

Gavan Reilly leads #murraytweetindex as Top 100 journalists boost followers to 3.3m

- Female journalists account for less than 30% of Top 100
- Covid 19 crisis sees RTE Health Correspondent Fergal Bowers quadruple followers
- Category winners include Tony Connelly, Evanne Ní Chuilinn and Matt Cooper
- Debate over editorial guidelines for journalists' tweets

Virgin Media political correspondent Gavan Reilly has taken the number 1 spot in the latest *#murraytweetindex*, which ranks the most influential Irish journalists on Twitter for 2019. RTE's Director of News Jon Williams came second, with last year's joint winner Today FM presenter Matt Cooper in third place. The wide reach of Irish journalists on Twitter was demonstrated again, with the Top 100 in the index having over 3.3m followers, an increase of 6% on 2018.

Gavan Reilly was also top political journalist for the sixth year in a row, whilst Matt Cooper topped the broadcast category for a fourth year running. Other major category winners included RTE's Evanne Ní Chuilinn for sport, The Currency's Tom Lyons for business, and Irish Times writer David McWilliams as top columnist.

Whilst high-profile female journalists like the Irish Times' Roisin Ingle and Irish Independent's Collette Browne rank highly in the index, women accounted for less than a third (28%) of the Top 100. In the six years the index has been compiled female representation has hovered around this level, reaching a peak of 36% in 2018, before dropping back in 2019.

During the current Covid 19 pandemic Twitter's role as a source of breaking news has been more prominent than ever. RTE's Fergal Bowers – top of the health category – has seen his follower count more than quadruple from 21,000 when the index data was compiled in December 2019, to over 88,000 today: a clear sign of Twitter users hungry for authoritative news turning to a reliable source.

In its 6th year of publication, the *#murraytweetindex*, compiled by communications consultancy Murray (@MurrayIRL), ranked over 700 journalists across six parameters*, measuring popularity, quality of engagement and level of activity. A composite index was then created to rank overall positions; the top 20 journalists in the overall rankings were:

TOP 20 MOST INFLUENTIAL JOURNALISTS ON TWITTER

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. @gavreilly Gavan Reilly | 11. @roisingle Róisín Ingle |
| 2. @Williamsjon Jon Williams | 12. @EvanneNIC Evanne Ní Chuilinn |
| 3. @cooper_m Matt Cooper | 13. @RealKevinPalmer Kevin Palmer |
| 4. @davidmcw David McWilliams | 14. @stephenkinsella Stephen Kinsella |
| 5. @oconnellhugh Hugh O'Connell | 15. @sicarswell Simon Carswell |
| 6. @tconnellyrte Tony Connelly | 16. @NaomiOhReally Naomi O'Leary |
| 7. @patkennynt Pat Kenny | 17. @ellenmcoyne Ellen Coyne |
| 8. @newschambers Richard Chambers | 18. @McDonnellDan Daniel McDonnell |
| 9. @PatLeahyT Pat Leahy | 19. @Jenoconnell Jennifer O'Connell |
| 10. @sallyhayd Sally Hayden | 20. @DavQuinn David Quinn |

www.murraytweetindex.ie #murraytweetindex

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In other categories, the Irish Times' Conor Pope and Irish Independent's Adrian Weckler remained number one in Consumer & Personal Finance and Technology respectively. RTE's Tony Connelly's close following of the unfolding Brexit crisis helped keep him top of the news category, whilst in agriculture, RTE's new correspondent Fran McNulty topped the category after a baptism of fire starting the job just as the beef price protests heated up last summer.

Lifestyle category winners included Marie-Claire Digby for Food & Drink, Laura Kennedy for Fashion, and Dave Humphreys topping a Motoring category introduced for the first time this year.

