

# Ireland Thinks Climate Polling for Friends of the Earth

October 2021

Friends of the Earth commissioned Ireland Thinks to gauge public opinion on various aspects of climate action.

*Full results and graphs are at the end of this document*

## A. Headline results

- There is overwhelming public support (80%) for Ireland cutting our climate-changing pollution by at least 51% by 2030, with 50% of people actually saying we should do more than that. Support for the target is strong among voters across all the main political parties.
- Majorities of voters for all the main political parties also think climate action should be a Government priority in the economic recovery from Covid 19. The overall figure of 61% compares with 63% when we last polled this question in summer 2020.
- More than three times as many people think the impact of climate action will be “mostly positive” as think it will be “mostly negative” (61% to 19%).
- 87% of people think corporations should pay a carbon tax.
- A majority of people (57%) think each sector should reduce its pollution by the same amount or just a bit more or less than other sectors.

## B. Analysis of findings

### Question 1: the 51% target

- There is overwhelming public support for the cutting our climate-changing pollution by at least 51% by 2030, the Government’s target now enshrined in law, with 50% of people thinking we should actually do more or much more, 30% thinking the target is about right and only 16% thinking we should do less or much less.
- Overwhelming majorities of voters for all parties, except Aontú, support the 51% target. Among Fianna Fáil voters, 44% actually think we should do more, 48% think the target is about right, and only 5% think we should do less. Among Fine Gael voters it’s 43%, 43% and 11%. Support is slightly lower among Sinn Fein voters with 40% saying the target is about right, 35% saying we should do more and 18% saying we should do less. Among voters for the Greens, Solidarity-PBP and the Soc Dems less than 4% think the target is too high.
- Support is strongest in Dublin with only 9% thinking we should cut our emissions by less than 51%. In Leinster that rises to 15%, 18% in Munster and 23% in Connacht-Ulster.
- Support is strongest among younger people, with 70% of those 24 and under thinking we should do more, and 62% of those aged 25-34. This compares with 42% of those over 65. Support is even stronger among women than men.

### Questions 2 and 3: Is climate action a priority?

- 61% of people agreed the Government should prioritise climate action in the economic recovery from Covid 19, with 31% disagreeing, a 2:1 majority in favour of prioritising action on climate. Support was highest among younger people and women. There was no significant regional differences. 52% of Sinn Fein voters felt Climate Action should be a priority compared with 72% of Fine Gael voters and 65% of Fianna Fáil voters.
- 10% of people identified climate change as one of their most important issues overall (top 3), well behind housing, Covid and the economy but well ahead of issues such as Brexit/Northern Ireland, Crime, and Inequality. Respondents named their own issues rather than picked from a list.

### Question 4: Will climate action be positive overall?

In recent polling we have seen public opposition to some specific climate policies, most notably the impact of the increase in the carbon tax at a time of rising energy costs. So we asked people whether they thought the overall impact of climate action would be positive or negative.

- 60% of people think the overall impact of climate action will be mostly positive, with 19% saying mostly negative and 21% didn't know. Three times as many people think the impact of cutting climate-changing pollution will be mostly positive as think it will be mostly negative.
- Majorities of all age groups said "mostly positive", with 79% of 18-24 year olds saying positive and 52% of over-65s. 68% of Fine Gael voters said positive, 66% of Fianna Fáil voters and 52% of Sinn Fein voters.

### Question 5: Should corporations pay a carbon tax?

Most discussion of carbon taxation has focused on the impact on individual drivers and householders. Given that energy costs are currently rising for other reasons it's not surprising that a majority don't support a carbon tax hike right now. In some ways it's surprising that as many of 41% do support it in the latest Business Post poll (including a majority of 18-34 year olds). But not only is carbon taxation only one element of climate policy, those polling questions only address one aspect of carbon taxation.

- When you ask people should *corporations* pay a carbon tax the answer is overwhelmingly supportive, with 87% saying yes and only 7% saying no. There were massive majorities in support across all ages, regions, educational levels and political parties.

### Questions 6: Should some sectors cut pollution by more than others?

As the focus shifts from the overall target to how much each sector has to cut emissions relative to other sectors, we asked whether all sectors should cut by the same amount, or whether some sectors should cut by a bit more or a lot more.

- 57% think that each sector should cut by the same amount or a just bit more than others, whereas 43% think some sectors should cut by a lot more than others.

