

WE THE **CITIZENS**

SPEAK UP FOR IRELAND



Participatory democracy
in action - a pilot

December 2011



Foreword from the Chairperson		Page 4
Executive summary		Page 6
Chapter 1	Purpose and content	Page 8
	1.1 Purpose of this report	Page 8
	1.2 How We the Citizens came about	Page 10
	1.3 So what is Participatory Democracy?	Page 12
Chapter 2	How we tested participatory democracy in Ireland	Page 15
	2.1 Regional citizens' meetings	Page 16
	2.2 The polling process	Page 30
	2.3 The Citizens' Assembly Pilot	Page 33
	2.4 Communicating 'We The Citizens'	Page 37
Chapter 3	Analysis and Results	Page 41
	3.1 Outcome 1: What the results tell us about whether deliberative democracy really works	Page 41
	3.2 Outcome 2: Outputs from the Citizens' Assembly Deliberations	Page 50
	3.3 Outcome 3: What the surveys tell us about people in Ireland in 2011	Page 58
Chapter 4	Conclusions	Page 67
Appendices		Page 71



Foreword from the Chairperson

We the Citizens set out with optimism, and indeed hope, to test the value to our democracy of including citizens more directly in decision-making. That hope has been truly vindicated. We now have unequivocal proof that citizens' assemblies will work in this country, as they have in many others. We have shown that when you give people objective information and the opportunity to deliberate, not only do they make informed decisions, they also feel a greater connection to the democratic process.

Ireland has changed and people are looking for new ways to engage in the civic and democratic life of their communities and their country. That was the message we heard as we travelled through Ireland this summer of 2011. What we found was that a great deal of common sense is generated when people get together to work things out. People came together at our events, not because of vested interests or political persuasions, but as individual citizens willing and ready to contribute to the future of our country.

People were rightly angry about the economic and social crisis they did not create. But significantly, they were ready to step up and become part of the solution.

We are grateful to every man and woman who engaged with We the Citizens at our events around the country, at our pilot Citizens' Assembly in Dublin and online through our website and social media. We owe it to them and to all citizens to ensure that the Government and other political parties see the value of this form of participatory democracy. After all, this model would support politics at both national and local level.

Above all, it would help to restore trust.

Fiach Mac Conghail
Chairperson, We the Citizens





Réamhfocal ón gCathaoirleach

Bhí sé mar mhian ag We the Citizens, le misneach agus muinín, an buntáiste a bhaineann le saoránaigh a bheith níos rannpháirtí sa phróiseas cinniúna dár ndaonlathas a mheas. Bhí toradh maith ar an mian sin. Níl amhras ar bith anois orainn ach go n-oibreoidh tionól saoránaigh sa tír seo, mar a oibríonn sé i dtíortha eile. Chonacthas dúinn nuair a thugtar eolas cruinn agus an deis plé do dhaoine ní amháin go ndéanann siad cinntí bunaithe ar an eolas ach braitheann siad go bhfuil baint acu leis an bpróiseas daonlathais.

De bharr go bhfuil Éirinn athraithe, tá muintir na hÉireann ag lorg modhanna nua chun páirt a ghlacadh sa tsaoiríocht agus sa daonlathas ina bpobal agus ina dtír. Is í sin an teachtaireacht a fuair muid agus muid ag taisteal na tíre i rith samhradh na bliana 2011. Is é an rud a fuair muid amach ná go dtagann go leor den chiall cheannaithe chun cinn nuair a thagann daoine le chéile chun cúrsaí a phlé. Ní hé gur tháinig daoine le chéile ag ár n-imeachtaí mar gheall ar a leasa féin ná a dtuairimí polaitíochta, ach tháinig siad chucu mar shaoránaigh aonair a bhí ag iarraidh agus a bhí sásta leas na tíre a chur chun cinn.

Bhí fearg ar dhaoine faoin ngéarchéim shóisialta agus gheilleagrach agus an ceart sin acu mar nárbh iad ba chúis leis. Mar sin féin, ba shuntasach an rud é go raibh siad sásta a gcuid a dhéanamh agus a bheith rannpháirteach i réiteach na faidhbe.

Ba mhaith linn buíochas a ghabháil le gach uile dhuine a ghlac páirt ag imeachtaí We the Citizens ar fud fad na tíre, ag céadarracht Tionól na Saoránach i mBaile Átha Cliath, ar an idirlíon, ar ár suíomh gréasáin agus ag úsáid na meáin shóisialta. Ar son na ndaoine sin agus gach saoránach, tá an freagracht orainn anois a chur ina luí ar an Rialtas agus páirtithe polaitíochta eile fiúntas rannpháirtíochta na saoránaigh sa daonlathas a thuiscint.

Gach ní ráite, bheadh an tsamhail seo mar bhonn taca don pholaitíocht ag leibhéal áitiúil agus ag leibhéal náisiúnta.

Thar gach ní eile, chuideodh sé le muinín a athchothú.

Fiach MacConghail

Cathaoirleach, We the Citizens





Every experiment starts with a question. The experiment that eventually became We the Citizens started with this: is there something that we can do to enhance our democracy, especially at a time when Irish people feel cast adrift and disconnected from power?

We the Citizens was a pilot project to test whether a more participatory form of democracy could work in Ireland. The model tested was a Citizens' Assembly, which is a form of deliberative democracy.

A representative group of citizens was randomly chosen, by an independent polling company, to attend the pilot Citizens' Assembly on 25th and 26th June 2011 in the Royal Hospital Kilmainham.

- Seven regional citizens' events had been held in May and June 2011 to inform the agenda of the Citizens' Assembly.
- A series of independent surveys – also informed by the issues raised by citizens at the regional events – was conducted to monitor and evaluate changes in the views of participants.
- At the assembly, participants were given expert information and the opportunity to deliberate on particular policy issues.
- They were surveyed afterwards to see whether deliberation had led them to change their views about the issues discussed. Control groups who had not taken part in the Citizens' Assembly were also polled.

Findings

The findings from the research are conclusive. As a result of their participation, citizens showed significant shifts of opinion and felt more positive about their influence on politics, compared to those who had not taken part.

After the Citizens' Assembly, participants:

- showed a greater interest in politics

- expressed more willingness to discuss and become more involved in politics
- felt more positive about the ability of ordinary people to influence politics
- demonstrated large shifts in opinion on the economic issues they had discussed, such as tax, spending and the sale of state assets
- revealed important shifts in opinion regarding the role of Dáil deputies
- became more aware of the complex trade-offs to be made in the areas of political reform and fiscal policy.

In other words, deliberation works.

Citizens' Assembly model will work in Ireland

Based on the evidence of our academic research and on what we heard and recorded from citizens all over the country, We the Citizens:

- **recommends** that government adopts a citizens' assembly mechanism to complement and enhance our representative democracy
- **recommends** that if reform programmes are to be successful, citizens must feel that they have some ownership in the process. A citizens' assembly allows that to happen
- **recommends** that this model of democratic engagement be used to make a positive contribution to democracy in Ireland
- **has shown** that a Citizens' Assembly strengthens our democracy by helping to restore trust in the democratic system of government.

This report provides a manual for any government, group or organisation on how deliberative methods can help give citizens a greater influence on decision-making and policy formation.



Key factors for success

For a citizens' assembly to be successful:

- It must be set up for a specific purpose, and once that purpose has been achieved, the Citizens' Assembly ceases to exist. In other words, the assembly cannot and should not act as another House of the Oireachtas: its work and membership are limited by time and purpose
- The members must be selected randomly to give a balanced social and demographic representation. They are not elected, nor are they there as representatives of particular sectors. There is therefore no risk of specific interests subverting the work of the assembly
- The members must be given balanced briefing notes and have the opportunity to hear from and to question experts
- The members should be given sufficient time and space to debate and deliberate over the issues
- It should be made clear what will happen to the **outcomes** of the Citizens' Assembly.

Three possible models:

- The Citizens' Assembly produces a specific proposal for change, that may be directly acted upon by the government in the form of a legislative act
- In a case where a matter has constitutional significance, the Citizens' Assembly produces the wording for the referendum question. This may go to a parliamentary committee for consideration or be put to the people in a referendum
- In the case where the matter in question relates to local budgetary issues, the decision of the Citizens' Assembly should have a direct impact on a portion of budgetary expenditure in the local area.

A citizens' assembly can be used nationally, regionally or locally. What is important is that citizens have a voice, not just a vote.

The regional citizens' events and Citizens' Assembly showed that despite the blows which have shaken our economy, society and political system, there is a strong spirit of determination among the people and an appetite for national renewal. Participatory democracy can and should be part of this drive for national renewal.





1.1 Purpose of this report

The purpose of this report is to record the work and the experience of the We the Citizens project. It describes the process that was followed, the decisions that were made and why, and how people became involved both as volunteers and participants. It looks at how the project was received and examines in detail the findings from the research element of the project.

At its heart, We the Citizens was a research project to establish whether or not more participative mechanisms for citizen involvement, specifically where deliberation was involved, would have a positive impact on our democracy. We tested a form of citizens' assembly where participants are selected randomly on a demographically representative basis. However, along the way, we asked other questions and gained other insights from the citizens who took part about the issues that were of concern and of interest to people in Ireland in the summer of 2011. We have tried to reflect this in the report.

In their election manifestos, both coalition partners identified a need for a more participative political mechanism to complement the existing decision-making and policy formation process in our representative democracy. Labour identified a constitutional convention and Fine Gael a citizens' assembly as possible approaches. The concept also appears in the Programme for Government.

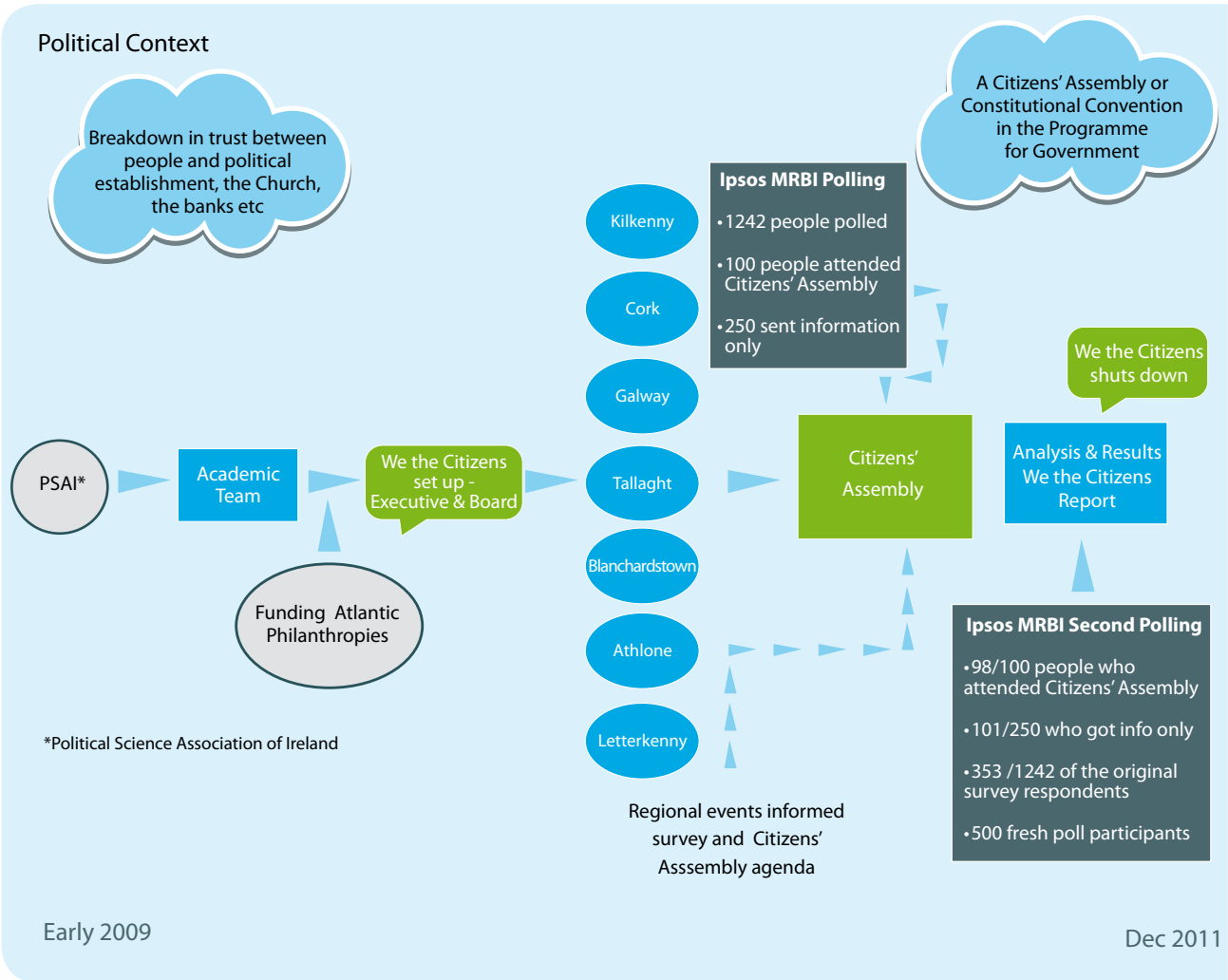
This document is intended as a guide for any authority or structure organising a citizens' assembly or similar initiative in the future – both in terms of what worked and what did not.

A common shared future built on the spirit of co-operation, the collective will and real participation in every aspect of the public world is achievable and I believe we can achieve it together. In our rich heritage some of our richest moments have been those that turned towards the future and a sense of what might be possible. It is that which brought us to independence. It is that which has enabled us to overcome adversity and it is that which will enable us to transcend our present difficulties and celebrate the real Republic which is ours for the making.

Inaugural speech of President Michael D. Higgins, St. Patrick's Hall, Dublin Castle, November 11, 2011



Fig 1.1 | We the Citizens – The Journey





1.2 How We the Citizens came about

Context of decline in trust

In the 2009 Eurobarometer poll, Ireland recorded virtually the lowest level of public trust in its political institutions across the 27 European countries surveyed, with only Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania and Greece returning lower degrees of trust. This was not normal for Ireland. In June 2008, confidence in government was at 46 per cent. The depth and nature of the economic crisis dramatically reduced trust in politics, which dropped to an incredible 10 per cent only a year later in an Irish Times/MRBI poll in September 2009. Moreover, according to the RTÉ exit poll on the day of the 2011 general election, the main reason people voted the way they did was because they felt angry and let down by politics.

The decline of trust in politics and institutions is not unique to Ireland. A growing civic disengagement and the weakening of the civic relationship between the government and people is increasingly evident across

a range of countries. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has echoed these concerns 'The financial crisis revealed failures of governance . . . For the sake of keeping the trust of voters, governments also need to be able to reassure citizens that their affairs are in safe hands' (OECD, 2009).

Although there is no magic bullet solution to restore this trust, governments and civil society alike have turned to participatory democracy as a mechanism to improve the process of enhancing citizen involvement in decision making. Although trust in institutions has declined, there remains a strong sense of loyalty to democracy itself and not just to democracy as a concept.

The fall in confidence and the perceived weakening of participation in formal or traditional politics has corresponded with the perception that a democratic deficit exists.

Responding to the climate

A working group was set up in 2009 by members of the political science departments of Irish universities under the aegis of the Political Studies Association of Ireland (PSAI). Its primary mission was to respond to the ongoing crisis and to the increasingly vocal debate on the need for changes to the political system and wider public life. The group – of no uniform ideological bent – did not always agree on the nature of reforms needed, but all agreed on the importance of informed debate.

Four of them – Dr Elaine Byrne of Trinity College Dublin, team leader Professor David Farrell of University College Dublin, Dr Eoin O'Malley of Dublin City University and Dr Jane Suiter of University College Cork – were invited in 2010 to submit a proposal to the Atlantic Philanthropies

for a project relating to participatory democracy which would be transparent, independent and objective. We the Citizens was organised in association with the Irish Universities Association, the representative body for the seven Irish universities.

What was proposed was a citizens' assembly, which would be supported by a series of public events around the country combined with extensive polling. The gatherings would be an opportunity for people to share ideas and concerns that in turn would feed into the agenda of the national Citizens' Assembly. The polls or surveys allowed the team to assess whether the opportunity to take part in a citizens' assembly had an impact on people's views on a range of topics. The aim



was that the Citizens' Assembly membership would reflect a cross-section of Irish society. It was based on models used successfully in other countries, such as Canada and the Netherlands.

We the Citizens was set up as a support organisation for the research project to test whether a form of citizens' assembly would work in an Irish context. Its primary purpose was to encourage people to take part in the events, through creating awareness and interest in the regional and national media, online, and in local communities around the country. This work was carried out by We the Citizens' three staff members, including Executive Director, Caroline Erskine. They also organised the logistics and attendance at the various events around the country. The academic team, led by Professor David Farrell, was responsible for commissioning and analysing the polls and designing the content of the Citizens' Assembly. The project was overseen by a Board of Directors, chaired by Fiach Mac Conghail and advised by an international scientific advisory board (Appendix 1 for details).

We the Citizens was established for a defined period from January 2011 to December 2011.

For the purpose of the project, the word 'citizen' refers to people living in Ireland, not exclusively holders of Irish citizenship.





1.3 So what is participatory democracy?

Participatory democracy is a process emphasising the broad participation of citizens in the direction and operation of political systems. All democracy depends on the participation of citizens at election time. However, participatory democracy tends to advocate more involved forms of citizen participation than traditional representative democracy.

Participatory democracy strives to create opportunities for all members of society to make meaningful contributions to decision-making, and seeks to broaden the range of people who have access to such opportunities.

Why are we talking about participatory democracy now?

People have started to expect more from democracy than just the opportunity to vote for a party every few years. Across established democracies like Ireland, although electoral participation is generally declining, participation is expanding into new forms of action.

Today, more people are signing petitions, joining citizen interest groups and engaging in unconventional forms of political action. The large expansion of public interest groups, social movements and NGOs creates new opportunities for participation. These trends suggest that the public's preferred mode of democratic decision-making is moving toward new forms of more direct

involvement in the political process - so people might not vote, but they will take part in a demonstration against the closure of a local hospital or lobby their politicians for increased funding for education.

Political establishments across the world are reacting to this trend in a number of ways. In France, for example, for the first time in October 2011, the Parti Socialiste held primaries to allow voters to choose their preferred candidate for the presidential election. In a country where political party membership is very low, with fewer than 6 per cent of people being members of any party, the primary approach allows the electorate to make the candidate choice and, therefore, perhaps to identify more closely with the candidate and the election process.

What is deliberative democracy?

Is it different? Basic definition: Deliberative democracy = ordinary citizens using discussion to reach an agreement and make recommendations to government on issues of importance. It is a form of participatory democracy. Academic definition: Deliberative democracy can be defined as 'a process of reaching reasoned agreement among free and equal citizens' ensuring that they have an opportunity to express their views and preferences and justify their decisions within a deliberative process for the purpose of reaching conclusions that are collectively binding (Bohman and Rehg, 1997: 321; Gutmann and Thompson 2004: 7).



What is deliberative polling?

The Center for Deliberative Democracy at Stanford University describes its process as follows: “A random, representative sample is first polled on the targeted issues. After this baseline poll, members of the sample are invited to gather at a single place for a weekend in order to discuss the issues. Carefully balanced briefing materials are sent to the participants and are also made publicly available. The participants engage in dialogue with competing experts and political leaders based on questions they develop in small group discussions with trained moderators. Parts of the weekend events are broadcast on television, either live or in taped and edited form. After the deliberations, the sample is again asked the original questions. The resulting changes in opinion represent the conclusions the public would reach, if people had opportunity to become more informed and more engaged by the issues.”

What is a citizens’ assembly?

A citizens’ assembly can be used to rebuild trust among citizens in the political process by taking ownership of the decision-making process. It is a mechanism of deliberative democracy. It is an approach that has had good results in many parts of the world - Canada, Iceland and Brazil.

How does it work?

It involves rational, reasoned discussion with a cross - section of an entire population and uses various methods of inquiry such as directly questioning experts. It is not adversarial, although disagreement is inevitable and is valued, not stifled. A citizens’ assembly values creativity and tends to build consensus rather than creating winning and losing sides – but there is no requirement of unanimity. Deliberative processes are not meant to replace representative or direct democracy, but to enhance and support it.

Examples of where citizen participation has worked - Brazil

The Brazilian city of Recife is home to 1.7 million people, and has been operating a participatory budget programme, which allows the public to play a pivotal role in determining how the city funds are spent, since 2001. With its citizen participation programme, the city of Recife shows how wide-ranging collaboration and partnership can be used to reduce the distance between policymakers and the public. The programme complements the city’s representative democracy by allowing citizens to play a direct role in decision-making processes, together with city administrators. It is a very good example of how the public can get involved in government. The participatory budget and the increased participation of citizens, the mayor concluded, have permanently changed the life of the people in the city of Recife, which is characterized by stark contrasts between rich and poor. Since 2001, its citizens have been extensively involved in shaping Recife’s development. More than 100,000 adults and young people participate every year in forums and on the internet, making suggestions for urban development projects and monitoring them as they are implemented. They also set priorities in a number of policy making areas. The participatory processes therefore allow the city to be present “on the ground” and to share responsibility with the public. To do so, it has built a comprehensive network of paid workers and volunteers, which ensures people are involved throughout the year in making and implementing decisions.



Citizens' Assembly on electoral reform – Canada

In 2007, a government sponsored citizens' assembly was held in British Columbia in Canada. The purpose of the Citizens' Assembly was to discuss electoral reform. The question answered by the assembly was what electoral system would work best for the province.

"In the end, 160 strangers from all walks of life, with formal education levels ranging from six years to an Oxford doctorate, managed to come to a remarkable degree of consensus on what electoral system would be best for British Columbia—a Single Transferable Vote system similar to the one used in Ireland" (Lang, 2007: 37).

"While the idea of citizens' assemblies is immediately appealing to anyone who believes that democracy should be inclusive, the question remains: is it really possible to have an independent process where people make binding decisions? Evidence from the British Columbia Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform suggests that if citizens are to be empowered by a citizens' assembly there needs to be a way of keeping that assembly independent of existing political institutions. Once the conditions for an independent assembly are set up the second question is how citizen interests and arguments crystallize over the course of a participatory process" (Lang, 2007: 35).

Views of any individual citizen are as valid as those elected to the highest office

An obvious question is: 'Will citizens make better decisions than elected politicians?' In modern democracies, all citizens are equal. This means whether you are well educated or not, wealthy or poor, male or female, you have equal citizenship. Proponents of

participatory democracy say that the views of any individual citizen are as valid as those elected to the highest office.

In theory, a group of citizens can make as good a decision as a group of legislators, if the conditions are right. We the Citizens set out to test this idea.

British Columbia - Canada



Testing participatory democracy



2. How we tested participatory democracy in Ireland

This chapter looks at how we tested participatory democracy in Ireland. It looks in detail at:

- The open door, open agenda regional citizens' events, issues from which were used to set the agenda for the Citizens' Assembly
- The polling/survey process – how it was organised and why
- How the Citizens' Assembly was organised and the types of recommendations that it produced
- The role of communications activity in the initiative.

The rationale underlying We the Citizens was to test whether participatory democracy can work, and more importantly, can work in Ireland. The mechanism or instrument that was chosen as most likely to be useful in an Irish context was a citizens' assembly, similar to that used in Canada and the Netherlands. In order to test the impact of the Citizens' Assembly, it was necessary for We the Citizens to survey the Irish population so as to produce hard evidence of this.

For evidence of impact, the survey work would be expected to produce the following outcomes:

- Opinions on the policy issues discussed would be expected to shift as the citizens become better informed and able to debate at length the issues and the trade-offs associated with them
- There should be evidence of the citizens feeling more empowered as a consequence of being involved in such a process.

The extent to which these expectations were met is examined in the next chapter. To produce conclusive results, comprehensive polling work was carried out and this was preceded by a series of open-door, open-agenda meetings at seven locations around the country. The issues raised at these regional meetings formed the backbone of the surveys and the agenda for the Citizens' Assembly to follow.



“As citizens, we need to get out of our comfort zone. We need to question more and every citizen needs to give up more time.”

“It’s not enough to volunteer; active citizenship also involves politics and informing policy making.”

“It’s important we have leaders we can respect.”

“We need to be visionary and plan better.”



2.1 Regional citizens' meetings

A key part of the integrity of the Citizens' Assembly organised by We the Citizens was the concept that the agenda be set, not by a group of academics, but by the people of Ireland. To do this, We the Citizens organised seven meetings around the country between May 10th and June 14th in Kilkenny, Cork, Galway, Blanchardstown, Tallaght, Letterkenny and Athlone.

At the We the Citizens launch on April 12th 2011, an open invitation was issued to the general public to attend citizens' events being held across the country.

The aim of the events was to provide an independent platform where people could share their ideas on how to renew Ireland. The prominent themes to arise from the seven events helped to determine the agenda of the national Citizens' Assembly held on June 25th and 26th 2011. This was to ensure that the issues deliberated upon at the national citizens' assembly came from the grassroots in a bottom-up fashion.

