



Report of the Citizens' Assembly on **Gender Equality**

June 2021





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Executive Summary

Establishment

The Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality was established by Oireachtas resolution in July 2019 to 'consider gender equality and make recommendations to the Oireachtas to advance gender equality by bringing forward proposals to:

- challenge the remaining barriers and social norms and attitudes that facilitate gender discrimination towards girls and boys, women and men;
- identify and dismantle economic and salary norms that result in gender inequalities, and reassess the economic value placed on work traditionally held by women;
- in particular, seek to ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in the workplace, politics and public life;
- recognise the importance of early years parental care and seek to facilitate greater work-life balance;
- examine the social responsibility of care and women and men's co-responsibility for care, especially within the family; and
- scrutinise the structural pay inequalities that result in women being disproportionately represented in low pay sectors.'

The resolution also asked the Assembly 'to prioritise the proposals, which may include policy, legislative or constitutional change, having regard to the legal requirements and the costs versus the potential impact'.

It specified that membership of the Assembly would consist of 100 persons – a Chairperson¹ and 99 citizens entitled to vote at a referendum, recruited at national level and randomly selected in accordance with best recruitment practice, as advised by industry experts, so as to be broadly representative of Irish society.

¹ Generally referred to as the Chair for the remainder of this report



Membership and meetings

Dr. Catherine Day was appointed to chair the Assembly in October 2019 and 99 members were selected randomly by a market research company. A panel of substitutes was also selected, some of whom replaced members who subsequently had to leave the process.

An introductory, inaugural meeting took place on 25 January 2020 and the first full meeting took place in person from 15-16 February 2020. Soon afterwards, meetings had to be postponed due to Covid-19 and the associated public health restrictions. After consultation with the members, the Assembly resumed online with a pilot session on 4 July followed by seven online meetings between October 2020 and April 2021.

Open Letter and recommendations

After deliberating on all the topics under its remit, the Assembly agreed 45 recommendations through e-voting at its final meeting on 17-18 April 2021. These recommendations are the most important outcome of the process. However, they are rightly very focussed on specific actions and priorities, and, if read as a stand-alone text, do not fully convey the mood and reflections of the members. Over the course of their work, members expressed their wish to make their political representatives aware of their general views on gender equality, on the Assembly process and of their expectations. After discussion, they decided to send an Open Letter to the Oireachtas to convey these sentiments.

Members agreed the final letter by Zoom poll with 95.6% in favour. Some members also contributed to a video reading of the Open Letter, thus emphasising their ownership of its messages. This is available at www.citizensassembly.ie.

In the Open Letter, members call for change now and for Ireland's laws and policies to be transformed to make them fit for a more gender equal post-Covid world. Members call on the Oireachtas to match their commitment by accepting their recommendations and implementing them without delay to deliver gender equality for Ireland.



Open Letter to the Oireachtas from the Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality

We are the members of the Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality. We were selected as a cross section of Ireland's people and are honoured to represent our fellow citizens in advising you on advancing a more gender equal Ireland for all. We see our recommendations as successors to those of previous Citizens' Assemblies that have helped transform Irish society to reflect how Irish people want to live their lives in the 21st century.

Undeterred by the Covid-19 pandemic, and despite the challenges of moving online, we gathered in mutual respect and openness as we listened, learned, and reflected. Our views on gender equality were deepened and at times challenged. We looked back into Ireland's history, we looked at present day society and we are now submitting to you a new view of a future Ireland where gender equality is the norm. We have worked hard together to agree a set of recommendations which we believe could make a real difference to the everyday lives of everyone living in Ireland, young and old.

Covid-19 has highlighted a cultural shift in our attitudes to gender-based inequalities in Irish life. It has magnified many shortcomings and gender inequalities which are no longer tolerable. We want to see change now. We believe our laws and policies need to be transformed to make them fit for the post-Covid world.

We ask that you bear the following in mind as you respond to our recommendations and also as you develop laws and policies in the longer term.

- Gender equality is a matter of human rights, justice, and fairness. It must underpin all of our interactions as a society. The State has a special responsibility to treat all of its citizens equally, regardless of their gender identity, in compliance with Article 40.1 of our Constitution ('All citizens shall, as human persons, be held equal before the law').
- While there are still many inequalities in women's lives that need to be eliminated, we also recognise that gender inequalities are intensified by discrimination on other grounds. Men also suffer from inequality, lack of opportunity and discrimination. Some of the prevailing gender norms and stereotypes are deeply destructive and adversely affect all genders. Trans and non-binary people suffer from particular facets of inequality. Advancing



gender equality through implementing our recommendations can benefit the whole of Irish society, regardless of gender identity. We are recommending behavioural change so that all citizens are respected and valued.

- Even pre Covid-19, it was clear that we need to transform our models of care to ensure that our society values every person, and provides high quality care for all who need support at every life stage. Post the pandemic, it is even more urgent to commit to well designed, publicly funded pay and career structures for carers whose invaluable work in the home and wider community contribute so much to the common good of our society.
- Ambitious, not incremental, change is needed to ensure political, business, sporting and cultural institutions are more representative of Irish society in terms of gender balance and representation of minorities. Without affirmative action to increase the number of women in representative office at national and local level, change will be too slow and we want to see change now.
- Gender equality is vital for a sustainable and equitable economy. It helps to reduce poverty and promotes economic growth. At work, the gender pay gap must end and we need a better work-life balance for the good of our families and our society.
- Gender stereotyping and old gender norms must be eliminated, including through education. Everyone must be supported in achieving their own potential, regardless of their gender identity. Urgent legislative action is needed to hold technology and social media companies to account for identifying and removing sexually violent or abusive content and to penalise and eliminate hateful and abusive language, including on the basis of gender.
- There is no place in our society for gender-based violence. We support the aspiration of the Istanbul Convention to create a Europe free from violence against women and all forms of domestic violence. We want our Government to work actively towards this goal.



Our recommendations call for better public services and improved social protection in order to advance gender equality. These should be funded firstly through greater efficiency and accountability for public funding and reprioritisation between current spending and revenue raising. If necessary, we are also prepared to support and pay higher taxes based on the principle of ability to pay, to make a reality of our recommendations.

We have enjoyed our work in the Assembly and welcomed the opportunity to contribute our views. Each of us has invested serious time and effort in our work, conscious of the importance of the theme of gender equality in our own lives and for the healthy development of our society.

We urge you to match our commitment by accepting our recommendations and implementing them without delay to deliver gender equality for Ireland.



Commentary from the Chair of the Assembly

The Oireachtas and the Government will wish to take time to consider the recommendations individually as they cover a wide range of policy areas. However, it will also be important to keep in mind the broader messages of the Assembly. These relate to treating gender equality as a matter of human rights, justice, and fairness which must underpin all of our interactions as a society. Making this a reality will involve measures ranging from amending our Constitution to new Ministerial responsibilities, collecting data and enforcing laws and commitments.

The Assembly only has the power to make recommendations. In many discussions, members expressed concern that their recommendations might be disregarded or left to 'gather dust on a shelf'. However, these recommendations should carry the force of persuasion. They are submitted in response to a mandate from the Oireachtas, they are based on factual information, evidence and months of discussion between citizens who have shown dedication and commitment to their work. The Oireachtas and Government cannot be bound by the recommendations, but if our society is to continue to use Citizens' Assemblies to get representative views on important issues, the response should show that the citizens' recommendations have had a tangible impact. If certain recommendations will not be taken up, there should be a clear explanation of the reasons why they have been rejected.



Assembly recommendations

The Constitution

1. Article 40.1 of the Constitution should be amended to refer explicitly to gender equality and non-discrimination.
2. Article 41 of the Constitution should be amended so that it would protect private and family life, with the protection afforded to the family not limited to the marital family.
3. Article 41.2 of the Constitution should be deleted and replaced with language that is not gender specific and obliges the State to take reasonable measures to support care within the home and wider community.

Care

4. To improve the terms and conditions of those in paid employment as carers (for children and adults):
 - (a) They should have a pay structure and benefits (including sick pay and pensions) that reward their level of skill and training, similar to those of teachers and nurses.
 - (b) They should have a career structure, including access to training and professional registration, which enables them to progress in their chosen area.
5. Reform Carers' Allowance by:
 - (a) Increasing the level of the income disregard.
 - (b) Reimbursing the costs associated with caring.
 - (c) Increasing the ceiling on the number of hours in paid work outside the home.
 - (d) Providing access to State employment and training programmes.



6. The State should develop an individualised pension solution for carers to ensure they have an adequate income once they reach retirement age.
7. Improve respite provision for carers by:
 - (a) Increasing the level of the Carers' Support Grant in the next Budget and keeping it under review to ensure it keeps pace with other increases in social protection payments.
 - (b) Providing adequate access to a range of respite services to meet individual needs.
8. Ireland should:
 - (a) Over the next decade move to a publicly funded, accessible and regulated model of quality, affordable early years and out of hours childcare.
 - (b) Increase the State share of GDP spent on childcare, from the current 0.37% of GDP to at least 1% by no later than 2030 in line with the UNICEF target.
9. Paid Leave for parents should:
 - (a) Cover the first year of a child's life.
 - (b) Be non-transferable to encourage sharing of childcare responsibility between parents.
 - (c) Provide lone parents with the same total leave period as a couple.
 - (d) Be incentivised by increasing payment levels to encourage increased take up.
10. Older people and persons with disabilities should:
 - (a) Be actively supported and resourced to live independently.
 - (b) Have access to person centred financial supports to serve their individual needs.



- (c) Be enabled to participate as fully as possible in decisions on their care needs, based on principles of fairness, respect, equality and dignity.
 - (d) Be facilitated and resourced as much as possible if their choice is to be cared for at home.
11. Provision for those who wish to be cared for at home should be improved by:
- (a) Providing a statutory right for payment for home care packages as well as nursing care.
 - (b) Increasing the annual home care budget to meet growing demand and reduce waiting lists.
12. Lifelong care for persons with disabilities who need it should be seamless and there should not be any break in services provided or need to reapply for support when a person turns 18.

Social Protection

13. Adopt a fully individualised social protection system to reflect the diversity of today's lives and to promote an equal division of paid work and care.
14. Social protection services should:
- (a) Set social protection payments and/or supports at a level that lifts people above the poverty line, prevents deprivation and supports an adequate standard of living.
 - (b) Regularly train staff to prioritise dignity and respect in all contact with clients, including giving a choice in how they receive payments.
15. Take account of gender equality issues in piloting a Universal Basic Income scheme.
16. Address the specific needs of lone parents to incentivise and support them in accessing work or education, including provision of child and after-school care.
17. Immediately address the impact of the marriage bar by automatically qualifying women affected by the marriage bar for a state pension.



18. Regardless of the pension model, enrolment into pension savings should be automatic and start when a person starts earning, subject to a threshold on low incomes and an opt-out clause.
19. Introduce a Universal State Pension so that every resident of Ireland receives a pension upon reaching pension age.

Leadership in Politics, Public Life & the Workplace

20. By the end of 2022:
 - (a) Extend the gender quota for party candidates at general elections to local elections, elections to the Seanad and European Parliament elections and review every 5 years.
 - (b) Increase penalties for parties that do not meet the statutory gender quotas.
 - (c) The 30% threshold should be increased to 40% for women (and 40% for men) for all elections.
21. Improve gender balance on boards by:
 - (a) Making funding to public bodies contingent on reaching a 40% gender balance quota by 2025.
 - (b) Enacting gender quota legislation that requires private companies to have at least 40% gender balance according to specific criteria such as turnover, number of employees etc.
22. Public funding to cultural, sports, arts and media organisations should be contingent on:
 - (a) A quota of 30% representation of women, and of men, on their Governing bodies by 2025 and 40% by 2030.
 - (b) Published plans to advance gender equality in their organisations.
 - (c) Annual reporting on progress towards agreed quotas on gender representation and funding.



23. Improve family-friendly practices for all representatives elected to public office by:
 - (a) Making maternity, paternity and parental leave available to all elected representatives, including Ministers (*through legislation or constitutional amendment as required*).
 - (b) Providing flexible working options including remote working and voting and adjusting meeting times and rules to suit caring responsibilities (*through legislation or constitutional amendment as required*).
24. Strengthen legislation, reporting and monitoring of press and social media by:
 - (a) Holding technology and social media companies accountable for immediately removing online content that constitutes sexual harassment, bullying, stalking, sexually violent or abusive content that they have identified or about which they have been informed.
 - (b) Penalising and eliminating hateful and abusive language, including on the basis of gender, with regular reviews to ensure legislation keeps pace with technological advances.
25. Work places should be required to develop, resource, implement and monitor gender-neutral recruitment and promotion policies and practices including:
 - (a) Specific policies to promote gender equality in leadership positions.
 - (b) A requirement to operate gender-sensitive and anti-discriminatory selection and promotions processes.
 - (c) Equal access to training, assignments and mentoring opportunities for all employees including part-time and remote workers.



Norms & Stereotypes and Education

26. Appropriately resource schools to facilitate:
 - (a) Provision of a broad range of subject choice that counters gender stereotyping.
 - (b) Provision of gender-neutral career information and advice from early second level education.
27. Curriculum review and development should:
 - (a) Promote gender equality and diversity.
 - (b) Explicitly cover gender power dynamics, consent and domestic, sexual and gender-based violence – both online and offline – within the revised Relationships and Sexuality curriculum.
28. All levels of the education system from pre-school to third level, led by the relevant Government Department, should:
 - (a) Ensure that initial education and continuing professional development for staff includes modules promoting gender awareness and gender-sensitive teaching methods.
 - (b) Monitor policies and practices – including school inspection and whole school evaluation – through the lens of gender equality and report regularly on trends and outcomes by gender.
29. In view of the gendered impact on women, reform the Third Level Grants Scheme to ensure that those accessing part-time courses are eligible to apply for a grant.
30. Provide appropriate State funding and resources for:
 - (a) Strengthening existing programmes to encourage women into male-dominated careers (e.g. STEM, Science Technology Engineering and Maths) and including apprenticeships.
 - (b) Developing initiatives to encourage men into female-dominated careers (e.g. caring professions).



31. Media and advertising, including social media, organisations should:
 - (a) Be more strongly regulated to promote gender equality and avoid gender discrimination and stereotyping and take action where discriminatory behaviours occur.
 - (b) Be obliged to annually publish details of their monitoring of, and compliance with, gender equality and inclusion measures.
 - (c) Make special efforts to improve the visibility of men performing caring roles.

Pay and Workplace Conditions

32. The State should set targets in legislation to reduce the hourly gender pay gap (currently 14%)² to 9% by 2025 and to 4% by 2030 with a view to eliminating it by 2035.
33. The Gender Pay Gap Information Bill should be enacted and implemented without delay. The law should include penalties for non-compliance and an obligation for annual reporting.
34. Increase the minimum wage to align it with the living wage by 2025 while considering potential employment impacts on small businesses.
35. Support employment contract security through:
 - (a) Establishing a legal right to collective bargaining to improve wages, working conditions and rights in all sectors.
 - (b) Increased resourcing of the Workplace Relations Commission for more effective enforcement of current employment laws.
36. Introduce a statutory right to reasonable access to flexible working.

² The latest data for 2018 available since the citizens considered this topic shows a gap of 11.3%. See https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/sdg_05_20/default/table?lang=en



Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence

37. All Government action to prevent and counter domestic, sexual and gender-based violence should be coordinated by a Cabinet Minister with direct responsibility for implementation of a national strategy.
38. Eliminate tolerance in our society of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence by developing and implementing awareness, prevention and education campaigns which may include children of an appropriate age on:
 - (a) The impact and harm caused by domestic, sexual and gender-based violence.
 - (b) Supports available to victims/survivors.
39. Support justice for victims/survivors by:
 - (a) Reviewing and reforming the courts system - including the family courts - to better protect and support victims/survivors of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence and their dependents and remove barriers to justice.
 - (b) Developing guidelines and specialist training for judges and lawyers regarding the treatment of victims/survivors, including the exclusion of the consideration of sexual history, character, attire and counselling/medical records.
 - (c) Introducing tougher sentences and rehabilitation programmes for the perpetrators of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence and sexual crimes.
 - (d) Providing specialised confidential health care and other support services for victims/survivors including legal representation.
 - (e) Putting in place a Victims/Survivors Commissioner as an independent advocate and voice for victims/survivors.



40. Ensure sufficient publicly funded provision of beds, shelters and accommodation for victims/survivors of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence across the country and their dependents in line with the Istanbul Convention.
41. Recognise female genital mutilation (FGM) as a ground for seeking asylum, and provide culturally sensitive specialised services for victims/survivors.

Gender Equality Principle in Law and Policy

42. Empower and adequately resource a statutory body for gender equality under the responsibility of a Cabinet Minister charged with cross government coordination of gender equality issues.
43. Ensure data gathering on key gender equality issues (including care), regular publication of such data and remedial action where necessary.
44. Reflecting international best practice, require gender impact assessment of all proposed legislation and legislate for equality budgeting across all Government bodies including local authorities.
45. Anti-discrimination and equality legislation should be:
 - (a) Regularly reviewed to ensure effective monitoring, investigation, reporting and enforcement.
 - (b) A standard part of employee training.

Members also voted in favour of the following:

Our recommendations call for better public services and improved social protection in order to advance gender equality. These should be funded firstly through greater efficiency and accountability for public funding and reprioritisation between current spending and revenue raising. If necessary, we are also prepared to support and pay higher taxes based on the principle of ability to pay, to make a reality of our recommendations.



PART A: Assembly design and process

Chapter 1: Background

1.1 Introduction

This report provides the context for the recommendations adopted by the Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality on 17-18 April 2021. It explains how the Assembly was organised and describes the move of the Assembly online due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The purpose of the report is to explain why and how the citizens chose the recommendations they adopted, after a lengthy process of debate and examination. Ownership of the process by the citizens themselves is crucial for the validity of the recommendations. The report explains in some detail how the members shaped the process and the outcome.

This background will be of interest to members of the Oireachtas, as they consider their position on the recommendations and to the civil servants charged with implementing those recommendations which are adopted by the Government and Oireachtas. It may also be of interest to anyone who is interested in the process of deliberative democracy and in comparing this Assembly to past and future assemblies.

In addition to reporting on the Assembly, the report contains a final section in which the Chair of the Assembly reflects on the process and makes recommendations for consideration in the creation of future assemblies.

1.2 What is a Citizens' Assembly?

Going back to ancient Athens, citizens' assemblies in various forms have long played a part in the democratic process. Broadly defined, a citizens' assembly is a gathering where citizens exchange views and consider different claims that are designed to secure the public good. Through their conversations, and a process of what is called 'deliberation', randomly selected citizens come to an agreement about what procedure, action, or policy will best produce the desired public good. Often also called models of 'deliberative democracy' or 'mini



publics', in modern times they provide a direct input to the process of representative democracy by providing recommendations to the legislature or other governing or state bodies.

1.3 Citizens' Assemblies in Ireland

The Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality followed two previous conventions/assemblies in Ireland, which led to significant Constitutional and social change.

Amongst a number of proposals for political reform, the 2011 Programme for Government³ included the establishment of a Constitutional Convention to implement 'a process to ensure our Constitution meets the challenges of the 21st century by addressing a number of specific urgent issues'. The Convention was subsequently established by Oireachtas resolution⁴ and made a number of important proposals for constitutional change. One of these was the recommendation to allow same sex marriage and to put the question of changing the relevant part of the Constitution⁵ to a referendum. The Convention was different in design from the subsequent Assemblies in a number of ways, for example, it included 33 representatives of the Oireachtas as well as 66 citizens.

Building on the work of the Constitutional Convention, a Citizens' Assembly was established by Oireachtas resolution in 2016⁶ to examine five separate topics of which the first was repeal of the Eighth Amendment to the Constitution. After deliberation over five meetings, the Assembly recommended repealing the amendment and replacing it with legislation on the termination of pregnancy.

Both of these assemblies resulted in clear recommendations to the Oireachtas to change long-standing and often controversial provisions of the Constitution. At the time when the recommendations were made, some commentators questioned whether the results were representative of the views of the general population. However, the Marriage Equality Referendum was passed with 62% of votes cast and the repeal of the Eighth Amendment with 66% of votes cast,

³ https://merrionstreet.ie/en/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/programme_for_government_2011.pdf p. 17.

⁴ http://www.constitutionalconvention.ie/Documents/Terms_of_Reference.pdf

⁵ Article 41.

⁶ <https://2016-2018.citizensassembly.ie/en/The-Eighth-Amendment-of-the-Constitution/Final-Report-on-the-Eighth-Amendment-of-the-Constitution/Final-Report-incl-Appendix-A-D.pdf>



which indicates that the views of the members broadly reflected the views of the general population.

1.4 Background to the Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality

One of the topics which the Convention on the Constitution was asked to consider was 'amending the clause on the role of women in the home', Article 41.2 of the Constitution. This states that 'the State recognises that by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved'. In May 2013, after considering this topic, the Convention on the Constitution voted on whether to change, delete or modify the clause. When they voted, 88% voted to modify the clause with 98% voting to make it gender neutral to include other carers 'in the home', while 62% voted to include carers 'beyond the home'.⁷

This recommendation was sent to the Oireachtas as part of the Second Report of the Convention on the Constitution.⁸ The Government accepted the recommendation on the need to amend Article 41.2, noting that a reference to carers in the Constitution required further reflection and consultation. It set up a Task Force to consider an appropriate response which reported in October 2016⁹, setting out three broad options:

- 1) to replace Article 41.2 with a provision which recognises the work of carers in the home, and a commitment to endeavour to support this work;
- 2) to extend the commitment to 'endeavour to support' carers beyond the home, through a new Article 45.4.3¹⁰ which would recognise care in the broader community, as well as in the home; or
- 3) to repeal Article 41.2 altogether (this approach was not recommended by the Task Force).