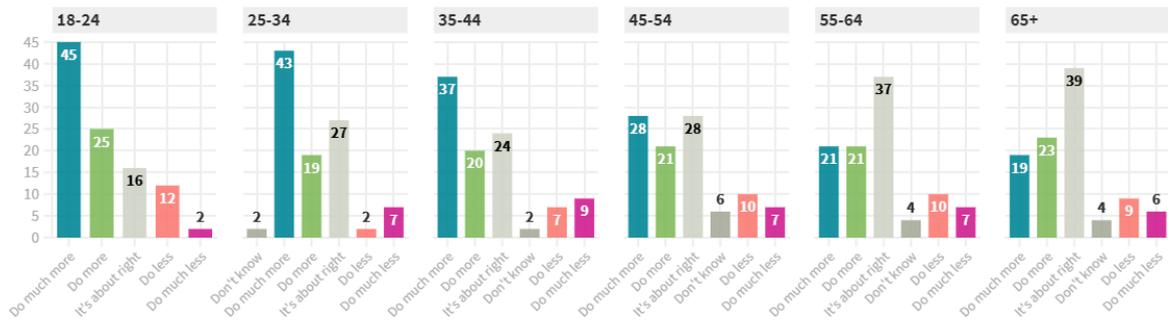
## C. Question wordings and full results breakdown

### Question 1:

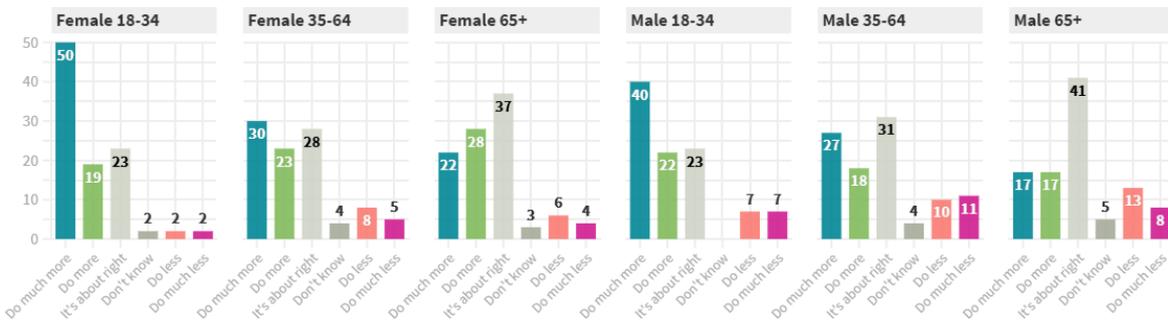
"Ireland is now committed to cutting its overall climate changing pollution by 51% by 2030. While this is still less than our action required to fulfil the Paris Climate Agreement it is broadly in line with pledges from the EU and the US. Which of the following statements best describes your opinion of Ireland's commitment?"



