



What is life like for women in Ireland in 2016?

IHREC's Consultation on the Convention on
the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination
Against Women



Coimisiún na hÉireann um Chearta
an Duine agus Comhionannas
Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission

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The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) was established under statute on 1 November 2014 to protect and promote human rights and equality in Ireland, to promote a culture of respect for human rights, equality and intercultural understanding, to promote understanding and awareness of the importance of human rights and equality, and to work towards the elimination of human rights abuses and discrimination.

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Introduction

The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) is Ireland’s independent national human rights institution (NHRI) and Ireland’s national equality body. IHREC has a broad mandate to protect and promote human rights and equality in Ireland. Listening to the public’s views and starting conversations on human rights and equality is a cornerstone of our work with participation as a fundamental value underpinning our operations. In 2015 – our first full year of operation – we developed a set of principles and procedures to create a consultation model, which draws on core human rights and equality concepts. These principles formed the basis of our first public consultation on our first strategy statement. Building on the success of this process, in 2016 we launched a public consultation on Ireland’s compliance with the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

This document is the story of our CEDAW consultation – where we went, the people we met, and the issues they raised.

About CEDAW

The United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) is an international human rights treaty which is often described as a bill of rights for women.

CEDAW sets out what governments must do to improve the situation of women living in the country, including to:

- address gender stereotyping and violence against women;
- promote gender equality in public life; and
- protect women's rights to education, health and employment.

Countries that sign up to ('ratify') CEDAW agree to take concrete steps to end gender-based discrimination and improve the situation of all women living in that country. Ireland ratified CEDAW in 1985.

The CEDAW Committee

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Committee) is a body of 23 independent experts from around the world that monitors implementation of CEDAW.

Countries that have ratified CEDAW are required to submit periodic reports to the CEDAW Committee every few years to demonstrate how they are fulfilling their obligations.

