

WOMEN'S COLLECTIVE IRELAND - LIMERICK



MEASURING THE IMPACT RESEARCH REPORT

CWELL Team

Prof. Maura Adshead, Course Director



Maura manages the CWELL programme, working mostly in the background to provide relevant staff and supports to maintain the programme.

Dr Patrick Doyle, Lecturer

Patrick teaches both first and second year CWELL students, focusing on the community based participatory research methods in the final year. His research interests cover the history of economic democracy and the historical relationship between capitalism and religion. Patrick is a founding member of Ireland's Solid Network and is interested in the application of democratic principles in community development.



Eileen Hoffer, Community Engagement Officer



Eileen project manages CWELL projects and leads on the Practicum II module. She has a background in community development both in Ireland and overseas.

Front Cover Photo: Edana Flynn, Dr Geraldine Grimes, Yvie and Katla - attending the Le Chéile - Diversity not Division March

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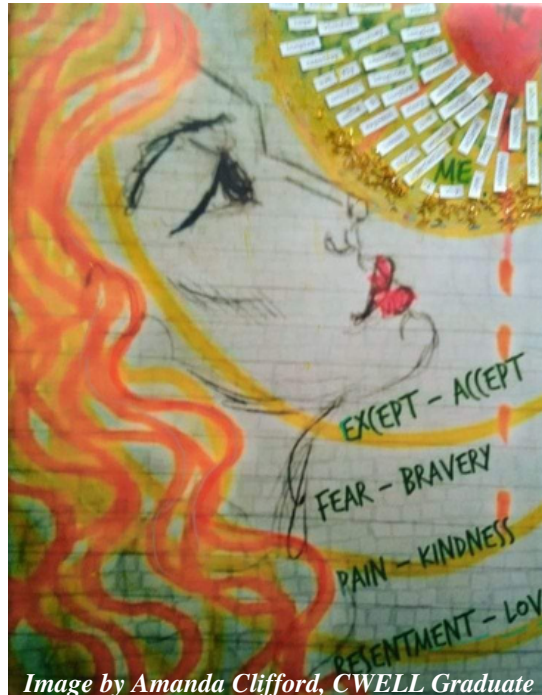


Image by Amanda Clifford, CWELL Graduate

This project would not have been possible without the support of many people. We would like to express our thanks to:

The staff of the Women's Collective Ireland Limerick, Yvie, Mary and Katla your vision, dedication and hard work is inspiring. Thank you for all you do to enhance and improve the lives of local women.

Thank you to those who engage with the WCIL. Thank you for generously sharing your insights with us, for attending our World Café and for completing our online survey.

To all of our CWELL lecturers, in particular, Dr Maura Adshead, Dr Patrick Doyle and to Eileen Hoffler.

To our families and friends, we would not have been able to complete the CWELL Diploma without your understanding and support - we love you all so much.

We dedicate this project to Liz Price in recognition of her work and commitment to the WCIL. We also dedicate our work to the memory of Edel Geraghty, We have been inspired by your example Edel and will strive to continue your legacy.

The Project Team

CWELL Project Team

Mary Devereux, CWELL Diploma Student



Mary Devereux, originally from Kileely, has dedicated over 30 years to childcare, working at various levels until an MS diagnosis forced her to leave the career she loved. Despite this setback, her passion for community work never left. In recent years, she has become an active volunteer and participated in the CWELL course. It led her to represent the CWELL course at the AONTAS awards and, buoyed by this experience, to serve on an expert panel at Leinster House, where she advocated for the rights and needs of people living with MS.

Rebecca Hannan, CWELL Diploma Student

From an early age, Rebecca Hannan has been proactive in her community, assisting elderly neighbours with their activities of everyday living. Over the last 12 years, she has worked in various health care roles. She is the facilitator of the Women's Shed Corbally, which offers a safe place for women to combat social isolation and engage in their community. Rebecca believes " *it is never too late to learn* "



Leah McNamara, CWELL Diploma Student



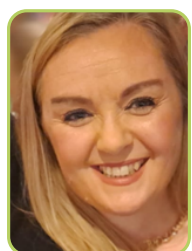
Leah Mc Namara is from Shannon, Co. Clare. She is a mother of 3 in a neurodiverse family. She is an advocate for mental health and neurodiversity awareness. Leah's mission is to bring more mental health awareness and support services such as peer support and education to Shannon Town.

