

Meaningful Employment Barriers and Aspirations for Mothers on Low Incomes

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FOCUS
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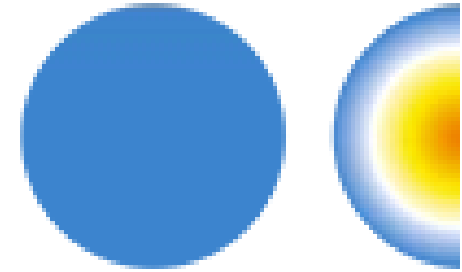


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Programme (2014-2020)



Research Overview

- Focus Ireland – housing and homelessness NGO
- REGAL – EU-funded project
- Core group of 16 women who have experienced homelessness *and* have a care responsibility
- Twelve focus groups, November 2019 – March 2020;
Four qualitative interviews, October 2020
- Explored work-life balance barriers and aspirations



Policy Context in Ireland

- Historical role of women and male 'breadwinner' model
- One parent families and the labour market
- In-work poverty
- Access to childcare
- Feminisation of homelessness



Methodology

Participatory Action Human Rights & Capability Approach (PAHRCA)



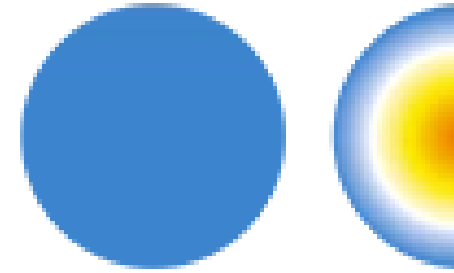
- Recruiting
- Building solidarity
- Creating Faith

- Double burden
- Human rights
- Election manifestos

- Research sessions
- Letters
- Photo diaries
- Budgeting

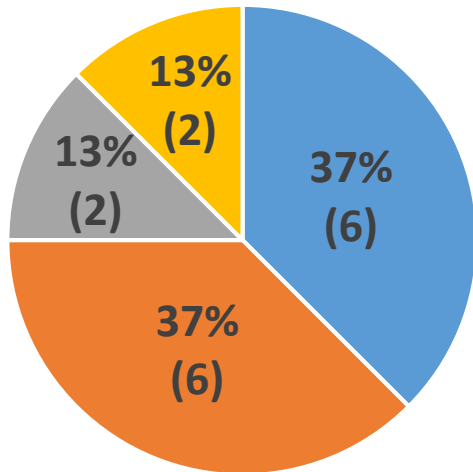
- Story-telling
- Propose solutions

Co-Researcher Profile (n=16)



