QUESTIONNAIRE

CA30180	Safe Ireland

Theme 1: Gender norms and stereotypes

<u>Gender norms and stereotypes as barriers to gender equality</u>
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.

It is well established that violence against women, domestic abuse, and coercive control are a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between women and men, which predominantly effect women and girls.

The numbers are staggering. In Ireland, 1 in 3 women have experienced psychological violence from a partner at some point in their lives, and 1 in 6 have experienced physical or sexual violence by a partner since the age of 15 (EU Fundamental Rights Agency (EU FRA), 2014).

In turn, physical and psychological abuse and control are crucial social mechanisms upon which unequal gender relations rely. The highly gendered nature of coercive control and domestic abuse both creates and maintains gender norms and stereotypes.

Evan Stark, a domestic abuse and coercive control expert, argues that coercive control centres on the "*monitoring and/or regulation of commonplace activities of daily living, particularly those associated with women's default roles as mothers, homemakers and sexual partners*". This strategy is adopted by many men in societies where the traditional norms and regulations of patriarchy are under challenge by changing laws and social movements towards formal equality (Stark, 2012, p. 4; Stark, 2007).

Sex and gender inequality create a self-perpetuating *Catch 22* situation. The invidious cycle of control and abuse which arises from sex and gender inequality creates a dynamic where the very ground of inequality is itself used to perpetuate abuse.

As Davina James Hanman, a leading coercive control expert, highlighted when she spoke at a Safe Ireland seminar in 2018, abusers will attack the very characteristics of gender identity that are seen by society as important. For example, abusers may say '*you are fat, you are ugly, you are a terrible mother, you can't keep a house clean'*, for these are areas of gender identity – sexual attractiveness, a good homemaker, a wonderful mother –and "*that women are indoctrinated from birth that they must make a success of* (these areas) *if they want to be valued."* (Speech can be accessed here)

Additionally, research tells us that traditional patriarchal attitudes and behaviours towards sex and gender roles often result in poor social response to male violence against women (Safe Ireland, 2014)

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Recent Safe Ireland research indicates that a significant number of people continue to hold hierarchical views of the roles and responsibilities of women and men, with some of the most traditional patriarchal views being expressed by younger people - *Gender Matters 2019.*

26% of young people aged 16 - 25 believe that a male should be head of the household, while 25% believed that males should earn more – in order to support a family. Safe Ireland is currently examining this research to help us better understand these trends. Beliefs and attitudes towards gender equality remain stubbornly sexist.

In line with the findings of our research, but perhaps even more stark, the current United Nation's Development Programme's report *Tackling Social Norms: A game changer for gender inequalities* (2020) found that "*91% of men and 86% of women show at least one clear bias against gender equality in areas such as politics, economic, education, intimate partner violence and women's reproductive rights*"(pg. 8). Data from 75 countries worldwide showed that ,on average, gender biases are growing instead of shrinking and that there appears to be a backlash against women's rights.

In terms of how gender biases play out across the private/public spheres, our research report *The Lawlessness of the Home* (2014) found that implicit gender bias and stereotyping have detrimental impacts on the outcome of women's attempts to secure protection from our courts.

In one case, a court accompaniment worker said that, in her experience, a woman who has lived with violence has to be: *"White, compliant, not too angry. You know, somebody who seems kind of beaten down and passive? (If) You go in there advocating for yourself as a strong woman - that's one thing you don't do…"* (p.53, 2014).

This stereotyping in turn influences people's demeanour and approaches to the legal system. Women may become what they are expected to be and men do too.

➢ 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.)

Please see our recommendations in the 'further comments' box

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.

Active participation in work or education for women experiencing domestic abuse and coercive control is impeded by their partners controlling behaviour, by stress, and other trauma-inducing impacts from violence.

The workplace impacts of domestic violence and abuse (Vodafone/ KPMG, 2019) found that 23,000 Irish working women had experienced domestic abuse in the previous 12 months.

Within the survey, participants were asked about the ways in which domestic violence and abuse impacted their work performance. 26% stated their work decreased in quality, 39% felt they were less productive and that they were unable to fulfil their potential. Almost half (47%) were distracted and found it hard to concentrate at work, 26% couldn't perform as well as before the abuse started, and 9% couldn't perform well at work because of an injury.

Safe Ireland's 2019 research on *Estimating the Costs of Intimate Partner Violence* (*forthcoming*) found that in some cases women were directly prevented by their abuser from working, or were unable to work due to illness or injury caused by the abuse.

