

BookScan Irish Consumer Market (ICM) 2021 Summary

Record year for print book sales in Ireland.

More money was spent on books in Ireland in 2021 than ever before, with total sales reaching €165.9m, €400k ahead of the previous record year (2008) and €4.4m ahead of 2020 (+3%). Volume sales added up to 13.3m books, up 2% on 2020 and ranking only behind 2008 to 2010. With value once again growing at a stronger rate than volume, the average price paid for print books went from €12.32 to €12.43, the highest it's been since 2007. 2021 marks the seventh year in a row of growth across both measures in Ireland, with the market improving by 3.8m books and €60m in spending since 2014. The **Children's** sector saw its highest volume and value on record, with **Fiction** earning its highest value since 2010 and **Non-Fiction** having its fifth-highest year by value.



Books



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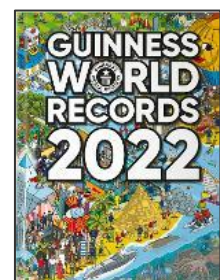
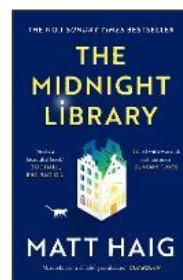
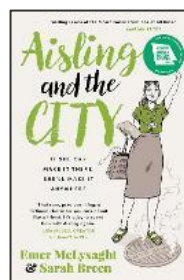
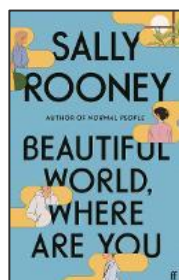
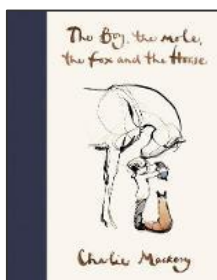
Prices

Top Titles

The Boy, The Mole, The Fox and The Horse by Charlie Mackesy reigned atop the 2021 chart right from the start, selling 56k copies throughout the year and earning €776k to make it the bestseller by volume and value. That's actually fewer copies than 2020, when it was second to *Where the Crawdads Sing* by Delia Owens, which also makes a repeat appearance in the top ten, at sixth. While the bestsellers didn't reach the heights of 2020, they were ahead of 2019's top titles, with both *The Boy, The Mole, The Fox and The Horse* and runner-up *Beautiful World, Where Are You* by Sally Rooney selling more copies than the number one from two years ago. Rooney's books have ranked within the top 20 every year since 2018 but this is her highest position yet and first time at the top of the **Fiction** chart, with 45k copies. Emer McLysaght & Sarah Breen's new *Aisling and the City* nearly caught up, at 43k copies, after it was the overall bestseller for the final period of the year.

Guinness World Records 2022 only trailed *Aisling and the City* by 600 copies throughout December and led the weekly chart three times, boosting it into the annual top five for the first time since 2017 with just under 34k in sales. That's about 2k copies behind *Midnight Library* by Matt Haig, which joined the top five as of April and stuck around to the end. Extending to the top ten, **Fiction** certainly dominates, with six spots, including *The Thursday Murder Club* by Richard Osman for the second year in a row, now sitting just behind sequel *The Man Who Died Twice*. But for the overall top 20, shown on the next page, **Non-Fiction** takes the lead, claiming half of the bestsellers, five of which sit in **Personal Development** or **Mind, Body & Spirit** categories and two which focus on Ireland. If we switch to value sales, the top three books remain the same but both *We Don't Know Ourselves* by Fintan O'Toole and *Old Ireland in Colour 2* by John Breslin & Sarah-Anne Buckley enter the top five, and *The Coastal Atlas of Ireland* makes the most impressive leap, moving up to seventh compared to beyond position 100 by volume.

Three **Children's** books appear in the top 20 for 2021, with the latest *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* book *Big Shot* by Jeff Kinney returning to the top of the sector, joined by *A Hug For You* by David King and Dav Pilkey's tenth *Dog Man* book *Mothering Heights*, which was only supplanted as the **Children's** number one in the final weeks of the year. Overall, six of the top 20 books overlap with the UK top 20: *The Boy, The Mole, The Fox and The Horse*; *Midnight Library*; *Guinness World Records 2022*; *Where the Crawdads Sing*; *The Man Who Died Twice* and *The Thursday Murder Club*.



