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**Sharon speaks out on RTE pay gap as Dobson joins 'Morning Ireland'**

**Niamh Horan**  
EXCLUSIVE

THE pay gap between RTE's best-known newsreaders has been revealed, with Bryan Dobson earning between €60,000-€80,000 a year more than his female co-anchor

Sharon Ni Bheolain. Mr Dobson is among RTE's top 10 earners — with an annual salary of €195,816 in 2014, but it is understood that Ms Ni Bheolain is paid considerably less. The news of the gender pay gap between the newsreaders

comes as RTE plans its biggest newsroom shake-up in years, with Mr Dobson set to move to the Radio One current affairs flagship *Morning Ireland*. In response to questions over whether Mr Dobson is on double her salary, according to RTE's 2014 figures, Ms

Ni Bheolain said: "As someone who values her privacy the very notion of sharing my salary with your newspaper is abhorrent to me. I do recognise, however, inequality and gender pay are key social issues in need of examination and so it would be cowardly

of me not to comment." She continued: "I can confirm the 2014 pay disparity you reference was accurate. However, this pay gap has since narrowed. In return for a pay rise, I have also undertaken extra duties. I believe that I am well remunerated,

but, for the record, my pay is still considerably less than that of Bryan's. I won't be commenting further." Mr Dobson was contacted last night but did not return calls. The gender pay gap was brought into sharp focus by

revelations of significant pay disparities at the BBC. Minister for Communications Denis Naughten says he wants the salaries of all RTE staff earning more than €100,000 a year published annually.

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**JESSICA O'GARA**

Taking life with Ronan in her stride IN LIVING



**GAME OF THRONES**



Emilia Clarke on TV, nudity and feminism IN LIFE



TALENT: RTE newsreader Sharon Ni Bheolain: 'Inequality and gender pay are key social issues'

**Squeezed middle want tax cuts as Leo soars — poll**

**Philip Ryan**  
EXCLUSIVE

THE squeezed middle are throwing their support behind the Government but want to be rewarded with tax cuts in the Budget, a *Sunday Independent*/Kantar Millward Brown opinion poll has revealed. The exclusive opinion poll shows confidence in the Government has soared to a six-year high since the appointment of Leo Varadkar as Taoiseach, but those backing the new Fine Gael leader now expect to have more take-home pay in their pockets after the Budget. The number satisfied with the Government has jumped a massive 13 points to 40pc, which is by far the highest level of support for a Fine Gael-led administration since the 2011 general election. Satisfaction with the Government is higher among professional and working voters (49pc) and those living in Dublin (54pc) where the economic recovery has improved at a faster rate than other parts of the country. In return for this dramatic

**KANTAR MILLWARD BROWN**

**POLL RESULTS AND ANALYSIS, PAGES 4 & 20**

rise in support, more than two in five (41pc) white-collar voters want to see tax cuts in the Budget, while around one in three (35pc) want the Government to focus on spending. Meanwhile, Mr Varadkar's appointment as Taoiseach has also resulted in a significant nine-point swing between Fine Gael and the main opposition party Fianna Fail. Fine Gael support has increased by five points to 30pc, while Micheal Martin's Fianna Fail has dropped four points to 29pc since the last comparable poll taken in February. While public support for the two main parties is almost neck-and-neck, Mr Martin will be concerned about the shift in support from Fianna Fail to Fine Gael since the change in Taoiseach. Mr Martin has continually ruled out bouncing Fine Gael into a snap vote but the party has increased its election preparations in recent weeks. The Taoiseach's personal satisfaction rating (49pc),

Continued on page 4

**BRENDAN O'CONNOR**

**Uh oh! It's a good day in Ireland**

THERE'S an uneasy feeling around the place. It's almost like a perfect storm. A perfect storm of positivity. Not only is the sun shining, which traditionally causes Irish people to lose their marbles and completely forget who we are, but U2 are home, reinstated for now as the greatest rock 'n' roll band in the world. And then there is this curious situation whereby, according to our poll today, people don't seem to hate the Government as much as is considered proper and traditional. It seems we like Leo. It seems we like him a whole lot more than we

liked Enda. And we even like Fine Gael a bit more. We even warmed to that little Bob Cratchit lad in the Department of Health when we saw him getting married on Friday. If the phrase 'lovely girl' hadn't been outlawed your mother would say his new wife Caoimhe Wade looks like a lovely girl. And being a nurse we imagine she is capable and bossy in a nice way, so she'll set that lad straight. And seeing Enda and Fionnuala looking younger than their years and in love arriving at the wedding, it was as if all the bad stuff about Enda melted away, forgiven, forgotten. Unlikely things are start-