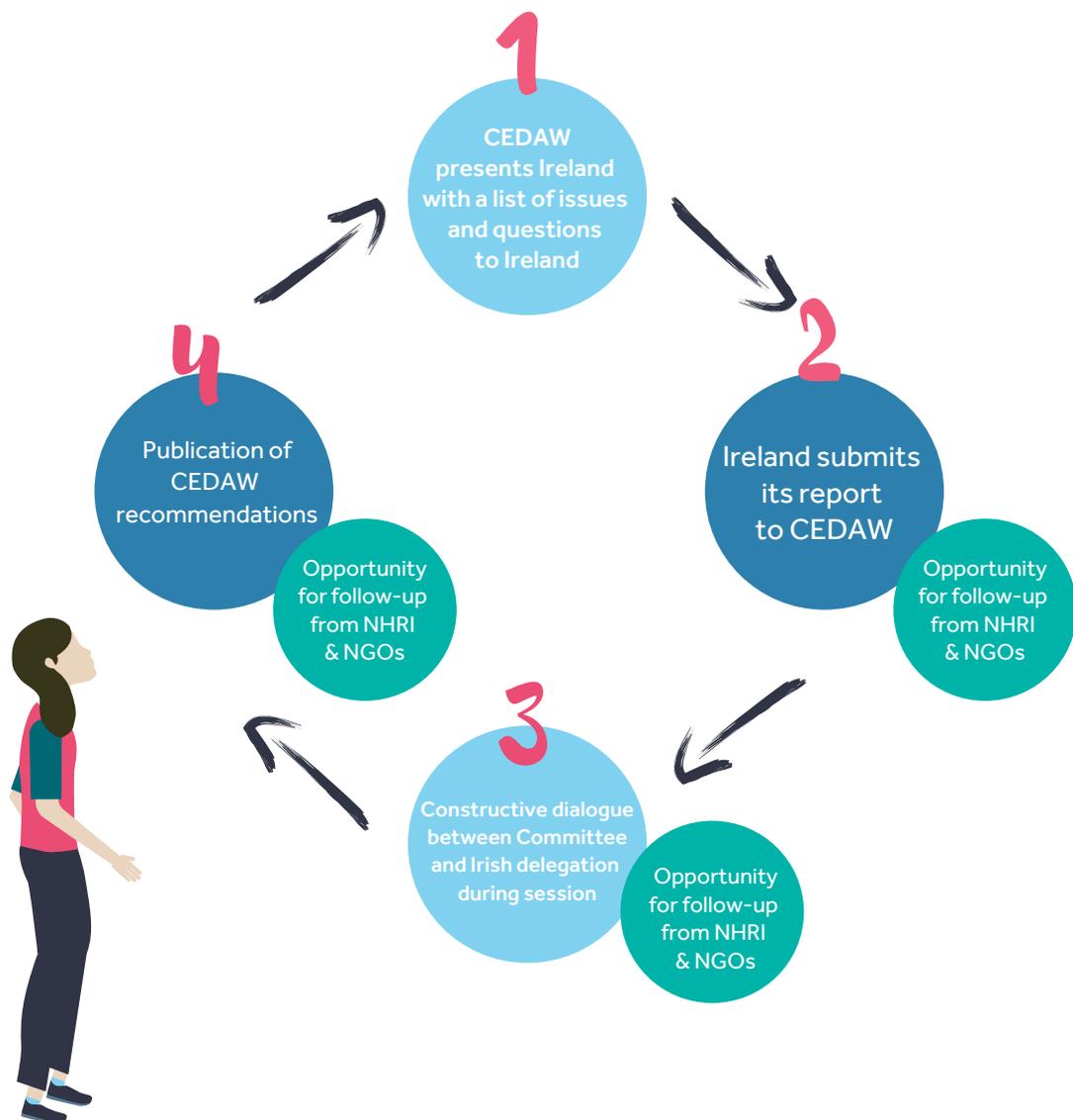
The CEDAW monitoring process

The CEDAW Committee examined Ireland in 1990, 1995 and 2005. Following each examination, the Committee produced its 'Concluding Observations' on Ireland's record – a set of goals for Ireland to achieve in order to better protect, respect and fulfil women's rights and gender equality.

The CEDAW Committee will examine Ireland's record for the fourth time at a hearing in spring of 2017. During the hearing, the Irish Government will have to answer the Committee's questions on all aspects of CEDAW. Preparations for the hearing have been underway in Geneva and in Dublin for nearly two years:

- In October 2015, the CEDAW Committee met with IHREC and members of civil society to get an understanding of gender equality and women's rights in Ireland
- In March 2016, the CEDAW Committee published a list of questions and concerns, known as its 'List of Issues', in relation to Ireland's compliance with CEDAW
- In September 2016, the Government submitted its periodic report to the CEDAW Committee.

IHREC's role in this process, as Ireland's national human rights institution, is to provide an independent assessment of Ireland's compliance with CEDAW. This assessment usually takes the form of a formal written report, which is submitted to the CEDAW Committee. The graphic below provides an overview of the reporting cycle.



About IHREC's CEDAW Project

To inform IHREC's report to the CEDAW Committee, in summer 2016 we launched a national public consultation on Ireland's compliance with CEDAW.

The overarching theme of the consultation was based on one simple question: "what is life like for women in Ireland in 2016"?

The principles underpinning IHREC consultations



Key considerations in the design of our CEDAW consultation

Planning the CEDAW consultation, the following was important:

- Reaching women from different backgrounds and in different settings
- Targeting women who are least likely to engage, making it as easy as possible for them to share their views and experiences
- Ensuring venues were accessible and that a welcoming, participative environment was created
- Being clear in the messages we were communicating and avoiding jargon
- Ensuring that we provided a safe space for women to share their experiences of discrimination, while being mindful of our statutory obligations in relation to confidentiality, data protection and disclosure
- Getting out of the capital! Since we are based in Dublin it is important to have a presence across the country and build connections with locally based groups, raising awareness of our national role regarding human rights and equality.

So, what did we do, where did we go and who did we meet?

We used a variety of ways to get people's views on what life is like for women in Ireland to ensure that we gave everybody an opportunity to engage with us in a way that was easiest and most useful for them. All in all, over a thousand people engaged with the consultations in the following ways:

- Responded to our open call for submissions;
- Attended our regional consultation events;
- Attended our focus group meetings;
- Met with us when we went to direct provision centres and women's prisons;
- Met with us to share insights from their own work;
- Stopped at our stand at the National Ploughing Championships to share their views.

Overleaf we outline where we went and who we met. It's a snapshot of the journey: a flavour of the conversations we had, and some of the key issues raised regarding women's human rights in Ireland today.

