

## WHO'S WHO ON TEAM TRUMP?

+ CHINA'S NEW  
US POLICY

World News



There is no good argument for this sequel to exist. It's no Gladiator. Thumbs down

**Gladiator II**  
Donald Clarke  
Review



**WEB SUMMIT**  
PADDY COSGRAVE  
RETURNS, AND  
HE'S WATCHING  
HIS WORDS

**Ian Curran**  
Business This Week

# Support for Independents jumps but Fine Gael retains a clear lead

Poll suggests Independent candidates are set for significant gains

Cost of living the issue that will influence voters the most

PAT LEAHY  
Political Editor

Support for independent candidates has jumped in the first opinion poll of the general election campaign, but Fine Gael retains a clear lead over its party rivals.

With just two weeks to go before polling, Fine Gael is on 25 per cent support, the latest Irish Times/Ipsos B&A poll finds. This is well ahead of its rivals in Fianna Fáil and Sinn Féin, both on 19 per cent.

But it is the independents which show the biggest move, up by four points to 20 per cent. This includes support for the new Independent Ireland party, which is formally registered as a political party, but which many voters think of as under the broader independent umbrella.

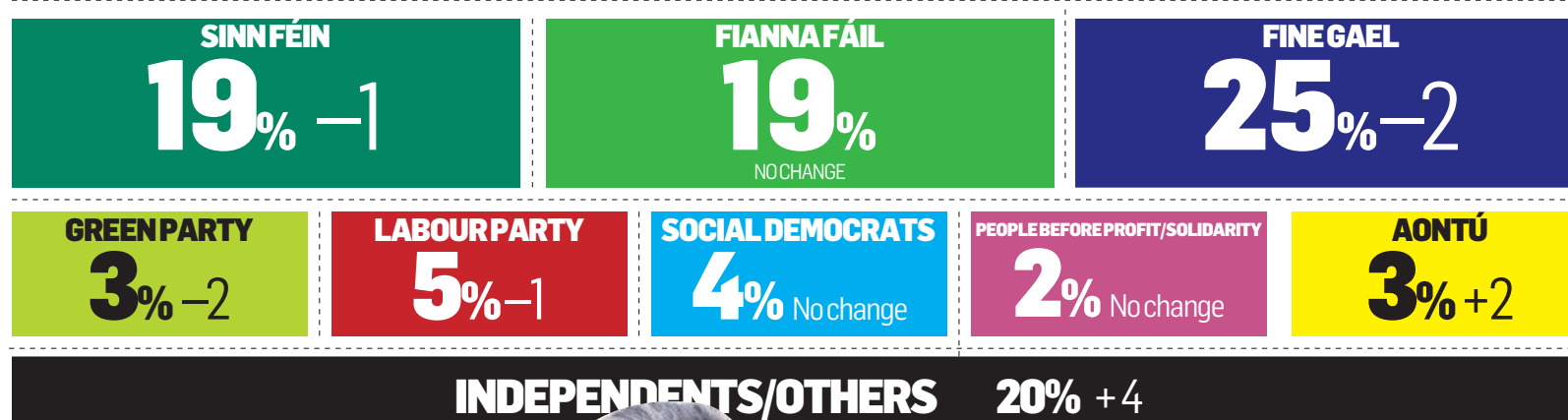
The state of the parties, when undecided voters and those unlikely to vote are excluded, is: Fine Gael 25 per cent (down two); Sinn Féin 19 per cent (down one); Fianna Fáil 19 per cent (no change).

Among the smaller parties, the Green Party is at 3 per cent (down two); Labour 5 per cent (down one); the Social Democrats 4 per cent (no change); People Before Profit Solidarity 2 per cent (no change); Aontú 3 per cent (up two). Independents are at 20 per cent (up four). Undecided voters – which are excluded from the above figures – drop by four points to 16 per cent.

On these figures, independent candidates are set for significant gains when votes are cast. Fine Gael, however, despite dropping by two points since the last poll in September, is on course to be the largest party in the next Dáil.