Setting up the regional citizens' events

The events were free of charge and open to everyone. To ensure the widest possible awareness of and interest in the events in each area, the We the Citizens team met with local media providers as part of preparations for the events. Radio advertisements were booked and interviews given to local radio stations in order to reach as large an audience as possible. Newspaper editors were also willing to carry copy both before and after each event.

In addition to using local media channels, the We the Citizens team also spent time in each area prior to an event, meeting volunteers who had contacted We the Citizens online. They helped to poster their area and spread the word amongst their communities about the forthcoming event. 133 people volunteered through the website to help with the initiative. Most of the volunteers were young people who had heard about We the Citizens through social media and wanted to do something positive for their country at this time of crisis.



Volunteers also helped the We the Citizens team to set up the venue for each meeting and assisted participants as they arrived. As the We the Citizens full-time executive team consists of just three people, the help of volunteers was invaluable and the success of the events was very much dependent on their support.

The We the Citizens team tapped into local networks including people in community groups, youth groups, chambers of commerce, local businesses and centres for the unemployed, encouraging them to disseminate information about the events. Leafleting the towns was another great way of spreading the word and We the Citizens distributed thousands of fliers on the streets with the help of volunteers.

The design of the regional events was a major challenge - how do you organise an unknown number of people to have a constructive discussion around an open agenda?



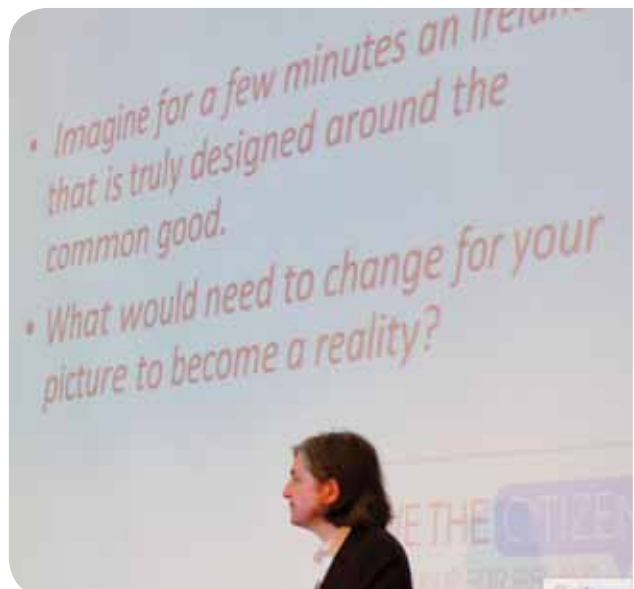
The solution was to take a “World Café” style approach¹, which involved tables of 8-10 people with a facilitator to moderate the discussion and try to ensure that everyone got their say. This approach was successful from the beginning and it was used not only for the regional events but also for the Citizens’ Assembly.

In the initial meetings, We the Citizens also organised live political comedy, to round off the evening. However a decision was taken to stop this after three events as it became clear that it was unnecessary: participants were there for the serious business of sharing their ideas and discussing important topics.

All seven events around the country took place in just over four weeks. This tight schedule was dictated by the holding of an early general election in February 2011 and the need to complete the events, including the Citizens’ Assembly, by the end of June 2011 before the holiday season. While this had the advantage of creating a sense of momentum, it proved very challenging from an organisational and promotional perspective. With the earlier meetings, the We the Citizens executive team of three had time to put into building local relationships and promoting the events in the locations well in advance. This resulted in high turnouts. The later events, which were also closer in time to the Citizens’ Assembly, suffered somewhat in terms of the preparation time available to spend on the ground in the location. Despite this, more than 1,000 people overall signed up online to attend the events, while over 700 participated.

A key learning point from the regional events is that there are significant human resources required to promote and run such events effectively. We the Citizens found that where there are a number of events taking place in quick succession, the lead time to promote the later events becomes too limited. We would therefore recommend either a greater time between individual events or additional resources to ensure that both the organisation and promotion can be completed within the time available.

¹ The World Café solution and facilitator training was provided by Genesis Marketing and Communications Ltd.





Forum calls on citizens to help reinvigorate nation

Better Ireland considered in Letterkenny

Cork people reveal ideas about future they want

Key to recovery lies in the community - and its citizens



Vital meeting to which the Citizens came

Empowering local communities discussed at Athlone 'We the Citizens' event

Phenomenal turnout to 'We The Citizens'

Tallaght speaks out loud and proud

Assembly of citizens backs major reforms

People make voices heard at Letterkenny session





Running the regional citizens' events

The format of the events was designed to foster an open and lively discussion among citizens themselves.

- A roundtable, facilitated approach was adopted - participants were invited to take a seat at tables with eight to ten others.
- There was no top table, no keynote speakers.
- We the Citizens Chairperson, Fiach Mac Conghail, welcomed participants and briefly explained the purpose of the evening and its timetable.
- A number of very general, non directive themes were suggested to give a starting point but the groups were under no obligation to stick to or address these questions if the group had other issues they wished to discuss. Those who attended the events determined what would be discussed.

Role of the facilitator

Each table had a facilitator who welcomed those who had come to participate. The role of the facilitator was to foster dialogue, to ensure that everyone got an opportunity to speak and that no single person dominated the conversation. The We the Citizens team of facilitators for the regional events were all doctoral students who had earlier received professional facilitator training. They already came to the project with high levels of knowledge about politics and with experience of conducting tutorials in their colleges.

The deliberative, round-table format was designed to give everyone the opportunity to raise their own viewpoints and to allow for disagreement. However, a tone of mutual respect underpinned the discussions, even if agreement was not reached on a particular issue. The common sense that a gathering of people from different backgrounds brought to the discussion was powerful. It happened repeatedly at the citizens' events.



'As a facilitator I was apprehensive before the first night that the usual complaining voices would emerge at this kind of event. However, I was most struck when a participant in Cork (male, approx late 50s) introduced himself at the start of the discussion and explained that he had never been a member of a political party or taken any interest in politics in his life, but he regrets that now. Though he had never attended anything like We the Citizens, he decided to come along to try and make a change for himself and to learn more' (Susie Donnelly, facilitator).

Themes presented for discussion were broad and non-directive. They were designed to encourage a constructive rather than negative dialogue. In the first stage of the evening, citizens were asked to reflect on the following questions for an hour:

- *Imagine for a few minutes an Ireland that is truly designed around the common good. Share your picture of that Ireland with the people at your table.*



- *What would need to change for your picture to become a reality?*

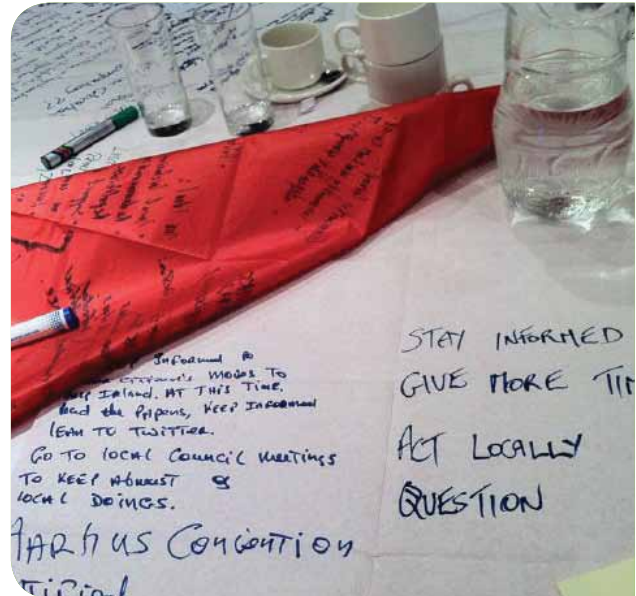
The citizens were invited to visualise and communicate their image of a better Ireland and to then focus on areas that currently present an impediment to it and would need to change. In the second hour of the event citizens were asked to discuss the following questions:

- *If we accept that each citizen has a responsibility for our democracy, what things would you do to make things better?*
- *Consider what choices or compromises you would be willing to make to get what you wish for.*

The emphasis in running the regional events was to facilitate a diverse group of people to feel comfortable with participating and putting across their own viewpoint.

As this Galway attendee said at the tea break, 'I got more out of this than I expected, I assumed it would be just another whinge-fest.' These comments were echoed by a participant in Cork who said that the 'facilitated discussions were the best part of my experience. There was mutual respect and even on the topics that divided the table, everyone discussed things very calmly and listened to one another. I wasn't expecting that.' A Kilkenny attendee remarked, 'Even though I was on the losing side of the debate I felt that my contribution was welcomed and that my concerns were somewhat addressed.'

Each person was also given marker pens so that they could, if they wished, write/draw their ideas and viewpoints on their tablecloths – the idea being that some prefer to express their views in the written form rather than verbally. The thoughts, opinions, doodles and cartoons that resulted, many of which appear in this document, are a rich resource in their own right and are currently being analysed by the academic team.



At the end of third round of discussions, there was a tea break during which the We the Citizens team collated the ideas, which had already been documented by each facilitator.

A PowerPoint presentation was created showing the prominent themes that emerged from each table. Regularly the same issues, ideas and solutions coincided across the tables.

After the break, there was a plenary session, where the citizens were invited to speak openly about the main issues that arose throughout the course of the evening. Microphones were passed around the venue as citizens shared their views and opinions with the entire room.

Inputs from the participants were also filmed and uploaded to the We the Citizens website in the following days. A short written report of the event was emailed to each attendee following each event.

Who attended the regional events?

One of the challenges of an open door, open agenda approach is that you do not know who you will attract and have no control over how representative or otherwise the group of people might be at a given event.



Some risks inherent in this approach are:

- That the events and the agenda might be taken over or heavily influenced by some organised political or lobby group
- That the event and the project would not appeal across the board and that the self-selected participants would be 'of a type'
- That the events would attract too many and the team would not be able to manage the numbers on the night
- That the events would not attract enough participants.

While nobody was asked to state their occupation, it was evident that the mix of people who attended included employers, the unemployed, public and private sector workers, students, small business people as well as people who worked in the home. The ages ranged from approximately 15-80.

The main themes that emerged from the regional events

Each event was different, reflecting the fact that they took place in seven diverse locations around Ireland. However, it was striking how consistently certain themes emerged across the country.

The controversial bailout of the banks was expected to feature more prominently at the events. Surprisingly, that issue did not arise nearly as much as had been anticipated. Instead, other general themes were repeatedly raised in Kilkenny, Cork, Galway, Blanchardstown, Tallaght, Letterkenny and Athlone:

- Transparency, accountability, honesty in public life
- Strengthening of politics at the local and community level
- Reforming the political system - role of TDs, type of TDs elected to reflect 21st Century Ireland

- Taxation and public spending
- Greater citizen involvement in decision making
- Improved and more effective civic education curriculum at second level.

At all seven regional meetings there was a strong sense that the people taking part were seeking alternative ways to constructively engage in democracy. The acts of voting or, indeed, of joining a political party or running for election, were no longer seen as sufficient options.

"We need reform of our oversight governance structures."

"Educational reform – target funding to primary school, improve civics education which will improve the quality of citizenship, reform the leaving cert away from the points race."

"Local government reform – tax raising powers and more power and responsibility needed."

"There needs to be consequences for people who are taking advantage of their position in ways that have a negative impact on the people they are representing."

"There needs to be a structure in place that allows people to express their opinion in a way that something constructive can be done to facilitate their opinions."

"We need real participation at a local level to have a more equal society."



In every regional session there were repeated demands for mechanisms to allow citizens to have a say in decision making. While participants acknowledged the exceptional access that the people of Ireland have to their local TDs, many believed that the relationship between elected representatives and their constituents had to change. What was needed, it was suggested, was a civic space where citizens could communicate collectively with their TDs and assess what work was being done in their name at a national level.

Reform of the structures that govern us, in particular, tackling the centralised nature of our political system, was another major issue which emerged. Devolving power to local government was seen as essential by many participants.

At every event, men and women called for much more accountability and transparency in public life.

Participants said that education is the key to helping people to understand what it means to be a citizen. Civic education would inform people as to the responsibilities as well as the rights that come with citizenship, to the betterment of society as a whole.

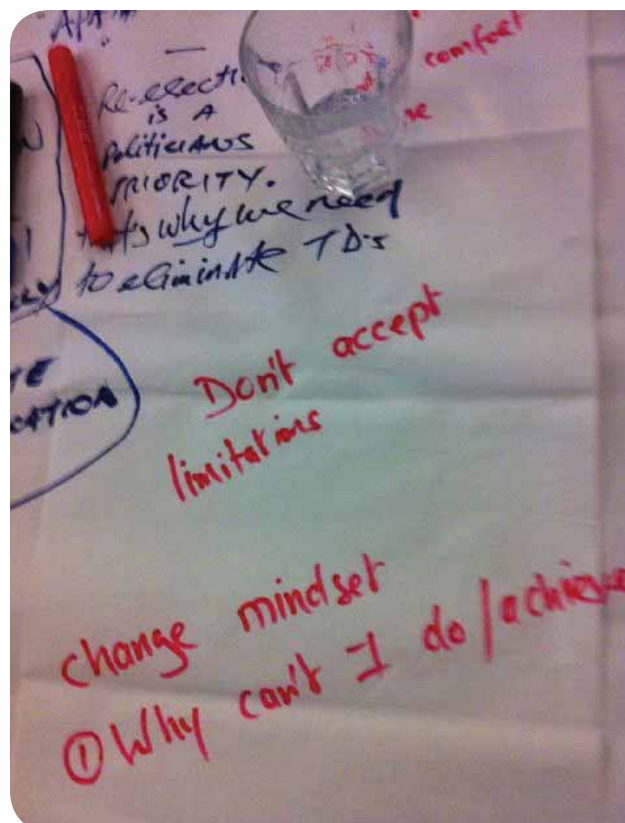
“From entitlement to responsibility.”
(Athlone)

“We stopped thinking collectively, we thought about things and personal gain rather than collective gain” (Tallaght)

“Teach children to ask why. Encourage and foster critical and creative thinking which contributes to accountability” (Letterkenny)

“Why cooperate with a ruling class that treats its citizens with contempt?”
(Blanchardstown)

Spontaneously and strikingly at every event across the country there were calls for a reformed civic education curriculum that would help to create a greater civic ethos.





Kilkenny – Transparency, accountability and honesty in public life

The inaugural citizens' event took place in Kilkenny. 119 people signed up online prior to the event with 120 people attending on the night itself. People could sign up either by registering online on www.wethecitizens.ie or by ringing the We the Citizens office. As with all the We the Citizens events, many travelled from beyond the host county to attend. The core themes of transparency, accountability and honesty in public life dominated discussions in Kilkenny.

There was a strong sentiment that politics in Ireland is too centralised and that more decisions need to be made at a local level. There was also a view expressed that people would be willing to pay more tax if it was spent and administered locally in an accountable and open fashion. The desire for a reformed civic education curriculum was another strong theme to emerge in Kilkenny. This was to prove a dominant theme at all the ensuing We the Citizens events across the country.

"We cannot reinvent the past but we can reinvent the future."

"We need more civic spirit. Moral philosophy and civics needs to be taught in secondary school."

"The problem is that in Ireland, money is the only measure of success."

"The political system as a decision-making structure rewards short term, popular decisions. Politicians are afraid to make the hard decisions."

Voices at the Kilkenny event, 10th May 2011





Cork – Citizens taking responsibility

At the second We the Citizens event in Cork, 115 people were in attendance (197 people had signed up online). What distinguished this gathering was that some of those who attended were already active in their community and involved in reform groups of their own e.g. Second Republic, Ballyhea Says No. There was a strong desire for citizens to have a greater involvement in political decision making between elections. One proposal was to hold elected representatives to account at regular public meetings with constituents.

There was also a call for more decision-making at a local level with many believing that if solutions could be found locally to issues, TDs could focus on national political questions. A demand for more transparency and accountability in public life echoed the sentiment expressed in Kilkenny. Active citizenship was deemed essential for the well-being of communities and the country. As a result, civic education in schools needed to be taught more rigorously from a younger age. There was a call in Cork for citizens themselves to take responsibility for the part they play in the political life of the country. If citizens want to enjoy greater levels of political decision-making, they must also take greater responsibility for the political choices they make.

“Not only do we need greater citizen engagement in politics but citizens also need to take greater responsibility in decision making.”

“We are responsible for the situation we are in now. We did not act as an electorate.”

“The three big words should be transparency, responsibility and accountability – we have none of those things.”

“Politics should not be a career, it should be something that you take time out of your career to serve in the short term and get out again.”

“Irish people are too loyal to political parties and need to take responsibility for the governments they elect.”

“Citizens need to pressure local constituency offices to get participatory models introduced into local government.”

Voices at the Cork event, 18th May 2011





Galway – Ireland’s value system

The third We the Citizens event in Galway was attended by 85 people although 160 had signed up online. RTÉ Radio One’s ‘Late Debate’ programme was broadcast live from the venue. The theme of participatory democracy emerged over and over again in different guises. Citizen participation, it was argued, should be defined not only by the act of voting. There should be alternative opportunities for people to make meaningful contributions to decision-making. The last two years of economic crisis had diminished the feeling of control people believed they had traditionally enjoyed over their lives. Participants called for alternative mechanisms of political engagement where their voices would be listened to.

In Galway, there was particular focus on Ireland’s value system. It was felt that the only way an altruistic commitment to the community would be valued was if a national mindset which centred on indicators of wealth as a measure of success was challenged. The need for a complete re-orientation of the education system and in particular the development of a more meaningful civic education curriculum was expressed.

Equality - or lack of it - particularly in the health system was addressed. When individuals discussed what they would be willing to sacrifice to achieve their vision of a fairer society, the issue of a re-introduction of local government rates was a prominent theme. But it was felt that such tax trade-offs would need to be balanced with discernable evidence of services.

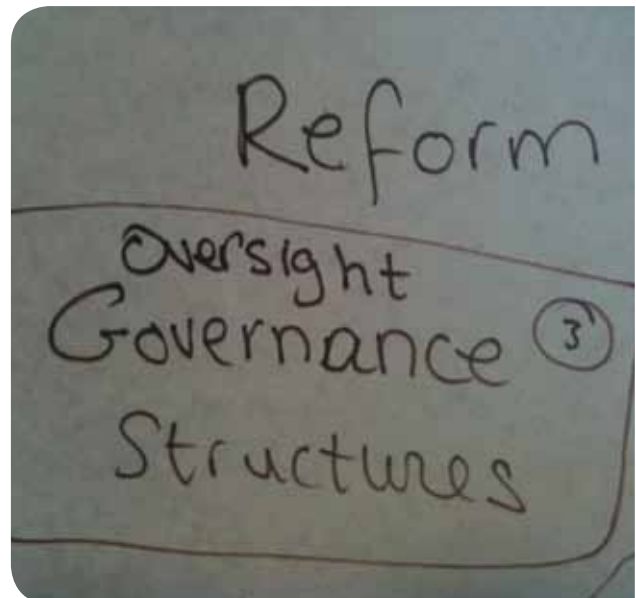
“Reform for the sake of reforming without looking at our value system is a wasted exercise.”

“If you have an active, interested, engaged people – then the government will react.”

“The most powerful speak, and then the rest of us don’t bother.”

“We asked the politicians to look after everything while we went on holidays and watched the X-Factor.”

Voices at the Galway event, 24th May 2011





Blanchardstown – Bottom-up participation and devolution of power to local level

The first Dublin We the Citizens event took place in Blanchardstown. Out of the 222 people who signed-up to attend the event, 110 attended. There were repeated calls for more bottom-up participation in democracy and more devolution of power to local level. As at previous events, citizens also asked for the opportunity to question their elected representatives at regular public fora on the decisions being made in their name.

Once again there were repeated demands for more open government, more transparency and accountability. Participants were frustrated that no one in public life seemed to be saying that ‘the buck stops here.’ There seemed to be no consequences for those whose mismanagement had undermined the common good.

Many in attendance spoke of the need for citizens, as well as politicians, to take responsibility for renewing Ireland, by becoming more involved in active citizenship. Many wanted to see structures developed that would give citizens a real role in decision-making in their communities. Some expressed a willingness to pay a ‘civic tax’ as long as it was to directly benefit the community. Again, there were repeated calls for more civics to be taught in schools from a very young age, including political culture and philosophy. It was felt

that this would foster a sense of both the rights and the responsibilities that come with citizenship and would benefit society as a whole.

“Bottom-up civic involvement is a cliché. We need mechanisms built into the Constitution to allow it to happen.”

“Maybe we all need to start social initiatives of our own, even if it starts in the pub with our mates.”

“We are governed as a people by a cabal of political parties who represent narrow self interests.”

“We need to give a time commitment to citizenship. We have to move from passive to active citizens.”

“There should be total transparency from everyone who gets public money.”

“Our country is run in a way that would not be acceptable for any club, community group or business.”

Voices at the Blanchardstown event, 31st May 2011





Tallaght – Political reform and the need for civic education

On the following evening, We the Citizens headed south to Tallaght for the fifth citizens' event. 118 people attended on the night out of the 255 people who had signed-up online. Tallaght confirmed a clear mood in the country for more citizen engagement with the political process. There was an acknowledgement that each citizen had a responsibility to get involved in the civic life of their communities. There was also a desire for political culture to change to ensure that TDs are elected to act in the common good, rather than devoting so much time to the needs of constituents.

There were repeated calls for more openness in political decision-making. In cases where bad decisions were taken due to incompetence, mismanagement or worse, the people who were responsible should be held accountable.

To give effect to these values, attendees at Tallaght focused on political reform and the need for greater civic education. There was a strong sense that the current Civic Social and Political Education (CSPE) course in second level schools is inadequate and that

an education on citizenship, ethics and how democracy works would be beneficial to society as a whole. There were also calls to redefine our values so that we become 'a society rather than an economy'. A willingness to pay higher taxes for better services emerged at many of the tables.

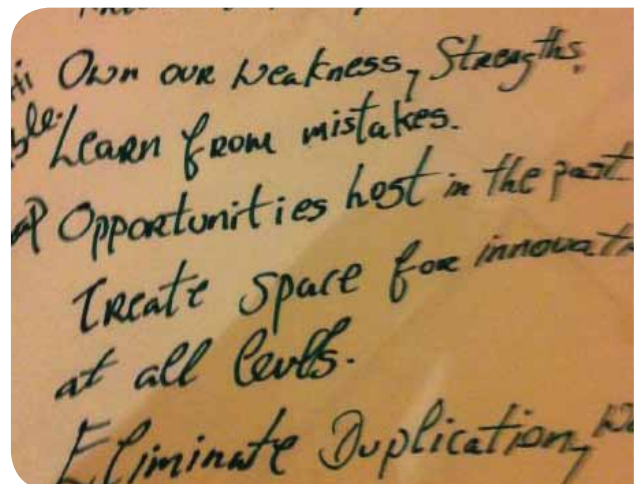
"People want first class health care, they want first class everything, but they will drive North to avoid VAT."

"Politicians aren't encouraged to think about the future, they're encouraged to think about 5 years hence."

"We (the citizens) were a part of the problem."

"The common good is the opposite of self interest – equality benefits everyone."

Voices at the Tallaght event, 1st June 2011





Letterkenny – More control over issues and decisions that affect our lives

A week later, the We the Citizens team were in the North-West. The Donegal event was held in Letterkenny. 75 people attended the event with 74 signing-up online prior to the event.

The need for citizens to have more control over issues and decisions that affect their lives was an overarching theme. This was expressed particularly strongly in Donegal as a sense of physical and psychological distance from the centre. A sense of powerlessness in the face of centralised government and wider global economic forces was coupled with an acknowledgement that each citizen has a personal responsibility to help to bring about change. This call to action echoed calls across the country for local citizens' fora where people would be allowed a say in decisions affecting their communities and where they could call in their elected politicians to hold them to account for the decisions made on their behalf.

Expressions of the need for active citizenship were accompanied by anger at what was perceived to be a failure of the institutions of the state to serve its citizens well. Much discussion focused on how to make the institutions that govern us more transparent in the way that decisions and appointments to top jobs are made, as well as more accountable when they get it wrong. Yet again, there were calls for more civic education in order

to teach children from an early age about citizenship and democracy, with the aim of encouraging children to think for themselves about political values.

“Make things local, then we know what’s going on. Local power has been completely and utterly eroded.”

“Schools don’t foster good thinking. It is all about answering the questions in the exam. In primary and secondary schools, students are taught not to question things and this feeds into the apathy of the nation.”

“The country has never been a republic in the original sense of the word, where everyone is treated equally.”

“We didn’t elect politicians to represent us at funerals.”

“We need ways of communicating with the government in between elections.”

“We need a system in place that brings information from the centre of power in the Oireachtas back to the local area.”

Voices at the Letterkenny event, 7th June 2011





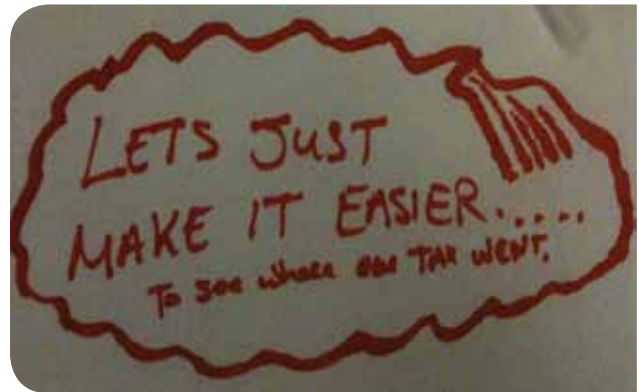
Athlone – Empowerment of local communities

The final citizens’ event took place in Athlone ten days prior to the national Citizens’ Assembly. 65 people attended while 58 people had signed-up online. A major theme that emerged in Athlone was the need for the empowerment of local communities by giving them increased responsibility in decision-making.