Philomena O'Brien, CWELL Diploma Student

Philomena O'Brien is originally from and still lives in the Fairgreen, Limerick. She has worked in the disability sector for 23 years in the role of Instructor Supervisor. She is very active in her community and is the Chairperson of the Fairgreen Residents Association. She also volunteers with homeless services. Philomena enjoys a busy family life. In her spare time, she likes to walk, swim and spend time with her dog Rex. Since joining CWELL, she has gained many skills that she now applies both in her work life and in her community work.



Vanessa O'Rahilly, CWELL Diploma Student



Vanessa O'Rahilly grew up on the Ballysimon Road Limerick. She is co-founder of Thomond Studios Creative Arts Project, which was created to allow students to work in a studio environment through costume and set design, acting music and filmmaking through a learner-led experience. She is a keen crafter and started The Stitchers Social, a knitting and crochet group that runs once a month on a voluntary basis in the Urban Co-op Limerick. CWELL has nurtured Vanessa's passion for community and learning and she is furthering her studies in this area by engaging in an MA in Youth, Community and Social Regeneration.

CWELL Project Team

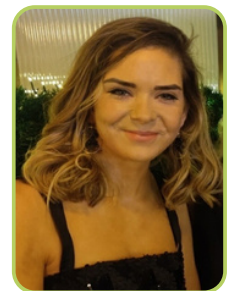
Praise Tshuma, CWELL Diploma Student



Praise Tshuma works as an administrator in Corbally House Nursing Home and as a part-time Healthcare Assistant in St John's Hospital. He started working in Corbally House Nursing Home in May 2020 as a Healthcare Assistant and was promoted to administration in March 2022. He holds Diplomas in Bookkeeping, Payroll and Medical Secretary. He believes that through CWELL he has improved his leadership, communication, and presentation skills.

Brid Doran, Community Engagement Professional Diploma Student

Bríd Doran has been teaching in Brookfield, West Tallaght for the last 15 years. Having worked in the classroom, in behavioural support, family support and one-to-one interventions with children, Bríd now works as the Home School Community Liaison teacher. Working in an area with a strong heritage and a multicultural community She is an advisory board member of the Garda Youth diversion projects and a Meitheal trained Lead Practitioner trained to support families in intervention and integration programmes Bríd hopes that community interaction and integration in education can be widely used to inspire, ignite and instill change.



Diarmuid Walsh, Community Engagement, Professional Diploma Student



Diarmuid Walsh has lived in Galway for the last 10 years after moving from Offaly. He works as a Home School Community Liaison teacher in Scoil Mhuire Tullamore, supporting parents from the school. Before becoming a teacher he worked as an archaeologist. He is a member of the Adult Literacy Coalition for Laois/Offaly working with multiple agencies to promote adult literacy within the area. He is a board member and Cathaoirleach of Naíonra Tí na Sí in Loughrea Co Galway, providing Irish language preschool and after-school service. He also helps out coaching an underage team for Craughwell Camogie Club.

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FOREWORD BY YVIE MURPHY COORDINATOR WOMEN'S COLLECTIVE IRELAND - LIMERICK

Women's Collective Ireland - Limerick, (formerly known as Limerick Women's Network) has been in operation in Limerick, in one form or another, for over 20 years. Since our formation, we have worked with and supported many women throughout Limerick City and County. This continued work would not have been possible without the wonderful volunteers and staff who have championed us along the way and we thank them for their time, experience and loyalty.

Working in the realm of community development, sometimes, it can be difficult to know how or if you are making an impact on the communities you work with. This is why when the CWELL class of 2022-2024 approached us about being their chosen organisation and wanted to work on a class project with us, we jumped at the chance.

