

PUBLIC CONSULTATION - CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY ON GENDER EQUALITY 2020

QUESTIONNAIRE

CA30227

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.

Great progress has been made on this front however there is still more that can be done. In education settings care should be taken to provide opportunities to get involved in activities, subjects, sports, hobbies seen as more suited one sex or the other. In terms of law and practice, the marketing, advertising and merchandising of products aimed at or for children have become marketedly more polarised in terms of being for girls or boys. For example in toy stores the pink aisle and the blue aisle. I would urge the assembly to visit a large toy store such as Smyths to see this in action. Independent early years stores are much less segregated but may be more frequented by parents who are middle class and above. In the pink aisle, girls are less likely to be offered the dolls and prams and tea sets of old but instead are bombarded with increasing amounts of glitter, shine, unicorns, princesses, glamour, miniature consumer collectables. What message are girls getting from this, are they being groomed to be as adults overly concerned with hyper feminine images and endless consumption? If we think about the changes in marketing to girl children in terms of barbie and bratz dolls as in the 1990s/2000s and the images that some young women in their twenties are cultivating in terms of aesthetic eg plastic surgery on lips and breasts. I don't think we can underestimate the effect that marketing and branding has on contributing to the messages that boys and girls are taking in as they grow up. Similarly, clothes are becoming far more polarised in terms of boy and girl clothes even from the tiniest babies. While pink and blue has been a feature for some time, the clothes themselves would be broadly similar. Now even baby boys are wearing larger fitting, more rugged clothes than those made for baby girls. Baby boys wear miniature versions of very masculine mens clothes, baggy jeans, big chunky footwear, hoodies, etc. As the two sexes grow, girls clothes can often be more tight fitting, showing a lot more skin, with slogans that focus on being pretty, being a princess, being kind (nothing wrong with that but you wouldnt see that on a boys tshirt) in other words a lot of messages that put girls into a decorative, passive and supportive role. The boys on the other hand have slogans that convey action, adventure, boldness

on clothes that are looser, wider, show less skin. A trip to a couple of big clothing stores would be a good idea to really see the stereotyping in action. To counter this there should be a ban on segregating by sex for children's products and they should be mixed up more while on display. A larger proportion should be designed and branded with both sexes in mind.

- 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 should lead a cross sectoral working group with experts, retailers and manufacturers and seek change on a voluntary basis - as a lot of our goods cross borders, this needs to be tackled at EU level. If it cannot be addressed voluntarily then regulation needs to happen.

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 agree with the statement made however I have no insight to offer on this point other than the importance of offering part time and flexible working across more sectors and at various levels of seniority which may offer more opportunities to work in other better paid sectors. This flexible and part time opportunities are becoming essential for men with caring responsibilities too. Things are changing for the better with many younger parents sharing the responsibility for creche pick ups and drop offs etc as their work schedules allow.

- 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 think the measures to improve maternity paternity and parental leave have made a massive difference. Many employers are responding to the needs of their workforces and offering supports that enable people to balance work and home life. One area of concern is that a two tier system could emerge with people in skilled steady

employment would have access to these supports but those in unsteady, hourly paid or zero hours contracts would not be able to access them in a way that supports caring responsibilities (while in theory zero hours contracts should provide the ultimate flexibility for the worker, in practice unless fairly and sensitively managed, the employer holds all the cards and can schedule workers at short notice for shifts that cause problems at home and if the worker doesn't comply they can lose hours and even the job.

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.

More men need to take parental leave. Women (and men) who avail of these supports need to be promoted with as much frequency as men and women who don't. If women and men who avail of these measures aren't seen as 'giving up' on their career aspirations but instead are promoted then things will change. Employers and employer organisations need to show leadership in this space. The public sector is showing leadership in this area and should share, along with other employers leading the way, the impacts with other employers at various fora/conferences.

- 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 said above this is an issue for employers, collecting and sharing research data of good practice with employers could be a way to change hearts and minds

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.