One concept that attracted a lot of attention was that of ‘civic republicanism’. This was expressed as a call for citizens to become more proactive not just in volunteering but also in the political and policy making decisions of our country. There was a hope expressed that people would have a say between elections in how their communities and their country are run through citizens’ fora and assemblies. While concern was articulated at the lack of accountability and transparency in the way we are governed, it was again acknowledged that citizens themselves have to take responsibility for challenging the system.

As at We the Citizens events in other parts of the country, many participants said they would be prepared to pay more taxes if they could see how money was being spent. There were also calls for a more progressive taxation system, which it was felt, would lead to a more equal and sustainable society.

The Athlone participants also shared a view that has been expressed all over Ireland for more civic education at school and bottom-up participation in democracy underpinned by an education system that challenges students to think for themselves rather than focusing on rote learning.



“Give people a little bit more responsibility and see where it takes us.”

“Education has ill-served us – the ability for critical thinking is wanting, especially in the context Ireland finds itself in.”

“We need to think of what we expect from politicians. We should consider the system into which they are voted.”

“People really do feel powerless. We’ve just come through a general election and people are still feeling powerless. That’s not a good sign of things.”

Voices at the Athlone event, 14th June 2011



Ensuring a citizen-led agenda for the Citizens' Assembly

The themes gathered from the regional sessions were collated by the academic team led by Professor David Farrell and fed into the next stage of the We the Citizens process – a national poll of 1,242 people in Ireland. It was conducted by Ipsos MRBI. The themes from the regional events were integrated into the questions for the survey. When the survey was carried out, all survey participants were asked whether they would be willing to attend a citizens' assembly later in the summer.

From those who had said they would be interested in attending, 150 were selected to attend the national Citizens' Assembly, 100 of whom could make it on the day. They represented a cross-section of Irish society in terms of age, gender, region and socio-economic background.

It was the Citizens' Assembly which was to be the conclusive test of whether deliberative democracy would prove to be a valuable model of democratic engagement in Ireland. The fact that the agenda of the national Citizens' Assembly had derived from the citizens' events, ensured that this initiative was truly citizen led.

2.2 The polling process

The polls were a critical instrument employed to measure whether statistically significant changes in people's views and attitudes emerged due to their taking part in the Citizens' Assembly. Before the Assembly was held, the first in a series of polls was carried out by professional polling company Ipsos MRBI. People were asked their views on a range of questions that had been raised in the regional events. The survey questionnaire can be seen in Appendix 4.

The process was as follows:

- In early June, We the Citizens commissioned a telephone poll from Ipsos MRBI of a representative sample (1,242) of the Irish population. The survey questions were based on the issues emerging from the regional events
- Ipsos MRBI recruited 100 people from this original sample of 1,242 people to attend the Citizens' Assembly. It was originally hoped that up to 150 Citizens' Assembly members would be recruited. To that end, Ipsos MRBI provided a list of 195 respondents who had indicated an interest in being involved in the Citizens' Assembly, when they were polled originally. Given the tight timing and the date of the event falling in the summer months, recruitment proved to be quite a challenge, which resulted in the recruiting of 100 members, 50 less than the original target, but still statistically valid
- As Table 2.1 shows, the 100 participants were nonetheless a good representative sample of the Irish population (age, gender, region, socio-economic background)
- From the original survey sample of 1,242 respondents, another separate group of 250 were sent the briefing documents relating to one of the sessions of the Citizens' Assembly, in this case, the Sunday morning sessions on the economy. The objective was to try to separate out information and deliberation effects, (i.e. whether it was receiving balanced expert information on the topics, or having the chance to discuss and deliberate which was creating any opinion changes)
- In the weeks following the Citizens' Assembly, Ipsos MRBI carried out a second series of surveys, as follows:
 - They re-interviewed the Citizens' Assembly members (the 'experimental group')
 - They re-interviewed as many as possible of the 250 respondents who had received the briefing documents (resulting in 101 respondents)



- They re-interviewed another 353 of the original 1,242 respondents
- They carried out a fresh set of interviews with a sample of 500 respondents who had not been surveyed at all in the first round (were not part of the 1,242 initially polled).

In all instances, precisely the same survey questions were asked. The reason for all this survey work is to measure scientifically the impact on the Citizens' Assembly members of their involvement in the Citizens' Assembly.

Technical definition of a control group: A group of subjects or conditions that is matched as closely as possible with an experimental group, but is not exposed to any experimental treatment. A control group is used as a standard against which to detect and measure changes that may occur in the experimental group due to experimental treatment.

As described above, there were a number of 'control' groups established whose survey responses were compared with those of the Citizens' Assembly members. The control groups were:

- 101 respondents surveyed twice, who in the interim had been given additional information about the economic and fiscal issues discussed on the Sunday of the Citizens' Assembly
- 353 respondents surveyed twice who neither received any information from We the Citizens nor were they involved in the Citizens' Assembly
- a fresh survey of 500 respondents surveyed only on one occasion. The purpose of this fresh control group was to allow for the possibility that having been asked the questions before might have affected the respondents opinions over time.

Table 2.1 | Demographics of Citizens' Assembly members

GENDER	Citizens' Assembly %	Population %
Men	50	49.5*
Women	50	50.5*

REGION	Citizens' Assembly %	Population %
Dublin	34	28
Munster	25	28
Leinster	22	26
Connaught / Ulster	19	18

AGE GROUPINGS	Citizens' Assembly %	Population %
18-24	6	12
23-34	20	23
35-44	19	20
45-54	18	16
55-64	19	14
65+	18	16

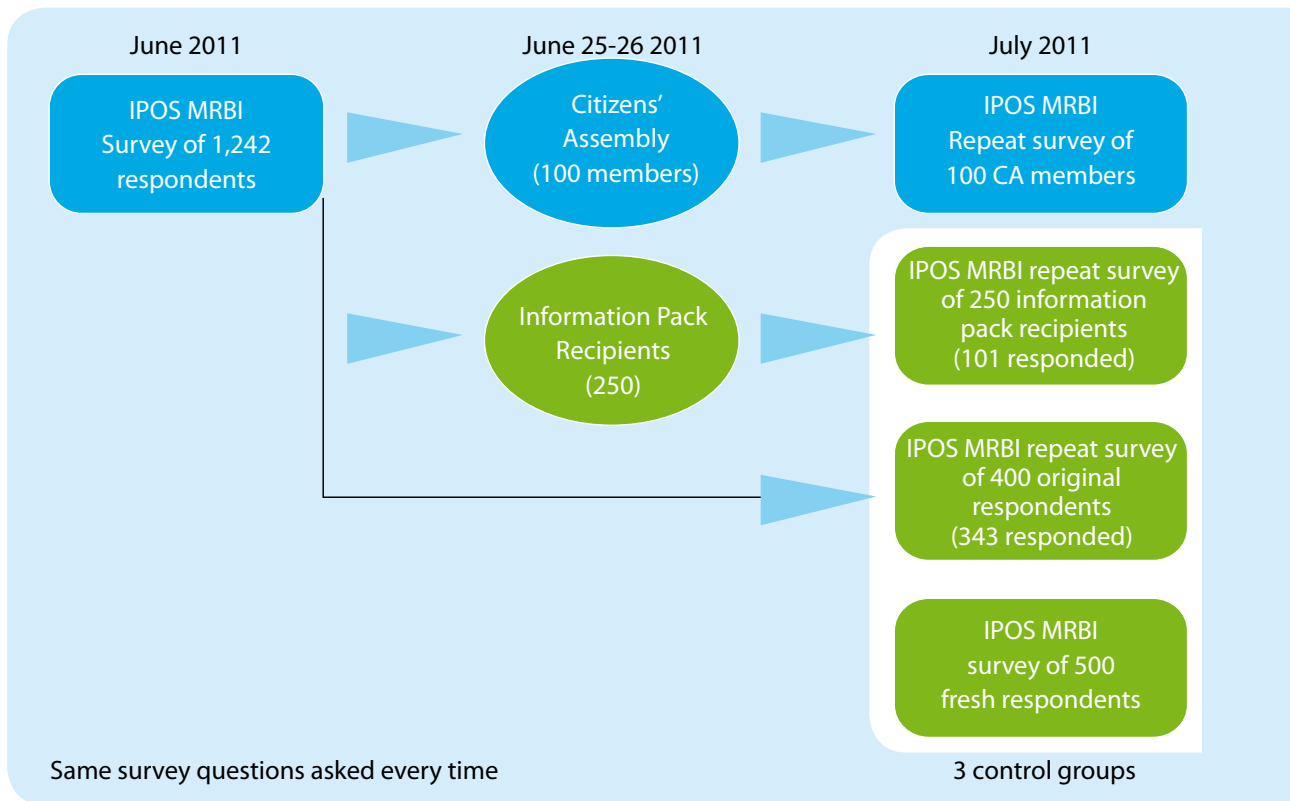
SOCIAL CLASS	Citizens' Assembly %	Population %
AB	18	13
C1	30	27
C2	23	23
DE	23	27
F1-F2	6	7

• *CSO preliminary figures for 2011

Standard Research Classifications	
A	Upper Middle Class
B	Middle Class
C1	Lower Middle Class
C2	Skilled Working Class
D	Other Working Class
E	Lowest Levels
F1	Large Farmers
F2	Small Farmers



Fig 2.1 | Surveys carried out



The purpose of the control groups

The purpose of having the group who were sent the briefing document, was to separate out the effect of new information from the act of deliberation. With this we can determine if people's opinions shifted as a result of the information they were sent or because of the act of deliberation itself. We know of no previous experiment in deliberative democracy that has tried to disentangle these two possible mechanisms for change.

Furthermore the experimental research design allows us to take account of the impact of being surveyed. There is a legitimate fear that when you measure something, you affect it. So if a person is surveyed on their political opinions, the mere act of being surveyed makes them more interested in politics, and this could also affect how they behave before being resurveyed. By including a large (500) fresh control sample that were only surveyed once after the Citizens' Assembly, we were able to measure the extent to which surveying caused

changes to the respondents' views.

In summary, the expectation was that:

- there would be significant shifts in opinion among the Citizens' Assembly participants,
- perhaps also some smaller shifts among those respondents who received the briefing document, and
- little or no change among the other survey respondents.

We found that these expected results were very much in line with what we discovered when we carried out the polls, showing that deliberation does have a significant impact on opinions and attitudes of those taking part. The detailed findings will be discussed in more depth in the next chapter.



2.3 The Citizens' Assembly pilot

The June 2011 Citizens' Assembly was designed as a pilot. Clearly, in a full-fledged Citizens' Assembly things would be different: the government of the day would set an agenda for the Citizens' Assembly to consider, and it would also be made clear what would happen to the outcome of the assembly.

The Citizens' Assembly also differed from a full-scale Citizens' Assembly in how the agenda was set. The agenda for the Citizens' Assembly was set on the basis of the topics and issues raised in the regional events that had been held around the country in May and early June.

Those who attended the Citizens' Assembly were taken from the group of 1,242 people polled in the original survey. They had not attended the regional events and were not representing any area or group. They were individuals chosen randomly, the only selection criterion, other than that they be part of the original survey group, was that the overall group be as representative as possible of the Irish population. As can be seen from the figures in table 2.1 on page 31, it is really only the 18-24 age group that was not attracted in the proportion one would have liked, this despite significant efforts to ensure proportionality.



Holding a citizens' assembly

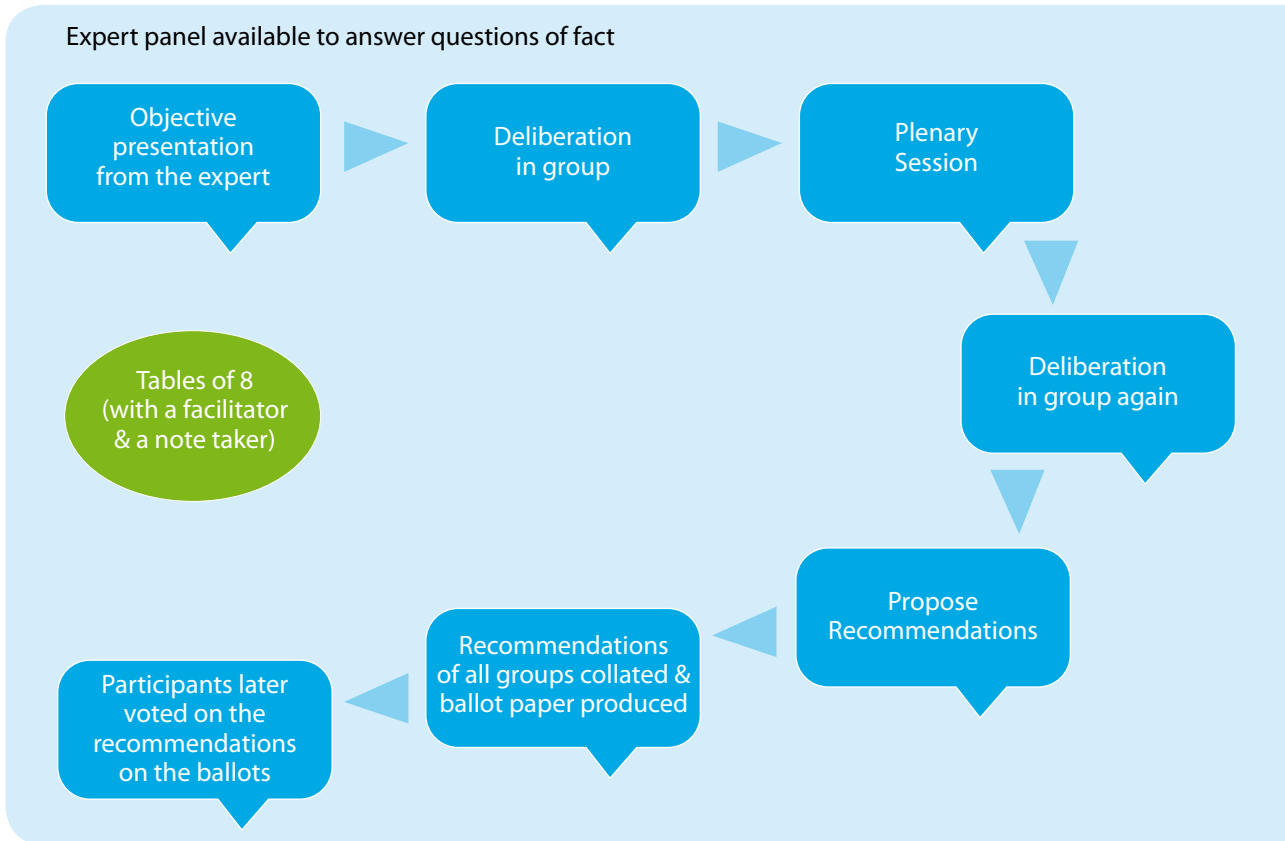
In running a citizens' assembly, there are two important considerations:

- To provide the participants with detailed, unbiased information that will help them to reach informed positions - both in terms of briefing documents and access to a panel of experts who can answer technical questions and provide context and background
- To set up the conditions, and allow sufficient time, for the participants to be able to deliberate fully on a question.

With the pilot Citizens' Assembly, we had an additional factor to think about: measuring change if it occurred and to what extent.



Fig 2.2 | The deliberative process



How the deliberations were organised in the Citizens' Assembly

- Citizens' Assembly members were distributed into tables of eight, each having a facilitator and note-taker, with paper tablecloths and markers to give the Citizens' Assembly members an opportunity to write down their own unmediated thoughts and comments
- The session started with a brief presentation by one or more experts, summarizing the key arguments that were set out in the briefing documents circulated the evening before. The purpose of the briefing documents and the expert panel was to provide the participants with the background information they needed to have an informed discussion
- The Citizens' Assembly members were then given an opportunity to deliberate among themselves, with the experts available to answer additional questions of detail or fact
- This was then followed by a plenary session, in which the Citizens' Assembly members were invited to comment on their initial sets of recommendations. In most cases, the tables nominated a spokesperson to share the table's recommendations with the assembly, though there were also individual contributions
- The Citizens' Assembly members were then given another opportunity to deliberate in small groups to finalise and word their recommendations
- As the session drew to a close they were asked to propose recommendations about the issue at hand and these were gathered in for each table
- Once the recommendations had been collated, a ballot paper was produced and the Citizens' Assembly members were given an opportunity to vote on their recommendations.

To maximize the capacity of measuring the impact of this pilot Citizens' Assembly, it was decided to break



the content of the Assembly into two main themes. The Saturday session focused on a series of political reform issues. On Sunday the question of whether to focus on tax rises or spending cuts in resolving our current economic crisis was discussed. The role of the expert panel was to provide a balanced introduction to the topics being discussed, so that participants could have an informed discussion. Participants were also free to ask questions of the experts during the course of the deliberation, an opportunity that was actively taken up by citizens across all the sessions of the assembly. The questions were brought to the experts by the note-takers and the most appropriate expert went over to the table to answer the question. The panel of experts and the academic team answered hundreds of questions during the deliberations.

The nature and tone of the debates

Over the two days, the Citizens' Assembly members were asked to deliberate on the following questions:

On Saturday morning

- Should our TDs do less constituency work?
- Should we have a different electoral system to choose our TDs?
- Should we have fewer TDs?

On Saturday afternoon

- Should the parties be forced to field more women candidates?
- Should there be limits on how long a TD can serve in the Dáil?
- Should we allow the appointment of ministers who have not been elected to the Dáil?

On Sunday morning

- In dealing with the economic crisis, should we focus more on tax rises or spending cuts?

- Among the specific issues the government is talking about are the following: property taxes, water charges, sale of state assets and student fees. What do you think?

These questions were identified based on the subjects raised most often at regional events. In a government-mandated Citizens' Assembly, the whole weekend would likely be spent discussing one question, as in the British Columbia example in 2007. For the pilot assembly, a larger number and range of questions were chosen for pragmatic reasons. It was important that the topics chosen were ones on which there was a divergence of opinion. Where there was large scale consensus, a shift in opinion was unlikely.

"What's really interesting is who chooses the candidates at a local level. We want a greater say in nominating the candidates."

"There's a feeling that the TDs end up in the constituency doing the donkey work for someone on the dole, somebody looking for planning permission. We have councillors and paid civil servants to do that. If they're not functioning, that's not the TD's issue. The system should be put right first. It's not the TD's job to do that."

"We want to feel represented, but we don't. We want to empower local government and get councils doing what they're supposed to be doing. Let them raise their own funds so somebody in Cork doesn't feel like they're paying for the Luas in Dublin."

"The main issue is accountability in the Dáil system. We feel that TDs should sign a code of conduct that's legally binding and can't be got around. So if they're caught doing something – they're signed up to a code of conduct and fired on the spot. It should bring more integrity to the Dáil."

"The idea of civic education included in the national curriculum in order that we can learn how to better govern ourselves and have our own say – it would be a wonderful thing."



The general tone of the debates was constructive, with participants listening to each other's views and giving each other the opportunity to speak, even when their views were very different. The groups made good use of the experts, to clarify specific points and to provide international or best practice examples, when, for instance, there was a point or a disagreement on which the group was stuck. As one would expect, some groups were more talkative than others. There were a small number of instances where a very strong personality dominated the discussion, though generally this tended not to happen, as the facilitators were able to manage the dynamic and keep some balance in terms of contribution within the groups. In general, people were satisfied with the agenda and how the discussions were moderated. However, on the Sunday, there was some dissatisfaction expressed by one table because they felt that they had not been allowed to discuss the possibility of Ireland defaulting on its EU/IMF obligations, rather than the decisions to be made as a consequence of Ireland's massive debt burden. There was some support for this point of view when it was raised in the plenary session.

"One of the issues that came up on our table, is that we feel there's an elephant in the room here and that is the debts that we owe the banks and the fact that a bank like Anglo Irish – a speculative investment bank was underwritten by the state. And we're talking about a third of national debt has gone to pay off these debts which should not be the responsibility of the Irish citizens and I feel that this is one of the biggest issues facing the country right now."

"Selling off assets is not an option – you only have to look at the sale of eircom which was a tragedy and which shouldn't have happened for the Irish people."

The learning point here is in relation to how questions are framed to the Assembly and how well facilitators understand the latitude that needs to be afforded within the discussions in an event like a citizens' assembly.

The Saturday debates went well, with the groups producing a small number of recommendations that

were fairly consistent across the tables. This meant that a simple ballot paper of reasonable length could be produced and percentages produced. It is important to note that at the Citizens' Assembly, the voting was not a core element of the scientific process. The We the Citizens team chose to add in a ballot at the end of each session to give the participants in the pilot assembly some sense of completing a process. In a real citizens' assembly, the recommendations would be sent back time and time again to the participants for further deliberation and refining.

"Water rates - there was a mixed feeling about that but we'd also like to point out that so much water is wasted through bad infrastructure throughout the country"

"Limit the term of the senior public servants because public servants have been there for years and years and the quality of advice coming up that avenue might be better with a change in that aspect of the system"

The Sunday debates produced more fractured and inconsistent results and recommendations, which made it hard to create a meaningful ballot. We discuss this experience and what was learnt from it in more detail later in the document.

"Having a better gender balance in the Dáil would be a very possible thing and we'd all like to see that. On the other side, by bringing it under the quota system it might demean the position of the lady TD after being elected and therefore they may not achieve the heights in politics that they would have otherwise"

"The most important quality of TDs should be whether or not they are any good, which should be irrespective of gender"

"More representative parliament in general would be preferable, not just gender balance, but that minority groups are considered. Across the board, age should be considered, it's all well and good to have politicians with a wealth of experience but if you don't bring newer people in, who can be more idealistic..."



A week after the Citizens' Assembly, its members were invited to the RTE television studios in Dublin to discuss their experience of it, on a special 'Prime Time' programme. While some doubts were expressed about

whether the pilot would be adopted as a model of democratic engagement, the general consensus among participants was that the experience had been positive and worthwhile.

Prime Time Special on the Citizens' Assembly, RTÉ Television, 4th July 2011

*I know I had the vote but I didn't feel that I had a voice. **Annette Ferguson, Blackrock, Co Louth***

I'm just a regular John citizen, but like multiples of thousands of John and Joan citizens over the last decade and a half I have become very disillusioned with the disconnect that has developed between the body politic and the people who are there that are meant to represent us. So when I found the opportunity to join the Citizens' Assembly I said to myself that it is better to light one candle than curse the darkness. It may or may not prove to be influential in the end, but it is better to do something than nothing at all, and I think that this organisation could be a very useful adjunct to the status quo body politic in this country. If they listen to us perhaps we can fill the middle ground between the top and the bottom which is very, very badly needed.

PJ Walsh, Ballymahon, Co. Longford

I think it is very important to have elected people make the executive decisions but I felt the [citizens' assembly] was a very good way of listening to the ordinary people - not people who have set up blogs or are in pressure groups. One thing that we found was that what everybody wanted was for politicians to sort out the system, not somebody's medical card.

Tom Cavanagh, Shankill, Co Dublin



2.4 Communicating 'We the Citizens'

Communication and participatory democracy

In any participatory democracy initiative, communication and awareness-raising are important parts of the process. In many cases, where the concept is new to a country, region, community or group, the initiatives have to work not only to highlight events or opportunities to participate, but they also need to educate their audience about why they might want to participate. The key communications goal has therefore to be to ensure that as great a spread as possible of citizens are aware of the initiative and understand its purpose, even before they are invited to take part.

We the Citizens – communications approach

We the Citizens launched on April 12th 2011 with the aim of testing whether deliberative democracy in the form of a citizens' assembly would work in Ireland.

As the concept was new to most people in Ireland, communications played a large role in the roll-out of the We the Citizens initiative. Without a government mandate, without the national network that a political party or other group might have, the communications task was significant. A major part of the initial communications had to be about encouraging participation and promoting the idea that everyone, no



matter who they were, had a voice that they could use to bring about change in Ireland.

“Speak Up for Ireland”

The tagline chosen for We the Citizens was “Speak Up for Ireland” and the communications approach was very much to seek to rally people to participate in the initiative and to have their voice heard through this new pilot process.

In order to ascertain the value of the model, We the Citizens first needed to establish the extent to which people here would be willing to get involved. The first step was to issue an open invitation to participate in the initiative. It was issued at the launch of We the Citizens, which was the first major step in its communications strategy.

At the launch, We the Citizens announced its aims, objectives and its programme of public events to an invited audience of interested parties from the public, private and NGO sectors and to representatives of the national media. The wethecitizens.ie website, YouTube, Facebook and Twitter feeds were also launched on the same day with #citizens even trending on Twitter on the day.