⁷ See <http://www.constitutionalconvention.ie/AttachmentDownload.ashx?mid=268d9308-c9b7-e211-a5a0-005056a32ee4> for details.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/TaskForceReport_Impl-2nd-Rpt-Conv-Constit.pdf/Files/TaskForceReport_Impl-2nd-Rpt-Conv-Constit.pdf

¹⁰ Article 45 contains a number of principles to guide the Oireachtas on social policy which are not cognisable in the Courts.



In its Programme for Government of May 2016¹¹ the Government committed to holding a referendum on Article 41.2.1 of Bunreacht na hÉireann regarding a ‘woman’s life within the home’.

On 12 July 2018, the Taoiseach, Mr Leo Varadkar TD, requested the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Justice and Equality to consider the General Scheme of the 38th Amendment of the Constitution (Role of Women) Bill. It was initially planned to hold a referendum on Article 41.2 in 2018, together with another referendum. However, on 5 September 2018 it was announced that the referendum was postponed pending the conclusion of pre-legislative hearings by the Oireachtas Committee.

Speaking to the Joint Committee in September 2018, the Minister for Justice explained that the Government’s preferred approach, on grounds of gender equality, was to delete Article 41.2, for the issue of care to be given separate and distinct consideration and to be referred to a citizens’ assembly. The Joint Committee on Justice and Equality issued its report on pre-legislative scrutiny of the Bill in December 2018.

One of the recommendations favoured by some members of the Committee was:

‘before proceeding with a referendum in 2019, to establish and engage in a public consultation process – an obvious possible model being how the Citizens’ Assembly addressed the issues around the eighth amendment... the prospect of a referendum on Article 41.2 offers an opportunity for a broader discussion on the role of care work; the rights and needs of carers, including financial supports; whether the value of care work to our society requires recognition in the Constitution; and if so, the form that recognition should take –

¹¹

https://www.merrionstreet.ie/merrionstreet/en/imagelibrary/programme_for_partnership_government.pdf
p. 153.



whether it should be more symbolic in nature, or enshrine concrete socio-economic rights.’¹²

In June 2019, the Government agreed to establish a Citizens’ Assembly on Gender Equality.

The length of time taken to decide how to handle the recommendation from the Convention on the Constitution, and the debates that took place at the time, demonstrated the different views on the best way to deal with this article. The majority of views publicly expressed agree that the article is outdated and that change is needed. Those who argued for simple deletion maintained that issues such as the recognition of care and carers should be handled separately through law and policy. Others argued that the principle of recognising and valuing care and carers should be enshrined in the Constitution. This could either be in the form of a symbolic recognition or by creating socio-economic rights that could be enforced by the Courts.

1.5 Oireachtas resolution

Following the Government decision, in July 2019 Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann agreed to a resolution¹³ establishing a Citizens’ Assembly to consider gender equality and make recommendations to the Oireachtas ‘to advance gender equality by bringing forward proposals to:

- challenge the remaining barriers and social norms and attitudes that facilitate gender discrimination towards girls and boys, women and men;
- identify and dismantle economic and salary norms that result in gender inequalities, and reassess the economic value placed on work traditionally held by women;

¹²https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/committee/dail/32/joint_committee_on_justice_and_equality/reports/2018/2018-12-06_report-on-pre-legislative-scrutiny-of-the-general-scheme-of-the-38th-amendment-of-the-constitution-role-of-women-bill_en.pdf

¹³ <https://www.citizensassembly.ie/en/news-publications/final-resolution-11th-july-2019.pdf>



- in particular, seek to ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in the workplace, politics and public life;
- recognise the importance of early years parental care and seek to facilitate greater work-life balance;
- examine the social responsibility of care and women and men’s co-responsibility for care, especially within the family; and
- scrutinise the structural pay inequalities that result in women being disproportionately represented in low pay sectors.’

The Assembly was asked to prioritise the proposals, which ‘may include policy, legislative or constitutional change, having regard to the legal requirements and the costs versus the potential impact’.

The resolution also set out a number of details regarding the operation of the Assembly which were broadly modelled on those of the 2016-2018 Citizens’ Assembly (see full text of resolution at Appendix 1).



Chapter 2: Main features of the Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality

2.1 Chair and Secretariat

A Secretariat, composed of civil servants seconded from the Department of the Taoiseach (as was the case for the previous Assembly), was gradually established between July 2019 and January 2020 to begin the work of setting up the Assembly.¹⁴ Dr. Catherine Day was appointed Chair of the Assembly in October 2019. Over this period, procurement began to secure the range of supports and services required to run the Assembly.

2.2 Selection of Assembly members and substitutes

The method for selection of members is set out in the Oireachtas resolution which specifies that:

‘Membership of the Assembly will consist of 100 persons as follows:

- A Chairperson to be appointed by the Government;
- 99 citizens entitled to vote at a referendum, recruited at national level and randomly selected in accordance with best recruitment practice, as advised by industry experts so as to be broadly representative of Irish society.

Membership of the Assembly will not include participation by politicians.’

Having examined the selection process followed by the previous Assembly and the Convention on the Constitution¹⁵, it was decided to follow a similar approach. This meant tendering for a company to recruit eligible candidates calling door-to-door to homes. As with the previous Assembly, the request for tender asked that citizens be selected to be broadly representative of the

¹⁴ There was a complement of six staff including the Secretary for most of the duration of the Assembly.

¹⁵ In both cases polling companies were used to conduct the random selection of citizens and to provide a list of eligible citizens who met the criteria together with a list of possible substitutes.



population in terms of gender, age, region and social class and eligible to vote in a referendum. The company was asked to select 99 members plus a substitute panel of replacements to fill any gaps in membership which later arose (see further detail in section 2.3 below).

The request for tenders was published on e-tenders but no responses were received by the closing date of 30 August 2019. After consulting the Office for Government Procurement, it was decided to conduct market engagement with potential suppliers to find out whether changes could be made to the requirements to increase the likelihood of responses.

Five companies were contacted by the Secretary and their feedback suggested that the lack of response was partly due to the very tight timelines involved, other business commitments and the fact that the work was seen as very resource intensive. However, it was considered that there was sufficient interest to conduct a negotiated procedure. Five companies were invited to initial exploratory meetings with the Chair and Secretary with three companies accepting this invitation. After these meetings, a request for proposals was issued to two of these companies. Following evaluation¹⁶, the contract was awarded to Amárach Research on 11 November 2019.

A three-stage recruitment process was agreed with Amárach. They carried out an initial recruitment process by calling door-to-door in sixty different, randomly chosen locations across the country to generate a list of interested candidates according to the criteria set out in the tender. These candidates were then screened by an Amárach call centre to ensure they met the eligibility criteria. The approved list was then submitted to the Secretariat of the Assembly who conducted a second screening to confirm eligibility and willingness to participate, including requesting participants to confirm in writing that they had been recruited randomly door-to-door.

In addition to the criteria set out in the Oireachtas resolution, it was decided to follow the precedent of the previous Assembly and exclude certain categories of citizens, such as certain categories of politicians and political party members,

¹⁶ The panel was composed of the Secretary and two people external to the Assembly including a former Director General of the Central Statistics Office.



journalists and others working in the media and campaigners on aspects of gender equality.

In line with the Oireachtas resolution and the recommendations of the Chair of the previous Assembly¹⁷, citizens were offered a modest gratuity for participating in the Assembly¹⁸. This was provided to members who completed the process.

2.3 Changes in membership during the Assembly

As for previous assemblies, Amárach Research was asked to provide a main list of 99 citizen members and a further list of 99 possible substitutes. The reason for recruiting substitutes lies in the experience of previous assemblies. Given the time commitment involved, and the duration of the process, it is inevitable that some people will have to drop out during the lifetime of the Assembly. For example, over the course of the 2016-2018 Citizens' Assembly, 53 substitutions were made to the membership.

As will be explained in more detail in Chapter 3 below, Covid-19 meant that after just one weekend meeting, the Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality had to postpone meetings for a number of months before resuming in October 2020. The resulting extension to the timeframe for the Assembly, as well as changed circumstances for some members arising from Covid, led to some members having to leave the process. Overall, it is estimated that at least 6 members left the Assembly specifically due to the move online¹⁹.

The Assembly was able to replace some of these members through the substitutes panel which had been recruited door-to-door prior to Covid. However, there were some vacancies involving certain combinations of demographic variables which were not sufficiently available on the substitutes panel.

¹⁷ <https://2016-2018.citizensassembly.ie/en/Manner-in-which-referenda-are-held/Final-Report-on-the-Manner-in-Which-Referenda-are-Held-and-Fixed-Term-Parliaments/Final-Report-on-Manner-in-which-Referenda-are-Held-Fixed-Term-Parliaments.pdf> pp. 105-107.

¹⁸ This took the form of a €500 voucher at the end of the process.

¹⁹ 5 others left the process and did not respond to contact from the Secretariat so their reason for leaving is unknown.



Due to the public health restrictions associated with Covid, a door-to-door recruitment method could not be used to fill these vacancies. Therefore, Amárach recommended recruiting by telephoning members of its existing research panel of nearly 5,000 adults who met the socio-demographic profile of the existing vacancies. A large number of members of this panel were previously recruited randomly by door-to-door and telephone recruitment methods. Therefore, candidates recruited by these methods were deemed eligible to fill existing vacancies if they met all other criteria. Similar to previously recruited members, those approached needed to be eligible to vote in a referendum and the same exclusions applied. The same two-stage verification process for members as applied to the original members was used.

In all, 42 members of the Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality were replaced by substitutes over the lifetime of the Assembly (compared with 53 in the previous Assembly). The comparable figures for this Assembly show 57²⁰ members served over this full period and 69 members served from the first full meeting in February 2020 (which was the first meeting where discussion and deliberation took place) to the end. Of the 42 substitutes, 23 were recruited by telephone from the Amárach panel and the remainder (19) were recruited door-to-door. A decision was taken not to replace any members who left the process after the December 2020 meeting. The Chair considered that they would have missed too much of the discussion, and would not be in a position to give a sufficiently informed view at the end. Therefore, the Assembly had 97 members (excluding the Chair) when it entered its final meeting over the weekend of 17-18 April.

Despite the constraints caused by the pandemic, and some members falling ill during the process, attendance at meetings compared favourably with the previous Assembly. As can be seen in Table 2.1, over the 2016-2018 period, the highest attendance at a meeting was 92 members and averaged around 80 per meeting. Between February 2020 and April 2021 the highest attendance for this Assembly was 94 members and averaged around 85 members per meeting.

²⁰ Excluding the Chair.



Table 2.1: Attendance at Assembly meetings

<i>Meeting Date</i>	<i>Venue</i>	<i>Topic/s</i>	<i>Number</i>
25 January	Dublin Castle	Inaugural – no substantive discussion	73
15-16 February 2020	Grand Hotel, Malahide	Norms and stereotypes, Article 41	85
17 October 2020	Online	Leadership	70
14 November 2020	Online	Work and social protection	86
5 December 2020	Online	Work and social protection	85
16 January 2021	Online	Care	90
13 February 2021	Online	Article 41	94
13 March 2021	Online	Domestic, sexual and gender-based violence; Care	92
17-18 April 2021	Online	Finalising ballot papers and voting	92

2.4. Initial programme of meetings

The topics set out in the Oireachtas resolution for the Assembly are broad, inter-related, detailed and complex. It was initially decided to hold six meetings of the Assembly, including an inaugural introductory meeting in Dublin Castle, between 25 January 2020 and 4-5 July 2020 when it was envisaged the Assembly would vote and complete its work. As for previous Assemblies, the meetings were scheduled to take place in a Dublin hotel²¹ over a weekend, commencing with an informal get together of citizens on the Friday night until the end of proceedings at lunchtime on the Sunday.

²¹ The contract to provide the hotel services was awarded to the Grand Hotel in Malahide following a tender process on the e-tenders website.



It was decided to organise the sessions around the different themes of the Oireachtas resolution such as gender norms and stereotypes, leadership, care, work, pay and social protection. At an early stage, the Chair also decided, in consultation with the Expert Advisory Group, that domestic, sexual and gender-based violence should be included as a topic given its importance as a gender equality issue, although it had not been mentioned explicitly in the resolution.

It was also planned that, similar to the previous Assembly, each session would consist of factual presentations from experts in the area under discussion as well as presentations from advocacy groups. Personal experience stories would be included to illustrate the issues from the perspective of individual lived experience. From the beginning, it was intended to provide plenty of time for discussion in small groups as well as in plenary session, as these roundtable discussions are seen as a crucial element of the deliberative process.

2.5 Rules of procedure

The Assembly adopted its rules of procedure²² at its first full meeting on 15 February 2020. These were largely based on those of the previous Assemblies. From the start, the Chair emphasised the six guiding principles of openness, fairness, equality of voice, respect, collegiality and efficiency.

2.6 Expert Advisory Group

The Oireachtas resolution provides that ‘a new Expert Advisory Group will be established for the topic being considered to assist the work of the Assembly in terms of preparing information and advice’. This follows the model of the previous Assembly and an explicit recommendation from its Chair, Ms Justice Mary Laffoy²³. The expertise and ongoing support of the Group was important in ensuring citizens had access to a broad, neutral and factual information base on which to base their discussions and recommendations.

²²<https://www.citizensassembly.ie/en/what-we-do/key-principles-rules-procedures/>

It should be noted that some of the procedures had to be adapted due to the transition online.

²³ <https://2016-2018.citizensassembly.ie/en/Manner-in-which-referenda-are-held/Final-Report-on-the-Manner-in-Which-Referenda-are-Held-and-Fixed-Term-Parliaments/Final-Report-on-Manner-in-which-Referenda-are-Held-Fixed-Term-Parliaments.pdf> p. 115-116.



To begin the process of scoping out the work, in November 2019 the Chair and Secretariat held two consultative roundtable meetings with a wide range of experts and organisations in the areas covered by the Oireachtas resolution. In all, 32 experts participated in these meetings and others were consulted separately by phone. Having considered the range of expertise required, the need for balance and the exclusion of advocacy groups from the Expert Advisory Group, the Chair decided to appoint seven experts to the Group²⁴.

The role of the Expert Advisory Group was to:

- Support the Chair and Secretariat in constructing a fair, balanced and comprehensive work programme on each of the topics;
- Provide background expert advice on the issues being discussed;
- Advise on the criteria for selecting specialists/experts to appear before the Assembly;
- Recommend names for the specialists/experts to appear before the Assembly;
- Advise on speakers from civil society and advocacy groups.

The Expert Advisory Group met 26 times between 10 December 2019 and 1 April 2021. They attended meetings of the Assembly and provided valuable advice and input between meetings. The previous Assembly had different Expert Groups for the distinct and unrelated topics under its remit. This Assembly kept one single Group throughout its life. This was because the Assembly had been given just one overarching topic - gender equality - and the cross-cutting nature of the items in the resolution meant that continuity and consistency of oversight was important.

2.7 Steering Group

Again, in line with the practice of previous assemblies, it was decided to have a Steering Group drawn from members of the Assembly to help the Chair and Secretariat guide the work of the Assembly. The Steering Group had six

²⁴ Details on the Expert Advisory Group are available at Appendix 2.



members who fed back the views of the broader membership and contributed to the Assembly's procedures and arrangements.

The creation of the Steering Group was agreed at the inaugural meeting in Dublin Castle on 25 January 2020 and members were invited to volunteer to fill six places on the group. Seven men and two women responded to the call to volunteer. In view of the need for gender balance in the group, a representative group of men was chosen on the basis of age and region and a further call for female volunteers was issued. As a result, a balanced Steering Group was constituted²⁵. One male member of the Steering Group left the process before the October meeting and was subsequently replaced by a volunteer with a similar demographic profile.

The initial intention in setting up the Steering Group was that the six members would liaise informally during each session with other members and feed back to the Secretariat the mood, wishes and any problems being experienced among citizens. The move online removed the possibility for this kind of interaction but the Steering Group still succeeded in being in touch with their fellow citizens and regularly conveyed their sentiments to the Chair and Secretariat. This proved very useful as part of the move online and on decisions to be taken on process as the work of the Assembly neared conclusion.

2.8 Research contract

The Oireachtas resolution provided that 'the Assembly will engage independent researchers to monitor and record, amongst other things, the perceived deliberative quality of the Assembly'. In October 2019, the Secretariat asked the Irish Research Council to run a call to select a research fellow to provide research support to the Assembly. After evaluation by an independent panel, the Research Fellowship was awarded to a research team led by Professor Jane Suiter of Dublin City University in January 2020.

Under the research contract, Professor Suiter ran a series of surveys of members, before and after the first meeting, and after each Assembly meeting. The feedback from these surveys was particularly valuable in providing the Chair

²⁵ Details of the Steering Group available at Appendix 2



and Secretariat with members' views on the transition online. As part of the research, Professor Suiter is also conducting interviews with a number of participants to get more detailed views on the operation of the Assembly. It is expected that her independent report will be completed before the end of June 2021 and, once finalised, it will be published on the Citizens' Assembly website.

2.9 Public consultation

As part of its terms of reference, the Assembly was authorised by the Oireachtas to 'invite and accept submissions from the general public and interested bodies and such expert advice as it considers desirable'.

The Chair of the previous Assembly had recommended in her final report that:

'it would be prudent for a future Secretariat to consider partnering with academics and researchers, both in relation to the design of the online form for submissions, and consideration of the ways in which the submissions could be analysed for the benefit of the members of the Assembly and the wider public'²⁶.

Informed by this recommendation, after a procurement process, Dr. Pauline Cullen of Maynooth University was contracted to design the consultation document and to analyse the public submissions received.

The public call for submissions opened on 29 January 2020 and closed on 6 March 2020. Respondents had the option of replying to a structured online questionnaire or alternatively submitting a response by email or by post using their own preferred style and structure. In all, 246 submissions were received - 66 from organisations and 180 from individuals which were all published on the Citizens' Assembly website²⁷.

Dr. Cullen's overall analysis of the submissions was presented to citizens at an online seminar on 4 July 2020 (see section 3.2 below). Her analysis of the submissions was also broken down into the themes of each subsequent meeting

²⁶ <https://2016-2018.citizensassembly.ie/en/Manner-in-which-referenda-are-held/Final-Report-on-the-Manner-in-Which-Referenda-are-Held-and-Fixed-Term-Parliaments/Final-Report-on-Manner-in-which-Referenda-are-Held-Fixed-Term-Parliaments.pdf> p.120-121.

²⁷ <https://www.citizensassembly.ie/en/what-we-do/public-consultation/>



and presented on video and in summary papers to citizens. The Secretariat also collated recommendations suggested in the submissions into a summary document sent to citizens in advance of each meeting to inform their group discussions.

2.10 First full weekend session

The first full weekend session took place in person from 15-16 February 2020. It rapidly became clear that the in-person meeting helped citizens to get to know each other and to begin exchanging views informally over coffee breaks, lunch and dinner in addition to their discussions in the formal sessions. The level of interest and engagement was very high, and many expressed the view that the process was an important democratic exercise in which they were keen to participate.

Quotes from members

The first meeting in Malahide, I thought these are going to be long sessions and they were long but they were very good and very well done.... And I thought yes this is going to be very good and very interesting and I felt it was going to be something well worthwhile to be involved in.

It was a great privilege to get to listen to the stories of lots of other people and to have the opportunity to debate some really important issues.

I was absolutely delighted to be invited. I knew about the Citizens' Assembly and I wondered about how people got onto the Assembly and it really is just by chance.



Everyone was made feel very, very welcome, there was very good support. When we had our first meeting, everyone was there for the same purpose. So everyone had the same interest and the same excitement about it.

Details of the topics and speakers at that meeting are available at Appendix 3. Findings from the first survey suggested a good start had been made with members responding positively to the material provided and the discussion. Over 96% of those in attendance said they were encouraged about their participation in the Assembly. However, before the next meeting, plans had to change very significantly due to Covid-19.



Chapter 3: The challenge of Covid-19 and the transition online

3.1 Rationale

The second full session of the Assembly was scheduled for 20-22 March. However, the Covid-19 pandemic was spreading rapidly in early 2020 and on 12 March 2020 the Taoiseach announced, amongst other things, that indoor gatherings of more than one hundred people were prohibited. Members were informed later that day that the March session of the Assembly was cancelled in compliance with the order.

As the scale and extent of the pandemic emerged, it became obvious that in-person meetings were unlikely to be authorised for quite some time with no clear sense of any timeline in this regard. The Chair and Secretariat considered a number of options, including postponing the work of the Assembly until the end of Covid restrictions, and running the Assembly online. At this time, the Secretariat consulted international colleagues involved in other assemblies. Some assemblies had paused their work while others (including in the UK and Australia) which had been very close to concluding their processes, transitioned online more or less immediately.

In considering the way forward, the Chair was influenced by a number of factors, including the important mandate the Assembly had been given, the fact that Covid was bringing several of the issues in the terms of reference of the Assembly to the fore and the fact that Government policy on many of these areas was under review. Taking all this into account, the Chair decided the Secretariat should explore with the members the option of moving the Assembly online to avoid undue delay in delivering its recommendations.

3.2 Survey and pilot event

On 18 May 2020, the Secretariat sent a survey to all members to assess their willingness, as well as the technical feasibility, of moving the Assembly online.



Of the 95 citizens surveyed²⁸, 90 replied. The results indicated that most members had access to the necessary equipment (92.2% had access to a computer or tablet and a further 7.8% had access to a smart phone) while 92% said that they had adequate internet access. Around 76% had some experience of using video conferencing systems such as Zoom or Skype although a significant minority (24%) had no experience of video calls and 29% of respondents said that they were ‘not very comfortable’ or ‘not comfortable at all’ in using video technology.

