

On newspapers in Ireland

At present, there are no women running any of the major newspapers in the Republic of Ireland. We have to look at the past to find women who have served as editors-in-chief of the largest newspapers in the country.

A particularly noteworthy case was that of Ms. **Fiona Mchugh**, appointed editor-in-chief of the Irish edition of *The Sunday Times* at the beginning of the 21st century, holding the role for 5 years.

In 2002, Ms. **Geraldine Kennedy** became the editor of the *Irish Times*, the second largest daily newspaper in the country. She headed the newspaper until 2011.

Following them, a number of women have become editors-in-chief of some of Ireland's leading newspapers. It is the case of Ms. **Nóirín Hegarty** (appointed editor in 2005 of the now defunct *Sunday Tribune*), Ms. **Anne Harris** (editor-in-chief of the most circulated Sunday newspaper in Ireland, the *Sunday Independent*, from 2012 to 2014) or Ms. **Claire Grady** (editor-in-chief of Ireland's leading daily newspaper, the *Irish Independent*, although she only held the post for 1 year).

However, as stated above, there is currently a significant lack of women at the top of the country's leading newspapers.

The genders of the editors-in-chief among the 7 largest daily national newspapers by circulation in the Republic of Ireland¹ are shown in Table 1 below²:

TABLE 1

Newspaper	Circulation (July - December 2018) (ABC) ³	Political alignment	Publishing group	Gender editor-in-chief (<i>name</i>)
Irish Independent	83,900	Conservative, populist	Independent News & Media (Mediahuis)	Male (<i>Cormac Bourke</i>)
Irish Times	58,131	Liberal	Irish Times Trust	Male (<i>Paul O'Neill</i>)
The Sun⁴	52,121	Right-wing, conservative	News UK	Male (<i>Kieran McDaid</i>) ⁵
Irish Daily Star⁶	44,233	Left-wing, populist	Reach plc	Male (<i>John Mitchell</i>) ⁷

¹ The data comes from the monthly data published by Audit Bureau of Circulations ("ABC") relating to the period between July and December 2018. Further information on the survey can be found on the ABC website: <https://www.abc.org.uk/>. For this Report, such information has been used as collected by the media watching website "ilevel": <https://www.ilevel.ie/> [Date Consulted: 8 October 2020].

² Sunday newspapers have been excluded. However, no distinction has been made between the traditional "tabloid" and "broadsheet" or "quality" newspaper categories, and they are therefore included interchangeably.

³ This period has been chosen because it is the last semester in which the newspapers of the Independent News & Media group were audited —among them, the *Irish Independent*, Irish best-selling daily newspaper. In 2019, the group stopped reporting its circulation figures to ABC.

⁴ The Irish edition of *The Sun* is known as *The Irish Sun*.

⁵ Mr. McDaid is editor of *The Irish Sun*.

⁶ Sister paper of the British *Daily Star*.

⁷ Mr. Mitchell is deputy editor of *Irish Daily Star*. Former editor-in-chief Mr. Eoin Brannigan left the newspaper in April 2020, according to the press. The current editor-in-chief of *Irish Daily Star*, if any, is unknown.

Irish Daily Mail ⁸	30,424	Right-wing eurosceptic	dmg media	Male (<i>Conor O'Donnell</i>)
The Herald	29,710	Conservative	Independent News & Media (Mediahuis)	Male (<i>Alan Steenson</i>)
Daily Mirror ⁹	28,632	Labour	Reach plc	Male (<i>Chris Sherrard</i>) ¹⁰

In the light of the data contained in Table 1, some facts can be inferred:

- 1) There are no women running the main daily newspapers in Ireland.
- 2) Consequently, this lack of female presence remains unchanged regardless of the particular characteristics of the headline (of Irish or British origin, broadsheet or tabloid, of one political orientation or another).
- 3) The situation is not different in the case of the business and financial press: the leading newspaper in such sector, the *Business Post*, is also ran by a man, Mr. **Richard Oakley**.
- 4) Although some of the newspapers that currently have men as editors-in-chief, have been headed by women in the past; it is not ruled out that this situation may change in the near future — although this is a hypothesis that will have to be confirmed.

The influence of the lack of a female point of view in the Irish press should be put into context: according to the data at our disposal, 3 million adults in Ireland regularly read newspapers —which is equivalent to 4 out of 5 adults in that country¹¹. In other words: 80% of Irish adults regularly consume information that has been, at least indirectly, predetermined by men. By contrast, figures show that there are significantly more women than men in Ireland.¹²

⁸ Sister paper of the British *Daily Mail*.

⁹ The Irish edition of *Daily Mirror* is known as *Irish Mirror*.

¹⁰ Mr. Sherrard is audience and content director for Ireland of Reach plc. *Irish Mirror*'s former editor-in-chief, Mr. John Kierans, left the newspaper in July 2020 after the restructuring of the parent group. The current editor-in-chief of *Irish Mirror*, if any, is unknown.

¹¹ According to the “Joint National Readership Survey” (JNRS) 2014/2015. For this Report, such information has been used as collected by NewsBrands Ireland, a representative body for Irish national newspapers. Further information on the survey can be found on the JNRS website: <https://newsbrandsireland.ie/were-a-nation-of-readers/#0> [Data consulted: 9 October 2020].

¹² According to the data from the “Central Statistics Office” (CSO) published for International Women’s Day on 8th March 2018: <https://www.cso.ie/en/csolatestnews/featuredarticles/internationalwomensday2018/> [Data Consulted: 9 October 2020].