Coinciding as it did with a heightened public appetite for reform and renewal, the launch attracted a

significant level of media interest. It was carried on RTÉ television and radio news bulletins, as well as by independent radio stations, and was covered by the political staff of the national broadsheet newspapers. RTÉ’s interest in the initiative was to continue as the public programme was rolled out, as did that of the national broadsheets, particularly The Irish Times, as well as the relevant local media.

The communications approach was to concentrate initially on the participation element of the We the Citizens initiative, rather than on the research aspect of the project.

It was felt that an overemphasis on the political science element might have discouraged people from attending what were genuinely open agenda public events. The aim was to encourage people of all backgrounds to participate. We the Citizens chose, therefore, to highlight the value of people taking part at the events. The ideas and concerns expressed would, after all, inform the wider survey questions and, in turn, the agenda of the Citizens’ Assembly.

Although We the Citizens had never intended to be, nor to portray itself as a campaigning organisation, the call to participate was misinterpreted by some observers as a call to join a political crusade. This created some negative commentary and misunderstanding in relation to the goal and purpose of the initiative.

Communications tools used by We the Citizens

Promoting the regional events

While national coverage of the initiative was important, it was essential for the team to promote the citizens’ events where they happened - Kilkenny, Cork, Galway, Blanchardstown, Tallaght, Letterkenny and Athlone. To encourage the widest possible attendance at the regional events, advance press releases were issued to the relevant local newspapers, which also commissioned

articles by the Chairperson and other members of the team.

There was considerable regional variation in advance coverage of the events. In Dublin, there was enough to spur on high numbers of online sign-ups for the Tallaght and Blanchardstown events. KCLR Radio played a prominent role in promoting the inaugural event in Kilkenny.

In addition to local media, the We the Citizens team spent time in each town prior to the event, meeting volunteers who had contacted We the Citizens online



and creating local support for the initiative. Volunteers in each location helped to poster their town and spread the word amongst their communities about the upcoming event. The We the Citizens team met with people in community groups, youth groups, chambers of commerce, local businesses, centres for the unemployed etc. inviting them to spread the word and to come along to the events. Leafleting the towns proved an effective way of getting the word out and We the Citizens distributed thousands of fliers on the streets, in shopping centres and in dole queues, with the help of volunteers.

Advertising – online advertising disappointing but leafleting worked

Events were advertised on the sides of buses in several locations but, ultimately, it was the help of volunteers and contacts on the ground coupled with local media coverage that helped to ensure a good turnout. Online advertising was less successful than the team expected. While it worked well in large urban centres such as Cork, it seemed to be ineffective in places such as Letterkenny, Athlone and Kilkenny. We the Citizens focused instead on local radio advertising. That, along with meeting with community groups, submitting articles to newspapers, leafleting and postering the towns proved the best strategy to ensure large numbers attended the events.

Website – lynch-pin of the communications strategy

The website www.wethecitizens.ie was the most important tool in the communications strategy. Designed by Bluebloc web designers, Marc Doyle and Odran Graby, on the website people could find information on the initiative, sign up for the regional events and afterwards view recordings of the events. The website offered feedback from each location visited by We the Citizens as well as a forum to debate the concerns and ideas being shared at the citizens' events around the country. The Facebook page was busy throughout our public programme, as was the Twitter feed.

A similar approach was adopted for the national Citizens' Assembly with a camera crew recording proceedings and the final recommendations of the citizens being communicated via email and post to them.

Media Facts/Stats:

We the Citizens website had 28,065 visits and 104,670 page views over a 6 month period

We the Citizens YouTube channel received 10,512 views, the Twitter feed attracted over 2,000 followers and the Facebook page achieved 1,317 'likes' in a 6-month period.

Use of video

Online video communication played an integral role in disseminating 'We the Citizens' activities to a larger audience (<http://www.wethecitizens.ie/video/>). We the Citizens created two animated online videos, the first to explain the initiative, the second to explain what it achieved. The first video went online on the same day that the initiative launched and was shared widely on Facebook and Twitter. The idea was that the video would reach young people and those who might not read broadsheet newspapers or watch current affairs programming.

Filmmaker, Luke McManus, was engaged by We the Citizens to create short films from every citizens' event. The films captured the 'feel' of each event showing some of the people who attended, why they came, what they hoped to contribute to the event and what they thought about the format. Each video was uploaded onto the website within a few days of the event itself and sent to the participants via email along with a short written report of the themes and issues that emerged on the night.



The videos were also a useful way of demonstrating deliberative democracy in action. Many who attended a We the Citizens meeting did so out of curiosity and a desire to become involved in the renewal of their country. They may have read a newspaper article or seen a television report. By going onto the www.wethecitizens.ie website and seeing video reports from prior events – it gave them a sense of what to expect before they attended. Filming also went on throughout the Citizens' Assembly, serving to convey the spirit of the initiative as well as bringing the debate to public attention.

Widespread media coverage over 6-month period

The aim from the outset was to bring the concerns and ideas being shared at the citizens' events to a wider audience. Press releases were issued after each meeting outlining the main themes of discussion, resulting in considerable media coverage of each event, locally and nationally.

The Irish Times reported from the Kilkenny, Blanchardstown and Athlone events. The Irish Examiner covered the Cork event. RTÉ Television News carried the inaugural citizens' event in Kilkenny (10th May 2011) and the Citizens' Assembly (26th June 2011). RTÉ Radio One's Late Debate programme was broadcast live from the Galway event (24th May 2011) and featured many of the participants. There were a number of op-ed pieces written by members of the We the Citizens team in the national broadsheets both before and after the Citizens' Assembly. A special programme on RTÉ Television's flagship Prime Time programme (4th July 2011) was devoted to a follow-up programme on the Citizens' Assembly when assembly members were invited to the studios in Donnybrook to share their experiences with the wider public.

Summarising the communications experience

The communications task for We the Citizens was significant. In terms of meeting the core goals, of getting participation and involvement from a wide and varied group of people across the country either

in the preparation for or in taking part in the Citizens' Assembly, it was very successful. However, there were also issues to be addressed - as a privately funded initiative, without a government mandate, there was some understandable, if misplaced, cynicism about the initiative.

For any organisation or body seeking to do something similar, the learning point is that the communications element of the process is extremely important and represents a large part of the effort and the budget. A broad based, multi-media approach needs to be used, which gives consideration to the access that different demographic groups have to the various forms of communication.





In a project such as We the Citizens, which set out to test whether deliberative democracy could work in Ireland, the results of the academic aspect of the project are of crucial importance. In that regard, the project produced clear evidence that given access to balanced expert information and sufficient time, a randomly selected group of people could make reasoned decisions on important social and political issues.

In addition, there are also some other outputs from the process: the outcomes of the deliberations at the pilot assembly itself, and the results of a broader range of survey questions that reveal the views and preferences of the people of Ireland in summer 2011 on a range of social and political issues.

In this chapter, each is examined separately.

3.1 Outcome 1:

What the results tell us about whether deliberative democracy really works

As set out in the previous chapters, the key objective of We the Citizens was to test whether deliberative democracy works, and whether there are clear and measureable impacts on the members of the Citizens' Assembly due to their involvement in it.

As was mentioned previously, a deliberative process such as participation in a citizens' assembly is expected to impact on participants in at least two ways:

- First, shifts should be seen in what is technically called 'efficacy and interest', i.e. in how much trust citizens have in the political process and also in their interest in the political system, and their willingness to get involved in politics
- Second, an impact should be seen on the citizens' attitudes to the topics debated in the deliberative process. By that we mean a greater appreciation

and understanding of the difficult choices involved in politics. People are often not appreciative of the impact certain policy decisions could have on other related areas.

Therefore, not only should citizens who participate in deliberation events become more engaged and more willing to get involved with politics, it should also be expected that their level of knowledge will increase and that they will change their views on issues about which they have never thought very deeply, prior to participating.

As described in previous chapters, the We the Citizens initiative combined a citizens' assembly with extensive polling, both of the 100 people involved in the Citizens' Assembly and of control groups. This is what allowed us to assess and measure the changes we saw in the attitudes of participants in the Citizens' Assembly.



Key results

- After the Citizens' Assembly, participants showed greater interest in politics, and also more willingness to discuss and become more involved in politics
- They felt more positive about the ability of ordinary people to influence politics
- There were large shifts in the opinions of Citizens' Assembly members after they had deliberated on economic issues, such as tax, spending and the sale of state assets
- There were also important shifts in the opinions of Citizens' Assembly members regarding the role of Dáil deputies. Deliberation led to a wish that TDs would concentrate more on national legislative and policy work and less on local service
- These opinion shifts are statistically significant and are distinctly different from those of the various control groups. In other words, we can be confident that the changes we observed are not random or a result of chance: it is the participation in the Citizens' Assembly that is causing these changes.



42

Statistical significance

In simple terms, when we talk about something being significant we mean that it is important, relevant or big. In statistics significance has a special meaning that is not the same as importance, relevance or size. Here it means that something is likely not due to chance. So if there is a 'statistically significant' difference between the position people held after the Citizens' Assembly compared to before, we can say with confidence that the change is real. This is like the margin of error reported in opinion polls, where an increase in the party's support outside the margin of error is said to be a real increase, not as a result of the sample.





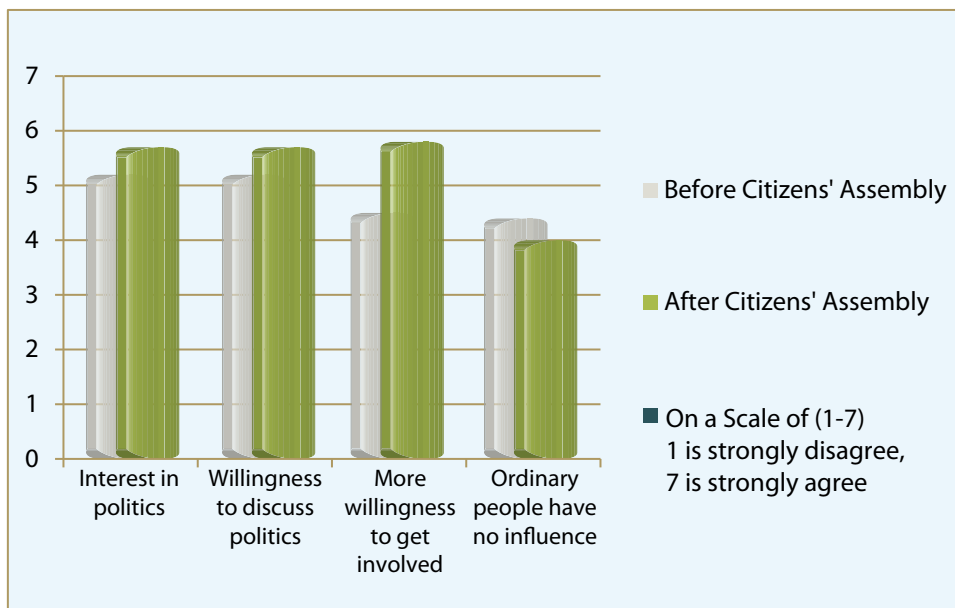
Looking at the results in detail

As one can see in Fig. 3.1 below, there was a marked increase in the trust and interest of Citizens' Assembly participants in politics. After the Citizens' Assembly, the members showed greater interest in politics, and also more willingness to discuss and become more involved in politics. These opinion shifts are statistically significant and are distinctly different from those of the various control groups. In other words, the changes that

we observe are not random or a result of chance: it is the participation in the Citizens' Assembly that is causing these changes.

One can also see that the participants came away with more belief in their influence on the political system than they had going in and were much more willing to become involved.

Fig 3.1 | Trust and Interest in Politics (Citizens' Assembly Members)



	Before Citizens' Assembly	After Citizens' Assembly
Interest in Politics	5.22	5.7
Willingness to discuss politics	5.2	5.65
More willing to get involved in politics	4.51	5.74
Ordinary people have no influence?	4.42	4





Perceptions about political influence

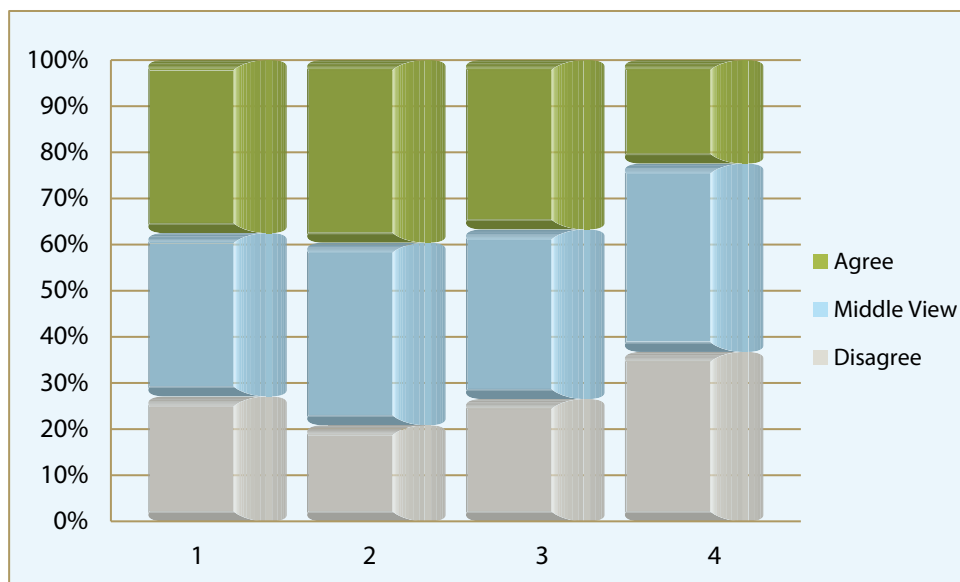
– men and women differ

The members of the Citizen’s Assembly were asked to comment on the statement “people like me have no influence on politics”. The expectation, based on research in the area of political efficacy (essentially the belief of participants in their ability to influence outcomes), is that a citizen’s trust, whether male or female, should increase in response to the opportunity to debate issues.

In reality, when we surveyed the Citizens’ Assembly participants at the beginning of the process, we found that women and men were broadly similar in their subjective efficacy, i.e. the extent to which they felt they could have an impact. In the final survey process,

we determined that, while the male participant’s efficacy fell very slightly (the fall was not statistically significant), the efficacy of the women participants showed a statistically significant increase. From this, we can reasonably conclude that the deliberative method is one which encourages women’s involvement and would support the evidence that women are discouraged from political participation by the adversarial nature of politics.

Fig 3.2 | Perceptions of influence – men and women differ



Green: Agree Blue: Middle ground view Grey: Disagree

- 1. Male Citizens’ Assembly before 3. Female Citizens’ Assembly before
- 2. Male Citizens’ Assembly after 4. Female Citizens’ Assembly after



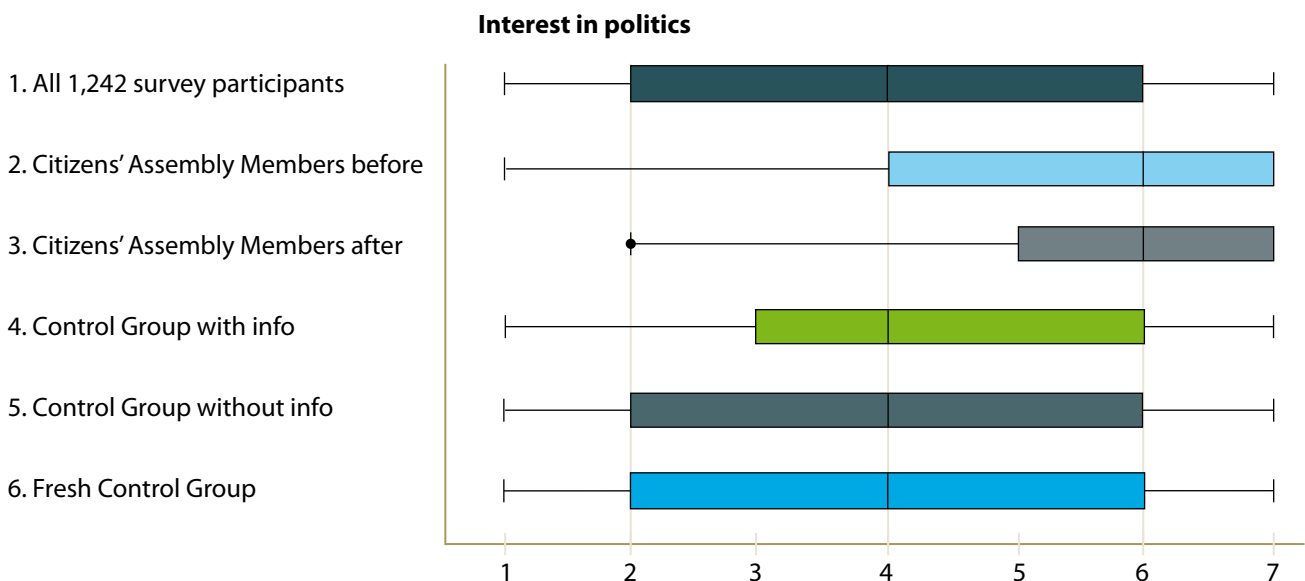
A significant increase in interest in politics

To give a sense of just how different the trends are for the Citizens' Assembly members, Figure 3.3 shows a 'boxplot' which displays the distribution of answers among the different groups for the statement 'I am very interested in politics', for which the response 1 means very little interest and 7 is a great deal of interest.

With a box-plot, a large spread (extended box) shows very differing views among those who were questioned. Where views were more consistent, the responses are all gathered at one end of the plot. Looking at the box-plot below, one can see that as you might expect, the Citizens' Assembly members started with a higher level of interest than the control groups – they did after all, give a whole weekend to a political pilot. However, after the Citizens' Assembly this interest was even stronger. Also interesting is the fact that there was almost no movement in the other groups, except those who had received the briefing information, which is as we would have expected. In both cases, the increase was statistically significant, but with the Citizens' Assembly members it was more pronounced.



Fig 3.3 | Box-plot of interest in politics





Large effects on attitudes of Citizens' Assembly members on economic issues

Perhaps the most interesting findings were in the substantive areas of debate over the weekend. We found large effects on the beliefs and attitudes of the Citizens' Assembly members when it came to economic attitudes.

One purpose of deliberation is to expose participants to the difficult choices politicians face. The classic trade-off faced is between tax and spending. Do we tax more and continue to spend, or do we cut spending and leave taxes as they are?

Traditionally, voters are in favour of spending cuts, but against increasing taxes. To force the issue of thinking in terms of the hard choices between the two, the respondents to the We the Citizens surveys were asked where they positioned themselves on a 7-point scale on the following statement: 'The government should increase taxes a little and cut much more on health and social services'.

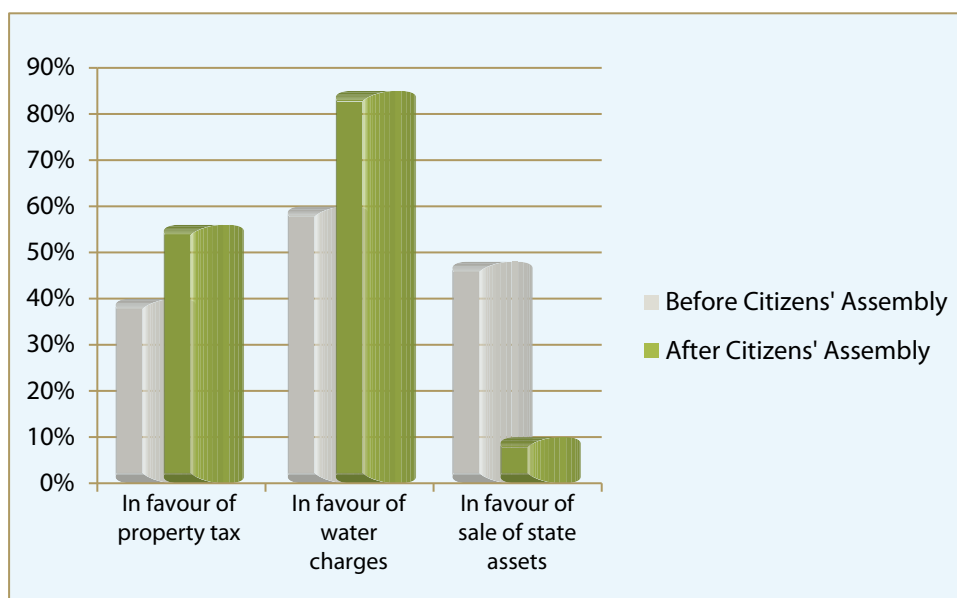
It was important that the information imparted to the Citizens' Assembly members was impartial. To that end they heard from two expert witnesses representing the two sides of this argument – Dr. Nat O'Connor of TASC and Fergal O'Brien of IBEC.

Citizens more willing to accept tax increases

The evidence shows clearly that the Citizens' Assembly participants became more willing to accept tax increases. There were shifts of opinion among the

various control groups but these were less dramatic, with those respondents who received the briefing document on the economy coming second to the Citizens' Assembly participants in terms of the degree of shift.

Fig 3.4 | Opinions shift on economic issues among Citizens' Assembly members





As Figure 3.4 reveals, the Citizens' Assembly members moved to a large extent on every economic question we asked. In all instances these shifts were statistically significant; by contrast, there was hardly any movement over time in our various control groups and any changes that did occur were not significant.

Shift from minority to majority in favour of property tax and water charges

When asked about whether they were in favour or opposed to the introduction of a property tax there was a large and significant shift from 40 per cent in favour to 56 per cent. A similar shift took place among the members in their attitude to the introduction of water charges (up from 60 per cent before the Citizens' Assembly to 85 per cent afterwards).

Massive shift against sale of State assets

The question on the sale of state assets saw the most significant movement of all as a result of the deliberation. Where less than half (48 per cent) of the

Citizens' Assembly members had been in favour before the weekend, this plummeted to just 10 per cent by the end of the weekend.

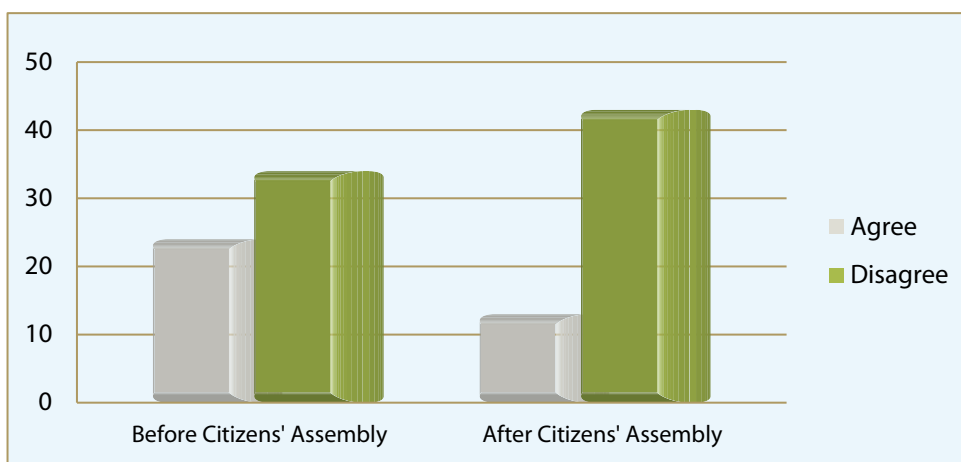
The Role of a TD

Participants in the Citizens' Assembly were asked a series of questions regarding the role of TDs; who they should be, what they should do, how they should represent citizens.

The Citizens' Assembly was asked to comment on the statement 'The ability of TDs to provide a local service is a strength'. The results of the Citizens' Assembly placed more weight on national legislative and policy work and less on local service. Indeed, the results showed a further marked and statistically significant decrease in support for the statement in the post-Citizens' Assembly survey.

