



Submission to the Citizens Assembly on Gender Equality 2020

Foreword from Orla O'Connor

Dear members of the Citizens Assembly,

We are learning as a society, time and time again, how critical it is to listen to the voices and experiences of women. When we ignore their experiences, we do so at an enormous cost to both women and our society.

When government proposed a referendum to remove Article 41.2 on women in the home from our Constitution, we were concerned that it would not allow enough time for a participative and respectful national conversation that recognises people's complex feelings, responsibilities and needs in relation to care. The right to be cared for and to care for others requires addressing the needs and rights of all of us at different stages of our lives. However, as our submission will outline, the issue of care and caring is particularly central to women's equality. To ensure a true valuing of care in Irish society, care must become a shared responsibility between women and men, with quality, accessible and affordable care supported and resourced by the state.

There was a danger of debate becoming divisive - between people fully working in the home and those who work inside and outside the home; divisive between those who do unpaid work that contributes to society and those who do paid work; and divisive between families and between women and men who work in the home.

We felt that a public conversation was necessary. The Citizens' Assembly provides an opportunity for such a conversation. It is an opportunity for consultation and deliberation where both expert and personal testimony can be heard. It will be absolutely critical in this public discussion that the experiences of women in all our diversity are heard.

We note the scale of the task as set out before the members of the Assembly. There are many issues that could be addressed under the very broad terms of reference before you. As Director of the NWCI, I have had the great privilege to listen to women all across the country and to hear about their lives and experiences. What I have learned from this diverse range of women is that there are some key constitutional and legislative changes that if effected, would result in transformational change and vastly improve both the lives of women and girls and men and boys.

Therefore, key actions that NWCI asks you to support in your recommendations:

- Holding a referendum to replace Article 41.2 of the Constitution with a gender neutral and inclusive statement on the value of care to Irish society
- Funding a public affordable and accessible childcare infrastructure
- Placing Equality Budgeting on a statutory footing
- Setting the minimum wage to the Living Wage
- Benchmarking social welfare rates to the Minimum Essential Standard of Living
- Introducing quotas on women's representation in local government, business, and the governance bodies of publically funded institutions
- Establish a National Rapporteur for gender based violence and exploitation

NWCI believes these recommendations represent a clear pathway that would result in real, positive outcomes for gender equality.

NWCI knows that the 99 citizens of the assembly, when provided with reliable, accurate and comprehensive information, will recognise the need for and recommend actions to address gender inequalities experienced by women and girls across Ireland.

NWCI would welcome the opportunity to come and speak to you during the course of your deliberations and to answer any questions you might have.



Orla O'Connor
Director
National Women's Council of Ireland

NWCI recommendations

Care

- Hold a referendum on Article 41.2 to replace the Article with an inclusive and gender-neutral acknowledgement of the value of care
- Amend the Constitution to ensure a broad and inclusive understanding of the family based on relationships of care and interdependence
- Legislate to establish the right to citizenship for children born in Ireland
- Develop a legislative underpinning for the funding of a public, affordable and accessible care infrastructure to support people at all stages of the lifecycle
- Increase investment in early years to of 1% of GDP over the next decade
- Develop a model of funding the sector that ensures proper wages for the workforce, a quality service for children and affordable fees for families
- Provide a statutory right for a broad spectrum of paid maternity, paternity, parental leave and carers leave, to include a minimum of 4 paid months of parental leave and 6 paid days of carers leave
- Legislate for a full and retrospective Homecare credit to support women to access a full pension
- Provide a statutory right to home care to support older persons to remain independent
- Provide a statutory right to a Personal Assistance Service for disabled people

Economic equality

- Legislate for wage transparency
- Legislate to support collective bargaining instruments
- Introduce the Living Wage as the minimum wage level for Ireland
- Begin a national dialogue on the moving to a 4 Day Week
- Legislate to benchmark social welfare payments to a Minimum Essential Standard of Living (MESL)
- Introduce a universal, fair State Pension system which will guarantee income adequacy in older age
- Legislate for a minimum of 10 days paid leave for persons experiencing domestic and intimate partner abuse and violence
- Ratify ILO Convention 190 on gender-based violence and harassment in the work place

Leadership

- Establish a 50% quota for gender balance, with targets for diversity, on all non-state Irish company boards
- Legislate for a quota system to be extended to local elections with an initial quota of 30% women's representation in the Local Elections 2024 & additional targets to improve diversity
- Introduce an entitlement to maternity/adoptive leave for women councillors and women TDs
- Legislate for a 50% gender quota and targets for diversity for decision making structures in communities

- Support and resource the women’s community sector to advance equality and support marginalised women to participate in public and political life

Violence Against Women

- Identify Violence Against Women as a national crisis including establishing a Citizens’ Assembly on VAW
- Establish a National Rapporteur on Sexual Domestic and Gender Based Violence
- Legislate for ring-fenced funding to combat violence against women
- Legislate for the establishment of a dedicated and integrated family court
- Legislate for an Objective Sex Education Curriculum

A new economic model

- Legislate for equality budgeting to become a statutory process, this includes expenditure and taxation actions
- Establish a commission to explore a new economic model for Ireland that takes account of equality, human rights and environmental sustainability

Introduction

Founded in 1973, the National Women’s Council of Ireland (NWC) is the leading national women’s membership organisation. We represent and derive our mandate from our membership, which includes over 190 groups and organisations from a diversity of backgrounds, sectors and locations across Ireland. We also have a growing number of individual members who support the campaign for women’s equality in Ireland. Our mission is to lead and to be a catalyst for change in the achievement of equality for women. Our vision is of an Ireland and of a world where women can achieve their full potential and there is full equality for women.

NWC welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Citizens’ Assembly on gender equality. The terms of reference for the Assembly to consider are wide ranging and relate to the roles of women and men, our understanding of family and home, economic equality for women, work life balance, the contribution of care and carers as well as the continuing epidemic of violence against women in our society.

The issue of *Care* is central to women’s equality. In previous discussions on Article 41.2 of the Constitution on ‘women in the home’, NWC has advocated for the need to recognise and to value care in our society. Caring for others and being cared for at different stages of life are central experiences for everyone. Care work is essential to the common good and our society and the economy could not function without it. The right to be cared for and to care for others requires addressing the needs and rights of all of us at different stages of our lives. For persons with disabilities, care must be understood as an independent right to support, autonomy and a fully realised life. To ensure a true valuing of care in Irish society, care must become a shared responsibility between women and men, with quality, accessible and affordable care supported and resourced by the state.

We know from Irish and international research that a key structural barrier for women achieving full *Economic Equality* is the unequal distribution of care responsibilities. The most effective and efficient way to tackle these persistent gender inequalities is sustained investment in public services and social infrastructure. This will mitigate historical and ongoing economic inequality and address unpaid and undervalued care labour.

Gender balance in *Leadership* roles in business, politics and public life is crucial to ensure accountability and responsiveness to women in all their diversity. Ensuring that the voices of women are heard in decision making and that their participation is supported and resourced at local level is key to tackling gender inequalities from the ground up.

We are still failing when it comes to protecting women from a range of gender based *Violence*, and preventing this violence from occurring in the first place. This is in spite of a welcome and rapid legislative transformation process over the last 3 years that was necessary to ensure that we meet our obligations under the recently ratified Istanbul Convention, the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. It is time that we reimagined new ways to eliminate violence against women. As it stands this responsibility rests too heavily on the shoulders of women and this must change. The burden must lie on the shoulders of those who incite fear, intimidation and control - the people who commit violent acts, and the people who take the lives of others.

NWCI's work on gender equality

NWCI's expertise in informing the development of government policy and legislation has been widely recognised. We sit by invitation on the monitoring group for the National Strategy for Women and Girls 2016-2020. The national strategy acknowledges, in particular, the value our organisation can provide 'by identifying the needs of [our] member organisations and their members'.

We chair the National Observatory on Violence against Women, an independent network of grassroots and national organisations that monitor progress on violence against women in Ireland.

We sit by invitation on the Equality Budgeting Expert Advisory Group, chaired by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and tasked with introducing gender equality framing into national budgetary processes.

We are members of the newly established Women's Health Task Force with the Department of Health and the European Institute for Women's Health.

In 2012 we were invited to inform the Constitutional Convention in its consideration of Article 41.2 - the 'women in the home' clause - and other areas of the Convention's deliberations impacting on women.

Submission structure

As a membership organisation, NWCI has a unique role in communicating the concerns of women in Ireland through ongoing consultation with our membership base and other organisations. Our members come from local women's organisations, professional

associations, rural groups and are both political and non-political. They share a common interest in promoting the rights of women.

This submission is grounded in the experiences and expertise shared with us by our member groups working to promote women's equality and providing services to women and research we have commissioned on the issues that women are facing in Ireland in the full realisation of their rights. It reflects the lived experience of the women that we have worked with and that have contacted us in huge numbers over many years.

A core NWCI value and belief, as stated in our Strategic Plan 2016-2020 Driving Women's Equality¹, is our commitment to intersectionality. NWCI acknowledges the intersectionality of women's lived experiences and in particular seeks to end discrimination on the grounds of gender, family status, religion, race, age, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, ethnicity or membership of the Travelling community. Where available, disaggregated data on the experience of diverse groups of women is used throughout this submission and an appendix is included at the end of this submission for ease of reference.

This submission will give a brief overview of the context for women in Ireland today before addressing four key elements of the Assembly's terms of reference:

1. Care
2. Economic equality
3. Leadership
4. Violence against women

Context

NWCI acknowledges the very significant progress Irish society has made in the last decades, from electing women as President of our country to repealing the 8th Amendment to the Constitution. Ireland has made commitments to the full realisation of gender equality under a range of national strategies and international treaties. These include:

National Strategy for Women and Girls 2016-2020

Second National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence 2016 - 2021

Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention)

UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)

UN Sustainable Development Goal's 2030 (SDG's)

¹ NWCI Strategic plan. Driving Women's Equality 2016-2020

However, the Assembly’s discussions are taking place in the context of continuing inequalities experienced by women and girls in Ireland. While much progress has been made over the past number of years, women’s position in Irish society continues to be marked by social and economic deficits, which we will highlight in the following sections.