Age Group

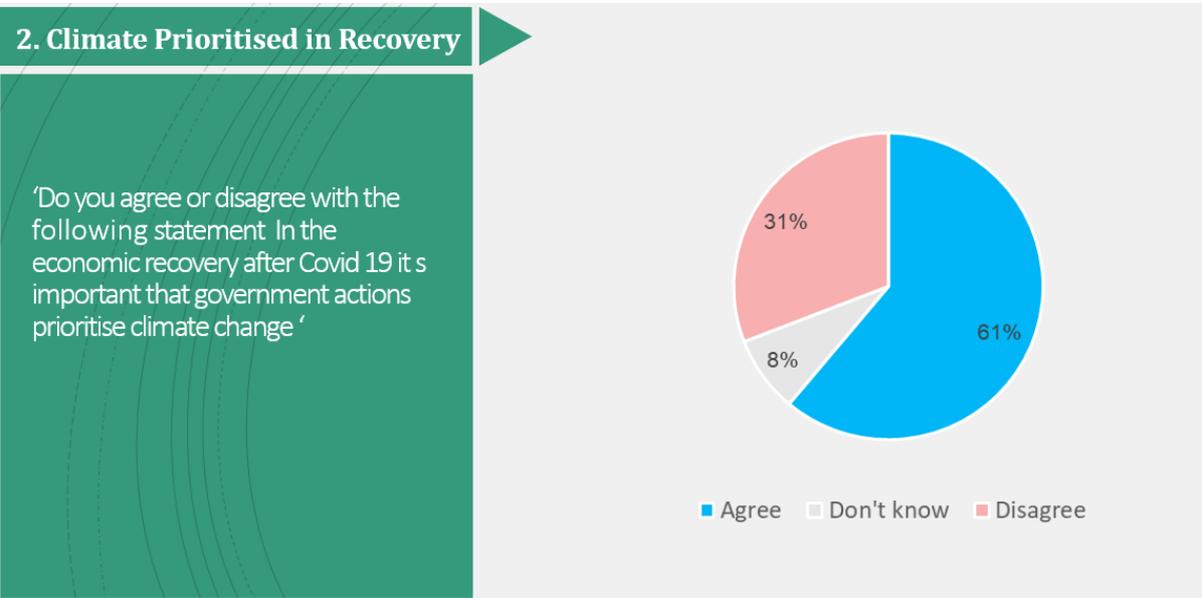


Age & Gender



**Question 2:**

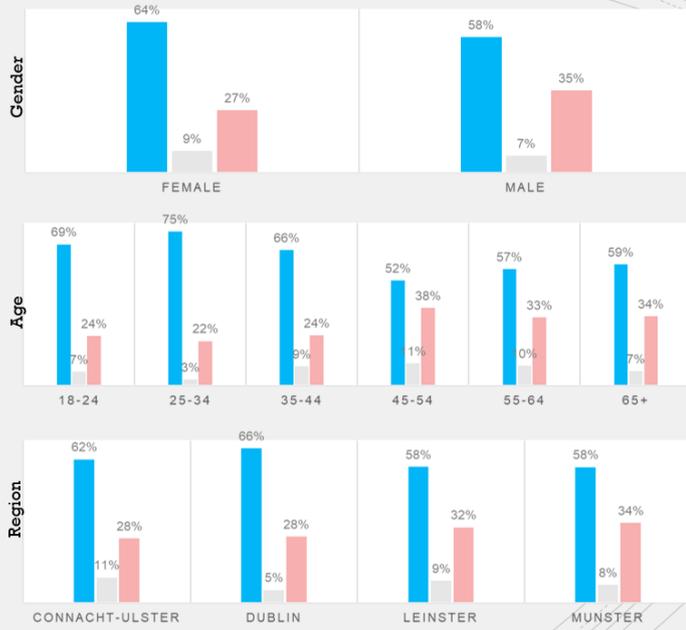
“Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: In the economic recovery after Covid 19 it's important that government actions prioritise climate change”



## 2. Climate Prioritised in Recovery

'Do you agree or disagree with the following statement In the economic recovery after Covid 19 it's important that government actions prioritise climate change'