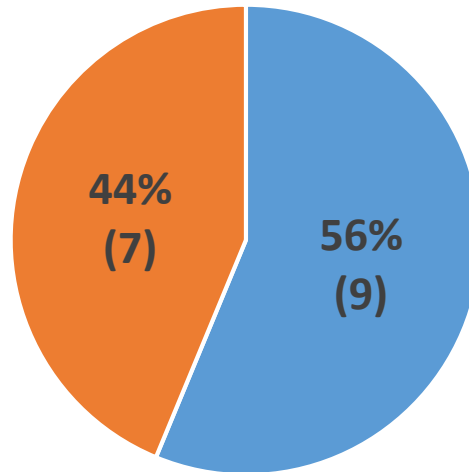
Accommodation

■ Emergency acc. ■ Focus housing
■ Social housing ■ Private rented



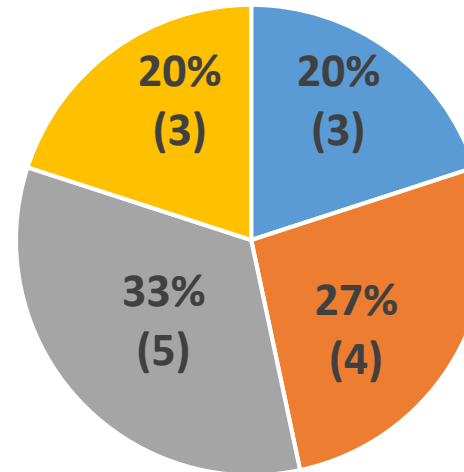
Relationship

■ Lone parent ■ Couple



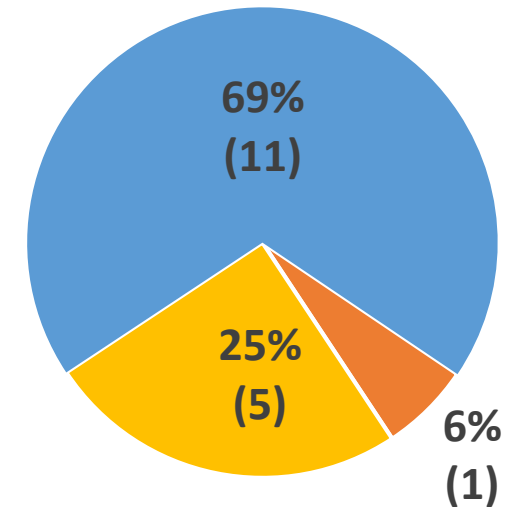
Children

■ 1 child ■ 2 children
■ 3 children ■ 4 children

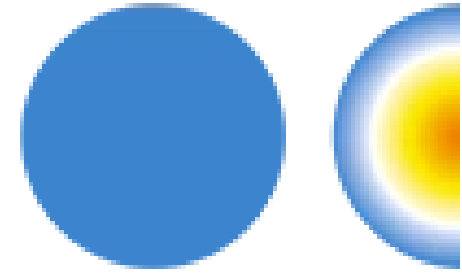


Labour market status

■ Self-emp ■ PETE ■ NEET



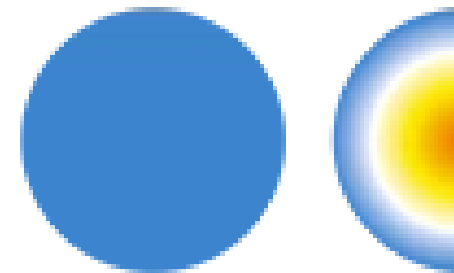
Findings



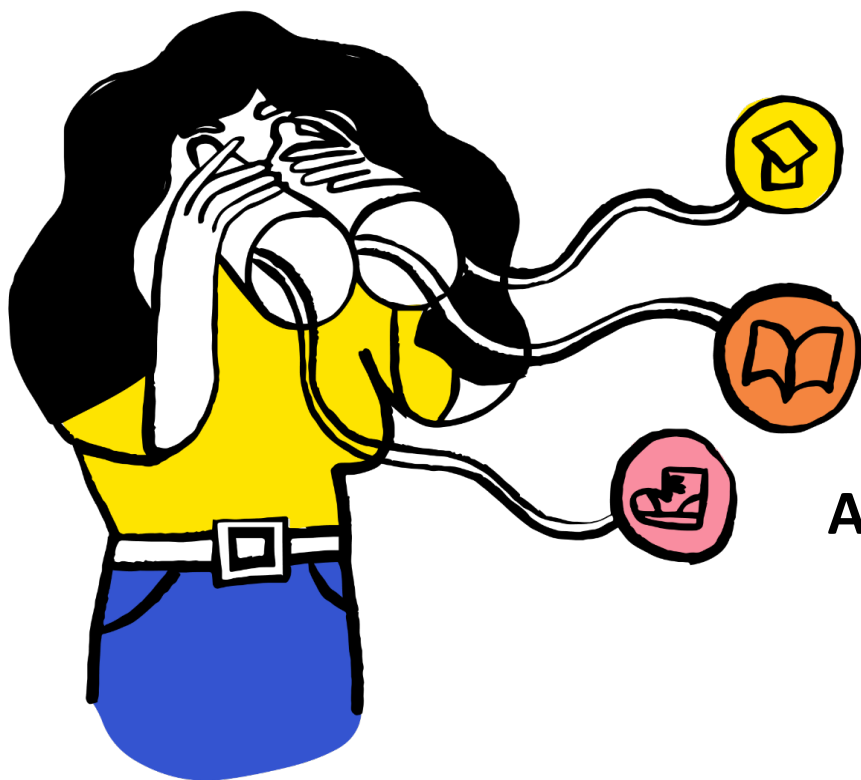
Meaningful Employment Aspirations & Barriers

Exploring Aspirations

- ❖ Difficult topic to explore with the group
- ❖ Aspirations framed in terms of wanting the best for their children or being a good mother
- ❖ Primary role of carer coupled with poverty stunted employment goals and future planning



If care work was looked after, what job would you like to do?