It is clear that the opportunity to discuss the role of TDs increased participants' belief in the importance of national issues and the wish that TDs would concentrate more on their legislative and policy making role.⁷

Fig 3.5 | Local service from TDs is a strength

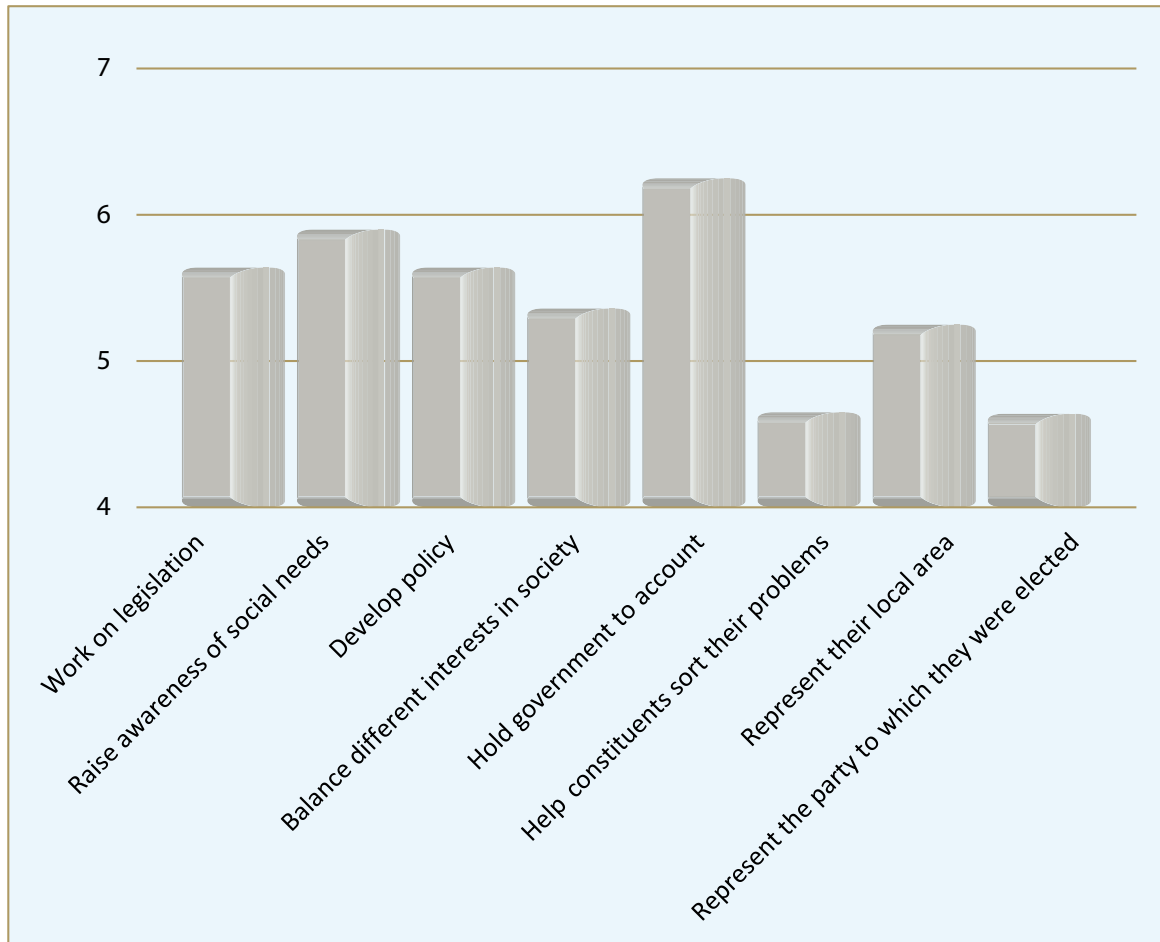


The We the Citizens poll asked a broad range of questions about the importance of the different elements of a TD's role (see figure 3.6 over).

⁷ It is interesting to compare the results of these questions from the Citizens' Assembly with the INES (Irish National Election Study) from February of 2011, which was compiled using a sample of 1,865 participants, surveyed just after the last general election and interviewed face-to-face by Red C, a professional polling company. While INES posed a different, longer, set of questions, the two surveys covered broadly the same issues, the main difference being that our results allow comparison of attitudes before and after the opportunity to deliberate in the assembly. It should be noted that most of the academic team involved in INES were also part of the 'We the Citizens' academic advisory group.



Fig 3.6 | The importance of the different elements of a TD's role



The Citizens' Assembly also posed the question 'Who should be involved in the political process?' In our findings, young people are most likely to be encouraged by the Citizens' Assembly, with women the least likely, although the differences are not huge (see fig. 3.7 on page 49). It is of note that members of the assembly were happy to 'encourage' participation. However, when specific questions related to concrete proposals were made, for example, the introduction of gender quotas to increase the number of women in the Dáil, responses become more guarded.

Finally, we also asked the general question, 'should the electoral system be changed?' In fig 3.8 on page 49, we see that the Citizens' Assembly participants and the overall survey population of 1,242 respondents varied

little in their view on this question before the Citizens' Assembly. However, after they had the opportunity to become informed and deliberate, the members of the Citizens' Assembly became much more inclined to disagree with changing the electoral system.

In terms of our conclusions on these points, we can see that the Citizens' Assembly were strongly in favour of increasing diversity and broader participation in the Dáil, as well as shifting the role of TDs towards 'big picture' issues, but more cautious in terms of actions to achieve such results.



Fig 3.7 | Who should be involved in the political process?

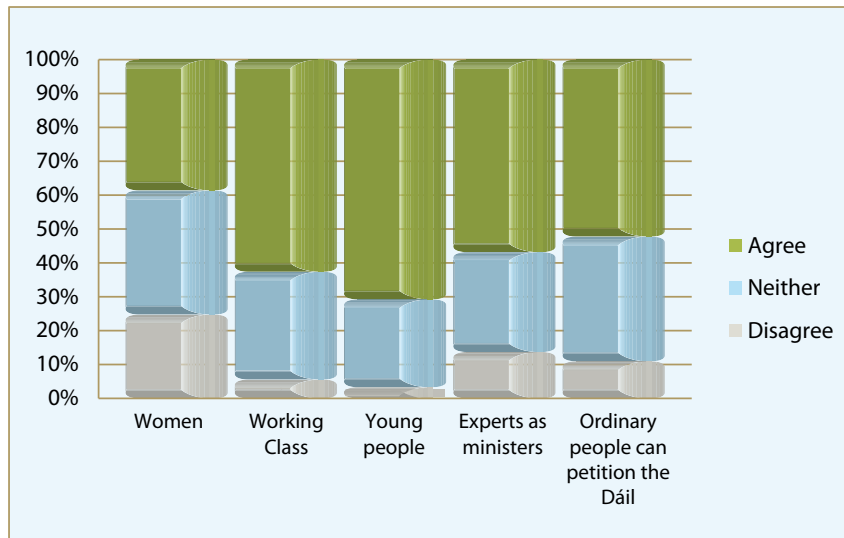
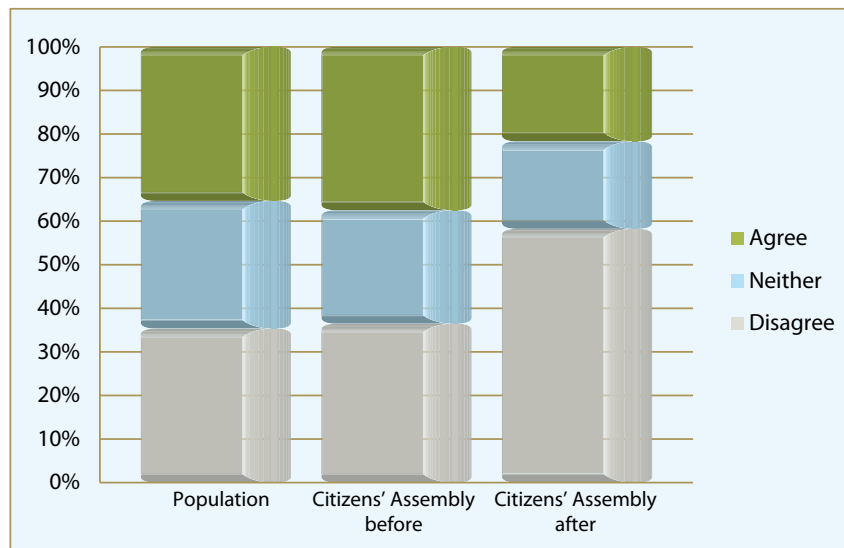


Fig 3.8 | Should the electoral system be changed?



Political reform questions showed movement, but less pronounced

In summary, there was generally less movement on the political reform questions. The one issue that saw the most significant shifts was over the amount of time TDs should devote to local and national issues and to helping constituents sort out their problems.

The number of Citizens' Assembly members who thought TDs working on legislation was of great importance moved from 37 per cent to 62 per cent. The numbers thinking that helping constituents was of great importance fell from 34 per cent to under 10 per cent. No such differences were found in the control groups on either issue. The respondents were also asked questions about the amount of time they think TDs should spend



on local and national issues. The Citizens' Assembly seemed to have an impact in that Citizens' Assembly participants shifted in both regards.

These trends are highly consistent with the strong clamour at the We the Citizens regional events for a more national political role for TDs and for a reinvigorated local politics as the more appropriate place for dealing with local issues.

In short, deliberation works

The findings are conclusive. As a result of their participation in the Citizens' Assembly weekend, the Citizens' Assembly members showed significant shifts of opinion

both in terms of feelings of trust and interest in politics, and also with regard to key substantive issues in politics. These changes were statistically significant, and were in marked contrast to the trends for our different control groups. In short, what this shows is that deliberation works. When given access to objective information, the opportunity to hear from expert witnesses and the time to debate and deliberate on these issues, citizens do make informed decisions.

3.2 Outcome 2:

Outputs from the Citizens' Assembly deliberations

What happens to the outcomes of a citizens' assembly?

In looking at places around the world where citizens' assemblies have been successful, one of the key factors is ensuring that there is clarity about what happens to the outputs or recommendations of the Citizens' Assembly.

There are three possible models:

- The Citizens' Assembly produces a specific proposal for change, that is directly acted upon by the government, perhaps in the form of a legislative act
- In the case where the matter has constitutional significance, the Citizens' Assembly produces the wording for the referendum question (as happened in the recent Canadian cases), to be considered by a parliamentary committee or to be put directly to the people

- In the case where the matter in question relates to local budgetary issues (such as the 'participatory budgeting' processes in use in a number of different jurisdictions), the decision of the Citizens' Assembly might have a direct impact on a portion of budgetary expenditure in the local area (such as 10 percent of the budgetary allocation).

Limitations of the pilot assembly

Our pilot Citizens' Assembly did not, of course, have any legal standing or remit. Therefore, for the process to feel complete for the participants who had committed so much time and energy to the process, we felt it was important for there to be some sort of outcome from the event itself, so at the end of each session, we created a ballot paper from a collation of the recommendations made by the groups and the participants were then able to vote on it. This did not form part of the scientific process that underlay the Citizens' Assembly.



There were a number of other ways in which our pilot Citizens' Assembly differed from an actual assembly:

- The number of questions the assembly members were asked to address over the weekend was much greater. In most real world citizens' assemblies, the citizens will be asked to address one or possibly two questions, for example, in British Columbia the question was about which electoral system to choose and in Brazil, the questions are often about specific spending issues, e.g. should the local government spend its resources on building a road or a school?
- Because of the pilot nature of the Citizens' Assembly held on 25th and 26th June 2011, we asked the participants to address a broader range of issues. This had the advantage of allowing us to test which kinds of issues might be best suited to an Irish citizens' assembly, and allowed us to learn about matters such as how best to phrase the questions for a deliberative exercise and allowed us to test movement/shift in opinions across a range of issues. However, there were some disadvantages, mainly the time pressure to finish one topic and move to another. This led, in some cases, to recommendations that were expressed in a way that was too general or vague. This became especially apparent in the Sunday morning session where the questions led to quite fractured, diverse discussions which produced recommendations that were wide-ranging and challenging to collate.

The learning point from the perspective of a future convener or organiser of a citizens' assembly is to allow time in the agenda for the recommendations to be refined and perhaps returned to the tables for verification before putting them on the ballot.

In this section, we look at the questions that the Citizens' Assembly members were asked and their recommendations. The information is presented chronologically, i.e. in the order in which the topics were discussed and the recommendations made.





Session 1: The recommendations of members of the Citizens' Assembly arising from their deliberations on the morning of Saturday, 25th June 2011

The first session on Saturday morning was devoted to the topic of how we, as citizens, are represented, focusing particularly on three main themes: the role of the TD; whether a new electoral system might change that role; whether the number of TDs should be reduced.

At the end of the Saturday morning session, the members of the Citizens' Assembly at each of their tables were invited to draw up a series of recommendations. These were gathered in by the

team, checked for areas of overlap, and collated onto one ballot paper. When collated, there were 31 recommendations to consider. The members then voted on the 31 recommendations, indicating those they agreed with and those they disagreed with (and leaving blank those recommendations where they had no view or were undecided).⁸

The results of the vote can be grouped under a series of headings.

Parliamentary System

	Agree %	Disagree %
We must create a political system that encourages less party politics and more cooperation	81	9
We should strengthen an ethics body that monitors representatives' behaviour	84	5
Reduce the size of the Dáil	60	32
Opposition political parties should have just as much access to expertise as the governing parties	87	8

The tenor of many of these recommendations favours a more open parliamentary system that gives opposition parties a greater scrutiny role. A strong majority of participants also favoured reducing the size of the Dáil.

Dáil Deputies

	Agree %	Disagree %
Implement term limits for TDs	51	38
Politicians' holiday time should be reduced	80	6
Political training is required for potential politicians	68	20
Politicians should not be allowed work in other jobs while holding office	85	11
Introduce a recall mechanism for TDs	79	10

TDs should be trained, work longer hours, be fulltime and subject to 'recall' (i.e. where voters can vote them out mid-term). There is also a narrow majority favouring term limits for TDs.

⁸ Given that the participants were asked to produce recommendations after relatively short periods of deliberations and without mediation, there were bound to be some that were somewhat vague ('Make the system more viable for independent candidates': 71% agreed; 16% disagreed) or that cover things that are already happening ('Voting patterns within parliament should be made easily available': 81% agreed; 2% disagreed).



TDs' Salaries & Expenses

	Agree %	Disagree %
TDs' salaries should be reduced	79	9
Committee work of government representatives should be conducted for no additional fee	86	4
Introduce performance bonuses for TDs	30	56
Politicians' pensions should only be payable from the age of 66	86	5

The clear signal here is that TDs should work for less, and existing perks (fees for committee work; early access to pensions) should be removed.

Electoral Reform

	Agree %	Disagree %
PR-STV should be preserved	68	12
Electronic voting should be introduced	31	55
We need a parliament that is more representative of the people. There should be measures to encourage a greater diversity of people at the nomination process	82	6
If the PR-STV system is to be kept, the number of candidates per party should be reduced	51	38
Initiatives such as weekend voting should be implemented to encourage greater turnout	86	4
Voting should be mandatory	48	39

The Citizens' Assembly members favour keeping the existing electoral system, do not want electronic voting, and want steps to improve turnout (weekend voting). There is some, though not overwhelming, support for mandatory (or compulsory) voting. They want steps to widen the pool of candidates.

Reform of Government

	Agree %	Disagree %
Vet government jobs including secretaries and parliamentary assistants	79	8
The cabinet must consist of experts in their fields	71	19
Ministers should be directly elected by the people	47	34
There should be a national report on the state of the nation every 12-15 months	88	2

The participants want experts in cabinet and vetting of all appointments; there is also some support for the direct election of ministers. They want regular state of the nation reports.



Other issues

	Agree %	Disagree %
Local government must be strengthened so that local issues can be dealt with at a local level and our TDs can deal with national issues	89	2
Introduce more regional government	62	21
Citizens should be able to play a more active role in political decision making	88	4
Town Hall meetings or citizens' advice bureau should be created in every constituency to create better informed citizens	87	4
Citizen feedback on proposals by electronic system should be employed	83	4
Implement whistleblower legislation	84	5

Although these issues were not formally on the agenda for this session, they emerged in the small-table deliberations. There is a strong push for stronger and reformed sub-national government, for a more active role in decision-making by citizens, and for more openness (whistleblower legislation).

Session 2: The recommendations of members of the Citizens' Assembly arising from their deliberations on the afternoon of Saturday, 25th June 2011

The afternoon session was devoted to the topic of who we would like to represent us:

- Do we need gender balance in politics?
- Should there be a limit to the number of years that TDs can serve?

- Should we allow the appointment of ministers who have not been elected to the Dáil.

Once again the Citizens' Assembly members' recommendations were gathered in and put on a ballot paper, and their votes are recorded below.

Women in politics

	Agree %	Disagree %
Facilitate women's entry and access to politics through 'soft' mechanisms	88	12
Introduce gender quotas to correct gender imbalance	51	45
Gender quotas for local elections	51	46
There should be reserved seats for women in the Dáil	33	62
Launch a school initiative to get young female students engaged with politics	89	10

The emphasis is very much on 'soft' mechanisms (family friendly hours, etc.) rather than on formal procedures such as gender quotas (which are supported but only just) or reserved seats (which are not supported).



Experts in government

	Agree %	Disagree %
Make more use of the provision that allows two ministerial appointments from the Seanad	76	18
Taoiseach should have power to appoint ministers from outside the Oireachtas	48	36
If experts are appointed to cabinet they should have no party affiliation	77	20
Expert external advisors should be used rather than expert ministers	62	30

While there is strong support for greater use of the existing provision to bring experts into government and for greater use of external advisors, there isn't much clamour for other steps to bring outsiders into government.

Term limits

	Agree %	Disagree %
Term limits for Taoiseach and ministers, but not for TDs	66	29
There should be a 'term break' after two terms, after which politicians can run for election again	59	38
Term limits for top civil servants	75	22

There is clear support for term limits, both for politicians and for top civil servants.

Other

	Agree %	Disagree %
Provide financial support for those studying politics	40	50
Primary system (like in the USA) for candidate selection	50	33
Provide financial support for non-party candidates	61	30
TDs should reach targets set by independent experts such as key performance indicators	79	13
Put in place mechanisms that ensure ministers and top civil servants are held accountable for the decisions they make	96	3

Strong support for greater accountability; and some support for steps to broaden the pool of candidates entering politics.



Session 3: The recommendations of members of the Citizens' Assembly arising from their deliberations at the last session of the afternoon of Saturday, 25th June 2011

This final, and very brief, session was focused on the future of Seanad Éireann. The expert briefing document and opening statement focused on three sets of options and at the end of the session the Citizens' Assembly

members were given a ballot paper with the three options, which they were invited to rank in order (along the same lines as the Presidential election).

The results of this poll were as follows:

	Agree %	Disagree %
We should abolish the Seanad	30	36
We should investigate ways to reform the Seanad	49	64
We should replace the Seanad with a Citizens' Assembly	21	--

The recommendation of participants was that the Seanad should be reformed rather than abolished.

Session 4: The recommendations of members of the Citizens' Assembly arising from their deliberations at the session of the morning of Sunday, 26th June 2011

This last session was perhaps the most challenging for the facilitators and the groups. The questions put to the Citizens' Assembly were more detailed than had been the case in the previous sessions. They were:

- *In dealing with the economic crisis, should we focus more on tax rises or spending cuts?*
- *Among the specific issues the government is talking about are the following: Property taxes, water charges, sale of state assets and student fees. What do you think?*

This had two impacts:

- The participants tended to focus on much smaller details, leading to a very large number of recommendations, many of them around micro issues
- There was a feeling amongst some participants that the questions were leading and precluding discussion on certain issues, such as the deficit and the question

of default. This surfaced strongly in one group during the Sunday morning session and was expressed and received some support in the wider group during the plenary session.

The learning point from this was that the phrasing of the question is extremely important to how free the participants feel to discuss particular issues. It also led to a situation where the recommendations that were put forward were problematic, in that the groups did not have time to refine, correct and reach agreement on prioritizing the recommendations – some were contradictory or confusing or represented the view of only one individual.

This created a number of obstacles for the team in treating the outputs from the session in the same way as the outputs from the previous day's deliberations had been treated.



Because of the large number of recommendations, over 100, it was not possible to represent the data in a coherent way on the day. As a result, the academic team collated the 100+ recommendation into 18 themes to produce a ballot paper that was then emailed/posted to all the participants. The participants were asked to rank-order (i.e. vote 1, 2, 3, etc.) their preferences under

each of the 18 themes and the results are reported below.⁹ However, it is important to note that a large proportion of the votes were spoiled, where participants did not follow the rank-order voting system correctly. The data are therefore, from a technical and statistical perspective, very hard to stand by and cannot really be compared with the data from the previous days.

The Results of the Ballot of Citizens' Assembly Members of Issues Emerging from the Sunday Morning Deliberations on Taxes and Spending

1. **Income tax:** Increase taxes on higher earners and close tax loopholes
2. **Corporation tax:** Opinions were divided with marginally more favouring the maintenance of corporation tax at current rates
3. **Property tax:** Higher property taxes on second properties; and stamp duty paid should be given as credit towards property tax
4. **Water charges:** These should be based on usage, and only introduced in return for improvements in water infrastructure
5. **Spending:** There should be full transparency and stricter oversight
6. **Education spending:** No cuts, and introduce civics from primary through secondary
7. **Student fees:** Only if means tested and in conjunction with scholarships
8. **Child benefit:** Should be means tested, and there should be the introduction of a child benefit system
9. **State assets:** Should not be sold, or should be leased or licensed on a short-term basis
10. **Social protection spending:** Incentivise return to work, and savings through fraud eradication
11. **Health spending:** Tax increases to be ring-fenced for health spending, and introduce compulsory health insurance
12. **Environment, energy and natural resources:** Rain water tanks for all homes; use natural resources as a revenue generator
13. **Local government:** Transparency in local council accounts, and ring-fence local taxes for local expenditure
14. **Bond markets/currency:** Burn the bondholders, or structured default
15. **Housing:** Mortgage relief for those in negative equity; increased rights for private tenants
16. **Oireachtas:** No external salaries for ministers; citizen involvement in the Dáil
17. **Pensions:** Option to work part-time after 60; pension cuts
18. **Miscellaneous:** Remove bonuses and expense accounts for state/semi-state sector; incentivise manufacturing under worker co-op schemes; tax breaks to incentivise small and medium enterprises.

⁹ We are grateful to Peter Emerson of the de Borda Institute for his assistance in collating these results.



3.3 Outcome 3:

What the surveys tell us about people in Ireland in 2011

In addition to the core academic results and the outputs from the Citizens' Assembly itself, the project also generated interesting additional findings from the surveys.

The first and largest survey of 1,242 people was carried out in early June 2011. It followed the regional events and Ipsos MRBI polled on the most common issues that had come up around the country. In this section, we look at the results from this survey which effectively, took the pulse of the nation in early summer 2011.

Some of the issues were tested in the Citizens' Assembly later at the end of June, and they were discussed in s3.1 earlier. This section refers only to the original survey results, with a view to giving a sense of the opinions of a representative group of people in Ireland on a wide range of issues. These are the overall poll results taken *before* the Citizens' Assembly and therefore do not take into account deliberation or different control groups. These are the results of the 1,242 people in the original survey sample, 100 of whom would go on to take part in the Citizens' Assembly and in some cases, experience some very significant shifts in their opinions.

Although not integral to the overall project, the results of this first survey provide insight into the views of a representative group of Irish people at a moment in time.

The full questionnaire can be found in Appendix 4. It was broadly broken down into three areas: a) education and citizenship, b) fiscal issues, and c) political reform.

a) Education and Citizenship

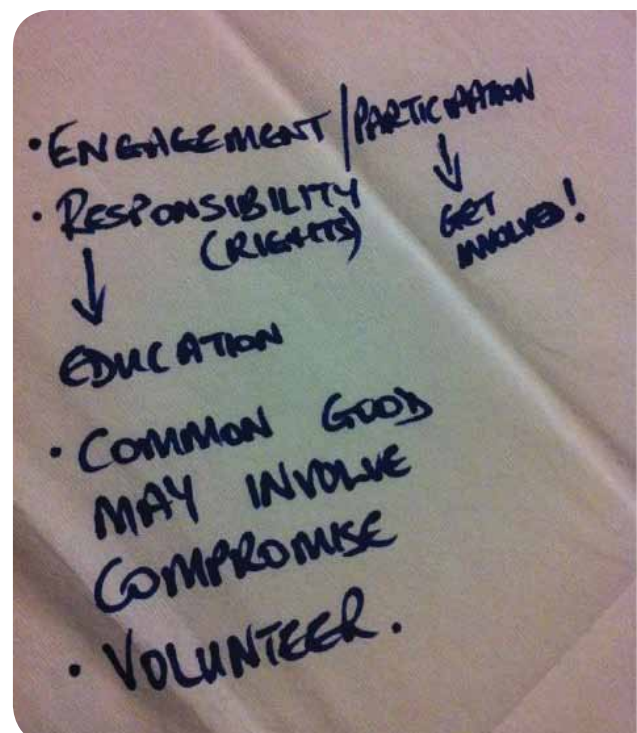
Debt and deficit not as big as education

It had been expected that tax and spending, debt, deficit and bailout would dominate the issues. It was surprising, however, the extent to which education

featured in every venue around the country during the regional events.

"We need equal opportunities in education e.g. someone from a working class background could be part of the judiciary."

"Educational reform – target funding to primary school, improve civics education which will improve the quality of citizenship, reform the leaving cert away from the points race."





Regional events lead to questions on education

In order to explore a hypothesis which had been brought up repeatedly at the meetings around the country, we asked whether schools should be focused on creating responsible Irish citizens.

It was found that we have a lot of confidence in our schools, fully 88 per cent say they have “quite a lot”

or “a great deal of confidence” in our schools, which compares to 29 per cent for religious groups, 34 per cent for trade unions or 32 per cent for the Dáil.

However, citizens are far less enamoured with the education system and, for the majority, the status quo is not a preferred option.

Figure 3.9 The state should pay the salaries of all teachers regardless of the type of school.

