

Women's Policy

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Contents

1	Championing Gender Equality in Ireland	3
2	Labour Force Survey	4
2.1	Quarter 1 2019.....	4
3	Women and the Economy	7
4	Women in Power and Decision Making	9
5	Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women	10
6	Education and Training of Women	11
7	Women and Poverty	13
8	Women and Health	15
9	Women and Homelessness	19
10	Women and Violence	21
11	Women in Prison	23
12	Women and Armed Conflict	24
13	Representations of Women in the Media	26
14	Women Sustainability and the Environment	27
15	Young Women and Girls	29

1 Championing Gender Equality in Ireland

The Green Party/Comhaontas Glas aspires to a feminist Ireland, one where all children and adults are treated fairly, regardless of their sex. We strive to create an Ireland in which our differences are celebrated in an inclusive and positive way.

Working in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) to be achieved by 2030, we celebrate that Ireland is ranked in the top 10 countries for gender equality¹. However, progress is not inevitable and we acknowledge that there is significant work still to be done. We note with pride, that Ireland has reached 9th place in the rankings of the Equal Measures 2030 index¹

All of society has a role to play in unravelling this inequality, through direct action, education, information and positive role models. In 2019, many metrics do not recognise gender as a significant factor. This silences the unique experience of women and girls. It fails to provide gender specific data on a diverse range of issues such as safety on transportation, access to play and sports facilities, health, work, family and society.

The economic structure of society has seen higher income groups benefit disproportionately from economic growth. Within this structure, the Green Party/Comhaontas Glas recognises that women are at a higher risk of poverty. Recent years have seen improvements in this regard. Progressive Irish governments have legislated to end discriminatory pay practices based on sex. However, many older pieces of legislation are designed to favour the male breadwinner model. As a result, women are being left short of basic entitlements such as the right to an adequate income or housing. The Green Party/Comhaontas Glas commits itself to tackling these barriers, striving to ensure an equal society.

In the present economic climate, women are now being actively encouraged into the workforce. However, according to CSO statistics, women still carry out 98% of care work, including disabled and elderly care, childcare and housework.² The time-consuming nature of this work results in Irish women being at a disadvantage in their careers, promotion opportunities, pay and retirement funds. In addition, it fails to value the work that is done in the home, despite the reliance of the economy on this work.

¹ <https://data.em2030.org/em2030-sdg-gender-index/> 2019EM indicator overall index rankings and scores, scores by goal and indicator. Ireland's score was 85.9 out of 100 overalls. For Gender Equality the score was 64.3 out of 100. The global average index score was 62

² CSO 2017 Women and Men in Ireland

2 Labour Force Survey

2.1 Quarter 1 2019

Indicator	Quarter 1 2019	Annual change
Employed	2,301,900	+81,200
Unemployed	114,400	-18,600
In labour force	2,416,300	+62,600
Not in labour force	1,480,200	+9,900

Women's workforce participation rates (56.7%) are still below men's (68.6%)³. The wage gap between men and women remains, and women are disproportionately employed in part-time occupations. Women are also underrepresented on training and employment programmes, particularly on apprenticeships.

The vast majority of home⁴ and caring work of children and dependant adults is carried out by women. This benefits the family, community and society at large and represents a significant, if uncounted part of GDP. The Green Party/Comhaontas Glas seeks to find a balance between paid and unpaid work that provides an unbiased and equal value for all forms of work, and does not penalise or demean, in terms of status, pension access or taxation, this essential unpaid work.

For mothers of young children, who are in the labour force, the reality of childcare costs⁵ in many instances is so prohibitively high that paid work becomes economically unviable. The Green Party/Comhaontas Glas defends the right of women to seek paid employment and will champion women's rights to fair childcare costs that recognise that children are not a women's sole economic responsibility but a shared responsibility for society.

The Green Party/Comhaontas Glas is proud to state that our political philosophy is informed through a feminist perspective. However, just as we believe in equal rights for women, we condemn any discrimination against men. For example, discrimination against men can be at its most blatant in terms of father's rights regarding custody and access to children when a marriage or partnership has dissolved. There is an urgent need for

³ Persons aged 15 years and over classified by sex and ILO Economic Status CSO, Q1 2019.

⁴ 2017 CSO there are 417,300 stay at home parents in Ireland. 10,400 of this number are men.

⁵ Fiona Reddan Irish Times 21 November 2017 OECD figures from last year show that an Irish family on 167 per cent of average earnings – a combined salary of about €75,000 – will give up, on average, 27 per cent of their after-tax income on childcare costs, or about €1,177 a month.

thorough research into this area, in order to inform the development, if necessary, of new legislation.