NWCI would also like to highlight that women’s experiences are shaped by the intersection of gender with other factors such as age, income, education, family status, membership of the Travelling community or other ethnic minority communities, disability, migration status, LGBTQI+ identity, living in an urban or rural area and so on.

The following statistics give an indication of the diverse profile of women and girls in Ireland.

- 36.6% of Ireland’s female population live in rural Ireland²
- 14% of the female population (331,551 women and girls) have a disability³
- There are 15,610 female members of the Travelling community living in Ireland, representing 0.7% of the general population⁴
- Ireland has 268,387 female, non-Irish nationals
- 2% of Ireland’s female population identify as Asian or Asian Irish (49,087); 1.4% as Black or Black Irish (32,915)
- 26,965 women and girls, 1.1% of Ireland’s female population identifies as Muslim
- 91% of lone parents are women⁵
- Between 60-65% of minimum wage workers are women⁶
- There is no official data on the LGBTQI+ population in Ireland but estimates based on other countries indicates around 5-7% of the population may identify as LGBT⁷

Care

The issue of care is central to women’s equality. NWCI has long advocated for the need to recognise and to value care in our society. Care work is essential to the common good: it is vital for a functioning economy and society. Recognition and valuing of affective care is

² CSO (2017). Census 2016.

³ CSO (2017). Census 2016

⁴ CSO (2017). Census 2016

⁵ CSO (2016). Women and men in Ireland

⁶ The LPC 2016 found 60 per cent of minimum wage workers were female while the NERI (2015) “A Profile of Those on The Minimum Wage”, found that 65% of minimum wage workers were women

⁷ Estimated by GLEN Ireland, cited here: https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/libraryResearch/2019/2019-06-28_l-rs-infographic-lgbt-community-in-ireland-a-statistical-profile_en.pdf

fundamental to full equality for women. Affective care refers to human dependence and interdependence, and the right to give and receive love and care.

NWCI's understanding of care is broad and acknowledges that across the lifespan, we all both give and receive care, and that this is a deeply fulfilling and necessary human experience. Care or unpaid work in the home encompasses a broad range of duties such as housework and preparing meals, the unpaid work that many women in rural areas do on family farms and small businesses, care for children, older family members, friends or neighbours and support and care for those with disabilities. NWCI acknowledges that disabled women are not passive recipients of care but individuals whose rights are intertwined with those, predominantly women that provide care.⁸

Though care and other domestic work such as housework and preparing meals, is essential to individual, family and society wellbeing, it is time that cannot be spent on other activities such as paid work, education and training or political and civic engagement. This has implications for women's position in society, their participation in the labour market and their financial situation, as well as their pension provision post-retirement.

One of the key challenges is that while there has been a significant increase in women's participation in the labour market, this has not been balanced by an equal increase in the contribution of men to domestic or care work. Nearly all of the people (98%) who were looking after home or family in 2016 were women⁹ and older women are five times more likely than men to leave work to care for a family member.¹⁰

Recent research indicates that 45% of women and 29% of men provide care for others on a day to day basis. Women who provide childcare carry out an average of 43 hours per week and men, 25 hours. When the hours spent on paid employment are accounted for, women still carry out more hours of care than men per week.¹¹

In terms of housework, 81% of women and 44% of men report engaging in housework on a daily basis. Women perform just under 20 hours of housework per week compared to 7 hours for men. Having a partner resulted in women spending more time on housework, regardless of whether the partner was employed or not.¹² Traveller women are almost twice as likely to be looking after home and family as the general population.¹³ The overall decline in rural infrastructure, lack of services, long distances and lack of public transport means that rural women experience a very significant additional burden of care and time spent organising and 'delivering' care.

Both women and men in Ireland report some of the highest levels of unpaid work in the EU, with Ireland scoring third among EU countries in terms of the amount of unpaid work carried out. However, Ireland has the seventh highest gender gap in the EU between the

⁸ McDonagh, R. <https://www.irishtimes.com/life-and-style/health-family/disabled-people-have-been-made-to-believe-they-are-the-problem-1.3774721>

⁹ CSO (2017). Census 2016

¹⁰ ESRI & HAS (2019). The ageing workforce in Ireland: Working conditions, health and extending working lives

¹¹ Russell, H., Grotti, R., McGinnity, F. & Privalko, I. (2019). Caring and Unpaid Work in Ireland. IHREC & ESRI

¹² Ibid

¹³ CSO (2017). A social portrait of Travellers.

hours of unpaid work carried out by women and men.¹⁴ This reflects low investment in services such as childcare and homecare and reliance on family to provide these in-house. The gender gap in the provision of unpaid work is narrowest in Scandinavian countries where focused effort has been made to achieve gender equality, supported by specific state policies and investment in social infrastructure.

The continuing reliance on women to carry out the majority of care and unpaid work has consequences for women's economic equality and creates significant vulnerabilities for women through the power and financial imbalance it creates. Women will frequently name their caring responsibilities and lack of financial resources, including housing as barriers to exiting unsafe and violent relationships.

Article 41.2 of the Constitution - the role of women in the home

Article 41.2 of Ireland's Constitution, which refers to a woman's 'life in the home' and 'duties in the home', is undoubtedly sexist and discriminatory. The Article notes that:

1. 'In particular, the State recognises that by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved.'
2. 'The State shall, therefore, endeavour to ensure that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home.'

The Article is problematic in a number of ways:

- It is outdated and does not encompass the variety and diversity of experiences which women have - as employees, as carers, as employers - in modern Ireland
- It does not recognise the work which men currently do as carers. Nor does it recognise that men have duties and responsibilities to be carers.
- It does not recognise the range of different types of care: in the community as well as with family members and friends
- It includes a definition of family which does not reflect the reality of families in Ireland nor the diversity of family life. It presumes a male breadwinner, two parent household where 'woman' stays at home and does not take into account the reality of lone parents, LGBTQI+ families, or blended families.

In practice, Article 41.2 has been little more than symbolic. Its placement in the Constitution could have led to recognition of the value of the contribution women make through unpaid care work in our society. However, it has faced minimal judicial scrutiny. It has had little or no impact on the positive formulation of social policy or improving the position of women. For example, it provided the Constitutional and cultural background for the marriage bar, and its detrimental impact on women's choices, employment and economic independence, the legacy of which we are still dealing with today. In practice Article 41.2 has not supported the home or family, it has merely diminished women.

Amending Article 41.2

It is important to recognise the value and importance of unpaid care work carried out in

¹⁴ Russell, H. et al. (2019). Caring and Unpaid Work in Ireland. IHREC and ESRI

Ireland. Such work is often invisible and undervalued as our society places increasing emphasis on the role of paid employment to the exclusion of other forms of work.¹⁵ Amending Art 41.2 provides an opportunity to recognise care in a more gender neutral and inclusive way.

When the members of the 2013 Constitutional Convention voted to express their view, 88% said it shouldn't be left as it is and 88% choose to amend or modify. Only 12% favoured a straight deletion.¹⁶ In 2017 The UN Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), also recommended that the male-oriented language be replaced with gender-sensitive language to convey the concept of gender equality more clearly.¹⁷

Proposal for an inclusive definition of care

NWCI proposes an inclusive statement about the importance of care and care work done by both women and men in Irish society. The new text should include the following principles:

- Assert that caring for each other, and care work, is essential for the good of everyone in our society.
- Be gender neutral, to recognise the care work done by both women and men.
- Recognise care work done inside the home, in families as well as within the broader community

NWCI proposes the following statement for consideration by the Assembly:

“The State recognises that care provided by the home, family and community gives society a support without which the common good cannot be achieved”¹⁸

Recognising care in this way gives recognition to the valuable work done by thousands of women and men, every day in Ireland. It invites men to take on more responsibility and enjoy the often rewarding, work of care. It extends the definition of care to include care outside the home and in the community. It confirms that the State will seek to support carers.

However, such a statement does not offer legal protection for the women and men who provide care in our society. It can provide a strong symbolic commitment, but only a full complement of socio-economic rights can address the economic inequality they experience as a consequence of their caring responsibilities and caring needs. Lone parent households, people with disabilities, those providing unpaid care and children are those

¹⁵ NWCI (2012). The Constitution, Gender and Reform: Improving the Position of Women in the Irish Constitution.

¹⁶ In 1996 Constitution Review Group, 1997 First progress report of the All-Party Oireachtas Committee on the Constitution, 2006 Tenth Progress Report of the All-Party Oireachtas Committee on the Constitution, 2013 the Constitutional Convention, 2016 Government Task Force - all of whom except the 2nd Commission on the Status of Women in 1993 recommended that the article be amended or replaced to recognise some form of care.

¹⁷ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (2017). Concluding observations on the combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of Ireland. CEDAW/C/IRL/CO/6-7.

¹⁸ The NWCI commissioned a barrister and lecturer in Constitutional Law, Dr. Alan Brady to produce a comprehensive legal analysis of changes in the Constitution which would benefit women, including amending this article. The full document is available at <http://bit.ly/nwci-constitution>

most at risk of poverty in Ireland. The remainder of this submission focuses on the practical recommendations that the Citizens Assembly can make to address the inequalities they experience.

Recommendation

Hold a referendum on Article 41.2 to replace the Article with an inclusive and gender-neutral acknowledgement of the value of care

Recognising the diversity of families

Article 41.2 is part of the broader Article 41 of the Constitution of Ireland which lays out the rights of the family and contains a number of provisions imposing duties on the State in relation to the family. However, the definition of family within the Constitution is based on a narrow understanding of the family that prioritises heterosexual, married families and fails to recognise and protect the diverse range of family forms that exist in modern Ireland. It denies protection to and has been used to discriminate against unmarried parents and their children, LGBTQI parents and non-biological parents. Failure to recognise diverse family forms means that the care work of many people goes unrecognised and is devalued.

In 2004, the Constitution was changed so that children born to parents who were not Irish nationals no longer had an automatic right to Irish citizenship. Since then, there have been a number of widely publicised cases of children who have lived in Ireland all their lives and yet are facing deportation. As well as the ever-present threat of deportation, Irish born children without citizenship have lesser entitlements to access services, such as third level education, on an equal basis with other Irish children.