In answer to the question ‘Would you be willing to participate if we were to run a session of the Assembly online to avoid what might be a lengthy delay in resuming our work?’, 77 citizens (86%) replied ‘yes’ and six said ‘no’. Interestingly, of the six members who said they would not be willing to participate online, four ultimately transitioned online and continued with the process until the end. Members were also asked how long they would be willing to spend online at a meeting of the Assembly. Close to 42% indicated a preference for four hours and nearly 27% chose three hours with a smaller number expressing a preference for longer meetings.

Based on the findings of the survey, it was decided to pilot an online session. An optional online seminar was run on Saturday 4 July. As well as trialling the online approach, this offered an opportunity for members to reconnect with the Secretariat and each other, and also for members to consider the impact Covid-19 had on their mandate. Seventy-five members attended this online event. Zoom training was offered by the Secretariat in advance of the event and 56 members availed of it.

A follow up survey of members conducted after the seminar indicated that the seminar was well received: 83% of respondents believed Zoom was a suitable platform, 82% had no technical issues, 80% believed they could contribute effectively at the online meeting and 92% were encouraged about their participation as an Assembly member. When asked, 84% also indicated that they were willing to participate in a full weekend meeting of the Assembly online. Of

²⁸ Four members had withdrawn and had not yet been replaced at this time given the uncertainty caused by Covid-19.



the 11 members who said they would ‘probably not’ attend another online meeting of the Assembly, 10 remained as members and completed the process to the very end with only one withdrawing.

Based on the replies to the surveys, and the success of the pilot event, it was decided to move the Assembly online. As suggested by the citizens, most of the online meetings were limited to four hours during one day (Saturday) with the programme split into two sessions of two hours each. This changed towards the end of the process when ballot papers were being agreed and, with the agreement of members, the final voting meeting took place over two days on 17 and 18 April.

3.3 Changes to meeting format

Moving online required a major rethink of the working method. In considering this, the Secretariat consulted with experts in online learning and events, and with other citizens’ assemblies which had transitioned online (including UK and Australia). One of the key messages emerging from this consultation was that it takes much longer to convey information online and presentations need to be much shorter and clearer with plenty of breaks.

In order to maximise the time for discussion among the citizens, all presentations were pre-recorded and sent out in advance so that citizens could watch them at a time of their choosing before the meeting. Pre-recorded videos were generally limited in length to 10-12 minutes and longer presentations were split into two videos. Similar to the format of previous meetings, each session was prepared with a mix of presentations from experts, advocacy organisations (which tended to take the form of moderated panel discussions) and personal experience videos²⁹. Some paper-based material was also circulated.

The video presentations, supporting papers and slides were provided by email and were accessible through a private members’ webpage for members to watch in advance at a time of their choosing. All the preparatory videos were sent in batches of two or three, over the 3 weeks before each meeting. Videos were generally provided at least a week in advance. Members were also sent

²⁹ All presentations are available on the Assembly website.



short 'reflection surveys' asking them whether the videos had raised anything they would like to propose as a recommendation and whether they had any questions for the speakers. The Secretariat also prepared a paper for members which collated all the recommendations made by speakers and this was provided in a pack by post and email before the meeting.

On some occasions, one of the expert videos was replayed at the meeting as a refresher for members and some of the expert speakers participated in a live Questions & Answers (Q&A) session with members during meetings. If members' questions were not reached at the meeting, the speakers answered them in writing and these replies were provided to members. All the programmes, video presentations and Q&A responses are available on the relevant meeting page on the website.

The format changed slightly once the Assembly moved towards the later stages where the ballot papers were being agreed. For these meetings, a panel of experts was available to answer questions emerging from the breakout groups throughout the meeting. For the February 2021 meeting, a panel of constitutional legal experts was on hand³⁰. For the March and April 2021 meetings, the Expert Advisory Group replied to questions. Breakout sessions were shorter with frequent plenary sessions providing feedback on the ballot questions and on suggestions for amendments. Zoom polls were used to check whether members were ready to agree ballot questions (further information on how the ballot paper was developed and agreed is available in the next section).

Post-meeting surveys show that the vast majority of citizens (83%-98%) watched most or all of the pre-recorded videos before the meeting. While some citizens regretted the shorter overall time for discussion, most missed the opportunity for informal discussion with other members over the extended period of a weekend. Given the health and safety requirements, there was no possibility of meeting in-person as a group, but an element of informality was introduced by enabling citizens to log in early and to chat to each other before each session began and during the lunch break.

³⁰ See Appendix 2.



Members' quotes

Moving the Citizens' Assembly online has worked well due to Covid-19 and restrictions in place, however it can be a challenge for some members... personal interaction within the Assembly is also very important. The 20 mins before the formal start of the meeting was great to catch up with old friends and was great just to chat.

I'm very comfortable with the Zoom format, but I can certainly see that nothing will beat in-person meetings where the informal conversations play a large part in thrashing out personal views, and/or misunderstandings.

Whilst online meetings would not be my preference, I think the Assembly meetings are running efficiently, with little or no hitches, making participation easier as time goes on.

Having the sessions on line was a good compromise, but feel that we greatly missed out on the social side of having sessions in the hotel. All our sessions were short sharp hard sessions and... I found these sessions very tiring. I feel that sessions interspersed with relaxing social intermissions would certainly have helped me cope with the amount of information given to us.

Members were asked their views on the merits of online compared with in-person meetings at various points in the surveys. Responses on this were mixed. When members were asked whether they agreed that an online format was suitable, 45.7% agreed and 30% disagreed with a sizeable number (24.3%) neither agreeing nor disagreeing. When asked whether they would prefer, if Covid-19 was not a factor, online meetings, in-person meetings or a mixture,



65.7% chose in person, 28.6% a mixture and 5.7% purely online (see further data in Appendix 5).

3.4 Evening meetings

Given the shorter meetings and online format, there was little time for members to discuss how they felt about the overall process. Although the post-meeting surveys were invaluable in tracking this, there was also little time for the Chair and Secretariat to interact with individual members. The Chair therefore decided to hold a number of optional evening meetings with members to allow them to give direct feedback regarding the overall progress of the Assembly and to consult them on specific decisions in relation to the planning and scheduling of meetings. These meetings were held on 10 & 14 December 2020, 22 & 23 February 2021 and on 24 March 2021. The number attending these optional meetings varied between 30 and 42.

The December 2020 meeting essentially served as an end of year review, roughly halfway through the process. The Chair consulted members on the 2021 programme of meetings and sought their views on how the process was going. In February 2021, amongst other things, the Chair consulted members on the approach to developing and agreeing the ballot paper. At the March 2021 meeting, members were consulted on how to manage the volume of work required in the final weekend in terms of its scheduling and structuring. The Secretary also updated them on the plan for online voting.

These meetings were invaluable in maintaining a link between members, the Chair and the Secretariat, and providing member input into the decisions that needed to be taken throughout the process. They served as a useful complement to the formal topic-driven sessions of the Assembly.

3.5 IT issues and technical support

As referenced in section 3.2 above, most members already had the minimum technical equipment necessary to participate in online meetings. However, some members were operating only from smartphones while others had very basic microphones and cameras which adversely affected the quality of their interaction in the group discussions.



In order to help those citizens who needed to upgrade their equipment to enhance the quality of their participation, it was decided to reimburse expenses incurred in upgrading equipment because of participation in the Assembly³¹. Feedback from members suggests that this is likely to have had a positive impact in terms of resolving the volume of technical issues members experienced and enhancing the level and quality of engagement.

On average, in the post meeting surveys, between 7 –11 attendees reported some degree of technical problems but the Secretariat provided ongoing support on all technical issues and most were resolved quickly. The most common issue was members dropping out of the meetings due to broadband connection problems, but this tended to be sporadic and was resolved quickly. There were weather issues in some parts of the country during the November 2020 meeting which led to greater connectivity issues.

As mentioned earlier, it is estimated that at least 6 members left the Assembly specifically due to the move online³².

3.6 Citizens' feedback

Surveying the views of members during and after the process provided a valuable insight into citizens' views and the evolution of those views. Two types of survey were conducted in parallel – post-meeting surveys and research surveys.

After each meeting members were asked about how well the meetings had been planned and supported, their views on how the time had been allocated, how the breakout groups had been managed and whether they were encouraged about their participation in the Assembly. Some comparisons of the key questions over time are included in the table below. This data will be analysed in more detail by Professor Jane Suiter in her separate report.

³¹ Up to a limit of €250. Over the period November 2020 to April 2021, 82 citizens availed of this offer at a total cost of €19,573.08.

³² 5 others left the process and did not respond to contact from the Secretariat so their reason for leaving is unknown.



Table 3.1: Selected data from post-meeting surveys

		<i>In all cases % who strongly agreed or agreed³³</i>				
	<i>What was the most helpful?</i>	<i>Was able to contribute effectively to event online</i>	<i>Some members dominated discussion</i>	<i>Facilitator influenced with own ideas</i>	<i>No technical difficulties during event</i>	<i>Encouraged about Assembly participation</i>
Feb 20	Small group discussions	N/A	17.5% N=80	3.8% N=80	N/A	96.3% N=80
Oct 20	Small group discussions	93.4% N=61	30% N=60	1.7% N=60	83.6% N=61	88.3% N=60
Nov 20	Small group discussions	93.1% N=72	30.6% N=72	1.4% N=72	80.3% N=71	95.7% N=69
Dec 20	Summary paper prepared by Secretariat	91% N=67	16.4% N=67	3% N=67	81.8% N=66	91% N=67
Jan 21	Summary paper prepared by Secretariat	95.2% N=63	11.1% N=63	6.3% N=64	89.4% N=66	89.1% N=64
Feb 21	Video presentations sent in advance	97.5% N=79	11.5% N=78	0% N=78	86.1% N=79	93.6% N=78
Mar 21	Summary paper prepared by Secretariat	96.9% N=65	13.8% N=65	3.1% N=65	86.2% N=65	93.8% N=64
Apr 21	Not asked	Not asked	Not asked	1.4% N=70	85.7% N=70	Not asked

Note: In each case % calculated as a proportion of the number who answered each question

³³ Five-point scale: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree or Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree. Table shows proportion who strongly agreed or agreed.



As can be seen from the table above, the vast majority of members were consistently encouraged about their participation in the Assembly after each meeting. Similarly, they considered that they were able to contribute effectively to the event online. Overall, the surveys indicated satisfaction with the support received and the information provided for each meeting.

Generally, feedback was also positive about the breakout group discussions. One issue that arose from the beginning was that some citizens considered that certain members were contributing more than others in the breakout groups and this particularly emerged from feedback after the November meeting. Given the importance of equality of voice as a principle of the Assembly, the Secretariat issued new guidance to the facilitators on this and feedback on this question improved in subsequent surveys. A large majority of members also consistently signalled that the facilitators had not attempted to influence the discussions, which was very important for the impartiality of the process.

3.7 Research surveys

The post meeting surveys also included a separate battery of questions from Professor Suiter's team about gender equality issues with a view to tracking members' views and their evolution during the deliberative process.

It was made clear to members that the Chair and Secretariat had no sight of this data and it had no impact in the design or development of the process. Some of this data may be used for Professor Suiter's independent report and subsequent academic research.

3.8 Approach to developing recommendations

A systematic and transparent approach was taken to identifying the issues for discussion based on the Oireachtas resolution. Three main sources were used to develop a long list of potential recommendations:

Category 1: Agreed feedback from members' discussions:

- Each breakout group was asked to agree 3-5 priority recommendations which were fed back to the whole Assembly at the end of each meeting.



Category 2: Additional feedback from members' discussions:

- Additional recommendations were collated from the notes of the breakout group discussions.

Category 3: Survey feedback:

- Members also suggested additional recommendations in their responses to surveys.

This process yielded over 500 potential recommendations. Gradually the items to be voted on were narrowed down to the eventual 45 recommendations on the final ballot paper.

Once the long list of recommendations had been developed, the top recommendations across each of the five meetings³⁴ were collated and developed into draft ballot papers. The Expert Advisory Group provided expertise on the draft wordings. Items from Category 1 were given the highest priority for inclusion on this short list, as they represented the collective priorities of the Assembly after deliberation.

In advance of a meeting where a section or sections of the ballot paper were to be agreed, draft recommendations were sent to members for their comments in a survey prior to the meeting. Members were asked to rank recommendations in order of priority and to add any additional recommendations they wished to suggest. These surveys had relatively high response rates (62-71 responses). The responses were analysed, and recommendations were redrafted, added to or deleted, based on members' responses. This second draft of the ballot paper was then circulated in advance of the relevant meeting and discussed by members on the meeting day.

Close to 88% of members agreed in a post meeting survey that this approach to gathering opinions on the draft ballot paper in advance of the meeting worked well, with only one member disagreeing.

³⁴ On leadership, care, work and social protection and domestic, sexual and gender-based violence but excluding the meeting on Article 41 of the Constitution which had a separate process as it related to specific issues on constitutional amendments.



Further ballot paper amendments were proposed by members at the relevant meeting, with members agreeing to accept or reject them by Zoom poll. In advance of the final meeting, when there were a number of ballot papers to agree, members agreed some procedural changes to maximise the efficiency of the process. Firstly, only amendments agreed by at least half of a breakout group could be tabled for further consideration. Secondly, once 80 members had participated in a Zoom poll it was closed, unless the additional votes could materially affect the outcome.

Once members had decided between the original or amended items by Zoom poll, members then agreed by another set of Zoom polls whether each item (either original or amended) should be included on the ballot paper. After the first meeting where this approach was used, nearly 99% of members agreed that using Zoom polls to gauge agreement on ballot papers worked well.

This process ensured that the recommendations that members voted on were developed in a genuinely ground-up approach. It ensured that the members had full ownership of the ballot paper at all drafting stages.

This also explains why a large majority agreed most items during the final voting. The funnelling process described above meant that, for an item to be on the final ballot paper it had to be a priority item for members and one they had explicitly agreed by Zoom poll should be on the ballot paper.

3.8 E-voting

The outbreak of Covid-19 meant that it was not possible for members to vote in person as they had at previous assemblies. In the last Assembly, voting had taken a similar format to that of formal elections with polling booths, ballot papers and scrutiny by a returning officer.

Once it became clear that this would not be possible, the Secretariat consulted other international assemblies and electoral experts to explore possible options. The main options considered were postal or online voting. Members indicated openness to either option. It was generally considered that online voting would be preferable as it could be conducted in real time, would allow members to vote at the same time and results would be available more quickly. However, it



was vital that any such system would be secure, confidential, reliable, transparent and allow for changes to the ballot paper during the meetings.

The Secretariat researched options available and conducted some market engagement to ensure there were providers who could provide such services. After a procurement process, Mi-Voice Democracy Technology Limited was engaged to provide an online voting system for the Assembly. During this process, the Assembly was advised by Mr John Fitzpatrick and Mr Ciaran Manning, experienced returning officers who had overseen the voting for the previous Assembly.

The Mi-voice system was secure, confidential and accessible. It was accessed by a randomly generated ten-digit voting code for each member. Members could vote using their tablet, smartphones or laptops. Training was provided for members and a pilot vote was run in advance of the meeting to ensure everyone was confident in using the e-voting system.

It was decided that, as was the case for the previous Assembly, members would vote together during scheduled slots in the programme over the Saturday and Sunday of the final meeting. Mi-Voice and the independent returning officer were on hand to oversee the process and the independent returning officer validated the results before they were announced.



PART B: RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter 4: Recommendations for Constitutional Change

4.1 Gender equality & non-discrimination provision

Recommendation 1: Article 40.1 of the Constitution should be amended to refer explicitly to gender equality and non-discrimination.

Question 15 on the ballot paper.

Existing wording of Article 40.1: All citizens shall as human persons be held equal before the law.

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Around 80% of the world’s constitutions contain provisions in relation to equality and non-discrimination³⁵. Members heard from experts and advocates who suggested that including such principles in constitutions carries both symbolic and practical weight, by providing a legal foundation for citizens to advance equality and combat discrimination.

Members voted by 96.6% to 3.4% in favour of this recommendation. Eighty- four of 85 members had previously agreed by Zoom poll that it should appear on the ballot paper.

4.2 Article 41- the family

Recommendation 2: Article 41 of the Constitution should be amended so that it would protect private and family life, with the protection afforded to the family not limited to the marital family.

Questions 4 & 5 on the ballot paper.

³⁵ 2014, Adèle Cassola et al ‘Where do Women Stand? New Evidence on the Presence and Absence of Gender Equality in the World’s Constitutions’. <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/politics-and-gender/article/abs/where-do-women-stand-new-evidence-on-the-presence-and-absence-of-gender-equality-in-the-worlds-constitutions/79D677171422A49D369D4B5EEE2C625F>



Existing wording of Article 41 of the Constitution: the family

41.1.1 The State recognises the Family as the natural primary and fundamental unit group of Society, and as a moral institution possessing inalienable and imprescriptible rights, antecedent and superior to all positive law.

41.1.2 The State, therefore, guarantees to protect the Family in its constitution and authority, as the necessary basis of social order and as indispensable to the welfare of the Nation and the State.

41.3.1. The State pledges itself to guard with special care the institution of Marriage, on which the Family is founded, and to protect it against attack.

There have been calls for many years for the reference to family in the Irish Constitution to be expanded beyond the marital family. This was highlighted in a number of public submissions to the Assembly which argued that the current definition of the family does not reflect the reality of Irish society today. Submissions argued that the limitation to the marital family discriminates against lone and unmarried parents and other ‘non-traditional’ family forms and is not in line with current international best practise and norms or even certain aspects of Irish legislation and policy.

Article 41 of the Constitution was discussed at two meetings of the Assembly - at its first full meeting in February 2020 and again at a meeting on 13 February 2021 where the ballot paper was agreed. Members discussed the questions set out in box 4.1 below and gave their feedback.



Box 4:1 - Draft ballot questions for discussion

Question 3:

Please vote 'Yes' or 'No' in answer to the following question.

Do you think 'the family' (however it might be understood) is something that should in principle be recognised in the Constitution and given special constitutional status and protection?

If a majority choose 'No' in response to question 3 during the voting in April, there will be no further vote.

If a majority votes 'Yes' in April there will be a vote on question 4. If this occurs, all Members will be entitled to vote on question 4 regardless of their vote on question 3.

Question 4:

Please vote 'Yes' or 'No' in answer to the following question.

Should the Assembly recommend that the constitutional understanding of the family under Article 41 be expanded to include forms other than the marital family?

The Chair and legal team then reformulated the questions to reflect members' views. The reformulation included wording from Article 8 of the European Convention of Human Rights (full text of final questions in box 4.2 below).

After further discussion in their breakout groups, nearly 99% of members agreed by Zoom poll that question 3 should go on the ballot paper and close to 96% of members agreed that the revised question 4 should go on the ballot paper.



Box 4:2 - Final Ballot paper questions on Article 41-the family

Question 4:

Should the Constitution continue to provide recognition for the family?

Yes/No

If a majority choose 'No' in response to question 3 during the voting in April, there will be no further vote. If a majority votes 'Yes' in April, there will be a vote on question 4. If this occurs, all Members will be entitled to vote on question 4 regardless of their vote on question 3.

Question 5:

Should the Constitution protect private and family life, including forms of family life beyond the marital family?

Yes/No

In the final vote on 17 April members voted by 93.3% in favour of the first question and by 98.9% in favour of the second question.

4.3 Article 41.2 'Woman in the home'

Recommendation 3: Article 41.2 of the Constitution should be deleted and replaced with language that is not gender specific and obliges the State to take reasonable measures to support care within the home and wider community.

Questions 1-3 on Ballot paper.



Article 41 of Bunreacht na hÉireann as currently formulated, reads:

41.2.1 In particular, the State recognises that by her life within the home, woman gives the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved.

41.2.2 The State shall, therefore, endeavour to ensure that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home.

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This topic was considered at two meetings: on 16 February 2020 and 13 February 2021.

At the initial meeting in February 2020, members heard about Article 41.2 of the Constitution as part of a general introduction to gender equality, norms and stereotypes and the family. At this meeting, members were asked to discuss in their breakout groups ‘Do you agree with the conclusions of the Constitutional Convention concerning Article 41.2 (clause on the role of the woman in the home)? If not, what would you like to propose instead?’

Feedback from this discussion indicated there was agreement 'in principle' with the conclusions of the Convention. However, there was some variation in views on the specific recommendations. There were various views on the woman in the home clause, with some citizens suggesting removal, while others suggested amending it with gender-neutral language. Additional suggestions included replacing ‘mother’ throughout with gender-neutral language, and removing the word ‘home’. There were also diverse opinions on the level of support for carers proposed by the Constitutional Convention.

The February 2020 discussion was an interesting indicator of the members’ initial thoughts on the topic which was subsequently revisited in more detail at the Assembly’s online meeting in February 2021 where the draft ballot questions set out below were discussed.



Box 4.3: Draft ballot questions on Article 41.2

Question 1 – Retain Article 41.2, ‘simple delete’ or ‘delete and replace’

- A. Retain Article 41.2:
The Assembly should recommend that no change is made to this provision and not make any further recommendations on the matter.
- B. Simple delete:
The Assembly should recommend that this provision be deleted from the Constitution, and not make any further recommendations on the matter.
- C. Delete and replace:
The Assembly should recommend that this provision be deleted from the Constitution and further recommend that it be replaced with a provision relating to care that would not be gender-specific.

If a majority choose A or B in response to question 1 during the voting in April, there will be no further vote. If a majority votes C in April there will be a vote on question 2. If this occurs, all members will be entitled to vote on question 2 regardless of their vote on question 1.

Question 2 – Nature of replacement provision

Please choose one of the following options:

A - The Assembly should recommend replacing the text of Article 41.2 with language that is not gender specific and recognises the principle of valuing and sharing care.

OR

B - The Assembly should recommend replacing the text of Article 41.2 with language that is not gender specific and recognises the principle of valuing and sharing care and commits the State to ensuring that its policies reflect this principle.