The Green Party/Comhaontas Glas proposes that:

- There is a phased introduction of a Refundable Tax Credit System, unconditionally given to every person aged over 18 on an individual basis. This will provide minimum income guarantees to provide for those doing unpaid work and give value to what has been traditionally viewed as 'unpaid' and 'value-less' work.
- A Gender Equality impact statement should be introduced alongside the Budget each year to ensure transparency and gender equality in all budgetary measures. All future budgets should be gender proofed.
- Gender proofing should go beyond simply measuring the amounts of money being spent in the form of GNP and GDP. New 'tracking' measurements should be introduced to monitor changes in quality of life, community development and the environmental well-being of everyone.
- A minimum guaranteed income should be established for those carrying out unpaid care work in the home and community.
- As women are unequally affected by consumer taxes, we recommend a review of taxation that is gender informed.
- There is a renewed focus on quality pre-school and primary school education, ensuring that all children receive the best possible start in learning.
- There is more emphasis on the prevention of ill health, both physical and mental, among all women, with practical and age-relevant education about the benefits of good diet and exercise for lifelong health.
- The Government implements an intensive, comprehensive and measurable education and awareness campaign about domestic abuse and violence. This campaign should be targeted appropriately to a wide range of audiences, from school children to people in business.
- The Irish Government ensures that women are nominated to positions of decision making and negotiation in relation to peace building in post-war situations through quotas for gender balance.
- The acceptable critical mass of each sex of at least 30% is adhered to in all political and policy decision making bodies. This to include local and national government bodies. It is also recommended and encouraged as best practice in private and limited companies, and third level education and research facilities.
- There is comprehensive research into why more women do not go forward for promotion to senior management level in the civil service, in representative bodies, in policy-making bodies or business etc. and remedial measures implemented to redress the imbalance.
- A comprehensive review of the taxation system with a focus on gender equality.
- Ensure through necessary reforms, that jointly tax assessed women are treated fairly.

- Funding is increased in the community and voluntary sector, recognising that this is an area that is crucial to the lives of many women in terms of social outlets, work and community participation.
- There is a focused approach to gender balance in access to expression in the media.
- There is disaggregation by sex and age of all data related to children in the health, education and other sectors in order to include a gender perspective in planning, implementation, and monitoring, of such programmes

3 Women and the Economy

There is an urgent need for Green economics to take root in government. This is to avert future crises across a range of basic services, many of them used more frequently by women, such as public transport or the health service. Despite a slow recovery in economic growth over the past decade, we still have high poverty, inequalities in access to education and healthcare, illiteracy, homelessness and a sharp deterioration in living space. Quality of life is suffering.

Women's "second shift" or unequal burden of unpaid caring and domestic work regardless of their employment status, remains an important contribution to GDP that has been underreported, undervalued and omitted from economic reports. While the gender pay gap in Ireland is closing, the gender pension pay gap is 41%.⁶ Women's careers are often shortened and limited by caring responsibilities.

If women are to be equal in terms of the economics of the country over the coming years, the Green Party/Comhaontas Glas proposes that:

- Measures are initiated to ensure true pay parity.
- The Homemakers Scheme should be backdated prior to 1994.
- A National Childcare Framework is established.
- Fiscal measures are introduced to assist parents/guardians, who wish to care for their own children.
- The damage done by the introduction of individualisation in tax is repaired by the phased introduction of refundable tax credits for all, thus providing value to what is now seen as 'unpaid' work, such as caring for children or elderly relatives.
- All future budgets should be gender proofed. However, this gender proofing should go beyond simply measuring the amounts of money being spent in the form of GNP and GDP. New 'tracking' measurements should be introduced to monitor changes in quality of life, community development and environmental well-being of women and men.
- Women receive contributory pension credits throughout the full lifecycle of their working life, including times when they are away from the traditional 'paid' workforce because of child rearing, looking after elderly relatives or other 'unpaid' duties. In other words, these 'unpaid' times should be valued equally.
- There is an increase in the level of paid parental leave in order to allow men to share with women in caring for children or relatives and running homes.

⁶ 2015 European Commission Men, Women and Pensions

- Social banking is promoted, and legislation is put in place to confer favoured status on a non-profit directed financial sector, e.g. the Credit Union Movement, which is used frequently by women.

4 Women in Power and Decision Making

Irish governments have encouraged the private sector to self-regulate gender equality in leadership positions. This has resulted in a gender imbalance in senior management positions and boards. Companies must be incentivised to improve the gender balance. Encouraging women to take on roles in senior management and Boards requires family friendly work environment and flexi time, training and mentoring for women in senior management, and rewarding boards who improve gender balances. Even in areas where women outnumber male colleagues, there are fewer women in higher positions (horizontal segregation)⁷

Ireland has a Dáil where 22% (2019) of representatives are women⁸. This is an improvement from the previous Dáil which had only 16% women. The Green Party/Comhaontas Glas supports the candidate gender quotas introduced for General Elections in 2016. We would like to see this extended to the Local council elections.