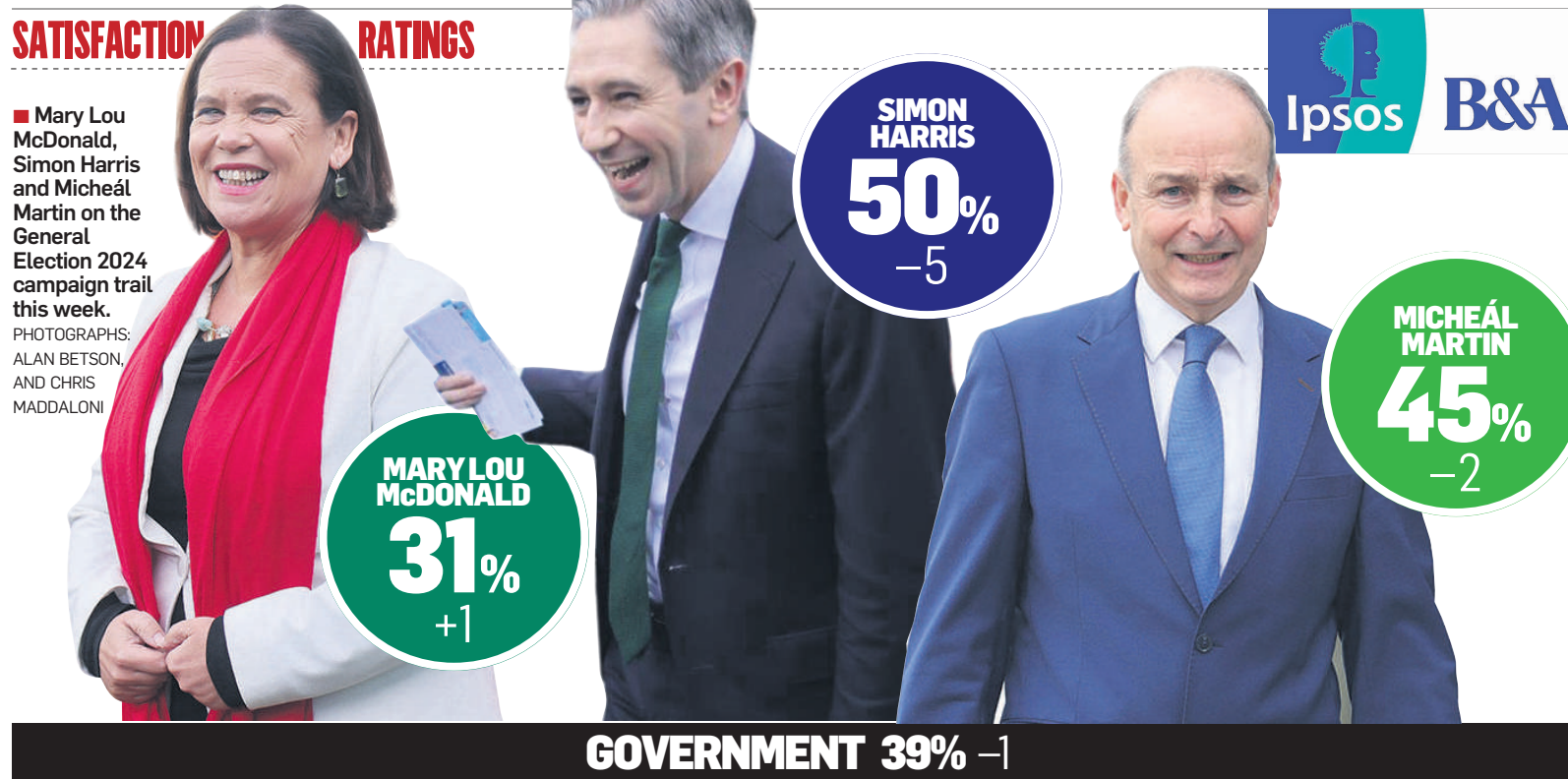
Fine Gael's Simon Harris re-

### IRISH TIMES POLL



### SATISFACTION RATINGS

Mary Lou McDonald, Simon Harris and Micheál Martin on the General Election 2024 campaign trail this week.  
PHOTOGRAPHS: ALAN BETSON, AND CHRIS MADDALONI



mains the most popular party leader, with a satisfaction rating of 50 per cent, a sharp drop of five points since the last poll. The Fianna Fáil leader Micheál Martin is on 45 per cent (down two) while Mary Lou McDonald of Sinn Féin improves marginally to 31 per cent. Roderic O'Gorman of the Green Party is up four to 21 per cent, while the Government as a whole drops marginally to 39 per cent.

There has been an increase in the proportion of voters saying that the country is generally going in the right direction, up

by five points to 42 per cent. Yet half of voters (50 per cent) say the country is generally going in the wrong direction, down by four points since last February.

Voters were also asked what was the issue that will have the most influence on their vote. The clear leader was the cost of living, nominated by 30 per cent of respondents.

Next on the list was health (18 per cent) and house prices (17 per cent), followed by immigration (9 per cent), the economy (6 per cent), the cost of rent (6 per cent), law and order (5

per cent), climate (4 per cent) and tax (3 per cent).

Asked what the next government should do if tax revenues decline, 60 per cent of respondents said it should reduce spending, 14 per cent said it should increase borrowing and 12 per cent said it should raise taxes.

The poll was conducted among a representative sample of adults aged 18 and upwards across 120 sampling points throughout all constituencies.

Unlike most other opinion polls, The Irish Times/Ipsos B&A series is conducted

through face-to-face sampling; personal in-home interviewing took place on November 12th and 13th. The total number of interviews conducted was 1,200. The accuracy is estimated at plus or minus 2.8 per cent.

