

PUBLIC CONSULTATION - CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY ON GENDER EQUALITY 2020

QUESTIONNAIRE

CA30093

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Theme 1: Gender norms and stereotypes

Gender norms and stereotypes as barriers to gender equality

Fixed ideas about what women and men should do in the home or at work are learned by girls and boys in early childhood and throughout their lives. These ideas or gender stereotypes affect their choices in school and as they enter careers and contribute to a lack of progress toward equality between women and men. This limits not only the jobs that women and men consider or are available to them, but also can exclude women and men from social roles and tasks.

- Please outline what you see as the key barriers/ obstacles and challenges to gender equality under this theme in law, policy and practice.

Improved sense of status for caregivers. To promote male participation in domestic and caring activities, and to allow for greater authenticity in choice-making by both men and women when considering what roles they wish to play, and what tasks and activities (in their own personal view) constitute a success and a happy life.

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

Provision of substantial paternity leave (as well as greater maternity leave) to reinforce that both partners have as much rights/responsibility to childcare and workforce participation. Greater emphasis on the cultural barriers to male participation - e.g. status associated with earning a wage vs. status of "parenthood". Greater monetary and cultural value placed on caring roles and professions. This is a job for policy-makers and the education system.

Theme 2: Work: Occupational segregation by gender, gender discrimination and the gender pay gap

Women and men are often concentrated into different kinds of jobs and within the same occupations, women are often in work that is less well paid and has less opportunities for career advancement. Women often work in areas where they can work part-time so as to fit in with their caring responsibilities. While many men work in low paid jobs, many professions dominated by women are also low paid, and professions that have

become female-dominated have become lower paid. This worsens the gender pay gap (the average difference between the wages of women and men who are working).

- Please outline what you see as the key barriers/ obstacles and challenges to gender equality under this theme in law, policy and practice.

Status associated with caring professions could be improved by greater monetary value being associated with them (pay nurses, social workers, childcare workers more). Younger audiences should be targeted as a lot of work has been done to improve socio-cultural understanding of gender. Children and young people should be provided with much greater guidance in career decisions throughout secondary school and college - informing them of the realities and day-to-day of the job. Emphasis should be placed on the importance of men in a caring role - as role models and as teachers and providers of emotional and cognitive development. Greater work is required in early years education to ensure that young girls are developing the skills to participate in traditionally male dominated fields (e.g. STEM). This includes an emphasis placed on maths and engineering skills through ensuring child-centred play with young girls includes a significant emphasis on building and problem solving, the use of numbers and angles, and creativity. Emphasis on this should commence during the critical period of brain development - the first 1000 days - or from conception until the child is 3 years old. Likewise, a greater emphasis should be placed on boys engaging in and enjoying play which is traditionally associated with caring - e.g. dolls and stuffed animals. Childrens life choices can be critically impacted by how they interact with the world at this age. It will be important to think-long term when trying to advance gender equality.

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

As above

Theme 3. Care, paid and unpaid, as a social and family responsibility

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

Women remain disproportionately responsible for unpaid care and often work in poorly paid care work. For working parents or lone parents, balancing paid work with parenting and or caring for older and dependent adults presents significant challenges. Women are most disadvantaged by these challenges, yet men also suffer from lack of opportunities to share parenting and caring roles. Despite recent legislation and policy initiatives to support early years parental care, inequalities in the distribution of unpaid care continue between women and men. The cost of childcare has been identified as a particular barrier to work for women alongside responsibilities of caring for older relatives and dependent adults.

- Please outline what you see as the key barriers/ obstacles and challenges to gender equality under this theme in law, policy and practice.

Children thrive when their primary caregivers are a parent or parent-like role-model. I believe that, while affordable childcare is critical, it is equally or more important to providing work-flexibility to both parents that allows them to remain as the primary caregivers and influencers of their children.

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

Provide greater parental leave Standardise flexible working policies for parents. Somehow reduce cost of living overall so that more parents can engage in the economy part-time and remain at least middle-income earners.

Theme 4: Women's access to, and representation in, public life and decision making

Ensure women's participation and representation in decision-making and leadership in the workplace, political and public life

Women are systematically underrepresented in leadership in economic and political decision-making. Despite the introduction of a candidate gender quota (through the system of party funding) for national political office, and initiatives to support women's access to corporate decision-making roles, men continue to dominate leadership positions. There are also issues to be considered around how media represents women and men.

- Please outline what you see as the key barriers/ obstacles and challenges to gender equality under this theme in law, policy and practice.

This is a socio-cultural issue. Women remain as primary caregivers, men as primary earners. Women take hits to their career to prioritize their families. We have heard for many years from both elderly and high-earning professionals that time away from family is one of their biggest regrets - both male and female decision-makers need to be facilitated to spend time with their family in a way which does not impact on career progression and values perspectives.

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

5. Where does gender inequality impact most?

To conclude we would be interested in your response to the following question: In which area do you think gender inequality matters most?

Please rank the following in order of importance, 1 being the most important:

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

➤ Please outline the reasons for your answer below:

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