

Irish Demographic Polling Datasets

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Abstract

The Irish Demographic Polling Datasets collect aggregated results on vote intentions, satisfaction with the government, and popularity of party leaders. The data are available for all respondents and various subsamples, such as age groups, gender, social class, geographic region, and district magnitude. Currently, the datasets consider over 100 polls, published between 2011 and 2022. In this report, we summarise the variables and structure of the data. Afterwards, we exemplify some of the advantages and limitations of subgroup analyses. We hope the Irish Demographic Polling Datasets will help researchers and practitioners analyse continuity and changes in Irish voters' party preferences and political opinions.

Access the most recent versions of the report and datasets at

<https://github.com/Irish-Dem-Polling/datasets>

1 Introduction

The Irish Demographic Polling Datasets contain results from survey reports provided by Irish pollsters. These reports are available as PDF files and contain cross-tables for various subsamples. We extracted these data by combining automated extraction using Python and manual coding. To the best of our knowledge, a comprehensive dataset of recent Irish opinion poll results for subgroups does not exist. Michael Marsh discontinued the [Irish Opinion Poll Archive](#) in 2006. The [Irish Political Studies](#) Data Yearbooks do not provide machine-readable datasets. The [Irish Polling Indicator](#) collects first-preference vote intention data from over 650 polls since 1983, but the project considers only one survey question and focuses on *all* respondents. At times, researchers and practitioners may be interested in assessing differences and similarities across geographic or demographic groups or moving beyond first-preference vote choice. The Irish Demographic Polling Datasets are intended to enable such analyses.

Our datasets contain information on weighted¹ party support, satisfaction with the government, and popularity of party leaders. The results are available for all respondents and various subgroups like age, social class, gender, region, and future vote choice. This document outlines the datasets and variable codings. In the last section, we exemplify the advantages and shortcomings of subgroup analyses.

If you use these datasets for news reports or academic research, please consider citing:

Thomas Pluck and Stefan Müller (2022). *Irish Demographic Polling Datasets*.

URL: <https://github.com/Irish-Dem-Polling/datasets>

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

¹The [June 2022](#) Behaviour & Attitudes polling report explains: “The subsequent survey results are weighted to reflect the known demographic profile of Irish adults, utilising the most recently published census population estimates from the Central Statistics Office (CSO). Party support levels are subsequently realigned in accordance with a technical adjustment factor, designed to smooth the effects of extreme highs and lows in support levels for individual parties as measured at a single point in time, and taking variable election day turnout levels into account.” The [May 2022](#) RedC report states: “A further past vote quota and weight is included that looks at how people on our panel voted at the last election (gathered at the time) and controls this to ensure it matches the actual results. Vote intention data is also weighted to take account of claimed likely turnout on the day of an election.”

one survey. Table 1 summarises the number of available surveys per question as well as the dates of the first and last survey (as of 14 June 2022).

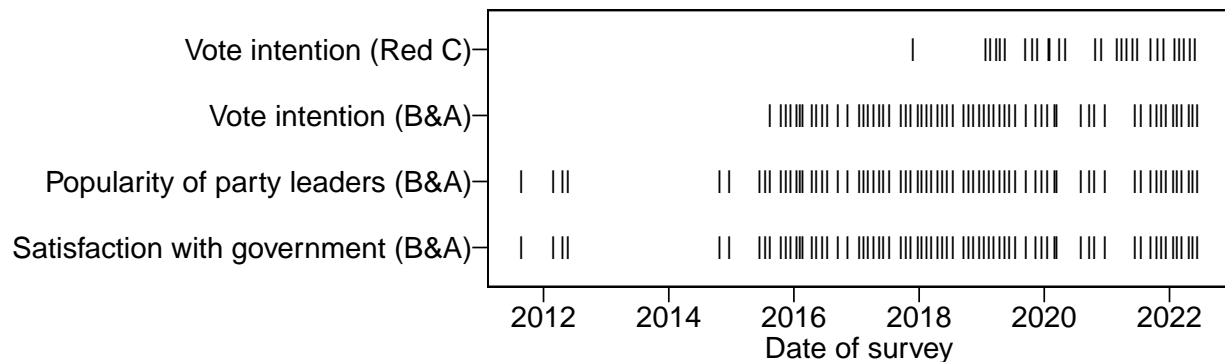


Table 1: Overview of available surveys

Dataset	Surveys	Start	End
Vote intention (Red C)	28	26 November 2017	29 May 2022
Vote intention (B&A)	64	15 August 2015	12 June 2022
Popularity of party leaders (B&A)	72	24 August 2011	12 June 2022
Satisfaction with government (B&A)	72	24 August 2011	12 June 2022

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.²

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.