Open Call for Submissions

IHREC launched an open call for submissions in July 2016 which ran until the end of September 2016. When we were planning our call for submissions, our primary aim was to make the call as accessible as possible in order to ensure that individuals had an opportunity to engage with us. Our approach included the following:

- We created a template document to help guide consultees in how to structure their response
- We provided our consultation materials in both official languages of the State
- We accepted submissions in a number of formats, including emails and video submissions
- We created an online survey in order to provide a safe space for those who wanted to engage with us anonymously.



Written submissions

We designed a consultation submission template to assist respondents to structure their engagement with us. We structured the template to focus on:

- The promotion of women's human rights and gender equality in law, policy and practice;
- Current and ongoing challenges to women's human rights and equality in Ireland; and
- Socioeconomic inequalities affecting the realisation of women's human rights and equality.

In relation to each topic area, we posed three key questions which addressed the following:

- Identification of gaps in law, policy, and practice;
- Outline of key barriers / obstacles / challenges to better implement the principles of CEDAW in Ireland;
- Identification of steps to be taken to address issues raised.

Thirty-four written submissions were received from a broad range of civil society organisations as well as four submissions from individuals. Some submissions focused on thematic issues such as gender-based violence, human trafficking, prostitution, education, social security, mental health, maternity services and reproductive rights. Some submissions reflected on the situation of specific groups of women in Ireland, including rural women, Traveller women, Roma women, young women, trans women and migrant women. Other submissions raised issues related to the specific circumstances of women living in detention and women experiencing homelessness. A full list of the written submissions we received is available in Appendix 1.

Video submission

We also received a video submission in Irish Sign Language from the National Deaf Women's Association of Ireland, which provided a great insight into the situation of Deaf women in Ireland.

