Irish Demographic Polling Datasets

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Abstract

The Irish Demographic Polling Dataset collects results on Irish voters' vote intentions, satisfaction with the government, and approval of party leaders. All data are available for the full set of respondents, and various sub-samples, such as age groups, gender, region, and social class. Currently, the datasets consider over 100 polls, published between 2011 and 2024. After summarising the variables and structure of the data, we briefly discuss advantages and limitations of sub-group analyses by addressing three typical questions relating to Irish party politics. The datasets can also be accessed, subsetted, and visualised through an interactive dashboard. We hope the Irish Demographic Polling Datasets will help researchers and practioners analyse continuity and changes in Irish voters' party preferences and political opinions.

1 Introduction

The Irish Demographic Polling Datasets contain results from survey reports provided by Irish pollsters. These reports are available as PDF files online and contain cross-tables for various sub-samples. We extracted these data by combining automated extraction using Python and manual coding. Our datasets contain information on (weighted) party support among all respondents and for various sub-groups like age, social class, gender, region, and future vote

choice. This document summarises the datasets, codings, and variables and provides various descriptive tables and plots. We exemplify the advantages and shortcomings of subgroup analyses in the last section.
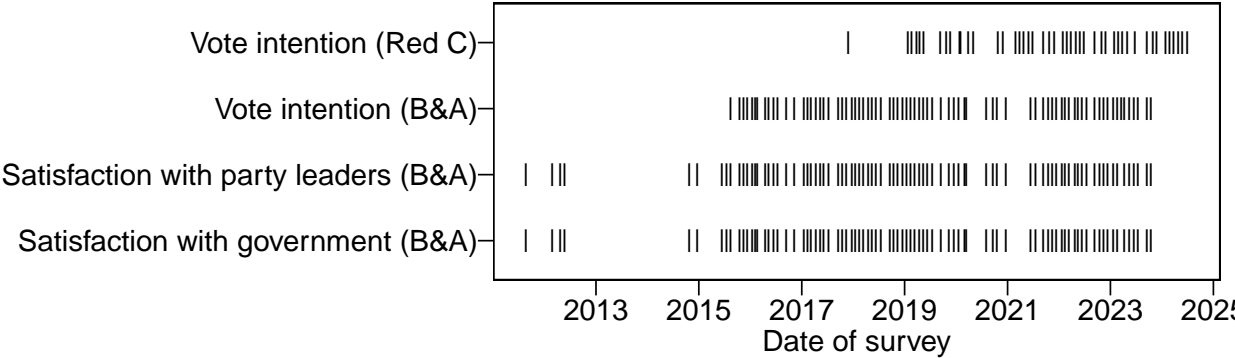
If you use these datasets for news reports or academic research, please consider citing:

> Stefan Müller, Thomas Pluck, and Paula Montano (2024). *Irish Demographic Polling Datasets.* URL: https://github.com/Irish-Dem-Polling/datasets

We want to thank RedC Research and Behaviour & Attitudes for continuously publishing survey reports for the public. If you use individual surveys, please cite and reference the pollsters' reports rather than this dataset.[1]

The figure below summarises the available polls in our dataset. Each horizontal bar indicates one survey.

Users can either download the raw data from our GitHub repository, or subset, download, and visualise the data on the Irish Demographic Polling Dashboard.

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2 Datasets

2.1 First-Preference Vote Choice

We gathered information on first-preference vote choice provided in survey reports by Behaviour & Attitudes and RedC.

The tables below summarise the number of polls and time spans.

Behaviour and Attitudes

The dataset `data_banda_firstpref_prop` contains first-preference vote choice for various subsamples and the full set of respondents released in 78 surveys. Results are reported as proportions. The dataset `data_banda_firstpref_count` contains the *weighted* counts provided in the survey reports. The first available poll was released on 15 August 2015. The latest poll included in the current version of the dataset was released on 15 October 2023. Table 1 describes the variables included in the dataset.

