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5-24-16

UROP Final Report

An Assessment of the Demographics of Ireland and How They Effect Voting Patterns

Summary of Project

On February 26 of this year there will be a general election in Ireland. This project will discuss this election in the terms of voter demographics and their preferences in political candidates and social issues. Limerick be Heard is the organization that will be funding and facilitating this research project. Maura Adshead is the current director of Limerick be Heard and she will be helping with the project in terms of support and as an access point into the community of Limerick. Limerick be Heard has the mission of increasing voter turnout and increasing the knowledge of the Irish voting process. Higher voter turnout correlates with other positive socio economic indications. This larger project provided the foundation for this research project. The direct focus of this research project was how the social demographics of the voter effects their voting patterns as well as what political issues they care about.

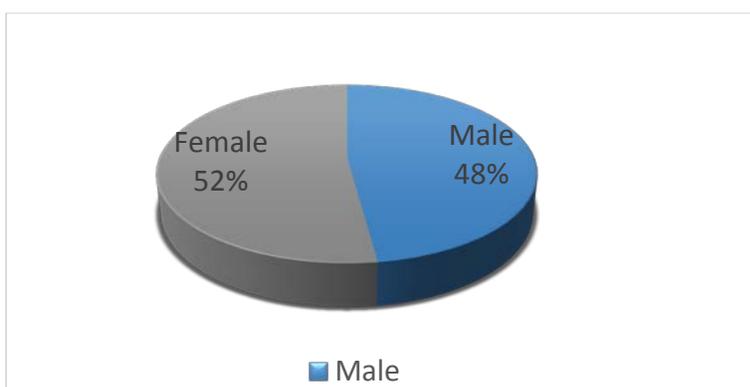
The main mode of information gathering was through a pre-election survey. This pre-election survey contained 24 questions. 19 of these questions detailed the voting patterns and political views of the interviewee while the remaining five questions detailed the demographics of the interviewee. For further information, the pre-election survey will be attached with this report. This pre-election survey was conducted around Ireland and in total survey answers were collection from 194 people from 25 areas of Ireland. The pre-election surveys were then

analyzed using excel to see if there were any trends in the data. These trends will be discussed later in the essay in the results section.