The full list of category winners follows:

| CATEGORY | JOURNALIST |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| NEWS | Tony Connelly @tconnellyrte |
| BUSINESS | Tom Lyons @TomLyonsBiz |
| SPORT | Evanne Ni Chuilinn @EvanneNIC |
| POLITICS | Gavan Reilly @gavreilly |
| BROADCAST PRESENTER | Matt Cooper @cooper_m |
| CONSUMER/PERSONAL FINANCE | Conor Pope @conor_pope |
| AGRICULTURE/FARMING | Fran McNulty @franmcnulty |
| TECHNOLOGY | Adrian Weckler @adrianweckler |
| ENTERTAINMENT | Ken Sweeney @kensweeney |
| COLUMNIST | David McWilliams @davidmcw |
| HEALTH | Fergal Bowers @fergalbowers |
| FOOD & DRINK | Marie-Claire Digby @mcdigby |
| PROPERTY | Ronald Quinlan @RonaldQ2016 |
| FASHION | Brendan Courtney @brendancourtney |
| EDITORIAL | Jon Williams @Williamsjon |
| BEAUTY | Laura Kennedy @LoooraKennedy |
| MOTORING | Dave Humphreys @LordHumphreys |
| CRIME | Conor Gallagher @ConorGallaghe_r |

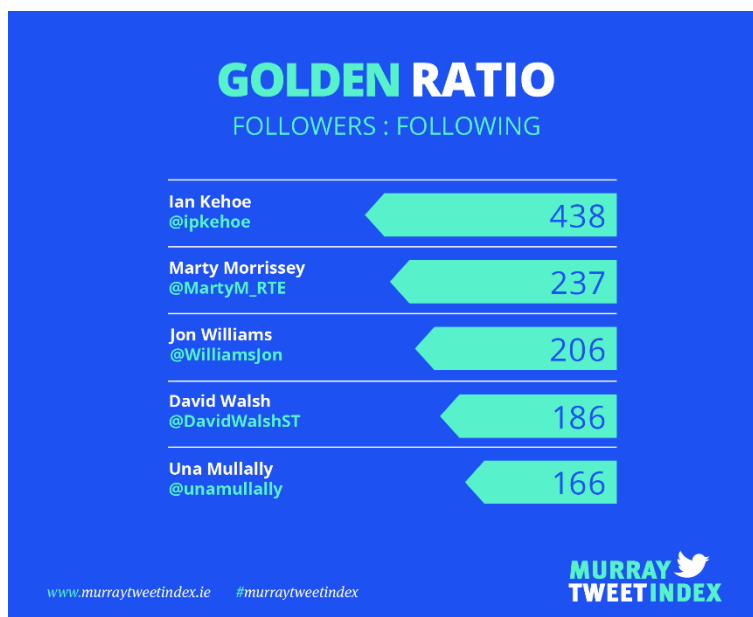
www.murraytweetindex.ie #murraytweetindex

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Analysing the results by outlet showed the Irish Times, at 24, with the most journalists in the top 100, followed by RTE with 17, and Independent News & Media with 14. Newstalk came next with 6, The Business Post with 5, Joe.ie/Maximum Media with 3, and Sunday Times/The Times, Virgin Media, the Irish Examiner, the Irish Daily Star, and The Currency all with 2.



This was the second year measuring the “golden ratio” of a handle’s followers to accounts it is following**. A high positive ratio gives an indication of a person who is viewed as desirable or interesting to follow, showing that many more people want to hear from that person than the individual wants to follow. Former Business Post Editor and founder of The Currency Ian Kehoe knocked RTE’s Marty Morrissey off the top spot into second place in this category. Having only tweeted for the first time in June 2018, at the time of measurement Kehoe had acquired over 6,000 followers but followed less than a hundred.