To help increase the numbers of women in power and decision making, the Green Party/Comhaontas Glas proposes that:

- Financial incentives be implemented for the local elections along the lines of the candidate quota legislation for the general elections.
- The accepted critical mass of both sexes of at least 30% is adhered to in all political and policy decision making bodies. Research has shown that at least 30% representation is required to generate a culture of change, not only in who takes the decisions, but also in the agendas under discussion.
- There is a gender equality clause in the Constitution, which will have the effect of making all Oireachtas bodies gender balanced (>30% level).
- The Women's Oireachtas Caucus be supported in its work.
- Political structures, such as meeting times, Dáil/County Council session times, are rearranged so that family life for all politicians, is better accommodated.
- Structures of decision-making bodies such as Partnerships or City and County Boards are reviewed to ensure that meeting times during the day particularly do not preclude women from taking part.
- Affordable childcare facilities are provided.
- Leadership, assertiveness, public speaking and politics are taught to all students in schools.

⁷ NWCI

⁸ The European average is 28.7% (2018).

5 Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women

Ireland has a relatively comprehensive legal and institutional framework legislating for equality. In the 1970s laws were passed to ensure that people received equal pay for work of equal value and to tackle discriminatory practices in recruitment and promotion. Over recent years, the legal framework on equality has been significantly strengthened with the Employment Equality Act 1998-2015 and the Equal Status Acts 2000-2015. The establishment of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission and the Workplace Relations Commission have also helped ensure that our equality laws will be monitored and implemented.

The Green Party/Comhaontas Glas welcomes these advancements and proposes a few additional developments towards ensuring institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women specifically, including:

- Equal pay for equal work is seen as a human right and that living in, or being at risk of, poverty is seen as a denial of one's human rights.
- People are treated as individuals for tax and social welfare.
- Consistent and visible support at the highest levels of Government for institutional changes to encourage the involvement and advancement of women.
- Comprehensive research into why more women do not go forward for promotion to senior management level in the civil service, in representative bodies, in policy making bodies or business etc.
- The promotion of information technology as a means of democratising society, improving access to information and providing a mass tool of education for women particularly.
- A Green Party/Comhaontas Glas comprehensive review of the decision-making criteria for public representations of important Irish figures and strongly recommends that the naming of new public buildings, statue placement and public representations of historically important Irish figures reinstates the important role of women in Irish history. We recommend that there is a gender balance quota for these decisions.

6 Education and Training of Women

The Green Party/Comhaontas Glas believes in lifelong education for all. Education should not be market-led but should fulfil individual needs (practical, creative, spiritual, intellectual and physical) as well as the needs of the broader community. We should be educating, not just for literacy and numeracy, but for other practical knowledge, including the nurturing of skills of good citizenship, skills to enhance society's ability to be sustainable and the ability to peacefully resolve conflicts in our own lives and in our local and global communities. No sector of society should suffer disadvantage in obtaining life-long education, including women.

However, while the Green Party/Comhaontas Glas believes that the training and education of women needs particular attention, it does not believe that women should be segregated. The above skills and attitudes are best nurtured by community-based, mixed education, which is not segregated by sex or religion.

Importantly, the Green Party/Comhaontas Glas believes that we must break the link between the wages that parents earn and the quality of education their children receive. By doing so, Irish children will enjoy better educational opportunities moving forwards.

To improve the educational and training opportunities for women over the coming years, the Green Party/Comhaontas Glas proposes that:

- There is a focus on quality pre-school and primary school education, ensuring that children receive the best possible start in learning.
- There are comprehensive childcare structures to accommodate a variety of childcare needs throughout the education process which are both affordable and widely available. In addition, fiscal policy should neither force nor discourage parental choices around childcare.
- There is positive encouragement, and teacher training, to encourage more girls towards technical subjects, and 'non-traditional' areas of study, such as engineering, science and politics.
- Domestic skills in school should be taught to all children in order to increase the sharing of home making and childcare work at a later stage in life.
- All student parents are provided with adequate childcare facilities and subsidies.
- Mindful of the maxim "if you can't see it, you can't be it" and its specific application to the visibility of girls, The Green Party/Comhaontas Glas will seek a gender awareness review of all educational curriculum used in state schools at primary and post primary level, with a remit of gender balancing representations and deemphasising stereotypes of boys and girls.
- With the aim of highlighting the lives and works of Irish women through history, the Green Party/Comhaontas Glas will seek to include their scientific, artistic, political, cultural and literature impacts by fully funding the building of the Women's Museum

of Ireland⁹ⁱⁱ to support better understanding of women and their contribution to modern Ireland.

- Promotion of a free book sharing scheme in schools to cut down on cost and waste.
- Promotion of generic school uniforms where necessary with iron on school crests.
- Specific targeting of back-to-school education and training programmes at socially marginalised women, with an emphasis on basic needs areas such as literacy training and personal development.

