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**Abstract:**

This article examines the phenomenon of Independents, or non-party candidates, in Irish political life. It has two main aims: the first is to disaggregate Independents from 'others' to provide a definitive dataset of their electoral performance, and to enable more reliable and valid analysis about this actor. The second, and primary, aim is to use this disaggregation to construct a typology of Independents. The background of every Independent candidate contesting a general election between 1922 and 2007 is examined, from which they are grouped into a number of Independent families and sub-categories. A detailed profile is provided of each of these categories, describing their key characteristics and respective electoral performances. It is shown that Independents are a residual heterogeneous category, about whom a better understanding can be achieved if their diversity is appreciated.

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## 1. Introduction

‘The most distinctive phenomenon on the Irish electoral landscape has been the Independent deputy’ (Coakley, 2005: 28)

In the immediate aftermath of the 2007 general election, the front page of *The Sunday Tribune* read ‘The Kingmakers’, below which the photographs of the five Independents<sup>1</sup> re-elected to the Dáil were published, along with details of the role they were expected to play in the government formation process (Rafter and Coleman, 2007). Ultimately, four of these Independents supported the re-election of Bertie Ahern, the fifth administration in less than 30 years which involved the negotiated support of Independent parliamentarians. Both the election of Independents and their participation in government formation is a highly exceptional occurrence by comparative standards, but to date the level of research conducted on any aspect of Independents is minimal (Mitchell, 2001: 199).

Along with the Labour Party, Independents are the only political grouping to have continuous representation in the Dáil since 1922. Regularly occupying between one in ten or fifteen seats in a parliament where the government majority is usually quite small has enabled Independents achieve a significant role (Chubb 1957: 136), at one stage even holding ministerial office and chairing parliamentary committees (see Weeks, 2008a for further detail). In contrast, in most western democracies Independents have ‘a minimal realistic chance of electoral success at national level’ (Norris 2006: 91), with the combined total elected to national parliaments in such systems usually amounting to less than the number of Independent TDs in any given Dáil.

Given the significant presence of Independents in Ireland, a number of important questions can be asked: Why do Independent candidates run? Why do voters support them?

What is the role of the electoral system (Sinnott, 2005: 120)? What are the consequences of Independents' presence? What power do they have? Why are some Independents more influential than others? All of these questions cannot be answered within the framework of a single paper (but some of them are in Weeks, 2008b), and before attempting such an answer, however, what is first required is an understanding of who exactly are these Independents. They are commonly grouped with minor parties and referred to as 'Independents and others' at best, or often just 'others', a meaningless term for analysis, the consequence of which has been both a lack of available data on who Independents are and how they have performed at elections.<sup>2</sup> Although this article is mainly of a preliminary descriptive nature and does not engage some of the critical issues about Independents mentioned above that scholars might like to see addressed, the aim is to lay the foundation for more sophisticated analyses of Independents. Given the lack of research on Independents, this is a necessary precondition for theoretical-based inference and is justified where the stock of knowledge on a subject is limited (King, Keohane, and Verba, 1994: 15).

This article has two main aims: the first is to disaggregate Independents from 'others' to provide a definitive dataset of their electoral performance; this will ensure that more reliable and valid analysis about this actor can be undertaken. The second aim is to use this disaggregation to construct a typology of Independents, which can then be the subject of inference in future studies. While political parties have been classified by ideology, family, organisation and structure (see von Beyme, 1985; Duverger, 1954; Epstein, 1967; Panebianco, 1988; Sartori, 1976), there have been very few detailed attempts to provide a categorisation of Independents, particularly in the western democracy where they have achieved their most electoral success. The justification for taxonomy is because Independents are often treated as if they are a homogenous

political grouping akin to the Greens or any other political party; as this article demonstrates, there is as much diversity between Independents as there is between parties, which means we need to disaggregate Independents to understand this phenomenon. In addition, constructing a taxonomy helps us to focus our attention on what explains the presence of Independents, reduces complexity, and allows both for more comparison and differentiation between cases (for an extensive list, see Bailey, 1994: 12-14).

## **2. What are Independents?**

There have been a number of studies on conspicuous features of the Irish political system, including an analysis of the comparatively weak left (Mair, 1992; Farrell, 1970), the weak influence of social bases on voting behaviour (Whyte, 1974; Sinnott, 1984), the electoral system (Gallagher, 1987, 2005), and a dominant centre-right party (Dunphy, 1995). However, Independent TDs have been at best the subject of an occasional paragraph in a general text on Irish politics (see for example Busted, 1990: 40–41; Carty, 1981: 58–61; Gallagher, 1976: 58–63; Gallagher, 1985: 118–120; Sinnott, 1995: 64–65; the various volumes of the *How Ireland Voted* series, and numerous references in Coakley and Gallagher, 2005; the exceptions include Chubb, 1957 and Weeks, 2008a). Rather than being due to a perceived irrelevance (as is the case in other European systems), this disregard is a product of both a lack of available data on these candidates, and of the difficulty in acquiring such data, a shortcoming addressed by this article.

Symptomatic of this benign ostracism has been the failure to provide a precise definition of who or what are Independents. Although defined in its simplest terms as a politician who is not affiliated with a party, some view ‘Independent’ as more than a political label, but also a virtuous qualitative term that implies a freedom from bias. This explains why there are examples of party

politicians who call themselves Independents; in 2005 one Fine Gael TD went so far as to describe himself as the only true Independent in the Dáil (*Dáil Debates* 602: 460, 11 May 2005) (at a time when there were 14 Independent TDs). It is erroneous to think of Independents as a homogeneous grouping akin to a party. One former Independent TD, Frank Sherwin, noted ‘there is the difference between chalk and cheese between Independents...They may be out for each other’s blood’ (*Dáil Debates* 201: 522, 27 March 1963). An examination of the background of candidates running under this label confirms this element of diversity; they range from former government ministers, community activists looking to promote a localised issue, nominees of interest groups, to representatives of religious groups. The working definition of an Independent in this paper is that used by the electoral authorities: a non-party (or at least, non-registered party) candidate. For the period prior to 1963 (when there was no state registry of parties), the task of identifying Independents is a bit more difficult, as some such candidates need not necessarily call themselves an Independent, running instead under a party label (Chubb, 1957: 131–2). Defining an Independent under such circumstances requires a clarification of what an Independent is not, that is, a party. LaPalombara and Weiner’s (1966: 6) definition of a party is used here, which identifies six key characteristics the organisation must exhibit. It must:

- Demonstrate continuity in organisation, where the life of the party is not dependent on the political life of the leader;
- Have a ‘manifest and...permanent organisation at the local level’;
- Have an aspiration to attain power in office;
- Have an explicit desire for votes;
- Not be a personalised machine of a dominant individual in the group;
- Run more than one candidate (unless this candidate is not the party leader).

Employing a qualitative analysis of all parties outside of Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, and Labour that contested general elections before 1963, the candidates of any group that do not possess all of the above characteristics is included as an Independent. The data used for this classification stemmed from an analysis of contemporary newspapers (see section 4 for further details) and some secondary literature, in particular Coakley (1990); where conflict arises concerning the ‘Independent’ nature of a candidacy, the more commonly cited description is used. Details of groups failing to meet the criteria to qualify as parties, and whose candidates are included as Independents are provided in Appendix 1.

### **3. Support for Independents**

Having clarified the definition of Independents used in this article, Figure 1 below graphs the definitive results for Independents at general elections from 1922 to 2007, which have not been collated before into a unitary dataset (a table of this data is provided in Appendix 2).

INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE

The 1920s was christened ‘the decade of the Independent’ by Manning (1972: 85), as there were 9, 13, 16, and 13 Independents elected to the Dáil at the four elections during this period. The introduction of the single transferable vote electoral system – with its candidate-oriented nature – encouraged Independents to run in the early years of the state (Chubb 1957), but they maintained success beyond the 1920s, winning over 8 percent of the national poll on average from the 1930s until the 1951 election, constituting a ‘powerful bloc in Irish politics’ (Gallagher, 1976: 58). Following a period of decline in the mid-1950s, 1960s and 1970s, Independents recovered again

in the 1980s, a pattern of fluctuating success that is detailed in Figure 1. It is possibly no coincidence that this occurred alongside an increase in the number of Independent candidates, which averaged at 26 per election before 1977, but between 1977 and 2007 almost trebled to 72. Although a correlation between the number of Independent candidates and seats won between 1922 and 2007 produces a very low Pearson's coefficient of  $-0.06$ , if we restrict the cases to elections since Independents' nadir of 1969 (when one solitary TD was elected), it produces a significant correlation of  $0.61$ . If we compare Independents' performance at 'first-order' general elections with 'second-order' elections, including those to local councils and the European Parliament, it is obvious there is far less fluctuation at the latter level, as the vote for Independents appears pretty solid, never falling below 10 percent in the period examined (see Table 1 below). This may well be evidence of Independents receiving a consistent protest vote at mid-term elections (although it does vary considerably at by-elections) but it also points to Independents profiting when there is less at stake (Gallagher, 1989: 32). Voters realise parties are a necessity at first-order elections when the formation of a government is involved, but as the importance of elections declines, the electorate are more willing to 'indulge in the luxury of voting for Independents' (ibid.: 31). The steady increase in the vote for Independents as we move from Dáil to county council to town council confirms this hypothesis (see Table 1), but it is also part of a comparative historical trend where non-party politics features quite significantly at local government level, Britain and France being two notable examples (Rallings and Thrasher, 1997: 85; Mabileau et al., 1989: 31–32).

INSERT TABLE 1 HERE

Although the aim of this paper is not to explain the patterns of support for Independents, their increased prevalence in recent years is possibly due to both declined levels of party identification amongst the electorate and the opening up of the party system following Fianna Fáil's embracement of coalition politics in 1989 (Mair and Weeks, 2005: 138). Both these developments strengthened the bargaining position of Independents, particularly when minority governments ensue and Independents hold the balance of power (Elgie and FitzGerald, 2005: 322–323; Murphy, 2005, p. 371–372). This is the only situation in which backbench TDs of any hue have some clout (Gallagher and Komito, 2005: 250–251), which explains why Independents with such leverage have been called 'kingmakers' in the media. Taken from a historical perspective, close to 40 percent of all Irish governments have needed the support of Independent TDs (see Table 2 below), but this does not necessarily imply that the latter were all kingmakers who were able to extract 'pork' from the ruling parties (for more on their role, see Weeks, 2008a). For example, Taoisigh such as de Valera and Lemass were not willing to be held to ransom by Independents, preferring to call the latter's bluff when crucial votes were called in the Dáil. In addition, although the four Independents conducting separate deals with Ahern in 2007 got some form of tangible reward, they were not kingmakers because the three-party coalition resultantly formed had a Dáil majority between them.

INSERT TABLE 2 HERE

Consequently, of all the Independent candidates who ran for office, and of all those elected, the true kingmakers from the above Table 2 were those supporting the first Costello government, the Fine Gael-Labour administration of 1981, two of Haughey's governments (1982 and 1987–1989)

and Ahern's first government (1997–2002). The obvious pattern here is the increased ability of Independents to realise their potentialities as kingmakers vis-à-vis minority governments, adding credibility to the hypothesis that the dealignment of recent years is somewhat responsible for Independents' revived fortunes. To understand the phenomenon of Independents, however, it is not sufficient to focus on their aggregate electoral performance; given the heterogeneous nature of these political actors, a categorisation and subsequent analysis of the different types of Independents is necessary, which is the focus of the remaining sections.

INSERT FIGURE 2 HERE

#### **4. Categorisation of Independents**

The difficulty in providing a typology of Independents has been noted in the literature, with claims ranging from 'classifying deputies as independents is not always easy' (Coakley, 2003: 515) to 'Independents are by definition almost impossible to categorise' (Busteed, 1990: 40); . As a result, it is impossible to achieve universal agreement for a categorisation of over 1,000 Independents, but what can be done is to employ an objective and replicable method. To satisfy these criteria, this article provides a combined conceptual/empirical taxonomy (Bailey, 1994: 31-32, 79), which utilises both inductive and deductive logic. It is conceptual in that some of the taxa were constructed before the data were analysed to check for their existence; it is empirical in that I had no clear idea of how to classify many of the Independents until the data was gathered, following which more categories were added to the taxonomy. The conceptual classification was aided by occasional references in the literature to a number of different types of Independents; these include Independent Farmers, business candidates, party dissidents, 'political oddities',

remnants of former parties, one-person crusades, ‘friends of the worker’, Independents with affinities to a major party, ‘friends and neighbours’ Independents, locally-minded Independents, left-wing ideological Independents, ‘interest group’ independents, ‘political tendency’ independents and ‘gene pool’ independents (see Coakley 2003: 515; Chubb 1957: 134–5; Gallagher 1985: 119; Sinnott 1995: 65). There have also been several categorisations of Independents in other political systems, most notably the UK (see Copus and Bottom, 2007; Nicolson, 1946). In addition to these typologies, Independents often adopt a self-descriptive label, or are christened with one by political commentators, examples including Independent Farmers and Independent Unionists.

The foremost source of information on Independents stemmed from an analysis of contemporary newspapers, chiefly *The Irish Times*, but where this lacked sufficient detail, *The Irish Press* and *Irish Independent* were also consulted. Combined with additional information gleaned from the secondary literature and parliamentary debates, the primary method used to classify Independents was historical interpretation, the aim of which is to account for significant historical outcomes by piecing evidence together in a chronological manner, and offering limited generalisations that are sensitive to context (Ragin, 1987: 35). Given the qualitative nature of the data, it was not possible to employ a quantitative technique such as factor analysis to devise a typology. Instead, the key characteristics of each category are identified, and Independents are classified according to the nature of the characteristics they exhibited. Independents can be categorised on several levels, including both electoral and organisational, but this paper focuses primarily on classifying them on an ideological level. Independents could also be classified in terms of the power they wield within parliament or who they voted for as Taoiseach to distinguish their partisanship vis-à-vis government. However, while the latter method would not

indicate what level of power wielded, it is also difficult to construct a power index because details of influence are usually kept secret; even where they are not it can be difficult to quantify how each deal measured up against another. In any case, this paper is not just concerned with Independent TDs, but with all Independent candidates, the vast majority of whom never enter the parliamentary chamber. While within-group variance is minimised and between-group variance is maximised in any ideal typology, because we are dealing with a diverse group of individuals that run under a common label, and because it is not possible to rigidly classify political actors (Chubb, 1957: 134), there is inevitably going to be some overlap between the categories. Nevertheless, the maxim followed here is that Independents are included in categories with which they share the most characteristics. This means that the taxa are more polythetic than monothetic in that they do not comprise cases that are all identical on all variables (Bailey, 1994: 7); rather they share a number of important common characteristics. The taxonomy identified six clear families of Independents (highlighted in bold text) and seven further sub-categories of Independents, details of which are provided in Table 3 below. A description of each of these categories is provided in the following sections.

INSERT TABLE 3 HERE

These categories may not be ideological all of the time, with Apostate Independents and quasi-parties the main two examples of deviation. The former includes those who left a party, a decision that is often a result of personal, rather than ideological, conflict (hence their being known as Temperamental Independents in the UK (Nicolson, 1946)). The category of quasi-parties includes personal vehicle movements, which may be ideological, but sometimes the party

label is adopted to provide added legitimacy to an individual's candidacy. This analysis into Independents' backgrounds also identifies four clear organisational categories of Independents. The first, and dominant type is the 'pure' Independent, who is not affiliated with any party (this includes Community Independents); second is the aforementioned gene pool Independent (Vestigial Independents and Apostate Independents), with a history of association with a party; third is the nominee of an interest group (Corporatist Independents and Ideological Independents); while fourth is the representative of either a locally-based or quasi-party that does not compete on the national scene, and has not been included on the official state register of parties.

