

European
Elections monitor

Corinne Deloy

RESULTS

Catherine Connolly wins the Irish presidential election

Independent candidate Catherine Connolly, backed by left-wing parties, won Ireland's presidential election on 24 October. The former Deputy Speaker (*Leas-Cheann Comhairle*) of the *Dail Eireann*, the lower house of parliament (2010-2024), won 63.36% of first-preference votes, ahead of Heather Humphreys (Fine Gael, FG), who won only 29.46%. This means that Catherine Connolly has won the election by the largest margin ever recorded in an Irish presidential election. The number of candidates is not the only explanation for this lead, as only two candidates had previously run for the presidency in 1959, 1966 and 1973. Catherine Connolly will succeed Michael D. Higgins as head of state. The outgoing president, who has served two terms, was not eligible to run again.

Voter turnout was low, slightly higher than in the previous presidential election on 26 October 2018. It stood at 45.83%, up 1.96 points. According to many political analysts, this low turnout can be explained by the frustration felt by the Irish people at the limited number of candidates for the highest office. Only two candidates were in the running on 24 October. A third candidate, Jim Gavin, who had to withdraw his candidacy on 5 October[1], but his name however still featured on the ballot papers[2]. Having obtained 7.18% of the vote, he is not eligible for reimbursement of his campaign expenses, as only candidates who obtain 12.5% of the vote can claim their money back.

A significant number of invalid ballots were recorded, particularly in the poorest regions of the Republic: 12.89% of the total votes cast (1.2% in 2018). This was an unprecedented figure in Irish history. It undeniably marks the high level of discontent among some Irish people, who were dissatisfied with the choice offered to them between a right-wing candidate supported by the parties that make up the current government (Fine Gael and Fianna Fail (FF)) and her rival on the other side of the political spectrum or, more broadly, who are defiant towards the political class. 'This

election day has been disastrous for Fine Gael and Fianna Fail (the two parties that have dominated Irish politics since the country's independence in 1922, the latter being that of the current Prime Minister (Taoiseach) Micheal Martin),' said Pat Leahy, political editorialist for the daily newspaper *The Irish Times*.

'Catherine Connolly is the clear winner' after the election 'became a referendum on the government,' said Eoin O'Malley, professor of political science at the University of Dublin, adding, "The big news, and the bad news for all parties, is the number of people who will invalidate their votes, which could be as high as 10% (...) This reflects deep anger and dissatisfaction with all parties, which refuse to discuss issues such as immigration."

'The campaign has been relatively dull and the number of candidates is causing some frustration,' said Kevin Rafter, director of the School of Communication at University College Dublin, adding, "The campaign has been disappointing because of its lack of intellectual enthusiasm and ambition. It has failed to inspire voters. Neither of the two candidates really identified any particular theme. On issues important to Irish society, such as housing, race, climate change or unification, they had very little of interest to say."

[1] Following the revelation by the daily newspaper *The Irish Independent* on 4 October that Jim Gavin had, at the end of the 2000s, failed to register a property he was renting with the Residential Tenancies Commission and had never refunded the €3,300 overpayment he had received from one of his tenants.

[2] Jim Gavin withdrew from the presidential race after the official registration of candidates, and his election campaign was suspended, but not his candidacy. It was therefore possible to vote for the Fianna Fail candidate on 24 October, a choice that was entirely valid.

Presidential election in Ireland

24th October 2025

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Results of the presidential election in Ireland on 24 October 2025

Turnout: 45.83%

Candidates	First preference votes	% of votes cast
Catherine Connolly (independent)	914 143	63.36
Heather Humphreys (Fine Gael, FG)	424 987	29.46
Jim Gavin (Fianna Fail, FF)	103 568	7.18

Source : <https://www.presidentialelection.ie>

"It will be a tremendous privilege to serve you (...) To those who did not vote for me and those who spoiled their ballots, let me say that I will be an inclusive president, attentive to your concerns," said Catherine Connolly. During her election campaign, the former Labour Party member repeatedly stated her ambition to be *"a president for all citizens, especially those who are often excluded and silenced"*. *"This is a resounding victory of optimism and hope over cynicism and negativity. It is a victory for the united opposition over the worn-out and hackneyed politics of Fianna Fail and Fine Gael,"* said Mary Lou McDonald, leader of Sinn Féin (SF).

Catherine Connolly has pledged to be *"a voice for peace, a voice that builds on our policy of neutrality and insists on the existential threat posed by climate change."* In terms of foreign policy, she has been criticised for several of her statements, such as saying that Germany's rearmament *"has certain similarities with the 1930s"* or that Hamas is *"an integral part of the social fabric of the Palestinian people."* Similarly, although she describes herself as pro-European, she made ambiguous comments in 2016 after the Brexit referendum in the United Kingdom, emphasising that British voters had *"exposed the European Union for what it is"*.

During the election campaign, Heather Humphreys criticised Catherine Connolly for not condemning Russia after Vladimir Putin's armed forces invaded Ukraine on 24 February 2022. *"I have never hesitated. What I am saying is that a neutral country like ours should denounce the abuse of power by anyone – by Russia but also by America,"* she replied.

"Catherine will be a president for all of us and she will be my president," said Heather Humphreys, acknowledging her defeat. The future head of state was congratulated by Fine Gael leader and Deputy Prime Minister (*Tánaiste*) Simon Harris. *"I wish her every success. Her success will be Ireland's success."* However, many political commentators anticipate rising tensions and conflicts between the future president and the government.

Aged 68 and originally from Galway in the west of Ireland, Catherine Connolly graduated in clinical psychology from the University of Leeds and in law from the University of Galway. She worked as a clinical psychologist before becoming a barrister in 1991.

In 1999, she was elected to Galway City Council. In 2004, she was elected mayor of the city. A member of the Labour Party, she resigned in 2006 when she was refused the nomination to succeed Michael D. Higgins. She then failed to return to the Dáil Éireann in the 2007 and 2011 general elections when she stood as an independent candidate. She was elected in the 2016 election. Re-elected in 2020, Catherine Connolly became [Deputy Speaker](#) of the Dáil Éireann until 2024. She is the first woman to have held this position in Ireland.

After her victory in the presidential election, Catherine Connolly became the third woman to become President of Ireland. Irish heads of state have a symbolic role. However, the last three heads of state, Mary Robinson (1990-1997), Mary McAleese (1997-2011) and Michael D. Higgins (since 2011), have transformed and modernised their role, giving it a new dimension.

"Mary Robinson's presidency marked a turning point. She was not particularly ideological, but she had much greater visibility than her predecessors and was seen as a symbol of modern Ireland. Her role is perceived as unifying," said Gail McElroy, professor of comparative politics at Trinity College Dublin.

Catherine Connolly will be sworn in as President of Ireland on 11 November. Among the first changes to come is greater use of Irish, Ireland's second national language, which will become the working language at *Aras an Uachtarain*, the official residence of the President of Ireland.

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Publishing Director : Pascale JOANNIN

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