⁹ The Women's Museum of Ireland, founded in 2012 has now physical location. www.womensmuseumofireland.ie

7 Women and Poverty

Women are at a higher risk of poverty than men are in Ireland. The risk of poverty for lone parents, where 84% of households are headed by women is also significant, with 50.1% of lone parent families with children under 18 experiencing deprivation and a quarter living in persistent poverty¹⁰. Much of women's poverty can be attributed to their unpaid work in the home, as carers to children and elderly relatives. However, there are also a lot of working women who are poor. A large proportion of the working poor on low pay and minimum wages in Ireland are women. Large numbers of retired women workers have no contributory pension entitlements because of interrupted careers due to child rearing or because of the nature of their jobs on the edge of the labour market.

Women still shoulder the greater burden of family responsibilities. Women in poverty often make contributions to household income through small, and often black market, jobs. Combined with the already full-time responsibility for the family's health and welfare on a limited budget, many women in poor households are also cut off from what might be considered normal social activities. They can be particularly disenfranchised from decision-making. Women in poverty are often time-poor as well as income-poor and so find it hard to break out of the vicious circle of social exclusion.

The difficulty of combining paid work and family responsibilities very often results in women working part-time or dropping out of the labour force altogether. A range of policies are necessary to support parental choice. In many countries, governments and businesses have implemented family-friendly policies – maternity leave, paternity leave, term-time and parental leave, subsidised childcare, early years' education, out-of-school-hours care, flexible working arrangements, etc. – to help parents with children. France and the Nordic countries, for example, provide a continuum of publicly provided support for parents during the early years of their child's life. They have been able to combine high female employment with reasonable fertility rates, carrying a demographic dividend with them into the future.

To reduce the number of women, and all persons, at risk of poverty, the Green Party/Comhaontas Glas proposes that:

- A Refundable Tax Credit system is introduced that would differ from other forms of income support, and would be particularly beneficial to women at risk of poverty, in that it is paid:
- To individuals rather than households.
- Irrespective of any income from other sources.
- Without conditions.

¹⁰ 2017 Survey on Income and Living Conditions 2016. This compares to 21% in the general population

- A parallel Parenting Allowance is introduced, which would be taxable, so that those on the lowest incomes get maximum benefits from the allowance.
- There is increased support for childcare, in particular community childcare, so that playgroups and crèches are available not just to women taking up work outside the home but also to women working in the home to help early socialisation for the children and to reduce social isolation for both children and parents.
- Adequate incentives be established to help women get back to training, education or work to help put an end to the poverty trap. In particular, there should be fully financed childcare as part of back to work or training schemes.
- Accreditation in contributory pensions for women caring or working in the home so that women in later life are not penalised for broken employment records or caring for children or elderly relatives.

8 Women and Health

Health and illness cannot be seen in isolation from environmental, economic or social conditions. The WHO refers to the triple burden of productive, reproductive, and caring work that women worldwide bear. It must be acknowledged that caring responsibilities can have negative impacts on mental and physical health.

Policies on areas as diverse as education, housing, or agriculture, all influence health. We must mandate an urgent examination of the health effects of our economic policies and work towards a society where income is more evenly distributed if women's health in Ireland is to improve.

The healthcare system we propose is holistic in nature with an emphasis on the prevention of illness for all citizens. Up to now, the absence of a holistic approach to healthcare for women and girls through the life cycle has constrained progress and has been exacerbated by a lack of gender sensitive health research and technology, and data disaggregated by sex, age, social position or ethnicity.

There has also been a lack of consideration of the impact of a variety of risk factors, in particular the environment, on women's health¹¹.

Differences in male and female biology must be a central concern in any strategy for promoting more equitable health policies. The most obvious differences in the health needs of women and men are those related to their reproductive characteristics. Women's capacity to conceive and give birth can have major effects on their wellbeing. If they cannot control their own fertility or lack the resources to move safely through pregnancy and childbirth, women will be unable to realise their full potential for health.

Gender inequalities also affect the use of health care and the quality of service. In Ireland, women are offered equal access to basic health care. However, their use of those services may be hindered by a number of gender related factors which are likely to affect poor women in particular. These include lack of transport, lack of childcare, or increasingly the lack of culturally appropriate care.

To ensure that healthcare in Ireland answers the specific needs of women, as the primary users of the health system, the Green Party/Comhaontas Glas proposes that:

- Slaintecare be implemented in full.

¹¹ Reports from the Cancer Registry Board, for example, provides an indication of the urgent need for research into the effects of the environment on disease. The survey showed that there was a marked difference in cancer rates between the urbanised East Coast of Ireland and the more rural West Coast. While nothing is yet proven, questions about environmental impact must be raised.