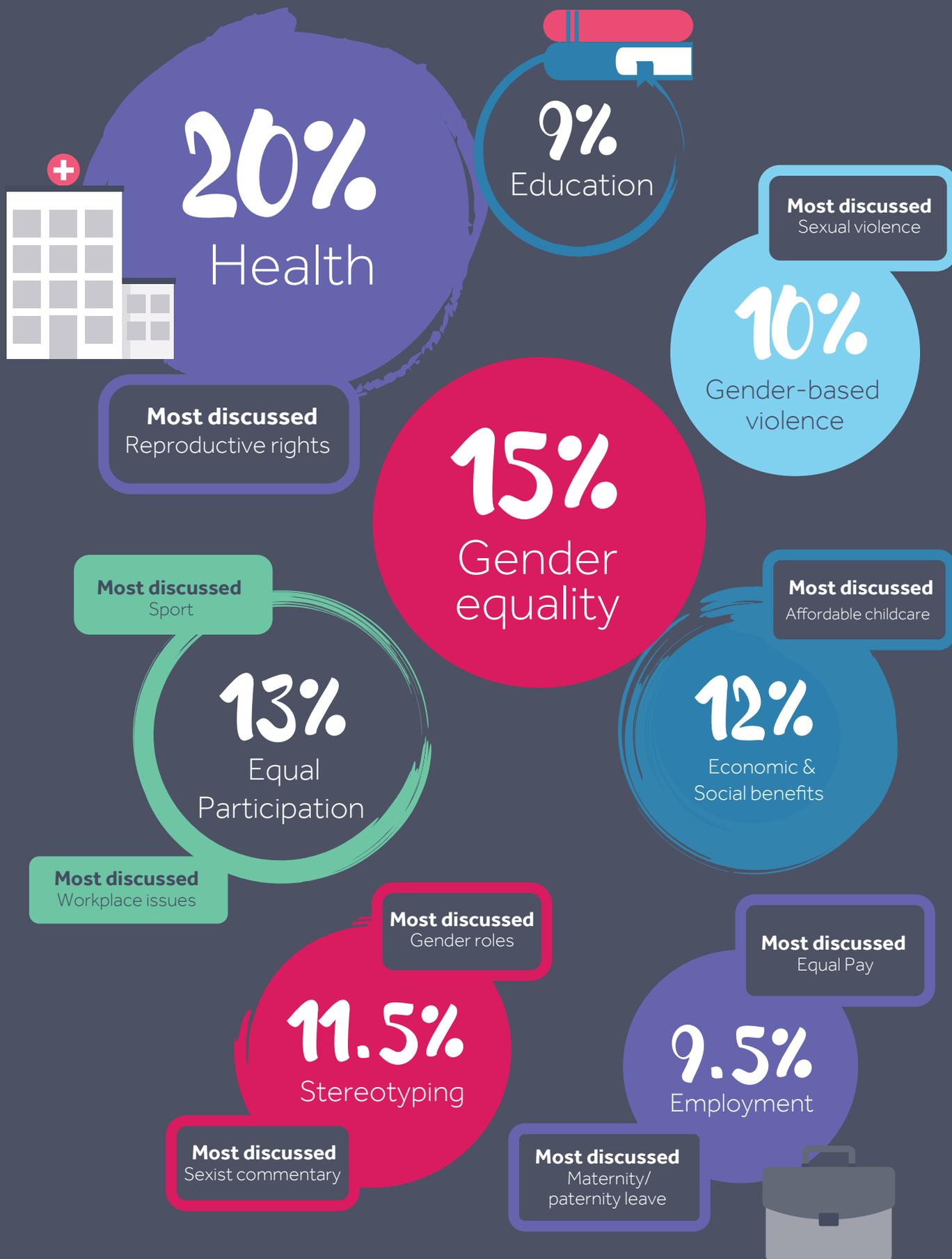
Online survey

To help us accurately paint a picture of what life is like for women and girls in Ireland, we asked the following questions in our online survey:

- What is your experience of discrimination against women?
- What can be done to end this type of discrimination?
- What should the State do to make Ireland a better country for women and girls to grow up in?
- Is there anything else you would like us to know about women's rights?

We promoted the online survey on our website, social media platforms and through a targeted email campaign to our stakeholders and were delighted to receive 204 submissions overall. We gathered some extremely helpful information about direct experiences of discrimination of women living in Ireland and their views on what issues need to be addressed in our society to eliminate discrimination against women. With each submission averaging over 300 words, that's the equivalent of a 2 minute conversation with over 200 people.

Issues Raised in the Online Survey



Focus Group Meetings

Planning our visits to prisons and direct provision centres

Given the CEDAW Committee's particular interest in women in detention and women seeking asylum, we wrote to relevant Government officials to request visits to direct provision centres and prisons. This gave us an opportunity to raise awareness about CEDAW with relevant State officials managing and working in the women's prisons, as well as the private companies running direct provision centres.

We were pleased to visit the State's two prisons where women are detained, as well as the only female-only direct provision centre in Ireland.

Planning our engagement with civil society

When we were planning our consultations, we made it a priority to meet with key organisations in civil society working on women's rights and gender equality. We recognise that many civil society organisations who work directly with women and girls on a daily basis are best placed to inform us about the situation of women in Ireland.

In that context, we greatly appreciated the cooperation we received from a number of civil society organisations who helped us to set up focus group meetings. Since the CEDAW Committee is particularly interested in the situation of marginalised groups and has expressed the view that CEDAW should be looked at from a lifecycle perspective, we met with the following groups of women and girls: young women, older women, women with disabilities, migrant women and women experiencing poverty and addiction.

We also greatly appreciate the opportunity to attend a consultation on Traveller and Roma women organised by the National Traveller Women's Forum and Pavee Point as well as a consultation organised by the National Women's Council of Ireland.

Meeting with women living in direct provision centres

We visited two Direct Provision centres in Summer 2016 – we went to Park Lodge, Killarney, Co. Kerry on 26 July 2016 and the Eglinton Hotel, Galway on 5 August 2016. During our visits we spoke to around 40 women in a confidential setting. They provided us with insights on the impact of the direct provision system on their rights.

Many women raised concerns about the length of time spent in direct provision centres and the restrictions placed on them within the centres, for example, not being able to cook their own food. The women we spoke to raised concerns about: employment, education, physical and mental health, sexual abuse and harassment.

 Emily Logan | @CC_IHREC

Thank You to the women in Direct Provision here in Killarney for telling us about their experience as women refugees for @_IHREC #CEDAW

 IHREC | @_IHREC

Talking about gender discrimination in Killarney today with women living in Direct Provision #CEDAW

“Now that I have my status, moving out is a problem. I can't get a place”



“Food is a big problem. It affects our health. Sometimes I'd rather go to bed hungry than eat the food here, it's very unhealthy: fried food; chips, wedges; pasta. I'm willing to help cook, even if it's just to cut an onion”

“It's hard when you walk down the street: everyone knows we have no money; people will call us things; men in their cars will drive by and beep at us; they believe all of us are prostitutes”

“We need to work. This makes us depressed. What can I do with €19.10 a week?”

