

NICE REFERENDUM 2

- Barometer Research -

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Prepared

Behaviour & Attitudes

DB/bs

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Section One - Introduction

This report presents the findings of a quantitative study carried out by Behaviour & Attitudes in the aftermath of the second Nice Referendum.

There was considerable media comment on the reasons for the swing in outcome between the first and second referendum results.

We felt it would be interesting to ask voters themselves whether, how and why they had voted.

A short questionnaire was included in our October Barometer survey. This is a syndicated survey covering a nationally representative sample of 1,200 adults aged 15+. The sample is quota controlled by all the normal demographic variables to ensure that it correctly reflects the known characteristics of the population of the Republic of Ireland.

Given the subject matter of this interview, the questions in this section were administered only to those respondents aged 18+: those who would have had an opportunity to vote in the referendum.

All interviewing on the project was carried out between xx and yy October 2002 by trained members of the Behaviour & Attitudes fieldforce working under supervision and within the guidelines of the Marketing Society of Ireland.

1.1 NOTE ON REPORT FORMAT

Because of the brevity of the questionnaire used on this occasion, the report is presented in summary format only. Where appropriate, charts and summary tables have been used to illustrate some of the key findings. The report is then completed by a full set of tabular results and the following technical appendices.

Appendix A – Analysis of Sample

Appendix B – Sampling Locations

Appendix C – The Questionnaire

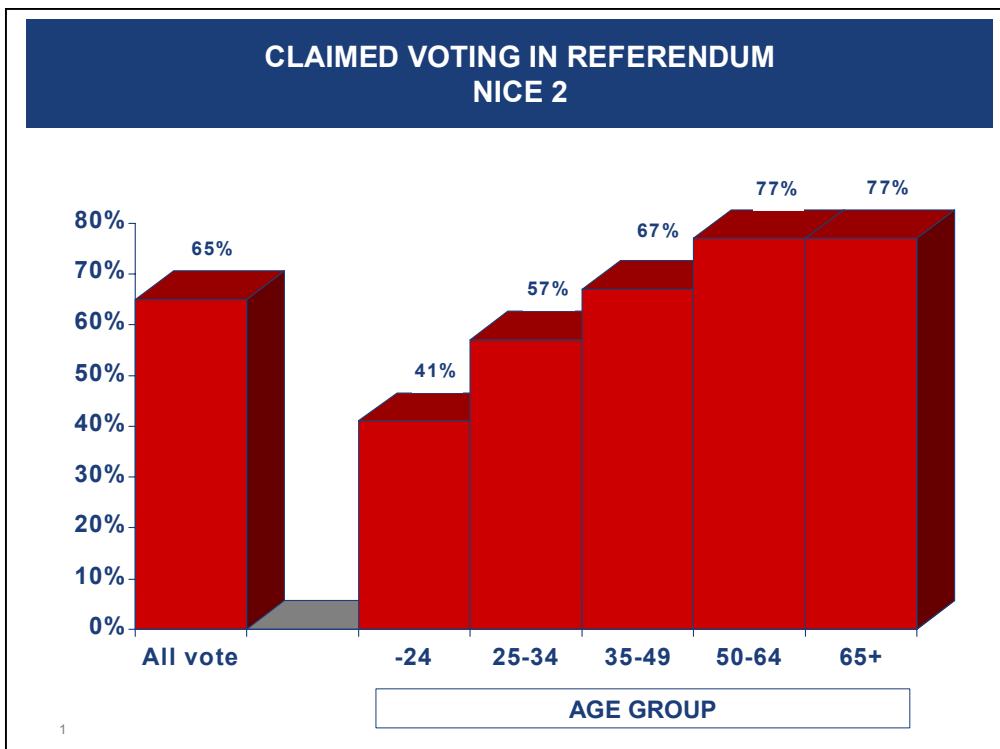
Section Two – Summary & Conclusions

2.1 People overstate their voting turnout

The decline in voter turnout in Irish Elections and Referenda has been well documented. It is equally well documented that respondents in surveys of this kind (carried out after the event) tended to over claim their incidence of voting. This tends to suggest that they probably feel they should have turned out (in other words they are conforming to social norms by claiming to have done so).

In overall terms, two out of three voters claimed to have voted in the second Nice Referendum. This obviously suggests a considerable overstatement (the reality was closer to 50%).