Finally, Figure 3 clarifies the electoral support received by each of these families of Independents back to 1922. Perhaps the most obvious trend from the chart is the change in the nature of Independent candidates since their electoral nadir in the 1960s. Up to that point there had been more types of Independents contesting elections, including both Vestigial Independents and Corporatist Independents. With the odd exception, none of these categories contested elections after the 1960s. Since the 1970s, more Ideological Independents (primarily Left-wing Independents and Single-issue Independents) have emerged, but Figure 3 also masks the reduction in the number of categories of Independents (as opposed to families), which since the turn of the millennium has declined to four, half the number present in the 1920s (see Table 4 below for more precise details on the numbers of Independents (per category) both running and elected).

INSERT FIGURE 3 HERE

## 5. Vestigial Independents

The label Vestigial Independents is adopted here to describe the vestiges, or remnants, of defunct parties.<sup>3</sup> In the Irish case, this refers to the dying embers of the Unionist Party (south of the border) and the IPP, which had monopolised representation up until the critical 1918 election (Manning, 1972: 85), but were absent in the party system of the new state. To continue a tradition of parliamentary representation, and to cater for these ‘lost’ constituencies who felt isolated in the new state, some of those previously affiliated with these two parties ran as Independents, adopting for themselves the labels Independent Nationalists (or sometimes simply ‘Old IPP’ candidates) and Independent Unionists.

### *(a) Independent Nationalists*

Despite their metamorphosis, most Independent Nationalists continued to stress their prior party affiliation during elections, subsequently attracting an IPP vote as Independents; a notable example was the persistence of a nationalist ‘Redmondite’ vote in Waterford (*The Irish Times*, 21 September 1927), which had been the electoral base of the last leader of the IPP, John Redmond. As constitutional nationalists, they were opposed to the extremities of the revolutionary period (1916–1923), and stemming both from disillusionment caused by the events of this era, and because many of their original aims were achieved under the 1921 treaty, few former IPP MPs felt compelled to continue their political careers in the new state. Only four Independent Nationalists ran for office, with three of them elected, two of whom (Captain William Redmond in Waterford and James Dillon in Monaghan) were sons of the last two leaders of the IPP.<sup>4</sup> With the consolidation of the fledgling democracy, and as memories of the early twentieth century political scene faded, Vestigial Independents like Redmond could not

expect to retain a sizeable ‘Old Irish Parliamentary Party’ vote. To preserve their political base, the three TDs all joined Cumann na nGaedheal/Fine Gael in the 1930s,<sup>5</sup> a move that spelled the end of the Independent Nationalist candidate.

*(b) Independent Unionists*

In regions where sizeable Protestant communities existed (primarily in Dublin boroughs and the counties proximate to the northern border), selection conventions were held, often at Orange Order halls,<sup>6</sup> to nominate Independent Unionist candidates – identified as those using this particular label – whose functional aim was to represent their religious community in an overwhelmingly Catholic state (Gallagher, 1976: 62).

Coming from a relatively affluent background which entailed a preference for conservative economic politics, and a sometimes hostile sectarian atmosphere, it was natural that Independent Unionists aligned themselves with the party associated with both free-market economics and ‘law and order’, Cumann na nGaedheal (ibid.). However, Independent Unionists did not agree with all of the social policies implemented by the aforementioned party when in power, many of which had a strong Catholic tinge (a prime example was the ban on marital divorce, introduced in 1925).

Initially, a significant number of Independent Unionists ran, beginning with ten in 1923, and holding at a figure between seven and nine until 1937 (see Table 4 below). Following the transferral of the three University of Dublin Dáil seats (which were always filled by Independent Unionists) to the Seanad under the 1937 constitution, no more than three Independent Unionists ran at one election. While Protestants transferred their allegiance to Cumann na nGaedheal (King, 2000: 89), which attracted two Independent Unionist TDs into its ranks (in 1927 and

1937), these trends differed in the border areas, where it took a little longer for the absorption of Protestants to occur, probably because of their proximity to the Northern state. Indeed, from 1937 on, all the Independent Unionist candidates (bar two minor figures in the 1980s) were from the three Ulster counties south of the border, each of which was represented by a prominent Unionist until the late 1950s (Donegal by James Sproule Myles and William Sheldon, Cavan by John Cole and his son, and Monaghan by Alexander Haslett and his son). These candidates were usually large farmholders, and such was the centrality of agriculture to their platform some of these candidates campaigned under the title of ‘Independent Unionist and Farmer’, with a sizeable number of their votes sometimes transferring to farming candidates (Tunney, 1995: 693–694).<sup>7</sup> Apart from a few isolated cases in 1987 and 1992, the retirement of these politicians largely spelled the end of the Independent Unionist in general elections (for a discussion on why they disappeared, see Gallagher (1976: 62) and Sacks (1976: 535–36)). Exceptions to this rule persisted at local level, however, particularly in the form of quasi-parties; these included the Monaghan Protestant Association and the Donegal Progressive Party, the latter of which was represented at local council level from the 1960s until the 1990s.

INSERT TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE

## **6. Corporatist Independents**

There have been two types of Corporatist Independents: Independent Business candidates and Independent Farmers. The term corporatist is used because these Independents are representative of professional and industrial sectors, with the aim of exercising influence over the political system.

*(a) Independent Business*

Described as the ‘urban counterpart’ of the Independent Farmer (Chubb, 1957: 135), Independent Business candidates were predominantly concerned about the future of the economy in the precarious new state. This title is adopted because it was the label these Independents used to identify themselves during their respective election campaigns.<sup>8</sup> It also refers to candidates who ran under quasi-party labels, including the Cork Progressive Association (a grouping of professional and businessmen mobilised to promote industry in the Cork region), and the Business and Professional Group, but not the Business Men’s Party, which satisfies the criteria to qualify as a genuine minor party. Because these Independents were predominantly wealthy businessmen (Richard Beamish, chairman of the Beamish brewery, and James Xavier Murphy, former governor of the Bank of Ireland, being two prominent examples) dependent on foreign trade, and because many of them hailed from ex-Unionist stock (Chubb, 1957: 135), they openly supported Cumann na nGaedheal in government. Sometimes they formed a micro-party, an example being the Business Men’s Party formed for the 1923 election by the Dublin Chamber of Commerce; but more generally they tended to run individual campaigns as Independents.

Despite their ideological disposition, these candidates were keen to stress that they were above the squabbles of partisan politics. For example, those involved in the Progressive Association claimed ‘they were not politicians’ and that they ‘had no desire to enter into useless discussion of the pros and cons of the differences between those who should be working together for the benefit of the country’ (*The Irish Times*, 10 September 1927). It is not clear how altruistic were the aims of the Independent Business candidates, but in the 1920s there were justified fears over how a group of former revolutionaries, most of whose leaders were dead or in jail, and with

little or no political experience, would be able to properly manage the finances of the new state. As a result, *The Irish Times* (which may also have supported these candidates because of its unionist leanings) strongly encouraged voters to back the business candidates to bring some much-needed expertise into the Dáil, noting that ‘the constructive criticism of the independent members, who include men of great experience not only in parliamentary, but also in financial and economic affairs, will be of much assistance to Ministers’ (*The Irish Times*, 1 September 1923).

However, once it was clear that neither the country nor the economy were going to collapse in ruin, and once the business candidates’ dreams of non-partisan, meritocratic political competition were well and truly shattered by the 1930s, these Independents flitted out of the political scene, with most of their supporters drifting to Cumann na nGaedheal. They were very much an ad hoc interest group which might have prospered had political competition taken on a vocational pattern, but the emergence of two large catch-all parties negated this possibility.