Image: Garden tended by residents of the Eglinton Hotel direct provision centre in Galway

Meeting with women in detention

In summer 2016 we visited the two places of detention for women in Ireland – we went to Limerick Prison on 25 July 2016 and Dóchas Women's Prison at Mountjoy Prison, Dublin on 10 August 2016. During our visits we spoke to around 50 women in a confidential setting, who raised issues in relation to prison regime and conditions, access to healthcare and the impact of detention on family life. During our visits we also met with Traveller women and migrant women who face particular issues, including stereotyping.

"Prison doesn't seem to be being used as a last resort"

"In here I have a bed, I have a roof over my head – out there, you're sent out to nothing"

"When my kids come to visit me they are learning that it is ok to be in prison"

"If it's daddy in prison that's OK because mammy will bring the kids to visits. There's nobody to visit mammy"

"A lot more compassion needs to be shown to people in addiction"

"Pre-release planning is minimal. They're setting us up to fail"

"No sooner are you out than you're back in. There's no setup once you're out. Of course you're going to reoffend"

"I don't want my children coming here, they're already traumatised enough without having to go through security and screening here"

 Emily Logan | @CC_IHREC

Delighted 32 women turned up for @IHREC women's rights consultation in Dóchas - also good private discussions with others in their cells

Meeting with young women at IHREC's offices in Dublin

On 9 August 2016 we invited a group of young women engaged with Future Voices Ireland to IHREC's offices in Dublin.

Health, including young people's mental, physical, sexual and reproductive health, featured prominently in the discussion. In the realm of education, participants raised concerns about the quality of sex education in schools, and the perpetuation of gender stereotypes with regard to subject choices.

"There's a weird stigma in school. It's like 'oh no, don't talk about sex!'"

"The most we've learned about sex is from biology"

"When you are a woman and try to speak out, the male voices drown you out"

 **Emily Logan | @CC_IHREC**

Huge thanks @FutureVoicesIre for today's discussion

"We don't get a voice ... If we try to speak out the male voice gets heard more"

"I feel like being in an all-girls school is very limiting. What if I want to become an engineer?"

"We are still considered as a weak gender"

Image: Chief Commissioner Emily Logan with young women from Future Voices Ireland

Meeting with women experiencing poverty and addiction at the SAOL Project's offices in Dublin

On 26 August 2016 we met with a group of eight women engaged with the SAOL Project, which provides services to women experiencing poverty and addiction at their offices in north inner city Dublin.

Issues raised included the stigma women feel when interacting with services; inadequate linkage made between violence against women and addiction; and difficulty women face when seeking access to refuges. They were critical of employment schemes not having a gender dimension so felt their specific needs are not being taken into account.

"It's assumed if you're a mother with an addiction you won't be a good mother"

"If you're a drug user you're treated very harshly. And if you're a woman or a mother it's even worse"

"There isn't much awareness of how wrapped up in addiction domestic violence and trauma are"

"I don't think anybody wants to be on social welfare; I'd love to be working but it's hard to find something with my convictions"

Meeting with older women in Cork

On 31 August 2016, we met with nine members of the Age Action Older Persons' Policy Group in Cork.

Key issues raised included access to health services and gender stereotyping in care work. Many participants also spoke about how living in a rural area can compound their experience of discrimination, particularly in relation to the lack of rural transport. They also raised concerns about the increasing difficulties in accessing information and services online, which are increasingly centralised, more bureaucratic and with little or no personal engagement.

"I don't fear getting old. It's a privilege to get old. I'm terrified of getting ill though"

"We deserve dignity"

"We need more primary care centres in each district – local is best"

"Access to health should be according to need, not the ability to pay"

"Everything is done online now"

"When you're old you're patronised and people think you know nothing"

"We're seen as a bit of a nuisance"

"My greatest fear is going into a nursing home"

"People should be able to stay in their home"

Meeting with women with disabilities at Inclusion Ireland's offices in Dublin

On 29 August 2016 we met with eight members of Inclusion Ireland's Self Advocate Group at the offices of Inclusion Ireland in Dublin.

Issues raised related to access to education and employment, independent living and stereotyping. Participants also raised concerns about the overuse of the medical model of disability in Ireland, and called for this to be replaced with the social model.