The research found that twice the number of women were unemployed after the abusive relationship compared to when the relationship started. Some of these women chose to leave work simply to care for their children in these environments. However, the majority had been driven into unemployment because of illness/injury as a result of intimate partner violence (IPV) or because the perpetrator prevented them from working, stalling their careers.

The financial impact of IPV on women's productivity, in the form of lost earnings and lost output, also emerged as significant for participants in this study. The vast majority were prevented from working, forced to work part-time, or to take sick leave, while others became ill as a result of the abuse. For instance, Megan* would have returned to full-time work following the birth of her first child if her ex-partner had also cared for their children. Instead, she has had to work part-time for the last eighteen years. She also took a two-year leave of absence due to a psychological breakdown, which she attributed to the abuse she was enduring at that time. Participants also reported missed days of work and/or difficulties concentrating at work. (*Estimating the Costs of Intimate Partner Violence,* Safe Ireland, *forthcoming*)

As a further example, a 2014 pan-Canadian survey titled *Can work be Safe when Home Isn't* which surveyed 8,429 people exploring the impacts of domestic violence in the workplace found that more than a third of respondents reported experiencing DV; among them, more than a third reported that DV affected their ability to get to work, and more than half reported that it continued at or near work. Most reported that DV negatively affected their performance. Almost all respondents, regardless of DV experience, believed that it impacts victims' work lives.

In addition, sexual harassment in the work place negatively impacts women's abilities to participate fully in the workplace. The EU Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) study

(2014) found that for 26% of women who had experienced sexual harassment since they were 15, that 1 in 4 of the perpetrators was someone in an employment context and 63% were male.

*not her real name

> 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.)

Please see our recommendations in the 'further comments' box below.

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.

Caring for family may trap women in the home with little access to resources.

Earning power or access to resources are crucial for women to be able to leave abusive situations. Women who participated in our research on *Estimating the Costs of Intimate Partner Violence (forthcoming)*, indicated that loss of financial independence was an important factor which prevented them from leaving an abusive relationship.

As mentioned previously, domestic abuse and coercive control reinforces traditional gender roles where women are forced into a subordinate role. Women may often be forced into taking responsibility for care work because they are prevented from accessing work outside the home, or because they have been coerced by their abuser to do so.

This research also found that in keeping with the regulatory regimes identified by Stark (2007, several women were subject to their ex-partners' rules and demands in terms of their care work in the home. Criticism and punishment were commonplace when unachievable standards were set by the abuser, and not met.

Parenting in the context of domestic abuse and coercive control can be extremely difficult and, while many women strive to protect their children, the impacts on children cannot be avoided.

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

Please see our recommendations in the 'further comments' box below.

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.

Gender based violence is often a barrier to women progressing in leadership roles or participating in public life.

Similar to the impacts that domestic abuse and coercive control have on women's ability to actively participate in the workforce, it also has major implications for women's access to leadership and decision making. When we think of the qualities needed to progress in leadership – confidence, self-belief, optimism and positivity - they are often the very traits that are eroded by domestic abuse and coercive control.

Coercive control is a persistent and deliberate pattern of behaviour by an abuser over a prolonged period of time designed to achieve obedience and create fear. It may include coercion, threats, stalking, intimidation, isolation, degradation and control. It may also include physical and/or sexual violence. Coercive control is all about making a woman's world smaller – trapping her, restricting her independence and freedom. A controlling partner may shut out her friends and family, control her movements, micro-manage what she eats or wears, restrict her access to money – all the time chipping away at her confidence and destroying her self-respect.

A Safe Ireland study from 2015, *Healing from Domestic Violence and Trauma,* offered a detailed picture of how trauma devastates quality of life for women, even after years away from the abuse. Participants in this research were found to be experiencing depression, sadness, anxiety, fear, anger, loneliness, and out of body feelings - long after the abuse had ended. The journey out of this is complex, individual, and needs support.

Echoing this, our research on *Estimating the Costs of Intimate Partner Violence (forthcoming)* found that women's self-worth and trust were also damaged as a result

of the abuse they had experienced which made it difficult for them to re-establish or build new networks of support. This loss of self-esteem and trust has significant consequences for the capability of IPV survivors , and their recoveries, and has cascading impacts on overall human capital within our societies.

