

Women's experiences of running for politics in Ireland

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Gendered barriers

At election time, male candidates outnumber women

- The 5Cs:
 - cash
 - care
 - confidence
 - culture
 - candidate selection
- A 6th C
 - cyberspace

Research project

- Research draws from a project conducted on behalf of *Women for Election* in collaboration with Dr Lisa Keenan of the Political Science Department in Trinity College
- Research question: What enables women who run, to run?

Political parties are pivotal!

- When women run for political office in Ireland, a majority contest under a party banner.
- Political parties play a pivotal role across all the stages of their political candidacy:
 - from the *decision to run to getting on the ticket*
 - from *contesting the election to getting elected.*

The 3 Rs

- Recruitment
- Resources
- Resistance

The challenge for parties

- Incumbency
- Select women to contest winnable seats

Individual level resources and practical supports

- Having time to run and having access to funding are important factors:
 - the support of family and friends
 - assistance with care responsibilities [where applicable]
 - job flexibility and
 - personal networks

Funding a campaign

- The average personal spend by women on their election campaigns during the 2016 general election campaign was €10,127.65
 - The average annual earnings in Ireland in 2019 was €40,283.
 - The average earnings for part-time employees averaged €18,305.

Source for data on average annual earnings is Central Statistics Office - <https://www.cso.ie/en/statistics/earnings/earningsandlabourcosts/>

The motivation to run?

- A desire to engender change
 - Personal, community, local, social, global issues
- Community activism, volunteerism

Online toxicity

- Research by Tom Felle, Eimer McAuley and Amy Blaney of NUI Galway - *Toxic tweets: female politicians, social media and misogyny* – reveals:
 - 96% of the current and former female politicians that they interviewed, 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
 - 38% have been threatened with rape or sexual violence.
 - Some 28% said that they had been verbally abused in public.

Getting elected

- Being elected is a huge honour and women speak of it in humbling terms.
- Women are hugely respectful of the faith that voters have entrusted in them and are privileged to serve and represent their constituents.

Final messages

- Achieving gender parity and diversity in Irish political decision-making, is an ongoing process
- The vast majority of the women we interviewed, would do it all again and would encourage other women to run