After a few initial meetings, it was collectively decided that an impact assessment would be the project that would be of most benefit to the WCI -Limerick. Over the last few months, we have built up an excellent working relationship with the students and have seen firsthand, their enthusiasm and dedication, not only towards this project but towards community development in a wider context.

"We have built up an excellent working relationship with the students and have seen first-hand, their enthusiasm and dedication, not only towards this project but towards community development in a wider context."

Yvie Murphy, Co-ordinator
Women's Collective Ireland Limericks



**The staff of the Women's Collective Ireland Limerick
Katla Thorhildardottir - Development Worker, Mary
Bradshaw - Project Worker, and Yvie Murphy -
Coordinator**

Getting the opportunity to learn about the positive impact we are having on local women and, indeed, the areas where we could benefit from making changes, has been invaluable to us. We are incredibly grateful to all of the CWELL students who have worked so passionately on this project and delivered this report, which we can use to showcase our work and our impact for years to come.

INTRODUCTION

Women's Collective Ireland - Limerick, WCI-Limerick (formerly Limerick Women's Network) is part of the national Women's Collective Ireland network and its key aim is to promote gender equality through their work. They provide an information and support service for women, supplying information on a range of issues such as health provision, screening services, and men's violence against women services. They also provide support for women to return to education and/or employment.

Additionally, they run various courses and workshops such as creative writing and community singing, as well as several courses and workshops aimed at improving and increasing women's participation in public and community life. These include: *Representing Women, Women and Politics Training Day, Political Participation Training for Migrant Women* and *Women in Local Leadership*. WCI-Limerick also run health focused events and awareness days as well as organizing and participating in celebration days such as International Women's Day. They regularly get involved in local and national campaigns and have taken part in public consultations relating to women's issues and broader issues using a gendered lens. They were instrumental in the establishment of the Limerick Women's Caucus, the first of its kind at a local level in the country. They are feminist, inclusive and pro-choice and work using feminist and community development principles.



Group attending Sex Worker Awareness Training with Sex Workers Alliance Ireland

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The students of the Community Wellness, Empowerment, Leadership and Lifeskills (CWELL) Diploma programme and the students of the Community Engagement Professional Diploma began collaborating with the Women's Collective Ireland - Limerick in Autumn 2023. The collaboration began with a consultation designed to establish the needs of the WCIL.

At this consultation, the students identified several needs (see Table 1) and in consideration of these needs, the range of possible responses and several possible projects. These were presented to the WCI - Limerick.

It was agreed at that presentation that the project would be a research project, the aim of which was to consider the impact of the WCI - Limerick on those who engage with their courses, events and initiatives.

A community-based participatory research approach was taken, involving two key research methods - a World Café style focus group event and an online survey. Both the questions for the World Café and the online survey were agreed in consultation with the WCI - Limerick.

The findings of the research indicate that the WCI - Limerick are making an impact on those engaging with them, with some finding their interactions empowering and even life-changing. The courses offered by WCI - Limerick are proving to be a popular way to engage, though social events are also very appealing to those who engage with the WCI - Limerick.



Representing Women Class of 2019 and some Limerick Women Councillors attending a field trip to Leinster House

This report aims to increase awareness of the activities of the WCI - Limerick across the city, county and beyond, to highlight the significant impact that the WCI - Limerick is having and to help advocate for increased funding for organisations like the WCI - Limerick. Investment in such organisations brings meaningful returns, offers exceptional value for money and helps to redress gender inequality.

Aims and Methodology

The Community Wellness, Empowerment Leadership and Life skills (CWELL) programme is a co-created, community-based adult education programme that aims to enhance the capacity of local communities experiencing disadvantage to identify and address areas of social concern. It is designed to deliver specific outcomes such as health literacy, application of knowledge to practice and personal and professional growth of programme participants, particularly the demonstration of leading and sustaining positive change.

A key aspect of the programme is the collaborative community project which is completed in the final year. The CWELL approach is based on the principles of genuine collaboration, parity of knowledge and reciprocity. Through the use of engaged research methodologies, students work with local communities and community organisations to develop an agreed project. One of this year's projects, and the subject of this report is CWELL's collaboration with the Women's Collective Ireland - Limerick.

