



An Chartlann Náisiúnta
National Archives

Reference Code: 2021/46/308

Creator(s): Department of Foreign Affairs

Accession Conditions: Open

Copyright: National Archives, Ireland.
May only be reproduced with
the written permission of the
Director of the National
Archives.

424
50.17.62 C

Sinn Féin voting patterns in 1992 General Election

1. Sinn Féin contested 37 Constituencies (with forty-two candidates nominated) in the 1992 General Election as compared to twelve Constituencies contested in 1989.
2. As a consequence of this significantly higher level of electoral involvement, the overall national Sinn Féin first preference vote increased from 20,003 (1.2% of the total valid poll) in 1989 to 27,396 (1.6% of the poll) in 1992. This increase is directly due to the Party contesting three times the number of Constituencies as compared to 1989.
3. This marginal increase in vote total masks, however, a substantial weakening of the Sinn Féin vote compared to 1989. Its performance in Dublin constituencies was notably poor in spite of efforts to focus on economic/social issues and a record of local community activism by many of its candidates, for example Christy Burke in Dublin Central. Excepting Dublin West, the Party's 1992 vote fell in every constituency contested in 1989. The decline was especially significant in Louth (from 5.2% to 3.9%) and Meath (from 2% to 1.3%). The highest Sinn Féin percentage of the vote achieved was again in Cavan-Monaghan with 7.6% of first preferences, a drop of 1.5% compared to 1989. Overall, forty out of the forty-two Sinn Féin candidates lost their deposit.

Comparison with British General Election

4. The Sinn Féin vote in the April 1992 Westminster General Election declined from 80,313 (10.6%) in 1987 to 78,636 (9.8%). The Party argued at the time that this decline was in the main due to traditional Sinn Féin voters engaging in tactical support for the S. D. L. P. in Mid-Ulster and Fermanagh-South Tyrone. Overall the Sinn Féin vote 1992 declined (as compared to 1987) in nine of the fourteen seats contested. In addition, the Party lost its only seat (West Belfast) to the S. D. L. P.

5. The April General Election results broadly repeated the pattern that emerged in the 1989 local elections - Sinn Féin polled badly in rural areas, held its own in urban areas, and consolidated its position in Belfast. With a 3 per cent increased vote in Belfast in the 1989 local elections, Sinn Féin gained a seat to bring its total number of seats on the City's Council to 8. In the Oldpark local by-election in August 1991, Sinn Féin gained a seat at the expense of the Ulster Unionists and increased its share of the vote by 6 per cent. This gain made Sinn Féin the second largest party on the Belfast Council after the Ulster Unionists, who at present hold 13 seats. In the 1992 General Election, Sinn Féin marginally declined in all Belfast constituencies except West Belfast (despite losing the seat).

Patterns of Sinn Féin support in 1992 Irish General Election

6. The regional breakdown of the Sinn Féin vote was as follows:

Connaught-Ulster: 8,069 (2.5% as compared to 2.3% in 1989)

Dublin: 8,988 (1.9%: similar percentage to 1989)

Rest of Leinster: 5,000 (1.2% as compared to .8% in 1989)

Munster: 5,339 (1.0% as compared to 0.2% in 1989)

National Total: 27,396 (1.6% compared to 1.2%)

Constituency breakdown in Sinn Féin support in 1992 Irish General Election

7. The following are 1992 Sinn Féin totals for each Constituency. The 1989 totals, where applicable, are also provided with comparative percentage gain/loss. Due to changes in Constituencies, some 1989 Sinn Féin totals are not provided (as in Dublin West where Sinn Féin registered its only electoral increase: from 545 to 1032).

	<u>1992</u>	<u>1989</u>	1992 v 1989 +/- relative to total votes cast
Cavan-Monaghan	4,197 (7.6%)	4,849 (9.2%)	- 1.6%
Clare	459 (1.0%)		
Cork East	366 (.9%)		
Cork North Central	617 (1.4%)	766 (1.9%)	- .5%
Cork South Central	592 (1.0%)		
Cork South West	330 (1.0%)		
Donegal N. E.	819 (2.6%)	1,091 (3.9%)	- 1.3%
Donegal S. W.	986 (3.3%)		
Dublin Central	1,362 (3.7%)	*	
Dublin North	411 (.9%)		
Dublin North Central	644 (1.4%)		
Dublin N. E.	1,088 (2.7%)		
Dublin N. W.	1,202 (3.2%)	1,255 (4.2%)	- 1.0%

1992 v 1989
+/- 0%
relative to
total votes
cast

	<u>1992</u>	<u>1989</u>	
Dublin South	486 (.8%)	*	
Dublin South Central	676 (1.7%)	*	
Dublin South East	851 (2.1%)		
Dublin S. W.	846 (2.0%)	*	
Dublin West	1,032 (2.8%)	*	
Dun Laoghaire	801 (1.3%)	940 (1.7%)	- .4%
Galway East	306 (1.1%)		
Galway West	349 (.7%)		
Kerry North	802 (2.4%)		
Kerry South	331 (1.1%)		
Kildare	719 (1.4%)		
Laois-Offaly	665 (1.2%)		
Limerick East	398 (.8%)		
Limerick West	346 (1.1%)		
Longford-Roscommon	160 (.4%)		
Louth	1,705 (3.9%)	2,291 (5.2%)	- 1.3%
Meath	641 (1.3%)	1,002 (2.0%)	- .7%
Sligo-Leitrim	1,311 (3.1%)	1,482 (3.5%)	- .4%

1992 v 1989
+/- 0%
relative to
total votes
cast

	<u>1992</u>	<u>1989</u>	
Tipperary North	382 (1.2%)		
Tipperary South	205 (.5%)		
Waterford	511 (1.2%)		
Westmeath	323 (1.1%)	*	
Wexford	410 (.8%)		
Wicklow	478 (.9%)	*	

* = Constituency
not comparable to 1989

Assessment

8. Given the significant expansion of the 1992 Sinn Féin electoral effort, the result can only come as a severe disappointment to the Party. Only in Dublin West (with John McCann, a local activist) did it show any increase in vote. In Louth and Meath, the decline was especially marked, with local commentators ascribing this in some measure to I.R.A. killing of a local farmer, Tom Oliver, from Cooley Peninsula, last year.
9. The Sinn Féin candidates this year again stood on a platform of taking their Dail seats if elected. The Party - especially in Dublin with the emphasis on local community involvement - probably hoped to take advantage of the decline in the Workers Party but this strongly

failed to make any impact. More significantly, the dramatic increase in constituencies contested reflected the recent efforts of Party "moderates" to orientate strategy towards economic-social issues.

10. In general, Sinn Féin support has not increased since its initial impact in the early 1980s. In the major electoral contests in the North since the Anglo-Irish Agreement, Sinn Féin's share of the vote has fallen back, while that of the S. D. L. P. has increased.
11. Its partial success in some urban areas in the North may well relate more to the party's economic agenda than its political stance. Ironically, the decline of the Workers' Party vote in areas of economic deprivation has coincided with the rise of Sinn Féin's. This pattern in Northern Ireland has, however, significantly failed to develop - as the 1992 results indicate - in Dublin or other urban areas of the South.
12. The results in both the British and Irish General Elections this year can, in summary, only be regarded as disheartening for Sinn Féin and, in itself, unlikely to strengthen the "moderate wing" seeking to move the party towards constitutional political activism.

G. Corr

1 December, 1992

W9683