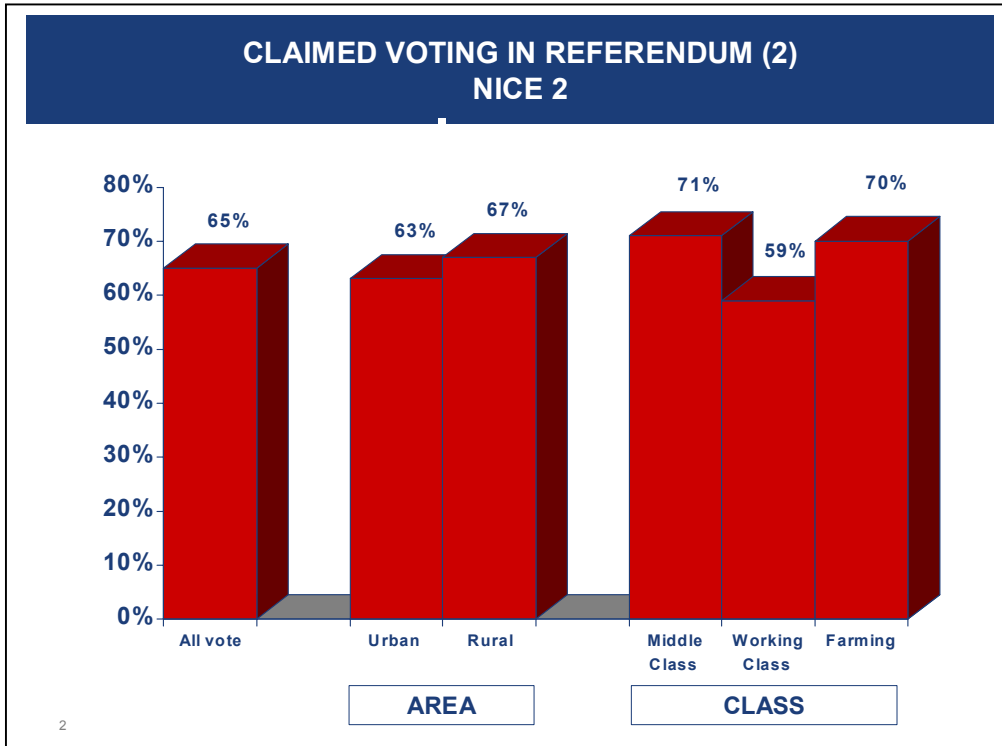
Ignoring this overstatement for the moment, we look in our first chart at the claimed turnout by age of voter.



It can be seen that there is a very considerable gap in the reported turnout pattern for younger and older voters. This ties in very closely with published and unpublished Poll data in the immediate run-up to the Referendum suggesting that this pattern is highly likely to be a valid one,

even if the absolute levels are overstated across the age cohorts. In other words it is likely that the relative position holds true.

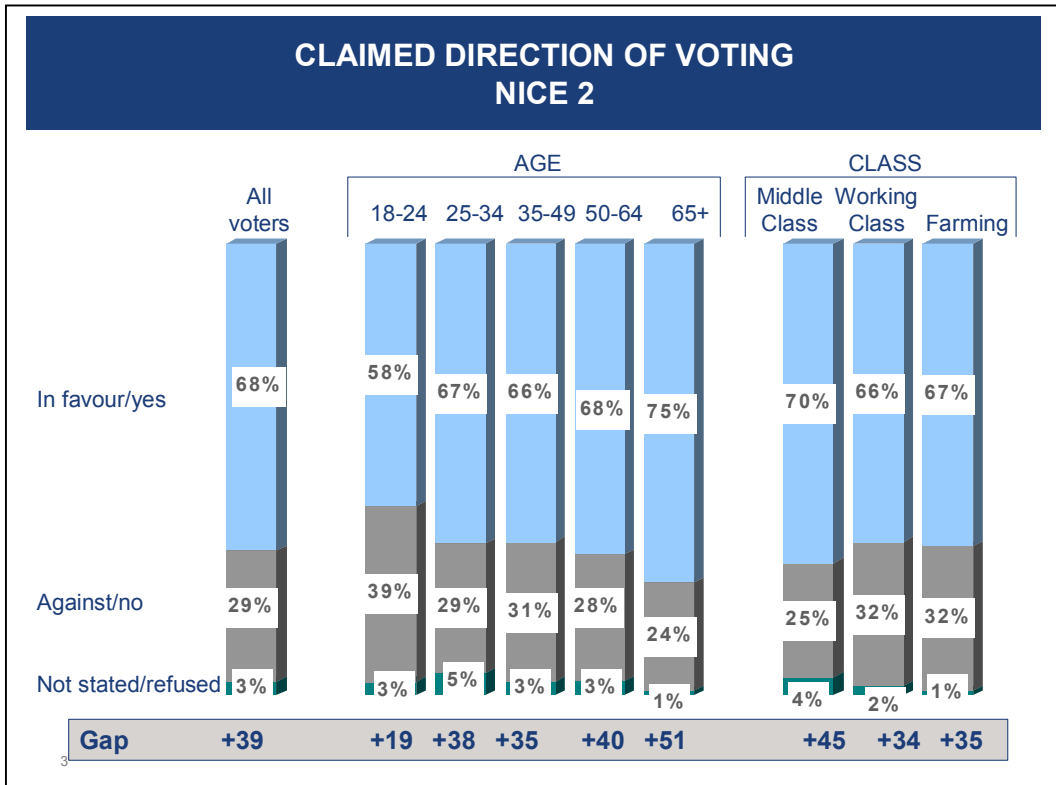
We can also analysis reported turnout by other characteristics such as area of residence and social class background.