After some discussion and questions, the members agreed by Zoom poll by just over 87.6% that question 1 should go on the ballot paper.

Over the course of the discussion on the second question, it became apparent that members felt that this should offer an option which imposed stronger obligations on the State (videos of the plenary discussion are available at www.citizensassembly.ie). To confirm this, members were explicitly asked by Zoom poll whether they wanted the language in (B) above to be stronger and more binding on the Government. Just over 71% of members agreed that they did. Members also signalled that they wanted to expand the reference to care to include care in both the home and wider community.

Based on this feedback, the Chair and Secretariat worked with the legal panel to formulate revised wordings as per box 4.4 below. They replaced ‘sharing’ care with ‘supporting’ care in the first option and also added a reference to ‘care in the home and wider community’ as had been proposed by the members. In the second option, the phrase ‘commits the State to ensuring that its policies reflect this principle’ was replaced by ‘obliges the State to take reasonable measures’ to strengthen the wording as requested by the members. Members subsequently agreed that this second question should go on the ballot paper by 95.7% to 4.3%.

Subsequently, in advance of the final ballot, the returning officer advised that it would be preferable to split the first question into 2 questions with only 2 possible answers (either Yes or No) in each. This was to ensure a conclusive outcome and to ensure that those who might wish to retain Article 41.2 would, if their preferred option was not supported, subsequently have the option to choose between ‘delete’ or ‘delete and replace’. Members agreed to this. The final ballot therefore contained three questions as follows:



Box 4.4: Final ballot questions on Article 41.2

Question 1 – Article 41.2: ‘no change’ versus ‘change’

A. The Assembly should recommend that no change is made to Article 41.2 and the Assembly should not make any further recommendations on the matter.

OR

B. The Assembly should recommend change (either deleting or replacing Article 41.2) and the Assembly should make further recommendations on the matter.

Question 2 – Article 41.2, ‘simple delete’ or ‘delete and replace’ -

A. Simple delete:

The Assembly should recommend that this provision be deleted from the Constitution, and not make any further recommendations on the matter.

OR

B. Delete and replace:

The Assembly should recommend that this provision be deleted from the Constitution and further recommend that it be replaced with a provision relating to care that would not be gender-specific.

If a majority choose A in response to question 2, there will be no further vote. If a majority choose B there will be a vote on question 3. If this occurs, all members will be entitled to vote on question 3 regardless of their vote on question 2.

Question 3 – Nature of Replacement provision

A. - The Assembly should recommend replacing the text of Article 41.2 with language that is not gender specific and recognises the principle of valuing and supporting care within the home and wider community.

OR

B. - The Assembly should recommend replacing the text of Article 41.2 with language that is not gender specific and obliges the State to take reasonable measures to support care within the home and wider community.



In the final vote, members voted in favour of change in question 1 by 94.4% to 5.6%. They voted in favour of delete and replace over delete by 84.3% to 15.7% in question 2 and they chose the stronger wording in question 3 by 80.9% to 19.1%.

The members' preference for a stronger obligation on the State had caused this item to be strengthened on the ballot paper so it was not unexpected that this was the favoured outcome in the final ballot.



Chapter 5: Care

Care

- 98% of full-time carers are women.
- Twice as many unpaid female as male carers provide over 43 hours care per week.
- 98% of childcare staff are female.
- Hourly wage of childcare sector staff is 43.5% below the average national wage.
- Almost 80% of childcare workers do not have sick pay.
- 90% of childcare workers do not have a private pension.
- 65% of childcare workers do not have paid maternity leave.

Parental paid leave

- 92% take up of maternity benefit in private sector compared with 51% take up of paternity benefit.
- The majority of OECD countries provide maternity payments that replace over 50% of previous earnings. 13 OECD countries offer a mother on average earnings full compensation across maternity leave. In Ireland less than one-third of gross average earnings are replaced by the maternity benefit.
- For Ireland average weekly take home pay in the private sector is over 2.5 times the paternity benefit payment.



Carers

Recommendation 4: To improve the terms and conditions of those in paid employment as carers (for children and adults):

- (a) They should have a pay structure and benefits (including sick pay and pensions) that reward their level of skill and training, similar to those of teachers and nurses.
- (b) They should have a career structure, including access to training and professional registration, which enables them to progress in their chosen area.

Recommendation 5: Reform Carers' Allowance by:

- (a) Increasing the level of the income disregard.
- (b) Reimbursing the costs associated with caring.
- (c) Increasing the ceiling on the number of hours in paid work outside the home.
- (d) Providing access to State employment and training programmes.

Recommendation 6: The State should develop an individualised pension solution for carers to ensure they have an adequate income once they reach retirement age.

Recommendation 7: Improve respite provision for carers by:

- (a) Increasing the level of the Carers' Support Grant in the next Budget and keeping it under review to ensure it keeps pace with other increases in social protection payments.
- (b) Providing adequate access to a range of respite services to meet individual needs.



Childcare

Recommendation 8: Ireland should:

- (a) Over the next decade move to a publicly funded, accessible and regulated model of quality, affordable early years and out of hours childcare.
- (b) Increase the State share of GDP spent on childcare, from the current 0.37% of GDP to at least 1% by no later than 2030 in line with the UNICEF target.

Recommendation 9: Paid Leave for parents should:

- (a) Cover the first year of a child's life.
- (b) Be non-transferable to encourage sharing of childcare responsibility between parents.
- (c) Provide lone parents with the same total leave period as a couple.
- (d) Be incentivised by increasing payment levels to encourage increased take up.

Older persons and persons with disabilities

Recommendation 10: Older people and persons with disabilities should:

- (a) Be actively supported and resourced to live independently.
- (b) Have access to person centred financial supports to serve their individual needs.
- (c) Be enabled to participate as fully as possible in decisions on their care needs, based on principles of fairness, respect, equality and dignity.
- (d) Be facilitated and resourced as much as possible if their choice is to be cared for at home.



Recommendation 11: Provision for those who wish to be cared for at home should be improved by:

- (a) Providing a statutory right for payment for home care packages as well as nursing care.
- (b) Increasing the annual home care budget to meet growing demand and reduce waiting lists.

Recommendation 12: Lifelong care for persons with disabilities who need it should be seamless and there should not be any break in services provided or need to reapply for support when a person turns 18.

Note: these were questions 6-14 on the original ballot paper.



The Oireachtas resolution contained two specific items on care:

‘Recognise the importance of early years parental care and seek to facilitate greater work- life balance;

Examine the social responsibility of care and women and men’s co-responsibility for care especially within the family.’

The outbreak of Covid-19 not only delayed the Assembly and changed its working methods, it also shone a strong spotlight on care, its importance in our society and the gendered nature of its provision. The topic of care therefore permeated all the work of the Assembly and was seen as relevant to all the other items set out in the resolution. For instance, the resolution asked for an examination of structural pay inequalities and the economic value placed on work traditionally held by women. Care work and the pay and conditions of care workers emerged as a key example of lower paid, less valued sectors referenced elsewhere in the resolution when this topic was examined further.

The Assembly meeting on Care took place on 16 January 2021 and members subsequently agreed the ballot paper at the meeting of 13 March 2021. Recommendation 4 on carers and childcare workers was informed by the Government’s ‘First 5 Early Years Strategy’ which explicitly recognises the common professional interests of the early years’ workforce with teachers and the health and social workforce. ‘First 5’ also refers to the potential for linkages between Continuous Professional Development for childcare workers and primary school teachers including joint delivery³⁶.

Recommendations 5, 6, 7, 10, 11 & 12, which relate to family carers and quality and choice in care for older persons and persons with disabilities, reflect the importance members attached to the contribution made by family carers to society (which Care Alliance Ireland estimated is worth at minimum €10 billion per annum³⁷). Members stressed the need to increase support for family carers whom they heard are at greater risk of poverty than the general population

³⁶https://first5.gov.ie/userfiles/pdf/5223_4966_DCYA_EarlyYears_INTERACTIVE_Booklet_280x215_v1.pdf#view=fit page 80 Action 3B.

³⁷ To note they have revised this estimate upwards since their presentation to the Assembly.



(37.7% of persons with disabilities are at risk of poverty, compared to 12.8% of the general population). Family carers often also lack access to adequate pension cover when they retire.

Recommendation 7 responds to the fact that, despite access to the ‘Carers’ support grant’³⁸, there are constraints in accessing appropriate respite for some families. For example, the *loco parentis* rule means that parents/guardians of a sick or disabled child, who are in receipt of a home care package, are required to be present with home care staff at all times so they do not get a break from their homecare environment. In other cases, there may be a lack of appropriate respite services or facilities in certain local areas.

Recommendation 10 reflects members’ calls for the State to increase its provision of caring and other supports to provide greater choice and independence to older people or persons with disabilities through, for example, increased access to personal assistance hours or home care supports.

Recommendation 8 on childcare reflects Ireland’s comparatively low spend on childcare and relatively high dependence on private sector provision. Members called for a move to a public model to improve terms and conditions for workers in the sector, ensure affordability for lower income parents and provide high quality early childhood education for all children including those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Recommendation 9 aims to ensure it is financially viable for parents to choose to care for their children at home for the first year of their lives. While the length of maternity benefit in Ireland is above average, the levels of maternity benefit payments are amongst the lowest in Europe.

Recommendation 9 on paid leave for parents reflects evidence that the Irish level of payments is relatively low compared with other countries. The current structure of paternity leave has not shown large-scale uptake and has therefore failed to encourage more equal sharing of parental leave between men and women. Research has found that the low uptake rate of paternity leave appears

³⁸ The Carer's Support Grant is an annual payment made to carers by the Department of Social Protection (DSP). The grant can be, but does not have to be, used to pay for respite care. DSP pays the grant annually to carers getting Carer's Allowance, Carer's Benefit, or Domiciliary Care Allowance.



closely related to whether employers top up the State payment³⁹. Members felt that that increased rates would encourage take up.

Recommendation 9 (c) is a response to the inequality faced by lone parent families and their children in certain parental leave schemes, for example where a child with two parents currently benefits from double the amount of time with a parent compared to a child from a lone parent family.

Member feedback resulted in fourteen initial recommendations, which were then reduced to nine on the basis of survey findings. During the meeting on 13 March 2021, amendments were proposed to two of these recommendations by Zoom poll and members then agreed by further Zoom polls that these nine recommendations, including some amendments, would be included in the final ballot paper.

All of these items were subsequently agreed by large majorities in the final vote, including two which were unanimously agreed (for full voting figures see Appendix 5).

³⁹ Presentation from Christopher Ryan, D/PER.



Chapter 6: Social Protection

- Ireland's gender pensions gap is 35% compared with an EU average of 36%.
- 55% of men receive an occupational pension compared with 28% of women.
- 90% of 'qualified adults' are adult women.
- 86% of lone parent households are headed by women.
- 29.7% of lone parent households are at risk of poverty compared with 12.8% of households overall and 11.9% of two-parent households.

Recommendation 13: Adopt a fully individualised social protection system to reflect the diversity of today's lives and to promote an equal division of paid work and care.

Recommendation 14: Social protection services should:

- (a) Set social protection payments and/or supports at a level that lifts people above the poverty line, prevents deprivation and supports an adequate standard of living.
- (b) Regularly train staff to prioritise dignity and respect in all contact with clients, including giving a choice in how they receive payments.

Recommendation 15: Take account of gender equality issues in piloting a Universal Basic Income scheme.

Recommendation 16: Address the specific needs of lone parents to incentivise and support them in accessing work or education, including provision of child and after-school care.

Recommendation 17: Immediately address the impact of the marriage bar by automatically qualifying women affected by the marriage bar for a state pension.



Recommendation 18: Regardless of the pension model, enrolment into pension savings should be automatic and start when a person starts earning, subject to a threshold on low incomes and an opt-out clause.

Recommendation 19: Introduce a Universal State Pension so that every resident of Ireland receives a pension upon reaching pension age.

These were questions 42-48 on the ballot paper.

The fact that women predominate in unpaid care and low paid jobs, including in the care sector, has implications for the social protection system. The recommendations agreed by members cover a number of changes to this system to help alleviate these inequalities, particularly in the area of pensions.

Ireland's social protection system makes payments to claimants in respect of spouses or partners who are deemed 'qualified adults'. These are people who are financially dependent on their spouse, civil partner or cohabitant. Ninety per cent of these 'qualified adults' are women. Recommendation 13 aims to ensure that these predominantly female 'qualified adults' receive their own social protection payments in future instead of being dependent for income on the main social protection recipient.

Recommendation 14 aims to ensure that social protection payments are set at a level that ensures recipients are not at risk of poverty and that they are treated with respect in their dealings with the State. Members stressed the need for recipients to have a choice in how they receive these payments (directly into bank or other personal accounts or in-person collection). In one of the presentations, the Assembly heard that the right to choose the method of payment did not apply to all recipients.

Members affirmed their support for plans to pilot a universal basic income (UBI) as a tool to ensure a basic standard of living, without conditionality linked to employment status. This could be particularly valuable for people with caring responsibilities. In Recommendation 15, members ask that gender equality implications be taken into account in designing the pilot for the UBI committed



to in the Programme for Government, for example in considering choice of sector or target group.

Members also agreed a number of recommendations to tackle the gender pensions gap. Recommendations 17-19 aim to ensure women have an adequate pension income in retirement, even where they may have limited or no time in the workplace due to having undertaken a caring role. The recommendations also call for delivery of the Government commitment to pensions auto-enrolment and for urgent implementation of a solution to compensate the women who still suffer pensions inequality due to the marriage bar.

Discussions leading to the development of these recommendations took place at the meeting in December 2020 and the recommendations for the ballot paper were subsequently agreed by Zoom poll on Sunday 18 April. Arising from members' feedback in the pre-meeting survey on the draft ballot paper, two items were deleted before the meeting. One proposed a move to full tax individualisation while the other proposed broadening access to jobseekers' payments to those working part time by choice. Of all the items in the survey on the draft ballot paper, the recommendation on tax individualisation had the highest number of members disagreeing that it should be on the ballot paper.

The Chair and EAG also considered that there had been insufficient time available for discussion of such a complex topic so, for all of these reasons, it was excluded from the final set of recommendations. The recommendation in relation to jobseekers' payments was ranked lowest in priority of these items so the decision was taken to exclude it.

At the meeting on 18 April 2021, three items were amended on the suggestion of members, notably recommendation 17 regarding the marriage bar and pensions which was further strengthened. All items including the amended items were subsequently agreed for the ballot paper by Zoom.

All these recommendations were passed in the final vote by at least 90% of members.



Chapter 7: Leadership in Politics, Public Life & the Workplace

- 36 women elected to the Dáil in 2020 (22.5% of TDs).
- Ireland's world ranking for parliamentary representation currently 100 out of 187 countries.
- Women currently hold 4 of 15 cabinet positions (27%).
- 27% women on boards of top 20 listed Irish companies.
- 38% of Irish listed companies have no women on their leadership team⁴⁰.
- Share of women on sporting governing authorities - IRFU 8%, GAA 11%, FAI 27%.

Recommendation 20: By the end of 2022:

- (a) Extend the gender quota for party candidates at general elections to local elections, elections to the Seanad and European Parliament elections and review every 5 years.
- (b) Increase penalties for parties that do not meet the statutory gender quotas.
- (c) The 30% threshold should be increased to 40% for women (and 40% for men) for all elections.

Recommendation 21: Improve gender balance on boards by:

- (a) Making funding to public bodies contingent on reaching a 40% gender balance quota by 2025.
- (b) Enacting gender quota legislation that requires private companies to have at least 40% gender balance according to specific criteria such as turnover, number of employees etc.

⁴⁰ <https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/5b436-balance-for-better-business-launches-third-report/>



Recommendation 22: Public funding to cultural, sports, arts and media organisations should be contingent on:

- (a) A quota of 30% representation of women, and of men, on their Governing bodies by 2025 and 40% by 2030.
- (b) Published plans to advance gender equality in their organisations.
- (c) Annual reporting on progress towards agreed quotas on gender representation and funding.

Recommendation 23: Improve family-friendly practices for all representatives elected to public office by:

- (a) Making maternity, paternity and parental leave available to all elected representatives, including Ministers (*through legislation or constitutional amendment as required*).
- (b) Providing flexible working options including remote working and voting and adjusting meeting times and rules to suit caring responsibilities (*through legislation or constitutional amendment as required*).

Recommendation 24: Strengthen legislation, reporting and monitoring of press and social media by:

- (a) Holding technology and social media companies accountable for immediately removing online content that constitutes sexual harassment, bullying, stalking, sexually violent or abusive content that they have identified or about which they have been informed.
- (b) Penalising and eliminating hateful and abusive language, including on the basis of gender, with regular reviews to ensure legislation keeps pace with technological advances.

Recommendation 25: Work places should be required to develop, resource, implement and monitor gender-neutral recruitment and promotion policies and practices including:

- (a) Specific policies to promote gender equality in leadership positions.



- (b) A requirement to operate gender-sensitive and anti-discriminatory selection and promotions processes.
- (c) Equal access to training, assignments and mentoring opportunities for all employees including part-time and remote workers.

These were questions 27-31 & question 20 on the ballot paper.

The Oireachtas resolution asked the Assembly to bring forward proposals to ‘seek to ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in the workplace, politics and public life.’ This topic was discussed at the October 2020 meeting of the Assembly which was the first online meeting and the ballot paper questions were agreed at the meeting of Saturday 17 April 2021.

Recommendations 20-22 involve accelerating or strengthening existing provisions in relation to quotas and targets. While quotas are often seen as divisive, the majority of members considered that they are necessary as a tool to accelerate gender equality in leadership in all areas.

Recommendation 20 extends the current electoral party quota system beyond national general elections to include local elections which are often where those aspiring to a political career start, and to Seanad and European Parliament elections. The recommendation also brings forward the period for increasing the threshold to 40% (currently 2023).

Recommendation 21 strengthens the current target for public boards by providing that public bodies should lose part of their State funding if they do not reach this target. It also follows other European countries (such as France, Norway and Germany) in proposing legislation to require private companies to have a certain proportion of women (in this case 40%) on their boards.

Current Government policy provides for a target of 30% of women on Sporting Governing bodies by 2027 but there is no financial penalty if this is not achieved. There are currently 34 National Governing bodies with less than 30% female representation on their boards. In recommendation 22, members decided therefore that this approach should be strengthened by introducing a financial



penalty for failing to achieve the target by 2025, increasing the target to 40% by 2030 and that the same requirements should apply to cultural, arts and media organisations.

Members made changes to these recommendations, both before they were agreed for the draft ballot paper for discussion on 17 April 2021, and at that meeting. The wording of question 20 on political quotas had originally provided that the deadline for extending beyond General Elections and increasing the quota to 40% would be ‘before the next election’ but this was viewed by members as too vague and indeterminate so it was changed to ‘by the end of 2022’. A proposed requirement for political parties to lose 100% of funding for failure to meet the quotas was seen as too strong by some survey respondents so it was amended to refer to increased penalties (i.e. beyond the current 50% level) without specifying what these should be. A reference to reviewing the quotas was also added to recommendation 20 based on feedback in the survey.

Members also strengthened recommendation 22, by adding a provision that the quota be extended to 40% by 2030 and specifying that there should also be a quota of 30% men. They changed 21(b) to ensure that the criteria for the application of quotas was not determined solely by company size but by a number of other criteria such as turnover. They made recommendation 22 more specific by referring to ‘annual’ rather than ‘regular’ reporting.

While the levels of support for the recommendations on quotas in the final vote were lower than for some of the other recommendations, they were agreed by a convincing margin. The lowest majority was 75.3% for increasing the penalty on parties for failing to achieving the quotas and the next lowest was 78.7% in favour of the legislation requiring private companies to have at least 40% gender balance on their boards. The other quota questions all received over 80% support.

Members were also very clear that quotas alone are not sufficient to encourage women to participate in politics, and that family friendly work practises and arrangements need to be in place so that elected representatives can accommodate caring and parental roles. Members were surprised to learn that elected representatives are not currently entitled to maternity, paternity and



parental leave. At the meeting of 17 April 2021, they amended the wording of this recommendation to ensure it applied to elected local representatives as well as members of the Oireachtas and Ministers. The final vote in favour of more family and caring friendly provisions in recommendation 23 was over 95%.

Members were also concerned about the level and nature of abuse on social media received by female political representatives and candidates. While this form of abuse is not confined to political representatives or to women, women and other minorities are disproportionately targeted. Members heard that over 96% of women in a National University of Ireland Galway study⁴¹ of current and former female politicians have received social media and/or electronic messages that used foul language or made an inappropriate comment about their appearance and intelligence, some 73% have been threatened with physical violence via social media and 38% have been threatened with rape or sexual violence.

Members made changes to recommendation 24 both before and at the meeting of 17 April 2021. Based on members' feedback in the survey on the draft ballot paper, the wording was strengthened to provide that legislation should be reviewed to ensure that it keeps pace with technological advances. After discussion at the meeting on 17 April 2021, the wording was further strengthened with members requesting the addition of a reference to stalking, sexual harassment and bullying as well as the need for companies to respond 'immediately' when notified of, or identifying such content.

The discussions showed that this issue was clearly a significant concern for members and in the final voting, 94.4% of them voted in favour of this recommendation.

Members also identified a need for workplace policies, including those on training and promotion, to be gender sensitive and anti-discriminatory. For example, such policies should recognise that women are more likely to work part time (31% of women work under 30 hours per week compared with 10.9%

⁴¹ Tom Felle, Eimer McAuley and Amy Blaney, NUI Galway - Toxic tweets: female politicians, social media and misogyny referenced in Dr. Fiona Buckley's presentation to Assembly.



of men ⁴²) but this should not be a reason for restricting their career development by limiting participation in training and mentoring opportunities. A reference to gender-neutral assessment of job applications was included in the original draft of the ballot paper but was deleted after the survey as it was considered difficult to implement in reality. At the meeting, a reference to gender balanced shortlists for interview was also removed as it was considered that requiring gender-sensitive and anti-discriminatory selection and promotions processes was sufficient. All three items in this recommendation (25), as amended, received over 90% support in the final vote.