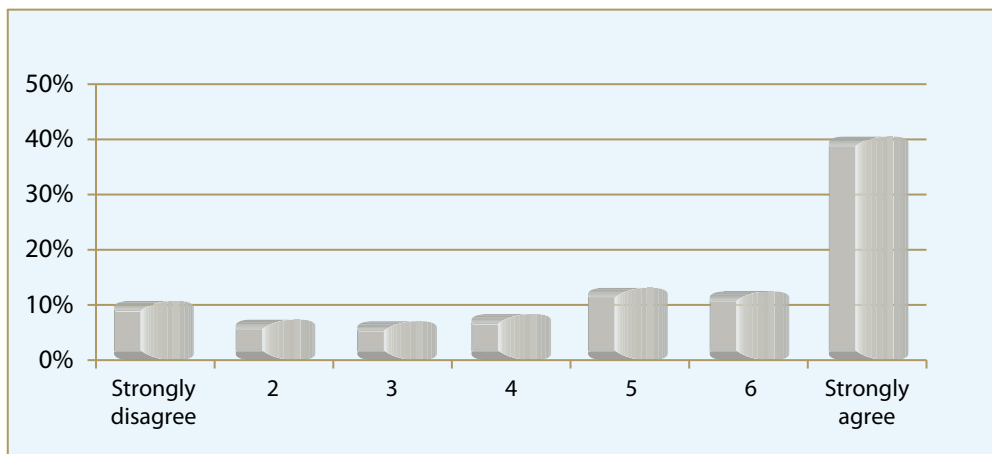


Figure 3.10 Civic and social education should be a fundamental element of children’s education.

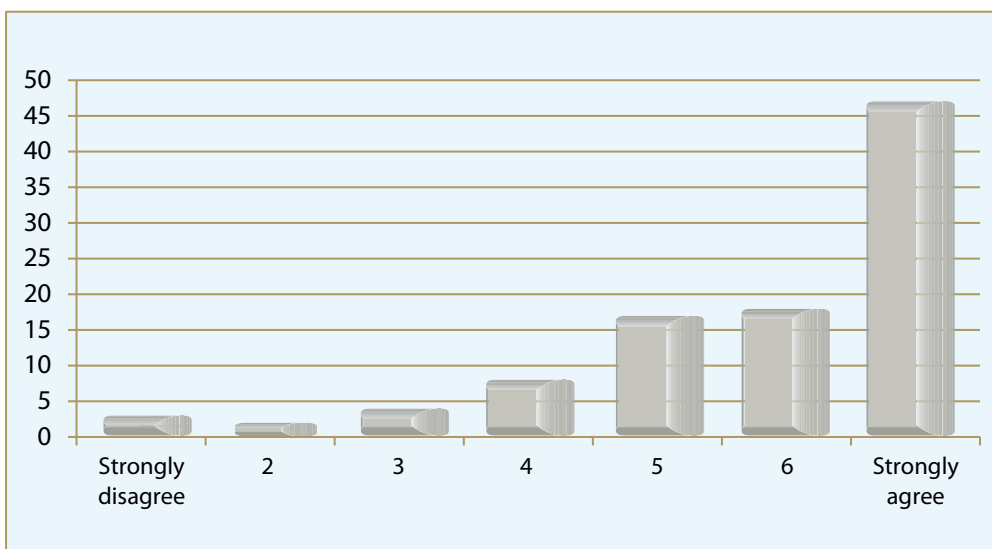




Figure 3.11 Religious education should be focused on teaching students about different religions rather than promoting one set of religious beliefs.

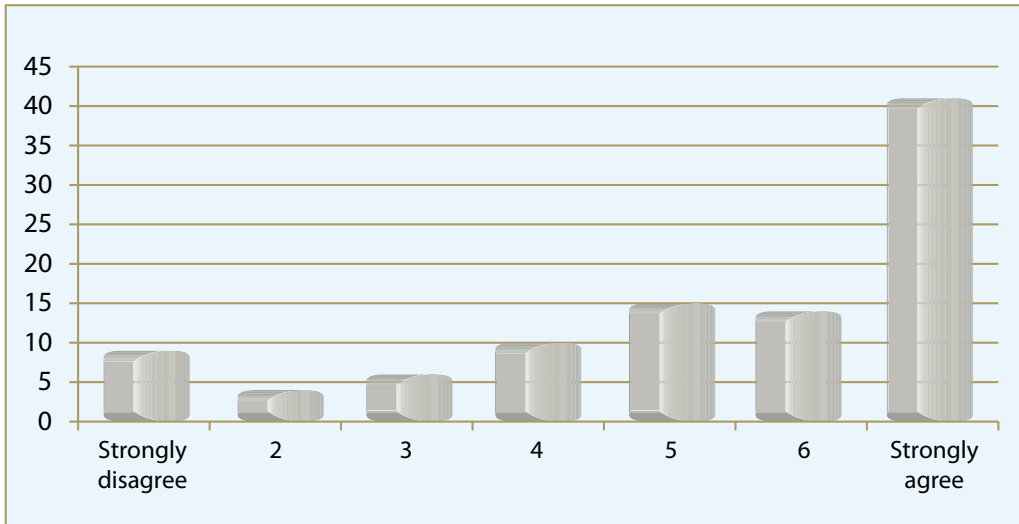


Figure 3.12 The Irish education system needs to encourage more creativity and independent thought.

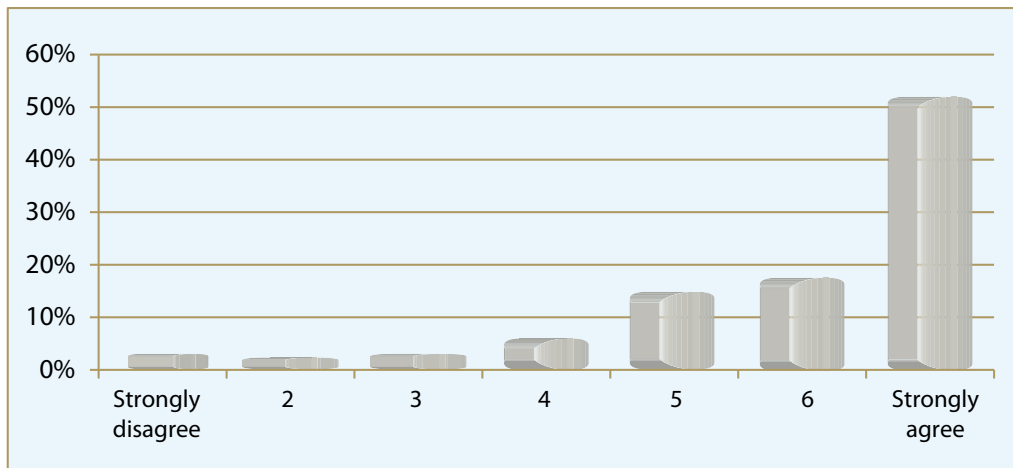
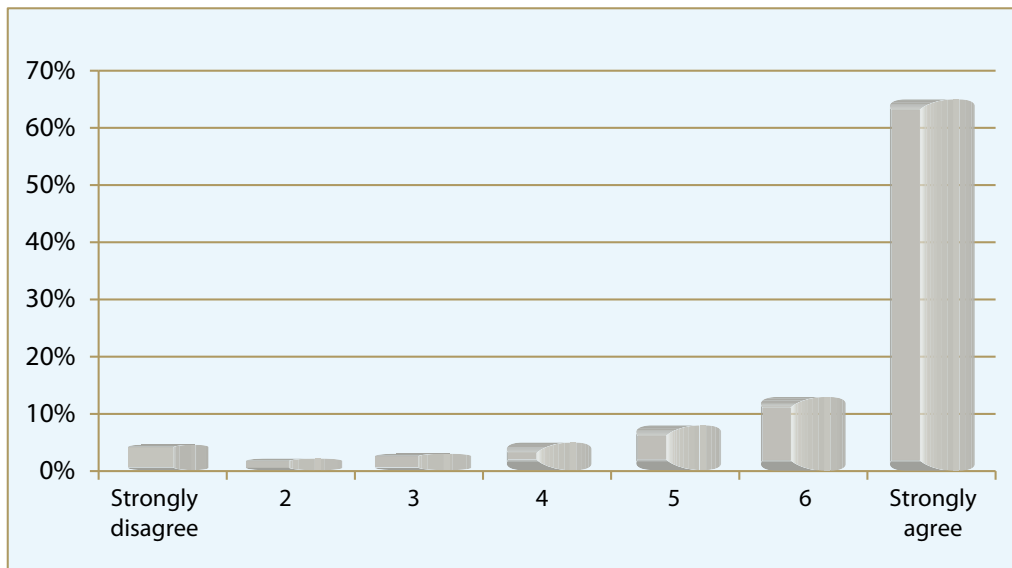




Figure 3.13 The church and state should be totally separate.



The polling also sought to elucidate the level of support for the Government's initiative to divest the Catholic Church of patronage of some of the more than 90 per cent of schools it controls in the primary sector.

We asked people how they would feel if most primary and secondary schools were to become multi-denominational, i.e. taken out of church control.

- 46 per cent said they would welcome this, a figure that was standard across age ranges and social classes
- 36 per cent said they were against it. Even in Connacht/Ulster where people were less supportive of the move, more were still in favour than against
- Indeed, there is a pretty strong groundswell of support for the notion of separating church and State generally: 65 per cent of people feel strongly they should be separated.

We also asked if the system needs to encourage more creativity and independent thought and once again the vast majority strongly agreed or agreed at 70 per cent.

b) Fiscal issues

Reactions to specific government proposals on deficit reduction

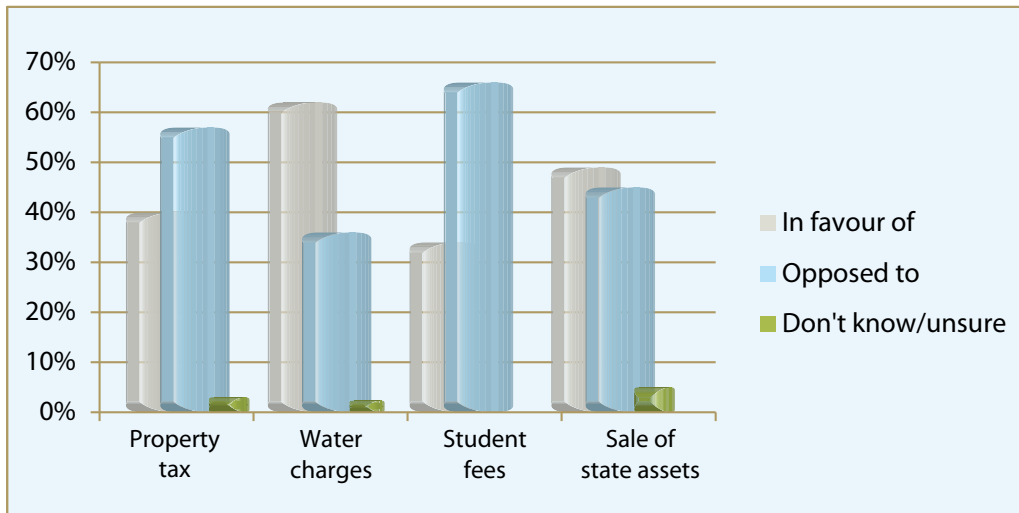
Raising tax is a pretty vague idea. The Government has already made some specific proposals. We also probed for the specifics of the few taxes which the Government has already mooted.

For example, some 60 per cent of people were opposed to the introduction of a property tax. Men, the over 45s, the better off and those from Connacht were most in favour of property taxes. A similar pattern of support is seen with water charges.

The pattern was reversed with the sale of state assets, where younger people and the unemployed were most in favour. Overall those in favour of the sale of state assets were evenly divided, with 49 per cent in favour and 47 per cent against. When asked about the introduction of student fees, unsurprisingly the under-25s were most opposed, as were women. But third-level fees are the least popular of these new measures and overall the vast majority was against their introduction, with 70 per cent opposed.

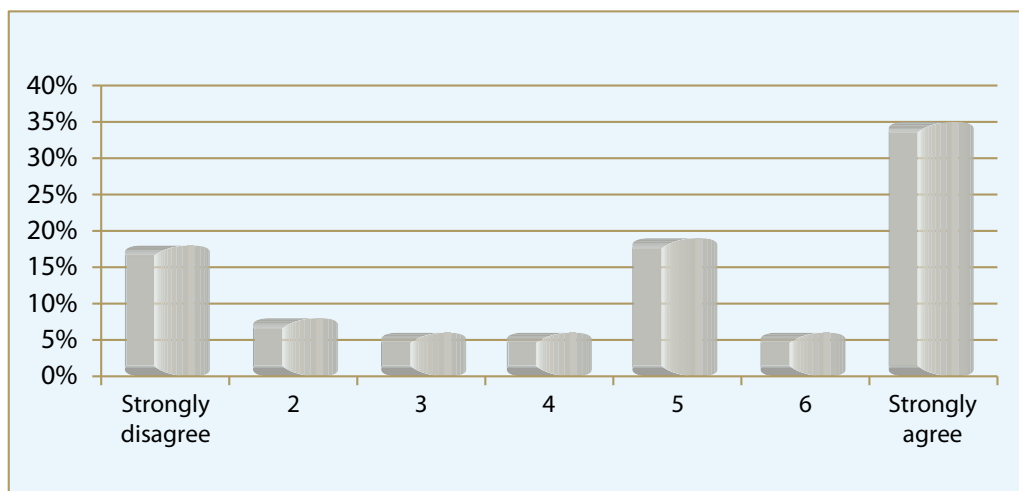


Figure 3.14 Support/Opposition to deficit reduction proposals



In addition the majority of people believed that certain state payments such as old age pensions or child benefit should only be paid to the less well off.

Figure 3.15 Some benefits such as child benefit or old age pensions should only be paid to the less well off.





c) Political reform

Attitudes to political reform

The third area where we probed people's attitudes and beliefs was on political reform. The issues here were wide ranging from open government and freedom of information to gender quotas and changing the electoral system.

There was almost unanimous support for involving more young people in politics with some 81 per cent agreeing or strongly agreeing that this is a good idea. While most people agreed that political parties should be made to nominate more women as candidates, when asked in a separate question whether political funding should be linked to the proportion of female candidates fielded by parties (the proposal that the Government is committed to introducing) only 17 per cent were in favour while 40 per cent were against.

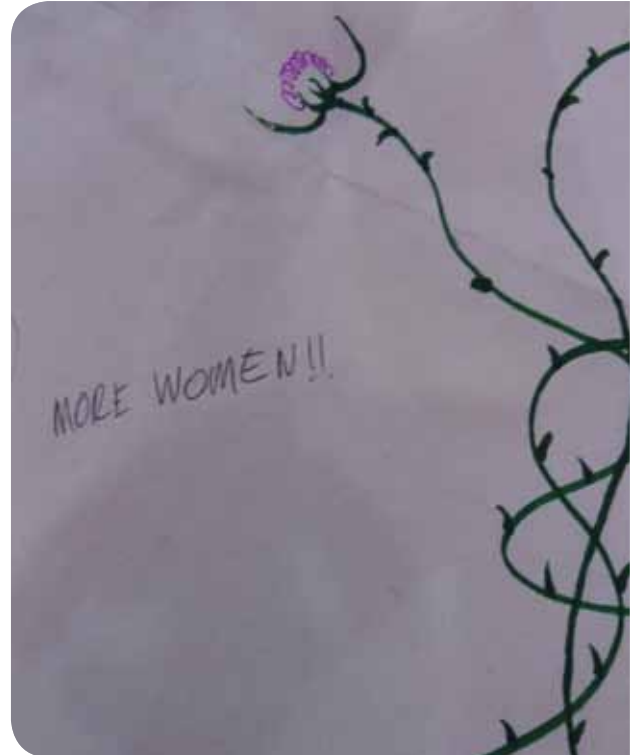


Figure 3.16 Parties should be made to nominate more women as candidates

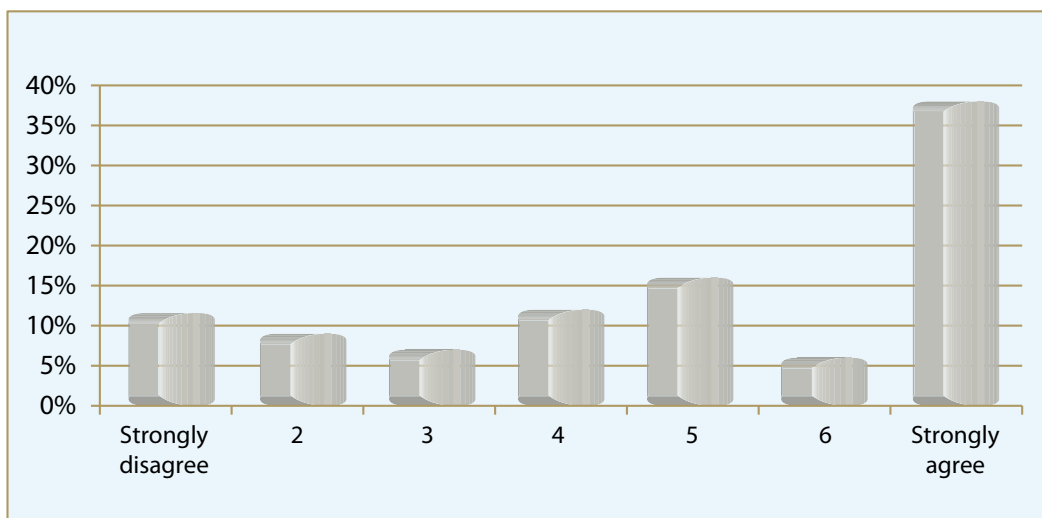
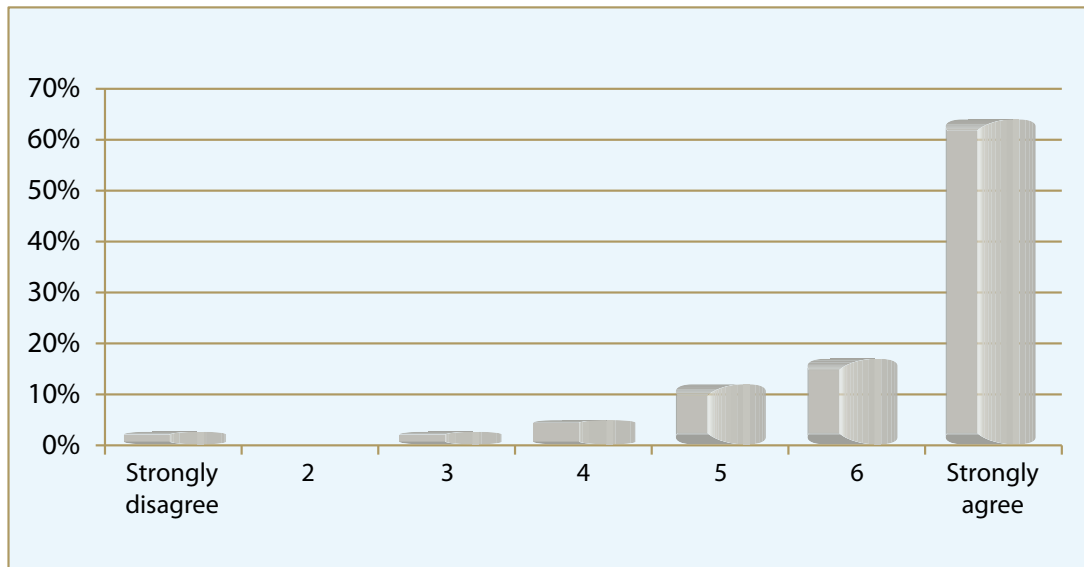




Figure 3.17 There should be more young people involved in politics.



There is also very strong support for more open government with 78 per cent of people agreeing or strongly agreeing that all Government documents should be published online unless the government applies to keep them secret.

Figure 3.18 All Government documents should be published online unless the government applies to keep them secret.

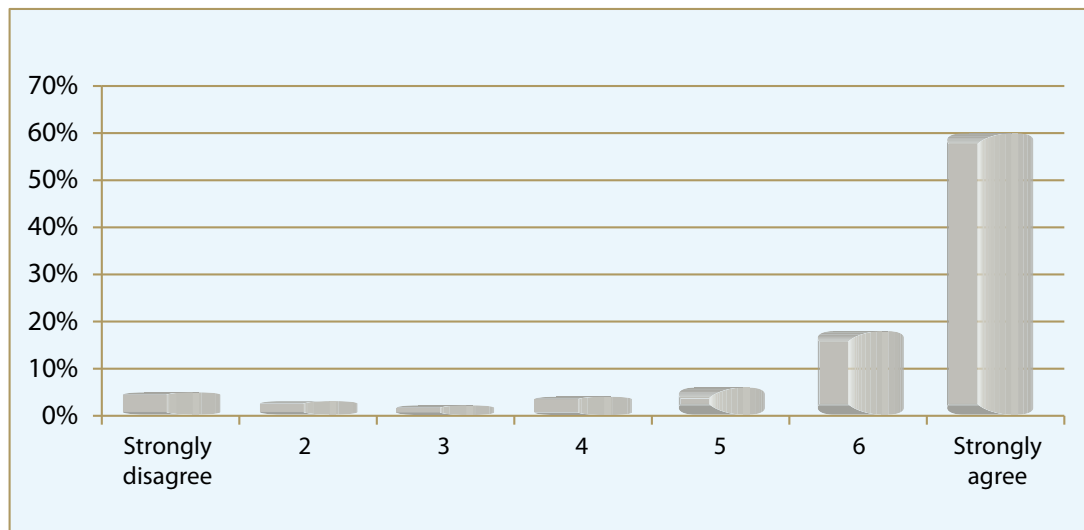
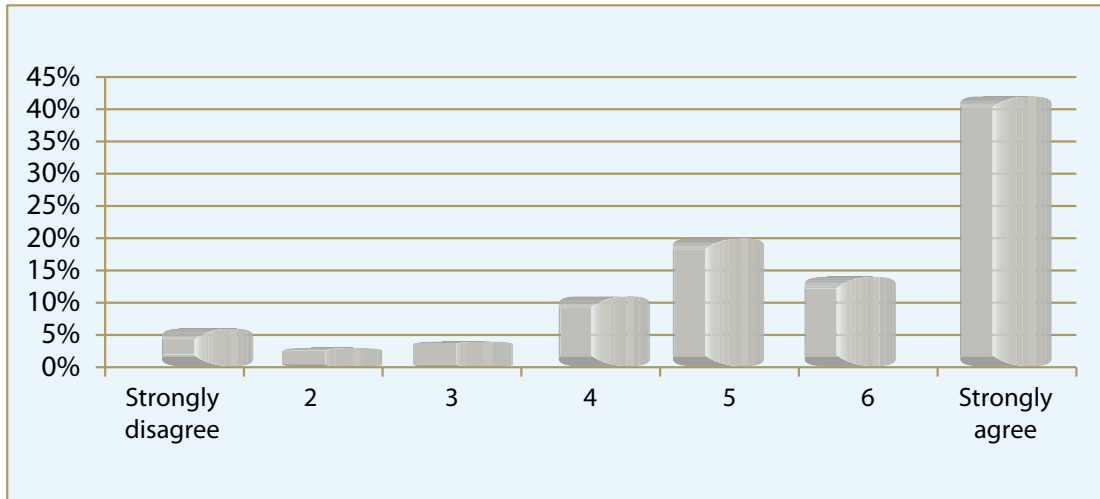


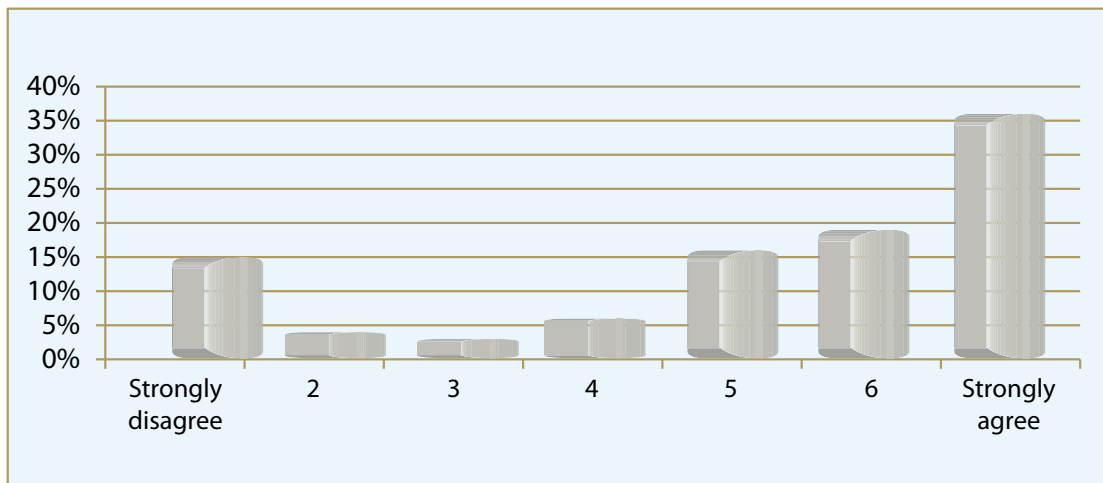


Figure 3.19 Ordinary citizens should be able to propose legislation by petitions to the Dáil.



At the regional citizens' events, the issue of power, or lack of it, at local level was a recurring theme. There were discussions about strengthening county councils and ensuring that tax money raised locally was spent locally. There was also support to replace county managers with directly elected mayors.