#### *(b) Independent Farmers*

Despite the importance of agriculture in Ireland, there has never been a major farmers’ party representing all agricultural interests. Instead, various short-lived organisations have appeared on behalf of sectional farming interests, and while they did sometimes form parties, such as the Farmers’ Party in 1922, these were often little more than loose collections of Independent Farmers, selected by separate farmers’ unions, but united in an ad hoc electoral group to maximise their profile (Manning, 1979: passim.). Consequently, it is not surprising that there was not always a clear line of demarcation between Independent Farmers and farmers’ party candidates; for example, several Clann na Talmhan (a party of small farmers) TDs, when elected,

acted as, and called themselves, Independents (see Varley, 1996) for an account of the party's fragmented nature). This ambiguity has created some confusion in the literature, so all candidates using the label Independent Farmers (including representatives of farming associations) at some stage in their campaign are included.

Independent farmers were not a cohesive bunch, as they represented a diversity of interests within the agrarian community. For example, in addition to the aforementioned 'Independent Unionist and Farmers', there existed 'Protectionist Farmer' candidates in the 1920s who were nominated by unions of small farmers to campaign for tariffs to protect Irish farmers from cheaper foreign imports. Besides these Independents, larger farmers, who favoured free trade policies, were also represented by Independent Farmer candidates (as well as by Fine Gael and its precursor (Gallagher and Marsh, 2002: 62, 70)), especially in the 1920s, when they united to form the pro-government Farmers' Party.

Farmers, particularly those with small holdings, turned towards Independent candidates because of 'a deep sense of betrayal' (Varley, 1996: 591), sentiment directed at the treaty parties (particularly Fianna Fáil), who they blamed for not arresting the declining economic fortunes of the agricultural sector in post-independence Ireland. Following a pronounced shift in government policy in the late 1950s, with a focus on industrial expansion and foreign direct investment, the importance of agriculture to both the Irish economy and society steadily declined. This trend, combined with the rise to prominence of a powerful farmers' interest group (the Irish Farmers' Association), the support, and the need, for Independent Farmers waned. While they regularly gained between one-quarter and one-third of the Independent vote from the 1920s to the 1960s, since the latter period they have been virtually non-existent as electoral competitors, with one sole exception, who was also elected to the European Parliament.

## **7. Ideological Independents**

These Independents are labelled ‘ideological’ because they are very much policy-oriented candidates, whose main aim in running for office is to achieve, or at least to highlight, particular policy goals.

### *(a) Left-wing Independents*

Left-wing Independents are defined as those whose policy platforms adopt a classically left-wing position. This category includes former members of left-wing parties who are no longer classified as Apostate Independents; those who ran on behalf of a left-wing movement; those who ran on an ‘Independent Labour’ ticket (but not including those who had run for Labour at a preceding election); and those who ran on an openly socialist ticket. Although such candidates do not necessarily run under a ‘Left-wing Independent’ label, their ideological stance is a defining feature of their political life, and they usually identify with left-wing parties, either by working in co-operation with them, or by joining them at some stage in their political career. An archetypal example of this category of Independent is Tony Gregory, a TD who has represented a disadvantaged area in Dublin’s inner city since the 1970s. Initially a member of two far-left parties, Official Sinn Féin and the Irish Republican Socialist Party, he was later active in a community organisation, the North Centre City Community Action Project (Curtin and Varley, 1995: 397–399). Gregory’s left-wing orientation was clear from the outset,<sup>9</sup> and was most evident in the details of the ‘Gregory Deal’, an arrangement that he negotiated in 1982 with Charles Haughey (leader of Fianna Fáil) in return for his supporting the latter’s nomination as Taoiseach. The particulars of the eponymous ‘deal’ included the building of 440 public authority

houses, the setting up of an Inner City Development Authority, the nationalisation of a large paper mill, and the provision of back-to-work schemes for the unemployed (Brennan, 1982a, 1982b; Curtin and Varley, 1995: 397–399; Joyce and Murtagh, 1983: 60–63).

In the early decades of the state, most Left-wing Independents were Labour party members who disagreed with the party's non-confrontational conservative approach in the Dáil arena, or campaigners for interest groups, such as the Town Tenants' Associations. Consequently, the presence of Left-wing Independents appears correlated to the level of harmony within the Labour party, the latter of which was continually open to divisions. For example, a row over coalition strategy resulted in a number of Labour dissidents in the 1970s. A change occurred in the 1980s with the emergence of a new type of Left-wing Independent – that of a socialist community candidate. These Independents were often nominated by local community action groups, and tended to focus their campaign on social issues, Gregory being an example (see Curtin and Varley, 1995: 397–399). There has been an increasing number of these candidates emerging, which may be due to a combined effect of the decline of the Workers' Party and the absorption of Democratic Left into the increasingly centrist Labour Party. This created a vacuum on the left of the political spectrum, which in a Downsian fashion Left-wing Independents have rushed to fill.

#### *(b) Independent Republicans*

Running under a self-adopted label, Independent Republicans' main ideological preoccupation is with partition of the island. There have been several different types of these candidates. In the early years of the state, they consisted of pro-Treaty and anti-Treaty republicans who did not wish to align with either of the Sinn Féin fragments, largely as a consequence of their

disillusionment at the party split. Up until the Arms Crisis of 1970, the vast majority of Independent Republican candidates (over 75 percent) ran in areas where nationalist sentiment still ran high, predominantly the border areas and the traditionally republican midlands region centred on the counties of Roscommon, Longford, and Westmeath. As the main focus of their campaigns was on republican issues, the primary source of support for these Independents was naturally from republican sympathisers, who were also usually ideologically left-wing.<sup>10</sup> While many of these Independent Republicans did procure significant vote returns, the only two elected were both Apostate Independents, which reflected the electorate's lack of major concern about the 'national question'.

The Arms Crisis resulted in the emergence of a new wave of Independent Republicans, as one of the sacked government ministers, Neil Blaney, converted his personal machine into a formal organisation known as 'Independent Fianna Fáil'. Six other Fianna Fáil members ran as Independents, but Blaney was the only one of these candidates to win a seat, which he held until his death in 1995. The H-Block protests of 1981 stirred up a wave of republican discontent that motivated another raft of Independent Republicans. The nine candidates run by the National H-Block Committee are not included as Independents because they ran on a common platform under a national organisation that was orchestrated by two parties, Sinn Féin and the Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP). However, other genuinely 'Independent' Republicans who campaigned on the issue of the hunger strikers, but were to all intents and purposes independent of a political party, are included. While these candidates won over 22,000 votes, this proved to be the high point of Independent republicanism, which abated following the end of the H-Block protests, and the decision by Sinn Féin and the IRSP to contest Dáil elections. From the mid-1980s on, apart from a few solitary figures, the sole Independent Republican candidates were

members of the Blaneyite organisation. This was merged into the Fianna Fáil fold in 2006, which combined with the development of the peace process in Northern Ireland, suggests the end of the Independent Republican.

*(c) National single-issue Independents*

The final sub-category of Ideological Independents is those standing on national single issues. As the title suggests, these candidates run their campaign on a national single issue, ranging from immigration rights, tax reform to women's rights. Because their concern is a national policy as opposed to a constituency issue, they are deemed ideological, as opposed to localistic (which applies to those running on a local single issue, i.e. Community Independents (see section 8 below)). Some, like the pro-life candidates in 1992, may have the backing of a national organisation (i.e. an interest group), while others may be what Gallagher called 'one-person crusades' (1985: 119). These Independents are a relatively recent phenomenon, with only a few such candidates running before the late 1970s.