The indicators here suggest that the turnout among working class voters was particularly low.

2.2 Claimed Direction of Voting – Further overstatement

Those people who claimed to have voted in the recent referendum were asked whether they had voted yes or no on this occasion. The following chart summarises replies with an analysis by age and social class background.



We know that the actual vote was approximately 60:40 in favour of the amendment on this occasion. It is clear from the chart that voters are very much inclined to overstate their tendency to have backed the winning side.

Comparing these data with pre-Referendum predictions however again suggests some consistency in the patterns of voting preferences between different categories of voters. The indicators here suggest that opposition in the referendum was most marked among younger voters and those from working class backgrounds.

2.3 A range of reasons for voting YES

Many commentators suggest that the reason the first referendum was defeated was that the Yes side had failed to get across the arguments in favour of their position. This seems to have been rectified in the most recent referendum as can be seen from the following list of reasons put forward for voting Yes among those who did so.

REASONS FOR VOTING YES (Base: All voting yes – 477)			
	%		%
Good for the country	46	Almost parties in favour	13
Ireland benefited/applicants should also	32	Reassured by guarantee of neutrality	11
Favour more countries jointly	29	Economy slowing down	6
Afraid Ireland would lose jobs/investment	23	Disliked no campaign	6
Found yes arguments more convincing	17	Disliked no “groups”	6
Felt I understood the yes arguments better this time	16	Other	11

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It can be seen that the prime reason for voting Yes was a sense that it was good for the country. The other major reasons related to people’s perceptions of the equity of allowing in new member state coupled with a concern that Ireland would lose out if the Referendum were defeated.

2.4 A range of reasons for voting No

The people who voted No in this referendum also feel that they had good reasons for so doing as is evident here:

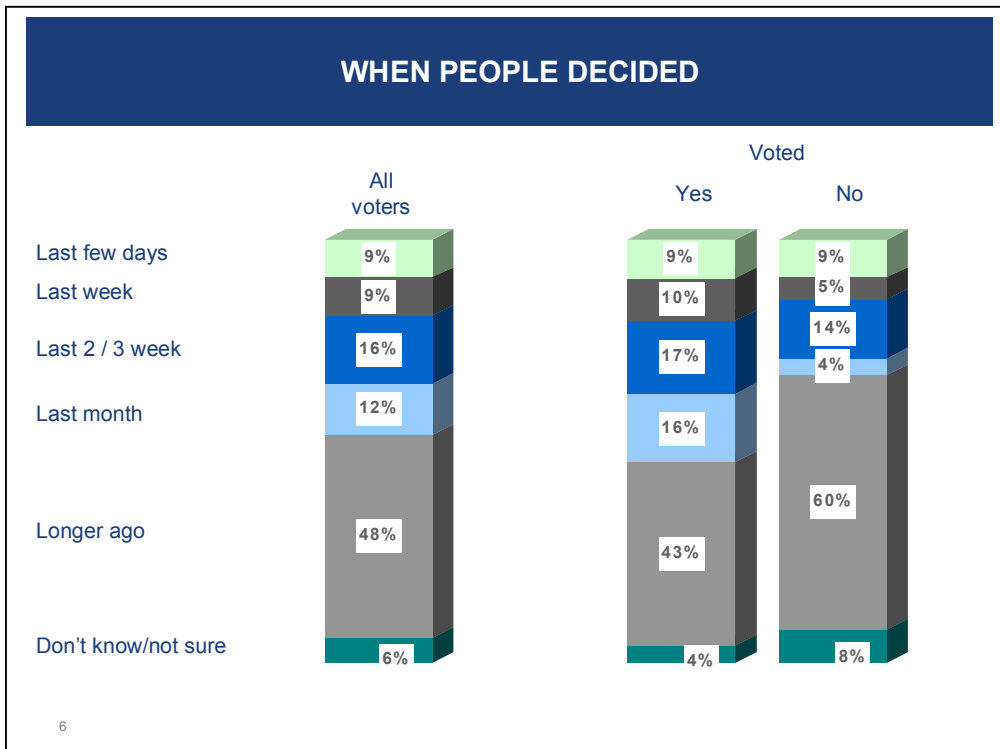
REASONS FOR VOTING NO (Base: All voting No – 206)			
	%		%
Think Ireland will lose influence and power	26	Europe becoming ISO bureaucratic	13
There will be an influx of immigrants	22	As a vote of protest against Government	11
Would undermine Irish neutrality	22	New countries will get in my way without Nice treaty	10
Don't like being asked to vote twice on same treaty	20	Suspicious that all large parties are in favour	9
We will lose jobs/investment to low cost countries	19	Ireland will lose commissioners/MEP's	8
Can't see any reason to voted in favour	18	Don't want to see Europe get bigger	7
Think Ireland will lose veto	15	As a reaction to tribunals	3
Found no arguments more convincing	13	Other	20