ICM Top 20 Titles 2021

Pos	Title	Author	Publisher	Vol (000s)	Val (€000)	ASP	Binding	Product Class
1	The Boy, The Mole, The Fox and The Horse	Charlie Mackesy	Ebury	56	€776	€13.84	H	History of Ideas & Popular Philosophy
2	Beautiful World, Where Are You	Sally Rooney	Faber	45	€643	€14.30	P	General & Literary Fiction
3	Aisling and the City	Emer McLysaght & Sarah Breen	Gill Books	43	€578	€13.42	P	General & Literary Fiction
4	The Midnight Library	Matt Haig	Canongate	36	€319	€8.92	P	General & Literary Fiction
5	Guinness World Records 2022		Guinness World Records	34	€478	€14.14	H	Encyclopedias & General Reference
6	Where the Crawdads Sing	Delia Owens	Little, Brown	33	€306	€9.24	P	General & Literary Fiction
7	Big Shot (Diary of a Wimpy Kid 16)	Jeff Kinney	PRH Children's	32	€396	€12.25	H	Children's Fiction
8	Your One Wild and Precious Life	Maureen Gaffney	Penguin	29	€460	€15.76	P	Popular Psychology
9	The Man Who Died Twice	Richard Osman	Penguin	28	€375	€13.48	P	Crime, Thriller & Adventure
10	The Thursday Murder Club	Richard Osman	Penguin	27	€252	€9.42	P	Crime, Thriller & Adventure
11	Old Ireland in Colour 2	John Breslin & Sarah-Anne Buckley	Merrion Press	26	€533	€20.20	P	Regional History
12	A Hug For You	David King	Penguin	24	€315	€12.95	H	Picture Books
13	Mothering Heights (Dog Man 10)	Dav Pilkey	Scholastic	24	€256	€10.82	H	Children's Fiction
14	Mind Full	Dermot Whelan	Gill Books	23	€349	€15.51	P	Mind, Body & Spirit
15	Good Vibes, Good Life	Vex King	Hay House	22	€240	€11.05	H	Self-Improvement
16	Fight or Flight: My Life	Keith Earls	Reach Sport	22	€432	€20.05	H	Sport Autobiography
17	Atomic Habits	James Clear	Cornerstone	21	€347	€16.20	P	Popular Psychology
18	We Don't Know Ourselves	Fintan O'Toole	Head of Zeus	21	€546	€25.47	P	Regional History
19	Awaken Your Power Within	Gerry Hussey	Hachette Ireland	21	€316	€14.96	P	Mind, Body & Spirit
20	Small Things Like These	Claire Keegan	Faber	21	€230	€11.12	H	General & Literary Fiction

Top Authors

Julia Donaldson was the bestselling author in Ireland in 2021, with her books earning €1.5m across 184k copies sold. **Children's** authors take the top five places for the overall **ICM**, with all five exceeding €1.0m in value sales. Two new names appear among the top ten **Children's** authors compared to 2020, with Harriet Muncaster and Leigh Bardugo joining the list, while Donaldson remains the only **Pre-School & Picture Books** author amidst the **Children's/YA Fiction**-dominated chart. Charlie Mackesy once again leads for **Non-Fiction** authors, with three more repeats from 2020: John Breslin & Sarah-Anne Buckley (moving up from third), Edith Eger (ninth in the previous year) and Kay Featherstone & Kate Allinson (shifting up from tenth).

Along with having the bestselling **Fiction** book of the year, Sally Rooney was also the bestselling author for the sector, appearing at sixth for the **ICM**. She's joined by Richard Osman, Emer McLysaght & Sarah Breen and Matt Haig all within the overall market top ten. Half of the **Fiction** top ten also appeared in 2020's list: Rooney, Delia Owens (who was first), Osman, James Patterson and Lee/Andrew Child. McLysaght & Breen, Ross O'Carroll-Kelly and Stephen King all sat just outside the top ten in 2020, while Matt Haig moved up from 88th, but the most significant jump belongs to Julia Quinn, whose books sold under 1,000 copies in the previous year, rising to 31k in 2021.

Fiction		Non-Fiction		Children's	
<i>by volume sales, ICM top ten in bold</i>					
Bestselling authors	Top title	Bestselling authors	Top title	Bestselling authors	Top title
Sally Rooney	Beautiful World, Where Are You	Charlie Mackesy	The Boy, The Mole, The Fox and The Horse	Julia Donaldson	Stick Man
Richard Osman	The Man Who Died Twice	John Breslin & Sarah-Anne Buckley	Old Ireland in Colour 2	Jeff Kinney	Big Shot
Emer McLysaght & Sarah Breen	Aisling and the City	Maureen Gaffney	Your One Wild and Precious Life	David Walliams	Gangsta Granny Strikes Again!
Matt Haig	The Midnight Library	Vex King	Good Vibes, Good Life	Dav Pilkey	Mothering Heights
Delia Owens	Where the Crawdads Sing	Kay Featherstone & Kate Allinson	Pinch of Nom Quick & Easy	J.K. Rowling	The Christmas Pig
James Patterson (& co-writes)	The President's Daughter	Edith Eger	The Choice	Roald Dahl	Matilda
Ross O'Carroll-Kelly	Normal Sheeple	Dermot Whelan	Mind Full	Rick Riordan	Percy Jackson & the Lightning Thief
Julia Quinn	The Duke and I	Fintan O'Toole	We Don't Know Ourselves	Harriet Muncaster	Isadora Moon Meets the Tooth Fairy
Lee (& Andrew) Child	Better Off Dead	James Clear	Atomic Habits	Leigh Bardugo	Shadow and Bone
Stephen King	Billy Summers	Billy Connolly	Windswept & Interesting	Liz Pichon	Ten Tremendous Tales