In its 2016 report on Ireland, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child criticised Ireland's immigration system for failing to protect the needs of undocumented children.¹⁹ In addition, there has been a marked change in public opinion since the original referendum as people have come to realise the impact of the Constitutional amendment on children and families in their communities. A recent survey showed that 71% of people in Ireland believe those born in Ireland should be entitled to citizenship.²⁰

Following the Constitutional referendum in 2004, Article 9.2 was inserted that enables the Oireachtas to legislate for citizenship without the need for another change in the Constitution. The effect of the referendum was not to deny for all time a right to automatic citizenship but rather to enable the Oireachtas to legislate on it.²¹

It is NWCI's view that that Constitutional recognition and protection should be afforded to all families that involve a relationship of caring and interdependence.

¹⁹ Committee on the Rights of the Child (2016). Concluding observations on the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Ireland. CRC/C/IRL/CO/3-4.

²⁰ Sunday Times Behaviour and Attitudes Poll (2018). <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/huge-swing-in-favour-of-citizenship-for-all-born-in-ireland-mcqqd2ttw>

²¹ Bacik, I. (2018). Irish Nationality and Citizenship (Naturalisation of Minors Born in Ireland) Bill 2018: Second Stage. Seanad Éireann debate - Wednesday, 21 Nov 2018 Vol. 261 No. 7

Recommendations

Amend the Constitution to ensure a broad and inclusive understanding of the family based on relationships of care and interdependence

Legislate to establish the right to citizenship for children born in Ireland

Comprehensive, affordable and accessible care infrastructure

Early childhood education and care (Childcare)

While the numbers of women in paid employment has increased dramatically, this has not been matched by significant increases in the contribution of men to domestic or care work. There has not been an adequate state response through recognition of, or investment in, childcare. Ireland's current investment in early childhood education and care (ECEC) is 0.2% of GDP. This is far below the EU average of 0.8% and the UNICEF recommended ratio of 1% of GDP.²²

Childcare remains the single most significant barrier to women's equal participation in all aspects of society, particularly employment, education and training. While affordability is an issue for most parents, the high cost of childcare acts as an, often insurmountable, barrier to employment for women who are not high earners. Recent research found that almost 60% of lone parents could not afford to access childcare services, three times the rate of two parent families.²³ Ireland is the worst performing country in the EU with regard to affordability for lone parents.

Participation in the labour force for women with children under 14 also varies according to their level of education. The labour force participation rate is 27% for women with lower secondary level education and 75% for mothers with third level education, as compared to an EU average of 42% and 80%, respectively.²⁴ This is a direct consequence of the cost of childcare with higher earners having more resources to spend on high cost childcare.

However, while childcare fees in Ireland are the highest in the EU, the sector workers are some of the lowest paid in the country. The ECEC sector has a significant sustainability crisis. Inadequate investment is creating a poorly paid, un-pensionable female dominated workforce, reliant on low wages with 6 out of 10 workers earning below the Living Wage. Employment contracts are intrinsically precarious and require a dependence on summer month social welfare supports. As the sector is predominantly staffed by women this has the consequence of perpetuating negative gendered labour patterns. We have seen an escalation in this issue recently with reports that services cannot obtain insurance and are at risk of closing, culminating in a protest in February 2020 by the Early Childhood Alliance, calling for the development of a funding model for affordable and accessible childcare for parents, quality for children and sustainability for providers.

²² OECD (2019). Education at a glance 2019.

²³ SVP (2019). Working, parenting and struggling? An analysis of the employment and living conditions of one parent families in Ireland

²⁴ NESF (2019). Gender, family and class issues in Ireland's social welfare system.

Statutory Leave Supports

Provision of statutory leave supports for parents in Ireland is also lower than EU norms. Though the duration of maternity leave in Ireland compares well with other EU countries, when the duration and value of paid leave across maternity, paternity and parental leave schemes is combined, Ireland lags behind our EU partners.²⁵ Germany for example, provides total paid leave for mothers of 58 weeks, payable at the equivalent of 73% of the average wage. Ireland compares unfavourably with a combined 28 weeks of leave (26 weeks maternity, 2 weeks parental benefit) at 27% of the average wage.²⁶

Paid parental leave schemes can help parents balance work and family life and to maintain their connection to the labour market. Policies should focus on promoting greater equality in uptake of parental leave between women and men.

Family Care Provision

When asked about their future care preferences, the majority of people (85%) report that they would prefer to be cared for at home with the necessary supports, 55% say they would be happy to be cared for in the home of a family member.²⁷ Yet, Ireland has huge unmet need in homecare and is reliant on the unpaid labour of women to provide much of this care.

Homecare has been progressively privatised in Ireland to a largely unregulated home care industry, with high fees, varied quality and standards of homecare provision, and poor terms and conditions for workers. Domestic and personal care workers are often migrant women workers, and women of colour, subject to the most extreme instances of precarious work and exploitation. NWCI is particularly concerned that we must not become dependent on the exploitation of some of the most vulnerable women workers to meet our personal, familial and community care needs.

NWCI is a member of the Home Care Coalition, a group of 22 not-for-profit organisations and campaigners. We believe what is needed is the implementation of an adequately-resourced, person-centred statutory home care scheme with equality of access and availability across the country.

Disabled women and care

Positioning disabled women as dependents or passive recipients of care ignores the personhood of disabled women. NWCI's feminist analysis of care includes not only the perspectives of the women who provide care but also the women who need such supports.

Historically, people with disabilities were institutionalised in large campus style settings where they lived and accessed health, social and other services. It is now well recognised that these institutions were both a form of human rights abuse in and of themselves, as well as a perpetrator of human rights abuses.²⁸ However, the absence of a sufficient state

²⁵ Russell, H. et al (2019). Caring and Unpaid Work in Ireland. IHREC and ESRI

²⁶ OECD (2018). Family database. https://www.oecd.org/els/soc/PF2_1_Parental_leave_systems.pdf

²⁷ Safeguarding Ireland (2020). <https://www.safeguardingireland.org/80-have-not-considered-where-they-would-like-to-be-cared-for/>

²⁸ For example, McCoy report on Aras Attracta, HSE's Time to Move on from Congregated settings, UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities General Comment on Article 19 of the UNCRPD.

response to supporting people with disabilities to live independent, supported lives, leaves family carers, predominantly women to provide often very high levels of care.

Despite a wealth of policies²⁹ committed to providing person centred, community-based supports to enable people with disabilities to live independent lives in their communities, 56% of adults with intellectual disabilities were living with family members and only 6% living independently in 2017.³⁰ A lack of state supports such as accessible housing and transport, personal assistance services, sign language interpretation, as well as the experience of poverty, forces disabled women into a position of dependence on family members. A comprehensive and inclusive care infrastructure must provide choice to disabled women in the nature of the care or support they receive.

NWCI supports the call of disabled persons organisations and disability activists for legislation to guarantee disabled people the right to a Personal Assistance Service, as per Article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).³¹ Personal Assistance is distinct from Home Help and Home Care and is seen as a necessary support to reduce dependence on family and friends and to maintain a private life with dignity.³²

As a result of the under investment outlined above, Ireland's level of unmet need for care services is among the highest in Europe. A recent study found that Ireland has the fourth-highest level of unmet need for childcare in the EU and the second-highest for home care.³³ Investment in public services is one of the most effective ways of addressing gender inequality. This investment would also help to reduce inequalities experienced by low income households.

Recommendations

Develop a legislative underpinning for the funding of a public, affordable and accessible care infrastructure to support people at all stages of the lifecycle

Incrementally increase investment in early years to bring overall expenditure in line with the UNICEF recommendation of 1% of GDP over the next decade

Develop a model of funding the sector that ensures proper wages for the workforce, at minimum a living wage, a quality service for children and affordable fees for families

²⁹ DOH's Value For Money and Policy Review of Disability Services (2012), HSE's Time to Move on from Congregated settings, National Disability Strategy, National Housing Strategy for People with Disabilities, National Disability Inclusion Strategy to name a few.

³⁰ Health Research Board (2018). Report of the National Intellectual Disability Database 2017

³¹ Independent Living Movement Ireland (2019). Independent Living Movement Ireland (2019). ILMI Personal Assistance Services Campaign. <https://ilmi.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/ILMI-Personal-Assistance-Services-Campaign.pdf>

³² Ibid

³³ Privalko, I. et al (2019). Access to childcare and home care services across Europe: an analysis of the Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC), 2016. ESRI and DEASP.

Provide a statutory right for a broad spectrum of paid maternity, paternity, parental leave and carers leave, to include a minimum of 4 paid months of parental leave and 6 paid days of carers leave

Acknowledge the vital contribution of women's unpaid work throughout their lives by legislating for a full and retrospective Homecare credit to support women to access a full pension

Provide a statutory right to home care to support older persons to remain independent

Provide a statutory right to a Personal Assistance Service for disabled people

Ensure Economic Equality

Female labour force participation rates in Ireland are lower than that of males, at 56% for females and 68% for males in 2018. While female labour force participation rates in Ireland are similar to the EU average of 58%³⁴, this hides important differences in participation for women with children and in particular, working class women, with only 27% of mothers with lower secondary level education in the labour market in Ireland compared to an EU average of 42%.³⁵

The labour force participation rate of disabled women is also low, at only 26% (35% for disabled men).³⁶ A survey of Disability Allowance recipients by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection found that 43% of those not currently at work expressed the desire to work part time or full time. Of those currently working part time, 26% said they would like to increase their hours.³⁷ Disabled women experience multiple barriers to accessing employment including lack of workplace flexibility, discrimination and negative attitudes and stereotypes.

