

PUBLIC CONSULTATION - CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY ON GENDER EQUALITY 2020

QUESTIONNAIRE

CA30098

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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.

Public sector HR managers make assumptions as to the choices that men and women will make regarding childcare. Family friendly policies are pushed as a way of saving money. Parents on leave are often required to do the same work for less pay.

- 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.)

Particularly in the education sector the norm seems to be to contact the mother about anything relating to the care of children. This reinforces family structures that assume that women are mainly responsible for the care of children and signals to girls that they should focus on their role as care giver in a family setting. This norm should be actively challenged so that all parents are equally involved in the care of their children, and that families can arrange responses to school contact as best suits them.

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.

See before my comments on the assumptions that only women will avail of family-friendly policies and on the failure to reduce the workload of people availing of these policies so that their work remains the same while their pay is reduced. Women who try to negotiate higher rates of pay are seen as pushy, as are women who put themselves forward for promotion.

- 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.)

Removing all markers of gender from job applications and promotion applications would mean that decisions were taken based on the CV rather than on the gender of the person. Concerted efforts should be made to equalise pay for work of equal value, rather than assuming that work traditionally done by men is of equal value. Increasing the number of women in a profession shouldn't be accompanied by a reduction in status and pay in that profession as it has been in the past. There is legislation to ensure that part-time workers have access to the range of benefits that full-time workers do, but it is often ignored. Part-time hours shouldn't be a reason to reduce any other benefits.

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 them in law, policy and practice.

The fact that the cost of childcare is borne by the family rather than by the state (as is the case in schooling). This makes childcare in Ireland more expensive than in most other European countries. Also, the shorter school day and the absence of school meals throws the burden back on families whereas in other countries it would be

borne by the community. The three-month holiday in secondary school which exceeds the holiday allowance of both parents if both are in work.

- 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.)

State childcare facilities, on the model of schools. Not money going to private childcare for a limited number of hours. A longer school day with meals provided

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

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

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

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

The inherent sexism in society.

- 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.)

All sectors should ensure that women are not judged by different criteria to men. Evaluations of women based on their appearance, for example, should not be treated seriously if similar evaluations would not be taken seriously when given to men. Media guidelines around how men and women should be discussed should bear this in mind. Questions such as "would the voting public accept a female Taoiseach" should be considered very carefully as they perpetuate stereotypes that suggest that this isn't acceptable.

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

➤ Please outline the reasons for your answer below:

Sexism is pervasive throughout society and women and men are impacted. I've essentially ranked the areas in the order of what I think is their impact on people's lives since sexism is everywhere.

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