"People have a serious issue with me being on my own. It is magnified when you're a woman"

"People with disabilities are heard last"

"Sometimes it's hard to tell if the discrimination I face is because I'm a woman or because I've a disability"

"There is an assumption that you'll only want to have a relationship with another person with a disability"

"The minute a woman with a disability has a baby, the social workers are on your doorstep"

Meeting with migrant women at MRCI's offices in Dublin

On 27 October 2016 we met with eight migrant women, including undocumented women, at the offices of the Migrant Rights Centre of Ireland (MRCI) in Dublin city.

The main issues raised included stereotyping; exploitation of domestic workers; lack of political representation of minority groups; lack of access to third level education; lack of information on rights; and the difficulty of speaking out about violence against women for fear of a negative impact on immigration status.

"We think we will be treated the same when we move from a work permit to citizenship but we are not"

"You could be naturalised but you will still be seen as a second-class citizen"

"We are doing the jobs nobody else wants to do"

"Women working in private homes are working in a hidden place"

"We are filling the childcare provision gap for the Government"

"We are not doctors or nurses but we take care of lives – why are there no rights for us?"

"We are not just here to cook and clean – we can sit in the big chair"

"When you arrive at a domestic violence refuge they will ask you what is your stamp, instead of what is your situation"

"We are so afraid to speak out for fear of being deported"

 **MRCI | @MigrantRightsIR**

@_IHREC thank you, so great for migrant women to get to input to the report on such a wide range of issues!

Regional Consultations

Regional consultation events

Over September and October 2016 we travelled the country holding regional consultation events to talk to women about their views on gender equality and women's human rights in Ireland. In planning the events we first linked with local women's groups and networks, local organisations and key individuals who helped greatly in promoting the consultations and encouraging people to come along. This support played an important role in attracting key workers in local community organisations, as well as representatives from local government, the Health Service Executive and An Garda Síochána.

A similar format was adopted at each event, which combined awareness raising and consultation. Attendees were provided with information about IHREC's core functions to protect and promote human rights and equality in Ireland as well as an insight into our role in international reporting. Attendees' knowledge of women's rights was also put to the test with an interactive quiz, which highlighted gender equality issues in their local community. There was also plenty of opportunity for networking throughout.

Attendees broke into three to four smaller groups in order to allow for in-depth discussion, which was facilitated and recorded by IHREC staff. The groups were asked to brainstorm their key issues of concern and this formed the basis for discussions. Each group then nominated one of the participants to give a short presentation on the key issues discussed to give everyone a flavour of the issues raised at each table.

At the National Ploughing Championships

Given that the CEDAW Committee has a particular interest in the situation of rural women, we decided to host a stand at the National Ploughing Championships. We spoke to women, men, girls and boys from all over Ireland during our three days at the Championships, and they raised a wide range of gender equality and women's rights issues from women in sport – to equal pay.

Key Issues Raised

Letterkenny

15 September

- Trafficking of women across the border
- Discrimination faced by Traveller and Roma women
- Childcare costs and early years education

Monaghan

16 September

- Domestic violence shelters
- Social security and childcare support
- Mental health and rural isolation

Castlebar

9 September

- Funding for women in sport
- Reproductive rights
- Women in politics

Ploughing Championships

20 - 22 September

- Pension rights for older women
- Girls' participation in sport
- Gender pay gap

Tralee

5 October

- Lack of employment or educational opportunities in rural areas
- Funding cuts to the women's sector
- Calls for the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)

Castlebar



"We need to look at ways to make women safe in their own homes"

"There is a huge problem with unreported sexual violence in this country – especially rape within marriage"



"We need to teach young men and women how to recognise unhealthy relationships in primary and secondary school"

Letterkenny



"I never got an education – because we were travellers, we were just left down the back of the classroom and ignored"

"The pension gap has huge implications, forcing women into poverty in older age"



"It is very hard for a Traveller man to get a job. For a woman, it's impossible"



SUPPORT YOUR COMMUNITY
CAMPAIGN
Teach Na nDaoine

JOIN YOUR LOCAL
COMMUNITY GROUP
Tel. 047 71398

Monaghan



"Women don't feel empowered to enter political life – there is a lack of confidence"



"It is embarrassing that we still have a Constitution that pigeon-holes and stereotypes women"

Tralee



"Women's high level of achievement in education does not translate into positions of power in the workplace"



"If a Traveller mother is educated in a family, you empower that whole family"

