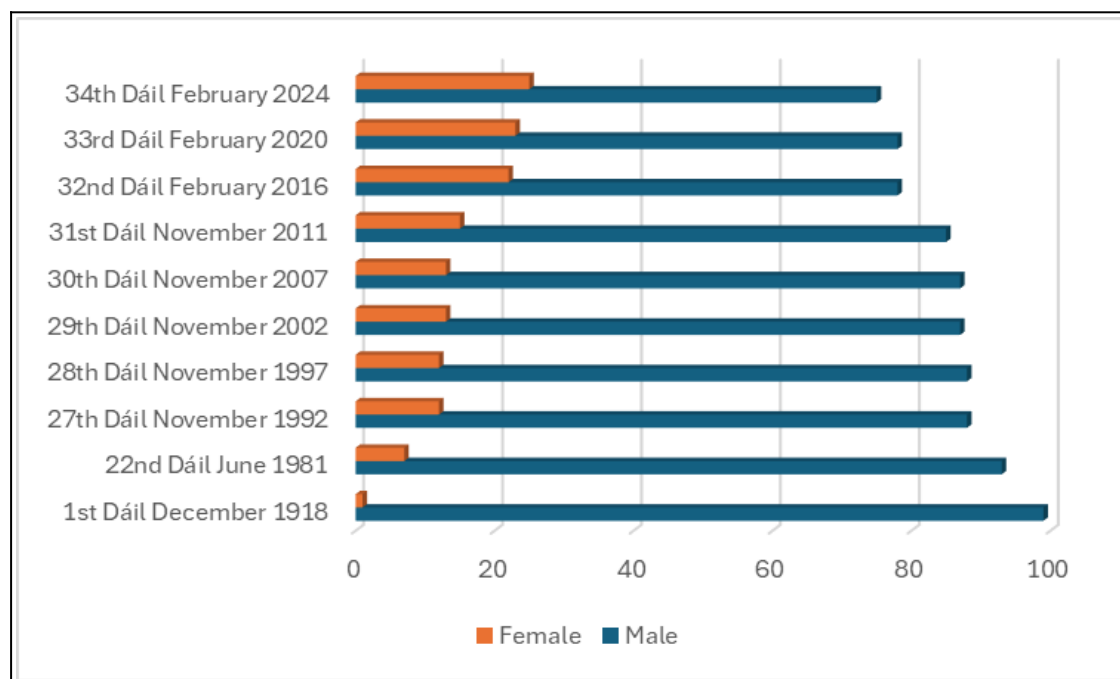


Governance and Participation

Chart 6.1: Women and men elected to Dáil Éireann , 1918-2024



Source: CSO, Table G0502

Table 6.1: Composition of PPN membership 2022* and 2023*

College	2022	2023	Change in No.	% Total 2023
Community and Voluntary	14,386	15,242	+856	80%
Environmental	673	730	+57	3.8%
Social Inclusion	2,972	3,081	+109	16.2%
Total	18,053	19,063	+1,010	

Source: Dept. of Rural and Community Development, PPN Annual Report 2023.

Note: Includes Associate Members. Please note with regards to the 2023 total figure - there are 10 groups registered to a PPN unassigned to any college.

Governance and Participation



Democracy and maintaining democratic systems are vital if we are to deliver a society which ensures that all people from different cultures are welcomed in a way that is consistent with our history, our obligations as world citizens and with our economic status, and that every person has a genuine voice in shaping the decisions that affect them. That democratic systems are under threat across the world means there is no place for complacency.

We welcome the commitments to countering mis and dis-information and support for independent journalism. We welcome political reform and the increased support for greater diversity and inclusion in our political representation. Local democracy must be supported as this is where the majority of people will engage with politics and policy through interaction with their local councillors, Public Participation Networks (PPN) and others.

Women in Politics

Women are significantly out-numbered by men in politics in Ireland. Gender quota legislation introduced prior to the 2016 General Election has resulted in general increases but women still only hold 25 per cent of seats (Chart 6.1). Research from the National Council of Women in Ireland reports that care is not an issue for only 40.24 per cent of female respondents (local councillors and key stakeholders) compared to 54.17 per cent of the male respondents (NCWI, [2019](#)). That same report notes that, “three times the proportion of women than men reported bringing

their children on canvassing duty. 16% of women and 9% of men reported being reliant on unpaid childcare and 9% of women and 4% of men indicated a reliance on paid care. Women are more likely to bring their children with them on the campaign and are more reliant on care than their male counterparts. Lone parents would seem to be specifically disadvantaged by these dynamics”. A balanced representation by both women and men is seen as important in strengthening democracy and “is a necessary condition for women's interests and concerns to be taken into account” (EPRS, [2021](#)). It is time to start investing in this area and move Ireland's childcare infrastructure in the direction of the European norm.

Public Participation Networks

As the PPNs go from strength to strength, (Table 6.1) adequately resourcing the PPN structures for participation at Local Authority (LA) level, establishing a Dialogue Forum in every Local Authority involving the LA and the PPN and establishing a social dialogue process are all essential to protecting and strengthening our democracy at local and national level.

Policy Priority

- Increase investment in early childhood education and care and after-school care.
- Adequately resource the Public Participation Network (PPN) structures for participation at Local Authority level and ensure capacity building is an integral part of the process.