

## **Public consultation - Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality 2020**

### **Questionnaire**

#### **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.**

We are making this submission as part of “Monthly Cycles” - a programme which is part of Dublin Cycling Campaign, running social cycling events for women and advocating for women’s inclusion in issues concerning public transport, active travel and the public realm.

We are particularly interested in the role that cycling can play in supporting women’s participation in public life. When the bicycle first became popular it became known as the “freedom machine” for women. It was said in 1896 that “for men the bicycle was a new toy but for women it was a steed upon which they rode to a new world”<sup>1</sup>. The bicycle revolutionised the way that women dressed, the places they went, the people they had the opportunity to interact with, and their physical health and mobility in public.

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<sup>1</sup>Popova, M. 2011. “Wheels of Change: How the Bicycle Empowered Women,” *The Atlantic*, 28 March 2011. Available online at: <https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2011/03/wheels-of-change-how-the-bicycle-empowered-women/73102/>

It is of particular concern to us therefore that over the past number of years, the gap between men and women cycling in Ireland has grown starkly - with just 27% of people cycling for work being women. Shockingly, fewer than 700 girls cycled to school in 2016 - a ratio of 1:9 compared to boys.

A study of women's "safety work" in public spaces found that women and girls tend to take significant precautionary actions in order to avoid perceived danger in public spaces. In "*The Right Amount of Panic: How Women Trade Freedom for Safety*"<sup>2</sup> the author shows how women adjust their behaviour, often in unconscious ways - adapting their routes home, avoiding certain dark streets, avoiding being alone at certain times of day, choosing their outfits according to their perception of their safety rather than their comfort.

The findings reveal the public realm to be a place where women are constantly moderating their comfort and their freedom for their own safety. These findings were echoed in Jackie Burke's investigation into women's and girls' safety in public in Dublin, as part of the UN Safe Cities Programme.<sup>3</sup>

The extremely low number of teenage girls in Ireland cycling to school also points to the impact of negative social norms on the choices made by teenage girls; research undertaken by Green-Schools revealed that young women are dealing with social issues such as peer pressure; harassment on the roads from drivers and young men; and a general perception of cycling as being "uncool".<sup>4</sup> It is our belief that we need to tackle these challenges in order to ensure that teenage girls can experience the autonomy of cycling with all its health and time-saving benefits, not to mention benefits for Irish society in terms of reducing pollution and congestion.

Debates over transport and the public realm are typically male dominated spaces, yet they are significant dimensions of women's lives, determining how they engage with their community, access their workplaces, and attend to caring duties during they may have. With this submission, we aim to draw attention to the ways in which our public space and our public transport is gendered, both in design and in use; we believe this merits more attention and a lack of gendered understanding of public space amounts to gender discrimination towards girls and women, with the consequence that women are disadvantaged in accessing their rights to participate in services such as education and work, or to undertake duties as carers or mothers.

Men, women and minority groups will access and use public transport and public space in quite different ways, as the World Bank's Maitreyi Das states: "*In general, cities work better for heterosexual, able-bodied, cisgender men than they do for women, girls, sexual and gender minorities, and people with disabilities. Faced with challenges ranging from transportation services that prioritize commuting over caregiving, to the lack of lighting and toilets in public spaces, many women, girls, and sexual and gender minorities around the world feel inconvenienced, ill-at-ease, and unsafe in the urban environment.*"<sup>5</sup>

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2 <https://policy.bristoluniversitypress.co.uk/the-right-amount-of-panic>

3 <https://arrow.tudublin.ie/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1032&context=aaschsslrep>

4 <https://greenschoolsireland.org/andshecycle-campaign/>

5 <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/urbandevelopment/publication/handbook-for-gender-inclusive-urban-planning-and-design>

In February 2020, the World Bank published a ‘Handbook for Gender-Inclusive Urban Planning and Design’<sup>6</sup>, setting out to analyse a range of areas of concern: accessing services and spaces in the public realm to mobility, freedom from violence, health and the built environment, as well as a gendered perspective on climate resilience. In March 2020, Transport for London launched its ‘Cycle your City’ campaign which aims to encourage more women to take up cycling.<sup>7</sup>

We are making this submission out of concern that Ireland is far behind regarding a gender analysis of how we design mobility services, not least the bike-to-work scheme which arguably perpetuates an inequity in use of public space by facilitating those with secure work, and disproportionately benefiting high earners who tend to be men; while doing nothing to support children, students, carers, the self-employed or those in precarious employment to access one of the cheapest and healthiest forms of transport.