Table 1: Variable description: First-preference vote choice (Behaviour and Attitudes)

Variable	Details
date	Release of poll
date_start	Survey fielding: start
date_end	Suvey fileding: end
date_middle	Survey fielding: middle
sample_size	Sample size
party	First-preference vote intention
total	Vote intention: All respondents
male	Vote intention: Male respondents
female	Vote intention: Female respondents
age_18_34	Vote intention by age group: 18-24
age_35_54	Vote intention by age group: 35-54
age_55	Vote intention by age group: 55+
class_abc1	Social class: ABC1
class_c2de	Social class: C2DE
class_f	Social class: F
region_dublin	Region: Dublin
region_leinster	Region: Rest of Leinster
region_munster	Region: Munster
region_connacht_ulster	Region: Connacht/Ulster
area_urban	Urban region
area_rural	Rural region
const_seats_3	3-seat constituency
const_seats_4	4-seat constituency
const_seats_5	5-seat constituency

RedC

The dataset `data_redc_firstpref_prop` contains first-preference vote choice from 46 surveys for various subsamples and the full set of respondents. Results are reported as proportions. The first available poll was released on 26 November 2017. The latest poll included in the current version of the dataset was released on 30 June 2024. The dataset currently considers 46 surveys. Table 2 describes the variables included in the dataset.

Table 2: Variable description: First-preference vote choice (RedC)

Variable	Details
date	Release of poll
date_start	Survey fielding: start
date_end	Suvey fileding: end
date_middle	Survey fielding: middle
sample_size	Sample size
party	First-preference vote intention
total	Vote intention: All respondents
male	Vote intention: Male respondents
female	Vote intention: Female respondents
age_18_34	Vote intention by age group: 18-24
age_35_54	Vote intention by age group: 35-54
age_55	Vote intention by age group: 55+
class_abc1	Social class: ABC1
class_c2de	Social class: C2DE
region_dublin	Region: Dublin
region_leinster_rest	Region: Rest of Leinster
region_munster	Region: Munster
region_connacht_ulster	Region: Connacht/Ulster

2.2   Satisfaction with the Government

The dataset `data_banda_govsat_prop` contains information on the satisfaction with the government for various subsamples and the full set of respondents. Results are reported as proportions. The dataset `data_banda_govsat_count` contains the *weighted* counts provided in the survey reports. The first available poll was released on 24 August 2011. The latest poll included in the current version of the dataset was released on 15 October 2023. 85 surveys are currently included in our dataset. Table 3 describes the variables included in the dataset.

2.3   Satisfaction with Party Leaders

The dataset `data_banda_leaders_prop` contains information on the satisfaction with the leaders of several political parties for various subsamples and the full set of respondents. Results are reported as proportions. The dataset `data_banda_leaders_count` contains the

Table 3: Variable description: Satisfaction with government (Behaviour and Attitudes)

Variable	Details
date	Release of poll
date_start	Survey fielding: start
date_end	Suvey fileding: end
date_middle	Survey fielding: middle
sample_size	Sample size
satisfaction_government	Satisfaction with government
total	Vote intention: All respondents
male	Vote intention: Male respondents
female	Vote intention: Female respondents
age_18_34	Vote intention by age group: 18-24
age_35_54	Vote intention by age group: 35-54
age_55	Vote intention by age group: 55+
class_abc1	Social class: ABC1
class_c2de	Social class: C2DE
class_f	Social class: F
region_dublin	Region: Dublin
region_leinster	Region: Rest of Leinster
region_munster	Region: Munster
region_connacht_ulster	Region: Connacht/Ulster
area_urban	Urban region
area_rural	Rural region
const_seats_3	3-seat constituency
const_seats_4	4-seat constituency
const_seats_5	5-seat constituency
voting_vote	Voting: will definitely vote
voting_prob_vote	Voting: will probably vote
voting_undecided	Voting: undecided
voting_not_vote	Voting: will not vote
future_fianna_fail	Future vote: Fianna Fáil
future_fine_gael	Future vote: Fine Gael
future_labour	Future vote: Labour
future_greens	Future vote: Green Party
future_sinn_fein	Future vote: Sinn Féin
future_ind_oth	Future vote: Other/Independent
future_dont_know	Future vote: Don't know
past_fianna_fail	Past vote: Fianna Fáil
past_fine_gael	Past vote: Fine Gael
past_labour	Past vote: Labour
past_greens	Past vote: Green Party
past_sinn_fein	Past vote: Sinn Féin
past_ind_oth	Past vote: Other/Independent
past_dont_know	Past vote: Don't know

weighted counts provided in the survey reports. The first of the 85 polls was released on 24 August 2011. The latest poll included in the current version of the dataset was released on 15 October 2023. Table 4 describes the variables included in the dataset.