The quota for election to public office needs to be increased further. Political parties are barely meeting the quota. Its a chicken and egg situation. If more women were involved they would the norms and ways of doing things that dissuade women from entering politics. 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 there own terms. Over emphasis on looks, appearance and dress for women but not for men. Referring to men having sex with underage women (no such thing - they are girls) referring to underage sex (children do not have capacity to consent to sex with adults) Using headlines that diminish the role of men in violence against women eg 'Woman Raped' ??

- 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.)

Press and media should address their own shortcomings when it comes to sex based bias in their reporting. But the Broadcasting standards authority or similar oversight body should have a role to intervene if they see sexist headlines. Immediately increase the quota to 40% with a view to 50% within ten years.

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 6
- Home & family life 1
- Education 7
- Politics and public life 5
- Media 44

- Caring for others 2
- Other – please elaborate 3

Clothing and marketing branding of toys, clothes and products based for male and female people is a huge and growing problem. As a child of the 70s I grew up in a time where the work of feminists was beginning to pay off. I now see there is almost a backlash against that with more extreme polarisation of what is acceptably male or female and less unisex cross over in the middle. For example when I was growing up you got a packet of markers and a colouring book that was just that. The book contained lots of images some which you could choose to colour in, dolls, rockets, teddies, balls, seaside scenes and everything you could think of. Nowadays you get boy or girl colouring books. Boys have boats and balls and rocket ships, girls have princesses and unicorns. All the work that is done by government, education and the state, is being undermined by this insidious and in my view potentially harmful gendering of everything.

- Please outline the reasons for your answer below:

The family environment has huge bearing on gender equality. How are domestic and caring responsibilities shared by adults? how are children reared, are they given certain chores based on sex, encouraged to develop certain skills. Caring responsibilities have a profound affect on access to opportunities - e.g. hobbies, work, social life, sport. As women are taking on more of this duty then they are disproportionately affected by this loss of access.

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

My second point is that I find the statement at the start of the consultation worrying and unclear. We are asked to consider gender equality for men and women girls and boys and then you qualify by stating It should be noted that the Oireachtas resolution establishing the Assembly refers to women and men, girls and boys. However, for the purposes of this consultation, please understand 'gender' to refer to any and all options in terms of gender identity. I do not know if or how this statement will affect the outcome of the consultation but I believe extreme transgender ideology for the example that transwomen are women and transmen are men to be a dogma, a belief and not a reality. Transwomen or non binary males are men who do not identify as men. Transmen or nonbinary females are and will always be women although they don't identify as women. Sex matters, it has always mattered and it always will matter although it should never limit opportunities for either sex. I fear that this consultation will be used to shoehorn extreme transgender beliefs into the recommendations in the name of equality. Transgender ideology is regressive in terms of shoring up gender stereotypes and based on emerging information is benefiting males and harming females. More careful analysis must occur before overriding sex with gender

identity. I think that the evidence for persistent and widespread gender inequality in favour of males is right here in this movement. A tiny minority of people have succeeded pushing policy by stealth that affects over half the population, ie a woman is anyone who identifies as a woman. I of course believe that transgender people need protection as a vulnerable group and should be supported to live their lives authentically however they should be included as the sex they are not the sex they identify as for most purposes such as women's privacy and safety, prison, women's shortlists and quotas, statistics on gender pay and other measures, sports. It is my hope that transgender people are accepted by society as a valid member of the sex they are who does not identify with or express themselves according to that sex's gender norms. Believing yourself to be something does not make it true. In no other area of equality or life would such a practice happen. Eg a 19 year old athlete cannot identify as an 18 year old on the basis he is small for his age and he stayed back in school and he was premature. It just wouldn't wash! Similarly I wouldn't be allowed to identify as a minority ethnic group or disabled (although such people exist, they are not entertained by such groups or indeed policy makers) but yet the one area where this has been accepted is conflating sex and gender?? I realise you will have to address equalities of those who are transgender but please consider the significance of what you are doing in terms of its affect on women and girls in particular. Current extreme transgender ideology is regressive in the view of many feminists (not all) many men and indeed many members of the LGBT+ community including transgender people. I wish to remain anonymous as I work in the public service and fear harassment from some trans rights activists as as happened to others. I also fear dismissal from my employment. Despite these fears I had to stand up and express myself.