**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.)**

Abolish the bike-to-work scheme and invest in bikes for school children, students and others. Where a bike-to-work scheme is offered, it should not be offered as a marginal rate tax break but rather as an incentive that benefits all workers equally, as well as those who work in the home.

Conduct further research into the gendered aspects of transport and the public realm, with specific focuses on groups such as teenage girls and ethnic minorities.

Apply gender and equality auditing to public planning, in accordance with the Public Sector Duty<sup>8</sup>, informed by the latest evidence-based research and in consultation with relevant stakeholders and representatives.

**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.**

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<sup>6</sup><https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/urbandevelopment/publication/handbook-for-gender-inclusive-urban-planning-and-design>

<sup>7</sup><https://tfl.gov.uk/info-for/media/press-releases/2020/march/tfl-launches-campaign-to-support-women-into-cycli>

<sup>8</sup>Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014. Available online: <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2014/act/25/section/42/enacted/en/html#sec42>

Stereotypes that are embedded in the education system for example school books which reinforce professions and gender.

A lack of women at leadership level in engineering - architectural professions. Women occupy just 10% of the highest-ranking jobs at the world's leading architectural practices.<sup>9</sup>

**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.)**

Third level universities to step up their commitment to training women to become engineers, with a particular focus on road engineering and transport design.

Tendering process to include gender-inclusive analysis for design of urban space.

Consideration for introducing quotas for participation of women in decision-making for design of publicly-funded road and public transport projects.

Consideration of quotas for engineering, transport planning and architectural professions, director appointments and leadership positions.

The burden of commuting to work on workers must be reduced. One possible way to work towards this goal is the introduction of mandatory workplace travel plans for all workplaces above a certain size. This is a goal contained in *A New Transport Policy for Ireland 2009 - 2020*. A workplace travel plan is a set of measures aimed at supporting sustainable travel for work-related journeys. It comprises actions to promote walking, cycling, public transport, carsharing, the use of technology instead of travel, and flexible working practices.<sup>10</sup>

Where it is possible for a woman to use transport other than a car to access employment, workplace transport planning has the potential to encourage a larger uptake of cycling and other more sustainable modes<sup>11</sup> while simultaneously opening up employment opportunities to women who would not otherwise have been able to access them without a car. One study of implementation of workplace travel plans in the UK showed that introducing plans doubled the proportion of staff commuting by bus, train, cycling and walking<sup>12</sup>.

Implementing a plan can be successful in reducing single occupancy car-use amongst workers<sup>13</sup> however, women are more likely to have more complex journeys, which can include getting groceries and dropping and picking up children and elderly parents.<sup>14</sup> Given what we know about women's travel patterns it is no surprise that women currently rely more on driving to get to work. This will restrict women from accessing employment who cannot afford a car or who cannot drive for one of many possible reasons. In Belgium, as well as countries such as

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/urbandevelopment/publication/handbook-for-gender-inclusive-urban-planning-and-design#>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.smartertravelworkplaces.ie/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Workplace-Travel-Plans-A-Guide-for-Implementers1.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Ibid p.79

<sup>12</sup> [https://econpapers.repec.org/article/eeetrans/v\\_3a44\\_3ay\\_3a2010\\_3ai\\_3a7\\_3ap\\_3a473-494.htm](https://econpapers.repec.org/article/eeetrans/v_3a44_3ay_3a2010_3ai_3a7_3ap_3a473-494.htm)

<sup>13</sup> [https://www.eltis.org/sites/default/files/trainingmaterials/evidence\\_in\\_depth\\_reviews\\_of\\_measures.pdf](https://www.eltis.org/sites/default/files/trainingmaterials/evidence_in_depth_reviews_of_measures.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.rte.ie/brainstorm/2019/0920/1077145-irish-women-driving-to-work-cars/>

Denmark, Finland, France, Germany and the Netherlands, commuting costs are considered a tax-deductible expense<sup>15</sup>. In Ireland there is no tax relief on expenses for getting to or from work. This must be addressed.