The purpose of the project was to research what impact, if any the WCI - Limerick is having on those who engage with their courses, events and other initiatives. To answer this question the students relied on a World Café style event and an online survey. The World Café invitation and link to the online survey were posted on all of the WCI - Limerick's social media platforms. The World Café invitation was attended by a group of women who engage with the WCI - Limerick. The online survey was completed by 36 respondents. The findings of both, along with associated recommendations are outlined in this report.

What is a World Café

World Café is a participatory method intended to encourage conversation and reflection with groups of people. The conversation is led by the participants themselves with little input from the facilitator. It promotes meaningful conversations on important topics. This method is called a World Café because the facilitator creates a café style space. Participants sit in small groups at several tables.



Students & Participants at the WCI - Limerick, World Café UL City Campus, April 17th, 2024

World Café Findings

Question 1.

What drew you to the WCI-Limerick and what keeps you involved?

Attendees at the World Café gave several reasons for their choice of the WCIL among these:

- I was involved in the community already was aware of the work of the WCI - Limerick
- Drawn to the WCI - Limerick's work on women's rights
- Through personal connections to those involved
- WCI - Limerick has stayed in operation other organisations have come and gone
- Great range of courses and workshops WCI - Limerick offer
- Represents the future of women – empowerment
- Wanted to make friends with like-minded people
- To get out of the house/ back into the world
- Heard great things about WCI - Limerick wanted to get involved
- Was made feel so welcome – I stayed involved
- Opportunities to go on and so other courses
- It was a pathway back to education for me

Question 2.

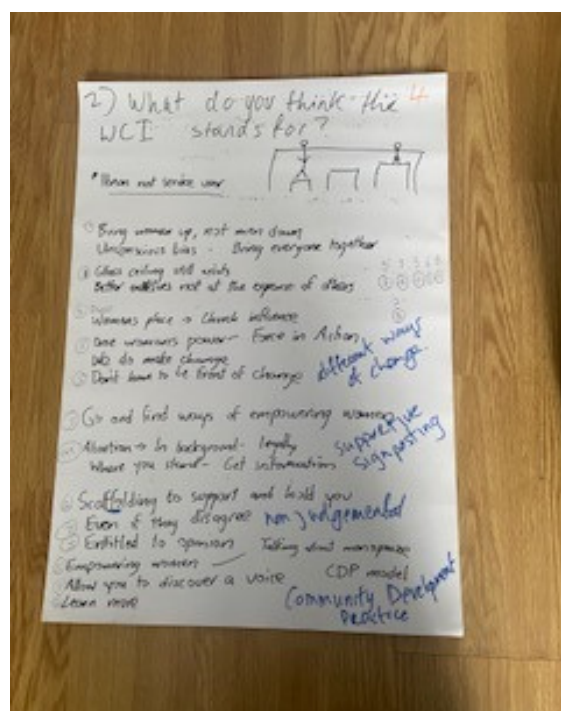
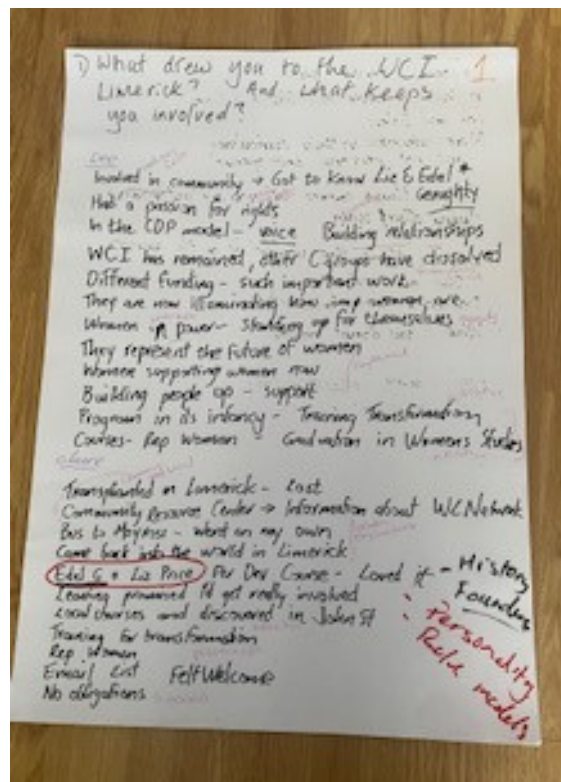
What do you think the WCI - Limerick stands for?