Opinion poll analysis: page 2  
General Election 2024: pages 3-4  
Justine McCarthy and Stephen Collins: opinion, page 12  
Editorial comment: page 13

# Over 4,600 Irish teachers work abroad

Lack of teachers posing challenges for schools, especially in the Dublin area

CARL O'BRIEN

More than 4,600 Irish teachers are estimated to be working abroad at a time of acute staff shortages in schools, according to official estimates.

The analysis, the first official effort to quantify the volume of teachers who have emigrated, assumes that registered teachers without any evidence of taxable income or social welfare support in Ireland no longer reside in the State.

The volume of teachers abroad is likely to spark calls for more to be done to incentivise them to return home or help prevent young teaching graduates moving abroad in the first place. Education authorities, however, say teachers based abroad account for just 4 per cent of the 123,000-plus registered with the Teaching Council.

The Irish Times has established that a Teaching Council Register Analysis found that 4,672 registered teachers – 1,792 primary and 2,169 second-level – are not economically active and assumed to be residing abroad. About 60 per cent of these teachers were aged between 25-34.

The fact that those identified in the study continue to maintain their registration with the Teaching Council – at a cost of €65 a year – indicates they intend to teach in Ireland.

The research, using data obtained in September 2023,

was a joint project between the Central Statistics Office, the Department of Education and the Teaching Council.

Principals say teacher shortages are posing a considerable challenge for many schools, especially in the Greater Dublin Area where rents are higher and housing is in short supply.

At second level, some schools report that they have had to narrow subject choice or rely on more "out-of-field" teachers, while at primary level many say they are struggling to find substitutes.

A spokesman for the Department of Education confirmed the findings of the analysis and said there are now "more teachers than ever working in the Irish education system", with almost 79,000 employed.

He said there has "always been a desire among some young teachers to gain experience abroad before returning home" and further research will be carried out to establish when they return to teach in Irish schools.

However, the general secretary of the Teachers' Union of Ireland, Michael Gillespie, said there was an urgent need to recognise the service of Irish teachers returning from Dubai and Australia with "incremental credit", or pay increases in recognition of their service.

Emer McLsaght page 11

# London property firm nears deal for Buswells Hotel

JOE BRENNAN

A new UK real-estate firm co-founded by an Irish property veteran is close to buying Buswells, the storied hotel opposite Leinster House once owned by the Quinn family, for about €15 million, according to sources.

London-based Roundstone Real Estate Group, cofounded

by Irishman David Meagher, is understood to have secured part financing for the deal from Novellus – an alternative lender owned by Billy McManus. Mr McManus is a nephew of race-horse owner JP McManus, but is reported to have links to the billionaire's Swiss family investment office, Leicosa.

Two previous high-profile

bidders each walked away from talks to buy Buswells, a favoured haunt of politicians, lobbyists and reporters, in the past two years.

Agents appointed by the liquidators of Irish Bank Resolution Corporation (IBRC), formerly Anglo Irish Bank, entered advanced talks in late 2022 to sell the three-star hotel to the

Murtagh family behind insulation giant Kingspan for a reported €22 million. The Murtaghs did not reach a final agreement.

By the end of 2023, businessman Eamonn Waters was said to have agreed to buy the hotel for €16.4 million.

Mr Meagher, who once worked with AIB and recently served as boss of UK retirement

living developer Auriens Group, cofounded Roundstone in January with fellow property veteran Richard Banks.

Efforts to reach Mr Meagher were unsuccessful, queries made to representatives of Billy McManus and JP McManus went unanswered, while representatives for IBRC liquidators declined to comment.

## Weather

Mostly cloudy with scattered patches of light rain and drizzle. Highs of 11-13 degrees in light southwesterly winds.

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## Home News

**High Court:** A man has told a jury he would never be the 'fall guy' for his friend Conor McGregor in relation to a woman's claim she was raped by Mr McGregor: page 5

**Housing:** Rent of almost €1,900 a month will be charged for cost-rental homes at O'Devaney Gardens in Dublin: page 7

## World News

**Ukraine:** Kyiv said it had fought off Russian attempts to enter the town of Kupiansk in Kharkiv region: page 10

## Business This Week

**Health insurance:** Level Health, a new insurer backed by Aviva Insurance Ireland, launches today with claims that it can offer 'meaningful savings'

**Pensions:** Workers may lose the right to opt out of their employer's occupational scheme, says consultant WTW

## Sports Friday

**Soccer:** A goal by Evan Ferguson and a penalty save by Caoimhín Kelleher secured a 1-0 win for Ireland against Finland in the Nations League last night: page 17

**Boxing:** ticket prices for the Katie Taylor-Amanda Serrano bout continue to fall ahead of their fight tonight: page 16

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