Based on the results of the survey, one draft recommendation in this area was excluded. This proposed Government funding for training and mentoring of groups of women who tend to be underrepresented in politics. This was considered to duplicate existing initiatives already in place and was ranked lowest in the survey so was deleted.

⁴² <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-wamii/womenandmeninireland2019/work/>



Chapter 8: Norms & Stereotypes and Education

Recommendation 26: Appropriately resource schools to facilitate:

- (a) Provision of a broad range of subject choice that counters gender stereotyping.
- (b) Provision of gender-neutral career information and advice from early second level education.

Recommendation 27: Curriculum review and development should:

- (a) Promote gender equality and diversity.
- (b) Explicitly cover gender power dynamics, consent and domestic, sexual and gender-based violence – both online and offline – within the revised Relationships and Sexuality curriculum.

Recommendation 28: All levels of the education system from pre-school to third level, led by the relevant Government Department, should:

- (a) Ensure that initial education and continuing professional development for staff includes modules promoting gender awareness and gender-sensitive teaching methods.
- (b) Monitor policies and practices – including school inspection and whole school evaluation – through the lens of gender equality and report regularly on trends and outcomes by gender.

Recommendation 29: In view of the gendered impact on women, reform the Third Level Grants Scheme to ensure that those accessing part-time courses are eligible to apply for a grant.



Recommendation 30: Provide appropriate State funding and resources for:

- (a) Strengthening existing programmes to encourage women into male-dominated careers (e.g. STEM, Science Technology Engineering and Maths) and including apprenticeships.
- (b) Developing initiatives to encourage men into female-dominated careers (e.g. caring professions).

Recommendation 31: Media and advertising, including social media, organisations should:

- (a) Be more strongly regulated to promote gender equality and avoid gender discrimination and stereotyping and take action where discriminatory behaviours occur.
- (b) Be obliged to annually publish details of their monitoring of, and compliance with, gender equality and inclusion measures.
- (c) Make special efforts to improve the visibility of men performing caring roles.

Questions 21-26 in the ballot paper.

Traditional gender norms and stereotypes play a significant role in perpetuating gender inequality and the Oireachtas resolution recognised this, asking the Assembly for recommendations which would ‘challenge the remaining barriers and social norms and attitudes that facilitate gender discrimination towards girls and boys, women and men.’

This topic was covered at the first meeting of the Assembly in February 2020 but members noted the impact of gender norms and stereotyping in their discussions across the range of topics in the resolution. The ballot paper questions on this topic were agreed by Zoom poll at the meeting of 17 April 2021.



Members particularly recognised the importance of education in perpetuating or eliminating traditional gender norms and stereotypes. These can influence course availability and subject choices which in turn influence careers.

Members therefore agreed a number of recommendations related to education, including those aimed at encouraging and enabling women to study subjects and choose careers seen as traditionally male and vice versa. These recommendations (26 & 30) were supported by over 90% of members. Over 95% of members also voted that the curriculum and initial education and continuous professional development for education staff should promote equality and diversity (as is the case in Sweden). In addition, 96.6% of members voted that the Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Programme in schools should cover consent, gender power dynamics and domestic, sexual and gender-based violence. The latter part of the recommendation links with the discussions and recommendations on the theme of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence (see chapter 10).

Members also noted the role of the media, including social media, in creating or counteracting stereotyping and recommended by a large majority (over 90%) that media organisations should be more strongly regulated to promote gender equality and avoid stereotyping, improve the visibility of men in caring roles and publish details of their monitoring of gender equality and inclusion measures.



Chapter 9: Pay and Workplace conditions

- 54.2% of those earning the minimum wage or less are female while 45.8% are male (2019).
- Of new entrants to the workplace, 28% of women and 25% of men are on temporary contracts.
- 31% of women work under 30 hours per week compared with 10.9% of men.

Recommendation 32: The State should set targets in legislation to reduce the hourly gender pay gap (currently 14%) to 9%⁴³ by 2025 and to 4% by 2030 with a view to eliminating it by 2035.

Recommendation 33: The Gender Pay Gap Information Bill should be enacted and implemented without delay. The law should include penalties for non-compliance and an obligation for annual reporting.

Recommendation 34: Increase the minimum wage to align it with the living wage by 2025 while considering potential employment impacts on small businesses.

Recommendation 35: Support employment contract security through:

- (a) Establishing a legal right to collective bargaining to improve wages, working conditions and rights in all sectors.
- (b) Increased resourcing of the Workplace Relations Commission for more effective enforcement of current employment laws.

Recommendation 36: Introduce a statutory right to reasonable access to flexible working.

Questions 37-41 on the ballot paper.

The Oireachtas resolution asked the Assembly to bring forward proposals that: 'identify and dismantle economic and salary norms that result in gender

⁴³ The latest data for 2018 available since the citizens considered this topic shows a gap of 11.3%. See https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/sdg_05_20/default/table?lang=en



inequalities, and reassess the economic value placed on work traditionally held by women’ and ‘to scrutinise the structural pay inequalities that result in women being disproportionately represented in low pay sectors’.

Members agreed a number of recommendations to reduce the gender pay gap and generally increase pay and improve working conditions for women. Importantly these measures will benefit lower paid or vulnerable workers of all genders.

Based on the data available to them in December 2020⁴⁴, members voted in favour of targets to reduce the hourly gender pay gap by just over one third to 9% by 2025 and by just over two thirds by 2030 to 4% with a view to eliminating it by 2035. Members strengthened this recommendation from its initial draft wording by providing that these targets be enacted in legislation and by adding the target date of 2035 to eliminate the gender pay gap. (See Chair’s comments on this in chapter 12).

Members also voted that the Gender Pay Gap Information Bill, which is currently at an advanced stage in the Oireachtas, should be enacted and implemented without delay with clear penalties in place for non-compliance. Members also amended this ballot paper question at the meeting by including an obligation for annual reporting.

Members strongly supported increasing the national minimum wage (NMW) to the level of the living wage by 2025 (with close to 98% support) noting that women are consistently more likely than men to earn the NMW. The latest CSO data shows that, of the 122,800 employees who reported earning the NMW or less, 54.2% were female while 45.8% were male.⁴⁵ Members recognised that there might be a potential impact on small businesses to be considered but were keen that this would not be used as an excuse to avoid the increase (for this reason the language on the ballot paper was softened here from an earlier draft which had referred to ‘taking account of any employment impact on the SME sector’).

⁴⁴ See footnote 39 above.

⁴⁵ <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/lfsnmw/lfsnationalminimumwageestimatesq42019/>



Members were also extremely concerned about workplace conditions and employment security, having heard evidence from women who had been badly treated in work or were in precarious employment including in the care sector. They voted strongly (by over 96%) in favour of establishing a legal right to collective bargaining as a means of increasing wages and improving working conditions. They also voted for increased resourcing of the Workplace Relations Commission noting that while there was a range of legislation in place to protect workers, appropriate enforcement to ensure compliance is crucial.

Members also recommended, by over 95%, that a statutory right to reasonable access to flexible working be introduced. Flexible working arrangements such as flexible hours, job sharing and remote working provide greater possibilities for entering the labour market, combining work with care and striking a better work-life balance. Members believe that increased access to flexible working is important for gender equality because it enables all workers, regardless of gender, to combine paid work with caring. This is particularly important in Ireland because more women (66 %) than men (51 %) have no control over their working time compared with the EU average, where the corresponding figure is 57 % of women and 54 % of men.⁴⁶ In fact, Ireland has the widest gender gap in the EU on this measure.

⁴⁶ <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/thematic-focus/work-life-balance/flexible-working-arrangements/IE>



Chapter 10: Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence

- 42% of women and 28% of men experienced some form of sexual abuse/assault in their lifetime (2002 data).
- Demand for Dublin Rape Crisis Centre's services reached record levels in 2019, with more than 14,159 contacts received by the National 24-Hour Helpline.
- 21% of survey participants thought there were occasions when non-consensual sex with a woman was justified (2016).
- One third of workers reported that they had experienced domestic violence at some point in their lives (2017 multinational survey).
- A 2020 survey of students found that 29% of females, 10% of males, and 28% of non-binary students reported non-consensual penetration by incapacitation, force, or threat of force.

Recommendation 37: All Government action to prevent and counter domestic, sexual and gender-based violence should be coordinated by a Cabinet Minister with direct responsibility for implementation of a national strategy.

Recommendation 38: Eliminate tolerance in our society of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence by developing and implementing awareness, prevention and education campaigns which may include children of an appropriate age on:

- (a) The impact and harm caused by domestic, sexual and gender-based violence.
- (b) Supports available to victims/survivors.



Recommendation 39: Support justice for victims/survivors by:

- (a) Reviewing and reforming the courts system – including the family courts – to better protect and support victims/survivors of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence and their dependents and remove barriers to justice.
- (b) Developing guidelines and specialist training for judges and lawyers regarding the treatment of victims/survivors, including the exclusion of the consideration of sexual history, character, attire and counselling/medical records.
- (c) Introducing tougher sentences and rehabilitation programmes for the perpetrators of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence and sexual crimes.
- (d) Providing specialised confidential health care and other support services for victims/survivors including legal representation.
- (e) Putting in place a Victims/Survivors Commissioner as an independent advocate and voice for victims/survivors.

Recommendation 40: Ensure sufficient publicly funded provision of beds, shelters and accommodation for victims/survivors of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence across the country and their dependents in line with the Istanbul Convention.

Recommendation 41: Recognise female genital mutilation (FGM) as a ground for seeking asylum, and provide culturally sensitive specialised services for victims/survivors.

These were questions 32-36 on the ballot paper.

Although domestic, sexual and gender-based violence was not included in the Oireachtas resolution, the Chair, in consultation with the EAG, decided early on in the process that it should be considered by the Assembly, given its importance as a gender equality issue. While there are significant data deficits in the area, evidence considered by members indicated that this is a very significant problem in Ireland and one which was exacerbated by Covid-19.



Members emphasised the need for strong, coordinated action by Government, voting by over 95% that a Cabinet Minister should be given responsibility for delivering a national strategy to ensure coordinated action to combat domestic, sexual and gender-based violence. Members amended the ballot paper to specify that this should be a Minister sitting at the Cabinet table.

Members also voted unanimously in favour of information and awareness campaigns to eliminate tolerance of this crime and nearly 99% were in favour of ensuring that there is sufficient housing and accommodation for victims/survivors. The Istanbul Convention recommends one shelter space to every 10,000 people in Ireland. Ireland's current provision (less than 150 beds) falls well short of this.

Members also had very significant concerns about the way victims/survivors are treated by the courts and voted strongly in favour of a number of reforms in this area including legal representation for victims/survivors, tougher sentences and specialist training for judges and lawyers. At the meeting of 18 April 2021, members proposed and agreed a number of amendments to the ballot paper to strengthen these recommendations, including excluding counselling and medical records of victims/survivors in court cases and putting in place a Victims/Survivors Commissioner.

Members also voted by 84.4% that female genital mutilation (FGM) should be recognised as a ground for seeking asylum, and that specialised services should be provided for victims/survivors.



Chapter 11: Gender equality principle in law and policy

Recommendation 42: Empower and adequately resource a statutory body for gender equality under the responsibility of a Cabinet Minister charged with cross government coordination of gender equality issues.

Recommendation 43: Ensure data gathering on key gender equality issues (including care), regular publication of such data and remedial action where necessary.

Recommendation 44: Reflecting international best practice, require gender impact assessment of all proposed legislation and legislate for equality budgeting across all Government bodies including local authorities.

Recommendation 45: Anti-discrimination and equality legislation should be:

- (a) Regularly reviewed to ensure effective monitoring, investigation, reporting and enforcement.
- (b) A standard part of employee training.

These were questions 16-19 on the ballot paper.

As well as making recommendations on the specific themes set out in the Oireachtas resolution, members also agreed a number of recommendations to embed, advance and implement gender equality in law and policy.

While there is some collection and publication of gender equality data in Ireland, including by the Central Statistics Office, in the course of their work members noticed a number of areas where data was deficient, limited, contested or out of date e.g. domestic, sexual and gender-based violence, care, gender pay gap measurement. It is important that gender equality policies are informed by data driven approaches and that progress can be measured. Members therefore voted that data collection on gender issues should be expanded to cover all key



gender equality priorities and, where data shows gender inequalities, action should be taken to address this.

Members considered that the routine assessment of the impact of new laws, policies and expenditure on gender equality would help mainstream gender equality considerations into all State and Government activity. Gender Impact Assessment of proposed legislation is not currently legally required in Ireland so members voted to introduce this as a requirement. Similarly, equality budgeting measures have been gradually introduced in Ireland since 2018 but equality budgeting is not currently required by legislation (although legislation is recommended by the OECD). Nor does it apply to all government bodies or local authorities. Members therefore recommended legislating for equality budgeting across all Government bodies including local authorities. Members also recommended that anti-discrimination and equality legislation should be regularly reviewed and that it should be a standard part of employee training. These recommendations were all supported by over 95% of members in the final voting.

Finally, members were very concerned that there should be clear lines of accountability and responsibility for delivering gender equality across Government and implementing the recommendations of the Assembly. While there is currently a Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, he has a very broad mandate. The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) has a statutory role to protect and promote human rights and equality in Ireland, but it has a very broad mandate. Members therefore voted by over 93% that there should be a statutory body, with more specific powers and increased resources, to advance gender equality and that a Cabinet Minister should have responsibility for ensuring delivery of gender equality across Government. Members amended the recommendation to specify that this Minister should be a full Cabinet Minister, emphasising the importance they place on high-level accountability for delivery.



PART C: CHAIR'S REFLECTIONS

Chapter 12: Chair's reflections on the Assembly process

12.1 The strengths and limits of a Citizens' Assembly

Chairing this Assembly has convinced me of the importance and relevance of the process in certain social policy areas. The issue of gender equality is a complex one, and in today's world, few people have either the time or sufficient access to factual information to be able to form considered opinions on many of the issues that it raises. Quick, knee jerk reactions abound on social media and the reliability of opinion polls often depends on how the questions are phrased. The considerable 'extra' that a Citizens' Assembly can bring to gauging the mood of the citizenry is the fact that those involved take the time to inform themselves, to debate with others who often hold very different views and then to build compromises in deciding their considered views to be conveyed to their public representatives. This form of deliberative democracy can never be a substitute for representative governance but it is a powerful indicator of where centre ground views lie. As this format is being used more often in Ireland, it is important to consider how the output will be used as well as the process for delivering it.

It is a tribute to the commitment of the members of this Assembly that they were able to tackle a wide range of complex issues in a relatively short time and come out with clear and focussed recommendations. However, trying to wrestle the terms of reference into coherent modules, which allowed for an appropriate level of discussion among members, was a huge challenge, particularly given the time constraints of working online. The online format also made it difficult at times to maintain the cross-cutting dimension of the topic.

In my view, it was important at all times to keep the focus on the purpose of the Assembly, which is to gather the informed views of the members. The Assembly cannot, and should not, try to be a policy advisory group. It does not have the capacity to propose complex legislation, carry out impact assessment or



cost/benefit analysis. Such things are the responsibility of Government and the civil service and the Assembly cannot substitute itself for them.

That is not to say that all complex or technical debate can or should be avoided, but rather that the work of the Assembly needs to be carefully scoped and focussed. Some members clearly felt uncomfortable being asked to debate issues such as alternative wording for the Constitution and ‘structural pay inequalities’ and ‘salary norms’. With the help of the Expert Advisory Group, we were able to provide legal advice and explanation of some possible costs and impacts of changes in policy so that members could reach informed conclusions. However, after much discussion, we agreed that it was not the job of the Assembly to draft legislation or design detailed policy. Instead, the recommendations are concentrated on what the citizens want to see changed/introduced/removed. It is up to the Government and the legislature, if they decide to follow the recommendations, to turn them into the appropriate measures, whether in the wording of a referendum or a legislative act or the formulation of a policy decision.

The resolution required the Assembly to have ‘regard to the legal requirements and the costs versus the potential impact’ of its proposals. During their discussions, the members were very conscious that some of their recommendations could entail higher public spending but were aware it was not feasible nor realistic to attempt detailed costings given how technical and time-consuming this would be. Many also felt that cost alone should not be a determining factor in deciding whether significant changes should be made, for example in the area of care.

In order to respond to this part of the Oireachtas resolution, I felt it was important to test the willingness of members to take account of the possible need for increased public funding in deciding their recommendations. We had several discussions on the concept of a statement by the Assembly on their willingness to pay higher taxes. Citizens stressed the need for greater efficiency in public spending, and for reprioritisation between current spending and revenue raising to be explored before tax increases are envisaged. However, 95.6% supported a clear statement indicating they are prepared to support and pay ‘higher taxes, based on the principle of ability to pay, to make a reality of



our recommendations.’ To my mind, this statement lends considerable credibility to the recommendations of the Assembly and underlines the strong wish of members to see changes in key areas, such as in the pay and conditions of carers and the move to a publicly funded and regulated childcare system.

12.2 Gender equality – a topic which affects us all

Our gender identity affects many aspects of our lives. From the outset, it seemed to me that the Assembly should treat gender equality as a matter for everyone, regardless of their gender identity. Perhaps inevitably, because so many aspects of women’s lives in Ireland have not been treated on an equal basis with men, and because of the framing of the Oireachtas resolution, many of the recommendations focus on moving ahead with greater fairness for women. However, if implemented, many would also benefit men’s lives – for example, better paid, longer parental leave would enable fathers to spend time caring for their children, more balanced representation of women and men in all areas of public life should lead to more balanced and inclusive policy and decision making and non-gender specific career advice would help young people to follow their interests rather than societal stereotypes about ‘women’s work’ and ‘men’s jobs’.

The issue of men’s welfare and experiences of inequality were touched on in the Assembly’s meetings and in the public submissions made in the consultation process. The importance of fathers’ relationships with their children, and how this is handled by the Family Courts in the context of marital or relationship breakdown, were particularly highlighted. This was outside the scope of the Oireachtas resolution and, given its complexity, there was insufficient space to examine it in detail but it is an area that requires attention in the interest of genuine equality.

The Oireachtas resolution refers only to ‘women and men, boys and girls’ but these classifications can be seen as excluding non-binary and transgender people. The Assembly took a broader approach, for example, in the public consultation document which stated ‘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.’

As is stated in their Open Letter, members made clear that gender identity should not define a person, their rights or opportunities, nor should their sexuality. A number of their recommendations would, if implemented, help to deal with issues raised by or affecting LGBTIQ+ citizens including as parents, workers and carers. To give just one example, broadening the definition of the family in the Constitution to all families, not just the marital family, should help remove certain obstacles faced by some same sex parents.

12.3 Intersectionality

In the course of its work, the Assembly heard important testimony from representatives of women in minority groups such as the Traveller community, migrant women and women with disabilities. They underlined the multiple obstacles faced by these women, in addition to the issues facing the general female population. It was not possible, given the breadth of the resolution and the time available, to consider and develop detailed recommendations to target issues specific to each of these groups. However, many of the recommendations agreed by the Assembly would advance equality and alleviate discrimination against these women (and in many cases all members of these groups regardless of gender), for example:

- by inserting the principle of non-discrimination in the Constitution;
- through stronger enforcement of employment law to eliminate exploitation;
- through better terms and conditions for care workers;
- increasing the minimum wage to the living wage;
- helping more women get elected to public office;
- penalising and eliminating hateful and abusive language;
- recognising female genital mutilation (FGM) as a grounds for seeking asylum; and
- ensuring increased choice in care and facilitating independent living for persons with disabilities.



12.4 Choice of topic

The Oireachtas resolution creating the Assembly on Gender Equality was broad in terms of overall reach and yet quite specific on certain topics. It was necessary to spend some time in discussion with experts to work out how to spread the topics over a number of meetings without losing sight of the interconnections between them. It became clear to me from an early stage that the topic of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence should also be included in the Assembly's discussions. It is not specifically mentioned in the resolution but it has a highly gendered impact and has also been exacerbated during Covid. Ultimately our choice of basing meetings around the themes of gender norms and stereotypes, leadership, work and social protection, care and domestic, sexual and gender-based violence enabled us to cover all the topics in a coherent manner.

However, the challenge of covering such a mixed set of topics in a relatively short time leads me to agree with the reflections of the previous Chair, Ms Justice Mary Laffoy who noted in her report that 'some topics are not absolutely suited to the Assembly process and... consideration of some categories of topics would not optimise the use of the Assembly's time or indeed taxpayers' money'⁴⁷. The kind of topics she considered suitable were those where the purpose was to establish the national mood on an issue or to begin a conversation about a topic of national importance. Topics she considered might not be suitable included those that have already been extensively considered by the relevant public bodies or complex policy issues involving multiple actors with competing demands on the public finances. In our Assembly, we found ways of discussing both kinds of topics and made clear recommendations. However, in future it might be best to consider more thoroughly what is being sought of citizens before including complex/detailed issues in the terms of reference.

In addition to endorsing Ms Justice Laffoy's recommendations, I would also suggest that, where possible, the Chair of any future Assembly might be invited to contribute to the terms of reference before they are finalised by the

⁴⁷ <https://2016-2018.citizensassembly.ie/en/Manner-in-which-referenda-are-held/Final-Report-on-the-Manner-in-Which-Referenda-are-Held-and-Fixed-Term-Parliaments/Final-Report-on-Manner-in-which-Referenda-are-Held-Fixed-Term-Parliaments.pdf> p. 112.