Genre Trends

Fiction

Adult Fiction posted the strongest performance across the broad sectors in 2021, with volume up 8% to 3.4m (the highest since 2012) and value growing 9% to just under €40m (which ranks only behind 2007 to 2010). The only category to decline was **Horror & Ghost Stories**, which fell short by 1,000 books and €12k in spending. **Historical & Mythological Fiction** returned to growth in 2021 after declining in the previous year, marking the second-highest year on record for the category, behind 2019, at 204k books and €2.5m spent. **Romance & Sagas** also experienced its second-highest year of value sales at €2.2m, exceeded only by the *Fifty Shades*-fuelled 2012. **Graphic Novels** saw their highest year yet, with €3.1m spent on 210k books; only **General & Literary Fiction** increased more in actual sales, with value up €743k to €17.3m. **Crime, Thriller & Adventure** also had a record year in value terms, with €10.5m spent, €300k ahead of the previous peak in 2010; volume sales were the highest they've been since 2011, at 915k. Five categories increased by more than €500k: **General & Literary Fiction**; **Crime, Thriller & Adventure**; **Romance & Sagas**; **Science Fiction & Fantasy** and **Graphic Novels**, with more moderate growth for the smaller categories of **Short Stories & Fiction Anthologies**, **Erotic Fiction**, **Westerns** and **War Fiction**.

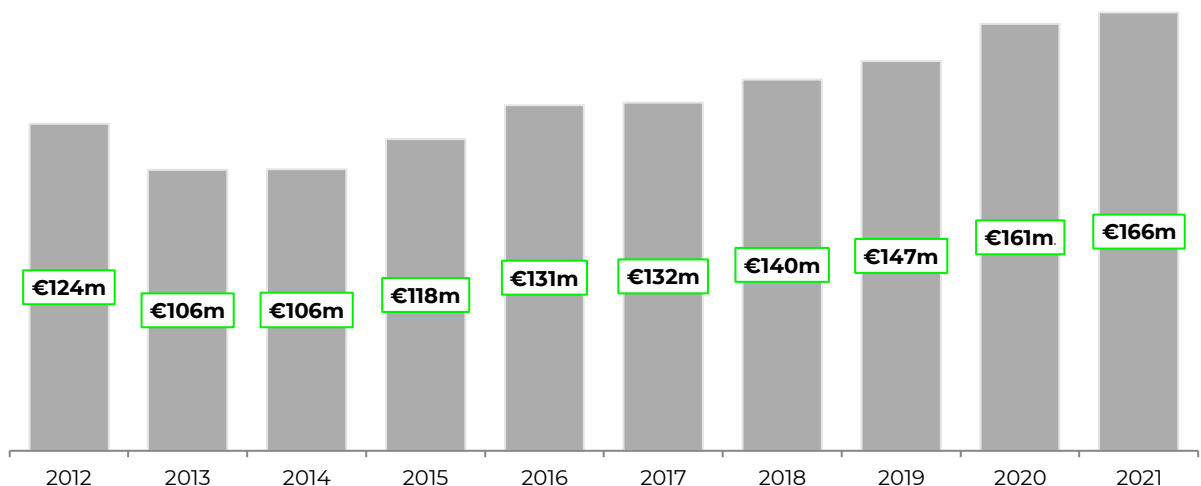
Non-Fiction

Specialist Non-Fiction grew slightly in volume in 2021 but dropped in value, while **Trade Non-Fiction** declined across both measures, leading to cumulative **Non-Fiction** sales (5.0m, €78m) ending the year down 1% in volume and 0.2% in value (which equates to 72k and €155k). Some of the largest areas contributed to that decline, including **Biographies & Autobiographies** and **Food & Drink** coming down from record highs in 2020 (although **Autobiography: The Arts** did grow by €1.1m, and **Food & Drink: General** took over as the highest earning **Non-Fiction** category). But plenty of genres had very successful years, helping to keep the overall sector decline so minimal: **Personal Development**, **Religion, Philosophy & Psychology** (volume) and **History & Military** (value) set new lifetime highs, while **Mind, Body & Spirit**; **Family, Health & Relationships**; **Social Sciences**; **Politics & Government** and **Atlases, Maps & Travel** all posted growth across both measures. The only category to increase more than **Autobiography: The Arts** was **Regional History** (+€1.4m), driving that lifetime peak for **History** overall.