Sometimes these candidates are organised in groups, hoping that a collective campaign will increase the awareness of the issue they are trying to highlight. Examples of this include the pro-life candidates (who were picked at selection conventions) and the 'Independent Health Alliance' in 2002. The latter was a group of eight Independent candidates mobilised on the issue of the health service, one of whom managed to win a seat. To date, this was the most successful election for national single-issue Independents, as the perceived failings in the health services resulted in a large number of candidates (sixteen) running to highlight this issue, winning almost 40,000 votes and two seats.

## 8. Community Independents

Community Independents' title (a label with which these Independents are christened either by the media or themselves) derives from their candidacy being entirely focussed on representing their local community, with little interest in the national political arena. Especially prevalent at local elections, this category includes candidates, who may or may not have been selected by an ad hoc electoral interest group, running a campaign centred on a single local issue – an example being Tom Gildea, the nominee of a localised group mobilised to keep a television deflector mast operational (Murphy, 2005: 371–372) – as well as residual candidates who received a minuscule vote, and about whom there is not enough information to classify the nature of their candidacy. The latter group tend to focus on some pressing local issues, which they do not address in an in-depth fashion; this is usually based on a realisation that their chances of being elected are extremely limited.

Community Independents highlight the disparities between their local area (often portrayed as a periphery) and the centre, emphasising the claim that government resources, be it jobs, infrastructure, or investment, are disproportionately distributed in favour of the latter. These candidates tend not to have any ideological platform, nor are they concerned with national policy issues; if elected to the Dáil, they rarely speak, vote, or attend parliamentary sessions.<sup>11</sup> A prime example of a Community Independent was Joseph Sheridan, who ran under the slogan 'Vote for Joe, the man you know' (*The Irish Times*, 7 October 2000), which neatly encapsulates the localistic and personalistic foci of such a candidates' campaign.

These candidates have been aptly described as 'friends and neighbours' Independents (Gallagher, 1985: 119), as they rely almost wholly on the strength of their local profile to attract

votes; one such Independent, Alfie Byrne, was known as the ‘shaking hands of Dublin’ (see *Dáil Debates* 379: 272, 16 March 1988). It is important to state that almost every candidate who contests an election in Ireland, be it party or Independent, exhibits some of these attributes; what distinguishes this type of Independent candidate is that these are their sole, or at least most distinguishing, attributes.

As Figure 3 indicates, Community Independents have consistently been by far the most successful type of Independent candidate, winning on average 25,700 votes and 31 percent of the overall Independent vote at each election. This is probably because they are the very epitome of what it implies to be an Independent, appealing to the cultural features that support the persistence of Independents, chiefly localism, particularism, and personalism.

## **9. Apostate Independents**

Despite the presence of disciplined party organisations, there have always been individuals who have flitted between party and Independent status. This abandonment of previous loyalties explains their being categorised as apostates. A number of factors account for the presence of these Independents, including their resigning or being expelled from a party (these can be called ‘exiles’), failing to secure a nomination (this group are ‘reluctants’), or because they are tolerated by a party, owing to an acknowledged preference for the latter on the part of the Independent (they are ‘abstainers’).<sup>12</sup> These apostates may also be using an Independent status as a stepping-stone to joining another party (this group are ‘renegades’). For the purposes of this paper the category of Apostate Independent specifically includes those who had run as a party candidate at a preceding election; those who campaigned on a history of association with a party; and those who unsuccessfully sought a party nomination for the same election. One caveat is that this

definition only refers to those dissidents who are running as an Independent for the first time since leaving their respective party. For any elections after this, such candidates are classified according to the central plank of their campaign (i.e. whether Independent Republican, Community Independent, etc.), because their dependence on the party label should dissipate over time. Exceptions to this rule are when the candidate continues to campaign on the record of their prior party affiliations.<sup>13</sup>

One factor explaining the presence of Apostate Independents is the candidate selection system within parties; a centralised process can result in cases of disgruntled members who blame the party executive for their failure to acquire a nomination. Mair claims that the electoral system is partly responsible, because voters can cast a preference for such a dissident without having to desert their favoured party (1987: 67). While Table 4 indicates that the numbers of dissidents running has increased at elections since the 1990s, Table 5 shows that this is markedly so in Fianna Fáil, which has a more centralised selection process than the other parties, and is the only party yet to adopt the one-member one-vote system to pick its candidates (Weeks, 2007). It is difficult to determine from Table 5 whether the increasing success rate of Apostate Independents from the Fianna Fáil fold in recent years is because of a declining loyalty of Fianna Fáil voters or because such dissidents were a better calibre of candidate than previous generations. What is worth noting, however, is that almost two-thirds of Apostate Independents who won a seat had previously served as TDs, while almost all of the remaining third had been councillors. This would suggest that – in spite of the importance of personalism, localism and a candidate-centred voting system – without a proven track record at the polls, Apostate Independents have little chance, if any, of electoral success.

INSERT TABLE 5 HERE

## **10. Quasi-Parties**

The final category of Independents to consider is candidates standing under a quasi-party label. These were already identified as not necessarily ‘pure’ Independents, but are included within the framework of this research because their affiliate organisations do not fulfil the criteria to qualify as parties; in effect, they are also non-party candidates.

The organisations included within this category are all those listed in the appendix (unless otherwise stated) that did not meet the criteria to qualify for party status. Some of these quasi-parties were semi-permanent organisations (existing outside of election periods), while others were what have been called the personal vehicle parties of dominant individuals (Rochon, 1985). The latter type of movement was usually founded by the said personality, who was its sole elected (or nominated) representative, who moulded the organisation around his/her policy preferences, and whose interest in maintaining the movement determined the latter’s lifespan. The Monetary Reform Association (MRA) was a classic example of a personal vehicle party. It was established and dominated by Oliver J. Flanagan, the party’s sole TD (see Gallagher, 1999: 658–659). Although it held selection conventions to officially ratify his candidacy, and although branches of the organisation existed outside of his local constituency, there was never any doubt that he was the personification of the organisation, especially considering the huge vote he attracted (over 30 percent of the constituency vote in 1948). The movement’s termination came when Flanagan joined Fine Gael in 1953.

The MRA was the only one of these quasi-parties to secure parliamentary representation, which is not surprising, because if any of them were capable of winning a seat, they would most

likely have qualified as full parties. One common characteristic these groups all share is that they tend to be fleeting organisations that barely survive one election; of the approximately 17 quasi-parties, only five contested more than one general election, and none contested more than three.

## **11. Conclusion**

This paper has classified the approximately 1,100 Independent candidates who contested general elections between 1922 and 2007 into workable typologies. It has been found that Independents are a very heterogeneous category, ranging from representatives of the Protestant community to defenders of pro-life interests, from socialist Independents to right-wing business candidates. The ideological nature of Independents has proven very flexible, having gone from generally being pro-establishment in the early years of the state to an anti-establishment position since the 1970s. One trend that has been persistent, however, is that Independents mobilise on issues that parties are perceived to be unable to adequately deal with, whether it is the representation of the Protestant community in the 1920s, or the provision of adequate health facilities in the early twenty-first century. This seems to indicate some level of Downsian rationale behind the motivations of Independent candidates – in contrast to their image in other systems, where Independents' minimal chances of electoral success results in those choosing the non-party route being portrayed as irrational, expressive actors (for example, the subtitle of Collet's study of Independents in the US (1999) is *Can they be serious?* and Sifry's (2003) is *Spoiling for a Fight*).

It was found that there are six general types of Independent families: Vestigial Independents, Corporatist Independents, Ideological Independents, Community Independents, Apostate Independents, and quasi-parties. While not all of these are 'pure' Independents in the

classical sense (if such a type of politician ever existed), they correspond to the three other common types of non-party candidates: gene pool Independents, interest group representatives, and quasi- or localised parties. Within these six families exist ten categories of Independents: Independent Unionists, Independent Nationalists, Independent Farmers, Independent Business candidates, Left-wing Independents, Independent Republicans, Single-issue Independents, Community Independents, Apostate Independents, and quasi-parties. These categories have not experienced consistent levels of success since 1922, but have tended to ebb and flow in line with the fortunes of the parties and the salience of the issues they represent. Just as the parties of today are different to those present in the 1920s, so too have Independents changed. The latter are a reactionary category who emerge when a particular issue or crisis arises, be it the closure of a local hospital or the failure of a local politician to secure a party candidacy. While their existence can be dependent on the ability of parties to deal with the respective issue, one should not underestimate the importance of personal factors for Independents. They cannot compete with parties in terms of both resources and organisation, and the disappearance of some Independents from political life may simply reflect the difficulty of maintaining a lone crusade in a party democracy.