Oireachtas. This would help the Chair in developing the programme of work for the Assembly and also in explaining the intentions of the Oireachtas to Assembly members. An alternative would be to present the topic more generally in the resolution, avoiding over specification, which would give members more agency in deciding how best to examine the topic.

12.5 Method of recruitment

As described in section 2.2 of this report, this Assembly followed the recruitment model of its predecessors. However, the random selection of members by knocking on doors may not be the best or even a viable approach for future Assemblies. Like any method of selection, it has advantages and disadvantages. It is more likely to secure participants who are at home during the day and also those living in houses as there can be difficulty for recruiters in gaining access to apartment buildings. It is also relatively onerous and time-consuming and is not conducive to enhancing representation from minority groups.

While our Assembly members were representative of the Irish population in terms of gender, age, region and social class, there are a number of issues to be considered in deciding who should be invited to participate in a future Assembly. For the 2016 and the 2020/2021 Assemblies the Oireachtas specified that members should be ‘entitled to vote at a referendum’. This inevitably limits the representation of newer citizens and those who are not citizens but living long term in Ireland, as well as those who are not/not yet registered to vote in a referendum. Since recent data shows that around 12%⁴⁸ of the population is made up of non-Irish nationals living in Ireland, it would be advisable to use other criteria for membership in order to ensure that the views of future assemblies are fully representative of the future population.

It may therefore be time to consider alternative recruitment approaches, informed by international practise. For example, some countries (UK and Germany) send a large number of letters (usually 20-30,000) to citizens in randomly selected parts of the country inviting them to participate in a particular assembly. From those who register an interest in participating, members are then selected according to a range of demographic and socio-

⁴⁸ CSO data for 2016.



economic variables. This method makes it easier to set membership quotas for variables beyond what was possible for the current Irish Assembly (such as membership of the Traveller community, other ethnic background, people with a disability etc). Other countries (e.g. France) have randomly selected members by texting or phoning randomly selected phone numbers. There are advantages and disadvantages to these various approaches which would be worth considering before deciding the selection method for future Irish assemblies.

In addition, since it seems likely that there will be future assemblies, possibly spread over different time periods, it might make sense to constitute a relatively large database of citizens who are willing to take part in an unspecified future citizens' assembly. Such a database model could then be used to draw members on a random basis each time a new assembly is called.

12.6 Length of service of members

The resolution specifies that the maximum length of service for members should be six months (other than the Chairperson who should have a 12-month term). Clearly, the pandemic upset the timetable and imposed an inevitable delay. The Assembly did not meet between February and July 2020 (when it met for an informal online seminar) or in August/September 2020, in all a gap of 6 months. Members understood the reasons for this and 69 members remained fully involved from February 2020 until April 2021. An estimated 6 people left the process because of the transition online and others had to leave for personal, health, work and family reasons (see section 2.3). In my view, a duration of around six months in non-Covid times is reasonable, depending on the topics to be covered. Members give up a sizeable amount of personal time, which also has an impact on their families and other commitments. Longer than six months places too much of a burden on the civic commitment asked of citizens.

12.7 Comparison of online and in-person meetings

It is clear from post meeting surveys that most members were satisfied with the content and running of online meetings (see section 3.6 for details). The move online had some advantages – there was no need for members to travel long distances for meetings, we benefitted from the expertise of some international experts who would not have travelled to Ireland for a meeting, and pre-recorded



presentations were generally shorter and more focussed. It was also possible for us to call informal evening meetings at relatively short notice when we felt the need to consult members. However, a large number of members regularly expressed the view that online meetings were not as good as in-person meetings. In particular, they felt the absence of opportunities for informal discussions between members to confront views and build compromises. Further data on this is available in Appendix 5.

Quotes from members

It wasn't the same as meeting face to face but once we got into the swing of things and into smaller breakout groups conversation started to flow again.

I understand the need to do it online in this way but I feel we are missing a lot because of no face to face contact, formal and informal, with fellow Assembly members and the Secretariat.

I don't think people get to fully discuss matters in the online format. I feel less control as a member. We have no private time to discuss things further as we would normally over dinner etc.

Having experienced both a full weekend, in-person meeting and then the move online, my own view is that the in-person format is the best way of discussing the topics covered by the Assembly. However, apart from the advantages listed above of the online format, there is also a considerable cost saving since there are no hotel or travel costs. In my view, a mix of the two formats could work well for future Assemblies. Depending on the topics, a blended format could be made up of a combination of holding the opening and closing sessions in person or of having alternate meetings in person and online.



As one member said:

I feel that everyone involved has made the absolute best of a difficult situation and perhaps in future assemblies a hybrid of online and in-person meetings may bring the best of both formats.

12.8 The challenge of sticking to the theme

As already mentioned, the Oireachtas resolution was very broad. Each of the issues provided much ground for discussion and, as Chair, I had to judge when there had been sufficient time for debate and when there was a need to move on to the next topic. This was particularly challenging given the time constraints of the online format. As expressed in the surveys, most members seem satisfied with the time allocated and depth of their discussions.

Another challenge of the theme was the need to maintain the focus on the cross-cutting nature of gender equality. Many of the topics discussed tempted wider questions on social protection and degrees of involvement of the State and/or the private sector. Here too I had to use the role of Chair to keep the focus of the debate squarely on the topics set out in the resolution. This meant that topics that did not directly bear on gender equality were not pursued in detail.

Members were keenly aware of the interconnections between different areas of policy which are often covered by different Government Ministers, Departments and Agencies. In other words, action or inaction in one area has implications for others, such as the lack of adequate pensions for carers who spend years working for low wages. However, these cross-cutting impacts or gaps, and their gender impacts, may not be fully recognised or captured in the design and implementation of policies or State schemes and supports. For this reason, several recommendations deal with the need for a central coordinating responsibility across government and for a statutory body on gender equality.

The need to keep the cross-cutting nature of gender equality in mind will also be a challenge for the Oireachtas and Government in deciding on their response to the recommendations. This seems to be recognised in the resolution itself where it states that the report and recommendations of the Assembly will be



referred ‘for consideration to a relevant Committee of both Houses and the Committee will in turn bring its conclusion to the Houses for debate’. The fact that one Committee will be leading the process should help to ensure that the recommendations are not treated as single issues but as part of a mosaic of delivering gender equality.

12.9 Sufficient time for debate?

Once the Assembly moved online, the key challenge was to maximise the time members had for debate with other members. This need was met in different ways:

- Having the presentations available to watch in their own time enabled members to watch them more than once. They were then able to participate in the online meetings by sharing their more reflective views on what they had seen, instead of immediately responding to a live presentation in an in-person meeting.
- Several Question and Answer sessions were arranged at the start of online meetings to enable members to question speakers on key topics.
- During meetings members met in groups of around 8-10 people. At the end of most meetings, each group nominated one member as rapporteur who then gave the top 3-5 recommendations from members on the topic at a concluding feedback session.
- As work progressed, a series of optional evening meetings was used to discuss members’ views on how to decide the final recommendations and to construct ballot papers for the final votes (see section 3.4 for details). Members fully exercised their ownership of the process during these sessions, mostly calling for stronger ambition, earlier dates and more forceful wording.

From time to time, I reminded members that the purpose of the Assembly was to give their views and recommendations to the Oireachtas, not to engage in precise policy design. Some would have liked to have more time to learn about issues and to continue debating them but others felt that after 7 months of



meetings as well as the pre Covid meeting they were sufficiently informed to move on to voting.

In the post-meeting survey after the February 2021 meeting, which was the first where ballot paper items were agreed, 91% of respondents said they felt ready to move on to the next phase of the Assembly's work and agree the ballot paper. In my view, given the main purpose of the Assembly, members had sufficient time for consideration and discussion of the issues.

12.10 Sufficient diversity of views & perspectives

When the results of the Convention on the Constitution and previous Citizens' Assembly were announced, some commentators argued that they were not fully representative of the views of the electorate. In any democracy there must be room for different opinions but, in the end, when it is time to decide, it is the views of the majority that are determinant in referenda and elections. As mentioned elsewhere in this report, in both cases the referenda that followed the previous Assemblies were carried by clear majorities.

The post meeting surveys of the Assembly clearly show a range of opinions on all of the issues under discussion and these different views were aired in the breakout groups. In general, members felt that different views were raised in a respectful way (see quotes below). For example, one member commented 'everybody was way more reasonable than I expected' and another said 'there were some things I did learn, there were other things that people learned from me'.

In the post meeting surveys over the process, between 81% - 96% of members agreed with the statement that the 'facilitators made sure diverse views were considered'. Between 83% - 99% agreed that 'my fellow members respected what I had to say even when they didn't agree'.

The final voting shows a variety of support/disagreement with the final recommendations. Given the process followed of whittling down the number of recommendations from over 500 to the top 45 priorities, it was always going to be the case that most recommendations would be carried as they reflected the top priorities of members. However, only five votes were unanimous. One



recommendation received the support of 75.3% which meant 22 members voted against it and another received the support of 77.8% with 20 voting against.

One of the key aims of the process was to provide members with factual information as well as a range of advocacy views on the topics set out in the resolution so that they could make up their own minds on the messages they wished to send to the Oireachtas. Great care was taken in the choice of speakers and in the objectivity of the factual material. The active participation of the Central Statistics Office and Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) as well as leading academics ensured that verified national and international data was presented. Obviously, advocacy organisations advance the views of their members but here too care was taken, wherever possible, to present a range of views to enable members to challenge their own and other members' views.

Members' comments would seem to indicate that they felt sufficiently well informed to vote on the outcome of their work. For example,

The more I learned about the topics the more I felt the need for significant and long lasting change.

I knew before the Citizens' Assembly that gender inequality had an impact on a variety of areas in life, but having taken part in the Citizens' Assembly, I now can articulate and discuss what those impacts are.

I would have considered myself a feminist but certainly there has been an awful lot of perspectives that I may not have considered previously.



I think my opinions are much more informed and I have a better understanding of what leads to change and reform.

My opinion on the use of quotas to promote gender equality has changed. I now consider quotas as a valuable tool in helping to achieve gender equality.

I think having the sessions on line was a good compromise, but feel that we greatly missed out on the social side... that ...having sessions in the hotel. All our sessions were short sharp hard sessions and as someone who has not worked (retired) for 10 years I found these sessions very tiring. I feel that sessions interspersed with relaxing social intermissions would certainly have helped me cope with the amount of information given to us.

It is likely that Professor Suiter will comment on this further in her analysis which was commissioned 'to monitor and record, amongst other things, the perceived deliberative quality of the Assembly' as provided for in the Oireachtas resolution.

12.11 Data issues

In several areas discussed by citizens it was clear that there was insufficient data or that the little that was available was long out of date. This is the case for example in the area of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence and many facets of care. Good policy making requires data and time series so that change and impact can be monitored. It is difficult to see progress if no base line can be established. These data limitations led to recommendations on gathering and publication of key gender equality data and requiring gender impact assessment of proposed legislation.



Some of these data issues are illustrated in the case of the gender pay gap. The information provided to members, which was correct at the time, was that the gender pay gap in Ireland was just over 14%. In making their recommendations, members wanted to set a clear road map and timetable for eliminating it. That is why recommendation 32 states ‘The state should set targets in legislation to reduce the hourly gender pay gap (*currently 14%*) to 9% by 2025 and to 4% by 2030 with a view to eliminating it by 2035’. However, the gender pay gap figure was updated subsequently. It also appears that the method of measurement changed between 2017 and 2018 so there is an open question as to the extent to which the reduction suggested by the updated figure is real or partially a measurement issue. I would hope that the Oireachtas would follow the intention of the citizens and set targets in legislation to achieve real reductions in the gender pay gap by 2025 and 2030 that would lead to its elimination by 2035.

12.12 To those who made it all possible

It was a privilege and an honour to chair the Citizens’ Assembly on Gender Equality. Before I took on the role, like many people, I had only a general idea of how such assemblies work. I was aware of the link between them and both referenda that led to important social change in recent years. The reality of leading an Assembly from inception to delivery was fascinating and challenging, particularly once the Covid-19 pandemic required the Assembly to do the bulk of its work online.

I am proud of the work done and of the quality and range of the recommendations adopted by the Assembly. This was only possible thanks to a tremendous team effort and was a truly collaborative experience. The credit for the outcome goes first and foremost to the members. Although they were chosen randomly, we were lucky to have an engaged and committed group of citizens who probed and questioned the information they were given. They challenged each other’s views but were also ready to find compromises.



In their own words, they...

...spent a lot of time...
debating and ... watching
things

and

...took on board other
people's views, listening
to people

Became

more informed from listening to the views of other
members and the general discussions. It also
heightened my awareness and understanding of
issues

Had

open frank uninterrupted conversation... if a debate
ensues that too is good as long as no offence is
caused.

I would also like to thank the members who agreed to participate in the Steering Group. They worked hard to convey the views of their fellow members, which involved additional time and commitment on their part.

We were equally blessed with a fantastic Secretariat, superbly ably led by Dr Mary Clare O'Sullivan. Lorraine Kavanagh, Lena Jacobs, Darren Greene, Bróna Olwill, Eric Keegan (and Gaye Malone during her time with us) combined professional excellence with openness, good humour and huge creativity in solving the myriad of issues that arose on a daily basis. As is clear from the surveys of the members, their constant help and support was greatly appreciated by all.

Many other people contributed to the work of the Assembly. We had an excellent, and very hard working, Expert Advisory Group which oversaw the



objectivity and relevance of the information provided to citizens. We benefitted from the expertise of several legal experts in our work on the Constitution and their knowledge and creativity helped us to find the right wording for our recommendations. Dr Pauline Cullen and Professor Jane Suiter and her team also provided invaluable research support and expertise throughout.

Work in the breakout groups was expertly managed by the team from Roomaxx and Pi Comms and Q4 also ably assisted and supported us throughout the process.

I would like to acknowledge the expertise and support of Mr. Ciaran Manning, Mr. John Fitzpatrick and Mr Tony Slater from Mi-voice in overseeing the e-voting process and ensuring its integrity and efficiency.

I would also like to thank the Grand Hotel Malahide, Beatrice.ie and Bridge Interpreting for supporting the February 2020 meeting.

While each Citizens' Assembly is unique, each also builds on the work of its predecessor. The Secretariat and I benefitted hugely from the advice and experience generously shared by the previous Chairs and Heads of Secretariat, respectively Mr. Tom Arnold and Mr. Art O'Leary, and Ms. Justice Mary Laffoy and Ms. Sharon Finegan.⁴⁹

Thank you all.

⁴⁹ Chair and Head of Secretariat of the Convention on the Constitution of 2012-2013 and the Citizens' Assembly of 2016-2018.



Appendices

Appendix 1: Oireachtas resolution

That Seanad Éireann:

approves the calling of a Citizens' Assembly to consider the following matter and to make such recommendations as it sees fit and report to the Houses of the Oireachtas:

- to advance gender equality by bringing forward proposals that:
 - challenge the remaining barriers and social norms and attitudes that facilitate gender discrimination towards girls and boys, women and men;
 - identify and dismantle economic and salary norms that result in gender inequalities, and reassess the economic value placed on work traditionally held by women;
 - in particular, seek to ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in the workplace, politics and public life;
 - recognise the importance of early years parental care and seek to facilitate greater work-life balance;
 - examine the social responsibility of care and women and men's co-responsibility for care, especially within the family; and
 - scrutinise the structural pay inequalities that result in women being disproportionately represented in low pay sectors;



following on from the above, to prioritise the proposals, which may include policy, legislative or constitutional change, having regard to the legal requirements and the costs versus the potential impact; and notes that:

- membership of the Assembly will consist of 100 persons as follows:
 - a Chairperson to be appointed by the Government;
 - 99 citizens entitled to vote at a referendum, recruited at national level and randomly selected in accordance with best recruitment practice, as advised by industry experts so as to be broadly representative of Irish society; and
 - membership of the Assembly will not include participation by politicians;
- the maximum length of service for Assembly members other than the Chairperson who will be appointed for a 12-month term, will be six months and the work programme for the Assembly will be developed in accordance with this, however, in the event of unforeseen circumstances, membership may continue until active consideration of a topic has been completed;
- members will receive a nominal stipend on a per weekend basis for each meeting attended, to recognise their civic commitment;
- substitutes may be appointed subject to the selection criteria above, who will be entitled to contribute to the proceedings and vote in their own name;
- the Assembly will agree its own rules of procedure for the effective conduct of its business in as economical a manner as possible;
- the Assembly will operate in an open and transparent manner, including livestreaming of public proceedings and the prompt publication of relevant documentation and material;



- the Assembly will make a report and recommendation(s) on the matter set out above to the Houses of the Oireachtas, which on receipt, will refer the report for consideration to a relevant Committee of both Houses and the Committee will, in turn, bring its conclusions to the Houses for debate;
- the Assembly will spend a minimum of two meetings considering the topic assigned to it and will report in any event not later than one year from the date of the first Assembly meeting;
- the Assembly may also be asked to consider such other matters as may be referred to it by the Houses of the Oireachtas;
- a new Expert Advisory Group will be established for the topic being considered to assist the work of the Assembly in terms of preparing information and advice;
- the Assembly may invite and accept submissions from the general public and interested bodies and will seek such expert advice as it considers desirable;
- the Assembly will engage independent researchers to monitor and record, amongst other things, the perceived deliberative quality of the Assembly;
- all matters before the Assembly will be determined by a majority of the votes of members present and voting, other than the Chairperson who will have a casting vote in the case of an equality of votes; and
- the Government will provide in the Houses of the Oireachtas a response to each recommendation of the Assembly and, if accepting some or all of the recommendations, will indicate the timeframe it envisages for the holding of any related referendum.’



Appendix 2: Membership of EAG, Steering Group and legal panel

Expert Advisory Group

The members of the Expert Advisory Group on how to advance gender equality were:

- Dr. Ursula Barry (University College Dublin)
- Professor John Garry (Queen's University Belfast)
- Dr. Grainne Healy (Equality Expert)
- Sandra Healy (Dublin City University)
- Dr. Tom Hickey (Dublin City University)
- Dr. Helen Russell (The Economic and Social Research Institute)
- Dr. Emer Smyth (The Economic and Social Research Institute)

Steering Group

The members of the Steering group on how to advance gender equality were:

- Eleanor Grace
- Liam Linehan
- Greg McDowell
- Anna O'Brien
- Mary B. O'Sullivan
- John T Quinn

Legal Panel

The members of the Legal Panel were:

- Dr Tom Hickey, Dublin City University
- Dr. Laura Cahillane, University of Limerick
- Dr. Oran Doyle, Trinity College Dublin
- Professor Conor O'Mahony, University College Cork
- Dr. Fergus Ryan, Maynooth University

Dr. Rachael Walsh (Trinity College Dublin) also assisted with preparation for the meeting.



Appendix 3: Summary outline of meetings

Inaugural meeting, Dublin Castle - Saturday 25 January 2020

On Saturday 25 January 2020, the Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality held its inaugural meeting to introduce members to the Chair, the process and each other and give them a sense of what was involved in being a member of the Citizens' Assembly. It took place from 2pm to 5pm with the first half in public session and the second half in private session.

The Chair, Dr. Catherine Day, opened the meeting. Members were also shown an animated video on how the Assembly process works. Following this, Dr. Evelyn Mahon of Trinity College Dublin presented on 'Social Change in Ireland' to provide some context for the work of the Assembly.

During the private session, there were two panel discussions, the first with BT Young Scientist winners Cormac Harris and Alan O'Sullivan speaking about their project on gender norms and stereotypes. Cathy Burke and David Keogh also discussed their experiences as members of the Citizens' Assembly 2016-2018. These panels were moderated by Katie Hannon. The meeting finished with a presentation from the Assembly Secretariat on the work programme, rules and procedures and the Steering Group.

15-16 February 2020, Grand Hotel Malahide, Co. Dublin

Gender, gender norms and stereotypes, and the family

The first full meeting of the Assembly took place over the weekend of 15-16 February 2020. This weekend included an introduction to the main issues around gender, gender norms and stereotypes, and the family.

On Saturday 15 February, the Assembly met from 9am to 5pm, with a 1-hour lunch break. The main themes for the day were: How do we live in Ireland today? What are the main issues around gender? Looking at definitions of the family that reflect Ireland today.



The speakers were as follows:

1. Elaine O'Mahoney (Central Statistics Office) - 'Gender in Ireland – some key facts';
2. Dr. Anne-Marie McGauran, Trinity College Dublin - 'Recent developments on gender equality in laws and policy in Ireland';
3. Lived Experience Panel: Lisa O'Brien – Quantity Surveyor, Oliver Allan – Emergency Department Nurse, Deirdre O'Neill – Former Teacher and Researcher;
4. Professor Sheila Greene, Trinity College Dublin - 'Gender Norms and Stereotypes'.

There was a number of question and answer sessions on the day with a CSO panel, Dr. McGauran and Professor Greene.

In addition, members were played the following videos:

- Redraw the Balance - How Stereotypes are Formed;
- 20x20 - If she can't see it, she can't be it;
- Dr Tom Hickey on 'Article 41 - the Constitution & Family'.

On Sunday 16 February the Citizens' Assembly met from 9am to 13:15pm. The main theme was 'The family: How is the family defined in Irish law? Evolution of Irish families and whether the rights and needs of modern families are met equally with those in 'traditional' families.' Members heard from the following speakers:

1. Professor Linda Connolly, NUI Maynooth - 'Evolution of Irish family';
2. Professor Siobhan Mullally, NUI Galway - 'The family in the constitution and law';
3. Lived Experience Panel: Adele O'Connor, Paula Fagan and Dave Saunders. Professor Mullally and Professor Connolly also answered questions from members.