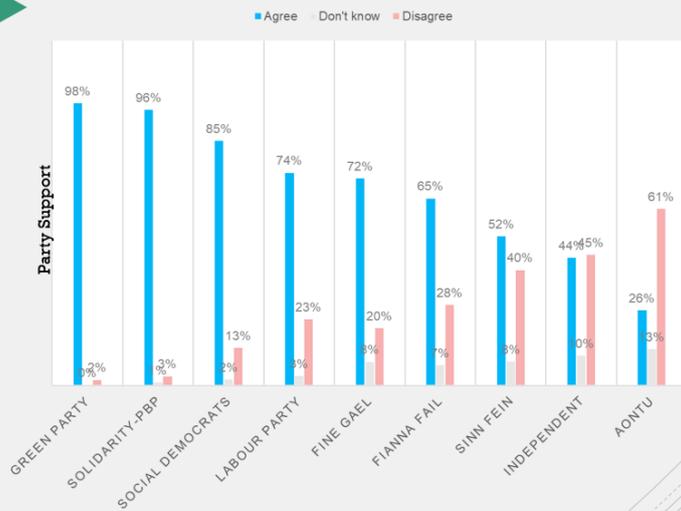
■ Agree ■ Don't know ■ Disagree



## 2. Climate Prioritised in Recovery

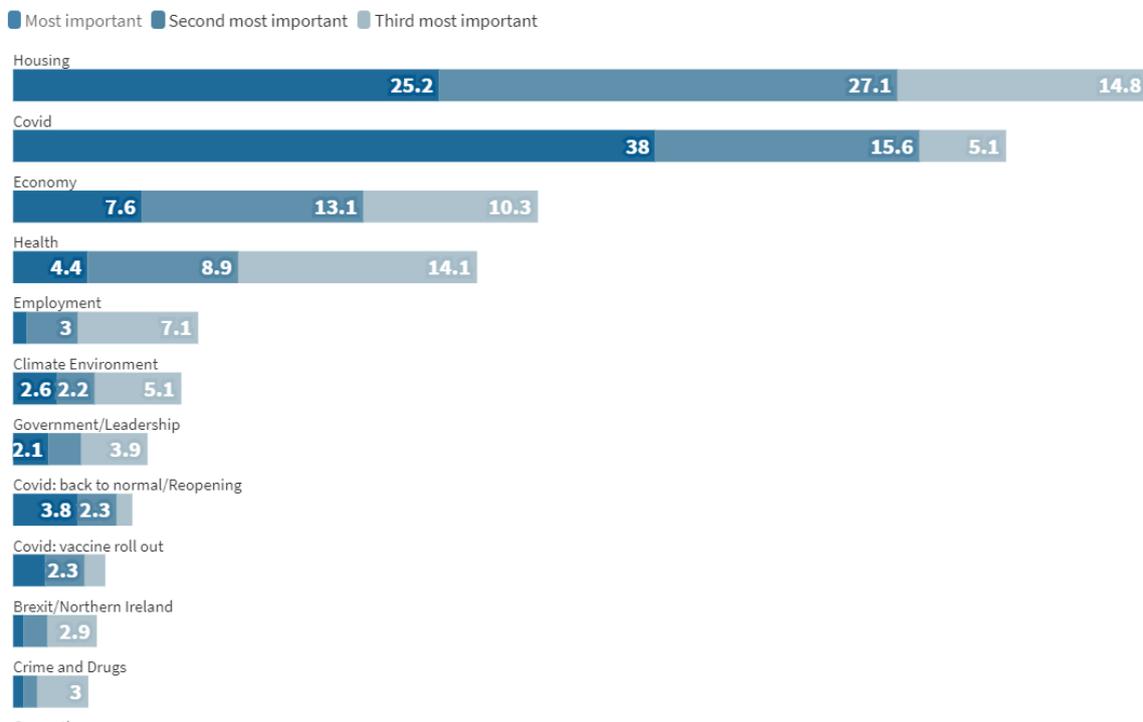
'Do you agree or disagree with the following statement In the economic recovery after Covid 19 it's important that government actions prioritise climate change'

■ Agree ■ Don't know ■ Disagree



### Question 3:

The questions the respondents were asked were: "What, in your view, is the most important issue facing the country?" followed by "And what is the second most important issue?" and "Finally, what is the third most important issue?"



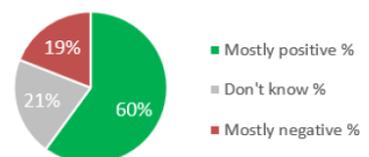
### Question 4:

"Overall, do you think the impact of cutting climate changing pollution will be..."

	Gender			Age group						Education			
	Total%	Male	Female	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	Less than leaving cert	Leaving cert	Post-leaving qual.	Third level degree
Mostly positive %	60%	60%	59%	79%	69%	57%	57%	59%	53%	42%	59%	57%	68%
Don't know %	21%	18%	24%	12%	18%	21%	22%	21%	27%	31%	23%	23%	16%
Mostly negative %	19%	21%	16%	9%	13%	22%	21%	20%	20%	27%	18%	20%	15%

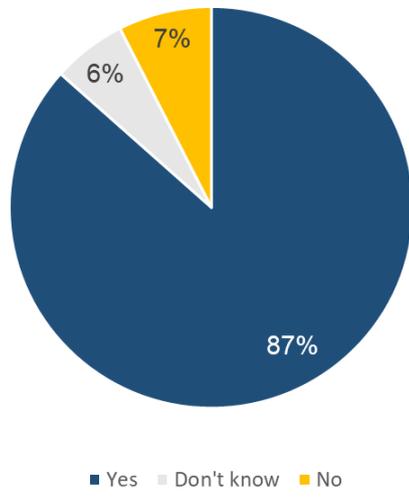
	Region					Vote								
	Dublin	Leinster	Munster	Connacht-Ulster	Other	Fine Gael	Sinn Féin	Fianna Fáil	Soc Dem	Labour Party	Green Party	Solidarity-PBP	Aontú	Independent
Mostly positive %	67%	57%	58%	56%	68%	68%	54%	66%	65%	71%	91%	63%	32%	38%
Don't know %	19%	25%	21%	19%	21%	21%	24%	20%	11%	23%	2%	23%	11%	30%
Mostly negative %	14%	18%	20%	25%	11%	11%	22%	13%	23%	6%	7%	14%	57%	32%