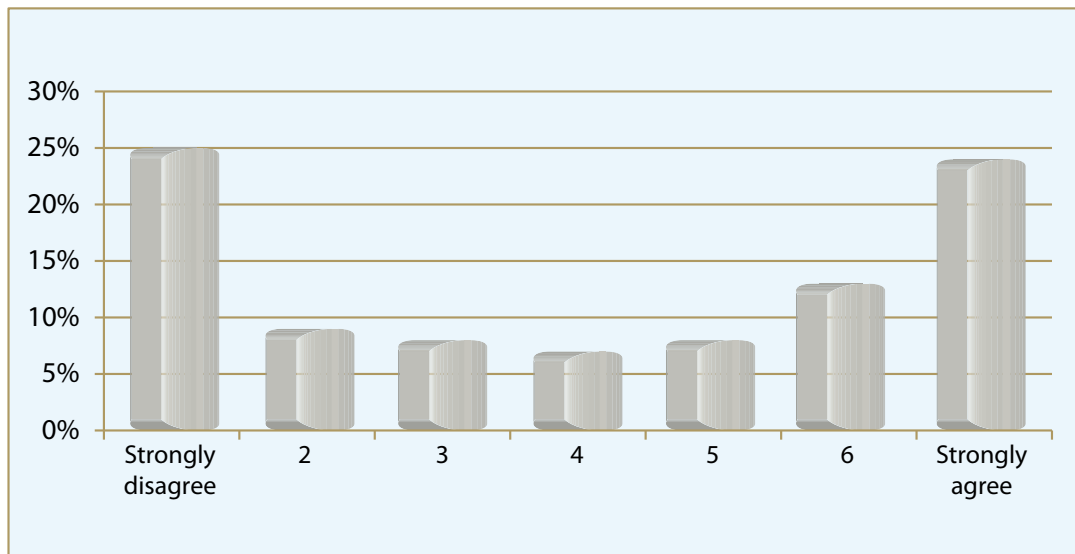
Figure 3.20 There should be directly elected mayors who take on the responsibilities of county managers in local authorities.





The Ipsos MRBI poll shows that people are evenly divided over whether to change our electoral system (47 per cent in favour; 44 per cent against), and just over half (54 per cent) feel the ability of TDs to provide a local service is a strength of the political system.

Figure 3.21 Our electoral system should be changed



Conclusions



This initiative has shown that given access to balanced expert information and the opportunity to deliberate, a randomly selected group of ordinary people in Ireland can adopt reasoned positions on complex and important issues of national importance.

Although what We the Citizens tested was a national citizens' assembly, deliberative democracy techniques can be applied usefully to a broader range of situations – in local government, at community level, by political parties and other groups who want to give people the opportunity to engage more closely with policy formation and decision-making.

There are two options currently being considered by Government – a citizens' assembly model similar to that tested by We the Citizens and a constitutional convention, which is made up of a number of streams, including experts and specialists, as well as citizens. A citizens' assembly structure could be used to create a stand alone citizen 'stream' within a constitutional convention.

The following are our suggestions to a government or other body seeking to put in place a citizens' assembly:

Setting up a citizens' assembly

As we have said, the most important features of participatory processes such as a citizens' assembly are the following:

- It is set up for a specific purpose, and once that purpose has been achieved, the Citizens' Assembly ceases to exist. In other words, the Citizens' Assembly cannot and should not act as another house of the Oireachtas: its work and membership are limited by time and purpose.
- The members are selected randomly. They are not elected, nor are they there as representatives of particular sectors. There is therefore no risk of specific interests subverting the work of the assembly

- The members must be given balanced briefing notes and have the opportunity to hear from and to question experts
- The members should be given sufficient time and space to debate and deliberate over the issues.





Ensuring action on outcomes

The other side of having ‘a purpose’ is that it should be made clear what will happen to the outcomes of the Citizens’ Assembly. As mentioned previously, there are three possible models:

- The Citizens’ Assembly produces a specific proposal for change, that may or may not be directly acted upon by the government, perhaps in the form of a legislative act
 - In the case where the matter has constitutional significance, the Citizens’ Assembly produces the wording for the referendum question (as happened in the recent Canadian cases). This may go to a parliamentary committee for consideration or be put directly to the people
 - In the case where the matter in question relates to local budgetary issues (such as the ‘participatory budgeting’ processes in use in a number of different jurisdictions), the decision of the Citizens’ Assembly might have a direct impact on a portion of budgetary expenditure in the local area (such as 10 percent of the budgetary allocation).
- A decision on a major constitutional question of the moment (e.g. electoral reform, children’s rights referendum, abolition versus reform of the Seanad, lowering the voting age)
 - Important but sensitive policy questions (e.g. the future of church-state relations, energy security and green energy)
 - Major infrastructural challenges (e.g. the development of an underground urban transport system, the building of a new motorway)
 - Local government budgeting (e.g. allowing citizens a say in the allocation of a percentage of the local budget, such as 10% in a number of real world examples).

It is this clarity and certainty about how the outcomes are treated that prevents a citizens’ assembly becoming a mere talking shop.

When a citizens’ assembly works best

A citizens’ assembly is not suited to every task. There are a number of specific situations where it has been shown to be particularly useful, such as the following:





Cost of a citizens' assembly

In the current economic climate, it is not possible to make a recommendation without considering the potential cost. Neither is it reasonable to speculate on exactly how much it would cost a national government, local government or other body to fund their citizens' assembly as each process is different in terms of scale and scope. Clearly, a local citizens' assembly for one weekend to discuss the route of a new road would cost a lot less than a national citizens' assembly on political reform held over a period of months.

No other citizens' assembly will have quite the same cost profile as the We the Citizens pilot assembly. There are parts of the work of the pilot, especially those pieces directly related to the academic research, which are irrelevant to a government mandated citizens' assembly.

However, to give a general reference point, we have extracted those costs which would be likely to occur whenever a citizens' assembly was held.

- Using a professional market research company to recruit a group one hundred randomly selected but demographically representative participants for the assembly: approximately €100 per head or €10,000.
- Development and management of a website, including data visualization, online video and analytics: €15,000.
- Costs related solely to the Citizens' Assembly event, including room hire, AV, photographer, film-maker, facilitators, accommodation, catering, stationery, expenses, travel costs: €78,500.

The above does not include communications and staff costs as these would vary greatly depending on the situation. Some of these costs would likely be lower, where the citizens' assembly was government mandated, i.e. the costs for the event and the staff to run them could be reduced as existing facilities and human resources could be used, such as city/county council chambers and other official buildings.

Value of a citizens' assembly

What the We the Citizens initiative has shown, above all, is that if you give a randomly selected group of people in Ireland the expert information they need and ask them to make the best decision for their country, they will take the job seriously. They will listen to each other and debate constructively and they will make a reasoned decision. It is important to stress that Irish people value representative democracy as a system that works. The addition of a more participatory element deepens and strengthens the engagement and understanding of citizens. Ordinary people in Ireland can and should be trusted to participate more directly in our democracy.

In the end, We the Citizens has just one key recommendation to make:

We recommend that the government adopt a citizens' assembly mechanism as a complement to our existing representative democracy system. If reform programmes are to be successful, citizens must feel that they have some ownership in the process. A citizens' assembly allows this to happen.



In summary

We the Citizens was successful as a research experiment to show that a citizens' assembly could work in objective terms in an Irish context. But to those who took part, it meant more. It gave them hope.

Voices from the Citizens' Assembly

"I've never had to vocalise so many opinions. I'm used to just sitting and giving out at the Six One News, saying 'what are they at now? Or can we get someone who knows what they're doing in charge?' But when you sit down and actually try and define what it is you want them to do, it's not just as easy as it sounds. So it's been very positive. I've enjoyed it so far. It's been really, really good."

"You had company directors with workers, with people who are unemployed here and everybody has an intelligent argument to put forward. It's not always easy to get agreement but everybody had an opinion and an intelligent opinion."

"I didn't have to give it a second thought. Absolutely I was interested in coming and I think this is a fabulous idea. I hope it continues and I hope it does actually make a difference and that the government do actually listen."

"It's been fantastic. I'm so surprised at the diversity of opinion in there. But at the same time on key issues there is a lot of consensus. It's very encouraging, sort of heart warming, to know that we can do this, people are intelligent, they govern themselves, they do care about these issues, so it's been a real experience and I'm honoured to have taken part."

"Personally I've always had the idea that if you're going to have rights then you need to fulfill obligations in order to achieve those rights. So, it's very close to my heart and I'm very happy to be here. I'm very enthused about what it could mean for the future – to see the citizens take a much more active role in politics."



Democracy is constantly evolving. No politician today would subscribe to the sentiment expressed by Winston Churchill that: "The biggest argument against democracy is a five-minute discussion with the average voter."

We the Citizens has tested participatory democracy in Ireland and has proven that it works.

What we saw in the regional events, in the Citizens' Assembly, throughout this process, was a desire amongst citizens for transparency and accountability and a willingness to take their part of the responsibility to make it happen.

We the Citizens started its journey as an experiment. It ends as a beacon of hope and a declaration of determination that we can, and will, do better as a democracy.



1. We The Citizens, Executive and Governing Structure	Page 72
2. We the Citizens funding	Page 73
3. Citizens' Assembly briefing documents	Page 74
4. The Ipsos MRBI survey questions	Page 84
5. Acknowledgements	Page 99



Appendix 1

We the Citizens – Executive and Governing Structure

Executive Team

- Caroline Erskine – Executive Director
- Órla De Búrca – Communications Director
- Úna Faulkner – Operations Manager
- Ross Curran – Intern

Academic Team

- Dr. Elaine Byrne, Trinity College Dublin
- Prof. David Farrell of University College Dublin – Academic Director
- Dr. Eoin O'Malley, Dublin City University
- Dr. Jane Suiter, University College Cork

Board Members

We the Citizens was steered by a Board of people who have distinguished themselves across the private, public and NGO sectors. They gave their time and expertise entirely pro bono. Chaired by Director of the Abbey Theatre and independent Senator Fiach Mac Conghail, the Board met every two months and provided feedback and guidance on the progress of the initiative. Each of the Board Members attended We the Citizens events and provided valuable feedback on improving the structure of those events and on communications strategies.

Senator Fiach Mac Conghail - Chairperson Director/CEO of the Abbey Theatre

Prof. Tom Collins - Former President of the National University of Ireland, Maynooth

Ned Costello - Chief Executive of the Irish Universities Association

Niamh Gallagher - Co-founder of Women for Europe and Women for Election

Owen Keenan - Founder and managing director of Middlequarter Consultancy

Brigid Laffan - Professor of European Politics, UCD. Visiting Professor, EUI, Florence

Sylda Langford - Chair of the Citizen's Information Board and a former Director General of the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs in the Department of Health and Children

Ruairí McKiernan - Founder of SpunOut.ie, a national youth organisation and a number of social change initiatives

Fidèle Mutwarasibo - Integration Manager, Immigrant Council of Ireland

Malcolm Quigley - Director VSO (Voluntary Service Overseas) Ireland





International Scientific Advisory Board

The We the Citizens initiative also had the benefit of a highly distinguished international scientific advisory board, whose members were:

Professor Ken Carty, (below left opposite page)
University of British Columbia, Canada and former academic director of the British Columbia Citizens' Parliament

Professor Russell Dalton, University of California Irvine, a leading scholar on citizen engagement

Dr Clodagh Harris, University College Cork, an expert on deliberative processes

Professor Michael Laver, New York University and convenor of Citizens' Juries

Professor Peter Mair, European University Institute, a leading scholar on parties and representative democracy *

Professor Michael Marsh, Trinity College Dublin, director of the Irish National Election Study

Professor Ian McAllister, Australian National University, involved in the Australian deliberative polls

Professor Pippa Norris, JFK School of Government, Harvard University and leading expert on citizen engagement



**We would like to acknowledge that Professor Mair (above) passed away suddenly before the publication of this report. We extend our deepest sympathy to his family, friends and colleagues.*

Appendix 2

We the Citizens Funding

We the Citizens was fully funded by The Atlantic Philanthropies.

The Atlantic Philanthropies is dedicated to bringing about lasting changes in the lives of disadvantaged and vulnerable people. Atlantic focuses on four critical social issues: Ageing, Children & Youth, Population Health, and Reconciliation & Human Rights. Programmes funded by Atlantic operate in Australia, Bermuda, Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, South Africa, the United States and Vietnam. To learn more, please visit: www.atlanticphilanthropies.org



Appendix 3

The following documents were distributed to the participants of the Citizens' Assembly in advance of the deliberation sessions. The purpose of the briefing documents was to provide the participants with balanced expert information in advance of the Citizens' Assembly. In most cases, they were given to the participants the night before. The briefing documents were put together by the expert panellists and the academic team.

Citizens' Assembly briefing documents

Briefing documents for Saturday morning, 25th June, 2011

How citizens are represented in politics

This session examines how we, the citizens, are represented by our TDs. There are three main areas we want to explore: are our TDs doing too much work in their constituencies? Should we elect them using a different electoral system? Do we have too many TDs?

1. Should our TDs do less constituency work?

Usually we think of our TDs as having a number of jobs. One is to act as legislators, making laws for the whole country. Another is to monitor and hold the government to account on our behalf and the third is to serve their constituents directly. However they seem to spend more time on the constituency than anything else. A recent survey of TDs found that on average they spend 53% of their working time on constituency-based work, 38% on legislative work, and 9% on 'other' work.

TDs tend to ask a lot of questions in the Dáil which are essentially private in nature: about individual citizens' cases. These take a great deal of time and cost a lot of money. Ireland is usually thought to be unusual for the extent to which our TDs spend time on constituency work, although constituency work does form an important element of the role.

Arguments against

The linkage between politicians and voters is a strong feature of representative democracy. In many other countries, politicians are criticised for their lack of

attention to constituents. The closeness between politicians and citizens that we enjoy might be seen as a positive aspect of the political system.

Constituency service itself might be a good thing for policy in that it informs policy makers of the problems in society.

If we were to move away from geographical constituencies, certain areas could suffer neglect because they tend not to have representation. For example, small enclaves such as Moyross in Limerick would have no one to champion its needs.

Arguments for

National politicians should be focused on national political work – such as legislating in the Dáil and monitoring government. Excessive constituency work means TDs 'take their eye off the ball' and allow bad policy to be passed.

It is the role of county councillors to look after local services. Engaging TDs for this type of work is inefficient.

When TDs try to deliver good to their own constituencies the focus of TDs moves away from improving policy and services. For instance, TDs work to provide for a local school rather than ensure that the education system is properly provided for more generally.

The demand on TDs to do certain types of constituency representations might be due to a failure in the public service to deliver services to its citizens. If the public services were improved, the demand for constituency representation might fall away.



2. Should we have a different electoral system to choose our TDs?

In the recent election some of the political parties proposed adapting our existing electoral system. Their argument is that our electoral system (PR-STV) plays a key role in encouraging the excessive constituency focus by TDs because TDs compete against others from their own party: they cannot compete in terms of policy and do so in terms of constituency service.

While there are differences in the detail, the general argument is that we should move to a hybrid system where in addition to having most TDs elected using the existing system, a number of our TDs would be elected from party lists, thus giving the parties an opportunity to introduce politicians of national calibre, available for ministerial or front-bench roles and less tied to serving constituency interests.

For this reason many people have suggested introducing some form of a national list, from which at least some TDs would be chosen on the basis of support for the party nationally and they would not be tied to a particular geographic location.

Arguments against

It is arguable that this wouldn't really change anything. The proposal assumes that the electoral system is the cause of the constituency service that TDs tend to engage in. But there is nothing to prevent TDs from the same party competing with each other through their contribution to the national debate. If there are other causes, as some argue, would these list TDs really operate that differently from their constituency counterparts?

It might introduce two classes of TD, when one type might be seen as a poor relation to the directly elected one. If this were the case the List TDs might see their status as a transitional one and work towards direct

election, causing them to behave more like TDs elected under the current system.

Those TDs elected through a list would depend on their party leaders for their position and may be more likely to toe the party line.

Arguments for

It would introduce into Irish politics a class of politician focused first and foremost on national issues.

Different types of politicians could introduce a distinct perspective into politics and widen the talent pool from which government ministers can be chosen.

Given that it's increasingly common that people live in areas they are not from or have little emotional connection with, we might consider the localist culture in Irish politics to be excessive and inappropriate.





3.) Should we have fewer TDs?

In addition to the proposed abolition of the Seanad, as part of its mission of making the political system 'leaner and more efficient for its citizens' the government has promised to reduce the number of TDs from the current 166.

This number is regulated by statute and by the Constitution, which stipulates that there should be a TD for between 20,000 and 30,000 people: this sets a limit on how small the Dáil can shrink.

Currently there is one TD for about every 23,000 people, so there is scope to reduce the size of the Dáil without the need for a referendum to change the Constitution. There is some disagreement over just how small the Dáil could shrink without breaching the constitutional limit: some saying it could be reduced to 120 TDs, others saying the lower limit may be 150. The government plans to cut by up to 20 – thus reducing the Dáil to 146 TDs.

Arguments against

It is not clear what the purpose of this proposal is. Reducing the size of the Dáil will hardly ensure for major efficiencies, and if there are other goals they might be achievable in some other way.

Ireland is about average in the number of national representatives for a country its size, so it would not be bringing Ireland in line with any international norm.

There is a critical number of TDs and senators needed to populate the government and make the committee system viable. Reducing this number, especially in tandem with the Seanad's abolition, might make it more difficult for opposition parties to hold the government to account. And it would reduce the talent pool from which a Taoiseach could choose his government.

A smaller Dáil might make it even harder for small parties to win seats, especially if the same number of constituencies is kept.

Arguments for

It will save the state some money in salaries for TDs.

Ireland is arguably over-represented, between TDs, local councillors, MEPs and senators, many of whom perform the same functions.

A smaller Dáil could make the type of constituency service we are used to more difficult if it weakens the link between local and national politics and thus enable TDs to consider national issues.





Briefing documents for Saturday afternoon, 25th June, 2011

Who do we, the citizens, want representing us?

This question for this session is who do we want representing us? Do we want more women in politics? Do we want to force TDs to give up their seats after a few terms in the Dáil? Do we want experts in the government?

1. Should the parties be forced to field more women candidates?

Women form more than half the population in most countries around the world, but until very recently, they made up only a small minority of all political representatives. In Ireland, women make up half of the population, yet the proportion of women TDs has never exceeded 14 per cent. To put it another way, the Dáil has always been at least 86 per cent male.

This is well below both the world average and the internationally recommended figure of 30% (a critical mass of women politicians). The Irish Dáil has one of the highest proportions of male politicians in any national parliament in the world.

In other parts of the world the crucial impetus for change has been the adoption of quotas to ensure the selection of female candidates to political office. It is often argued that the only successful way that women's representation has been increased is through the deployment of temporary quotas until representation reaches a set level. More than 100 countries now have some sort of quota. Such a rule would require a change in legislation but may be challenged as unconstitutional.

The proposal in Ireland is to link political party funding to a minimum proportion of candidates coming from either sex. So the current proposal is that party funding would be halved for parties which had less than 30 per cent of its candidates from one of the sexes.

Arguments against

Quotas may not empower women, they discriminate against men, restrict voters' choices, and contravene articles of the law that enshrine equality between women and men.

Women elected in this way face the possibility of being taken for 'quota women,' as people who did not earn political office 'on their own,' thus reducing their esteem in the eyes of voters and their colleagues.

If voters are predisposed against women candidates, putting more women in the field will not necessarily increase their chances of success. This may not address other underlying reasons why women are not in politics, such as childcare and the hours involved in politics.

Parties could choose to nominate 'token' women candidates who have little chance of success simply in order to comply with the funding rules.

If we introduce quotas for women, what other groups might then need help to gain representation. Should there also be quotas on sexuality or age?



Arguments for

It could quickly and easily make for a more representative democracy. Having more women in the Dáil could improve the quality of debate and introduce perspectives that are currently missing.

In surveys in many countries, including Ireland, around two-thirds of the public say they wanted to see more women in politics. Voters should have a balanced choice of candidates. But in many Irish constituencies at election time, no women candidates are fielded by the leading political parties, leading to reduced or restricted voter choice.

The quotas could be temporary and only in place until women formed a critical mass in parliament.

2. Should there be limits on how long a TD can serve in the Dáil?

In most political systems there are no restrictions on the number of times a politician can run for election or serve in a particular position. Nor are there typically restrictions on the number of years that a politician can serve in any position. As a result there is an increasingly professional class of politicians, which might contrast with classical types of democracy where people were chosen randomly and there was a suspicion of the idea of a 'professional' politician.

To counteract this, term limits have been introduced in some systems for certain political roles, most famously in the United States of America where one is only permitted to be elected twice to the position of President.

Ireland has one of the more stable 'political classes' in the world – that is, TDs once elected tend to stay in office – though 2011 saw a very high turnover of TDs. Term limits could be introduced in Ireland, for certain offices, such as Taoiseach, a minister or a TD. Term limits are common for executive offices, especially in Presidential systems, but only the Philippines has term limits for legislators. To introduce such a rule would require a constitutional amendment.

Arguments against

If we impose term limits on politicians we are potentially losing a great deal of experience in the political system. These politicians will possibly have more knowledge than new people coming in.

Term limits could be considered anti-democratic. If we don't want a politician, we can simply not elect him or her. Term limits would limit voters' choices by keeping some candidates off the ballot paper.

If the elected representatives are limited in the number of terms or length of time they serve, the parties and party leaders/ organisers could have greater power because they will not be subject to such limits. They might also control candidate selection and only put in as candidates those that agree with their positions.

Depending on how it is organised, there could be ways around this system by politicians temporarily 'retiring' from politics, but coming back in other roles.

If we think that there is a limited pool of talent available, there might be a risk that we simply run out of suitable candidates.



Arguments for

It would ensure greater turnover of politicians. With fewer career politicians, who might be less concerned about re-election and more concerned about serving the longer term interests of the country.

Greater turnover might lead to a more diverse Dáil/ government. Some have argued that one of the problems with the political system is that most politicians have similar backgrounds/ interests and as such have similar points of view. With limited turnover there are a finite number of points of views in the Dáil and cabinet.

If power is thought to corrupt, putting limits on the number of times a politician can hold a particular office prevents them having too much control of the offices they hold.

Incumbent politicians tend to have an advantage over non-incumbents, so this proposal may allow a 'fairer fight' in any election.

Many people complain about political 'dynasties', term limits would force incumbents to give up office and may guard against the development of dynasties.

3. Should we allow the appointment of ministers who have not been elected to the Dáil?

Ministers are the executive officers who run government departments. In many countries, such as Sweden, Germany and Spain, these can be chosen from the whole population. In presidential systems, there is usually a rule that the executive officers cannot be in the legislature. In parliamentary democracies, such as Ireland is, it is common that they are or have been parliamentarians, that is, elected to the equivalent of our Dáil.

However Ireland is unusual in that effectively all ministers are elected to the Dáil. In theory ministers can come from the Seanad, but this is rare. Therefore Ireland might consider enabling

a greater number of our ministers to come from outside the Dáil or even require that no minister can sit in the Dáil or Seanad. To introduce such a rule would require a constitutional amendment.

Arguments against

Ministers could get the expertise they need through having specialist advisers/ a more expert civil service.

As well as technical/ policy expertise ministers need to be able to sell policies to the parliament and public. Policy experts may not necessarily be as adept at this, and they may not understand the political system as well. Even where it is possible to hire non-parliamentary ministers, about three quarters of those chosen in fact have parliamentary experience.

Having TDs in ministerial positions keeps them close to the electoral needs of their constituents/ people. The ministers could be an elite with little connection to the people. Having ministers who are elected allows voters a direct means of punishing underperforming ministers.

Non-elected ministers would have little or no power base to counteract the power of the Taoiseach, who presumably would have to have been elected. This might concentrate influence in the hands of an increasingly powerful Taoiseach.

There is no certainty that those chosen would have expertise; they might just be loyal servants of the party and its leadership.

The Dáil provides a useful training ground for ministers, and some of the 'experts' that might have been chosen in the last ten years could have been wholly inappropriate.



Arguments for

Ministers could get the expertise they need through having specialist advisers/ a more expert civil service.

As well as technical/ policy expertise ministers need to be able to sell policies to the parliament and public. Policy experts may not necessarily be as adept at this, and they may not understand the political system as well. Even where it is possible to hire non-parliamentary ministers, about three quarters of those chosen in fact have parliamentary experience.

Having TDs in ministerial positions keeps them close to the electoral needs of their constituents/ people. The ministers could be an elite with little connection to the people. Having ministers who are elected allows voters a direct means of punishing underperforming ministers.

Non-elected ministers would have little or no power base to counteract the power of the Taoiseach, who presumably would have to have been elected. This might concentrate influence in the hands of an increasingly powerful Taoiseach.

There is no certainty that those chosen would have expertise; they might just be loyal servants of the party and its leadership.

The Dáil provides a useful training ground for ministers, and some of the 'experts' that might have been chosen in the last ten years could have been wholly inappropriate.





