

PUBLIC CONSULTATION - CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY ON GENDER EQUALITY 2020

QUESTIONNAIRE

CA30232

Name: Orla Ní Chomhraí

Theme 1: Gender norms and stereotypes

Gender norms and stereotypes as barriers to gender equality

Fixed ideas about what women and men should do in the home or at work are learned by girls and boys in early childhood and throughout their lives. These ideas or gender stereotypes affect their choices in school and as they enter careers and contribute to a lack of progress toward equality between women and men. This limits not only the jobs that women and men consider or are available to them, but also can exclude women and men from social roles and tasks.

- Please outline what you see as the key barriers/ obstacles and challenges to gender equality under this theme in law, policy and practice.

I am concerned that men can now identify as women, and the key argument they make to prove this point is their claim to femininity. So now being a man or woman is dependent one's adherence to a sexist stereotype and not a biological fact (that has implications in terms of social policy, the workplace etc.). Being a woman is not a feeling or an identity. In the UK children are being taught pink-brain blue-brain nonsense, and having sexist stereotypes promoted as what makes someone male or female. This may be a factor in a massive increase in girls in particular identifying as male. This has serious negative health consequences for themselves if they go down the medical route, but also what are we doing to society if we promote sexist stereotypes to young children? I grew up in the 70's and 80's and I think there was less gender rigidity in terms of things like children's clothes (see old pictures) and toys then, though this could have varied a lot between families (Some of this may have been for practical reasons, with a hand-me-down culture, but there was definitely also a bit of a "girls can do anything" attitude about). There is pressure in Ireland to introduce lessons on gender ideology here. This will promote sexist stereotypes (it has anywhere else it has been introduced). It could also have implications if boys can identify their way into girls changing rooms. I think the Gender Recognition Act needs to be scrapped. This Act has the potential to cause havoc, for women in particular. If "men" can get pregnant and "women" can have male bodies, with male reproductive organs, what potential impact will this have for women in terms of anti-discrimination legislation? The fact that there is a male sex offender in a female prison (he was in the dochas centre initially, and is now in the women's prison in Limerick) should give us all pause for thought.

- Please identify the steps to be taken to address the issues raised and who should address them (e.g. the state, private sector, education system etc.)

Scrap the Gender Recognition Act (2015). Oppose the teaching of gender ideology in schools. Instead, allow boys to wear the "girls" uniform and girls to wear the "boys" uniform. Make sure subject choices are open to both boys and girls. Have anti-bullying policies in place if, for example, boys get picked on for doing sewing. If having speakers come into the school talking about careers encourage at least some which don't conform to stereotypes (e.g. male nurses and female scientists).

Theme 2: Work: Occupational segregation by gender, gender discrimination and the gender pay gap

Women and men are often concentrated into different kinds of jobs and within the same occupations, women are often in work that is less well paid and has less opportunities for career advancement. Women often work in areas where they can work part-time so as to fit in with their caring responsibilities. While many men work in low paid jobs, many professions dominated by women are also low paid, and professions that have become female-dominated have become lower paid. This worsens the gender pay gap (the average difference between the wages of women and men who are working).

- Please outline what you see as the key barriers/ obstacles and challenges to gender equality under this theme in law, policy and practice.

I feel I am not qualified enough to contribute usefully to this section. I got sick young so have been out of the paid workforce since.

- Please identify the steps to be taken to address the issues raised and who should address them (e.g. the state, private sector, education system etc.)

See above

Theme 3. Care, paid and unpaid, as a social and family responsibility

Care -- the social responsibility of care and women and men's co responsibility for care, especially within the family

Women remain disproportionately responsible for unpaid care and often work in poorly paid care work. For working parents or lone parents, balancing paid work with parenting and or caring for older and dependent adults presents significant challenges. Women are most disadvantaged by these challenges, yet men also suffer from lack of opportunities to share parenting and caring roles. Despite recent legislation and policy initiatives to support early years parental care, inequalities in the distribution of unpaid care continue between women and men. The cost of childcare has been identified as a particular barrier to work for women alongside responsibilities of caring for older relatives and dependent adults.

- Please outline what you see as the key barriers/ obstacles and challenges to gender equality under this theme in law, policy and practice.

One area which needs to change is the lack of availability of home help and personal assistance, especially for younger people but also older. I've known quite a few women who had to reduce hours, or give up work, to take care of sick relatives (these are young, often adult, relatives with chronic illnesses, so it could involve a few decades of reduced paid work for the carers, mostly women).

- Please identify the steps to be taken to address the issues raised and who should address them (e.g. the state, private sector, education system etc.)

It is near impossible for anyone under 65 to get home help, and PA's are almost impossible to get also. There seems to be more cut-backs planned in my area in community care (I don't know yet which services are to be affected, but it sounded from what I read that home-help would be). The government needs to reverse cut-backs in these areas, but also make it possible for adults under 65 to get help.

Theme 4: Women's access to, and representation in, public life and decision making

Ensure women's participation and representation in decision-making and leadership in the workplace, political and public life

Women are systematically underrepresented in leadership in economic and political decision-making. Despite the introduction of a candidate gender quota (through the system of party funding) for national political office, and initiatives to support women's access to corporate decision-making roles, men continue to dominate leadership positions. There are also issues to be considered around how media represents women and men.

- Please outline what you see as the key barriers/ obstacles and challenges to gender equality under this theme in law, policy and practice.

If men can legally identify as women a lot of efforts will be potentially undermined. This may seem like I am concerned about nothing, but men are already muscling women out of women's awards and sports. In Ireland, Toni got a Mná na hÉireann/Women of Ireland award for their work empowering and promoting men in business. I think we will be seeing more of this sort of thing in the future. In theory you could have a board comprising 100% males, but that it would be considered 50% male 50% female, as at the stroke of a pen half of the men could identify as women.

- Please identify the steps to be taken to address the issues raised and who should address them (e.g. the state, private sector, education system etc.)

The state needs to scrap the Gender Recognition Act (2015). Private sector, including NGO's, need to not include men in the definition of women, and not identify men as women in looking at quotas and statistics.

5. Where does gender inequality impact most?

To conclude we would be interested in your response to the following question: In which area do you think gender inequality matters most?

Please rank the following in order of importance, 1 being the most important:

- Paid work 5
- Home & family life 2
- Education 6
- Politics and public life 3
- Media 4
- Caring for others 1
- Other – please elaborate 7

This was not my top one, but I think the impact of violent misogynistic porn is something that is worth examining. I don't know if that comes under media, but it might need it's own category.

- Please outline the reasons for your answer below:

To be honest, my ranking was influenced by what I see around me. I can see all around me that women do the vast majority of caring work, organising the family etc. This then impacts them in terms of participating in public life, paid work etc.

- Please include any further comments or observations you may have here.