	Tenure					Religious		
	Own outright	Own with mortgage	Rent privately	Rent from council	Other	Weekly	Irregular	Never
Mostly positive %	54%	64%	58%	54%	77%	48%	59%	65%
Don't know %	26%	20%	22%	16%	11%	25%	21%	21%
Mostly negative %	21%	16%	20%	30%	12%	28%	20%	14%

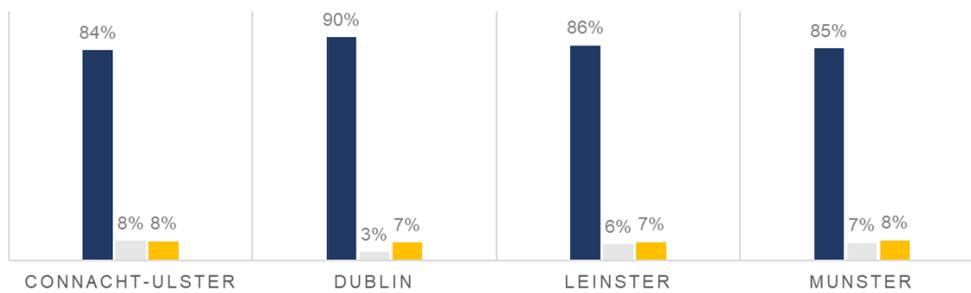
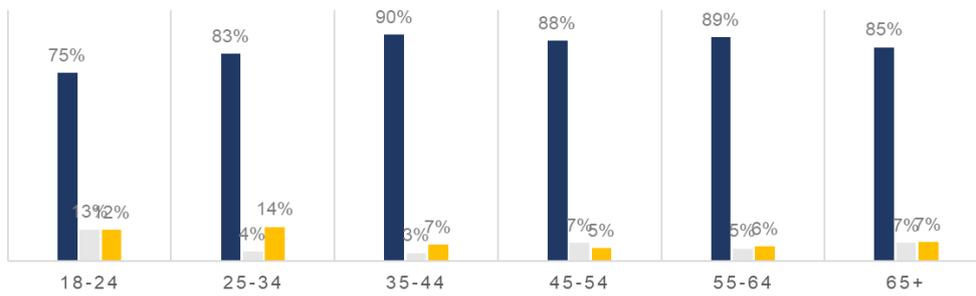
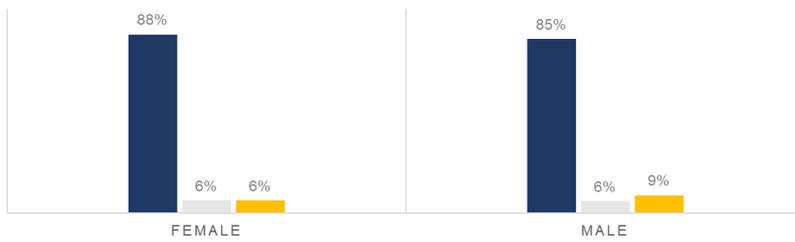