### **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.**

There is a considerable body of research focusing on children and young people's independent mobility<sup>16</sup>. This research examines the conditions that have an impact on children and young people's travel behaviours, and, in turn, the impacts that travel behaviours have on children and young people's wellbeing and development. Overall, the literature shows us that children and young people are becoming more restrained in their ability to be independently mobile due to increased car dependence changes in the built environment. One important feature to note is that generally, girls have less freedom to move around independently than boys<sup>17</sup>. This constrains girls from participating fully in health, education or other activities.

We can understand children and young people's independent mobility (or lack thereof) as an indicator of women's caring responsibilities. When factors reduce the possibility for independent mobility, parents or carers - who are most likely women - must take on the responsibility of accompanying children and young people to school and other activities.

- **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.)**

Prioritisation of Child Friendly Environments

Design of public transport systems so that complex 'trip-chain'<sup>18</sup> journeys can be undertaken with ease.

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<sup>15</sup> [https://www.eltis.org/sites/default/files/trainingmaterials/evidence\\_in\\_depth\\_reviews\\_of\\_measures.pdf](https://www.eltis.org/sites/default/files/trainingmaterials/evidence_in_depth_reviews_of_measures.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6267483/#B62-ijerph-15-02441>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.getirelandactive.ie/Professionals/Health/Research/Children/Childhood%20Mobility%20Report.pdf> p.44

<sup>18</sup> <https://nhts.ornl.gov/2001/pub/TripChaining.pdf>

#### **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.**

As stated above, the professional sectors which are responsible for designing our public realms tend to be dominated by men - we need greater diversity amongst the professional staff who are designing our public space.

There is a lack of engagement amongst key public figures leading public works projects regarding gender; this lack of leadership on the issue is a major challenge in terms of creating a working environment which welcomes diversity.

There is a lack of engagement with the public sector duty and its impact on how we design transport services at a senior level amongst public servants.

**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 1999, Vienna took a decision to gender mainstream design of public space, a commitment which followed a consultative process, happening at the time feminist Maria Vassilakou was appointed deputy mayor. This meant adding extra lighting to make walking at night safer for women, altering traffic lights to prioritise pedestrians and installing seating in nine new locations. More than a kilometre of pavement in Vienna was widened, and five areas were made entirely barrier-free, so as to better accommodate prams, wheelchair users and elderly people. We outline the experience in Vienna with a view to highlighting how, with a significant effort to undertake a consultative process which tracks women's journeys and identifies their preferences regarding mobility, Ireland could design much better quality of public transport which would benefit everyone equally.

**5. Where does gender inequality impact most?** Women who experience an intersection of discrimination; for example ethnic minority women or women living with disabilities.

**To conclude we would be interested in your response to the following question: In which area do you think gender inequality matters most?** Socio-economic disadvantage which is exacerbated through gender inequality, leaving women spending extra time on bus journeys, for example, of having to pay for taxi journeys where no public transport service is available.

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

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|---------------------------------|-------|
| <b>Paid work</b>                | ----- |
| <b>Home &amp; family life</b>   | ----- |
| <b>Education</b>                | ----- |
| <b>Politics and public life</b> | ----- |
| <b>Media</b>                    | ----- |
| <b>Caring for others</b>        | ----- |
| <b>Other – please elaborate</b> | ----- |

- **Please outline the reasons for your answer below:**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- **Please include any further comments or observations you may have here.**

**If there is any supplementary information or documents that you would like to submit as part of your consultation, please send this to [info@citizensassembly.ie](mailto:info@citizensassembly.ie), with 'Public Consultation Supplementary Information' in the subject line, along with your name to allow us to correctly match any documents with your submission.**