

PUBLIC CONSULTATION - CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY ON GENDER EQUALITY 2020

QUESTIONNAIRE

CA30016

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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 think that the issues start as early as primary school but continue into secondary school. In younger years, in areas like childrens toys and clothes there is a clear stereotype of girls being caring, gentle, kind, pretty etc whereas with boys it's far more along the lines of being adventurous, brave etc. Then when girls later get into secondary school the various subjects they're offered and encouraged to take will reflect those norms. I attended an all-girls secondary school and I wasn't able to take a number of STEM-subjects such as Applied Maths, Technical Drawing or Economics. Similarly the local all-boys school didn't offer Home Economics. We did have a single honours maths class but students were practically encouraged to drop down to Pass if they weren't excellent at it - I very much doubt the same standard was applied to men.

- 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.)

I believe that all parties hold responsibility for improving this: Private Sector: The private sector needs to be more mindful of the kinds of toys that they're manufacturing and the clothes. Education Sector: I believe that the education sector holds some of the biggest responsibility in this area, not only in expanding the range of subjects available to girls schools but also in actively encouraging girls to participate in these subjects. I also believe further education in gender stereotyping awareness is necessary.

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 think there are a number of barriers around this. Culturally, women are still seen as primary care-givers in the home, and thus their roles in the workplace are considered 'less' than the mans. Once women give birth they are more likely to take flexible working options, or to take time off for caring responsibilities, or to take less-well-paid roles which offer more flexibility. Also, women generally take a year off for maternity leave which leaves the company out of pocket. This results in women getting paid less than men, or not being promoted at the same rate.

- 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.)

In this case, the workplace practices causing these issues (flexible working, long maternity leave etc) are actually positive for women - the main issue is that they are not available to men. I believe that the main way to counteract these issues is to ensure that men are offered the same opportunities for care-giving as women - and equally importantly that they take them. If men were offered up to one year paternity leave, flexible working etc then it would lessen the responsibility of women to be care-givers and companies would stop associating these costs entirely with child-bearing women. As well as offering these options, there needs to be a cultural change whereby men feel comfortable taking and using these opportunities, and do not feel like they need to be the 'providers' for the family.

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.

Childcare is incredibly inaccessible and over-priced in this country. We are expecting our first child and getting a place in the creche has been a nightmare, we are currently looking at 3 months when we won't have any childcare and likely I will need to take unpaid leave to cover it. Anecdotally, I know of a few women who have to give up work entirely because it isn't possible to get childcare.

- 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.)

I believe that resolving this issue is entirely the responsibility of the state. Childcare needs to be heavily subsidised to ensure that it remains affordable for parents. There also needs to be an independent investigation into why the costs have spiralled, I don't understand how the childcare workers are striking because they aren't getting paid well enough, and at the same time child-care costs are extortionate. If it's an issue of high insurance costs then the state needs to look into state-provided insurance or similar. These for me is the biggest issue in care at the moment.

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.

I think the biggest issue here is general sexism to be honest. Politics requires a lot of confidence and self-belief which tend to be instilled far more in men than women. It also requires a lot of 'Putting Yourself Out There' which again isn't something women tend to do (because we have been culturally told to Stay Quiet).

- 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.)

I am actually a big fan of quotas but there is a lot of dislike for them amongst the general public so I don't think increasing the gender quotas is the way to go. I think that introducing politics and the idea of running for office to women in secondary school would be a great idea. If we could instill in them that this is something that they CAN do, that they are perfectly qualified for it etc then that would go a long way to making up the gap.

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

- Please outline the reasons for your answer below:

I think that paid work reflects the state of gender equality in a number of other areas (home, education, caring for others). To be honest, I feel like these are all so inter-linked that ranking them doesn't make a huge amount of difference.

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