BEAUTICIAN COUNSELLOR LAWYER

NURSE CLOTHES DESIGNER DANCER

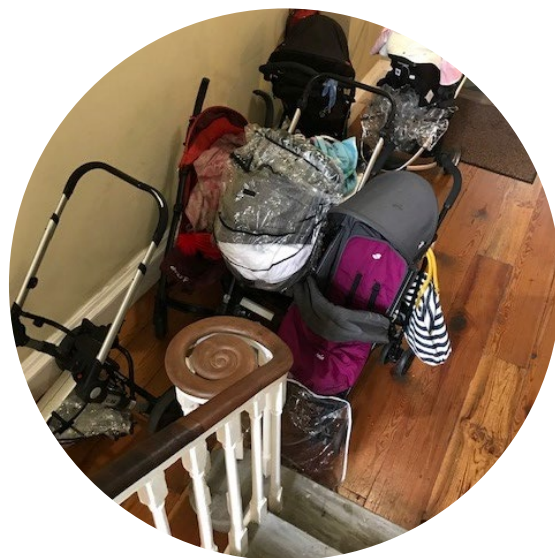
ARMY OFFICER ACCOUNTANT

SOCIAL or HEALTH CARE

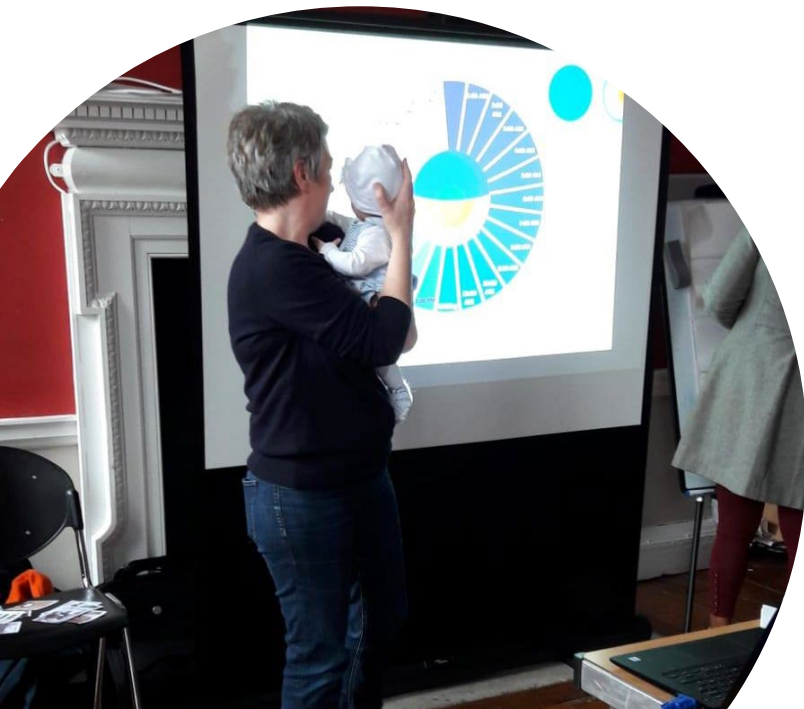


Exploring Barriers - Childcare

- Childcare is (still) expensive
 - Particularly for employees with flexible working hours
- Working just to pay for childcare
- Reliance on informal arrangements
- Often not available when mothers need it to work
 - Weekends, evening/night shifts
- Transport to & from an issue
 - Particularly for lone parents or dual worker households
- After-school activities



**No research project
without childcare...**



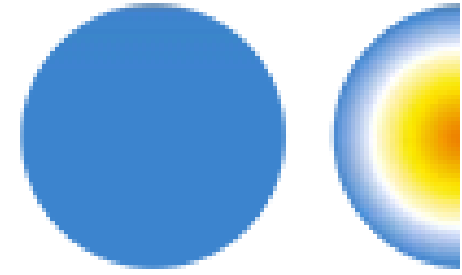
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Exploring Barriers - Precarious Work

- Part-time jobs often require high levels of availability & flexibility by employees
 - Limited flexibility for employees
- Often for low pay and poor conditions
- Few progression opportunities
- Less social insurance coverage
 - Limited recognition of care in social insurance system
- Expectation that there's no 'life' while you're in 'work'
- Exploitation – replaceable
- The types of work realistically available just not worth it



Is Upskilling the Answer?



