



WOMEN BEYOND THE DÁIL: MORE WOMEN IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

In the 2019 local elections, only 226 women candidates were elected to local government or 24% of all councillors elected. NWCI has carried out research to increase our knowledge and understanding of what supports women's access to representative democracy at local level. In order to achieve a critical mass of women's representation, NWCI has developed the following recommendations for the Government, political parties and Local Government. These recommendations are based on the 2019 report produced by Dr Pauline Cullen and Claire McGing on behalf of NWCI: "Women beyond the Dáil: More Women in Local Government." This was funded by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INCREASING WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

National Government:

- Implement legislation for a candidate gender quota for local elections
- Fund long-term programmes to equip women to run for local political office
- Target programmes in rural areas with lowest levels of female candidacy
- Organise training programmes designed for women underrepresented in politics including young women, Traveller and Roma women, migrant women and women with disabilities
- Provide more flexible working hours and meeting times to support councillors with caring responsibilities
- Introduce systematic entitlement to maternity/adoptive leave for women county councillors
- Increase remuneration for local councillors to address specific obstacles for women in low paid work to consider the role
- Introduce the use of technology to support councillors working in rural areas
- Introduce codes of conduct against sexism and an effective Standards Committee to enforce it
- Commission research under the planned Electoral Commission to further examine appropriate supports required to diversify candidate selection processes
- Support the development of regional and local women's caucuses to support women councillors
- Allocate adequate resources for organisations that are supporting marginalised women to participate in public and political life



Political Parties:

- Implement a proactive approach to recruit women from marginalised communities including Traveller and Roma women and migrant women
- Develop candidate selection processes that look outside the usual networks to seek a diversity of women including women from ethnic minorities, migrant women and women with disabilities
- Deliver gender awareness training to party members involved in selection to undermine gendered perceptions of candidacy
- Support long-term and strategic succession planning among women officeholders
- Increase women's access to leadership positions within political parties
- Invite aspirants to consider candidacy sooner to provide a longer lead in time
- Hold convention processes that support women candidates and mitigate attempts to undermine or question their legitimacy
- Develop a political party candidate placement strategy that enhances women's electability
- Introduce childcare allowance or other in kind supports for candidates with care responsibilities
- Provide expectation management and checking-in system during the campaign
- Ensure supports are in place during campaigning to orientate first time candidates
- Provide support for unsuccessful candidates in the aftermath of an election (debrief and supports to maintain engagement with party politics)

Local Government:

- Invite local women and women's groups to observe local council meetings
- Deliver mentoring, shadowing and internship programmes for women with local councillors and local authorities
- Sign up to the European Charter for Equality Between Women and Men in Local Life
- Increase visibility of elected women councillors
- Strategic outreach aimed at younger women, women living in poverty, ethnic minorities, women with disabilities, Traveller and Roma women and migrant women to increase engagement with politics

The National Women's Council of Ireland's (NWCI) mission is to lead and to be a catalyst in the achievement of equality for women. We are the leading national representative organisation for women and women's groups in Ireland. A non-governmental, not-for-profit organisation, founded in 1973, we seek to achieve equality for women. We represent and take our mandate from our over 190-member groups from across a diversity of backgrounds, sectors and geographical locations. We also have a growing number of individual members who support the campaign for women's equality in Ireland. Our mandate is to take action to ensure that the voices of women in all their diversity are heard. Our vision is of an Ireland and of a world where women can achieve their full potential in a just and equal society.

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An Roinn Tithíochta,
Pleanála agus Rialtais Áitiúil
Department of Housing,
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