

## QUESTIONNAIRE

CA30278

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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.

From birth, children are subjected to gender socialization through collective cultural, economic and societal values and norms (Henslin, 1999). The effects of gender socialization impact men and women's choices in school and careers. The traditional idea of masculine and feminine gender roles is problematic as they contribute to a lack of progress toward equality between men and women.

#### Law.

The Irish Constitution, Bunreacht na hÉireann consists of several gender stereotypical beliefs, including article 41.2 that states that a women's place is within the home (Office of the Attorney General, n.d). Although some people may feel that this is outdated and can be looked over, many others feel that a referendum should be held to repeal or amend the article (Bardon, 2018). It is important for a countries constitution to reflect the contemporary practices and beliefs of its people. This constitutional article, albeit outdated, is a symbolic legal barrier to gender equality between men and women.

#### Policy.

The National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017 - 2020 outlines several areas to improve gender equality between men and women by tackling barriers to equality. One of these goals is combatting violence against women. The issue of violence against women has been addressed by the State through various acts and policies such as The Second National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence 2016 - 2021 and the Domestic Violence Act 2018. However, the issue of violence against women is still prevalent. 14% of women in Ireland have reported experiencing violence by a partner. 15.6% have experienced sexual violence by a current or former partner and 31% have reported experiencing psychological violence (European Union Fundamental Rights Agency, 2014). Although domestic violence is what comes to mind for a lot of people when

violence against women is mentioned, it is also worth noting that 14% of women have been experienced cyber-stalking (EUFRA, 2014). With the surge of people accessing the online world and the high number of women experiencing both offline and online harassment, the issue of revenge porn has surfaced in Ireland. Despite the goal of the implementation of revenge porn legislation in the National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017 – 2020, it has not been achieved (Bray, 2019).

#### Practice.

Through gender socialization and the place of the woman in the home in the constitution, it is not unusual for women to stay at home as care-givers. This can lead women becoming financially dependent on men. Therefore, when domestic violence occurs, it is not always easy for the woman to leave. If a woman does decide to attempt to leave and access support services through a women's refuge, she may find that the refuge has reached capacity (Cody, 2019, Soarise Women's Refuge, 2017). This problem is exacerbated by the current housing crisis which disproportionately affects women who are experiencing domestic violence, as they are forced to return to their abusers (RTE, 2019). This is alarming as 1 out of 2 femicide victims in resolved cases in Ireland were murdered by a current or former partner (Women's Aid, 2019).

It is therefore vital to examine the gaps and pitfalls of legislation and policies which address barriers and stereotypes to gender equality, particularly violence against women.

- 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.)

In order to address the gaps and pitfalls of legislation and policies which address barriers and stereotypes to gender equality, particularly violence against women, a multi-disciplinary approach is needed.

In regards to education, factual and age appropriate sexual health and relationship education is paramount. This will inform young people of what constitutes as healthy and consensual relationships so young people can identify red flags and problematic and possibly dangerous/controlling/manipulating behaviour in future partners.

Collaboration with advocacy groups who represent and work with people effected by gender inequality is paramount to addressing violence against women as a barrier to gender equality. Organisations such as Women's Aid have worked relentlessly to produce reports on the number of women who experience domestic violence in Ireland. Furthermore, they provide a 24/7 hour helpline to women in need. Therefore, liaising with such organisations is vital.

The State have a responsibility to firstly listen to the advocating groups and citizens who identify pitfalls in legislation and policy. Secondly, the State must provide an adequate legal framework that reflects the contemporary problems of society, such as enacting revenge porn legislation. Lastly, the State must allocate the appropriate funding to the services that are at capacity.

It is not up to one individual sector of society to address barriers to gender inequality, particularly violence against women. It is only through a multi-disciplinary approach that adequate and informed legislation and policy will be implemented.

**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.

**Practice.**

Women and men are sometimes concentrated into different career paths which impact their pay. This begins in their schooling. Girls are significantly underrepresented in Leaving Certificate science subjects compared to their male counterparts (Courtney, 2019). This is a significant barrier in deterring women away from studying STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) in college. STEM constitutes a large proportion of the Irish workforce in a market dominated neoliberal society. Even when women do enter STEM careers in Ireland, despite being better educated overall, women with a degree earn 28% less than their male counterparts (Donnelly, 2019).

There is a belief that STEM is an unequal playing field for women. This is due to the subconscious bias that women are not as competent at mathematics, compared to men (Courtney, 2019). Women who opt for non-STEM career paths usually enter lower paid professions, such as social care or early childhood education. Unfortunately, these professions in Ireland have reached crisis point in regards to adequate funding and poorly paid workers (Fletcher, 2020). It is of vital importance to question why such female dominated professions are so poorly paid.

**Law and policy.**

There is currently a bill to make gender pay gap reporting mandatory. Although the reporting of gender pay gaps will not solve the pay disparity, it will certainly highlight the issue at a legislative level (Brady, 2020).

- 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.)

**Education sector.**

The education sector can address how men and women are concentrated into different careers by ensuring a fairer playing field for both boys and girls in school when it comes to interest in STEM. During Transition Year or work experience, a specific initiative for girls to experience the STEM field can be implemented to break down the subconscious bias that women are not fit for STEM subjects. This would address the gender pay gap in the long term.