Ploughing



"Women are seen as 'trouble-makers' when they speak out"

 www.ihrec.ie

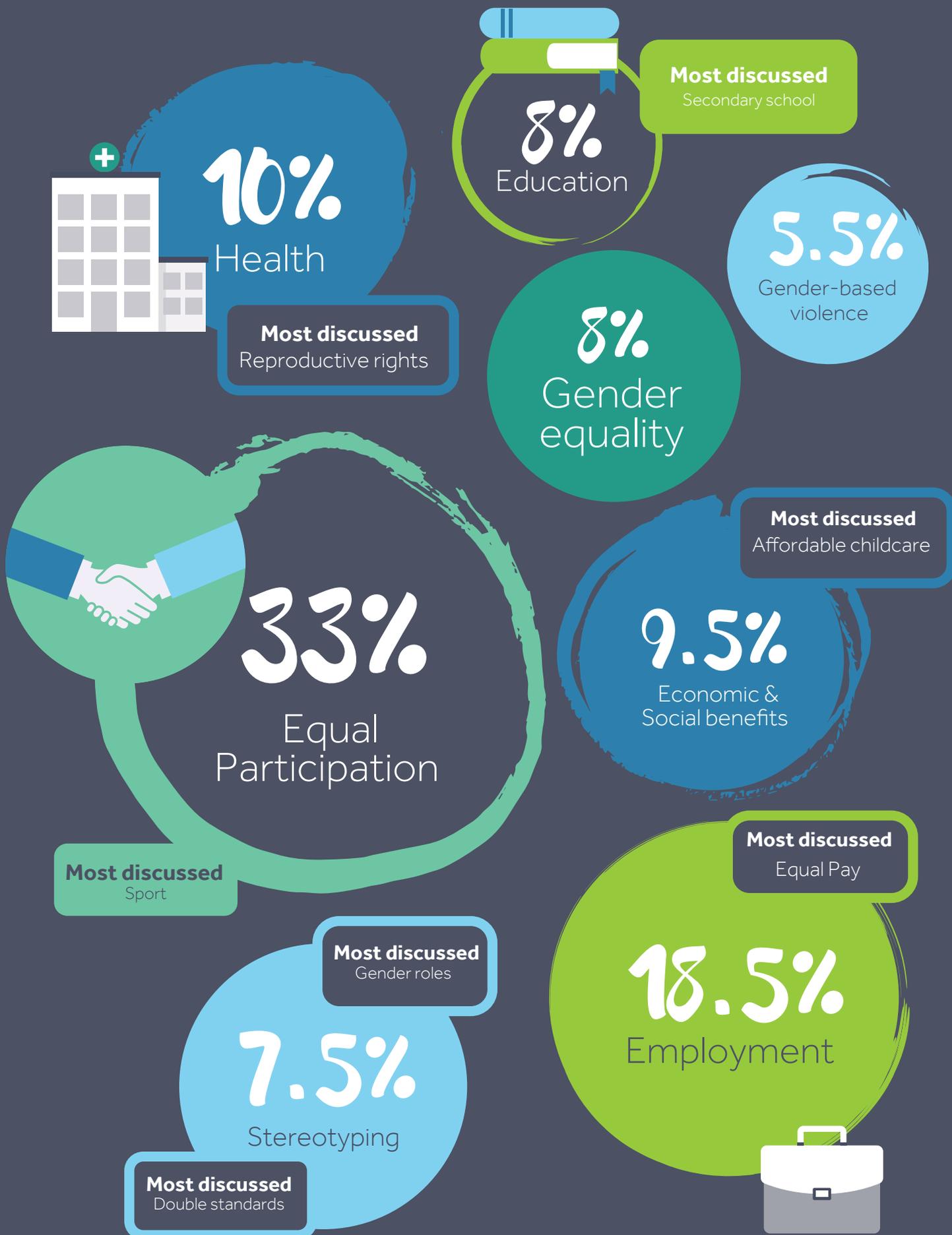
What factors affect the health and well-being of women and girls in Ireland?



"'Boys will be boys' accepts behaviour that would be frowned upon if I did it"



Issues Raised at the Ploughing



Bringing the Issues to Life

Our focus on the consultation findings in our report to the UN

Through our consultation, our aim was to paint a realistic picture for the UN CEDAW Committee of what life is like for women in Ireland in 2016.

