

Analysis of the Public Submissions of the Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality

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

Non representative sample with a stake in these issues

Approach: Problem and Solution

Consensus, minority and dissenting views captured in selected/excerpted quotations

Broad consensus women are underrepresented in public life and decision making and this contributes to gender inequality

Key concerns

1. Barriers to women's representation & participation: structure of public roles, gender stereotypes about leadership & different standards applied to women & men in public life.
2. Party political culture & institutions maintain overrepresentation of men in political office, demands of political office incompatible with care & family life.
3. Culture & networks of recruitment & promotion advantage men & maintain women's underrepresentation in leadership in business & higher education.

Key concerns

4. Women under-represented in media & decision making in media industries. Women represented in stereotypical ways in traditional & social media, areas of public life where women experience hostility & abuse.
5. Women from minority groups underrepresented in media & higher education & excluded from senior decision making roles & representation in political office.
6. Gender balanced representation is lacking but positive actions & initiatives can deliver change.

Submissions identified solutions to these concerns

1. Education challenge gender stereotypes about who should participate in public life & whom can be a good leader.
2. Flexible working hours & family friendly policies in public life alongside gender sensitive candidate selection processes & rules of conduct to attract & retain women in political office.
3. Gender balance in decision making requires transparency in recruitment processes, unconscious bias training, mentoring programmes & gender quotas.

Submissions identified solutions to these concerns

4. Targets & quotas reach gender balance in media decision making, production, coverage & participation in programming. Protocols to tackle gender stereotyping in representation. Legislation to prohibit abuse directed at women social media.
5. Initiatives promoting inclusiveness alongside mentoring & training targeted at minority women to increase representation & participation in public roles.

Problem A : Organisation & culture of public roles leads to women's underrepresentation

“The manner in which leadership is practiced favours traditional roles, activities and interests of men.” CA 30108

“ It can be intimidating to be the only woman in the room. Especially if you feel you have to constantly defend your position and your qualifications.” CA 30018

Women's interest in public life

“We are talking about areas where you need to be bloodthirsty and often cruel as well as two faced. As stated most people especially women are not suited to such things.” CA 30007

“The problem arises from the reluctance of women to participate in such activities, because nowadays, every woman can run a company and manage it, start elections, and here the voters decide. These are independent women's decisions.” CA 30060

Women's interest in public life

“Women do not go up for leadership positions because they strongly disagree with the masculinist way in which institutions are being run.” CA 30031

“Broader social factors keep women out of public life. Women's lack of confidence; gender stereotyping; unfair and unequal weight of caring assigned to women as opposed to men.” CA 30217

Problem A: Solutions

“Raise girls to be confident and value their voice. Stop interrupting us when we speak.” CA 30242

“Providing (girls especially) with relatable leadership role models (who they perceive as similar to themselves).” CA 30037

Problem A: Solutions

“Educate men on the downsides of creating a "lad" culture so that they're aware how their behaviors deter women from participating and succeeding in leadership positions. Make sure they understand the benefits of a diverse leadership team with statistics.” CA 30018

Problem B: Women's representation in media

“Wherever you look, women are still underrepresented in the film industry the proportion of finances allocated to their projects is less than their male colleagues.” CA 30184

Problem B: Women's representation in media

“In terms of media treatment of men and women, I don't know where to start! Women can be referred to in terms of their relationship to a man rather than in their own terms. Over emphasis on looks, appearance and dress for women but not for men.” CA 3022

Problem B: Women's representation in media

“It is incredibly difficult to be seen as a strong worthy leader if constantly portrayed as an angry, shrill, woman.” CA 30210

“Women are still held to a different standard than men and receive more threats of violence against them on social media, this abuse needs to be addressed.” (CA 30235)

Problem B: Solutions

“Press ombudsman office to maybe examine the use of language around gender of politician's and produce guidelines to help combat gendered stereotyping which creates public mistrust of women in high office (even after we've had 2 female Presidents)” (CA 30210)

Problem B: Solutions

“Also the media need to look at panels on radio, chat shows etc. and make sure women are represented” (CA 30088)

“Tech companies could do a lot more to stop the online abuse of women, the state will probably have to force them to do so.” (CA 30235)

Problem C : Women's underrepresentation in decision making in business & public sector

“The concentration of women in lower paid jobs and outside of senior management roles and few supports for working parents are deeply connected to the low levels of women in economic decision-making.”
(CA30179)

Problem C : Women's underrepresentation in decision making in business & public sector

“Women are still not being considered for senior roles. They are being shouted down or dismissed in the board room, if they even get in there.” (CA 30017)

“Men doing business over a pint in a pub after office hours while women rush home to look after children etc. Too much business is done in situations and places that exclude women.” (CA 30115)

Problem C : Solutions

“Government should lead this, ensure state boards are equally represented.” (CA 30146)

“There is a need for absolute accountability and complete transparency during any recruitment processes.” (CA30191)

“Create mentoring programmes for women at all stages of their career.” (CA30249)

Problem D : Women's underrepresentation in political office

“The hours of the Dáil are not family friendly. The confrontational style of the Dail is old fashioned and very masculine way of working. “(CA 30241)

“No childcare expenses can be claimed if running for election. No maternity leave for politicians or ability to use a proxy if child is ill etc..” (CA 30228)

“Women in public roles face far more comment, criticism and harassment than their male counterparts.” (CA30208)

Problem D: Solution

“The grassroots system of selection needs to be reformed, root and branch. It's male dominated, and it's dominated by dynasties. It's still all very 'old school'. (CA 30110)

“An entitlement to maternity / adoptive leave should be introduced for all elected TDs Senators and Councillors.”
(CA30207)

Problem D: Solution

“Quotas for all walks of public life. Legislation is the only thing that will overcome such barriers. It can always be repealed if and when it achieves its objectives. The women are qualified and experienced, they just need the opportunity.” (CA 30110)

“Quota to any position is not equal opportunities it is forcing equal outcomes. Almost every position is open to a woman just like a man they must all show their worth. Hiring someone based on sex to fill a quota is sexual discrimination.” (CA 30086)

Equality in women's representation in public life should extend to all women

“Diversity in local representation matters. It is often those who are furthest away from power - Traveller and Roma women, working class women, disabled women, migrant women and carers – who experience the impact of policy making the most.” (CA30179)

Equality in women's representation in public life should extend to all women

“Gender balance in leadership roles in trade unions, business, politics and public life is crucial to ensure accountability and responsiveness to women in all their diversity. Ensuring that the voices of women are heard in decision making and that their participation is supported and resourced is key to tackling gender inequalities from the ground up.” (CA30275)