

# LABOUR

BUILDING AN EQUAL SOCIETY



## Women at work

Labour's proposals for gender equality in the workplace

# Women at Work

Ireland is a different country to that of our mothers and grandmothers. It has been gradually transformed with greater parity between women and men. We need to do much more after four wasted years

- Women in Ireland today earn 14% less than their male colleagues.
- There are still not enough women in senior leadership roles.
- Ireland has some of the highest childcare costs in Europe, forcing many mothers to choose between their career and their children.
- Lack of flexibility in many workplaces puts enormous strain on working mothers making it impossible for some to work full-time.

The Labour Party has four core proposals to address gender inequality in the workplace so that we can build an equal society.

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## GENDER PAY GAP LEGISLATION

Ireland has a gender pay gap of 13.9%. In real terms, that means women work for free for just over a month every year, or stop getting paid at 3.50 pm every day.

In 2017 the Labour Party published legislation to require companies with 50 or more employees to report on the differences in pay between male and female employees. It passed Seanad Éireann and reached committee stage in the Dáil where the Fine Gael Government blocked it. Their own weaker bill failed to deliver the necessary transparency and ensure that effective action can be taken. It has not progressed beyond Committee stage, but women cannot wait any longer.

**Labour will require businesses and public agencies with 50 or more employees to publish their gender pay gap in their annual reports, as well as the remuneration of top executives.**

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## LEADERSHIP ROLES

Labour ensured that a minimum of 40% of State Board appointees are women. That has been successful with 40.9% now in place, but more action is needed.

There are still more men in senior and leadership positions across many sectors, and women make up just 19% of publicly listed boards here. There are another 13 Irish companies that have no women at all on their boards, according to recent research.

**Labour will introduce a legally binding quota of 30% for non-executive directors on the boards of listed companies and require businesses to publish the gender breakdown of company directors in their annual reports. Labour will also require at least 40% representation of each gender in sport governing bodies.**

## CHILDCARE

Childcare in Ireland is too expensive. Many parents, particularly women, are being forced to choose between working full-time and their children. There is also a severe shortage of creche spaces in many parts of the country. It is clear that the current childcare model is not working. We need a new approach that brings Ireland into line with our European neighbours.

Labour will develop a public **Childcare Scheme for Working Parents**, and the costs to parents will be moderate, set at the EU average level of childcare costs – Irish parents are currently paying three times the EU average.

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## FLEXIBILITY AT WORK

Labour wants to make flexible work practices for women at work a reality. Long commutes are causing hours of misery in terms of parents. Technology has opened up new opportunities with the potential to increase productivity and provide a better work-life balance, all while reducing rush-hour congestion and commuting costs.

Unlike other EU countries, there is currently no law that requires employers to grant flexible arrangements so that is why the

**Labour will implement a National Flexible Working Strategy**, working with trade unions and employers at the National Economic and Social Council. The strategy will develop good practice standards for permitting people to work from home or from other locations. The strategy will pay particular attention to the gender dimension of work-life balance, given that women still are disproportionately likely to be the primary caregiver for children.

**Labour will also introduce a legal right to flexible working hours** where an employer only has to make a reasonable adjustment to allow for them, to reduce stress and wasted time from commuting, and to facilitate work-life balance for parents and carers in particular.