- We read and watched each of the submissions we received
- We took detailed notes at the regional consultation events, focus group meetings and visits to direct provision centres and prisons
- At the National Ploughing Championships, we recorded the views of visitors to our stand, and analysed the frequency of issues raised
- We analysed the types and frequency of issues raised through our online consultation
- Our CEDAW consultation enriched our understanding of the daily experience of women living in Ireland.
- We learned some of the key areas of concern for women living in Ireland
- We became aware of gaps in law and policy in relation to gender equality and women's rights
- We gained an enriched understanding of how the legal and policy framework works in practice
- We learned how the situation of women varies throughout the country.

The insights we gained during our CEDAW consultation have been reflected in *Ireland and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women*, our report to the CEDAW Committee.

These insights have assisted us in making recommendations about how Ireland can better promote gender equality and protect the rights of women.



Appendix 1

List of organisations that made submissions

Action Aid
Adoption Rights Alliance
Association for Improvements in the Maternity Services Ireland
Alzheimer Society of Ireland
Atheist Ireland
Cork Equal and Sustainable Communities Alliance (CESCA)
Dublin Rape Crisis Centre
EPIC – Empowering People in Care
Equality Budgeting Campaign
Focus Ireland
Free Legal Advice Centres
Galway Pro Choice
Immigrant Council of Ireland
Irish Council for Civil Liberties
Irish Family Planning Association
Irish Penal Reform Trust
Longford Women’s Link
Justice for Magdalenes Research
Migrant Rights Centre Ireland
Nasc – The Irish Immigrant Support Centre
National Deaf Women of Ireland
National Traveller Women's Forum
Pavee Point
Ruhama
Space International
St Patrick’s Mental Health Services
TENI – Transgender Equality Network Ireland
Tomhaggard Women’s Shed
Women’s Aid

IHREC received five written submissions from individual members of the public on a range of issues including domestic violence, historical abuse and issues affecting rural women.

Organisations that contributed to IHREC’s consultation process

Age Action Dublin and Cork
Bedford Row Family Project, Limerick
Dóchas Centre, Mountjoy Prison
Eglinton Hotel, direct provision centre, Salthill, Co. Galway
Future Voices Ireland
Inclusion Ireland
Irish Rural Link
Irish Prison Service
Limerick Prison
National Advocacy Service
National Women’s Council of Ireland
Park Lodge, direct provision centre, Killarney, Co. Kerry
Reception and Integration Agency
SAOL Project
St Stephen Green’s Trust, Travellers in Prison Initiative

Ceartha

Na

What should the State do to make Ireland a better country for women and girls?
That women Don't Get much Supporter's than men in sports

What should the State do to make Ireland a better country for women and girls?
make men go to nursing matches than college matches

What should the State do to make Ireland a better country for women and girls?
men go matches Womens

What should the State do to make Ireland a better country for women and girls?
I See alot more of men than Women More women needs

What should the State do to make Ireland a better country for women and girls?
Training courses for parents Domestic violence No signs for women who are living with their partners they use their power

What should the State do to make Ireland a better country for women and girls?
let go for the parent hood

What should the State do to make Ireland a better country for women and girls?
More information and activities to include girls in sports & science

What should the State do to make Ireland a better country for women and girls?
More awareness in parents of boy + girl discrimination in school

What should the State do to make Ireland a better country for women and girls?
WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES

What should the State do to make Ireland a better country for women and girls?
Rights of Under 18's

What should the State do to make Ireland a better country for women and girls?
Bodily autonomy

What should the State do to make Ireland a better country for women and girls?
Social welfare system -> providing all women with necessary

What should the State do to make Ireland a better country for women and girls?
Pay the stay At home mothers

What should the State do to make Ireland a better country for women and girls?
Girls sport - should be state

What should the State do to make Ireland a better country for women and girls?
You need standards with organisations for equality for women in sport - training

What should the State do to make Ireland a better country for women and girls?
think of against all schoolwork for a week women do some things children, their home

What should the State do to make Ireland a better country for women and girls?
girls in sport winning games are not supported

What should the State do to make Ireland a better country for women and girls?
Further education in sport and women's rights

What should the State do to make Ireland a better country for women and girls?
* Skinning demands who are sexually assaulted

What should the State do to make Ireland a better country for women and girls?
Women's football that escape enough in Ireland

What should the State do to make Ireland a better country for women and girls?
Harder for women to get a job

What should the State do to make Ireland a better country for women and girls?
Women should not be all up to women to clean up!

What should the State do to make Ireland a better country for women and girls?
More opportunities in jobs

What should the State do to make Ireland a better country for women and girls?
Primary schools provide opportunity employment of young girls start at early age



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