

PUBLIC CONSULTATION - CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY ON GENDER EQUALITY 2020

QUESTIONNAIRE

CA30189	Name: Citizens Information Board
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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.

A 2019 Safe Ireland Report, *Gender Matters in Ireland*¹ found that a significant number of people continue to hold traditional views of gender-based roles and responsibilities and that younger people often hold more rigid views on gender equality and roles. For example, the Report found that 26% of young people under 25 believe a man should be the head of a household.

In terms of attitudes towards domestic violence, 20% of men said they believe women may provoke abuse against themselves, while 16% of adults in general feel this way.

The Report also suggested that the findings pointed to the views and actions of parents and older role-models reinforcing rigid views about home and societal positioning for men and women. For example, nearly 30% of over-65s believe that household chores like cooking and cleaning should be done by women, compared to 17% of people in general.

These findings are somewhat stark and are indicative of ingrained stereotypical gender views. They suggest a clear need for a critical appraisal of the values underpinning such views and how these are being transmitted through our socialisation and educational systems.

¹ https://www.safeireland.ie/policy-publications/#dflip-df_7296/1/

- 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 a general observation, as well as a focus on law, policy and practice as parameters for the analysis of gender issues, underlying social values relating to the role of women, poverty and wealth differentials and social class embedded in our culture require critical consideration..

Actions identified relating to the six high level objectives of the National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017-2020 need to be progressed with a greater sense of urgency. While some progress has been made² much more needs to be done in the areas of gender stereotyping with particular reference to care provision in the home.

Specific actions that should be prioritised to combat embedded negative gender stereotypes and norms include:

- Schools should include organised education about gender from primary school onwards
- Establish a programme of activity including research, awareness raising, to promote positive gender norms.
- Take a zero-tolerance approach to gender based violence and harassment in the workplace
- Place emphasis on promoting positive gender stereotypes across public policies, and across all media.
- Create family friendly work environments which promote flexible working and which value women's as well as men's roles in childcare.
- Examine recruitment and promotion processes for gender bias.
- Promote women's and men's participation in occupational segregated areas, such as apprenticeships, science and technology for women, and education, health and caring professions for men.

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,

² https://www.unecce.org/fileadmin/DAM/Gender/Beijing_20/Ireland.pdf

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.

The majority of workers who currently earn the minimum wage are female. Women of all ages are particularly vulnerable to lower rates of pay, especially if working part-time, working unpredictable hours, on temporary contracts or in certain sectors such as retail and hospitality which are frequently low-paid positions³. Also, there is a greater likelihood of part-time working by women which is often linked to the need to combine work with caring responsibilities. Data from the Labour Force Survey indicates that in 2018 the majority (57.9%) of those earning the minimum wage or less were working part-time.

According to figures from Eurostat⁴, women's gross hourly earnings were 16% below those of men in the European Union, while the gender pay gap in Ireland was 13.9%. The gender pay gap is generally much lower for new labour market entrants and tends to widen with age.

Feedback from CIB delivery services -- Citizens Information Services (CISs) the Citizens Information Phone Service (CIPS) and MABS points to the significant challenge many parents with children, particularly lone parents, face in taking up employment because of the poor availability and cost of child care. Other difficulties, referenced in queries by women and in feedback from Information/Advice Providers on issues impacting their clients, include welfare to work traps and related household financial strain. The interaction between the tax and social welfare system, the difficulty in transitioning from welfare to work, the types of jobs available and whether the skills of those seeking work match the requirements of these jobs are all relevant factors.

Women accounted for 70% of part-time workers (321,600 workers), of which over 20% classified themselves as involuntary part-time or underemployed.⁵ The insufficient provision of childcare is one of the main causes of high female inactivity but so too is the cultural gap between male and female participation in household work, elder care and emotional labour⁶. Research has demonstrated that over half of inactive Irish females reported caring responsibilities as the main reason for inactivity, against an EU average of 31%.

Key factors relating to women in employment can be summarised as follows:

³ Collins, M, 2016, *Earnings and Low Pay in the Republic of Ireland*, NERI, <https://www.nerinstitute.net/research/earnings-and-low-pay-republic-ireland>

⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Gender_pay_gap_statistics#Gender_pay_gap_levels_vary_significantly_across_EU

⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/file_import/2019-european-semester-country-report-ireland_en.pdf

⁶ NWCI (2019) Pre-Budget Submission to DEASP

- While women on low pay work both full-time and part-time, in the low paid part-time sector, women predominate – the latter is a key contributory factor to women’s low income and related economic insecurity;
- In some instances women on low pay are the only wage earners in the household;
- Many women on low pay support children;
- Women seeking to work on a part-time or flexible basis are often restricted to low-level and low-paid positions that do not make the most of their skills;
- Women and men in low paid positions need to continue to work to earn a living and often don’t have time to invest in training and upskilling, and, as a result, get trapped in low paid situations even though they want to progress.