- Recognition that better quality jobs require qualifications/training
- Inaccessible and Inflexible training/education opportunities
 - High costs
 - Unsuitable hours and structure – family unfriendly
- Fear of the unknown
 - Versus the stability of welfare support
 - Lack of self confidence – “am I able for this?”
- Practical mindset
 - Focus on practical, realistic work opportunities in the here and now rather than aspirational roles



Exploring Solutions

Solutions for work-life balance  **REGAL**
REGAINING LIFE FOR
PRECARIOUS WOMEN
AT WORK

- National Childcare Subsidy (NCS)**
 - Increase National Childcare Subsidy for lowest income parents
- Prioritise subsidised childcare for working parents**
 - Policy should prioritise parents in the labour market - including education & training
- Making Work Pay**
 - Include childcare costs in Working Family Payment assessment
- Right to certain working hours**
 - Right to some certainty about number & pattern of working hours
- Flexible family leave**
 - Make Parent's Leave more flexible so parents can take leave when children are sick
- Earlier pre-school entry**
 - Children of working parents can start preschool before age 3
- Longer pre-school term**
 - Increase length of pre-school term
- Longer pre-school day**
 - Increase length of the subsidised pre-school day
- After-school activities on/near school**
 - Make use of school facilities
 - Use provider partnerships to deliver programmes

NO DISCRIMINATION **PUBLIC OFFICIALS MAKE RACIST COMMENTS**

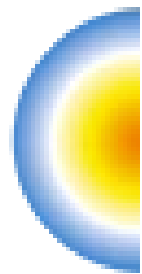
- After-school for all school children**
 - All children, including teenagers, should have access to after-school activities
- After-school activities on/near school**
 - Make use of school facilities
 - Use provider partnerships to deliver programmes
- Paid family leave for all**
 - Create family leave payments for those without social insurance
- Earlier pre-school entry**
 - Children of working parents can start preschool before age 3
- Right to flexible work**
 - Right to negotiate flexible hours for employees with caring responsibilities
- Making Work Pay**
 - Include childcare costs in Working Family Payment assessment
- Flexible family leave**
 - Make Parent's Leave more flexible so parents can take leave when children are sick
- National Childcare Subsidy (NCS)**
 - Increase National Childcare Subsidy for lowest income parents
- Shared family leave**
 - Allow sharing of some family leave between parents
- CITIZENS RIGHTS** **CHILDREN BORN IN IRELAND SHOULD BE IRISH CITIZENS**
- Pick up & drop off from pre-school**
 - Gives parents more flexibility

Solutions for work-life balance  **REGAL**
REGAINING LIFE FOR
PRECARIOUS WOMEN
AT WORK

- Affordable Childcare** **For all ages**
- After-school for all school children**
 - All children, including teenagers, should have access to after-school activities
- Pick up & drop off from after-school**
 - Where activities not on school premises, and particularly for younger children
- Pick up & drop off from pre-school**
 - Gives parents more flexibility
- Earlier pre-school entry**
 - Children of working parents can start preschool before age 3
- Right to flexible work**
 - Right to negotiate flexible hours for employees with caring responsibilities
- Paid family leave for all**
 - Create family leave payments for those without social insurance