While it is difficult to access up to date data on the intersection between gender and ethnicity or migrant status in Ireland, there is evidence that migrant women and ethnic minority women experience additional disadvantages in access to the labour market as well as in the workplace. Black Africans experience extremely high rates of discrimination both looking for work (23%), and in the workplace (29%), compared to Irish nationals (6% and 5% respectively).³⁸ Migrant workers are at greater risk of exploitation with 44% of participants on one study reporting that they received less than the minimum wage.³⁹

While racism affects men and women, women's experiences are tied up with both racism and sexism and women are more likely to be affected. Research with Muslim communities

³⁴ Callaghan, N. et al (2018). Social Impact Assessment: Female Labour Force Participation. DEASP. <https://igees.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/SIA-Female-Labour-Force-Participation.pdf>

³⁵ NESF (2019). Gender, family and class issues in Ireland's social welfare system.

³⁶ CSO (2017). Census 2016.

³⁷ DSP (2016). Department of Social Protection Report on Disability Allowance Survey.

³⁸ Kingston et al (2013). Discrimination in the Irish labour market: nationality, ethnicity and the recession. UCD.

³⁹ MRCI (2015). All work and low pay: the experiences of migrants working in Ireland.

in Dublin found that Muslim women were three times more likely to experience verbal abuse and physical violence in public spaces than Muslim men.⁴⁰

Traveller women find themselves in a situation where they are all but excluded from the workplace and 80% of Traveller women are unemployed. Members of the Travelling community experience a high degree of discrimination in recruitment as well as in the workplace with Traveller women twice as likely to report discrimination.⁴¹

Women living in rural Ireland experience particular challenges to economic equality. Though women have always worked on Irish farms, this employment has not always been paid or counted in official statistics⁴² or recognised in our social protection system.

Paid work is also no guarantee of income adequacy for women with women predominating in low paid and precarious work. As well as the obvious effect of income inadequacy in the present, exclusion from the labour force has significant impacts on women's future economic equality. With access to pensions so connected to work, many women are at risk of poverty in later life.

Women's economic security is also threatened by the experience of harassment, violence and abuse which impacts significantly on economic equality and independence. Women may be prevented from working, or their wages or social welfare payments may be taken by the perpetrator, leaving her with no independent income. Women who experience violence may have disrupted work histories, with high rates of absenteeism frequent changes in jobs and more employment in casual work. This leads to income inadequacy, perpetuating economic inequality, creating dependency and further undermining her capacity to be independent and safe, particularly if she has children.

Challenge low pay

Ireland performs poorly on wage and income gender gaps globally, ranking 56th place in the world.⁴³ This reality has serious implications for a woman's lifetime earnings, her career decisions and her ability to live in older years with a decent income.

The economic cost of being a woman, the gender pay gap, (GPG) stands at 14%.⁴⁴ This means that for every hour worked, women earn 86 cent for every euro earned by men. The GPG almost trebles between 30's and 40's, when women are stepping away from the workforce for caring responsibilities.

The 'unexplained' part of the GPG, actual pay discrimination was to be significantly challenged by proposed new Gender Pay Gap legislation. This planned legislation lapsed with the dissolution of the government and it is important that Ireland's next government

⁴⁰ J. Carr (2016), Islamophobia in Dublin: Experiences and how to respond, Immigrant Council of Ireland.

⁴¹ Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission and Economic and Social Research Institute. Who experiences discrimination in Ireland?

⁴² Shortall, S. (2017) Changing Gender Roles in Irish Farm Households: Continuity and Change Irish Geography, 50(2), 175–191

⁴³ WEF (2019). Global Gender Gap Report 2020

⁴⁴ Eurostat (2019). Gender pay gap statistics. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Gender_pay_gap_statistics

progresses this legislation. But there are other factors that contribute to the gender pay gap, including low pay.

Ireland has one of the highest number of low paid workers in the OECD, with 23% of the workforce designated as low paid⁴⁵ compared to an OECD average of 15%.⁴⁶ Women make up a higher percentage of the low paid in Ireland. It's been estimated that between 60 and 65% of minimum wage workers in Ireland are women.⁴⁷ Part-time workers account for over 50% percent of all National Minimum Wage employees and approximately 80% of these are female.⁴⁸ A large proportion of minimum wage jobs are concentrated in the hotel, catering, restaurant, wholesale and retail sector - sectors comprised mainly of women workers.⁴⁹ Among the, predominantly female, childcare workforce, 6 out of 10 workers earn below the Living Wage.⁵⁰

Women dominated employment sectors have been subject to aggressive casualisation and the erosion of pay and security. Many of these women are young women, women of colour or migrant women who are vulnerable to the most precarious working conditions.

Participants in a survey of migrant workers in the restaurant, domestic, home care, retail and security sectors, found that 62% of all those surveyed have a third level qualification yet continue to work in jobs well below their skill levels. Participants reported that it was difficult to moving beyond low-paid, entry-level positions, despite years of experience, third level qualifications and sometimes a high degree of responsibility in their workplace.⁵¹

Workers represent 14% of all those in poverty. Among lone parents, 21% who were working were living in poverty in 2017, an increase from 9% in 2012. Lone parents are 5 times more likely to experience in work poverty than other households with children.⁵²

It is the view of NWCI that minimum wage levels should be set at a rate that is sufficient to cover the cost of living as experienced by workers. The Living Wage is calculated to ensure that work should provide an income that is sufficient to enable individuals to afford a socially acceptable standard of living.⁵³ Currently set at €12.30 per hour, it is the average gross salary which will enable full-time employed adults (without dependents) across Ireland afford a socially acceptable minimum standard of living.

Unlike the Minimum Wage, the Living Wage is an evidence-based rate of pay which is grounded in agreement by the public about what people need to afford an acceptable minimum standard of living. The Living Wage is part of an international movement to obtain a living wage and it has been accepted by both trade unions and notable

⁴⁵ Low pay refers to the share of workers earning less than two-thirds of median earnings

⁴⁶ OECD (2019). Wage levels statistics. <https://data.oecd.org/earnwage/wage-levels.htm>

⁴⁷ The LPC 2016 found 60 per cent of minimum wage workers were female while the NERI (2015) report "A Profile of Those on The Minimum Wage", found that 64.7% of minimum wage workers were women

⁴⁸ LPC (2016). The preponderance of women on the national minimum wage.

⁴⁹ Collins, M. (2016). Women and Low Pay: An empirical assessment.

https://www.neriinstitute.net/sites/default/files/events/downloads/2019/michel_collins_neri_paper.pdf

⁵⁰ Pobal (2019). Annual Early Years Sector Profile Report 2018/2019.

⁵¹ MRCI (2015). All work and low pay: the experiences of migrants working in Ireland.

⁵² SVP (2019). Working, parenting and struggling? An analysis of the employment and living conditions of one parent families in Ireland.

⁵³ Living Wage Technical Group (2019). Living Wage Technical Document.

employers, such as Ikea, Aldi and Lidl, as representing an income floor which no one should be expected to live below.⁵⁴

Collective bargaining is one of the most effective ways to create more equal redistribution of wealth, reduce inequality and address low pay. Research has indicated that countries with a high coverage of collective bargaining tend to have shorter working hours for both women and men, more flexible work options under secure employment conditions, better protection for non-standard workers, as well as a reduced gender pay gap.⁵⁵ Legislation is of particular necessity in Ireland, as our laws allow employers not to recognise unions in pay disputes. Unions are often not recognised and joint labour committees don't exist in many of the sectors women predominate.

Reduce working hours

NWCI is part of the campaign for a four day week. The four day week campaign is advocating for a gradual, managed transition to a shorter working week for all workers, in the private and public sectors, with no loss of pay. The current model is not working for women. As the previous section have outlined, women still perform the bulk of unpaid work, despite significant increases in their labour market participation. There is also evidence that the current model is not good for the health of women or men. According to the ESRI, the number of employees in Ireland who felt job stress 'always' or 'most of the time' doubled from 8% in 2010 to 17% in 2015.⁵⁶ Long hours were associated with job stress - those working over 40 hours per week were twice as likely to experience job stress as those working 36 to 40 hours.

The campaign wants to change the false narrative that working long hours is good for productivity and challenge the worst excesses of the 'work-first culture, and instead champion the importance of family time, leisure time, caring work and community work. We believe this can be achieved through a combination of labour market competition, public demand and business leadership, strong trade unions and collective bargaining and government influence and public contracting.

In the UK, in 2017-18, 57% of all sick days were due to work-related stress, anxiety or depression with women having statistically significantly higher rates of work-related stress, depression and anxiety.⁵⁷

A four day week would offer a more positive alternative for women for multiple reasons:

- It would help to facilitate a more equal distribution of care between women and men, supporting both to play more of a role in child-rearing as well as care of older family members.

⁵⁴ VPSJ (2019). Submission to DEASP: Social welfare benchmarking.

⁵⁵ European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC). Collective bargaining and gender equality. <https://www.etuc.org/en/collective-bargaining-and-gender-equality>

⁵⁶ ESRI & Health and Safety Authority (2018). Job stress and working conditions: Ireland in comparative perspective - An analysis of the European Working Conditions survey.

⁵⁷ Health and Safety Executive (2019). Work-related stress, anxiety or depression statistics in Great Britain, 2019 <https://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/causdis/stress.pdf>

- It would provide greater choice to women in the labour market and help to address the current situation whereby limited possibilities to combine paid work with family responsibilities mean women predominate in low paid, precarious and short term employment and thus help to alleviate the Gender Pay Gap.
- Changing our work environment where working time is reduced at all levels would make a significant improvement to women’s representation at senior level.

As well as the benefits to workers, the four day week has benefits for both business and the environment. There is no correlation between working longer hours and greater productivity, in fact, evidence suggests the opposite. The four day week has led to more focused, energised and happier workers from Galway to New Zealand, with many companies who have trialled or introduced the four day week reporting an increase in productivity and profitability.⁵⁸

Research suggests that moving to a four day week would reduce carbon emissions by around a fifth, through cutting back on commuting and energy use in buildings.⁵⁹ In the context of climate change, the transition to a four day week is one of many radical actions we need to take quickly to protect our increasingly fragile environment.

Recommendations

Legislate for wage transparency

Legislate to support collective bargaining instruments

Introduce the Living Wage as the minimum wage level for Ireland

Begin a national dialogue on the moving to a 4 Day Week

End poverty and ensure an adequate standard of living for all

The social welfare system plays an important role in reducing poverty and inequality. It should ensure that everyone, no matter what their stage of life, can live free from poverty. If social welfare transfers are excluded, 41% of the population would be at risk of poverty.⁶⁰

For some years now, the government’s poverty target has been to reduce consistent poverty to 2% but the most recent data published by the CSO indicates that poverty remains unacceptably high. In 2018, 14% of the overall population was at risk of poverty.