- There is more emphasis on the prevention of ill health among girls and young women in particular.
- Practical and age-relevant education about the benefits of good diet and exercise for lifelong health and the gender specific dangers of activities such as smoking or drinking should be delivered.
- There is increased funding and access to screening for cancers for women.
- Open disclosure should be mandated through legislation.¹².
- There is a genuine commitment to preventative health care by examining seriously the growing body of evidence linking health problems with environmental problems. The Green Party/Comhaontas Glas will fund research into baseline levels of PCBs and fluorides, as well as levels and effects of dioxin pollution, traffic pollution, and air quality.
- That midwifery led service of pregnancy and childbirth is promoted.
- Women are provided with a real choice of home or hospital/nursing home birth. This includes the provision of mental health services post birth and proper recourse for complaints during maternity care.
- Prioritise funding to complete the National Maternity Strategy Implementation Plan on time.
- Breastfeeding is given priority status, with more specific awareness and education for women about its benefits for their children and themselves. We advocate for increased Government support for breastfeeding facilities in everyday situations and more support for groups such as La Leche League or Cuidiú.
- The Maternity and Infant Care Scheme includes a free post-natal dental and physiotherapy check-up for mothers, in keeping with the holistic approach to health.
- Welcoming the “Well Before Birth” initiative, we underline the essential nature of perinatal mental health services available nationwide to all women, especially those affected by perinatal depression and anxiety.¹³
- We will provide grants to support organisations working with teen mothers.
- We advocate for health visitors and community supports for young families that facilitate positive relationships for women with their children.
- Sexual education (RSE) is addressed effectively and openly in schools. The Green Party/Comhaontas Glas welcomes the review of RSE in schools, and suggests a focus on consent, contraception and LGBTQ+ specific education.
- Free contraception is available for all women who desire it.
- Access is improved to sanitary products through schemes which provide these for free in schools, colleges and to vulnerable groups of women, thus reducing period poverty. Where possible, environmentally friendly options would be provided.

¹² Some cervical check slides had false negative results and this was not disclosed to the women affected. The delay in the cancer being detected suggests the women missed out on earlier intervention.

¹³ Perinatal mental health illnesses affect 16% of perinatal women. The WHO estimates that worldwide approximately 10% of pregnant women and 13% of women who have just given birth experience a mental disorder, primarily depression. In Ireland, teenage mothers experience postnatal depression at twice the rate of mothers over 25. HSE 2018

- Particular attention is directed to the specific health needs of marginalised women, such as Travellers, HIV carriers, women on low income, women with disabilities and asylum seeker/refugees.
- Each national census includes a section on gender disaggregated health in order to continually improve the collection of relevant health statistics.
- The curriculum for training doctors, nurses and other medical staff is broadened to include the study of gender, and the study of complementary medicine. Medical training should be re-oriented to enable health workers to meet the needs of a health system based on prevention and primary health care.
- The medical system is 'decentralised' as much as practical, so that women can attend local clinics and local hospitals more easily.
- All medical research in Ireland should be gender specific and all pharmaceuticals' products specifically list recommended dosages by gender.
- Research grants are created and provided that are specifically focused on health issues that affect women, including PMS, endometriosis, diagnostic signs and symptoms of potentially fatal conditions that differ by gender (e.g., heart attack, stroke) under diagnosis and treatment of pain in women.
- Engage in a review and follow up with training recommendations for all health care professionals to identify gender bias in diagnosis, treatment, management specifically with regard to pain management and length of time taken for treatment.
- Create a series of gender specific public health campaigns to create awareness in women of their gender specific symptoms, to major medical conditions, such as coronary disease¹⁴
- Ireland uses its influence at the UN and the EU to advocate for more education and awareness of HIV and AIDS, which is growing at a rapid rate among women and children in the developing world.
- Ireland uses its influence to ensure more research into the causes of AIDs and to ensure that the cost of drugs to treat the disease are priced at a level affordable (free if necessary) to those infected.
- Access to Abortion should be provided in a non-judgemental supportive environment. The Green Party/Comhaontas Glas support the idea of safe zones around clinics to prevent protests that impact negatively on women patients' mental health.
- The Green Party/Comhaontas Glas ensures that women's mental health is adequately provided for through school and workplace mental health schemes¹⁵.

¹⁴ Cardiovascular disease is the most common cause of death in Ireland. Womens Health Council 2014. https://health.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/women_cardiovascular.pdf

¹⁵ Women's mental health issues are central to their wellbeing and to the community at large. Irish teenage girls have the highest suicide rate in the EU¹⁵. While the Irish male suicide rate is higher, more women than men attempt suicide. This is in addition to the 24% higher self harm rate for women in Ireland

- Ensure that mental health services take significant care of at-risk groups of women, including women who are homeless and Traveller women.¹⁶

¹⁶ Recent suicides in South Dublin have brought the male and female suicide rate on a par. Traveller women have a suicide rate 5 times that of settled women. 2010 All Ireland Traveller Health Survey.

9 Women and Homelessness

As of May 2019, there are 2,660 Women in Emergency Accommodation, not including children. Homelessness occurs for many reasons, and the Green Party/Comhaontas seeks to significantly reduce homelessness in Ireland, through tackling the root causes.

With the dramatic rise of families entering emergency homeless accommodation, the gender gap in the official figures has decreased. Previously, there was always a higher percentage of men counted as homelessness in the State (though homeless counts are widely recognised as underestimating the number of women experiencing homelessness as women are more likely to reside in 'hidden' homelessness situations such as doubling up with friends or family members). For example, when comparing gender breakdown between 2014 and 2016 (as outlined in Table 1), the percentage of women experiencing homelessness across Ireland has increased by 8%.