Identified Policy Preferences



Paid Family leave

**Parental care in
early years**

**Paid leave for all
parents**

**Longer, flexible,
shared* leave**

Inclusive childcare

Affordable

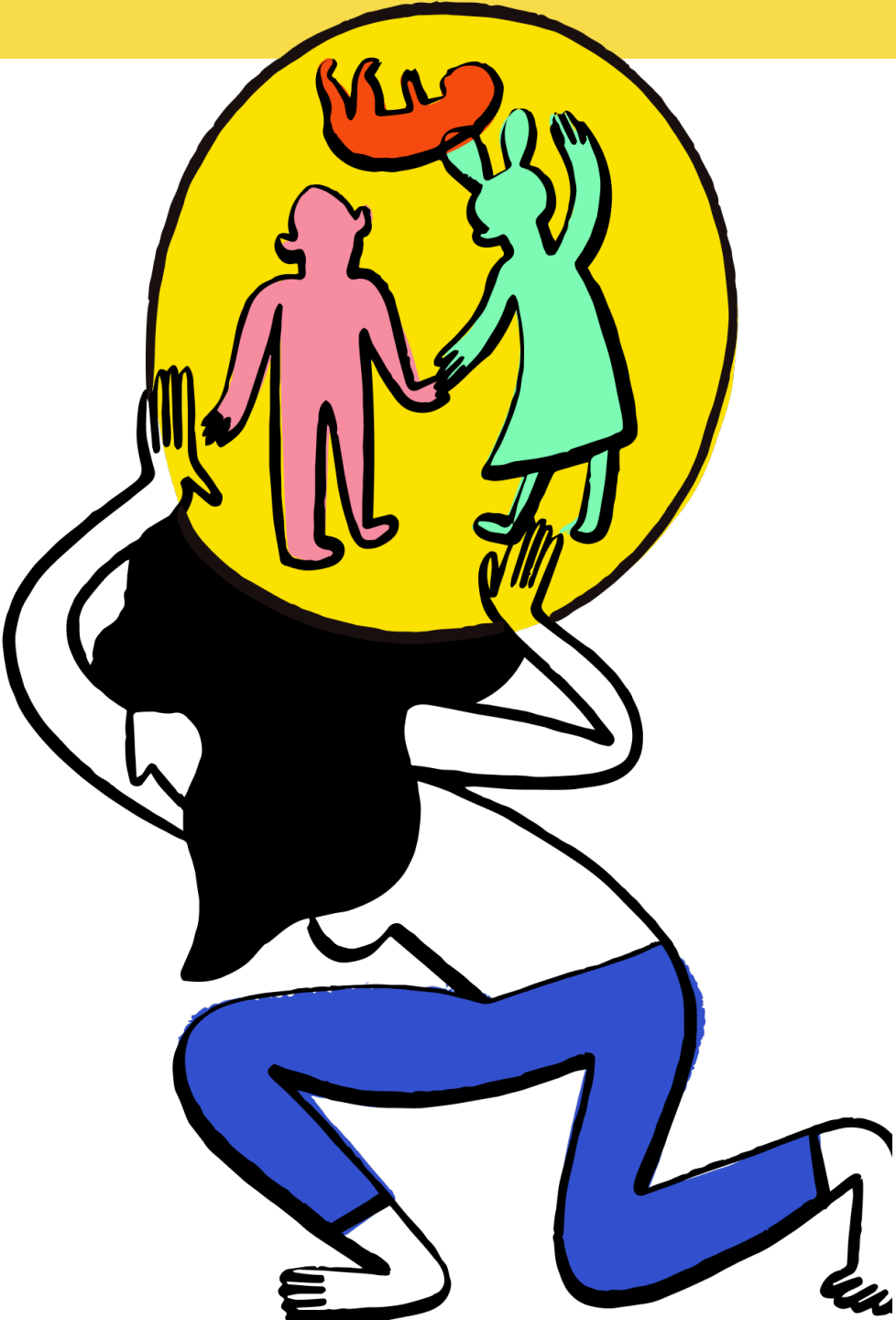
**Accessible
(transport)**

Afterschool

Family-friendly workplaces

**Right to flexible
work**

**Right to certain
working hours**



Conclusion

- Lack of inclusive childcare forces women on low incomes into unemployment or precarious work
- Precarious work provides little stability or security
- Lack of affordable courses available which take care responsibilities and low incomes into account
- Unemployment trap
- Significant impact on mental health and self-confidence
- Solutions viewed in policy terms as paid family leave, inclusive childcare and family-friendly workplaces

Outputs

- ❑ National papers
- ❑ EU synthesis report
- ❑ EU storybook report
- ❑ Methodology toolkit – www.regalproject.eu
- ❑ Testing Faith website – www.testingfaith.ie



THANK YOU

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