The overall poverty level masks differences in experience depending on family status, employment status and disability. Lone parents, the vast majority of whom are women, continue to be among those most at risk of poverty and deprivation. As can be seen from Table 1, 33.5% of families headed by a lone parent and with one or more children under 18

⁵⁸ Ibid

⁵⁹ Ibid

⁶⁰ CSO (2020). SILC 2018.

were at risk of poverty in 2018 compared to 9.9% of two parent families. 42.7% experienced deprivation which means they can't afford some of the essential goods and services that are considered the norm in society.

In terms of purchasing power, lone parents in Ireland have the fourth lowest household income among EU-15 countries. While the household income of the general population in Ireland has recovered to pre-crisis levels, the income of one parent households was lower in 2017 than in 2007.^{61 62}

Table 1. Experience of poverty by gender, household status, disability in 2018 (% of the population)

	At risk of poverty	Deprivation	Consistent poverty
Women	14.9	15.6	6.2
Men	13	14.7	5.1
Lone parent households	33.5	42.7	19.2
Two parent households	9.9	14.3	5
People with disabilities	47.7	36.6	21.3

Source: Adapted from CSO (2020). Survey on Income and Living Conditions 2018.

People with disabilities also experience unacceptably high levels of poverty, with 21.3% experiencing consistent poverty in 2018, almost 4 times that of the general population and more than 10 times that of the target of 2%.

There is substantial evidence that the additional costs of having a disability can place a household at further risk of poverty and deprivation and this is not accounted for in national poverty statistics. A study by NUIG found that older people with a disability face more significant rates of poverty due to the combination of age and disability. The additional cost was found to be up to €203.04 per week for those who required the most support with day to day living.⁶³ As women make up the larger cohort of people with disabilities over the age of 55, it is disabled, older women who are disproportionately affected by the cost of disability.⁶⁴

⁶¹ SVP (2019). Working, parenting and struggling? An analysis of the employment and living conditions of one parent families in Ireland.

⁶² Research from Europe shows that this pattern is not unique to Ireland & and that increases in the labour market attachment of lone parents does not necessarily reduce their poverty risk. (Jaehrling, K., Kalina, T. and Mesaros, L. (2015) 'A paradox of activation strategies: *Social Politics*, Vol 22).

⁶³ Cullinan, J. (2014). The Economic Cost of Disability for Older People. Research Bulletin Series 2014 No.1

⁶⁴ Census 2016 indicates 176,662 women with disabilities aged 55 and over and 147, 029 men of the same age range.

Recent data published by the European Commission shows that some migrants are more at risk of poverty with 32% of non EU nationals living in Ireland at risk of poverty or social exclusion compared to 19% of Irish nationals.⁶⁵

Women living in rural areas experience additional challenges to having an adequate income, including lack of transport, fuel poverty, access to and availability of public services and access and cost of childcare.⁶⁶ Research undertaken by the Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice (VPSJ) demonstrated that the cost of a ‘minimum essential standard of living’ was higher for rural households compared with their urban counterparts.⁶⁷

Households containing a pensioner living alone have an income that is insufficient in terms of achieving a minimum standard of living; a fact that significantly and disproportionately impacts older women.⁶⁸ One-quarter of our older population live alone, two-thirds of which are women (87,455). Among the older age group - aged 85 and over - women accounted for almost three in every four of those living alone.⁶⁹

Protect against pension poverty

As women are more likely to be in low paid, part time jobs on precarious contracts, this makes it difficult to collect sufficient PRSI contributions to be eligible for the full State contributory pension and so women are more likely to be reliant on the state non-contributory pension than men. Only 28% of women of pension age have an occupational or private pension compared to 55% of men and there is a gender pension gap of 35%.⁷⁰ Among women workers, 35% say they can’t afford to pay into an occupational pension and 6/10 part-time workers report that their employer doesn’t offer a pension scheme.⁷¹

Older rural women are even less likely than older urban women to have an occupational or contributory pension.⁷² Ireland’s social insurance system defines many women who work on the family farm and spouses of business owners (mainly women) as ‘relatives assisting’. Although working in the family business, ‘relatives assisting’ cannot make PRSI contributions, which would entitle them to old age contributory pension and maternity benefit. Therefore, many women working in agricultural areas are financially dependent on their husbands and rely on a qualified adult state pension that is approximately 70% of the full amount.

The Homemaker’s Scheme does not address the inequalities and discrimination experienced by older women who were expected by Irish society to shoulder the full burden of caring responsibilities but who were equally expected to do this work for

⁶⁵ Eurostat (2020). People at risk of poverty or social exclusion by citizenship.

https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/4187653/10321587/Migrant_integration_AROPE_2018.jpg

⁶⁶ Irish Rural Link (2016). Poverty and Social Inclusion: the case for Rural Ireland.

⁶⁷ VPSJ (2017). Minimum Essential Standard of Living: Update report 2017.

⁶⁸ Ibid

⁶⁹ CSO (2017). Census 2016

⁷⁰ Nolan, A. et al (2019). Gender, pensions and income in retirement. Dublin: ESRI.

⁷¹ CSO (2020). Pensions statistics. <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-pens/pensioncoverage2019/>

⁷² Ní Léime, A. et al. Gender and Rural Ageing in Ireland: Profile and Key Issues. Irish Centre for Social Gerontology National University of Ireland, Galway

nothing. NWCi believes that the State has a particular responsibility to remedy the inequality experienced by women affected by the marriage bar and by a system built on a patriarchal single “breadwinner” model. The state pension system requires reform to tackle these types of structural inequalities and the best way to achieve equality for women is through a universal pension.⁷³

The Minimum Essential Standard of Living (MESL)

As the data on poverty clearly shows, for many households, social welfare payments fall below the threshold that is needed to keep them out of poverty and to ensure they have an adequate standard of living. Underpinning this inadequacy, is the fact that Ireland’s expenditure on all types of social protection (pensions, unemployment, disability, housing supports and children) is one of the lowest in the EU.

Our expenditure currently stands at 16% of our GDP compared to an EU average of 28%. Only Lithuania, Latvia and Romania spend less on social protection than Ireland.⁷⁴ Ireland’s expenditure on pensions is the lowest in the EU, at 6% of GDP compared to an EU average of 13%.⁷⁵

It is the view of NWCi that social welfare payments should be benchmarked at a level which is adequate to both lift people above the poverty line and addresses the cost of living. Where welfare rates are not benchmarked, there is a risk that people who rely on social welfare payments and pensions are left behind when the rest of the economy is growing. Older people, on fixed incomes are particularly vulnerable to stagnating social welfare rates that do not keep up with the cost of living. Indeed, Ireland is one of just two countries in Europe who do not have a formal process of benchmarking for pensions.⁷⁶

The Minimum Essential Standard of Living (MESL) has been established in Irish research and policy as a credible benchmark for adequacy. By working with members of the public to agree a ‘basket’ of essential goods, it calculates the income needed to achieve a socially acceptable minimum standard of living for a broad range of different family types.⁷⁷

The MESL focuses on ‘needs’ rather than ‘wants’. It is designed to protect the human right to an adequate standard of living as set out on international treaties and to protect against poverty and social exclusion, as defined by Irish policy.⁷⁸

Recommendations

Legislate to benchmark social welfare payments to a Minimum Essential Standard of Living (MESL)

⁷³ NWCi (2008). Pensions: What women want - a model of pensions that guarantees independence.

⁷⁴ Eurostat (2019). Social Protection Statistics. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Social_protection_statistics

⁷⁵ Ibid

⁷⁶ DEASP (2020). Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020-2025.

⁷⁷ VPSJ (2019). Submission to DEASP: Social welfare benchmarking.

⁷⁸ Ibid

Introduce a universal, fair State Pension system which will guarantee income adequacy in older age

Address the economic impact of violence against women

There has been little recognition of the extent and impact that financial abuse has on persons who experience intimate partner abuse and violence. Research has shown that 94% of survivors experience financial abuse.⁷⁹ Abuse goes far beyond the confines of the personal and domestic sphere, as outlined earlier it significantly impacts on a person's financial security and employment. Employment sabotage, as a distinct form of abuse, is experienced by 78% of survivors of intimate partner and domestic abuse and violence.⁸⁰

In recognition of this particular form of abuse, it is imperative that statutory leave be afforded to persons who are experiencing domestic or intimate partner abuse or violence. Allowing for a minimum of 10 days paid leave⁸¹ equal to average daily pay alongside the introduction of fast-tracked flexible working conditions. This measure will go some way towards recognising that domestic and intimate partner abuse and violence is a public, societal concern.

In June 2019 a new international labour standard to address gender-based violence (GBV) and harassment in work was developed, ILO 190. If ratified by the Irish state, legislation and measures to protect & support workers experiencing GBV in the workplace would be mandated for development.

Recommendations

Legislate for a minimum of 10 days paid leave for persons experiencing domestic and intimate partner abuse and violence

Ratify ILO Convention 190 on gender-based violence and harassment in the work place

Representation in politics, business and public life

Leadership in the business world

Lower rates of female labour market participation, the concentration of women in lower paid jobs and outside of senior management roles and few supports for working parents are deeply connected to the lack of gender balance and low levels of women in economic decision-making.

⁷⁹ Postmus, J. et al (2012). Understanding Economic Abuse in the Lives of Survivors', (2012) 27 Journal of Interpersonal Abuse 3.

⁸⁰ Ibid

⁸¹ There is no pro-rating of the 10-day entitlement. An employee who begins work partway through a calendar year should be entitled to 10 days during the remainder of that year.

Women comprise only 21% of ISEQ 20 directors and only 12% of directors of other Irish listed companies, amounting to an average of 16% women on the boards of all Irish listed companies.⁸² While this represents some improvement from previous years, it is a clear indication of persistent gender inequality in corporate leadership.