**The State.**

The State have a responsibility to listen to the predominately female workers in non-STEM careers that are demanding an increase to service funding and an increase of wages.

**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.

**Practice.**

Almost 190,000 people provide unpaid care for a friend or family member with a long term illness or disability (National Women's Council of Ireland, 2011). There is a 'significant and persistent imbalance' between men and women and the time they spend engaging in unpaid care work (Economic and Social Research Institute, 2019). According to the ERSI (2019) women spend twice as much time acting as a primary care-givers compared to men. This responsibility coupled with exuberant childcare costs is a major barrier for women to enter the workforce.

**Law and policy.**

Despite newly introduced paternal leave, inequalities in the distribution of unpaid care continues to exist between men and women (Reddan, 2019). The consequence of women's default role as care-givers exacerbates the normalization of unpaid

care work (Chambers Ireland, 2017) and amplifies the idea that men are not as concerned with early years parental care.

The ideology of traditional gender norms creates further barriers for gender equality as the responsibility of caring for relatives often falls upon women.

- 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.)

It is important for all sectors of society to recognise that care work is vital for the wellbeing of individuals and society (ESRI, 2019).

However, a major responsibility lies with the State to recognise unpaid care work as Irish women who carry out unpaid care contribute at least 24 billion euro to the economy every year (Oxfam, 2020).

It is also important to further develop parental leave legislation to allow men to participate in early years parental care to a greater extent, to perhaps mirror a Swedish model of men taking at least a mandatory 90 days parental leave (Sweden, n.d).

#### **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.

Law and policy.

There are current gender quotas in place for candidates running for national political office. However, it is aimed to rise to 40% in the next decade (Bray, 2018).

Practice.

Despite the introduction of a candidate gender quota for national political office, and a record number of women running in the 2020 General Election (McConnell, 2020), there has been no female TDs elected in almost a third of constituencies (Bray and O'Halloran, 2020). This is particularly worrying as the lack of female voices in positions of power means that their "lives and experiences remain excluded from policies and strategies" (National Women's Council of Ireland, 2016).

The media has an important role to play in promoting women in positions of leadership in economic and political decision-making. European Ombudsman, Emily O'Reilly believes that there is a 'savagery' to the online abuse female politicians encounter (Burns, 2020). O'Reilly states that this is a major barrier for women participating in influential decision-making roles (Burns, 2020). This harassment is prevalent both online, and offline. It is not uncommon for workplaces to have a culture of bullying and sexual harassment, and apparently Leinster House is no exception. The level of harassment that some female TD's have experienced while working has been so extensive that a proposal for an audit of harassment and bullying in the Oireachtas has been put forward. This may be a major deterrent for women to enter or remain in politics (Brennan, 2018).

The public and private scrutiny women face when participating in decision-making and leadership roles may be a huge barrier to gender equality, and must be addressed.

- 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.)

There are several steps to addressing the barriers for women in participating in leadership roles.

Education sector.

The education sector has the ability to instil a sense of equality within girls and boys when it comes to the delegation of leadership roles. Language such as 'being bossy' has been almost exclusively used towards girls while boys have been praised for having 'leadership skills (Harrington, 2014) while they exhibit similar behaviours.

The private sector and the public sector.

The private sector and the public sector have the ability to introduce gender quotas to attempt to even out the playing field when it comes to men and women holding positions of power and decision-making roles.

The State.

The State can continue to enforce the gender quota for candidates running for national political office. However, it is worth noting that the NWCI (2019) has recommended gender quotas for local elections, not just for candidates running for seats in the Dail.

## 5. Where does gender inequality impact most?

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

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

- Paid work

4

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

➤ Please outline the reasons for your answer below:

#### 1. Media

From birth, children are subjected to gender socialization through collective cultural, economic and societal values and norms (Henslin, 1999). These gender norms become ingrained into people's subconscious from a young age and become the doxic experience (Bourdieu, 1980). From a young age, people learn about their world through the media they consume. When the media continuously presents women as objects to be admired by the male gaze, it promotes gender inequality as women are usually seen, and not heard (Byerly and Ross, 2006).

#### 2. Education

However, it is through education at every level that these harmful depictions of gender can be unlearned, and a new perspective of the fluidity of gender can be embraced (Hines, 2018).

#### 3. Politics and public life

When the complexity and diversity of gender is embraced by the general public, the collective people can influence the political structures to legislate and reflect the progression of society through politics.

#### 4. Paid work

In the immediate sense of gender equality, paid work would usually rank higher. However, there is no quick-fix for removing the financial inequalities between men and women. It is only through collective action and agency that people will increase the pressure on the political structures to pay workers fairly and recognize and compensate for the important unpaid care work that is carried out predominantly by women.

#### 5. House and family life

The outdated constitutional article 41.2 that essentially states that a woman's place is in the home is a symbolic barrier to gender equality and does not reflect modern society.

## 6. Caring for others

Similarly to paid work, there is a need for meaningful recognition at a structural level for the care work that is performed predominately by women.

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

If there is any supplementary information or documents that you would like to submit as part of your consultation, please send this to [info@citizensassembly.ie](mailto:info@citizensassembly.ie), with 'Public Consultation Supplementary Information' in the subject line, along with your name to allow us to correctly match any documents with your submission.

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