

# The Role of Minor Political Parties in the Republic of Ireland

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**Abstract:** Since the creation of the Irish Free State, minor political parties have appeared in the Irish political landscape along the three mainstream parties Fine Gael, Fianna Fail and Labour. They have had different life spans and influence but some of them managed to bring about some real change. The emergence of these parties occurred during three main periods and although some of them did lead to policy shifts from the major parties their participation in coalition governments eventually led to their decline. This article deals with most of these minor parties and tries to show how the third period is different from the previous ones and how minor parties, even if they are doomed to failure in the long term, have become an essential feature of Irish politics.

**Keywords:** Irish parties, minor parties, general elections, coalition governments, proportional representation