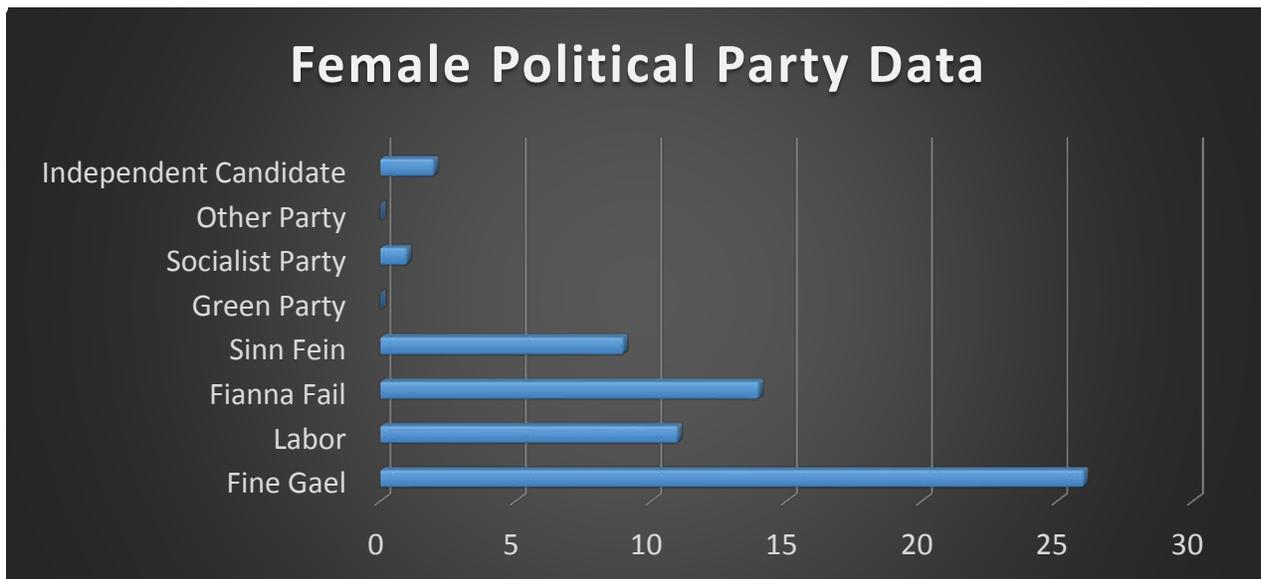
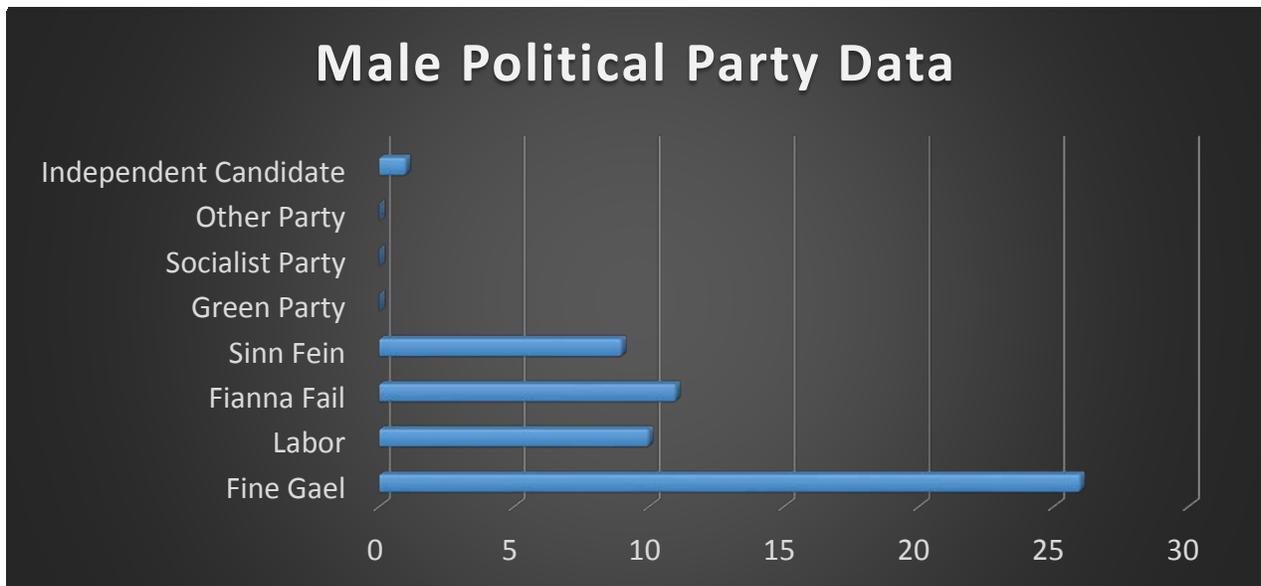
A post-election survey was also created for this research project. This survey contained similar questions about voting and political patterns as well as demographics. Originally the plan was to compare the pre and post-election data to see if there were any changes in the data. This however, was not possible to do. This is because there was not enough time to start and complete the post-election interviews as the semester come to a close. Limerick be Heard and others who remain in Ireland past the end of the semester will be conducting the post-election surveys this summer. But, as these surveys have not yet been completed no comparison between the two data sets can be provided.

Results

As stated before the goal of this project was to assess any trends between the demographics of Irish voters and their voting patterns. 194 people were interviewed from 25 different parts of Ireland. 52% of those surveyed were women and 48% were men as shown below.

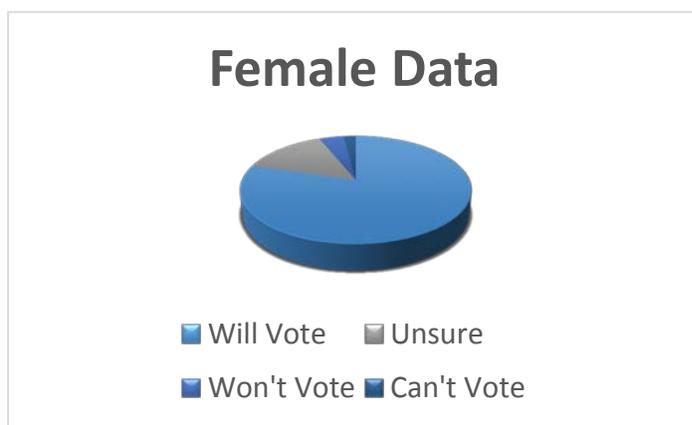
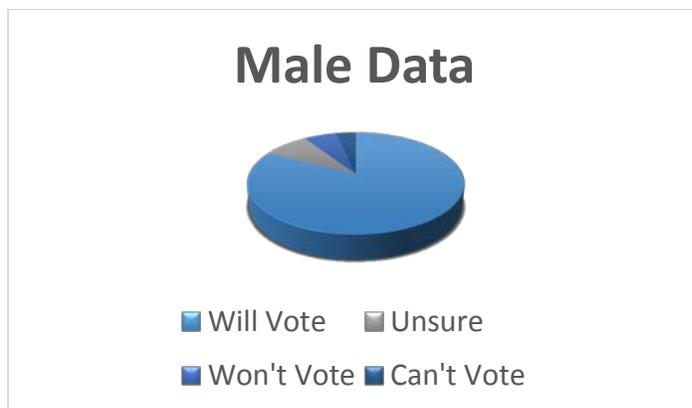