Only five categories of Independents still contest elections, with Left-wing Independents and Community Independents the more prevalent. It is noticeable that these five all have a far more localised orientation than the other Independent categories. The Independent families that have disappeared were generally more nationally policy-driven than the current crop. One of the probable reasons for this is that in the early years of the state it was sometimes suggested that Independents could have a national role to fulfil by assisting parties in the running of the country. In addition, politics was not as localised during this time, as was evident by the number

of TDs who resided outside of their constituency, as compared to recent generations of politicians (Garvin 1972: 361).

This categorisation makes an important contribution to future studies because Independents have sometimes been accused of being unclassifiable, and consequently tend to be excluded from analysis of political behaviour, or else consigned to a footnote. When Independents receive almost 10 percent of first preference votes (as occurred in 2002) or participate in the government formation process (as occurred in both 1997 and 2007), their omission from analysis is not an altogether desirable outcome. Although to some extent of a preliminary descriptive nature, this paper has provided the framework for the inclusion of Independents in any future political studies in either the Irish context or beyond.

Finally, the separate analyses of the Independent families suggest that there is a large number of reasons why individuals choose to vote for Independents, each varying according to the nature of the candidate. Because the types of these candidates have changed over the decades, the nature of the motivations to vote for Independents has also changed, with the consequence that the Independent vote can be quite contextual, and depends on the policy platforms of the respective Independent candidates. Further studies could take this a step further and examine if there are any general reasons beyond these candidate-specific factors that explain why people vote for Independents. Both Laver (2005) and Marsh *et al* (2008) have tentatively touched on this in the context of wider studies of Irish electoral behaviour. Their respective findings that ‘voters are strongly appealed to by individual candidates’ (Laver, 2005: 191) and that ‘for many voters the candidate, rather than the party, is the key to their decision on election day and that constituency service is a very important factor in that candidate decision’ (Marsh *et*

al, 2008: 159) provide useful starting points to explain Independents' electoral impact; one does not have to party to succeed in Irish politics.

## Appendix 1

This section details those groups failing to meet the criteria to qualify as parties prior to the 1963 Electoral Act (see section 4), and whose candidates are included as Independents. Unless otherwise stated, they are included in the quasi-party category. The elections contested by these groups are parenthesised.

(1) The following organisations are simply ad hoc electoral machines of interest groups, and cannot be defined as parties.

Ratepayers' Association (1922–'23, 1957);

Town Tenants' Association (1923–September 1927);

City Workers' Housing Association (1923) (it also ran only one candidate);

Workers' Farming Association (1923) (it also ran only one candidate);<sup>14</sup>

Unpurchased Tenants' Association (1923) (it also ran only one candidate);<sup>16</sup>

Evicted Tenants' Association (1923) (it also ran only one candidate);<sup>16</sup>

Blind Men's Party (June 1927);

Irish Women's Citizens' Association (June 1927) (it also ran only one candidate);

Cine Gael (1954) (it also ran only one candidate);

Irish Housewives' Association (1957);

(2) The following groups were little more than the personalised machine of an individual who was the group's sole candidate:

Irish Workers' League (1951–'54, 1961);<sup>15</sup>

National Action (1954);

(3) Although these groups ran several candidates, they cannot be included as parties since the contemporary newspapers described them as Independent Business or ‘Commercial’ candidates (see, for example, *The Irish Times* 18 June 1922 and other dates), with most of these candidates, especially in Cork, conducting independent campaigns.

Business and Professional Group (1922);<sup>16</sup>

Cork Progressive Association (1923).<sup>18</sup>

(4) Although these groups may have run more than one candidate, they were little more than the personalised machines of a dominant individual that wound up on his/her departure from the association.

‘Irish Worker’ League (September 1927–’32);<sup>17</sup>

Monetary Reform (1943–’48);

Christian Democratic Party (1961) (it also ran only one candidate).

## Appendix 2

INSERT TABLE 6 HERE

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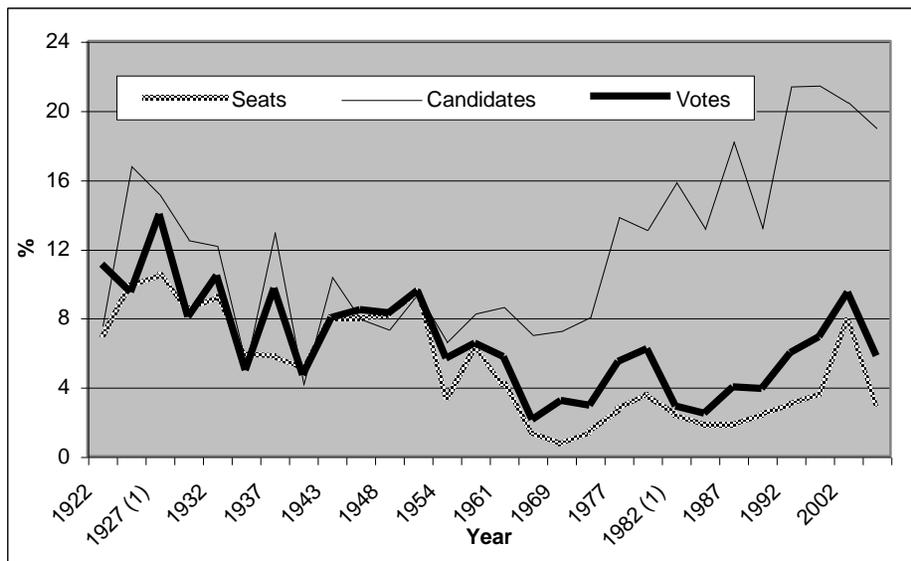
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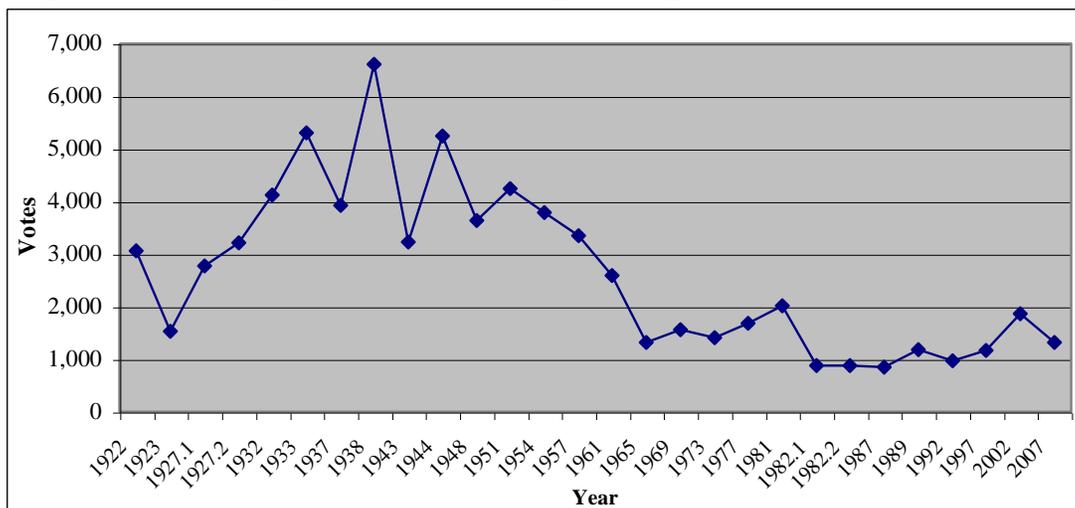
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**Figure 1. % 1<sup>st</sup> preference votes and seats won by Independents and % candidates running as Independents at general elections 1922–2007**