Briefing documents for Sunday, 26th June, 2011

The Economy

1. General Perspective

Fergal O'Brien

Head of Economics and Taxation

Irish Business
and Employers Confederation

Nat O'Connor

Director of TASC

Think-tank for Action
on Social Change

- The scale of the fiscal adjustment is predetermined by the loan agreement with EU/IMF
- This means Government must make an adjustment of €3.6 bn in December's Budget, followed by €3.1 bn in the following budget
- Extensive international research shows that it is much less damaging on an economy to make the bulk of the adjustment through expenditure reductions rather than through tax increases
- However, Ireland's tax base has been 'hollowed out' in recent years as the Exchequer became reliant on bubble taxes, so new taxes will be needed
- The balance of adjustment in the coming Budgets should therefore be two-thirds expenditure and one-third taxation
- The boom time excesses have shown us that higher spending does not equate to better outcomes – future policy focus must be on what we get from our spending not on how much we spend

- The economy should serve society's needs
- Across Europe, there are many different versions of what is 'normal' in terms of tax, public spending and the role of the state in the economy
- Ireland is at one extreme of the European experience, with low tax, low spending and the domination of 'free market' ideas
- Countries like Germany have a 'social market economy', with higher taxation, higher quality public services and more security for people who are unemployed or retired
- At the other end of the spectrum from Ireland, the 'Nordic model' (in countries like Sweden and Denmark) involves the highest levels of tax and social insurance in exchange for excellent public services, strong social security and more equality
- Personally, I favour having a more equal society with good public services for everyone, and I am willing to pay for that



2. Closing the Deficit

Currently the government spends significantly more than it receives in revenues. To raise revenue for the public finances, can you tell me whether you would be in favour of, or opposed to each of the following:

a) Cutting public spending

- It would be impossible to achieve a balanced budget without reducing public expenditure
- Public expenditure increased in line with economic growth and taxation fuelled by the property boom. Now that this bubble has burst, expenditure must be reduced accordingly
- Public sector pay and costs remain high by international standards and cutting spending is an important part of the necessary competitiveness adjustment process
- Cutting spending does not have to mean cutting services – the focus has to be on reducing unit costs rather than cutting front-line services
- Spending more does not guarantee better quality public services

- Generally opposed to cuts; however we should cut private banking debt from the national debt
- We need to reform public services and move spending to where it is most needed
- Ireland generally has one of the lowest levels of public spending in Europe. Over fifteen years (1995-2008) Ireland's average spending was 35.5 per cent of national output (GDP). The Western European (EU15) average was 48 per cent of GDP
- Although spending is higher now, because of the unemployment crisis and banking debt, we need to tax more not just to close the deficit but also to provide sustainable high quality public services in future
- We need to spend more – not less – on essential public goods, like education

b) Increasing taxes

- Some tax increases will be needed over the coming Budgets but the bulk of the adjustment must be on the expenditure side
- Tax increases should be done in a way which minimises the damage to economic growth and jobs – increased taxes on mobile business or workers would result in a loss of activity and employment
- It is therefore essential to have a property tax and local charges
- The marginal income tax rate of 51% is already high by international standards and cannot be increased further if we are to retain and attract skilled workers
- Any increase in corporation tax would be counterproductive from an economic perspective

- In favour of increased taxation to pay for quality public services
- Ireland's total tax take is low compared to other Western European countries. Over fifteen years (1995-2008) Ireland's tax levels averaged 34 per cent of national output (GDP). The Western European (EU15) average was 44 per cent of GDP
- Collective public services (e.g. healthcare) are often cheaper than when individuals pay privately – so many people should actually be better off even though they pay more tax
- A United Nations expert recently criticised Ireland for maintaining low taxes while cutting public spending
- High earners and wealthy people should pay proportionately more
- We also need to raise tax by cutting Ireland's high level of tax breaks



3. Taxation versus Health and Social Spending

To what extent do you agree with the following statements, using a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 is completely disagree and 7 is completely agree.

a) The government should raise taxes a lot and spend a little less on health and social services

- Ireland is not a low tax country – our budget deficit has occurred as a result of the impacts of the downturn in the business cycle; excessive spending increases prior to recession; and excessive reductions in some taxes
- There is scope to improve the effectiveness of the tax system and to raise some additional taxes but it makes no economic sense to increase tax rates significantly
- Higher tax rates are a disincentive to work and enterprise and lead to a growing black economy.
- Higher tax rates will not necessary result in higher tax revenues
- Health and social services are essential to a society where everyone can live in dignity. We already know that people born into poverty live less healthy lives and die younger than people from affluent areas. For example, on average, the one-in-five men who have the lowest incomes have a shorter life expectancy by four and a half years compared to the wealthiest one-in-five
- We cannot achieve a more equal, fair society unless we are willing to pay for it collectively
- Therefore, we must increase taxes rather than cut health and social services

b) The government should increase taxes a little and cut much more on health and social services

- There is potential to raise some additional tax revenue, mainly through the introduction of new taxes
- Expenditure on health and social services will have to be reduced but this must be done in a way which protects front-line services
- Through productivity and work place change, unit costs must be reduced – this is what has happened in the private sector
- The 10% growth in real annual health expenditure in the decade prior to the crisis did not result in commensurate improvements in the quality of service provision
- Health expenditure in 2008 was three times that in 2000 – much of this increase went in the form of higher pay rates
- Our current health and social services are far from perfect, yet we are borrowing billions every year to maintain them as they are
- While there is always room for improvement and reform, we cannot expect better quality services if we cut spending on them
- Our social spending is already well below the EU average, despite our higher-than-average unemployment levels (16.5% v 20.1% GDP).
- Many vulnerable people are already suffering from the cuts
- Cutting services today may result in increased expenditure tomorrow, while investing in areas such as primary healthcare may save money in the future



Appendix 4

This appendix contains the full set of questions for the surveys carried out by We the Citizens. The questions were formulated following the regional events. They were used a number of times in June and July 2011 with original representative population sample of 1,242, with the Citizens' Assembly participants and with a number of control groups.

The Ipsos MRBI Survey Questions

Deliberative Polling

JN: 11-020403

FINAL Questionnaire

SECTION 1 - CLASSIFICATION

Thank you for your interest in participating in this survey. Before we go to the first question I just need to reassure you that all of your answers are completely confidential and your rights under the Data Protection Act will be fully observed, including not answering and choosing to end the interview.

We'd like to start the survey by firstly asking you a few classification questions to determine if you are eligible to participate in the survey.

GENDER

RECORD SEX OF RESPONDENT

- 1. Male
- 2. Female

AGE

To ensure we interview a wide cross section of the public, could I first ask what age group you fall into?

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------|
| 1. 15-17 CLOSE | 10. 50-54 |
| 2. 18-19 | 11. 55-59 |
| 3. 20-21 | 12. 60-64 |
| 4. 22-24 | 13. 65-69 |
| 5. 25-29 | 14. 70-74 |
| 6. 30-34 | 15. 75+ |

Reply may be REF

7. 35-39

8. 40-44

And, may I ask what is your actual age?

9. 45-49

18 to 99



COUNTY

What county do you live in?

- 1. Dublin
- 2. Carlow
- 3. Kildare
- 4. Kilkenny
- 5. Laois
- 6. Longford
- 7. Louth
- 8. Meath
- 9. Offaly
- 10. Westmeath
- 11. Wexford
- 12. Wicklow
- 13. Clare
- 14. Cork
- 15. Kerry
- 16. Limerick
- 17. Tipperary
- 18. Waterford
- 19. Galway
- 20. Leitrim
- 21. Mayo
- 22. Roscommon
- 23. Sligo
- 24. Cavan
- 25. Donegal
- 26. Monaghan

CODE REGION

- Dublin..... 1
- Rest of Leinster..... 2
- Munster..... 3
- Connaught..... 4
- Ulster..... 5

AREA

And would you say you live in an urban or rural area?

- Urban..... 1
- Rural..... 2



SECTION 2: MAIN QUESTIONNAIRE

Q.1 First of all, I am going to read out a number of organisations. For each one, could you tell me how much confidence you have in them: is it no confidence at all, not very much confidence, quite a lot of confidence, or a great deal of confidence?

READ OUT – ROTATE ORDER		No confidence at all	Not very much confidence	Quite a lot of confidence	A great deal of confidence	DK (DNRO)
	Religious groups	1	2	3	4	9
	Trade Unions	1	2	3	4	9
	The Gardaí	1	2	3	4	9
	Schools	1	2	3	4	9
	Political parties	1	2	3	4	9
	Banks	1	2	3	4	9
	The Dáil	1	2	3	4	9
	The Civil service	1	2	3	4	9
	Irish media	1	2	3	4	9
	Local authority/local government	1	2	3	4	9
	The European Union	1	2	3	4	9
	Citizens' Assembly – that is an assembly where ordinary citizens come together to discuss and decide upon policy issues in the way that the Dáil might.	1	2	3	4	9



Q.2 Can you tell me how often you do the following things? **PROBE TO PRECODES.**

SINGLE CODE.

	Everyday	Every couple of days	Weekly	Fort-nightly	Less often	Never	Don't know DNRO
Watch television news	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
Read a newspaper	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
Listen to NATIONAL radio news	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
Listen to LOCAL radio news	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
Visit social media sites (e.g. facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn.....)	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
View a twitter account	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
Browse online for news	1	2	3	4	5	6	9

Q.3 I am now going to read out a list of different emotions. Thinking about Ireland's current economic, political and social circumstances, can you tell me the extent to which you are feeling each of these emotions, using a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 is not feeling that emotion at all and 7 is feeling that emotion to a great extent? You can give any number between 1 and 7.

PROBE TO SCALE

READ OUT – ROTATE ORDER	Not feeling that emotion at all							Feeling that emotion to a great extent	Don't know DNRO
Angry	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9	
Afraid	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9	
Proud	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9	
Hopeful	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9	
Happy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9	
Distrustful	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9	



Q.4 Now, I want to ask you about your interest in politics. I will read out some statements. Using a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 is strongly disagree and 7 is strongly agree, please tell me to what extent you disagree or agree with each statement.

READ OUT – ROTATE ORDER		Strongly disagree						Strongly agree	DK (DNRO)
	I am very interested in politics	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9
	I like to discuss politics with others	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9
	Sometimes politics and government is so complicated that I find it difficult to understand what is going on	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9
	I think I am better informed about politics and government than most other people	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9
	Ordinary people have no influence on politics	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9
	I would be willing to get more involved in political issues than I currently am	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9

Q.5 Currently the government spends significantly more than it receives in revenues. To raise revenue for the public finances, can you tell me whether you would be in favour of, or opposed to each of the following:

READ OUT – ROTATE ORDER		In Favour Of	Opposed To	DK/ Unsure	
	The introduction of property tax	1	2	3	
	The introduction of water charges	1	2	3	
	The sale of state assets (for example ESB and CIE)	1	2	3	
	The re-introduction of student fees	1	2	3	
	Cutting public spending	1	2	3	
	Increasing taxes	1	2	3	



Q.6 Thinking now about education. If most primary and secondary schools were to become multi-denominational, that is, removing the current levels of Catholic patronage that preside over the majority of schools in Ireland, which of the following statements would best describe your view?

READ OUT - ROTATE

- I would welcome this as a good idea 1
- I would not have a strong opinion either way 2
- I would prefer to see schools stay as Catholic schools but would not object to sending my children to a multi-denominational school 3
- I would not send my children a multi-denominational school 4
- Don't know/ have no opinion (DNRO) 5

Q.7 I am going to read out a number of statements related to education. For each one, please tell me, to what extent you agree or disagree with each statement, using a scale of 1 to 7, where one is strongly disagree and 7 is strongly agree.

PROBE TO PRECODES.

READ OUT – ROTATE ORDER		Strongly disagree						Strongly agree	DK (DNRO)
	The Irish education system should be focused on creating responsible Irish citizens	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9
	There should be less emphasis on final examinations for secondary school students	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9
	There should be more emphasis placed on scientific subjects	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9
	Civic and social education should be a fundamental element of children's education	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9
	Religious education should be focused on teaching students about different religions rather than promoting one set of religious beliefs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9
	The Irish education system needs to encourage more creativity and independent thought	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9



Q.8 A lot of people talk about the left and right in politics. Thinking about your own political opinions, where would you place yourself on a scale from 0 to 10 where 0 means the left and 10 means the right?

	LEFT			RIGHT					DK						
	0			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	X	

Q.9ai I'd like to ask you about how TDs spend their time between local issues and national issues. By local issues I mean working to solve the problems of individual constituents, or trying to ensure that their constituency gets a bigger share of resources.

What percentage of their time do you think that TDs **generally spend** on local issues?

Local

Q.9aii And what percentage of their time do you think that TDs **generally spend** on national issues? By national issues I mean contributing to debates on national policy issues, or playing an active part in drawing up legislation to deal with national issues.

National

TOTAL MUST ADD TO 100%

Q.9bi And, what percentage of their time do you think that TDs **SHOULD** spend on local issues?

Local

Q.9bii And what percentage of their time do you think that TDs **SHOULD** spend on national issues?

National

TOTAL MUST ADD TO 100%



Q.10 When thinking about the work of a TD, how important are the following aspects of their work? Please use a scale of 1 to 7 where 1 is of no importance and 7 is of great importance.

PROBE TO PRECODES.

READ OUT – ROTATE ORDER		No importance						Great importance	DK (DNRO)
	Working on legislation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9
	Raising awareness of important social needs and interests	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9
	Developing policies	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9
	Balancing different interests in society	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9
	Helping constituents sort out their problems	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9
	Holding the Government to account	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9
	Representing their local area	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9
	Representing the party to which they were elected	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9

Q.11 To what extent to you agree with the following statements, using a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 is completely disagree and 7 is completely agree.

READ OUT – ROTATE ORDER		Strongly disagree						Strongly agree	DK (DNRO)
	The government should raise taxes a lot and spend a little less on health and social services	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9
	The government should increase taxes a little and cut much more on health and social services	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9



Q.12 Were you unable to vote in the last General Election because of the day the voting was held, or because you are not registered to vote or was there another reason?

- The day voting was held 1
- Not registered to vote 2
- Other (specify _____) 3
- Did vote in last General Election 4

ASK ALL WHO VOTED at Q.12

Q.13a Can I ask you to which party or independent candidate did you give your first preference vote?

Fianna Fáil	1	
Fine Gael	2	
Labour	3	
Sinn Féin	4	
The Green Party	5	
Independent Candidate	6	
Socialist Party/ United Left Alliance/ People Before Profit	7	
Other party (Specify) _____	8	
Did not vote	9	
Undecided	10	
Refused	11	



ASK ALL

Q.13b Can I ask you to which party or independent candidate did you give your first preference vote?

Fianna Fáil	1	
Fine Gael	2	
Labour	3	
Sinn Féin	4	
The Green Party	5	
Independent Candidate	6	
Socialist Party/ United Left Alliance/ People Before Profit	7	
Other party (Specify) _____	8	
Would not vote	9	
Undecided	10	
Refused	11	

Q.14 When you vote for a politician, which of the following is the most important factor in determining who gets your vote? Is it:

SINGLE CODE

READ OUT - ROTATE

- The candidate's contribution at a national level 1
- Because you support the party to which the candidate belongs 2
- The policies of the candidate's party 3
- The candidate's contribution at a local level 4
- The personal qualities of the candidate 5
- Because you know the candidate personally or live in close proximity to the candidate 6
- Other reason 7
- Don't know (DNRO) 9



Q.15 There is a Presidential election in the autumn. If this election were held tomorrow, to which of the following candidates, would you give your first preference vote? **READ OUT. ROTATE**

ROTATE ORDER		
Pat Cox	1	
David Norris	2	
Gay Mitchell	3	
Michael D. Higgins	4	
Avril Doyle	5	
Niall O'Dowd	6	
Seán Gallagher	7	
Máiread McGuinness	8	
Other candidate (Specify) _____	X	
	()	
Would not vote	0	
Undecided	X	
Refused	V	

Q.16 There is a Presidential election in the autumn. If this election were held tomorrow, to which of the following candidates, would you give your first preference vote? **READ OUT. ROTATE**

--



Q.17 I am going to read out a list of statements. Can you please tell me the degree to which you disagree or agree with these statements, where 1 is strongly disagree and 7 is strongly agree.

PROBE TO PRECODES.

READ OUT – ROTATE ORDER	Strongly disagree							Strongly agree	DK (DNRO)
The ability of TDs to provide a local service to their constituents is a strength of the Irish political system	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9	
Our electoral system should be changed	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9	
Parties should be made to nominate more women as candidates in elections	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9	
People from working class backgrounds should be encouraged to become more involved in politics	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9	
There should be more young people involved in politics	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9	
Strengthening the Freedom of Information legislation would be enough to make Irish government open	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9	
Other non religious groups should be allowed take over the patronage of schools that are currently under the patronage of religious groups.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9	
The burden of deficit reduction should come predominantly from spending cuts rather than tax increases	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9	
All Government documents should be published online unless the government applies to keep them secret	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9	
What young people need most of all is strict discipline by their parents	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9	
The church and state should be totally separate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9	
The state should pay the salaries of all teachers regardless of the type of school	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9	
The under-representation of women in the Dáil weakens its ability to function as a representative institution	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9	
Some benefits such as child benefit or old age pensions should only be paid to the less well off	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9	



Political party funding should be linked to the proportion of female candidates that are put forward for nomination	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9
Non politicians such as experts from industry or others with particular skills should be able to become Ministers in the government	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9
Ordinary citizens should be able to propose legislation by petitions to the Dáil	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9
Voting should be compulsory for all Irish citizens except in exceptional circumstances	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9
There should be a cap on the number of years a TD can serve in the Dáil	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9
There should be directly elected mayors who take on the responsibilities of county managers in local authorities.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9
People have a responsibility to learn about political issues if they are going to use their vote	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9
There should be fewer TDs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9

Q.18 Now we would like to read out some different ways people may describe themselves. For each, please tell me if you agree that the description applies to you or not, using a scale of 1 to 7 where 1 does not apply to you at all and 7 applies to you a lot.

PROBE TO PRECODES.

READ OUT – ROTATE ORDER	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree	DK (DNRO)
I tend to think of myself as someone who prefers to stick to a routine	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9
I tend to think of myself as someone who likes to go to different places and try new experiences	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9
I usually think there is one, right way of doing things	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9
I tend to think of myself as someone who likes to consider different ideas	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9
I think it would be better if people made an effort to fit in with the way most other people do things	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9



SECTION 3: ADDITIONAL CLASSIFICATION QUESTIONS

SOCIAL CLASS

Can you tell me the occupation of the chief income earner in your household? (Or previous occupation if unemployed for less than six months)

And what type of organisation does/did the Chief income earner work for?

And what is/was the Chief income earner's position/rank/grade?

And does the Chief income earner have any special qualifications related to their occupation?

CODE WORK STATUS

(1185)

Housewife (working in the home)	1
Unemployed	2
Full-Time Student (3rd Level)	3
Retired	4
Working full-time (30+ hours per week)	5
Working part-time (18-29 hours per week)	6
Working part-time (<18 hours)	7
Self employed	8

REMEMBER TO CHECK WIDOWED OR RETIRED DETAILS:

Widow with widow's pension only

Widow with private means (specify husband's former occupation)

Retired with state pension only

Retired with state pension AND occupation pension (specify former occupation)

EMPLOYMENT TYPE

Public Sector
Semi-state body
Private Sector

CODE CLASS

(1182)

Reply may be REF	
Reply may be open ended	
AB	1
C1	2
C2	3
DE	4
F1 (50+ acres)	5



AT WHAT LEVEL DID YOU FINISH YOUR FULL-TIME EDUCATION?

(1183 - 1184)

- Still at 2nd level 1
- Still at 3rd level 2
- Finished at primary level 3
- Finished at 2nd level 4
- Finished at 3rd level 5
- No formal education 6

MARITAL STATUS

Are you

- Married
- Living as married
- Single
- Widowed\Divorced\Separated

Reply may be REF

KIDS

Do you have any children under 18 living at home with you?

Yes

No

Reply may be DK or REF

RELIGION

To which religion do you belong?

- Catholic
- Church of Ireland (including Protestant)
- Presbyterian
- Muslim (Islamic)
- Orthodox
- Methodist
- Other Christian religion
- Other stated religion
- No religion
- Refused /Not stated

How often nowadays do you attend religious services?

- Daily
- Every couple of days
- Weekly
- Fortnightly
- Monthly
- Less often



Appendix 4

Acknowledgements

We would like to express our sincere thanks to the following for their help and support:

All of the citizens who attended our seven citizens' events around the country. Thank you for your honesty, your openness, your ideas.

All the participants in the Citizens' Assembly, who took a weekend away from their normal lives to make their voices heard. Thank you for your willingness to try something new and unknown. Thank you for the effort, time and good faith you put into the project.

Richard Beausang, Aislinn Bobbett, Sharon Brady, Derwin Brennan, Martin Brennan, Fran Brody, Miriam Browne, Natasha Burke, Sadie Byrne, James Byrne, Robert Caldrell, John Carew, Tom Cavanagh, Sinead Clarke, Margaret Clear, Peter Cole, Sally Crowley, Sandra Cunningham, Brenda Cusack, Stephen Devenney, Hugh Dorrian, Brian Dowley, Mark Doyle, Josephine Dwyer, Deborah Ellis, Paddy Farrell, Annette Ferguson, Denis Ferry, Rosanna Flynn, Ann Gordon, Catherine Gunning, Eamonn Healy, Damien Hennigan, Betty Henry, Jason Hogan, Zainab Hussein, Jalcins Iskandrobs, Tom Jones, Dolores Kearney, Crionna Kelly, Marion Kelly, Patrick C. Kiely, Tom Kiely, Ben Klaasen, Maciej Koczur, Des Lalor, Peter Lawton, Frank Lehan, Una Loughlin, Fionnuala Maher, Donal Mangan, Caroline Martin, Dan McDermott, Brenda McGrath, Macarton McGroder, Mary Meany, Brendan Moran, Noel Mulhearn, Carmel Mullane, Mary Murphy, Conor Nelson, Máirín Ní Dhomhnaill, Adam Noonan, Anne Noone, Caitriona O'Brien, Fiona O'Dwyer, David O'Keeffe, Maria O'Neill, Mark O'Sullivan, Catherine O'Sullivan, Geraldine Patten, Tony Pender, Martin Phelan, Marguerita Phibbs, Orla Power, Eugene Quigley, Edward Quinlan, Cleopatra Rammusi, Brigid Redmond, Rebecca Roper, Dorothy Seagrave, Tina Shee, Ann Sheehan, Philip Sheridan, Jason Sinnott, David Sloan, Michael Smith, Margaret Sweeney, Dympna Treanor, Mandy Vuong, Stephen Wallace, Róisín Walsh,

Niall Walsh, PJ Walsh, Rose Walsh, Pauline Walsh, Laura Watson, Edward Whelan, Brenda Yourell.

Our facilitators and note-takers, who ran and recorded the discussions at the regional events and the citizens' assembly. Your dedication and attention to detail were integral to the success of the project.

Michael Anderson, David Barrett, Erin Baumann, Ciara Begley, Mary Browne, Lorna Carney, Mark Carpenter, Michael Courtney, Julie Connelly, Maurice Cotter, Julianne Cox, Joseph Curran, Elizabeth Cusack, Lee Daly, Des Delaney, Stephen Dineen, Susie Donnelly, Claire Ann Dooley, Mark Dunne, Colm Finlay, John Fitzgibbon, Louise Fitzgerald, Eamon Furey, Brendan Gilroy, Dan Hayden, Eoin Hayes, Mike Hayes, Barry Healy, Mary Hyland, Éanna Kelly, Ronan Kennedy, Lydia Leonard, Anne Marlborough, Aislinn McCauley, Anthony McDonnell, Caroline McEvoy, Jonathan Mullen, Liam Murphy, Philip Murphy, Bairbre Nic an Ultaigh, Daudi Nyaluka, Séin Ó Muineacháin, Niall Ó Tuathail, Dr Niamh Purseil, Stephen Quinlan, Laura Maria Schwirz, John Sheridan, Tony Smith, Isabell Smyth, Kate Solovieva, Natasha Underhill, Dawn Walsh, Veronica Walsh.

Our volunteers, who worked tirelessly to promote the regional events and encourage participation. Your contribution is greatly valued.

Maeve Ann Austen, Darren Bates, Séamus Carey, Angelina Cox, Mark Dargan, Meabh De Búrca, Jack Devlin, Kate Devlin, John Doyle, Rosann Dunne, Colin Dunning, Joan Fitzpatrick, Padraig Fogarty, Jennifer Geoff, Aisling Geraghty, Bronagh Geraghty, Laura Harman, Donal Hassett, Jordan Hewson, James Jarleth, Marty Kerrane, John Mannion, Jennifer McCreevy, Alison McGrath, Oliver Moran, Lily Mulhall, Maura Murphy, Cillian O'Brien, Kevin O'Flynn, Ross O'Mahony, Tracey O'Shea, Robert Price, Kevin Quarrell, Stephen Spillane, Lorraine Tansey, Eamonn Tyrell, Andrea Wickham.



Special thanks to:

Prof. Ken Carty, Lorna Carney, Anne Connolly, Dr. Clodagh Harris, Gary Joyce, Jessica Kavanagh, Kieran Leonard, Mark Little, Luke McManus, Dr. Bryan McMahon and the Board and staff of the Abbey Theatre, Fergal O'Brien, Dr. Nat O'Connor, Dr. Theresa Reidy, Roddy Rowan, Fearghal Ward, and the staff at VSO Dublin Headquarters.