

PUBLIC CONSULTATION - CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY ON GENDER EQUALITY 2020

QUESTIONNAIRE

CA30273

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.

In terms of roles in the home, while it is important for both boys and girls to contribute to domestic duties there is an ongoing social stereotype to diminish male activity. This includes the notion of “useless dads” often used as an advertising trope, but also extends to the excessive focus on female centric areas of disadvantage while ignoring males areas - for example a focus on gender pay gap but not on gender hours gap. In effect it creates a dishonest narrative that disadvantage only runs one way. A further element of this is seen in schooling where female results being higher than male is promoted as a good thing and indeed the only area of focussed. Concern is where boys outperform girls. In spite of extensive research linking this to the structural nature of the education system there is limited focus on addressing this and indeed a trope of girls being cleverer is actively promoted, when in reality research would indicate “cleverer” here is a euphemism of more willing conform to a system that has greater benefits for them. This imbalance is also seen in third level where there is a focus on stem participation while ignoring the lower admission rates for boys in other areas.

- 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 actively promote increasing boys participation in other third level areas. It should also actively look at updating the education system structure to address how it disadvantage boys. One area that would be key is the shortage of male educators and active steps should be taken to remedy this. Promotional steps in non Stem areas (similar to those taken for girls in stem) should be undertaken to promote greater male uptake. Active surveying to understand what boys don't participate in areas where they are underrepresented should be undertaken. This stems from early childhood development. girls are often provided with dolls to play with while boys provided with building blocks and other more cognitive toys.

Clothes that are designed for boys include themes of action and adventure, while girls clothes generally have some sort of princess theme. Girls schools often have minimal STEM-type subjects on offer and instead offer Home Economics and Biology as their only science subjects, while the reverse is true for boys schools allowing them to only do construction/metal work etc.

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.

An active endorsement of fathers is key here. Research shows that men are adversely affected by the gender hours gap. Legislative steps to reduce overworking would be beneficial. In addition extending paternity leave entitlements significantly should be a priority. In addition comments attributed to government ministers such as “men play golf during paternity leave” are hugely unhelpful and these should not be simply tolerated

- 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.)

Extension of statutory paternity leave. It must be mandatory for fathers to take time rather than optional sharing- Scandinavian experience shows that men get squeezed out in the latter scenario. Actively require keeping of detailed records across all employee events including management of hours worked and reporting by gender. Remove exemptions to the work time directive based on seniority.

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.

Many covered in my previous answer.

- 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.)

See previous answer

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.

Put simply. Asking someone to vote for you just because of your gender is not credible- in effect it alienates half your voters if you suggest you're there to represent the other half. Even with higher numbers of women running we are seeing single issue candidates do not resonate with voters.

- 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.)

Politically the only step that should be taken is to encourage both genders to run . Any quota beyond that is self defeating.

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

The social disposability of boys in any equality conversation

➤ Please outline the reasons for your answer below:

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