

Appendix D: Membership of the Citizens' Assembly

The Citizens' Assembly on Drugs Use was comprised of 100 members, including 99 members of the general public and an independent Chairperson.

Optimising the representativeness and diversity of the Assembly

Recruitment of members for the Citizens' Assembly was based on the selection method first introduced in 2022. This method is designed to optimise the diversity of the Assembly membership and ensure it is as representative as possible of the general public.

The improved member recruitment method is informed by international best practice, with reference in particular to the OECD Recommendation on Open Government⁶, the OECD Good Practice Principles for Deliberative Processes for Public Decision Making⁷ and countries with extensive experience of Citizens' Assemblies, including Canada and Australia.

Invitations

A total of 20,000 households right around Ireland received a postal invitation from Taoiseach Leo Varadkar T.D., inviting them to nominate one adult from that household to apply to become a member. The sample of households that received invitations was randomly generated from the GeoDirectory database of households, which is the most comprehensive available database of households in the country.

Applications

Written invitations were addressed generically to 'The Householder', as distinct from named persons within the household. Each household that received an invitation was entitled to nominate just one adult from that household to apply. It was up to household members themselves to decide who might apply. Invitations were non-transferable between households.

Applicants from eligible households were required to register their interest in becoming a member of the Assembly, either online or by phone. As part of the registration process, key demographic information was requested from applicants.

The Secretariat then used this demographic information to select members using a stratified random selection process, which ensured that the overall composition of the assembly broadly mirrored wider Irish society in terms of gender, age, geography, socioeconomic status and nationality.

Response rate

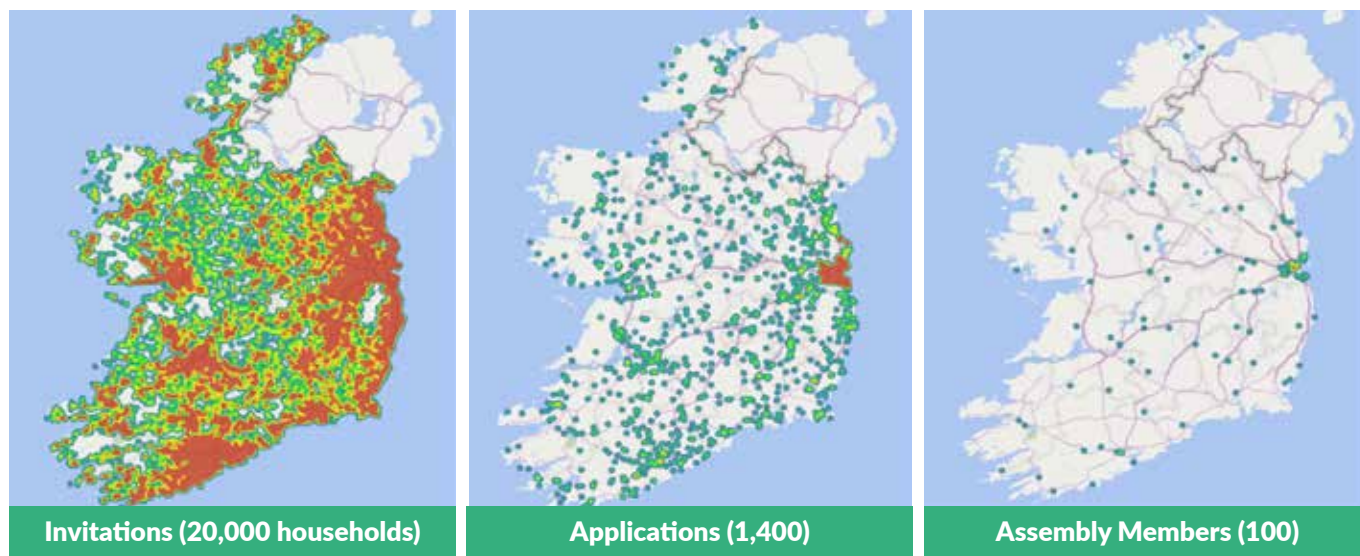
A total of 20,000 invitations were issued, with approx. 1,400 responses received, which is in line with expectations based on international experience.

⁶ OECD (2017) <https://www.oecd.org/gov/Recommendation-Open-Government-Approved-Council-141217.pdf>

⁷ Chwalisz, C. (2020), 'Good practice principles for deliberative processes for public decision making', in Innovative Citizen Participation and New Democratic Institutions: Catching the Deliberative Wave, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/b40aab2a-en>.

Geographic distribution of invitees, applicants and members

Figure 1, below, shows the spread and concentration of invitations, applications and members across Ireland.



Sortition criteria

The final selection of public members of the Assembly was based on a stratified random selection of 99 members of the public, using six demographic variables:

- Gender
- Age Group
- Place of residence
- Employment status and occupation (proxy indicators for socio-economic status and disability);
- Language (as a proxy indicator of nationality).

Demographic profile of members

Using a demographic profile of the general public based on CSO Census data, targets were set for selecting members by gender, age group and location by region.

Supplementary criteria of employment status, language and occupation were used to optimise diversity and inclusivity of membership.

Tables 1 – 3 below show the targets, and results, of the stratified random selection, while Tables 4-6 indicate the diversity and inclusivity achieved among the group.

Table 9 Gender profile of assembly members

Gender	Target	Result
Male	49	49
Female	50	49
Non-Binary		1
Total	99	99

Table 10 Age profile of assembly members

Age	Target	Result
65 years or older	20	20
45-64 years	32	32
25-44 years	36	36
18-24 years	11	11
Total	99	99

Table 11 Geographic profile of assembly members

Age	Target	Result
1. Dublin	28	28
2. Rest of Leinster	27	27
3. Munster	27	27
4. Connacht & Ulster	17	17
Total	99	99

Table 12 wider indicators of diversity within the 99 members

The 99 members of the Assembly included four people with disabilities, a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds, and 15 non-nationals including 11 whose first language was not English. Languages spoken included Latvian, Romanian, Polish, Mandarin, Arabic, and French.

Participation, attrition, replacement and retention

The Assembly maintained a high participation rate. A total of 6 members withdrew from the Assembly at various points during the process, meaning that at the conclusion of the Assembly there were 94 members, remaining compared to the initial cohort of 100. The effective attrition rate for this Assembly compares very favourably to most previous Citizens' Assemblies.