Children's

Children's, Young Adult & Educational managed to pass 2020's sales to once again achieve its highest year on record in Ireland, with 4.9m books bought (+1%) and €47m spent (+2%). A number of categories shared in that achievement: **Novelty & Activity Books** (value), **Picture Books**, **Children's Fiction**, **Children's Comic Strip Fiction & Graphic Novels**, **Children's General Non-Fiction** (value) and **Children's General Interest & Leisure** all saw lifetime peaks. There was also growth for **Pre-School & Early Learning**, **Children's Annuals**, **Young Adult Fiction** and **Young Adult General Interest & Leisure**, with the only significant decline stemming from educational categories (apart from growth for **School Textbooks & Study Guides: Vocational**). The largest increase in sales came from **YA Fiction**, which brought in an extra €970k across 113k more books compared to 2020, exceeding 400k and €4.0m for the first time since 2014.

ICM ten-year trend, value



Top Publishers Performance

The same five publishers make up the top of the list as in 2020, with two of those five growing their sales in 2021. Penguin Random House maintained their share of 20% of market value, with growth of 3%, followed by Hachette down by less than 1%, taking 12% share, and HarperCollins with 8% of the market and 1% decline. Gill Group represented 5% of the overall **ICM** (but nearly 30% of books published in Ireland, as shown below) and dropped 4% compared to 2020. Pan Macmillan returned to growth in 2021 (+5%), setting a new lifetime high in the process and maintaining 4% of market value. Within the top ten publishers, both Faber and Bonnier grew by more than 30%, with Simon & Schuster and Scholastic also seeing growth.

The table below narrows down to books published in Ireland, which added up to 2.1m and €31m in 2021. **School Textbooks & Study Guides** accounted for nearly 30% of local publishing, leading sales for four of the top publishers, so the decline for educational books will be contributing to the decline seen for Irish published titles overall. **Autobiography: General** remained the top non-textbook category for Irish publishing, despite a drop in sales, followed by **General & Literary Fiction** (led by *Aisling and the City* and the top category for Gill) and **Regional History** (*Old Ireland in Colour 2* and the dominant category for Merrion Press).

Publisher	2021 Volume	2021 Value	Value change	Value % share	Leading category
Total published in Ireland	2.1m	€31.0m	-5%		School Text: Literature, Arts & Humanities
Gill Books	584k	€9.0m	-4%	29%	General & Literary Fiction
Penguin Random House	171k	€2.7m	-31%	9%	General & Literary Fiction
Hachette	166k	€2.3m	+3%	7%	Autobiography: General
Edco	181k	€2.1m	-15%	7%	School Text: Literature, Arts & Humanities
Folens	122k	€1.9m	-20%	6%	School Text: Literature, Arts & Humanities
C. J. Fallon	139k	€1.9m	-18%	6%	School Text: Maths, Science & Technical
O'Brien Press	153k	€1.8m	+13%	6%	Children's Fiction
Merrion Press	67k	€1.3m	-15%	4%	Regional History
educate.ie	84k	€982k	-3%	3%	School Text: Literature, Arts & Humanities
Cork University Press	15k	€706k	+142%	2%	Geography

In Summary

After 2020 marked the second-highest year on record for print book revenue in Ireland, 2021 managed to go the distance, with value sales surpassing all other years measured by BookScan. It wasn't a universally positive year, with the market actually tracking behind for the second half of 2021, but the nearly 20% increase seen from January to June was enough to balance the decline in autumn. In total, 20 weeks saw double-digit percent growth against the same weeks in 2020 across both measures, with 33 weeks growing at all for both volume and value. The year culminated in the week leading up to Christmas becoming only the eighth week on record to see more than €10m spent on books (and the week before that was only €17k shy of €10m). That strong performance echoes across varied types of books – Irish culture and history, self-help, comfort reads, inspirational stories, escapist fiction – and throughout the market, beyond just the bestsellers and big names. The pandemic is still causing a lot of uncertainty of course, but for now consumers are still turning to books in record numbers, and that doesn't look to be abating soon. And casting our minds back, the **ICM** was in a positive position heading into 2020, so even if COVID has amplified sales for the past two years, we know there's a solid base underneath.