Twitter’s role in journalism continues to be the subject of debate, with major issues in the last 12-18 months including:

- In the UK, the BBC is reported to be considering introducing stricter guidelines on the use of Twitter by top correspondents¹. This follows an outcry when BBC political editor Laura Kuenssberg posted a tweet during the December 2019 UK General Election campaign that a Labour activist had punched a Conservative Minister’s aide, and later had to retract the false allegation.
- The importance of social media for businesses was also highlighted in January of this year when US online mattress company Casper warned potential investors that its value could be

impacted if paid social media influencers promoting the company did something that would damage its reputation. The company's prospectus also noted the risks posed by a negative review on social media². Casper rapid growth into a \$250m+ business has been helped by heavy use of social media influencers that have included Kylie Jenner.

- US regulators have introduced strict rules on social media use, with the Federal Trade Commission suing people for selling fake Twitter followers and for posting fake product reviews³. In Ireland legal sanctions have thus far been less aggressive: the Public Relations Institute of Ireland (PRII) has clear guidelines which state that it is "unethical and illegal to pay for...positive comment without that being clearly declared as such"⁴; the Advertising Standards Authority of Ireland (ASAI) guidance states that "where celebrities are sponsored by brands...it must be clear that their posts are marketing communications"⁵.
- The top Irish news hashtags in 2019 were: #Brexit, #ClimateStrike, #LE19, #StormLorenzo, and 'Budget2020'⁶.

Commenting on the #murraytweetindex, Doug Keatinge, Director at Murray, who led the research said:

"Gavan Reilly has made his social media presence a central part of his reporting and year on year built his profile to take the top spot in this year's index. A well thought out Twitter thread can provide a first draft of history with as much impact as a news package or column. Along with other top performers like Matt Cooper, Tony Connelly or Sinead O'Carroll, Reilly uses the platform to enlighten and entertain his followers.

For the first time we have looked at the proportion of female journalists in the Top 100, which at around 30% is similar to disparities at a senior level in the corporate sector. Like many other career paths, women remain under-represented, and a higher proportion of strong female journalist voices in the index would be welcome.

With growing pressure to break the news first, media outlets also need to consider the editorial standards they expect from their staff in their Tweets. As the Laura Kuenssberg row in the UK demonstrates, the pressure to lead the press pack can lead to unforced errors."

Pat Walsh, Managing Director of Murray said:

"During times of crisis consumers increasingly reach for trusted and specialist sources, reporting in real-time. In the case of Covid 19, health correspondents like RTE's Fergal Bowers - who saw a quadrupling of followers since the pandemic began - are seen as playing an important role in quickly sifting between fact and fiction in these challenging times.

"From a commercial perspective Covid 19 looks to be accelerating the structural shift to online news consumption. Now more than ever platforms like Twitter will play an important role in promoting content and guiding readers to the websites where they can find what they are looking for."

In addition to the overall results and news category winners, the research looked at how journalists performed in each of the parameters by which they were measured. David McWilliams retained the position of having the most followers on Twitter, adding over 18,000 followers since last year. Meanwhile sports journalist Ewan McKenna was the most prolific Tweeter with an average of 60 tweets or retweets per day, followed by Irish Daily Mail food and drink writer Tom Doorley with 56.

The top-ranking journalists for each parameter are as follows:



The top 100 #murraytweetindex performers are displayed on an interactive website designed by Murray Creative, a division within Murray focussed on supporting clients' digital and social media needs. www.murraytweetindex.ie

ENDS

¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2019/dec/21/bbc-could-restrict-journalists-twitter>

² <https://www.sec.gov/Archives/edgar/data/1598674/000104746920000166/a2240404zs-1.htm>

³ <https://www.ft.com/content/9660ac88-f435-11e9-a79c-bc9acae3b654>

⁴ <https://www.prii.ie/about/social-media-guidelines.html>

⁵ <https://www.asai.ie/wp-content/uploads/ASAI-Guidance-Note-on-Recognisability-in-advertising-V1-Nov-16.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.todayfm.com/news/brexit-top-news-hashtag-irish-twitter-2019-935794>

For further information please contact:

@dougkeatinge, +353-86-0374163; dkeatinge@murraygroup.ie

Methodology

*The study was based on the analysis of the Twitter handles of over 700 journalists carried out in December 2019. Using the analysis tool Twitonomy, we gathered the following data for each of the journalists:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-----|
| 1. Total Number of Followers | 30% |
| 2. Total Number of Retweets | 25% |
| 3. % Retweeted | 15% |
| 4. Total Number of Favourites | 15% |
| 5. % of Favourited | 5% |
| 6. Tweets per day | 10% |

The data was based on the previous 3,200 tweets that the user had made (or if the user had yet to make 3,200 tweets then all their tweets to date). To calculate the overall rankings we attached a weighting to the users' ranking in each of the individual parameters. The percentages shown above indicate the weighting each parameter was given in the overall score. The factors that influence the overall ranking are:

- A person's absolute popularity on Twitter (as measured by number of followers)
- The quality of engagement the user has with followers (as measured by the absolute number of retweets and favourites, and the percentage of these in the tweets analysed)
- The level of activity on Twitter (as measured by Tweets per day)

Journalists who had tweeted less than 10 times during 2019 were excluded from the analysis due to their lack of activity. Journalists were allocated to the category we viewed as their primary responsibility during the year under review. Journalists were attributed to the news organisation which they had worked with for the majority of the year even if they moved jobs during the year (e.g. Ellen Coyne/Joe.ie). Where a journalist was associated closely with more than one media outlet, we attributed them to the one we viewed as their prime association, for example Matt Cooper is allocated to Today FM rather than Virgin Media.

**The following to follower ratio – “Golden ratio” - was calculated by dividing the number of followers of a handle by the number of accounts it is following. Journalists following only one account were excluded from this analysis.

***The index has taken every journalists' Twitter followers at face value as recorded by Twitonomy. We have not come across a reliable method to ascertain with certainty if someone has acquired fake followers, and how many there might be, and therefore do not believe we can make that judgement call.

For comments or suggestions on the methodology, or to suggest a name that was not included and should have been, please email us at tweetindex@murraygroup.ie