Online Seminar Saturday 4 July 2020

The Assembly had an optional online seminar on Saturday 4 July 2020 on the themes of the public submissions and how the Covid crisis had impacted on the mandate of the Assembly. It was also an opportunity to pilot an online meeting.

The seminar took place from 10:30am to 12.30pm.

Members were shown 4 videos which had also been circulated in advance:

1. Dr Pauline Cullen, Maynooth University – Introduction to submissions;
2. Dr. Mary Murphy, Maynooth University - ‘Gender Impacts of Covid-19 – Takeaways’;
3. Dr. Lisa Wilson, Nevin Economic Research Institute - ‘The Forgotten Children’;
4. Tom Ferris, Economist – ‘The Economy, Gender Equality and Covid-19’.

Dr. Pauline Cullen answered questions from members during the seminar. In addition, there was a separate question and answer session with Dr. Mary Murphy, Dr. Lisa Wilson and Tom Ferris.

17 October 2020 (online) - Leadership and Public Life

On Saturday 17 October the Assembly held its first full online meeting which took place from 10am to 4pm, with a 2-hour lunch break. This meeting covered women in leadership and public life, covering the following section in the Oireachtas resolution:

Seek to ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in the workplace, politics and public life.

Members were sent 7 videos in the four weeks leading up to the meeting, allowing the time on the day to be spent primarily in discussion. These were:

1. Dr. Pauline Cullen on the public submissions on leadership and public life;
2. Professor Yvonne Galligan, TU Dublin on gender equality, leadership and politics;



3. Panel discussion: Lian Bell, *Waking the Feminists*; Maria Joyce, National Traveller Women's Forum Ireland and Julie Sinnamon, Enterprise Ireland. Moderated by Dr. Brian MacCraith;
4. Advocacy panel: Sinead Gibney, Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC), Gary Kennedy, 30% Club and Better Balance for Better Business, and Alison Cowzer, Women for Election. Moderated by Dr. Larry O'Connell, NESC;
5. A video prepared by Women on Air discussing the representation of women in the media;
6. Dr. Lenita Freidenvall, Stockholm University on Gender Balance in Elected Office in Europe;
7. Lynne Cantwell, Chair of Sport Ireland's Women in Sport committee on gender inequality in sport.

A short video from the Taoiseach Micheál Martin was shown during this introductory section as well as a video with perspectives from a number of women in leadership roles:

- Sinéad Burke – Director of Tilting the Lens and Author;
- Geraldine Byrne-Nason – Irish Ambassador to the United Nations.
- Deirdre Carbery – Gender Advisor and Military Veteran;
- Jenny Courtney – CEO, Belvedere Youth Club;
- Eileen Flynn – Senator and Advocate;
- Aoife Martin – Advocate and Company Secretary of TENI;
- Anna May McHugh – Managing Director, National Ploughing Association;
- Sinéad McSweeney – Managing Director, Twitter Ireland and VP Public Policy EMEA; and
- Deborah Somorin – Founder of Empower the Family;

During the breakout rooms members were shown short videos from:

- Dr. Fiona Buckley of UCC on her research on women's experience running for election in Ireland;
- Male Champions for Change – an Australian initiative encouraging men and women to work together for gender equality.



14 November 2020 (online) - Work and Social Protection 1

On Saturday 14 November, the Assembly held its first meeting on work and social protection. It was decided to split the topic over two meetings due to its complexity and the breadth of material to be covered. The second part of this topic was covered on 5 December. The relevant text from the Oireachtas resolution is:

‘Identify and dismantle economic and salary norms that result in gender inequalities, and reassess the economic value placed on work traditionally held by women;

Scrutinise the structural pay inequalities that result in women being disproportionately represented in low pay sectors.’

This meeting covered work, the gender pay gap, low pay, minimum wage, occupational segregation, promotions and career advancement. It took place from 10am to 3.30pm, with a 1.5-hour lunch break.

Members were sent 10 videos in the four weeks leading up to the meeting, allowing the time on the day to be spent primarily in discussion. These were:

- 1&2. Dr. Helen Russell, ESRI on the figures underlying the gender pay gap, the possible reasons for the gender pay gap and approaches to addressing it (presented in two videos);
3. Professor Damian Grimshaw, Kings College London on some examples of measures taken by other countries to address the gender pay gap;
4. Advocacy panel: Jennifer McCarthy Flynn, National Women’s Council, David Joyce, ICTU and Kara McGann, IBEC. Moderated by Dr Paul Donnelly, TU Dublin
5. Advocacy video: Elizabeth Bowen, Small Firms Association;
6. Dr. Pauline Cullen on her analysis of the public submissions on this topic;
7. A video on the personal experience of Health Care Assistants (created by SIPTU);
8. A video on the economic benefits of gender equality in work, created by the European Institute of Gender Equality;
9. A video from Business in Europe on gender equality in work; and



10. A video from WorkEqual 2020, with politicians from across the political spectrum in Ireland voicing their support for equal pay.

During the plenary the following videos were played:

- Essential workers during the Covid crisis, made by RTE;
- Dr. Helen Russell's second video was replayed;
- Professor Damian Grimshaw's video was replayed.

During the breakout sessions the following videos were played:

- Lived experience panel- Avril Hannifin, Suzy Byrne, and Mariaam Bhatti. Moderated by Tom Arnold;
- Dr. Alicja Bobek, Trinity College Dublin presented her qualitative research on personal experiences of working in low pay sectors.

There was also a question and answer session with Dr. Russell and her colleagues from the ESRI Associate Research Professor Frances McGinnity and Senior Research Officer Karina Doorley.

5 December 2020, online - Work and Social Protection 2

On Saturday 5 December, the Assembly held its second meeting on work and social protection. The relevant text from the Oireachtas resolution is:

'Identify and dismantle economic and salary norms that result in gender inequalities, and reassess the economic value placed on work traditionally held by women;

Scrutinise the structural pay inequalities that result in women being disproportionately represented in low pay sectors.'

This meeting covered social protection, pensions, activation, working hours, family friendly working arrangements and recognition of caring responsibilities. It took place from 10am to 3.30pm, with a 75-minute lunch break.

Members were sent 5 videos in advance of the meeting:

1. Dr. Mary Murphy on Gender Inequality in the Welfare System;
2. Dr. Eoin O'Malley, DCU on Making public policy, Making policy work;



3. Christopher Ryan, D/PER on a summary of a review of the Paid Parent's Leave Scheme;
4. Dr. Adele Whelan, ESRI on The Gender Gap in Retirement Incomes;
5. Advocacy panel: Bríd O'Brien, Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed, Laura Bambrick ICTU, and Sandra McCullagh, National Women's Council of Ireland. Moderated by Sandra Healy, DCU.

A short video highlighting the benefits of paid paternity leave by the Economist magazine was played in plenary session.

Dr. Mary Murphy and Dr. Adele Whelan answered questions from members.

During the breakout session the following videos were played:

- Lived experience panel: Finian Murphy, Mary Walsh, and Kathy Cunningham. Moderated by Tom Arnold;
- Presentation from Dr Tricia Keilthy, St. Vincent DePaul, who highlighted research and qualitative data from people experiencing poverty.

16 January 2021 (online) - Care

On Saturday 16 January the Assembly on Gender Equality met on the topic of care from 10am to 3.30m with 1.5-hour lunch break. The relevant text from the Oireachtas resolution is:

'Recognise the importance of early years parental care and seek to facilitate greater work-life balance;

Examine the social responsibility of care and women and men's co-responsibility for care, especially within the family.'

This meeting covered the treatment of care and caring in the economy and society, childcare, the experience of carers and those requiring care and Ireland's system of care for children, persons with disabilities and older people.

Members were sent 7 videos in advance of the meeting:

- 1&2. Professor Ursula Barry – Placing the CARE economy at the Centre of Irish Society (presented in two parts);



3. Professor Nóirín Hayes, Trinity College Dublin - Gender Equality; Caring for Children;
4. Teresa Heeney, Early Childhood Ireland on 'Pathways to Better Prospects' study;
5. Dr. Pauline Cullen – Summary of public submissions on Care;
6. Advocacy panel: Zoe Hughes, Care Alliance Ireland; Orla O'Connor, National Women's Council of Ireland; Tanya Ward, Children's Rights Alliance. Moderated by Cathal McCoille;
7. Advocacy: Dr. Meredith Raley, Disability Federation of Ireland.

A short video from the International Labour Organisation; 'Decent Work in the Care Economy' was played in plenary session.

Professor Ursula Barry and Professor Nóirín Hayes answered questions from members.

During the breakout sessions the following video was played:

- Lived experience panel: Damien Douglas, Aisling Glynn and Brendan Courtney. Moderated by Rory O'Donnell.

13 February 2021 (online) - Article 41

On Saturday 13 February the Assembly met from 10am to 3.45pm, with an hour's lunch break.

This meeting focused on Article 41 of the Irish Constitution and agreeing a draft ballot paper on this topic for voting on in April.

Members were sent 7 videos in the four weeks leading up to the meeting:

1. Dr Tom Hickey on 'The Irish Constitution';
2. Dr Laura Cahillane on Article 41.2

Members were also recirculated with 3 videos of the presentations and videos from the February 2020 meeting on the family. In addition, members were recirculated with videos played at optional evening meetings in advance of the meeting. These were:

3. Chair's video explaining the Pathway to Recommendations;
4. Chair's video on the approach to the meeting on 13 February.



Members also received a paper on 'Submissions received on Article 41 of the Constitution' prepared by Dr Pauline Cullen and the draft ballot paper on the Constitution.

The following legal experts were available to answer questions on the draft ballot paper: Dr Tom Hickey, Dr. Laura Cahillane, Professor Oran Doyle, Professor Conor O'Mahony and Dr Fergus Ryan. Members agreed the draft ballot paper on Article 41 by Zoom poll at this meeting.

13 March 2021 (online) - Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence & Agreeing the Care Ballot Paper

On Saturday 13 March, the Assembly met from 10am to 4pm, with an hour's lunch break.

This meeting focused on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in the morning session and agreeing a draft ballot paper on Care in the afternoon for voting in April.

Members were sent 6 videos in the four weeks leading up to the meeting:

1. Dr. Monica O'Connor, UCD '*Gender-based Violence and Gender Equality*';
2. Dr. Pauline Cullen – Public submissions on Gender-Based Violence;
3. '*Framework for Consent in Higher Education Institutions*' Lorna Fitzpatrick, President USI in conversation with Sandra Healy;
4. Advocacy panel 1: Noeline Blackwell, Dublin Rape Crisis Centre; Sean Cooke, Men's Development Network, Mary McDermott, Safe Ireland;
5. Advocacy panel 2: Sarah Benson, Women's Aid; Caroline Munyi, AkiDwA; Dr Clóna Saidléar, Rape Crisis Network Ireland;
Advocacy panels 1 and 2 moderated by Dr. Gráinne Healy;
6. Explanation of ballot paper changes- Catherine Day, Chair.

Dr. Monica O'Connor answered questions from members at the meeting. The Expert Advisory Group were also available to answer questions related to the draft ballot paper on care. Members agreed the ballot paper on care by zoom poll at this meeting.



17-18 April 2021 - Agreeing the Ballot Paper and voting

On Saturday 17 April the Assembly on Gender Equality met from 9am to 4pm, with an hour's lunch break.

This meeting focused on agreeing the ballot questions on gender equality principles; leadership in the workplace; education & norms; gender quotas, politics and public life. The members also conducted the final formal voting on the Constitution, care, gender equality principles, leadership in the workplace; education & norms and gender quotas, politics and public life.

On Sunday 18 April, the Citizens' Assembly met from 9am to 4pm, with an hour lunch break.

This meeting focused on agreeing the ballot questions on domestic, sexual and gender-based violence, pay & working conditions; social protection & pensions, and willingness to pay. In addition, the members conducted the final, formal voting on these topics.

Members were sent 3 videos in advance of the meeting. These were:

1. Chair explaining draft ballot paper changes on gender equality leadership, education and norms; gender quotas, politics and public life.
2. Chair explaining draft ballot paper changes on domestic, sexual and gender-based violence and social protection and pensions;
3. Tony Slater from Mi-Voice on the formal voting system.

Members of the Expert Advisory Group were available to answer questions on the draft ballot paper over the two days.



Appendix 4: Results of voting

Note: The Ballot paper was structured and ordered in blocs according to what worked best in terms of planning the meetings to discuss and agree the ballot paper. There were also some sequential questions on the Constitutional recommendations. The final numbering of the recommendations has therefore been adjusted to order the recommendations more thematically and to account for the sequential questions. The number of the questions below does not therefore tally with the numbering of the recommendations in the body of the Report but the boxes in the Report state in each case the corresponding number for each recommendation as it appeared on the ballot paper.

Bloc A: The Constitution

Question 1 – Article 41.2: ‘no change’ versus ‘change’

Option	Votes	%
A. The Assembly should recommend that no change is made to Article 41.2 and the Assembly should not make any further recommendations on the matter.	5	5.6%
B. The Assembly should recommend change (either deleting or replacing Article 41.2) and the Assembly should make further recommendations on the matter.	84	94.4%

Question 2 – Article 41.2, ‘simple delete’ or ‘delete and replace’

Option	Votes	%
A. Simple delete: The Assembly should recommend that this provision be deleted from the Constitution and not make any further recommendations on the matter.	14	15.7%
B. Delete and replace: The Assembly should recommend that this provision be deleted from the Constitution and further recommend that it be replaced with a provision relating to care that would not be gender-specific.	75	84.3%



Question 3 – Nature of Replacement provision

Option	Votes	%
A - The Assembly should recommend replacing the text of Article 41.2 with language that is not gender specific and recognises the principle of valuing and supporting care within the home and wider community.	17	19.1%
B - The Assembly should recommend replacing the text of Article 41.2 with language that is not gender specific and obliges the State to take reasonable measures to support care within the home and wider community.	72	80.9%

Question 4

Please vote 'Yes' or 'No' in answer to the following question.

Should the Constitution continue to provide recognition for the family?

Option	Votes	%
Yes	83	93.3%
No	6	6.7%

Question 5

Please vote 'Yes' or 'No' in answer to the following question.

Should the Constitution protect private and family life, including forms of family life beyond the marital family?

Option	Votes	%
Yes	87	98.9%
No	1	1.1%



Bloc B: Care

Question 6

To improve the terms and conditions of those in paid employment as carers (for children and adults):

(a) they should have a pay structure and benefits (including sick pay and pensions) that reward their level of skill and training, similar to those of teachers and nurses.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	86	95.6%
No	4	4.4%

(b) they should have a career structure, including access to training and professional registration, which enables them to progress in their chosen area.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	88	97.8%
No	2	2.2%

Question 7

Reform Carers' Allowance by:

(a) increasing the level of the income disregard.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	87	96.7%
No	3	3.3%

(b) reimbursing the costs associated with caring.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	86	95.6%
No	4	4.4%



(c) increasing the ceiling on the number of hours in paid work outside the home.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	84	93.3%
No	6	6.7%

(d) providing access to State employment and training programmes.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	85	94.4%
No	5	5.6%

Question 8

The State should develop an individualised pension solution for carers to ensure they have an adequate income once they reach retirement age.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	86	95.6%
No	4	4.4%

Question 9

Improve respite provision for carers by:

(a) Increasing the level of the Carers' Support Grant in the next Budget and keeping it under review to ensure it keeps pace with other increases in social protection payments.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	88	97.8%
No	2	2.2%



(b) Providing adequate access to a range of respite services to meet individual needs.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	88	97.8%
No	2	2.2%

Question 10

Ireland should:

(a) over the next decade move to a publicly funded, accessible and regulated model of quality, affordable early years and out of hours childcare.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	87	96.7%
No	3	3.3%

(b) increase the State share of GDP spent on childcare, from the current 0.37% of GDP to at least 1% by no later than 2030 in line with the UNICEF target.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	87	96.7%
No	3	3.3%

Question 11

Paid Leave for parents should:

(a) cover the first year of a child's life.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	75	83.3%
No	15	16.7%



(b) be non-transferable to encourage sharing of childcare responsibility between parents.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	70	77.8%
No	20	22.2%

(c) provide lone parents with the same total leave period as a couple.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	74	82.2%
No	16	17.8%

(d) be incentivised by increasing payment levels to encourage increased take up.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	71	78.9%
No	19	21.1%

Question 12

Older people and persons with disabilities should:

(a) be actively supported and resourced to live independently.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	90	100%
No	0	0%

(b) have access to person centred financial supports to serve their individual needs.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	88	97.8%
No	2	2.2%



(c) be enabled to participate as fully as possible in decisions on their care needs, based on principles of fairness, respect, equality and dignity.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	89	98.9%
No	1	1.1%

(d) be facilitated and resourced as much as possible if their choice is to be cared for at home.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	87	96.7%
No	3	3.3%

Question 13

Provision for those who wish to be cared for at home should be improved by:

(a) providing a statutory right for payment for home care packages as well as nursing care.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	87	97.8%
No	2	2.2%

(b) increasing the annual home care budget to meet growing demand and reduce waiting lists.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	89	98.9%
No	1	1.1%



Question 14

Lifelong care for persons with disabilities who need it should be seamless and there should not be any break in services provided or need to reapply for support when a person turns 18.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	90	100%
No	0	0%

Bloc C: Gender equality principle in constitution, law and policy

Question 15

Amend Article 40.1 of the Constitution to refer explicitly to gender equality and non-discrimination.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	86	96.6%
No	3	3.4%

Question 16

Empower and adequately resource a statutory body for gender equality under the responsibility of a Cabinet Minister charged with cross government co-ordination of gender equality issues.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	83	93.3%
No	6	6.7%



Question 17

Ensure data gathering on key gender equality issues (including care), regular publication of such data and remedial action where necessary.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	87	97.8%
No	2	2.2%

Question 18

Reflecting international best practice, require gender impact assessment of all proposed legislation and legislate for equality budgeting across all Government bodies including local authorities.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	85	95.5%
No	4	4.5%

Question 19

Anti-discrimination and equality legislation should be:

(a) regularly reviewed to ensure effective monitoring, investigation, reporting and enforcement.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	87	97.8%
No	2	2.2%

(b) a standard part of employee training.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	87	97.8%
No	2	2.2%



Bloc D: Leadership in the workplace, norms & stereotypes, education

Question 20

Work places should be required to develop, resource, implement and monitor gender-neutral recruitment and promotion policies and practices including:

(a) Specific policies to promote gender equality in leadership positions.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	83	93.3%
No	6	6.7%

(b) A requirement to operate gender-sensitive and anti-discriminatory selection and promotions processes.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	85	95.5%
No	4	4.5%

(c) Equal access to training, assignments and mentoring opportunities for all employees including part-time and remote workers.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	86	96.6%
No	3	3.4%

Question 21

Appropriately resource schools to facilitate:

(a) Provision of a broad range of subject choice that counters gender stereotyping.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	85	95.5%
No	4	4.5%



(b) Provision of gender-neutral career information and advice from early second level education.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	88	98.9%
No	1	1.1%

Question 22

Curriculum review and development should:

(a) Promote gender equality and diversity.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	85	95.5%
No	4	4.5%

(b) Explicitly cover gender power dynamics, consent and domestic, sexual and gender-based violence– both online and offline – within the revised Relationships and Sexuality curriculum.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	86	96.6%
No	3	3.4%

Question 23

All levels of the education system from pre-school to third level, led by the relevant Government Department, should:

(a) Ensure that initial education and continuing professional development for staff includes modules promoting gender awareness and gender-sensitive teaching methods.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	86	96.6%
No	3	3.4%



(b) Monitor policies and practices – including school inspection and whole school evaluation – through the lens of gender equality and report regularly on trends and outcomes by gender.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	85	95.5%
No	4	4.5%

Question 24

In view of the gendered impact on women, reform the Third Level Grants Scheme to ensure that those accessing part-time courses are eligible to apply for a grant.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	88	98.9%
No	1	1.1%

Question 25

Media and advertising, including social media, organisations should:

(a) Be more strongly regulated to promote gender equality and avoid gender discrimination and stereotyping and take action where discriminatory behaviours occur.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	84	94.4%
No	5	5.6%

(b) Be obliged to annually publish details of their monitoring of, and compliance with, gender equality and inclusion measures.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	83	93.3%
No	6	6.7%



(c) Make special efforts to improve the visibility of men performing caring roles.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	83	93.3%
No	6	6.7%

Question 26

Provide appropriate State funding and resources for:

(a) Strengthening existing programmes to encourage women into male-dominated careers (e.g. STEM, Science Technology Engineering and Maths) and including apprenticeships.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	86	96.6%
No	3	3.4%

(b) Developing initiatives to encourage men into female-dominated careers (e.g. caring professions).

Option	Votes	%
Yes	82	92.1%
No	7	7.9%

Bloc E: Gender Quotas, politics & public life

Question 27

By the end of 2022:

(a) Extend the gender quota for party candidates at general elections to local elections, elections to the Seanad and European Parliament elections and review every 5 years.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	78	87.6%
No	11	12.4%



(b) Increase penalties for parties that do not meet the statutory gender quotas.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	67	75.3%
No	22	24.7%

(c) The 30% threshold should be increased to 40% for women (and 40% for men) for all elections.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	74	83.1%
No	15	16.9%

Question 28

Improve gender balance on boards by:

(a) Making funding to public bodies contingent on reaching a 40% gender balance quota by 2025.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	74	83.1%
No	15	16.9%

(b) Enacting gender quota legislation that requires private companies to have at least 40% gender balance according to specific criteria such as turnover, number of employees etc.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	70	78.7%
No	19	21.3%



Question 29

Public funding to cultural, sports, arts and media organisations should be contingent on:

(a) A quota of 30% representation of women, and of men, on their Governing bodies by 2025 and 40% by 2030.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	74	83.1%
No	15	16.9%

(b) Published plans to advance gender equality in their organisations.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	83	93.3%
No	6	6.7%

(c) Annual reporting on progress towards agreed quotas on gender representation and funding.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	80	89.9%
No	9	10.1%

Question 30

Improve family-friendly practices for all representatives elected to public office by:

(a) Making maternity, paternity and parental leave available to all elected representatives, including Ministers (*through legislation or constitutional amendment as required*).