²Reports provided by Behaviour & Attitudes are available [here](#). The reports released by RedC can be accessed [here](#).

2.1.1 First-Preference Vote Intention: Behaviour & Attitudes

The dataset `data_banda_firstpref_prop` contains first-preference vote choice for various subsamples and the full set of respondents released in 64 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 12 June 2022.³ Table 2 describes the variables included in the dataset.

Table 2: Variable description: First-preference vote choice (Behaviour & Attitudes)

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

2.1.2 First-Preference Vote Intention: RedC

The dataset `data_redc_firstpref_prop` contains first-preference vote choice from 28 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 29 May 2022. The dataset currently considers 28 surveys. Table 3 describes the variables included in the dataset.

³Between 2011 and 2015, Behaviour & Attitudes did not distinguish between minor parties and independent candidates. To ensure consistency in the methodology, we limit this dataset to the period from 2015 to 2022.

Table 3: Variable description: First-preference vote choice (RedC)

Variable	Details
date	Release of poll
date_start	Survey fielding: start
date_end	Survey fielding: 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 Behaviour & Attitudes poll was released on 24 August 2011. The latest poll included in the current version of the dataset was released on 12 June 2022. 72 surveys are currently included in our dataset. Table 4 describes the variables included in the dataset.

2.3 Popularity of 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 *weighted* counts provided in the survey reports. The first of the 72 Behaviour & Attitudes polls was released on 24 August 2011. The latest poll included in the current version of the dataset was released on 12 June 2022. Table 5 describes the variables included in the dataset.

Table 4: Variable description: Satisfaction with government (Behaviour & Attitudes)

Variable	Details
date	Release of poll
date_start	Survey fielding: start
date_end	Survey fielding: 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

3 Examples and Cautionary Notes

In this section, we provide examples on how the datasets can reveal difference and similarities across subgroups. We also show how and why these analyses can be problematic and involve considerable uncertainty. If researchers conduct subgroup analyses, we recommend pooling or comparing many surveys to better understand heterogeneity across polls.

Table 5: Variable description: Satisfaction with party leaders (Behaviour & Attitudes)

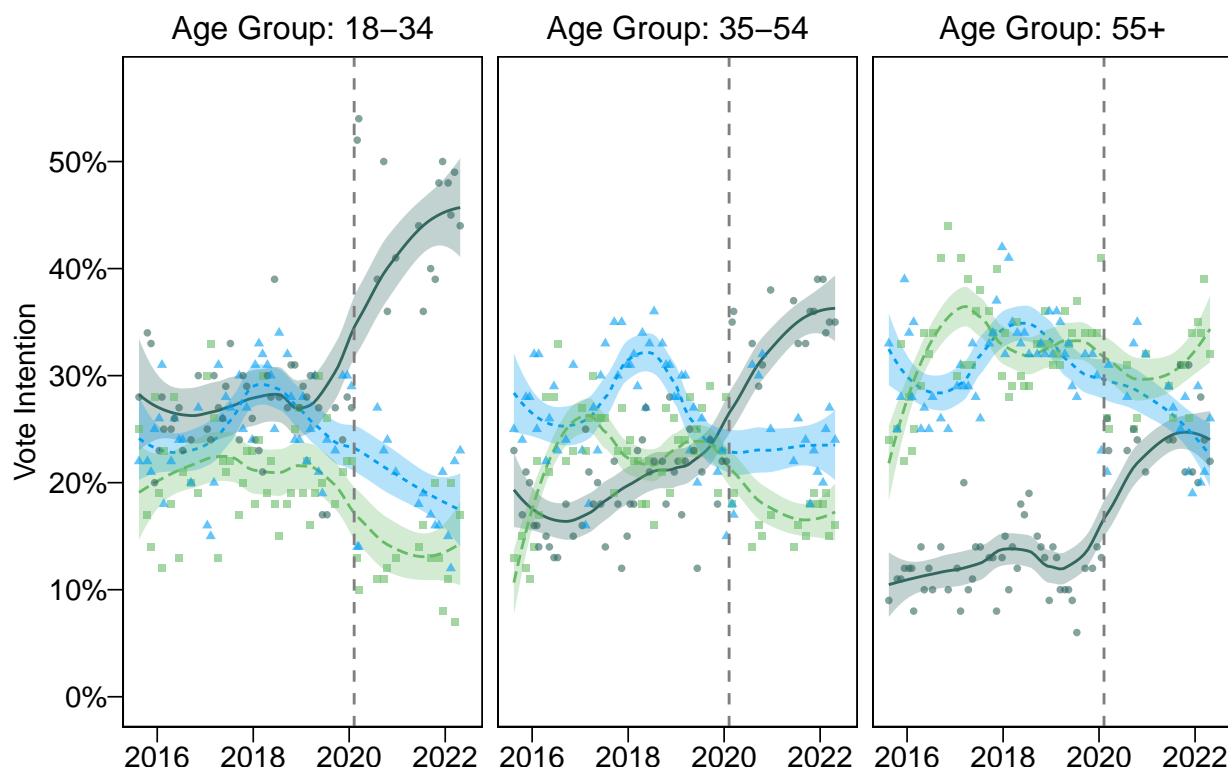
Variable	Details
date	Release of poll
date_start	Survey fielding: start
date_end	Survey fielding: end
date_middle	Survey fielding: middle
sample_size	Sample size
leader_party	Party of leader
leader_name	Name of party leader
satisfaction_leader	Satisfaction with party leader
total	Vote intention: All respondents
male	Vote intention: Male respondents
female	Vote intention: Female respondents
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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