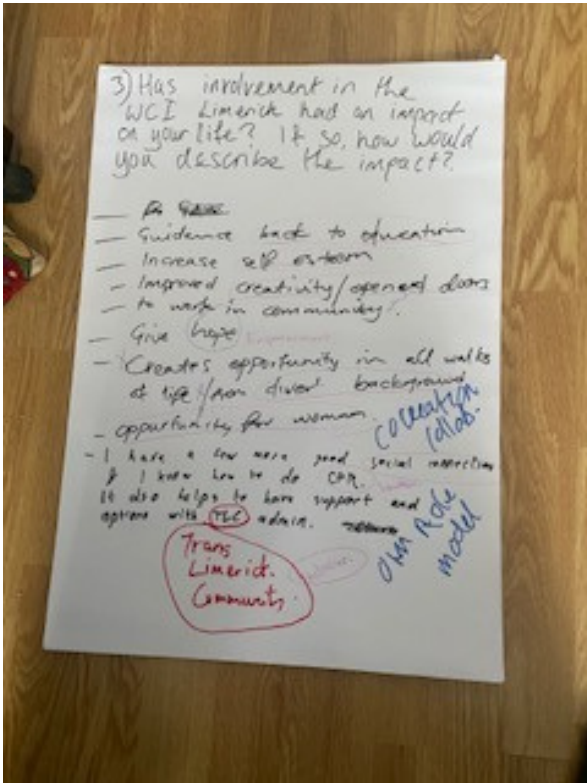
This question was also asked in the online survey for a full analysis see survey question 3 below.

Question 3.

If your involvement has had an impact on your life, how would you describe this impact?

This question was also asked in the online survey for a full analysis see survey question 17 below.



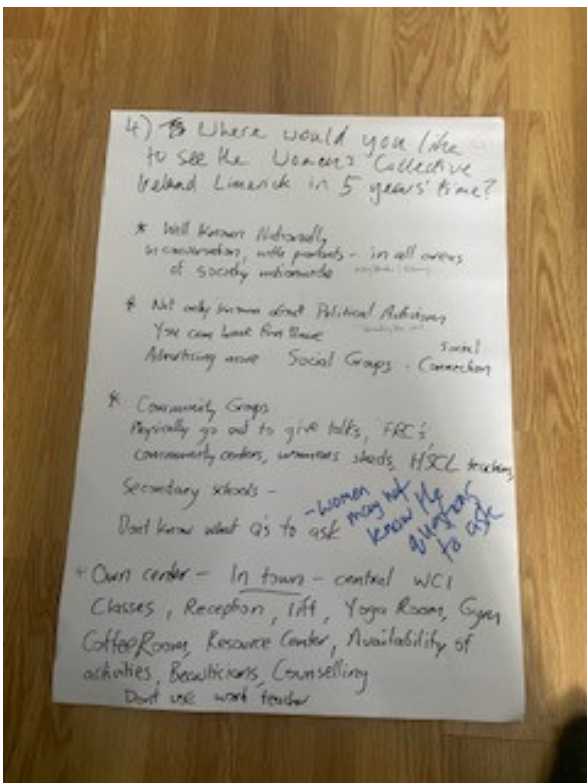


Question 4.

Where would you like to see the WCI - Limerick in 5 years' time?