One important aspect of ones voting patterns is the political party that the voter belongs to. Following are the data about political party membership for both the men and women respectively.



The male and female graphs follow the same general trends. There is really only one major difference, the female data contains one entry in the socialist party column.

The final trend that this paper will discuss is the relationship between gender and ability to vote. Following are the male and female graphs respectively.



As shown above, there was not noticeable difference between the male and female ability to vote. Overall, the between the male and female data there were very few differences and those differences were relatively small.

Completion of the Set Objectives

The pre-election survey was a success because we were able to collect 194 responses of our goal of 200 responses. All of these responses were completed before the election. However, due to time constraints some were completed just one day before the election on the 25th of February 2016. After the data was collected in was inputted and processed. This took quite a bit of time due to the format of the survey. Some of the questions were open ended and were thus hard to transfer into numerical values for data processing.

The data collection team also had a bit of a communication problem. This was largely due to the fact that all of the students participating in the project were all study abroad students and as the semester came to an end we were all constantly travelling and exploring our surroundings in Europe.

The post-election survey was created but due to time constraints we were unable to conduct the interviews before the semester came to an end. Limerick be Heard and others who remain in Ireland past the end of the semester will be conducting the post-election surveys this summer. But, as these surveys have not yet been completed no comparison between the two data sets can be provided. This was disappointing because I was hoping to be able to compare to pre-election and the post-election survey data.

Overall, we completed quite a lot this past semester. I do wish that we could have completed more but due to the time constraint of a semester I think we did well.

Evaluation of UROP

I enjoyed this UROP project quite a bit. I enjoyed being able to explore a topic that I would not normally have as my areas of study are biology and marine biology. I also enjoyed the group of students from the University of Minnesota that participated in the research project. There are however, a few things that I would change. The first is that I wish we had had an opportunity to learn about the Irish general election and the political parties of Ireland before we arrived in Ireland. This would have given us more time to conduct our research project. Another thing that I would change is there was a lack of communication between the University of Minnesota and those working with us in Ireland. This was particularly evident when we were obtaining IRB ethics approval. At the beginning of the semester we were told that we only needed Irish ethics approval for our project which we had obtained. About a month into the

semester we were told that we needed to complete IRB ethics approval as well. This was hard for us because we were already conducting research and were hard pressed for time because the election was fast approaching. There was also a lack of communication between the mentors of both universities and the students apart of the UROP project. One example of this was that fact that I never received any confirmation that my UROP proposal was approved by UROP. I had to seek out whether or not it had been approved. I think that this process should be more streamlined. The other thing that I would like to note is that often I would send emails to Maura, our advisor in Ireland, and she would never respond. This made it hard for us to function as a team as we had no supervision or guidance a lot of the time. The final suggestion that I would like to make is that I wish this project had been longer. In order to collect the data we wished we could have we needed more time. Thus, I would suggest if a similar UROP would be approved again that they would be given a whole year instead of a semester to complete the project.

Overall, I really enjoyed this project and my time abroad and I would like to thank UROP for making my time in Ireland possible through their financial support.

For Further Reading

- For more on Irish Politics
 - <http://www.movetoireland.com/movepag/miscpoli.htm>
 - <http://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/Europe/Ireland-POLITICAL-PARTIES.html>
 - https://www.tcd.ie/Political_Science/staff/michael_gallagher/PolPartiesIreland85.pdf
 - <http://www.ireland-information.com/reference/congov.htm>
 - <https://sulis.ul.ie/access/content/group/558b031a-d584-4d64-95f5-935b6a1b5396/Irish%20Electoral%20System/adshead-tonge%20CHAPTER%206%20ELECTORAL%20BEHAVIOUR%20FINAL.pdf>

- https://sulis.ul.ie/access/content/group/558b031a-d584-4d64-95f5-935b6a1b5396/Irish%20Political%20Parties/9781403_989697_07_cha05.pdf