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TOP 100

| | | | | | |
|----|----------------------|------------------|-----|---------------------|------------------|
| 1 | Gavan Reilly | @gavreilly | 51 | Nathan Murphy | @nathanmurf |
| 2 | Jon Williams | @WilliamsJon | 52 | Miguel Delaney | @MiguelDelaney |
| 3 | Matt Cooper | @cooper_m | 53 | Jim Carroll | @byjimcarroll |
| 4 | David McWilliams | @davidmcw | 54 | Shane Beatty | @ShaneBeattyNews |
| 5 | Hugh O'Connell | @oconnellhugh | 55 | Philip Bromwell | @philipbromwell |
| 6 | Tony Connelly | @tconnellyrte | 56 | Brian O'Donovan | @brianOD_News |
| 7 | Pat Kenny | @patkennynt | 57 | Martin Doyle | @MartinDoyleIT |
| 8 | Richard Chambers | @newschambers | 58 | Rosemary McCabe | @RosemaryMacCabe |
| 9 | Pat Leahy | @PatLeahyIT | 59 | Rodney Edwards | @rodneyedwards |
| 10 | Sally Hayden | @sallyhayd | 60 | Cian Tracey | @CianTracey1 |
| 11 | Róisín Ingle | @roisiningle | 61 | Ruth Dudley Edwards | @RuthDE |
| 12 | Evanne Ní Chuilinn | @EvanneNIC | 62 | Rosita Boland | @RositaBoland |
| 13 | Kevin Palmer | @RealKevinPalmer | 63 | Dave Humphreys | @LordHumphreys |
| 14 | Stephen Kinsella | @stephenkinsella | 64 | Sean Defoe | @SeanDefoe |
| 15 | Simon Carswell | @sicanswell | 65 | Gillian Nelis | @gnelis |
| 16 | Naomi O'Leary | @NaomiOhReally | 66 | Philip Nolan | @philipnolan1 |
| 17 | Ellen Coyne | @ellenmcoyne | 67 | Kitty Holland | @kittyhollandit |
| 18 | Daniel McDonnell | @McDonnellDan | 68 | Michael O'Regan | @Michael_O_Regan |
| 19 | Jennifer O'Connell | @jenoconnell | 69 | Gavin Sheridan | @gavinsblog |
| 20 | David Quinn | @DayQuinn | 70 | David Cochrane | @davidcochrane |
| 21 | Colette Brown | @colettebrowne | 71 | Mark Hennessy | @MarkHennessy |
| 22 | Ivan Yates | @IvanYatesNT | 72 | Michael Brennan | @obraonain |
| 23 | Kieran Cunningham | @KCSixtyseven | 73 | Malachy Clerkin | @malachyclerkin |
| 24 | Victoria Mary Clarke | @Victoriamary | 74 | Paul Cunningham | @RTENewsPaulC |
| 25 | Mark Tighe | @marktigheST | 75 | Michael Corcoran | @michaelc_rte |
| 26 | Una Mullally | @unamullally | 76 | Will Goodbody | @willgoodbody |
| 27 | Conor Gallagher | @ConorGallaghe_r | 77 | Shona Murray | @ShonaMurray_ |
| 28 | Adrian Weckler | @adrianweckler | 78 | Neil O'Riordan | @norioridan |
| 29 | Conor Pope | @conor_pope | 79 | Joe O'Shea | @josefoshea |
| 30 | John Gibbons | @think_or_swim | 80 | Nadine O'Regan | @NadineORegan |
| 31 | Amy O'Connor | @amyohconnor | 81 | Suzanne Lynch | @suzannelynch1 |
| 32 | Tom Lyons | @TomLyonsBiz | 82 | Suzanne Campbell | @campbellsuz |
| 33 | Charlie Weston | @CWeston_Indo | 83 | Michael O'Toole | @mickthehack |
| 34 | Kevin Doyle | @KevDoyle_Indo | 84 | Marty Morrissey | @MartyM_RTE |
| 35 | Des Cahill | @sportsdes | 85 | Jess Kelly | @jesskellynt |
| 36 | Fergal Bowers | @fergalbowers | 86 | Hugh Linehan | @hlinehan |
| 37 | Cathal Mac Coille | @CMacCoille | 87 | Ronan McGreevy | @RMcGreevy1301 |
| 38 | Dan O'Brien | @danobrien20 | 88 | Kevin Blake | @kevinblake2011 |
| 39 | Harry McGee | @harrymcgee | 89 | Damien O'Meara | @damien_omeara |
| 40 | Sinead Ryan | @sinead_ryan | 90 | Fiachra Ó Cionnaith | @Ocionnaith |
| 41 | Carl Kinsella | @TVsCarlKinsella | 91 | Tony Leen | @tonyleen |
| 42 | Fiach Kelly | @fiachkelly | 92 | Cathal Dennehy | @cathal_dennehy |
| 43 | Marie Claire Digby | @mcdigby | 93 | Pól Ó Conghaile | @poloconghaile |
| 44 | Rúaidhrí O'Connor | @RuaidhriOC | 94 | Barbara Scully | @barbarascully |
| 45 | John Fogarty | @JohnFogartyIrl | 95 | Fintan O'Toole | @fotoole |
| 46 | Ronan Murphy | @swearimnotpaul | 96 | Donald Clarke | @DonaldClarke63 |
| 47 | Dearbhail McDonald | @DearbhailDibs | 97 | Colm Parkinson | @Woolberto |
| 48 | Mary Regan | @MaryERegan | 98 | Mary Kenny | @MaryKenny4 |
| 49 | Fran McNulty | @franmcnulty | 99 | Frank McNally | @FrankmcnallyIT |
| 50 | Sinead O'Carroll | @SineadOCarroll | 100 | Susan Mitchell | @susmittchellSBP |