	Men	Women
2014 (August)	65%	35%
2016 (November)	57%	43%

Table 1: Gender Breakdown of Persons Residing in Emergency Accommodation Nationally in Ireland.

The majority of lone parent families experiencing homelessness are female-headed. On the other hand, rough sleeper counts demonstrate far higher numbers of men. The rough sleeper count conducted in November 2016 showed that 85% of those counted on the street were male. This most acute and visible form of housing exclusion traditionally attracts the greatest policy and media attention. As a result, homelessness policy and service delivery could be described as 'gender-blind' in its overemphasis on the needs of male service users. Lone parents face particular difficulties when homeless. For example, children are not allowed to be present in the kitchen of a hotel. However, neither are they allowed to be left alone.

The association between homelessness among women and violence / victimisation has been highlighted repeatedly across the international literature. However, despite this, there is a broad disconnect between homelessness and domestic violence services. This results in gaps in provision as homelessness policy does not adequately incorporate the housing needs of women (and children) where that need arises from violence and abuse.

Within this, the Green Party/Comhaontas Glas recognises that women who are homeless experience particular problems specific to their gender. To tackle these issues, the Green Party/Comhaontas Glas proposes:

- Urgent action to increase the numbers of social houses.¹⁷
- The establishment of homeless services that specifically advocate for and develop services and facilities that take into consideration the needs of homeless women and their children, including physical and mental safety and health services, plus the provision of practical help in family life management under the strain of homelessness.¹⁸ⁱⁱⁱ
- An increase in social housing support rates to reduce the level of poverty and a commitment to increasing them in line with rents.
- Research into whether changes to the labour market conditionality rule for One Parent Family payments increased the risk of homelessness.
- A referendum to introduce a justiciable right to housing in the Irish constitution.
- Research into the prevalence of lone parents in homeless services, and an examination of whether one parent families are more at risk of longer-term homeless episodes.
- Increased investment in preventing people from becoming homeless.
- The inclusion of women residing in domestic violence refuges in monthly homelessness statistics.
- The provision of women-only emergency accommodation for individuals who want it.
- The incorporation of women to a greater extent in homelessness policies and strategies. In particular, the input of women who have experienced homelessness should be sought to inform decision-making.

¹⁷ Women experience homelessness in Ireland at a higher rate than other European countries. Irish women account for 42% of the national homeless figure and 47% of the Dublin figure. This compares to European averages ranging from 20-33%. Women's Homelessness is often invisible as they live temporarily with others. Homeless women are often mothers separated from their children.

¹⁸ The direction of services to the traditional homeless single male means that there is a failure to respond effectively to women in homelessness crisis. Women's Homelessness also affects lone mothers and their children disproportionately, accounting for 66% of homeless families. Severe mental and physical health problems occur for women who are homeless. These include depression, anxiety, circulatory, respiratory and cardiovascular problems.

10 Women and Violence

The Green Party/Comhaontas Glas believe that violence at any level holds no place within a civilised society. It is possible to resolve conflict without violence. This message must be reinforced throughout society, from the cradle to the grave, if violence, and particularly, violence against women, is to be tackled.

The Green Party/Comhaontas Glas also believes that there is a need to broaden out the definition of violence. Violence includes attacks on self-esteem and integrity through sexual intimidation or humiliation, sabotage of birth control, rape, verbal, mental or emotional abuse, or more subtle forms of controlling behaviour such as physical, or social, isolation from friends and family and financial or material deprivation.

It is important also to emphasise that violence against women is not class or border conscious. It occurs in its myriad forms on a daily basis in every society and in every country. It occurs to women of every class, race, age, sexuality and religion.

Towards tackling the level of violence against women in Irish society, the Green Party/Comhaontas Glas proposes that:

- The Government implements an intensive, comprehensive and measurable education and awareness campaign about violence against women, with emphasis on how it can be detected. This campaign should be targeted appropriately at a wide range of audiences, from school children to people in business.
- Positive parenting skills training is developed, promoted and offered to all parents.
- People likely to come into contact with women under threat of violence, such as Gardaí, GPs, teachers and social workers, are given full and supported training in the detection of different traits and forms of violence.
- There is more control on the sale of alcohol, particularly to young people.
- Supports the promotion and rollout of positive, healthy relationship skills and strategies for preventing negative experiences for girls and women.
- Sexual Assault Units be available countrywide for the people who experience sexual assault and rape.
- Plans are made for the rolling out of community accessible counselling for the people of Ireland who have experienced rape or sexual assault.¹⁹
- The legislative system should be revised to discover the reasons for only 6% of domestic violence offenders receiving a prison sentence.²⁰

¹⁹ 7.5% of women and 1.5% of men have experienced rape or attempted rape in adulthood and 20% women, 10% men experienced sexual assault. 2002 SAVI Report McGee et al, The Liffey Press

²⁰ 2005 ESRI Domestic Abuse of Men and Women in Ireland

- Public awareness should be increased through media campaigns, school and college education programmes and community outreach. This should be backed up by holistic services to support a victims and families affected by domestic violence.
- Recognising that domestic violence against women is often a significant factor in the lives of women who are homeless and in prison, The Green Party proposes to make available integrated help in the form of accommodation, mental health services and community supports for women.