There are targets in place for gender balance on boards, however, these are aspirational goals that a firm or the state might set but not mandate any of its office holders to achieve. Legislative quotas, on the other hand, are binding and ‘mandatory’ with non-compliance attracting sanctions. The international evidence is clear that a reliance on targets will not deliver significant progress on gender imbalance on corporate boards, this will require a quota.

There are both social and business cases made for binding gender quotas including opening new opportunities for women’s economic participation and improving the quality and innovation of boards and by extension the profitability of companies.

Adopting a legislative quota indicates business communities and policymakers understand women’s underrepresentation will not be fixed by individual women’s efforts and goodwill of individual corporations alone, and that larger structures, cultures and biases need to be challenged. Legislative gender quotas are essential to help overcome such limits.

Recommendation

Establish a 50% quota for gender balance, with targets for diversity, on all non-state Irish company boards

Leadership in local government

The Electoral (Amendment) (Political Funding) Act 2012 introduced gender quotas into the Irish electoral system. The Act provides that parties who do not put forward 30% female candidates in a general election will have their state funding cut by half. Like parliamentary politics, local government in the Republic of Ireland has historically been male-dominated, however no such quota system exists for local elections.

In the 2019 local elections, the two largest parties, Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael, failed to run 30% women as candidates. Only 24% (226 people) of those elected to local councils were women, compared to an EU average of 32% for local/municipal councils.⁸³ Only seven out of thirty-one local authorities have achieved a critical mass of 30% women councillors. There are 23 electoral areas with no women representatives, the majority of which are in rural areas.

The numbers of women in politics matters. Research has made the link between low levels

⁸² CSO (2019). Gender balance in Business statistics

⁸³ European Parliament (2019). Women in local and regional government. European Parliamentary Research Service

of women's representation in decision-making and poor outcomes for women's interests.⁸⁴ Local government provides essential services such as housing, roads, libraries, planning, environment and economic development as well as being a key part of the functioning of our democratic system. With its proximity to women's lives, local government is uniquely positioned to strengthen women's participation and improve the representation of their interests. Local political experience is also a key route to national office for women, significantly more so than for men.⁸⁵ Over 80% of women TDs have local government experience.

Diversity in local representation matters. It is often those who are furthest away from power - Traveller and Roma women, working class women, disabled women, migrant women and carers - who experience the impact of policy making the most. While sexism and sexual harassment in politics acts as a barrier for women candidates, for ethnic minority candidates, the experience of sexist abuse and harassment is exacerbated by the experience of racism.⁸⁶

People in Ireland acknowledge and recognise that work is needed to address gender inequality in politics. A recent Eurobarometer survey found that 72% of people in Ireland think there should be more women in political decision-making roles and 79% are in favour of legal measures to ensure gender equality in politics.⁸⁷

The introduction of gender quotas in local elections has seen some success internationally. In a recent study of 41 countries, fourteen introduced mandatory quotas at the local level. These countries have more women elected at the local level (32% versus 28% in countries with no quotas) but, more importantly, have witnessed greater progression on average (+9% compared to +4%).⁸⁸

The 30% gender quota proved to be successful in the 2016 Dáil elections, with the number of women elected rising from 16% in 2011 to 22% in 2016. With little improvement between 2016-2020, parties will have to work harder to meet the 40% quota in 2023.

Recommendations

Legislate for a quota system to be extended to local elections with an initial quota of 30% women's representation in the Local Elections 2024 & additional targets to improve diversity

⁸⁴ Holman, M. (2017). Women in Local Government: What We Know and Where We Go from Here. *State and Local Government Review*, 49(4), 285–296

⁸⁵ Buckley, B. et al (2015). Is Local Office a Springboard for Women to Dáil Éireann? *Journal of Women, Politics & Policy*, 36:3, 311-335

⁸⁶ Cullen, P. & McGing, C. (2019). Women Beyond the Dáil: More Women in Local Government. NWCI.

⁸⁷ European Commission (2017). Eurobarometer on Gender Equality. https://ec.europa.eu/ireland/news/79-per-cent-of-irish-people-in-favour-of-legal-measures-to-ensure-gender-parity-in-politics_en

⁸⁸ CEMR (2019). Women in Politics: Local and European Trends. The Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR)

Introduce an entitlement to maternity/adoptive leave for women councillors and women TDs

Leadership in local development

Outside of local government, there are a range of decision-making structures operating at local level across Ireland. Men out-numbered women in all regional decision-making structures in Ireland in 2016.⁸⁹ Local decision-making structures include:

Local Community Development Committees (LCDC's). Local authorities are tasked with oversight, management and monitoring of local development and community development activity and programmes through LCDC's. The LCDC is the primary participative and overseeing structure for local development and community development activities but only eighteen out of thirty one LCDC's have a 40% or above gender balance. One LCDC is 94% male.⁹⁰

- Strategic Policy Committees (SPC's), are committees of the council and advise and assist the council in the formulation, development and review of policy. The Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government do not currently provide a comprehensive gender breakdown of SPCs. Local councillors occupy two thirds of all seats on every SPC, and with so few female local councillors, gender balance would be challenging to obtain. This further reinforces the need to introduce gender quotas at local level

Gender balance across local decision-making structures is critical as these structures play important roles in the planning and delivery of policy, services and programmes. NWCI has expressed concern about the advancement of women's equality at local level within these structures. Women's voices and participation must be resourced and it is crucial that they take on influential positions on these structures. The situation of women will not improve if their voices and expertise remain unheard within these structures.

Representation of all women, and particularly women from disadvantaged or marginalised communities, must be incorporated into all stages of local decision making or we risk losing an opportunity to build healthy and vibrant communities that are informed by the experiences and expertise of all of their residents. The role of women's groups is crucial in supporting the participation of women from different backgrounds into political and public life. A well-resourced and independent women's community sector will ensure that women most distant from decision making processes can engage meaningfully. We want to see Traveller and Roma women, migrant women, working class women and women with disabilities in Ministerial positions, chairing Boards and leading the discussions at their county & city councils.

⁸⁹ CSO (2016). Women and men in Ireland.

⁹⁰ Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (2019). Review of Local Community Development Committees.

Austerity and cutbacks over recent years have decimated community development projects, in particular those working with women.⁹¹ NWCI knows from our many members working at community level that they are barely surviving and are increasingly unable to provide essential supports and advocacy for women in our communities. This lack of financial support is limiting women's development and engagement in civil society. This was noted by the CEDAW Committee in their Concluding observations in 2017 who urged Ireland “to take appropriate measures to restore funding for non-governmental organisations working in the field of women’s rights”.⁹²

Recommendations

Legislate for a 50% gender quota and targets for diversity for decision making structures in communities

Support and resource the women’s community sector to advance equality and support marginalised women to participate in public and political life

Changing Ireland’s record on Violence Against Women

Violence Against Women (VAW) is a complex, widespread issue, constituting the most serious violation of women’s human rights in Ireland today. Violence against women takes many forms including domestic violence, sexual violence, stalking and harassment, coercion, female genital mutilation (FGM), trafficking, prostitution, sexual violence as a weapon of war, institutional violence and femicide.

NWCI chairs the Irish Observatory on Violence Against Women which is an independent network of 18 grassroots and national organisations working together to improve Ireland’s response to violence against women (VAW). Although a diverse grouping, the Observatory shares a common understanding of VAW as a cause and consequence of gender discrimination that needs to be located within a gender equality framework.

NWCI also chairs the National Advisory Committee (NAC) for Ending Sexual Violence & Harassment in Third Level Education (ESHTE). The NAC is a cross sectoral body of the Higher & Further Education sector whose members include the Irish University Association (IUA), the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and the Technological Higher Education Association (THEA), representatives from higher & further education institutions, the Union of Students of Ireland (USI) and student unions across Ireland.

Our submission is based on the experiences women and girls have shared with us over many years of work and on the expertise of members of the Observatory, NAC and other bodies that NWCI is a member of. NWCI will be able to highlight only *some* key issues and

⁹¹ Harvey, B. (2012). Changes in employment and services in the voluntary and community sector in Ireland, 2008-2012.

⁹² Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (2017). Concluding observations on the combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of Ireland. CEDAW/C/IRL/CO/6-7.

recommendations. NWCi believes the prevalence and scale of violence against women in Ireland is such that it merits a separate Citizens' Assembly.

The 2014 study, 'Violence against women: An EU-wide survey' by the European Union Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA)⁹³ reported that in Ireland:

- 14% of women have experienced physical violence by a partner since age 15
- 6% of women have experienced sexual violence by a current or former partner
- 31% of women have experienced psychological violence by a partner
- 12% of Irish respondents had experienced stalking (including cyber stalking).
- 8% of women experience physical and/or sexual violence each year
- 79% of Irish women who experienced sexual or physical violence never reported it to an official body

Since 1996, 230 women have died violently in the Republic of Ireland, 61% were killed in their own homes. In the resolved cases, 56% of women were murdered by a partner or ex-partner, 31% of women were killed by someone they knew (e.g. brother, son, neighbour, acquaintance), a total of 87% of women were killed by someone known to them.⁹⁴

In 2018, there were 941 attendances at the six Sexual Assault Trauma Units (SATUs) in Irish hospitals, an increase of over 8% from 2017 (when 865 patients attended), and an increase of 44% from 2009. 889 (94%) of patients were women.⁹⁵

Ending VAW is critical to ensuring women are safe and free to participate fully in society. Yet, Ireland has historically had a weak state response to the scale of the issue and to the different experiences of the most disadvantaged groups of women. Despite ratifying the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention), the state continues to fail to respond to the urgency of action required and publically we struggle as a society to recognise the epidemic of violence that so many women are faced with daily.

In December 2019, Garda Commissioner Drew Harris highlighted that more women die as a result of domestic homicide than those who die as a result of organised crime, yet there is a shocking distinction between resources and public attention to violence associated with organised crime and that associated with domestic violence.

Ireland received recommendations from the UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) committee in relation to VAW in 2017. These included:

- Ensure that the National Office for the Prevention of Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence implement the “gold standard” so that data on all forms of gender-based violence against women are systematically collected and analysed and disaggregated by, inter alia, age, ethnicity and relationship with the perpetrator

⁹³ Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) (2014). VAW: an EU-wide survey report.