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The overall impression one has in looking at these data is that the No vote was more widely dispersed across a range of concepts: Ireland would lose influence and power, there would be an influx of immigrants, Irish neutrality would be undermined and people simply did not like being asked to vote for a second time on what seemed like an identical referendum.

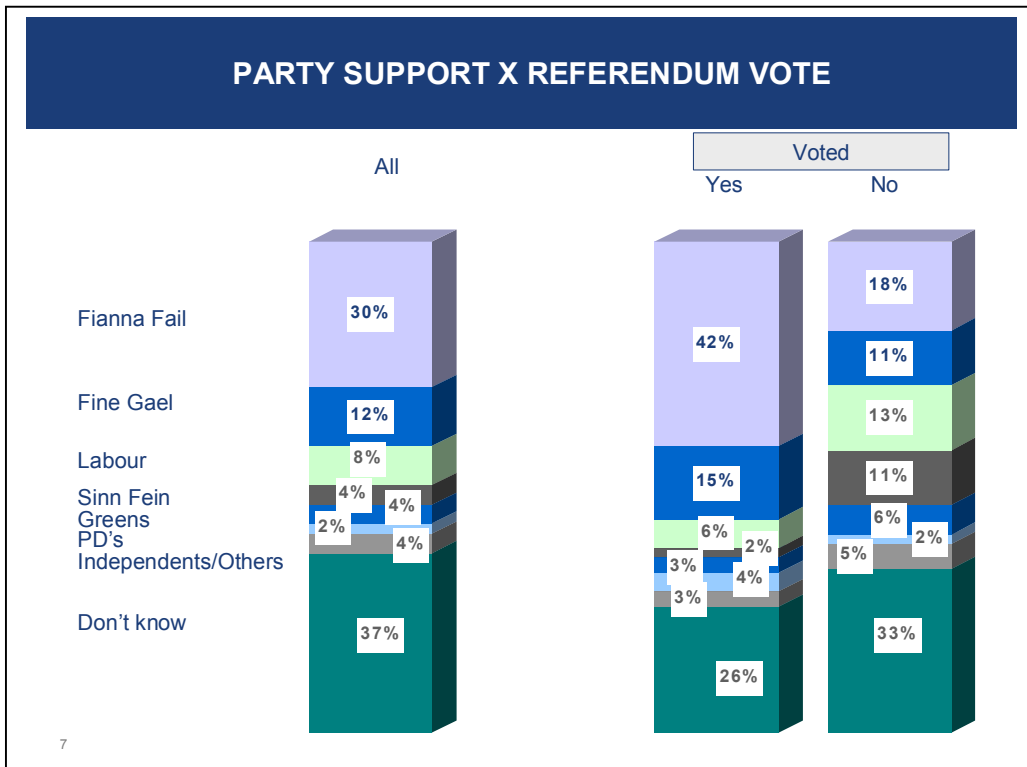
2.5 The Yes side gained momentum throughout the campaign

One issue which we were particularly interested to explore was when people made up their minds how they would vote. The following chart summarises the position distinguishing between people who claim to vote Yes and those who voted No in the final analysis.



It can be seen that a higher proportion of Yes voters made up their minds late in the day: suggesting that the Yes campaign had the better of the exchanges in this particular referendum.

Our final chart examines the current Party support of Yes and No voters.



One can clearly see the influence of Party allegiance on referendum voting patterns in this chart. However it is equally evident that the referendum issues cut across traditional Party lines in many cases. The Yes vote contained a higher than average share of Fianna Fail voters but Fianna Fail voters featured relatively prominently on the No side also. The same is true for all of the traditional Parties although the average tendency in each case tends to line up with the basic position of the main Parties. In other words if a Party supported the issue, its supporters were more likely to vote Yes and vice-versa.