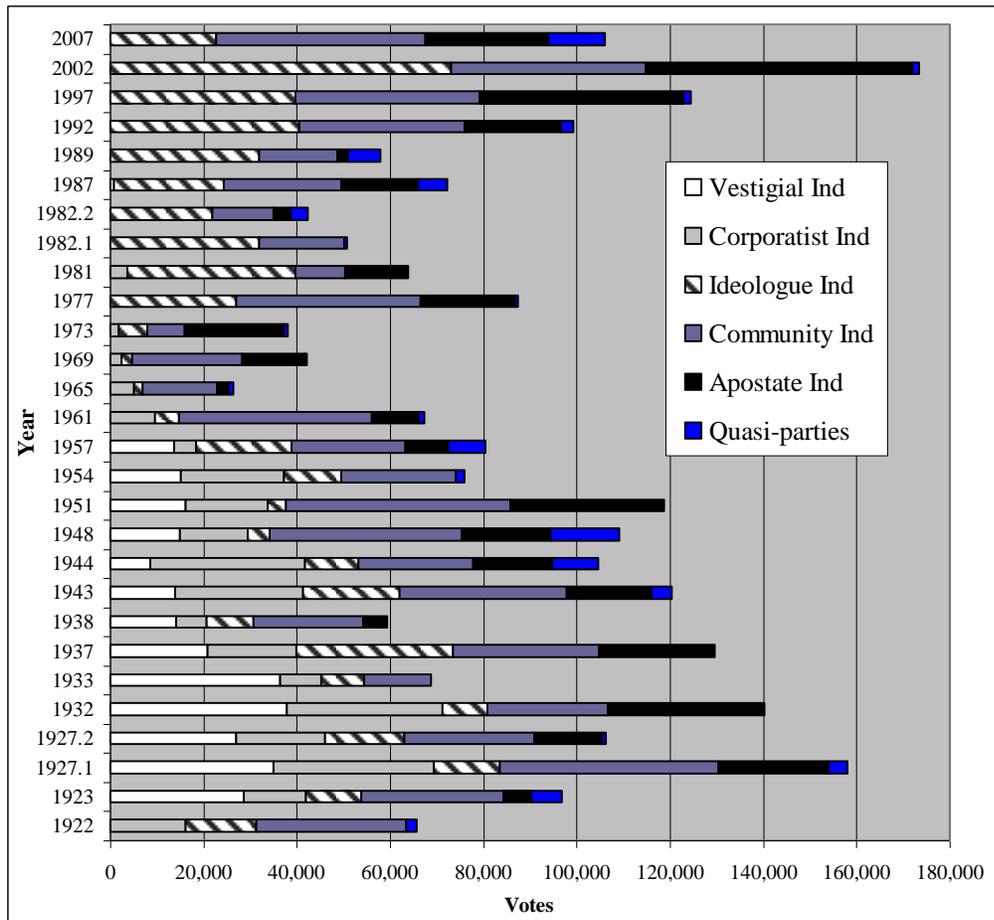


Source: The data for this table, and for all other tables and figures in this article, come from various issues of *Election results and transfer of votes for Dáil and bye-elections*. Dublin: Stationery Office; Brian M. Walker. 1993. *Parliamentary Election Results in Ireland 1918-1992*. Dublin: Royal Irish Academy; Michael Gallagher. 1994. *Irish Elections 1922-1944*. Dublin: PSAI.

**Figure 2. Mean 1<sup>st</sup> preference vote won per Independent candidate, 1922–2007**



**Figure 3. Support for Independent families, 1922-2007**



This figure details the aggregate vote for Independents per election, with the proportion received by each category grouped by shading.

**Table 1. Independents' performance at local, European Parliament and by-elections**

Year	County and city		Borough and UDC*		European Parliament		Town Council		By-elections		
	Seats	Votes	Seats	Votes	Seats	Votes	Seats	Votes	Decade	Seats	Votes
1974	10.1	11.8	23.3	24.9			17.4	18.6	1920s	0	2.2
1979	7.8	11.2	21.9	22.3	13.3	14.6	22.2	22.9	1930s	-	0
1984					6.7	10.1			1940s	0	1.7
1985	8.5	10.3	23.3	26.3			23.1	23.8	1950s	20.0	7.9
1989					13.3	11.9			1960s	0	1.6
1991	9.6	12							1970s	0	7.8
1994			22.7	25.2			22.2	22.8	1980s	0	2.5
1999	8.0	12.3			13.3	12.6			1990s	9.1	11.5
2004	9.7	12.3	19.7	21	15.4	14.6	13.4	21	2000s	50.0	20.6

\*There are no official returns for local elections prior to 1974.  
UDC denotes Urban District Council.

**Table 2. Governments needing the support of Independents, 1922–2007**

<b>Government (Taoisigh)</b>	<b>Years</b>
William T. Cosgrave	1927–30
William T. Cosgrave	1930–2
John A. Costello	1948–51
Éamon de Valera	1951–4
John A. Costello	1954–7
Seán Lemass	1961–5
Garret FitzGerald	1981–2
Charles J. Haughey	1982
Charles J. Haughey	1987–89
Bertie Ahern	1997–2002

Note: This table includes Taoisigh that needed the votes of Independent TDs to either win the vote of investiture in the Dáil, or to survive following their successful nomination.

Source: *The Irish Times*; John Coakley and Michael Gallagher (eds.). 2005. *Politics in the Republic of Ireland*. London: Routledge in association with PSAI Press.

**Table 3. Typology of Independents, 1922–2007**

<b><i>1. Vestigial Independents</i></b>
Independent Unionists
Independent Nationalists
<b><i>2. Corporatist Independents</i></b>
Independent Farmers
Independent Business
<b><i>3. Ideological Independents</i></b>
Left-wing Independents
Independent Republicans
(National) single-issue Independents
<b><i>4. Community Independents</i></b>
<b><i>5. Apostate Independents</i></b>
<b><i>6. Quasi-parties</i></b>

**Table 4. Candidates and seats by Independent category**

Year	Ind Nationalist	Ind Unionist	Ind Business	Ind Farmer	Left-wing Ind	Ind Republican	Single-issue Ind	Community Ind	Apostate Ind	Quasi-parties
1922	–	4-4*	6-1	–	–	1-1	–	9-4	–	1-0
1923	2-1	10-6*	10-2	3-0	5-1	1-1	1-0	24-3	3-1	5-0
1927.1	–	9-7	5-1	7-1	6-1	2-1	–	17-3	9-2	4-0
1927.2	–	7-7*	3-2	2-2	6-1	1-0	–	8-1	6-0	1-0
1932	2-1	7-5*	4-1	5-2	2-0	–	1-0	5-1	9-4	–
1933	1-1	7-5*	1-1	–	3-1	–	–	1-1	–	–
1937	–	3-2	–	6-1	3-2	7-0	1-0	7-3	9-0	–
1938	–	2-2	–	1-1	2-0	–	–	4-3	1-1	–
1943	–	3-1	1-0	8-4	7-1	4-0	–	14-2	4-2	1-1
1944	–	2-0	–	6-4	2-1	2-1	–	7-2	3-2	1-1
1948	–	3-1	–	4-2	–	1-1	–	14-4	6-3	2-1
1951	–	3-1	–	3-2	1-0	1-0	–	13-5	7-6	–
1954	–	3-1	–	6-1	3-0	2-2	–	10-2	–	2-0
1957	–	3-1	–	1-0	3-2	4-1	–	9-3	2-2	5-0
1961	–	–	–	2-1	1-0	1-0	–	19-2	4-3	1-0
1965	–	–	–	1-1	2-0	1-0	–	14-1	2-0	1-0
1969	–	–	–	1-0	3-0	–	–	16-1	6-0	1-0
1973	–	–	–	1-0	1-0	4-0	1-0	5-1	10-1	2-0
1977	–	–	–	–	4-2	3-1	6-0	33-1	6-2	1-0
1981	–	–	–	1-0	6-1	10-1	2-0	21-1	4-1	–
1982.1	–	–	–	–	8-3	6-1	4-0	33-0	–	1-0
1982.2	–	–	–	–	5-2	3-1	2-0	32-0	2-0	7-0
1987	–	2-0	–	–	6-1	1-1	16-0	45-0	6-1	11-0
1989	–	–	–	–	8-2	1-1	8-0	30-1	1-0	3-0
1992	–	1-0	–	–	9-2	1-1	25-0	49-1	13-1	5-0
1997	–	–	–	–	9-1	3-1	10-0	68-1	13-3	1-0
2002	–	–	–	–	6-2	3-1	37-2	30-5	16-3	2-0
2007	–	–	–	–	6-1	–	6-0	51-2	11-2	16-0