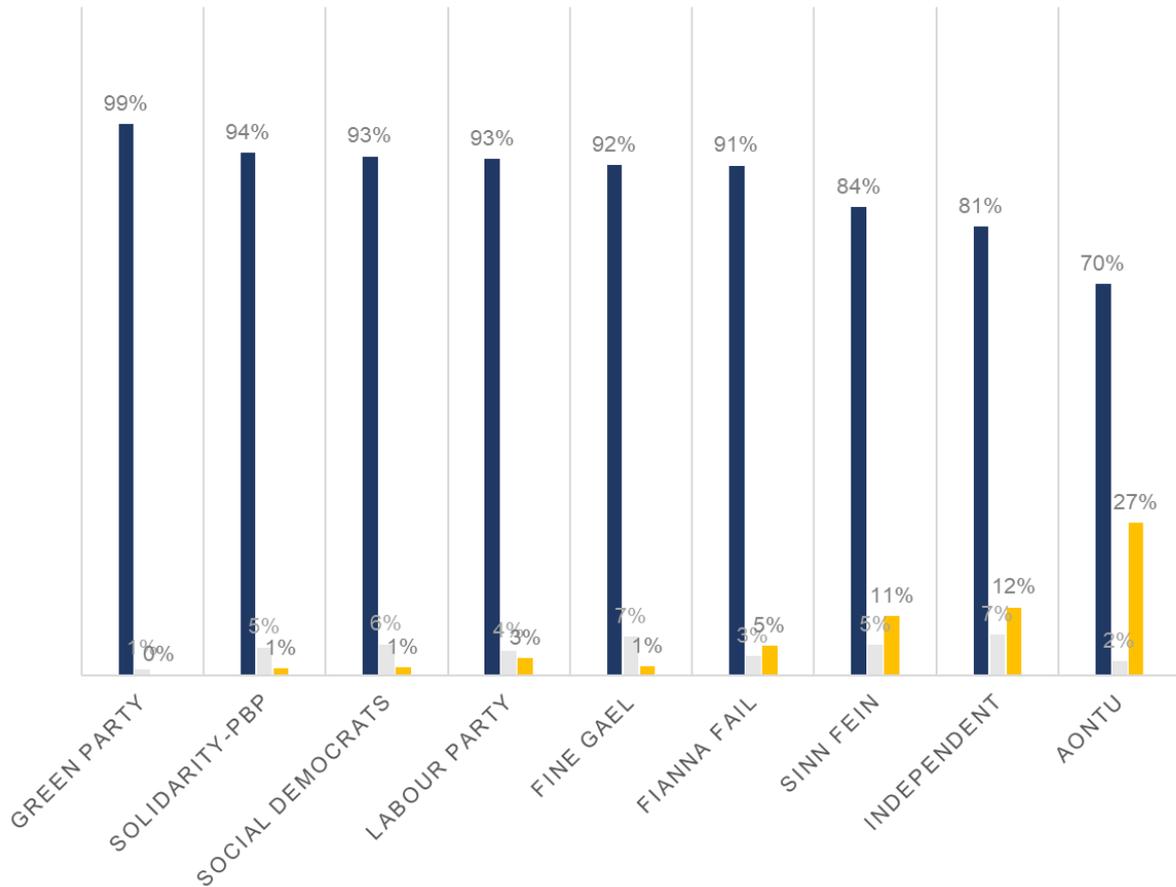
### Question 5:

'Should corporations pay a carbon tax?'



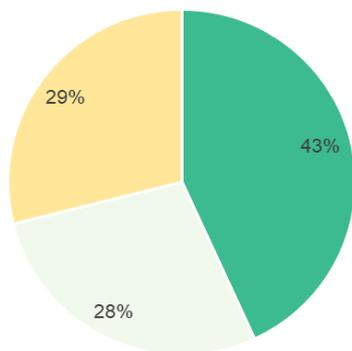
■ Yes ■ Don't know ■ No





### Question 6

‘Ireland is now committed to cutting its overall climate pollution by 51% by 2030. If any one sector of the economy reduces its pollution by less than 51% other sectors will have to do more to make up the difference. The four sectors that emit the vast majority of our pollution are electricity, transport, agriculture, and heating. Which of the following statements best describes your opinion of what the starting point should be for negotiations on how much each sector will do?’



- Some sectors should reduce their pollution by a lot more
- Some sectors should reduce their pollution by a bit more
- Each sector should reduce its pollution by the same amount

## **Methodological note**

The polling was carried out by Ireland Thinks as part of three waves of its regular polling. In each case a nationally representative sample of more than 1,000 responses was carefully selected from a larger group of over 30,000 panellists to ensure that the poll was exactly representative in terms of age, gender, region, educational attainment, religious adherence, housing status, and past voting behaviour. This yields a carefully weighted and high response rate panel, minimising bias in the poll. Dr Kevin Cunningham of Ireland Thinks holds two degrees in statistics and is a consultant to some of the leading polling companies in the world. Questions 1 and 3 were part of a poll carried out on 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> July. Questions 2, 5 and 6 were part of a poll carried out on 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> August. Question 4 was part of a poll carried out 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> October.