11 Women in Prison

While women represent only 3.8% of the prison population, the nature of women's crimes and the direct impact on the wellbeing of their children make it imperative to consider alternatives²¹.

The numbers of women in prison have been rising in the last twenty years, although almost half of female prison committals are for non-payment of court ordered fines.²²

Women in prison have high rates of reoffending and high rates of substance abuse, self-harm and lifetime mental health issues.²³

The Green Party/Comhaontas Glas proposes that:

- Statistics are gathered to discover the real impact of prison sentences on women and their children in terms of health, long term outcomes, economic poverty, educational achievement, and employment, repeat offence and child outcomes.
- How women are processed through the justice system should be gender proofed to prevent discrimination.
- Women leaving prison are likely to experience homelessness and difficulty accessing accommodation and this must be addressed through services to help former prisoners to reintegrate into society.
- For non-violent crimes, sentences would be better served in the community with supports and services available to the family unit. Irish prison services need to be gender proofed in order to ensure that women prisoners have access to open prison as men do and that the criteria for open prison and re-entry to society include the specific needs of women.

²¹ 95% of children of incarcerated mothers are displaced from the family home as a result of the imprisonment of their mother. More women than men who are primary care givers to young children are incarcerated. 17 babies have been born in prison 2010-2017

²² Women's rates are rising faster than male committal. 42% of female prison committals are for non-payment of court ordered fines (the male figure is approx 20%)

²³ Women in prison in Ireland are housed in closed medium security prisons. They do not have access to an open prison and services for reintegration into the community are inadequate. The results show that while 15% of men, with access to open prison, reoffend, 60% of women, who do not have the same access, reoffend.

12 Women and Armed Conflict

Women and children are inevitably among the principal victims of armed conflicts. Women and children always fill refugee camps. Armed conflict in many regions of the world, has prompted a flight of people, not just to camps in neighbouring countries, but to Western Europe and Ireland in search of asylum. The traumas experienced by people in these warzones and in the process of flight are unimaginable and are not easily healed by the mere arrival in a country such as Ireland.

Within our own country, we have also had conflict stretching over three decades. Thankfully in the last two decades since the Good Friday agreement in 1998 there has been peace on this island. Given the political vacuum with the absence of the Stormont power sharing executive, the Green Party/Comhaontas Glas commits to protecting the Good Friday agreement and the principle of consent.

Women are particularly supportive of building post-war peace everywhere. In Northern Ireland, the peace process and the Belfast Agreement brought large numbers of women from all communities together. Women's NGOs played a vital role in bringing the message of peace into homes and neighbourhoods, across both communities.

The Green Party/Comhaontas Glas believes that values traditionally associated with women 'cooperation, caring, nurturing and respect' need to be harnessed in tackling armed conflict, both here in Ireland and around the world. To this end, the Green Party/Comhaontas Glas proposes that:

- The Irish Government ensures that women are nominated to positions of decision making and negotiation in relation to peace building in post-war situations.
- The Irish Government dedicates humanitarian relief to supporting women and child victims of war particularly.
- Education about armed conflict, war situations and resulting flights for asylum are fully explained and discussed as part of the Irish school curriculum.
- The Irish Government takes into full account the impact of armed conflict on women refugees/asylum seekers and that adequate supports and resources are put in place to help these women. Also, that the Government takes into full account the impact of conflict in Northern Ireland on women affected by it, with the commitment of appropriate resources and supports.

In order to progress the human rights of women in Ireland, and indeed, globally, the Green Party/Comhaontas Glas proposes that:

- The Irish Government works to ensure that Directive 2011/36/EU and the UN Protocol on trafficking is implemented.

- The Government ends direct provision and the dispersal of refugees/asylum seekers without adequate supports.

13 Representations of Women in the Media

Widespread media usage has exploded in recent years, making a balanced female portrayal in the media difficult to implement. However, it is possible to put mechanisms in place to ensure media generated in Ireland is gender sensitive.

As a starting point, the role of journalists in the media, their background and training as well as the integrity of their professional organisations have an important part to play in ensuring that people are portrayed without prejudice. In addition, it is important that more women are involved in the management of the media, a goal which is a little more difficult to achieve now that more media is owned by international and private organisations.

