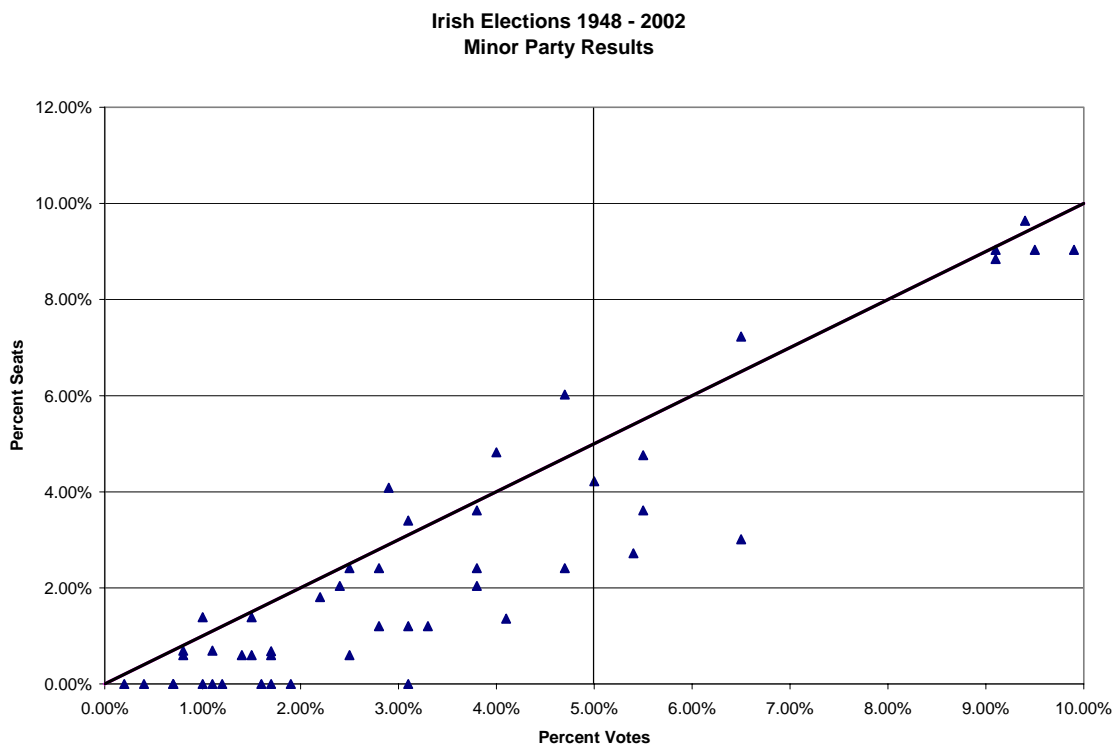


## Seats versus Votes for Smaller Parties in Ireland

Much has been made of the quota in Irish STV elections. For districts with magnitude 3, 4 and 5 the quotas are respectively 25%, 20% and 16.7% of the vote. Many make the assumption that such high quotas prevent smaller parties from winning seats, especially if the support for those parties is relatively homogeneous.

While this theory seems sound it does not stand up under closer examination. The following chart demonstrated the seats versus votes percentages for all parties with less than 10% of the national vote. Data is from all Irish elections between 1948 and 2002 (17 elections).



Over this period:

- Seats won relates closely to votes for parties with more than 9% of the vote. Seats won by parties with less than 7% of the vote do not always reflect the votes won. (Although it should be noted there is not a hard threshold at 4% or 5% as there is with PR List and MMP systems.)
- Only one party with more than 2% of the national vote has every failed to win a seat. The party was Sinn Féin who in 1961 failed to win a seat with 3.1% of the vote.

- In nine of the nineteen cases where a party won less than two percent of the vote, the party won at least one seat in the Dáil.