Option	Votes	%
Yes	86	96.6%
No	3	3.4%



(b) Providing flexible working options including remote working and voting and adjusting meeting times and rules to suit caring responsibilities (*through legislation or constitutional amendment as required*).

Option	Votes	%
Yes	87	97.8%
No	2	2.2%

Question 31

Strengthen legislation, reporting and monitoring of press and social media by:

(a) holding technology and social media companies accountable for immediately removing online content that constitutes sexual harassment, bullying, stalking, sexually violent or abusive content that they have identified or about which they have been informed.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	84	94.4%
No	5	5.6%

(b) penalising and eliminating hateful and abusive language, including on the basis of gender, with regular reviews to ensure legislation keeps pace with technological advances.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	84	94.4%
No	5	5.6%

Bloc F: Domestic, Sexual & Gender-Based Violence

Question 32

All Government action to prevent and counter domestic, sexual and gender-based violence should be coordinated by a Cabinet Minister with direct responsibility for implementation of a national strategy.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	86	95.6%
No	4	4.4%



Question 33

Eliminate tolerance in our society of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence by developing and implementing awareness, prevention and education campaigns which may include children of an appropriate age on:

(a) the impact and harm caused by domestic, sexual and gender-based violence.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	90	100%
No	0	0%

(b) supports available to victims/survivors.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	90	100%
No	0	0%

Question 34

Support justice for victims/survivors by:

(a) Reviewing and reforming the courts system – including the family courts – to better protect and support victims/survivors of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence and their dependents and remove barriers to justice.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	89	98.9%
No	1	1.1%

(b) Developing guidelines and specialist training for judges and lawyers regarding the treatment of victims/survivors, including the exclusion of the consideration of sexual history, character, attire and counselling/medical records

Option	Votes	%
Yes	86	95.6%
No	4	4.4%



(c) Introducing tougher sentences and rehabilitation programmes for the perpetrators of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence and sexual crimes.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	88	97.8%
No	2	2.2%

(d) Providing specialised confidential health care and other support services for victims/survivors including legal representation.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	90	100%
No	0	0%

(e) Putting in place a Victims/Survivors Commissioner as an independent advocate and voice for victims/survivors.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	85	94.4%
No	5	5.6%

Question 35

Ensure sufficient publicly funded provision of beds, shelters and accommodation for victims/survivors of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence across the country and their dependents in line with the Istanbul Convention.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	89	98.9%
No	1	1.1%



Question 36

Recognise female genital mutilation (FGM) as a ground for seeking asylum, and provide culturally sensitive specialised services for victims/survivors.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	76	84.4%
No	14	15.6%

Bloc G: Pay and workplace conditions

Question 37

The State should set targets in legislation to reduce the hourly gender pay gap (*currently 14%*) to 9% by 2025 and to 4% by 2030 with a view to eliminating it by 2035.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	85	94.4%
No	5	5.6%

Question 38

The Gender Pay Gap Information Bill should be enacted and implemented without delay. The law should include penalties for non-compliance and an obligation for annual reporting.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	87	96.7%
No	3	3.3%

Question 39

Increase the minimum wage to align it with the living wage by 2025 while considering potential employment impacts on small businesses.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	88	97.8%
No	2	2.2%



Question 40

Support employment contract security through:

(a) Establishing a legal right to collective bargaining to improve wages, working conditions and rights in all sectors.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	87	96.7%
No	3	3.3%

(b) Increased resourcing of the Workplace Relations Commission for more effective enforcement of current employment laws.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	87	96.7%
No	3	3.3%

Question 41

Introduce a statutory right to reasonable access to flexible working.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	86	95.6%
No	4	4.4%

Bloc H: Social Protection

Question 42

Adopt a fully individualised social protection system to reflect the diversity of today's lives and to promote an equal division of paid work and care.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	84	93.3%
No	6	6.7%



Question 43

Social protection services should:

(a) Set social protection payments and/or supports at a level that lifts people above the poverty line, prevents deprivation and supports an adequate standard of living.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	87	96.7%
No	3	3.3%

(b) Regularly train staff to prioritise dignity and respect in all contact with clients, including giving a choice in how they receive payments.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	85	94.4%
No	5	5.6%

Question 44

Take account of gender equality issues in piloting a Universal Basic Income scheme.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	83	92.2%
No	7	7.8%

Question 45

Address the specific needs of lone parents to incentivise and support them in accessing work or education, including provision of child and after-school care.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	86	95.6%
No	4	4.4%



Question 46

Immediately address the impact of the Marriage Bar by automatically qualifying women affected by the marriage bar for a state pension.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	84	93.3%
No	6	6.7%

Question 47

Regardless of the pension model, enrolment into pension savings should be automatic and start when a person starts earning, subject to a threshold on low incomes and an opt-out clause.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	89	98.9%
No	1	1.1%

Question 48

Introduce a Universal State Pension so that every resident of Ireland receives a pension upon reaching pension age.

Option	Votes	%
Yes	81	90.0%
No	9	10.0%



Willingness to Pay

Question 49

Do you agree that the following statement should be included in the final set of recommendations sent to the Oireachtas?

Our recommendations call for better public services and improved social protection in order to advance gender equality. These should be funded firstly through greater efficiency and accountability for public funding and reprioritisation between current spending and revenue raising. If necessary, we are also prepared to support and pay higher taxes based on the principle of ability to pay, to make a reality of our recommendations.

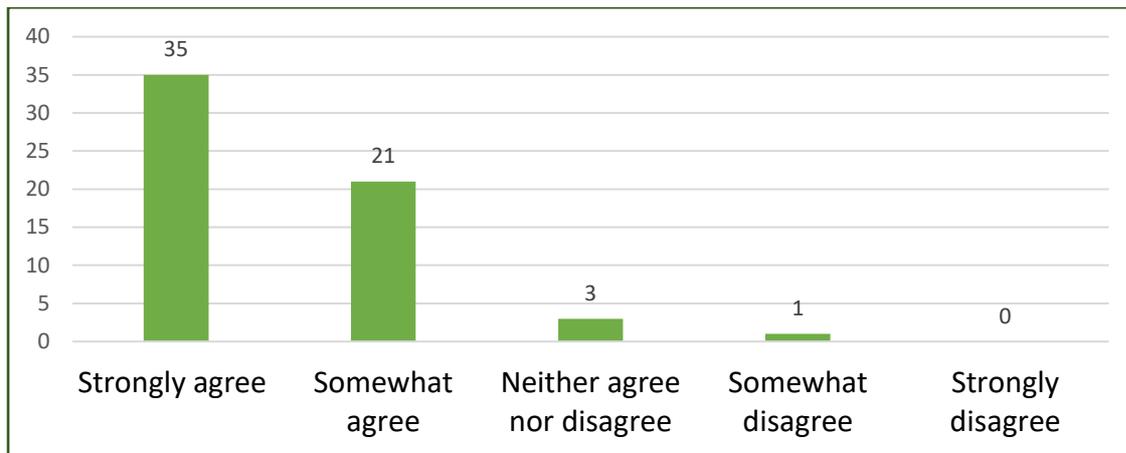
Option	Votes	%
Yes	86	95.6%
No	4	4.4%



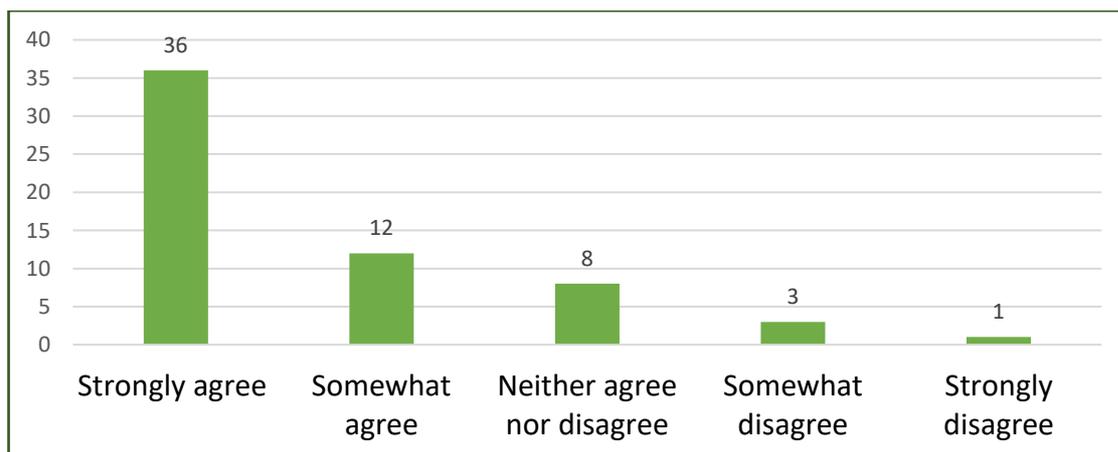
Appendix 5: Survey responses - online compared with in-person

Please note responses relate to the numbers of respondents and not percentages.

- **The breakout groups on Zoom were a good forum for allowing discussion and debate**

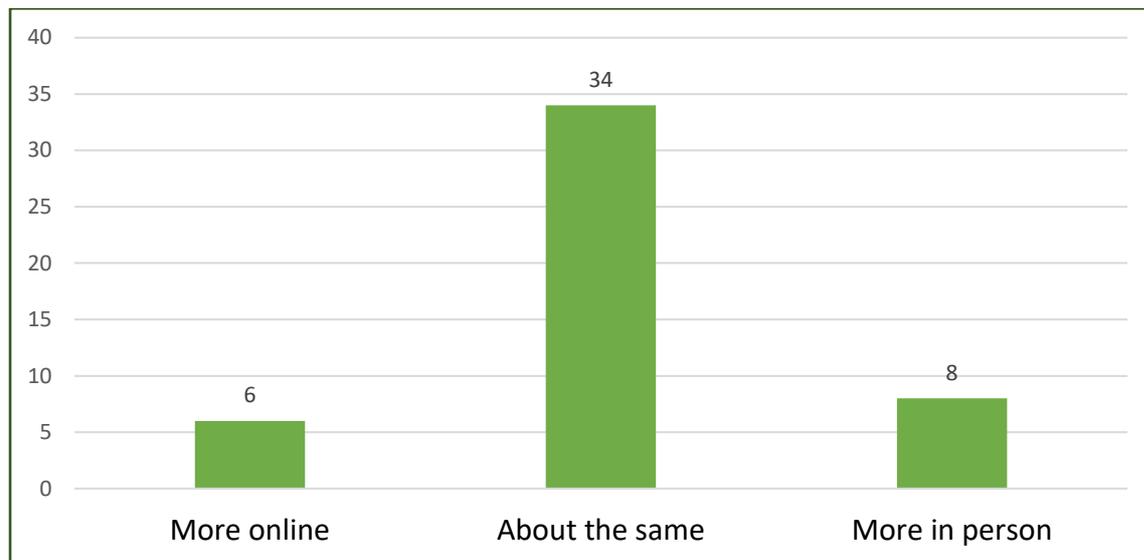


- **The group discussion is more dynamic face to face**

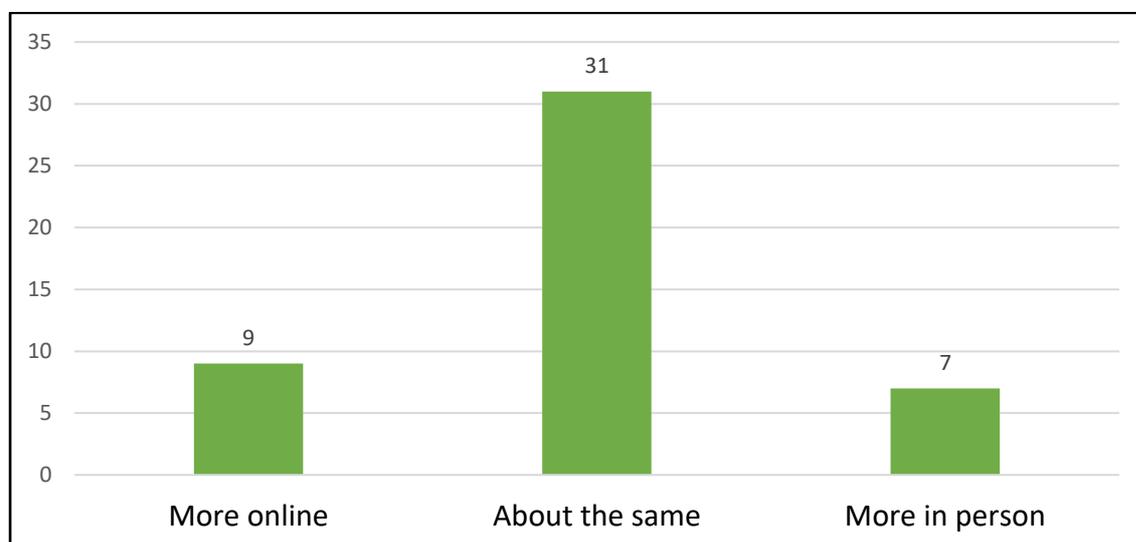




- **The facilitator made sure everyone got a chance to speak**

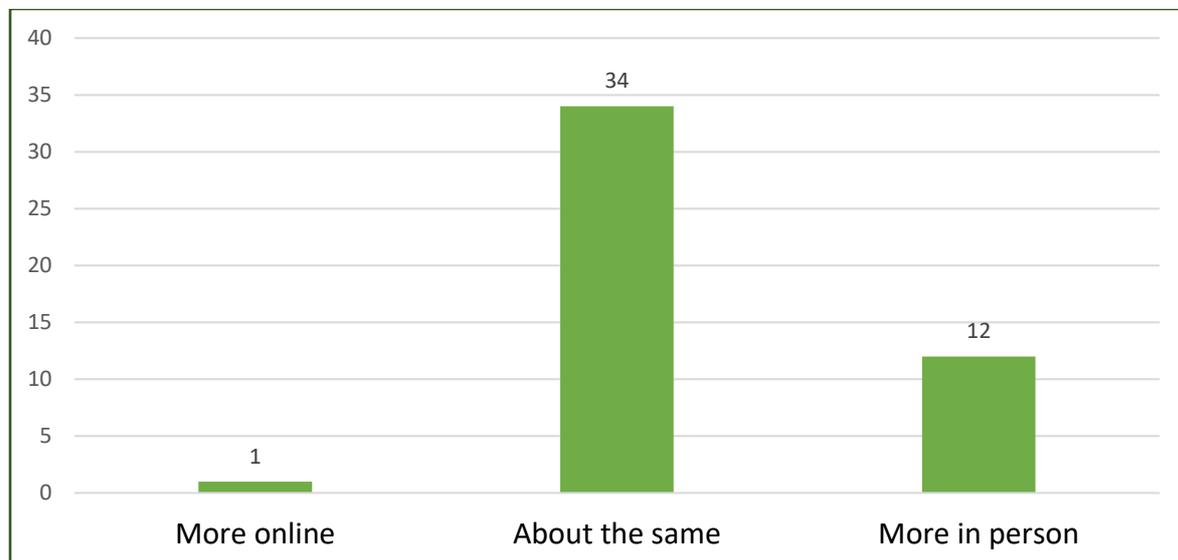


- **I kept some of my thoughts to myself for fear of the reactions of others**

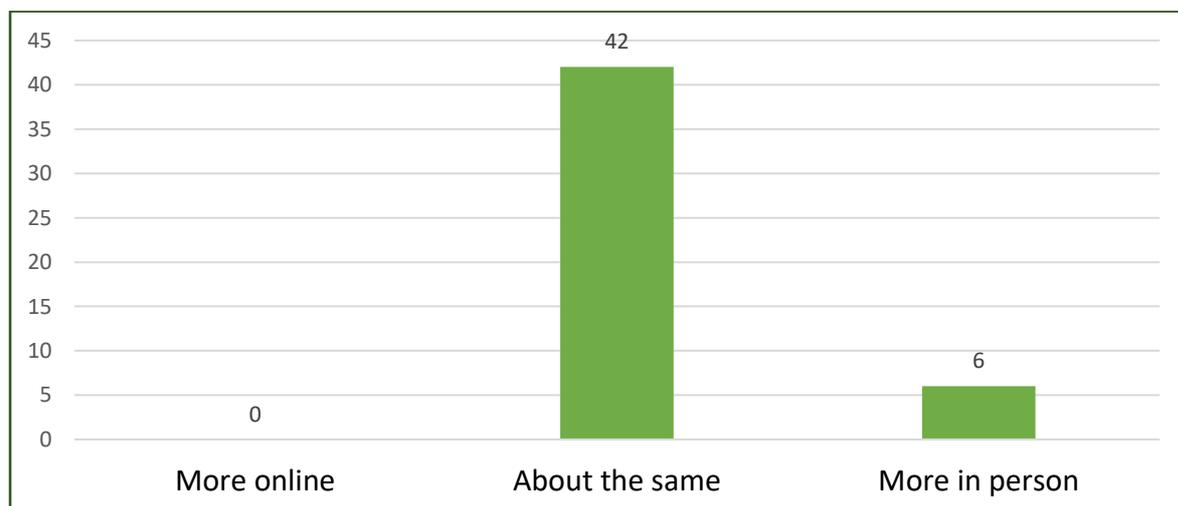




- **When members expressed views that were different from my own, I gave due consideration to what they had to say**

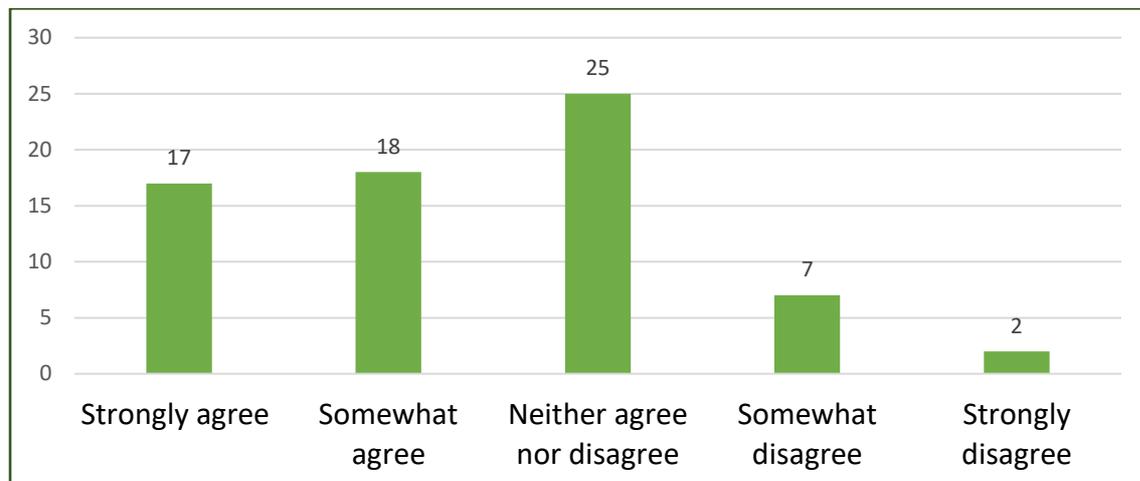


- **My fellow members respected what I had to say, even when they didn't agree**

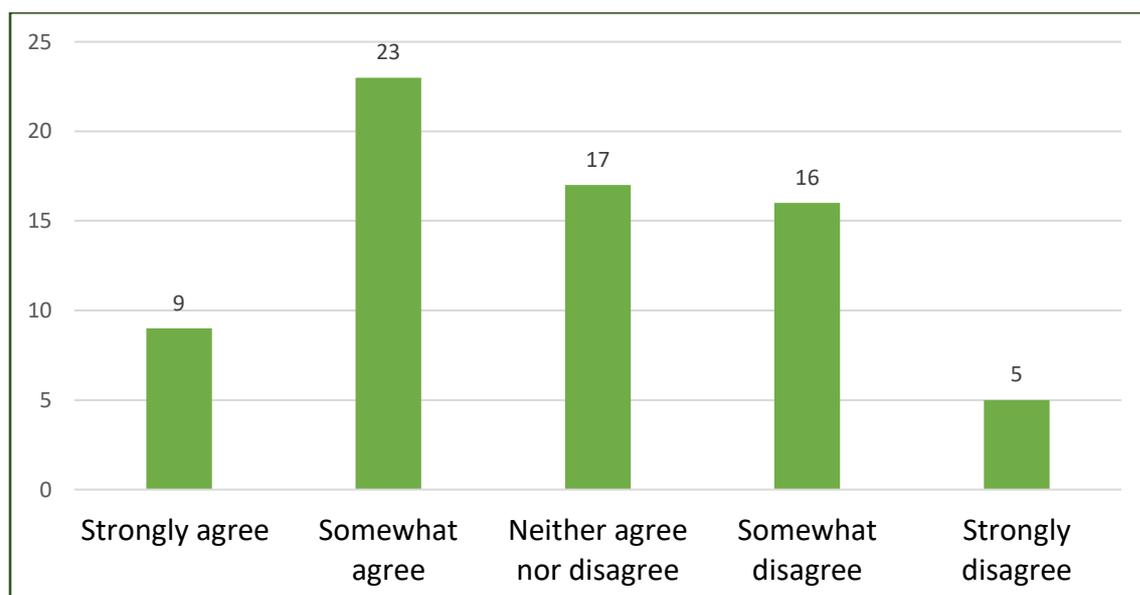




- **The Assembly process would run more smoothly in person**



- **An online format is suitable for a Citizens' Assembly**





- **If Covid-19 was not a factor, would you have preferred that the Assembly took place**