ing to happen everywhere. Someone seems to have managed to rebuild a beautiful outdoor swimming baths in Clontarf without a huge row or making a balls of it. And it will open, not in 10 years — the usual time span on many projects — but in six weeks. They seem to have just quietly done it, without fanfare. Even Michael O'Leary is contributing to the gaiety of the nation. There was something comforting last week about him assuming again his traditional role as what Jennifer Zamparelli called "the biggest pr\*\*k in Ireland". Not once but twice in one day he popped his head up on Radio One to do his stock material, like calling his own customers whingers. Comforting, too, to hear Joe Duffy having a good old barney with him on *LiveLine*. It felt as if the natural order had been restored. And then Bank of Ireland

raised its economic growth projections to 4.8pc for this year and 3.8pc next year. And none of the mysterious jobless growth we enjoyed for so many years. In fact, this economic growth will be driven in part by employment growth of 3pc this year and 2.4pc next year. And to top it all last week, we even heard the unlikely phrase "Ireland strike gold in the 100m at the European championships" as diversity started to pay more dividends and 18-year-old Irish girl Gina Akpe-Moses became our latest athletic champion. All this good stuff is very unsettling, and of course some of us would prefer to keep portraying the country as "some kind of hellhole of Calcutta" as Brian Hayes put it in *Glenties*. But maybe, just for today, it would be OK to just savour this moment, and think, it's not all bad.

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# Sharon reveals gender pay gap on TV news desk

Arguably more bankable, RTE newsreader Sharon Ni Bheolain earns considerably less than her male co-anchor, writes **Niamh Horan**



**PAY PACKETS:** Sharon Ni Bheolain has confirmed that fellow RTE newsreader Bryan Dobson is paid a much larger salary than she receives

**T**HE pay gap between RTE's best-known newscasters has been revealed with Bryan Dobson earning between €60,000 to €80,000 per year more than his female co-anchor Sharon Ni Bheolain.

While Mr Dobson is among RTE's top 10 earners, with an annual salary of €195,816 in 2014, it is understood that Ms Ni Bheolain is paid considerably less.

The gender pay gap between two of the national broadcaster's most familiar faces comes as RTE plans its biggest newsroom shake-up in years.

When contacted yesterday, Ms Ni Bheolain, in response to questions over whether Mr Dobson is on double her salary according to RTE's 2014 figures, said: "As someone who values her privacy, the very notion of sharing my salary with your newspaper is abhorrent to me. I do, however, recognise inequality and gender pay are key social issues in need of examination and so it would be cowardly of me not to comment."

She continued: "I can confirm the 2014 pay disparity you reference was accurate. However, this pay gap has since narrowed. In return for a pay rise, I have also undertaken extra duties. I believe that I am well remunerated, but for the record, my pay is still considerably less than that of Bryan's. I won't be commenting further."

The *Sunday Independent* understands that Mr Dobson, who has presented the main TV news for more than two decades, will be moving to *Morning Ireland*.

Last week, the issue of men earning more than women in broadcasting was brought into sharp focus by

revelations of significant pay disparities at the BBC in Britain.

At least 10 female BBC presenters are now considering legal action if the corporation does not narrow the gender pay gap.

The women, household names from radio and television, were furious to learn that male colleagues who shared their job descriptions are significantly better paid.

Back on this side of the Irish Sea, the *Sunday Independent* has learned that the pay gap between RTE's main TV news presenters was even greater until a few years ago.

At one time, Mr Dobson earned double the salary of his female co-anchor — though, arguably, she has the greater recognition factor among TV viewers. She was even referenced in TV adverts for Carlsberg beer.

The figure emerges as the BBC faces fierce criticism after being forced to expose its gender pay gap. The Irish State broadcaster has yet to do the same.

When contacted about the pay gap, RTE said it did not comment on individual salaries, however "the difference in earning power" across the board is down to "experience, length of service and range of duties".

Mr Dobson has been in the job 21 years, while Ms Ni Bheolain has been in the post in 2005. But they carry out remarkably similar duties and both share heavy responsibilities as the 'faces' of RTE's news coverage on television.

Both Ms Ni Bheolain and Mr Dobson present a similar number of *Six One News* bulletins. Both present a similar number of outside broadcasts, while news specials and breaking news

**'I do recognise inequality and gender pay are key social issues in need of examination and so it would be cowardly of me not to comment'**

programmes are largely shared 50/50 between the two newscasters.

Both anchors also present *Leaders' Questions* from Dail Eireann. Ms Ni Bheolain presents the programme on Tuesdays and Thursdays, while Mr Dobson presents

on Wednesdays. During the 2016 Election campaign *Six One News* coverage, Ms Ni Bheolain reported and presented all constituency programmes, while Mr Dobson conducted interviews with party leaders. In 2016, Mr Dobson

also covered RTE's 1916 commemorations.