Research carried out by the Nevin Economic Research Institute⁷ shows that the risk of low pay in households consisting of one adult with children was just over 50% -- this is likely to apply to women to a greater extent than men given that lone parents are predominantly women and that low pay is most prevalent in specific sectors of the labour market where there is a preponderance of women.

The types of jobs available to women who have child care responsibilities and/or who are seeking to return to the workplace or to take up employment for the first time are often precarious and low-paid. While the growing focus internationally on micro-jobs and the idea of ‘bundling’ ‘slivers of time’ to create a working week may be attractive to some professionals and freelance workers, it is likely to be a contributory factor to the entrapment of women in low-paid employment.⁸

Contemporary work restructuring involving the contracting out of public services (in particular, home care services) to the private sector has contributed to the destabilisation of work sectors traditionally occupied by women. Private contractors operate a business model that requires a maximisation of profits which frequently results in driving down pay and terms and conditions of employment. This has almost certainly resulted in further undermining the position of women in the lowest paid sectors of employment, many of whom are migrant women in domestic and personal care roles.

The cost of childcare acts as a significant labour market barrier for women. Recent research findings referenced in the Irish Times⁹ found that half of working mothers have considered giving up work due to the cost of childcare; almost 90% feel “overwhelmed at times” by the pressures of balancing work and their personal lives; while almost half feel they have been discriminated against at work because they are women.

⁷ <https://www.nerininstitute.net/research/earnings-and-low-pay-republic-ireland>

⁸ Murphy, M. (2014), Ireland’s lone parents, social welfare and recession, [http://www.communitylawandmediation.ie/fileupload/The%20Journal/CLM-eJournal-Issue-2-Volume-3%20\(December%202014\).pdf](http://www.communitylawandmediation.ie/fileupload/The%20Journal/CLM-eJournal-Issue-2-Volume-3%20(December%202014).pdf)

⁹ <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/half-of-working-mothers-consider-giving-up-work-over-childcare-costs-1.4189580>

- 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.)

- Activation policies need to take more cognisance of the gender aspects of both part-time work (which is frequently precarious and inflexible) and full time work which impacts on people's ability to carry out their child care responsibilities without undue stress;
- The Gender Pay Gap Information Bill 2019 (which lapsed with the dissolution of the Dáil) requires certain employers to publish information relating to the remuneration of their employees by reference to the gender of such employees. This legislation should be enacted as a matter of priority by the incoming Government and should be extended on a phased basis to cover all employers with more than 20 staff.
- Consideration should be given to the introduction of a more flexible working day (e.g., beginning at 7am and ending at 7pm) to facilitate earlier or later starts and finishes than possible in the usual 9-5 working day.
- Additional and targeted research is required to get more comprehensive gender disaggregated data relating to low-paid employment;
- There is a need for more research and analysis in relation to possible linkages between under-investment in public child care and women in low paid employment.

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.

While there have been significant developments in recent years, including increased participation by women in the workplace, there remain considerable gaps in supports for caring and unpaid work.

The vast majority (98%) of those who were looking after home/family in 2016 were women even though the number of men looking after home/family nearly doubled in the 10 years up to 2016, rising from 4,900 to 9,200.

A joint ESRI and IHREC 2019 report¹⁰ found that on average, women in Ireland spend double the time of men on caring and more than twice as much time on housework. The average time spent on care across the whole population is 16 hours per week, 10.6 hours for men and 21.3 hours for women. Among those providing regular childcare i.e. at least once a week, the mean weekly time is 35.2 hours per week: 42.6 hours for women and 25.2 hours for men.

Childcare provision and costs

Affordable early childhood education and care (ECEC) remains one of the most significant barriers to women's equal participation in employment, education and training¹¹.

During the past number of years, feedback from CISs and MABS has consistently identified the cost of childcare and the lack of adequate childcare support structures as major barriers to parents (particularly women) taking up work, increasing working hours and/or participating in activation programmes.¹² In light of this, CIB welcomes the roll-out of the National Childcare Scheme and its provision of both universal and targeted measures for families in need of 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.)

A joint ESRI and IHREC 2019 report¹³ identified a need for changes in social and employment policies that support carers, facilitate the combination of care and employment and encourage greater male participation in care. It also highlights the need to address the clear connection between caring responsibility and gender inequality in the labour market and states (p.xiii) that without greater equality in terms of unpaid work, greater gender equality in the labour market is unlikely to be achieved.