The EU FRA study (2014) previously referenced found that 23% of women in Ireland experienced controlling behaviour by a partner. The long term psychological consequences for women who experienced violence by a partner included loss of self-confidence (55%), feeling vulnerable (49%), anxiety (35%) and depression (33%). Furthermore, 1 in 5 women (19%) had experienced some form of sexual harassment in the immediate 12 months prior to being interviewed, rising to 1 in 2 women experiencing some form of sexual harassment since they were 15.

➢ 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.)

Please see our recommendations in the 'further comments' box below.

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   _ 1_ _ _ _

- Home & family life   _ 1 _ _

- Education   _ 1 _ _ _

- Politics and public life   _ 1 _ _ _

- Media   _1 _ _ _ _

- Caring for others   _1 _ _ _ _

- Justice   _ 1_ _ _ _

➢ Please outline the reasons for your answer below:

Scaling these domains is an ineffective measure – they intersect differently for every woman, depending on the versions and strengths of misogyny, sexism and patriarchy she lives in, across domains.

In a single women's life, they can converge to devastating effect – for example, negotiating Family and Criminal Courts as a result of domestic, sexual or gender based violence.

> Any woman may live in a malign patriarchal home, work in a 'soft-sexist' environment, but encounter a misogynistic legal infrastructure.
> Females and women in any domain are hierarchically disadvantaged.

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

About Safe Ireland

Safe Ireland is a national social change agency working to end gender based violence, with a specific focus on male violence against women in intimate/domestic relationships. It has a nation-wide member network of 38 refuge and support services for the domestic abuse sector.

We believe that a fundamental source of all violence arises from gender hierarchies, stereotypes and inequalities in the home. We also believe that the single biggest barrier to achieving gender equality and human rights for women is the high prevalence of gender based violence, with its wider personal, family, social and economic impacts.

We are working to make Ireland the safest country in the world for women and children.

We collaborate in our work with 38 specialist frontline services (all members of Safe Ireland), with state agencies, civic society organisations, business, community, and cultural organisations throughout the country who wish to address this epidemic.

We work directly with women to bring their experiences and voices into research, policy, service development and violence prevention programmes. Our core strategic focus is to change culture and transform the response to gender based violence in Ireland and to progress towards realising our vision for a safe Ireland.

About this submission

As an agency with specific expertise on domestic abuse and coercive control, we have prepared this submission to highlight the intrinsic link between domestic abuse and gender inequality. Violence against women and girls is a central, driving factor for gender inequality in Ireland.

This evidence based submission draws on much of our own recent research, along with international sources, the expertise of our member services, and the women and children they work with day in and day out.

Domestic abuse and coercive control negatively impacts all facets of a woman's life; her physical and mental health, her socioeconomic status, her participation in education, work and leadership. We know that any form of abuse and violence has negative effects on the brain, mind, spirit and body. We know this circulates and extends to and from communities, and within society at large, in a vicious feedback loop. A vast body of research has unequivocally established the

impacts of intimate partner violence and sexual assault on women's physical and mental health and well-being.

As the Citizen's Assembly has been tasked with exploring the advancement of gender equality under the themes of gender norms and stereotypes, work, care, and women's access to, and representation in, public life and decision making, we have focused in this submission on the intersection of domestic abuse with each theme and how it prevents women from achieving their full potential in all areas.

However, fundamentally, domestic abuse permeates all areas of a woman's life. Large-scale structural barriers exist which support domestic abuse and gender based violence – and in fact unequal parental sharing, under/unpaid care-work, unequal employment patterns, and representative invisibility, are all part of the lattice that support it.

What is needed is a dismantling of the misogyny, sexism and patriarchies that continue to prevail in our attitudes and behaviours, in our institutions and societal structures, including our communities – and especially our homes.

A piece meal response will not suffice.

Our Recommendations

1. **Preventing and responding to Domestic, Sexual and Gender based Violence should be named as a mandatory priority area for Government (e.g. in every Programme for Government)**

2. **A clear comprehensive line of responsibility to government for Domestic Sexual & Gender Based Violence, with appropriate resources and independent powers should be established in Ireland.**

3. **The Domestic Sexual and Gender Based Violence sector be fully resourced to prevent and respond to all forms of sexual, intimate partner and domestic violence adequately.**

4. **Establish a Government Review of how family and criminal courts interact and respond to domestic and sexual violence cases, and initiate urgently needed improvements to protect and support women and children experiencing violence and abuse.**

If you would like any further information please email office@safeireland.ie or visit www.safeireland.ie to learn more about domestic abuse and coercive control and our vision for a safe Ireland.