3.1 First-Preference Vote Choice

First, we show how first-preference vote choice for Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, and Sinn Féin has developed in Behaviour & Attitudes polls among 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.

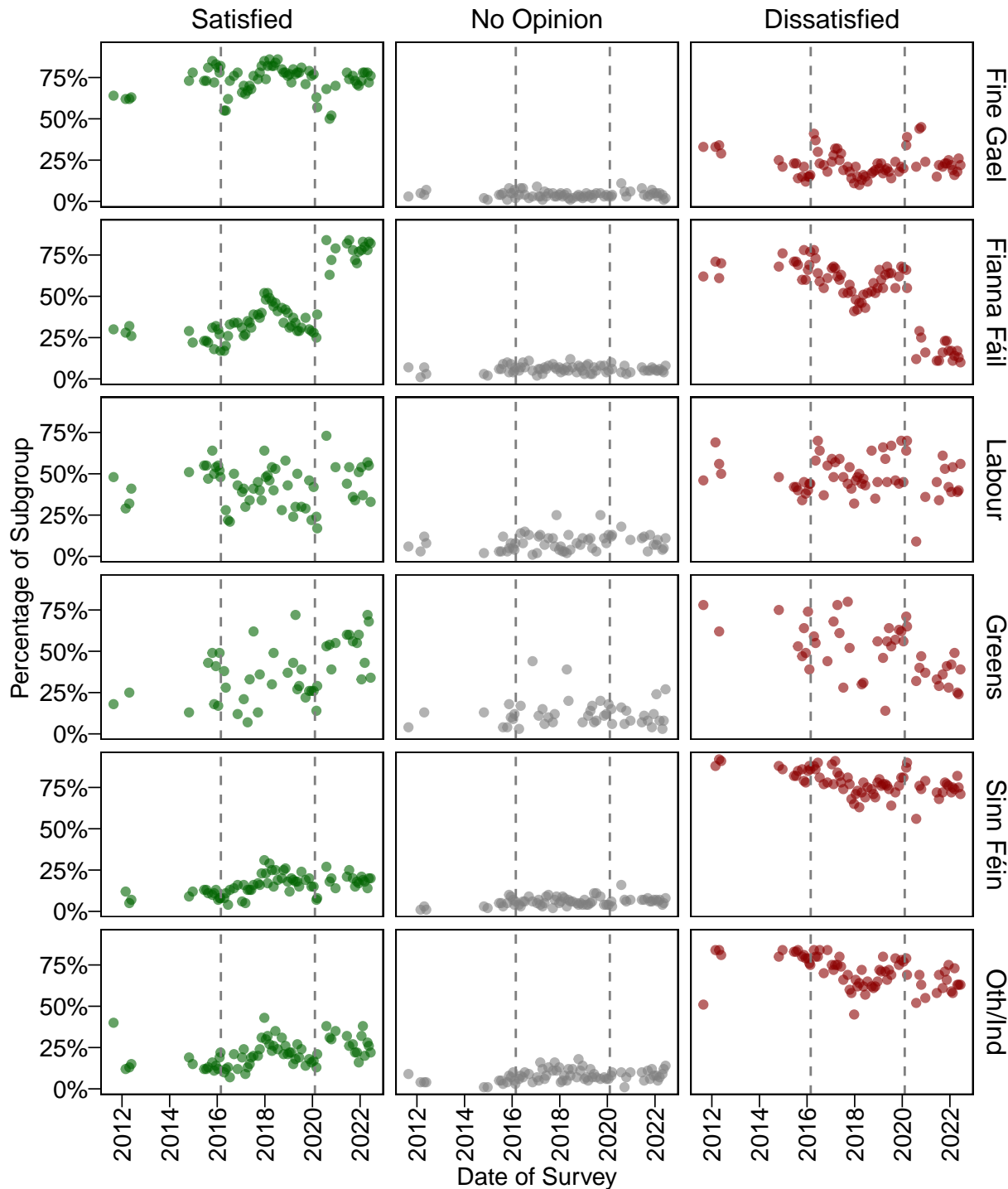
Party Support Among Age Groups



3.2 Satisfaction with the Government

Next, we turn to an example of government satisfaction. Behaviour & Attitudes 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

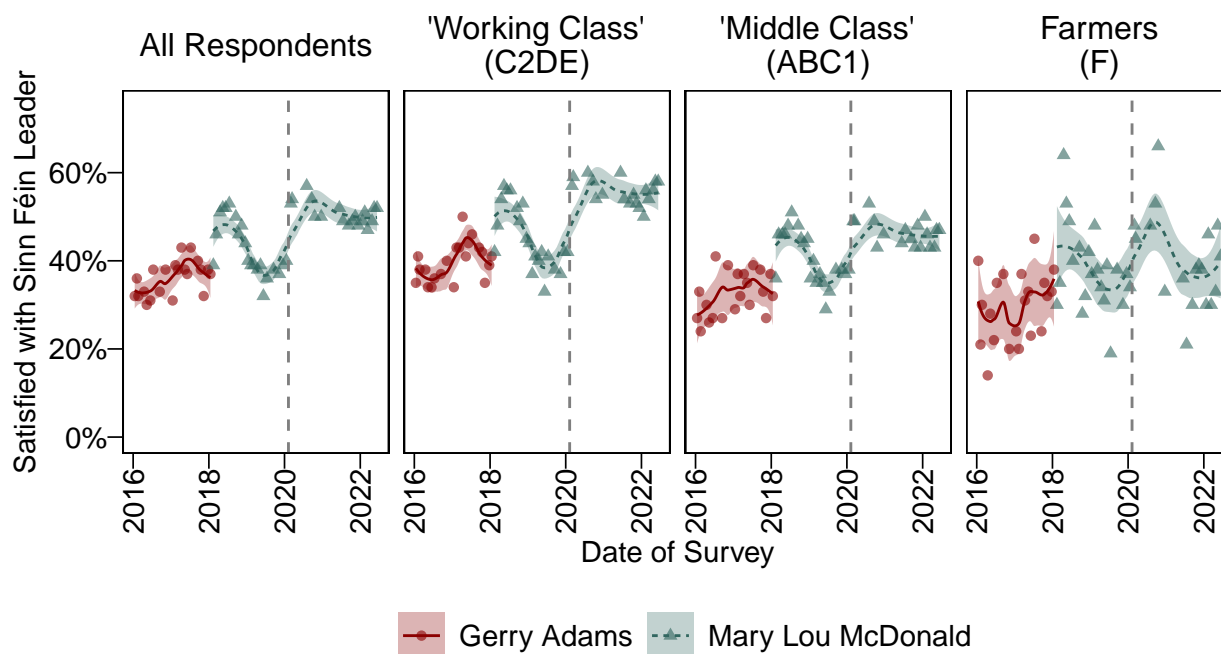


3.3 Popularity of Party Leaders

Third, we assess how the popularity of party leaders varies among census-based measures of social class. The B&A reports distinguish between ABC1 (“middle class”), C2DE (“working class”) and F (farmers). 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 farmers 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 farmers, which again points to the disadvantage of samples with around 1000 respondents: subgroup 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 three file formats.

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

5 About the Maintainers

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Thomas Pluck is a Mathematics Graduate and a Trainee Cybersecurity Analyst. He works on various projects related to Applied Mathematics and Data Analysis.

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Stefan Müller (stefan.mueller@ucd.ie; <https://muellerstefan.net>) is an Assistant Professor and Ad Astra Fellow in the School of Politics and International Relations at University College Dublin. Stefan's research focuses on political representation, party competition, political communication, public opinion, and quantitative text analysis.