⁹⁴ Women's Aid Femicide Watch 2019. <https://www.womensaid.ie/about/campaigns/femicide-in-ireland.html>

⁹⁵ SATU Rotunda Hospital (2019). National Sexual Assault Treatment Units-Annual Key Service Activity Report 2018. Dublin: Rotunda Hospital.

- Intensify existing efforts to combat gender-based violence against women particularly targeting Traveller, Roma and migrant women and girls
- Criminalise emerging forms of gender-based violence, such as online stalking and harassment
- Provide adequate financial resources to non-governmental organisations that provide services to victims of gender-based violence
- Expedite the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (the Istanbul Convention)⁹⁶

NWCI welcomed the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Violence Against Women (Istanbul Convention) in 2019. However, the essential resourcing of frontline services, the funding of specialised services, the supports for the collection of data on the incidence of violence against women, remains inadequate and the other priorities highlighted by CEDAW remain.

Identify Violence Against Women as a national crisis

Tackling and preventing Domestic, Sexual and Gender based Violence should be named as a priority area for the Irish state and for government. This would include establishing a National Rapporteur on Sexual Domestic and Gender Based Violence, reporting regularly to Government on progress achieved, with adequate resources and powers to develop recommendations and monitor their implementation through a third national action plan.

This work should include the establishment of an Online Safety Commissioner and the development of legislation to criminalise online harmful communications, including image based harassment (also known as revenge porn), online stalking and harassment and digital coercion and exploitation. These emergent forms of violence against women are particularly impactful on young women and the state is often incapable of responding to them in a meaningful way. Online abuse and harassment has been identified as key methods being used to target women in public life and diminish the voice and agency of women in politics and civil society.⁹⁷

Legislate for ringfenced funding to combat violence against women

Frontline Services

Demand for frontline Violence Against Women (VAW) services is high and has continued to grow. However, only moderate increases are being provided in State-allocated funding from €22.1 million in 2017 to €23.8 million in 2018 to €25.3 in 2019.⁹⁸ Refugees and services funded by Tusla are not being provided with funding necessary to restore staff pay from 2008 levels. This is leading to high staff turnover and impacting severely on the women and children needing these services. Funding needs to reflect the substantial increase in demand for both support and preventative services.

⁹⁶ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (2017). Concluding observations on the combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of Ireland. CEDAW/C/IRL/CO/6-7.

⁹⁷ European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) (2018). Cyber Violence Against Women & Girls 2017

⁹⁸ Parliamentary Question – Dept. Children and Youth Affairs, Child and Family Agency Data, 21st May 2019.

Refuge Spaces

The Istanbul Convention recommends that there should be a target by member states of at least 1 refuge place per 10,000 of population. With a total 2019 allocation of 155 spaces, consisting of 145 units in refuge accommodation and 10 in Safe Homes⁹⁹ (this figure includes 9 units not available since 2017), Ireland is not close to meeting our legal minimum standards of 472 spaces and requires significant investment & development to meet the *minimum* target.

Protection & Statutory Services

Garda National Protective Services Bureau (GNPSB) provides advice, guidance and assistance to Gardaí investigating Sexual Crime, Domestic Abuse Intervention, Human Trafficking and organised prostitution amongst other work. The continuing roll out of Divisional Garda Protective Services Units (DPSUs) is very welcome. However, it is also clear that there continues to be insufficient Garda personnel and supervision at district level to meet the demands of VAW incidences appropriately.

Comprehensive, trauma-informed training needs to be provided to all personnel involved in providing frontline services to victims of domestic, sexual and gender based violence and exploitation.

Understanding and Data

The current timeline of the new national sexual violence survey means that we will not have any updated information until 2024 at the earliest. There is no current proposal to begin research on the extent of sexual violence among vulnerable minority groups: like Travellers, members of the LGBTQI, disabled and migrant communities. Government urgently needs to commit resources to reduce this timeframe. For example a small scale 2009 review of court records showed that *the* second most common risk factor for rape after gender, is disability with 19% of all complainants recorded as having a physical or intellectual disability or a history of mental illness.¹⁰⁰

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which Ireland ratified in 2018, recognises that women and girls with disabilities face greater risk of violence and reminds States to take “all appropriate...measures to protect persons with disabilities....both within and from all forms of exploitation, violence and abuse, including their gender-based aspects.”¹⁰¹

Reform legal & court processes

Resources must be allocated to the reform of crucial state processes connected with the issue of VAW including the family law courts system and the development of a model of multi-agency Domestic Homicide Reviews. An integrated courts welfare system should be established with appropriate facilities and wraparound services for victims of sexual violence.

⁹⁹ TUSLA response to PQ May 2019

¹⁰⁰ Rape & Justice in Ireland: A National Study of Survivor, Prosecutor and Court Responses to Rape 2009

¹⁰¹ UN General Assembly, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: resolution / adopted by the General Assembly, 24 January 2007, A/RES/61/106.

Update relationships & sexual health education

Young women and men consistently name the inadequacies of the education they receive in school as being deeply problematic for them as they learn to develop happy, healthy relationship based on mutuality and respect.¹⁰² The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) has recently published recommendations recognising the need to update the 21 year old programme around sexuality education and consent.¹⁰³ Young people have a right to information and education on such basic matters as may affect their physical, mental and emotional development and well-being.

NWCI believes a crucial aspect of ensuring young women and girls can receive meaningful relationship and sexual health education is the enactment of the Objective Sex Education Bill proposed in 2018. This legislation seeks to guarantee the right of students to receive factual and objective relationships and sexuality education without regard to the religious ethos of the school.

Recommendations

Identify Violence Against Women as a national crisis and establish a Citizens' Assembly process on VAW

Establish a National Rapporteur on Sexual Domestic and Gender Based Violence

Legislate for ring-fenced funding to combat violence against women

Legislate for the establishment of a dedicated and integrated family court

Legislate for an Objective Sex Education that addresses all forms of VAW (intimate partner abuse, sexual assault/rape, coercive control, prostitution and pornography)

Moving to a new economic model

Investing In Irish Society

NWCI believes that investment in public services and social infrastructure is how we can realise a fair, just and equal Irish society. In countries that invest more in public services and infrastructure, better outcomes are achieved for both women and men. Lack of investment will inevitably keep, or transfer back, personal, health and community care needs to the unpaid, undervalued and often invisible labour of women.

Tax plays a key role in shaping Irish society through funding our public services and social infrastructure, supporting economic activity and progressively redistributing resources.

¹⁰² NWCI ESHTe Report 2017, *A Review of Data on Prevalence of Sexual Violence And Harassment*; USI 2013, *Say Something*

¹⁰³ Report on the Review of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) in primary and post primary schools <https://ncca.ie/media/4462/report-on-the-review-of-relationships-and-sexuality-education-rse-in-primary-and-post-primary-school.pdf>

However, Ireland's tax take as a percentage of national income (GDP) is also below average and is one of the lowest in the OECD. In 2018, Ireland had a tax-to-GDP ratio of 22% compared with the OECD average of 34%, placing us 34th out of 36 OECD countries.¹⁰⁴

If we are to have the public services that are the norm in other EU countries, Ireland needs to increase its tax take by broadening the tax base in a fair, progressive, sustainable and gender sensitive way. This can be done through:

- **Measures related to corporate tax base**

NWCI believes that Ireland needs to refocus the role low corporate tax rates play in Ireland's overall economic strategy. Government must reduce reliance on windfall corporation tax receipts that has built up in recent years. The introduction of a minimum effective corporate tax rate would also serve as an opportunity for Ireland to take a leadership role in implementing progressive moves.

- **Reform Tax reliefs**

Make all discretionary tax reliefs/expenditures available only at the standard 20% rate. It is unjust and regressive that people on higher incomes should be able to claim certain tax reliefs at the top marginal income tax rate.

The State spends approximately €2.39 billion per annum in private pension tax relief. In 2014, 72% of pension tax relief went to the top 20% of earners and 5% of the population are getting 50% of the tax relief.¹⁰⁵

This current tax based incentive system for pension savings favours men above women. As women tend to be lower earners, these tax reliefs also widen rather than narrow the gender pension gap. The public monies saved should be reinvested in first tier State pensions and a universal pension.

- **Financial transaction tax**

A financial transaction tax (FTT) should be introduced to provide additional revenue for delivery of services which have been cut back over the last decade. Research suggests that an FTT discourages speculative finance whilst simultaneously generating revenue for investment in social infrastructure. Ireland should support calls for a progressive European FTT also.

- **Wealth tax**

Ireland has one of the highest levels of wealth inequality in the EU. We have a disproportionately high number of billionaires for the size of our population and rank fifth in the world after Hong Kong, Cyprus, Switzerland and Singapore in terms of relative number of billionaires¹⁰⁶

Economists have indicated that introducing a wealth tax in the Ireland is more than feasible. A wealth tax with a household threshold of €1 million would affect just 1% to

¹⁰⁴ OECD (2019). Revenue Statistics 2019 – Ireland. <https://www.oecd.org/tax/revenue-statistics-ireland.pdf>

¹⁰⁵ Collins, M.L. & Hughes, G. Supporting Pensions Contributions through the tax system. IEA Conference 2017

¹⁰⁶ Oxfam (2020). Time to care: Unpaid and underpaid care work and the global inequality crisis.

2% of the wealthiest households and would provide an estimate of at least €250 million for the exchequer annually.¹⁰⁷

NWCI also acknowledges that gender inequality does not end at Ireland's borders and that decisions made in Ireland have an impact on the wider world. As well as the need to raise and distribute national income in a more equal way, Oxfam Ireland has highlighted that Ireland's current taxation system facilitates tax avoidance by multinational companies and in doing so, undermines developing countries.¹⁰⁸ A feminist approach should also extend to looking at impact of Ireland's decisions on women and girls globally.

Gender proofing public expenditure

NWCI works with the Dept. of Public Expenditure & Reform (DPER) on the Equality Budgeting Expert Advisory group to advance the integration of gender (and progressively other equality budgeting processes) into the annual budget process and the delivery of public services and social investment.