Note: the first figure in each cell denotes the numbers of candidates per category and the second figure denotes the numbers of seats won per category.

\* Four candidates were returned unopposed (without an election) to the Dublin University constituency in 1922, and three from 1923 to 1933 inclusive.

**Table 5. Performance of Apostate Independents by party background**

Decade	Ind. FF	Vote	Ind. FG	Vote	Ind. Lab	Vote	Others	Vote
1920s	5-1	5.4	4-0	7.0	4-1	6.9	5-1	7.1
1930s	5-0	5.0	4-0	7.9	4-2	7.1	6-3	11.1
1940s	4-2	12.5	6-3	12.9	1-0	3.7	3-3	12.7
1950s	0	-	0	-	1-0	6.3	8-6	15.4
1960s	3-0	7.6	4-2	9.8	2-1	8.1	3-0	7.0
1970s	8-1	9.0	2-0	5.9	6-2	8.3	0	-
1980s	7-0	4.7	3-0	4.2	3-2	11.3	0	-
1990s	14-3	7.4	6-1	6.4	2-0	5.3	4-0	2.6
2000s	14-5	8.4	6-0	2.6	2-0	6.4	5-0	2.8

Note: in the party background column, the first figure refers to the number of candidates and the second figure the number of seats won,  
Vote refers to mean (%) 1<sup>st</sup> preference constituency vote won by the respective categories of Apostate Independents.  
Others includes all those with a background in any other party.

**Table 6. Numbers and shares of votes and seats for Independents and numbers and proportion of candidates comprising Independents at general elections 1922–2007**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total Votes</b>	<b>% Total Votes</b>	<b>No. of Seats</b>	<b>% Total Seats</b>	<b>No. of Candidates</b>	<b>% Total Candidates</b>
<b>1922</b>	65,797	11.1	9	7.0	21	7.6
<b>1923</b>	96,877	9.4	15	9.8	63	16.8
<b>1927 (June)</b>	158,004	14.0	16	10.5	57	15.2
<b>1927 (Sept.)</b>	106,224	8.1	13	8.5	33	12.6
<b>1932</b>	140,298	10.5	14	9.2	34	12.2
<b>1933</b>	68,882	5.0	9	5.9	13	5.3
<b>1937</b>	129,704	9.7	8	5.8	33	13.0
<b>1938</b>	59,461	4.7	7	5.1	9	4.2
<b>1943</b>	120,403	8.0	11	8.0	37	10.4
<b>1944</b>	104,708	8.5	11	8.0	20	8.0
<b>1948</b>	109,089	8.3	12	8.2	30	7.4
<b>1951</b>	118,714	9.6	14	9.5	28	9.5
<b>1954</b>	75,896	5.7	5	3.4	20	6.6
<b>1957</b>	80,402	6.6	9	6.1	24	8.3
<b>1961</b>	67,372	5.8	6	4.2	26	8.7
<b>1965</b>	26,460	2.1	2	1.4	20	7.1
<b>1969</b>	42,230	3.2	1	0.7	27	7.3
<b>1973</b>	38,082	3.0	2	1.4	27	8.1
<b>1977</b>	87,527	5.5	4	2.7	52	13.9
<b>1981</b>	106,632	6.2	6	3.6	53	13.2
<b>1982 (Feb.)</b>	50,713	2.9	4	2.4	58	15.9
<b>1982 (Nov.)</b>	42,451	2.5	3	1.8	48	13.2
<b>1987</b>	72,217	4.0	3	1.8	85	18.2
<b>1989</b>	57,982	3.9	4	2.4	49	13.2
<b>1992</b>	99,243	6.0	5	3.0	103	21.4
<b>1997</b>	124,490	6.9	6	3.6	104	21.5
<b>2002</b>	176,304	9.5	13	7.8	95	20.5
<b>2007</b>	118,951	5.8	5	3.0	90	19.1

<sup>1</sup> Throughout this paper the term ‘Independent’ and its concomitant categories are capitalised when referring to Independent politicians. This is done to distinguish between the use of the word ‘independent’ as a general adjective and as a noun signifying a particular political status.

<sup>2</sup> For example, in the sole article devoted exclusively to Independents in Ireland, Chubb was not able to identify an exact number of Independent candidates for every election (Chubb 1957: 135)

<sup>3</sup> The label ‘Forlorn Independents’ has been used for such Independents in the UK (Nicolson 1946).

<sup>4</sup> Alfred Byrne, a former Independent Nationalist MP (1915–1918), also held a seat in the Dáil (as did three of his sons), but is included in the category of Community Independents (see section 8).

<sup>5</sup> Although Redmond did not move straight from the Independent ranks to Cumann na nGaedheal. He initially formed a new party, the National League (for which Coburn – a fellow Independent Nationalist – was also elected to the Dáil) in 1926, that later dissolved in 1930. A year later Redmond joined Cumann na nGaedheal (O’Day 2004).

<sup>6</sup> Some of these Independents were members of the Orange Order, including JJ Cole (TD for Cavan, 1923–1932, 1937–1943), who was a County Grand Master (*The Irish Times*, 26 May 1959)

<sup>7</sup> Independents of this hue were not confined to the South, as some were also elected to the Stormont parliament in Belfast.

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<sup>8</sup> Some business candidates also called themselves ‘Independent Progressives’, and they are included within this family of Independents.

<sup>9</sup> Gregory himself said ‘I think it is fairly clear that my vote is the left-wing vote’ (*The Irish Times*, 19 February 1987).

<sup>10</sup> Most republican parties also pursued socialist policies.

<sup>11</sup> An example of such a candidate, Thomas Burke, spoke on just two occasions during his fourteen years in the Dáil (1937–1951). Source: search of online historical parliamentary debates @ [www.historical-debates.oireachtas.ie](http://www.historical-debates.oireachtas.ie) (10 April 2007)

<sup>12</sup> While some do not include these because they are not ‘pure’ Independents (see Costar and Curtin 2004), it has been shown above that ‘independent’ is an ambiguous qualitative term that could include both party and Independent candidates, so Apostate Independents are included in this study.

<sup>13</sup> This method is necessary, since it would otherwise be impossible to establish how long an Apostate Independent retains this label. The sole exception to the inclusion of those running on a record of prior party association within this category is Neil Blaney. Although he continued to campaign under an ‘Independent Fianna Fáil’ platform, Blaney had his own personal machine, and was clearly identifiable as an Independent Republican. The rationale behind this categorisation is that it was this machine and Blaney’s republican stance that was the main source of his support, rather than his previous affiliation to Fianna Fáil.

<sup>14</sup> Included in the Independent Farmer category.

<sup>15</sup> Included in the Left-wing Independent category.

<sup>16</sup> Included in the Independent Business category.