

PUBLIC CONSULTATION - CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY ON GENDER EQUALITY 2020

QUESTIONNAIRE

CA30096

Name: Name with Secretariat

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.

Certain religious communities (eg traditionalist Catholics and highly orthodox Muslims) are more prone to reinforcing gender stereotypes, the continuing - perhaps even growing - influence of these groups is such a barrier. Further, commercial interests literally 'follow the money', they sell whatever will be bought. To the extent that lack of imagination - even fear, especially fear of difference - on the part of some parents leads to their demanding gender-specific products, so commercial companies meet that 'need'. But commerce creates or encourages need at least as much as it meets whatever already exists. Thus, there is a cyclical relationship: people want, companies supply, other people see certain products and imagine that they need these and so forth. In sum: certain religious and commercial interests present significant barriers/obstacles to the ending of gender stereotypes - though the issues are more complicated than that.

- 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.)

As one who is fundamentally an anarchist it is not given to me to advocate or support state action and, again, as an anarchist, not a libertarian, I have to favour the community over the market, thus I am obliged to answer the question - but only in very crude terms - by saying that the 'education system' should deal with these issues. Indeed, there are few or no problems to which education is not the solution - though by that I mean something less reductive than the question implies. Equally, to reduce what needs to be done to a series of 'steps' is a barbaric oversimplification. But, roughly speaking, there should be 'more of the same', more of the feminist-influenced work on consciousness raising and erosion of gender stereotypes in and through schools that has been underway since the 1970s. This should not mean crude initiatives to ban books that do not satisfy modern tastes and the like, but the work of

encouraging each pupil to understand his/her potential fully needs to continue. There is also a strong case for eliminating single-sex schools but these needs to be done cautiously so that what emerges are not boys' schools to which girls are admitted, but schools that are truly not gendered.

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.

Here I think the fundamental problem is not so much that women are discriminated against - though in some degree they undoubtedly are - but that parents who care for children are disadvantaged. Thus, there needs to be a culture that recognises the value of parenting - not simply by women, but by men also. Career advantage accrues to people who have no children or who are 'standoffish' parents, those little involved in the raising of the child[ren] in question. The latter category usually consists of men though it is not universally so. In such a culture as currently prevails a woman can be disadvantaged by becoming a mother but a man can also be disadvantaged by becoming an involved father. Perhaps a fundamental shift would be to recognise that there is not 'work' and 'parenting' but that parenting is work.

- 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'm not sure this can be reduced to specific steps. It requires significant cultural change. But perhaps above all, people who are childless (whether by choice or not) must not be as advantaged as they currently are.

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 them in law, policy and practice.

The cost and quality of childcare in this country can best be described as a scandal. The well-organised childcare lobby needs to be challenged. In a culture of clientalism, such as that which prevails in Ireland, certain groups are undoubtedly advantaged to a disproportionate degree. Roughly speaking, it is well known that farmers, rental property owners and publicans almost always get what they want (and it is striking how many TDs belong to one or more of these categories). But the childcare lobby has grown in recent times and continues to demand that its members be allowed to provide sub-standard care at inflated prices. More bureaucratic state management of childcare through regulation will cause as many problems as it solves but steps have to be taken to reduce costs and improve quality.

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

I'm not sure this can be reduced to specific steps but the childcare lobby needs to be curbed.

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 one who is fundamentally an anarchist it does not fall me to answer questions of this sort. Democracy has to be way of life, not a way of choosing representatives. That requires far more fundamental change than could be discussed here. However, it bears saying that liberal feminist initiatives (eg more women on corporate boards or in high state offices) are fundamentally concerned with reinforcing that status quo, not changing it and they flatter to deceive, promoting the appearance of change as opposed to the reality. This kind of sponsored mobility is not feminist in any important sense.

- 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.)

Again, this is not something that can be reduced to 'steps'.

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

- Please outline the reasons for your answer below:

Education is the cornerstone of life, it is the means by which whatever is best is maintained and the best opportunity to productive change. This has always to be ranked first in importance. The ordering of other categories after that is arbitrary.

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

This survey is fundamentally flawed in attempting to reduce vast and complicated issues to simple answers.