Gender budgeting is about examining decisions on public expenditure to determine their impact on women and girls as compared to men and boys. Gender budgeting asks what impact does this action have on gender inequality? Does it increase it, reduce it or leave it unchanged?¹⁰⁹

Comprehensive gender budgeting must encompass equality for diverse groups of women and men and take into account how other aspects of a person's identity impact on their experience of a policy or budgetary decision. Gender budgeting is not about having separate budgets for women nor does it necessarily involve increasing spending more on women-specific initiatives, it is about working towards equal economic and social opportunities for both women and men.¹¹⁰

There can be a perception that budgetary and policy decisions are 'gender neutral' when in fact, the outcomes of such decisions can perpetuate ingrained gender as well as other inequalities. Investment in active labour market programmes (ALMP's) provides one example of this.

A gender analysis of Budget 2018 investment in AMLP's shows clear gender bias in end-recipients of ALMP investment. While 27% of women benefitted from such programmes, the majority of beneficiaries, at 73% were men.¹¹¹ Just 1% of women benefitted from investment in apprenticeship schemes.

¹⁰⁷ NERI (2018). A Household Net Wealth Tax in the Republic of Ireland: Some Considerations

¹⁰⁸ Oxfam Ireland. Hard to Swallow: How Ireland could do more to tackle corporate tax avoidance.

<https://www.oxfamireland.org/blog/hard-swallow-how-ireland-could-do-more-tackle-corporate-tax-avoidance>

¹⁰⁹ NWCI (2017). Gender budgeting is good budgeting: Towards gender responsive budgeting in Ireland.

¹¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹¹ Murphy, M. (2018). No Feminist Budget: Analysis of Budget 2019 for NWCI.

Table 2: Gender analysis of women’s access to budget 2018 Active Labour Market Programmes

Budget 2018 ALMP	%Women	%Men
Youth Development	50	50
Rural Social Scheme	20	80
JobsPlus	33	67
Springboard	31	69
Apprenticeship	1	99
Average	27	73

In 2018, the Oireachtas Committee on Budgetary Oversight recommended that consideration be given to placing equality budgeting on a statutory basis in Ireland in order to highlight the importance of equality budgeting and to give it a legal basis.¹¹²

A report on equality budgeting in Ireland by the OECD found that efforts to roll out equality budgeting have been hindered due to the fact that government departments are not obliged to equality proof their public spending decisions.¹¹³ In countries such as Canada, having a legal foundation for equality budgeting has helped to ensure longer term sustainability, relevance and impact of equality budgeting.¹¹⁴

The need for a new economic model

At a broader level, there is a need for a radical change in our economy and in how we measure success. Measuring progress through the measurement of national income has been a global standard for the past 80 years and is currently measured through GDP, a narrow concept which measures the market value of all goods produced in an economy.

There are many things wrong with measuring success through continuous GDP growth, including that it fails to take into account the damage done to the environment through constant production or consumption of goods and a failure to take into account inequality in society. Spending on damages caused by storms and floods provides an example of the perverse nature of using GDP to measure growth - spending to repair damages has a positive effect on our GDP, even though the fallout could include loss of life, damage to homes and job losses, as well as environmental degradation. Crucially, GDP does not take into account the value of the millions of hours of unpaid work carried out by women, work that is not paid for but is vital to sustaining the economy and society.

¹¹² Oireachtas Committee on Budgetary Oversight (2018). Report on Gender Budgeting.

¹¹³ OECD (2019). OECD Scan: Equality Budgeting in Ireland.

¹¹⁴ Ibid

Though it is difficult to put a market value on the amount of unpaid work carried out each year by women, a recent report by Oxfam estimated that women carry out 38 million hours of unpaid care work every week, contributing at least €24 billion to the economy every year or the equivalent of 12% of the entire annual Irish economy.¹¹⁵

Though long recognised by feminist economists, recognition of the shortcomings of using GDP as a measure of progress is becoming more mainstream in recent years. A report commissioned by former French president, Nicolas Sarkozy, called for a shift in emphasis from measuring economic production to measuring the wellbeing of people, including sustainability and inequality between groups of people.¹¹⁶ The report defined wellbeing as including material living standards such as income, consumption and wealth as well as health, education, work, political voice and governance, social inclusion, environment and security and safety. A report by the World Bank noted that GDP is limited to measuring flows of national income but does not measure key quality of life indicators like health care or education and ignores that our economic activities may be harmful to the world we live in.¹¹⁷

It is becoming increasingly clear that we need to change the way that we measure success. Some more holistic alternatives to the use of GDP that have been put forward include measuring progress against the Sustainable Development Goals; the use of ‘wellbeing budgets’ (announced by New Zealand in 2019 and which includes measuring child poverty, domestic violence and mental health); and an economic model that proposes a social foundation of human rights and an ecological ceiling to meet the needs of everyone on the planet, within the means of the planet.¹¹⁸

Recommendations

Legislate for equality budgeting to become a statutory process, this includes expenditure and taxation actions

Establish a commission to explore a new economic model for Ireland that takes account of equality, human rights and environmental sustainability

Conclusion

We urgently need social and economic policies to address gender inequality. The Citizens’ Assembly provides a unique opportunity to finally recognise the value of care and to make recommendations to government on the need to recognise care in our Constitution and in our legislation.

¹¹⁵ Oxfam (2020). Time to care: Unpaid and underpaid care work and the global inequality crisis.

¹¹⁶ Stiglitz, J. et al. Report by the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress. <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/118025/118123/Fitoussi+Commission+report>

¹¹⁷ World Bank Group (2018). The Changing Wealth of Nations 2018. Washington: The World Bank

¹¹⁸ Haworth, K. (2017). Doughnut economics. Seven ways to think like a 21st century economist. London: Penguin Random House.

Investment in public services and social infrastructure is key to achieving gender equality as well as reducing disadvantage and poverty and we must consider expenditure on care, public services and social infrastructure as an investment in the economy and society rather than cost to be borne. In order to deliver an equal society, we must create tax and spending systems that promote equality and provide the revenue needed to fund services.

To build an inclusive and equal society from the ground up, it is necessary to improve the gender balance and diversity of local government and local decision-making structures so that all structures and programmes of local government are accountable and responsive to women in all their diversity. The voices of women must be heard in decision making and their participation supported and resourced at local level.

Therefore, NWCi calls on the Citizens' Assembly to include the following recommendations in its report to government:

- Hold a referendum on Article 41.2 to replace the Article with an inclusive and gender-neutral acknowledgement of the value of care
- Legislate for the funding of a comprehensive care infrastructure to support people at all stages of the lifecycle, including increasing childcare funding to 1% of GDP, proper wages for the workforce, a statutory right for a broad spectrum of paid leave, a Homecare credit to access a full pension, a statutory right to home care and Personal Assistance Services
- Legislate for a Living Wage and collective bargaining rights and explore moving to a four day week
- Legislate to benchmark social welfare payments to a Minimum Essential Standard of Living (MESL) and introduce a universal pension
- Address the intersection of violence and women's economic inequality by ratifying the ILO Convention 190 on gender-based violence and harassment in the work place and legislating for a minimum of 10 days paid leave for persons experiencing domestic and intimate partner abuse and violence
- Identify violence against women as a national crisis and implement policy and legislation to address this as well as increasing refuge spaces and funding
- Put equality proofing on a statutory footing to ensure that public resources are shared in a more equitable way
- Legislate for a 50% quota of women on Boards, in local elections and in local decision-making structures, with additional diversity targets to ensure participation of marginalised groups
- Introduce an entitlement to maternity/adoptive leave for women county councillors and women TDs
- Support and resource the women's community sector to advance equality and support marginalised women to participate in public and political life
- Establish a commission to explore a new economic model for Ireland that takes account of equality, human rights and environmental sustainability

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APPENDIX 1 - Data on women's equality in Ireland

Women's Economic Inequality

- 33.5 per cent of lone parent families (the vast majority of whom are headed by women) families were at risk of poverty in 2018
- 47.7% of persons not at work due to illness or disability were at risk of poverty
- 32% of non EU nationals living in Ireland at risk of poverty or social exclusion compared to 19% of Irish nationals
- Only 28 per cent of women of pension age had an occupational or private pension compared to 55 per cent of men and there is a gender pension gap of 35%
- Between 60-65% of minimum wage workers are women
- 6 in 10 workers in the childcare sector earn less than the living wage

Women's Caring Roles

- Nearly all of the people (98%) who were looking after home or family in 2016 were women
- Older women are five times more likely to leave work to care for a family member - check Alan B/ESRI
- Ireland has the 7th highest gap in the EU in the hours spent on unpaid work by women and men
- Childcare costs in Ireland are the highest in the OECD for lone parents.
- 91% of lone parents are women
- There are more lone parent households among the Travelling community than the general population (20% compared to 12%)
- 76% of Carer's Allowance recipients are women and 24% men

Violence Against Women

- 14% of women have experienced physical violence by a partner since age 15
- 6% of women have experienced sexual violence by a current or former partner
- 31% of women have experienced psychological violence by a partner

- 12% of Irish respondents had experienced stalking (including cyber stalking).
- 8% of women experience physical and/or sexual violence each year
- 79% of Irish women who experienced sexual or physical violence never reported it to an official body
- One in five men (20%) believe women may provoke abuse against themselves
- In 2014, 25% Irish women had experienced a form of physical and/or sexual violence since the age of fifteen, and 8% experience physical and/or sexual violence each year
- 10,782 women and 2,572 children received support from a women's domestic violence support service in 2018 and on 3,256 occasions, domestic violence services were unable to accommodate women and their children because the refuge was full

Women's Leadership

- Women now make up 24% of councillors. The EU average is 32%
- Only 19 women have held cabinet posts since foundation of state
- Just three of the 17 top civil service jobs are held by women. Men account for around two-thirds of the senior roles in all government departments
- In the business world, women occupied only 28 per cent of Senior Executive roles in Ireland in 2019 and only one in nine CEOs in large enterprises were women. Women comprised only 20 per cent of the positions on Boards of Directors but only 7 per cent of Chairpersons were women