3 Examples and Cautionary Notes

In this section, we provide examples on how the datasets can reveal difference and similarities across sub-groups. We also show how and why these analyses can be problematic and involve considerable uncertainty. If researchers conduct sub-group analyses, we recommend pooling

Table 4: Variable description: Satisfaction with party leaders (Behaviour and Attitudes)

Variable	Details
date	Release of poll
date_start	Survey fielding: start
date_end	Suvey fileding: end
date_middle	Survey fielding: middle
sample_size	Sample size
leader_party	Leader's party
leader_name	
satisfaction_leader	Satisfaction with party leader
total	Vote intention: All respondents
male	Vote intention: Male respondents
female	Vote intention: Female respondents
age_18_34	Vote intention by age group: 18-24
age_35_54	Vote intention by age group: 35-54
age_55	Vote intention by age group: 55+
class_abc1	Social class: ABC1
class_c2de	Social class: C2DE
class_f	Social class: F
region_dublin	Region: Dublin
region_leinster	Region: Rest of Leinster
region_munster	Region: Munster
region_connacht_ulster	Region: Connacht/Ulster
area_urban	Urban region
area_rural	Rural region
const_seats_3	3-seat constituency
const_seats_4	4-seat constituency
const_seats_5	5-seat constituency
voting_vote	Voting: will definitely vote
voting_prob_vote	Voting: will probably vote
voting_undecided	Voting: undecided
voting_not_vote	Voting: will not vote
future_fianna_fail	Future vote: Fianna Fáil
future_fine_gael	Future vote: Fine Gael
future_labour	Future vote: Labour
future_greens	Future vote: Green Party
future_sinn_fein	Future vote: Sinn Féin
future_ind_oth	Future vote: Other/Independent
future_dont_know	Future vote: Don't know
past_fianna_fail	Past vote: Fianna Fáil
past_fine_gael	Past vote: Fine Gael
past_labour	Past vote: Labour
past_greens	Past vote: Green Party
past_sinn_fein	Past vote: Sinn Féin
past_ind_oth	Past vote: Other/Independent
past_dont_know	Past vote: Don't know

or comparing many surveys to better understand heterogeneity across polls.

3.1 First-Preference Vote Choice

First, we show how first-preference vote choice for Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, and Sinn Féin has developed across the three age categories. The plot reveals three striking developments. First, in the group of 18-34-olds, support for the three parties was comparable between 2016 and 2020. Since the election in February 2020, support for Sinn Féin has skyrocketed among

this age group. Support increased from around 30% to 45-50%. In the age group of 35-54 year-olds Sinn Féin also overtook Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael. In the group of respondents over 55 years, Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael tend to be stronger than Sinn Féin, but this gap has narrowed considerably. Current support for Sinn Féin is almost twice as high than between 2016 and 2020.

Party Support Among Age Groups in Behaviour and Attitudes Polls

3.2   Satisfaction with Government

Next, we turn to an example of government satisfaction. Behaviour and Attitude polls ask respondents whether they are satisfied with the government, dissatisfied with the government, or have no opinion. These results are, among others, available for subgroups of vote intention. The figure below shows, unsurprisingly, that Fianna Fáil supporters were much more satisfied when the party joined a coalition with Fine Gael and the Green Party in June 2020. We also observe that over 8 out of 10 Sinn Féin supporters tend to be dissatisfied with the government.

Results for the Green Party and Labour vary a lot, which is a consequence of the small subsample size.

Satisfaction with the Government, Conditional on Party Support

3.3   Satisfaction with Party Leaders

Third, we assess how approval with party leaders varies among census-based measures of social class. The B&A reports distinguish between *ABC1* ("middle class"), *C2DE* ("working class") and *F* ("semi-skilled"). All B&A datasets include estimates for these three groups. Below, we assess how support for the leader of Sinn Féin varies across the three groups. Moreover, we compare differences in approval between Mary Lou McDonald and Gerry Adams.

First, Mary Lou McDonald is more popular than Gerry Adams when he left the party. Second, voters classified into *C2DE* (working class) tend approve McDonald more than semi-skilled and middle-class voters. This difference tends to be relatively small, though. Third, even though support for Sinn Féin increased substantively since the election in 2020, support McDonald remained constant. Fourth, we observe considerable variation among semi-skilled workers, which again points to the disadvantage of samples with around 1000 respondents: sub-group analyses for small groups involve a lot of uncertainty and should be treated with great caution.

Satisfaction with Leaders of Sinn Féin, Conditional on Social Class

4 File Formats

We provide all datasets in four file formats.

- `csv`: The comma-separated values file ensures inter-operability as it can be opened in R, Python, Stata, SPSS, and Excel.

- `xlsx`: The Excel spreadsheets allow for an even more straightforward import of the data into Microsoft Excel.

- `dta`: This file can be used to import the datasets with correct variable encodings into Stata.

- `rds`: The RDS file is optimised for the R statistical programming language.