In order to ensure that the media plays a positive role in the advancement of women, the Green Party/Comhaontas Glas proposes that:

- There is a focused approach to gender balance in access to expression in the media.
- There is training in the journalism profession about gender equity, with at least one module on a gender perspective focusing particularly on images and depiction of women to ensure equality and diversity.
- Advertising targeted at children be banned on Irish channels.
- Advertising created in Ireland reflect the changing roles of people in Irish society. For example, the increase in, and range of, female participation in the workforce and male participation in the home.
- Advertising reflect the corresponding changing roles of men in both their careers and as equal homemakers.
- The Press Council monitors for equality and diversity in the media.

14 Women Sustainability and the Environment

Women have a particularly vital role to play in the protection of the environment, both in Ireland and globally. Women shopping for themselves or their family decide on the products they purchase. If they are the primary cook they will decide what the family will eat, how food is used or wasted and ultimately may decide how the packaging is disposed of.

On a global scale, women in developed countries have a central role in promoting sustainable consumer patterns geared towards the improvement of life for women in developing countries

Many women in the developing world are involved in the production of materials to feed the unsustainable consumerism of the developed countries, often working for exploitative wages in poor conditions. If women are made aware of the role they can play in curbing or changing modern consumerism, the lives of women around the world can be changed for the better.

Transport priorities in this country have a negative effect on women particularly. More women than men rely on public transport, yet this service continues to be under resourced. Public transport needs to be reliable, safe, and affordable.

Where we live also has a profound effect on our lives. How we plan our environment must consider the particular needs of women, if it is to have a positive effect on women's quality of life.

In order to ensure that environmental issues are more woman-centred, the Green Party/Comhaontas Glas proposes that:

- Women are actively involved in environmental decision making. For example, women should be involved at a senior level in the planning of communities and support services, from housing designs for intergenerational communities to the provision of playground areas, to the provision of adequate transport or shopping and school services.
- Women are targeted for education about waste management. This should include their role as consumers in re-using, reducing and recycling waste. They should also be educated about the importance of making sustainable consumer choices and reducing the amount of food waste.
- The monitoring of Sellafield is stepped up because of its particularly negative effects on the health of people on the east coast of Ireland.
- More women are targeted for education and training in environmental sciences, engineering, planning and architecture and that family-friendly policies are put in

place within these critical areas to ensure that women can continue to work to senior decision-making levels.

- Women are educated about the environmental impact of cosmetics and toiletries.

15 Young Women and Girls

It is important that Ireland honours its duties to all children, particularly to the most vulnerable.

In Ireland, there are an increasing number of refugee/asylum seeker children. The particular barriers to girls from minority ethnic groups in Ireland must be addressed. Children from ethnic groups can experience everyday barriers such as language barriers, negative cultural attitudes and practices, and on-going experiences of racism and discrimination. This can impact on their ability to live a fulfilling life, either here in Ireland or elsewhere. In addition, there may be ethnic/cultural issues from their own background which may also create barriers to the fulfilment of their life in Ireland.

There needs to be both tolerance and education about cultural differences among young people. However, certain 'ethnic' or cultural customs have to be outlawed, such as the practice of female genital mutilation or the practice of honour punishments.

Another more encompassing example of threat, perhaps, is the issue of advertising and marketing. Commercial interests here are targeting younger and younger children as part of their advertisement campaigns. From a very young age, many of the images used to sell products are tied in with an image of girls and young women with the 'ideal' body shape. This image is often very restrictive and very sexualised and has been linked strongly to negative body image and damaging behaviour such as anorexia, bulimia or smoking to keep weight down among young women. These behaviours have frightening implications for health in later life, such as the risk of osteoporosis or CHD.

By age 15, only 13% of teen girls in Ireland get their recommended daily physical activity (60 minutes).²⁴ Yet, programmes aimed at increasing fitness in schools show that girl's improvement in these programmes outperforms boys.

The Green Party/Comhaontas Glas proposes the following to ensure the safety and positive lived experience of children in Ireland.

- There is disaggregation by sex and age of all data related to children in the health, education and other sectors in order to include a gender perspective in planning, implementation and monitoring of such programmes.
- That the curriculum in schools addresses and promotes sport and outdoor activity for children with special attention to girls and teenage girls.

²⁴ 2017 Irish Health Schools Fitness Challenge – girls fitness improved by average 16%

- Sports facilities suitable to girls' needs are provided, such as adequate indoor facilities and the promotion of high performing female athletes, in line with high performing male athletes.²⁵
 - Children are educated about the importance of nutrition and exercise as the best means of preventing ill health.
 - The high level of eating disorders amongst girls and young women should be assessed and included in all health care strategies.
 - The practice of female genital mutilation is discussed, and health information sessions put in place for at risk members of the community and their families. Note: Under 2012 legislation, not only is FGM prohibited in Ireland, but it is also a criminal offence for someone in Ireland to take a girl to another country to undergo it.
 - Advertising to young children is banned and advertising to teenagers is strictly monitored in Ireland, under Ireland's current consumer advertising laws.
 - Ireland uses its international influence to ensure an end to child slavery globally.
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²⁵ Sport Ireland awarded 55 male and 21 female athletes CSO 2016 Women and Men in Ireland