¹⁰ Caring and Unpaid Work in Ireland (2019).

<https://www.esri.ie/system/files/publications/BKMNEXT382.pdf>

¹¹ NWCI (2019) National Women's Council of Ireland's Pre-Budget Submission 2020 to the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection.

¹² https://www.citizensinformationboard.ie/downloads/social_policy/social_prebudget_2020.pdf

¹³ <https://www.esri.ie/system/files/publications/BKMNEXT382.pdf>

Further research is necessary to explore the more detailed cultural, social and policy processes (social services, family policies, tax/welfare policies, employment policies) that shape gender roles in the home and the related ability of many women to engage in quality work.

It is important to ensure that family carers are adequately supported in their caring role and secured as far as possible from exposure to the negative professional and personal consequences which are commonly acknowledged to result from assuming the role. The right of workers to flexible working time, and its encouragement as a way of facilitating employees' balancing of work with care obligations is an important consideration.

The measures to support the balancing of work with providing care in the home must be part of a suite of measures by which Government supports family care, including those who choose to care full time. Those who do leave the workforce to care must be supported to re-enter it through appropriate reactivation initiatives when their caring role comes to an end, and offered adequate social security to ensure they do not fall into poverty through caring. To date activation policies have not fully catered for women with child care responsibilities.

Take-up of reduced hours options remains strongly gendered in Ireland (Russell et al., 2017b; Russell et al., 2014)¹⁴. Changes in organisational culture are needed to normalise part-time work among men, to reduce long hours work culture and to reduce the penalties attached to part-time work. This would also facilitate a shift towards more gender equality in paid and unpaid work. This change may also be consistent with many men's preferences.

Policies to assist working carers should include the following elements:

- Appropriate long-term care services to support dependent persons and their families
- Adequate Income support measures for full-time carers
- More working time flexibility arrangements

The literature on work and care suggests that carers who retain a working identity often respond better to the demands of caring, and are not as exposed to some of the risks associated with the caring role, such as social exclusion or isolation, or negative impact on psychological and physical wellbeing as well as on their financial circumstances.¹⁵

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

¹⁴ ESRI 2019.

¹⁵ <https://familycarers.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Paying-the-Price-The-Hidden-Impacts-of-Caring.pdf>
<https://familycarers.ie/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Submission-to-Oireachtas-Joint-Committee-on-Justice-and-Equality-on-proposed-EU-Directive-on-Work-Life-Balance.pdf>

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.

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In 2017, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) published its observations on Ireland's combined sixth and seventh periodic reports. These observations were scathing about the efforts made by successive Irish governments and State agencies to eliminate discrimination against women and respect and vindicate women's human rights since the previous report in 2005. While some progress has been made since 2017, there remain significant issues which require attitudinal, policy and political changes.

The CEDAW Report identified 58 aspects of Irish life and legislation that "adversely affect women" and prevent them from enjoying "human rights and freedoms".

The Committee has called for state action for Traveller women on health, education, housing and employment outcomes.

On participation in public life, the Report asked the State to "*consider extending the Electoral (Amendment) (Political Funding) Act of 2012 to local government elections*" in order to introduce gender quotas for local government elections.

The Committee also made detailed recommendations on the right to health for women in Ireland, including in relation to the legal and policy framework on reproductive rights.

Women are significantly under-represented in decision-making structures in Ireland at both national and regional levels. Less than a quarter (22.5%) of TDs in Dáil Éireann are women in 2020 and they account for only one-fifth of members of Local Authorities. The average female representation in national parliaments in the EU in 2016 was 28.7%."

- 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.)

Educational curricula need to be significantly reconfigured to address the obvious negative female stereotyping that pervades our culture.

Clearly, better supports for childcare are required coupled with better provisions for flexi-time working.

Since women are more strongly represented among workers on the minimum wage or below, Government should continue to strive to move towards making the Living Wage a legal requirement.

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

There needs to be a much stronger focus on measures to reconfigure the gendered nature of care work, and to create the conditions to encourage men to take on more such work both in the home and in paid work roles.

Legislation for a referendum on Article 41.2 of the Constitution should be expedited with particular reference to acknowledging the vital contribution to society of families in a caring role while removing the clear gender bias contained in the Article.

Gender equality issues affect women, the LGBT+ community and, men to a lesser extent. A root and branch value-critical analysis is required of the complex national and international structural issues that impact on gender inequality.

The experience of many CIB service delivery clients clearly indicates that as a society we can do no less if we are serious about gender equality. It is to be hoped that the work of the Citizens Assembly on Gender Equality will identify a clear pathway forward.

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, with 'Public Consultation Supplementary Information' in the subject line, along with your name to allow us to correctly match any documents with your submission.