Ms Ni Bheolain is currently the main presenter, while Mr Dobson is on a three-month incentivised sabbatical.

Meanwhile, as part of the newsroom shake-up, Mr Dobson will step down as a main evening news broadcaster to take up a post as a presenter on *Morning Ireland* — RTE Radio One's flagship morning current affairs show. Cathal Mac Coille is expected to retire in the coming weeks.

It remains to be seen who will replace him but it

is understood that RTE is lining up a male presenter. It also remains to be seen if the new newscaster will be put in a more senior position than Ms Ni Bheolain and on what salary.

When asked about the pay gap this weekend, an RTE spokesperson told the *Sunday Independent*: "RTE overall pay takes into account a wide range of factors including levels of experience, length of service and range of duties or programming a person is involved in. RTE does not comment on individual staff salaries."

When asked if RTE is open to releasing its pay scales in its totality, a separate spokesperson said: "RTE is very proud of its on-air talent, both male and female, who continue to make a valuable contribution to our public service. In line with our public commitment, RTE has been publishing details of its top 10 highest earners for a number of years and has to date published figures for 2008-2014. RTE has reduced the fees paid to top talent by 40pc since 2008. "The total top 10 presenter earnings for 2014

represents less than 1pc of RTE's total operating costs in 2014 and less than 2pc of total personnel-related operating costs. Salaries and earnings at RTE are not based on gender. Diversity within the organisation is being considered as part of RTE's five-year strategy which is due to be presented to the BAI (Broadcasting Authority of Ireland) in September."

It added: "RTE would adhere to any legal requirements to disclose further information on salaries, including gender-related information."

# Minister tells RTE to publish salaries of stars every year

**Philip Ryan** and **Wayne O'Connor**

**COMMUNICATIONS** Minister Denis Naughten wants RTE to annually publish the salaries of all its top broadcasters who earn more than €100,000-a-year.

Mr Naughten's call will heap pressure on RTE to become as transparent as its counterpart in Britain, the BBC, which was forced to detail the salaries of more than 90 of its top stars last week.

Those salaries revealed a massive gender pay divide.

The Communications Minister's spokeswoman told the *Sunday Independent*: "The Minister would be in favour of RTE publishing the salaries of its top presenters who earn more than €100,00 on their website annually."

RTE publishes the salaries of the station's top-10 earners every two years but the figures given are for amounts paid to broadcasters two years earlier.

Last year, RTE released details of salaries earned by broadcasters in 2014.

The figures showed the state broadcaster's 10 highest paid stars earned more than €2.6m between them during 2014.

New figures are set to be declared publicly before the

## RTE's TOP EARNERS

Last published figures (2014)

Ryan Tubridy	€495,000
Joe Duffy	€416,893
Marian Finucane	€295,000
Sean O'Rourke	€290,096
Miriam O'Callaghan	€280,445
Bryan Dobson	€195,816
George Lee	€179,031
Richard Crowley	€174,120
Colm Hayes	€169,992
Derek Mooney	€168,871



Ryan Tubridy, Miriam O'Callaghan, Sean O'Rourke, Derek Mooney

end of this year. The host of *The Late Late Show*, Ryan Tubridy, is RTE's best paid presenter, earning €495,000.

His stipend covers both his television and radio work

and represents a significant pay cut from the €752,950 he earned two years earlier.

Joe Duffy is RTE's second highest paid broadcaster. The 2014 figures show he was paid €416,893, an increase of more

than €113,000 on his earnings the previous year.

Both Mr Tubridy and Mr Duffy were among five of the top 10 earners who are contractors, meaning they charge RTE fees for their work as opposed to earning a salary.

Marian Finucane, on €295,000, was the highest paid female presenter the last time RTE's payments to its top talent were disclosed. This figure left her third overall but it is down on the €437,005 she received in 2012.

Sean O'Rourke and Miriam O'Callaghan rounded off the top five with incomes of €290,096 and €280,445 respectively.

Newsreader Bryan Dobson's most recently published salary figure was €195,816. Agriculture and environment correspondent George Lee's 2014 payment was €179,031. Journalist Richard Crowley was ranked eighth on the list with his €174,120 salary. Derek Mooney rounded off the top 10 by earning €168,871.

Radio host Colm Hayes was also included on the list but he no longer works for RTE. In 2014, his reported earnings were €169,992. The figures when they were published did not include Ray D'Arcy's pay because he only re-joined from Today FM in 2015.

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