The gathered participants had very strong hopes for the WCIL including:

- More well known locally, regionally and nationally
- More women involved – more diversity. A broader following
- Promoting the social aspects more
- Increase number of female politicians
- Increase awareness through secondary school programme for transition years, talks in community centres, family resources centres
- Own premises – accessible building offering variety of opportunities to engage.
- More funding
- Able to appoint more staff
- More WCI branches
- Become the largest of the women's networks
- Research the extent to which equal rights have been achieved
- Work more with younger women
- Feminist term can be off putting – work to demystify
- Consider the role of men in forwarding equality



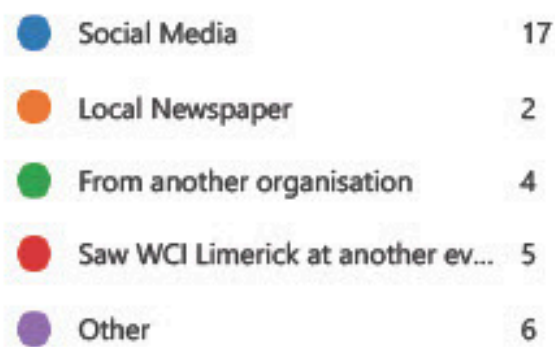
Online Survey Findings

Question 1.

How did you hear about the Women's Collective Ireland Limerick?

Question 2.

If, other please specify?



Most popular source social media 17 responses – 50% of respondents

The increasing importance of social media as a channel of communication for the WCI - Limerick was reflected in both the focus group and survey. It would be interesting to see the age profile of this 50%. It may exclude older women or women low in digital literacy or access to digital platforms.

50% of respondents heard about WCI - Limerick from other sources, which indicates further channels that can be explored by WCI - Limerick to reach those not engaging with social media.

Fifteen respondents heard about WCI - Limerick through attending an event WCI - Limerick participated in, through other organisations or through a friend, (5 of the 6 respondents who listed other responses listed a friend as the source through which the respondent heard about the WCI - Limerick). This points to the importance and effectiveness, of the WCI - Limerick's networking efforts and the value of peer recommendations.

Interestingly, of the categories provided only two respondents heard about the WCI- Limerick through local newspapers, which suggests that traditional, media is not an important channel for raising awareness of the work of the WCI -Limerick.

Learnings for future research:

- Include a question regarding the age of the respondent
- Add from a friend as an option

Question 3.

What do you think the WCI - Limerick stands for, what are their values?



This question was also asked at the World Café, similar themes emerged using both research methods. In the World Café, however, there was a stronger emphasis placed by attendees on advocacy, diversity and inclusion than emerged from the survey. The transformative effect of the work of the WCI -Limerick was also raised during the World Café with attendees mentioning the WCI - Limerick as:

- Bringing women back to life through courses and meeting other people
- Giving women hope
- Empowering women to be more
- Bringing women up, not men down
- Providing scaffolding to support and hold you
- Showing women that there are different ways to be part of change, not everyone has to lead from the front
- Allowing women to discover a voice

Discussions at the World Café also noted the traditional role of women, the influence of the Church, the achievement of some rights and the challenges that persist.

There was also an appreciation of the community development practice model employed by the WCI -Limerick, which was considered very conducive to the working at grassroots level with women '*on the ground*'.

The responses to this question in the survey can be considered under the following themes:

1. Women's Equality
2. Education, Access
3. Disadvantaged Women
4. Women's Empowerment
Inclusion and Identity
5. Safe Space
6. Diversity
7. Advocacy
8. Isolation

When asked what the WCI - Limerick stands for, and what are their values, seven responses related to **Women's Equality** – responses received included:

“Equality for all women”

“For women to have equal opportunities to men and to support them in their daily lives in any way possible. To provide encouragement, education, access to assistance to become who they want to be”



Creative Writing Class of 2022 at the launch of their publication,

***‘Untold Stories’ -
A collection of poems and short stories written by local women.’***

(If you would like to link to the publication you can find it here:

<https://womenscollective.ie/latest-news/wci-limerick-launch-of-untold-stories/>

Four responses related to **Education** including:

“Supporting women, offering training opportunities for women “

“They are a feminist organisation that offer courses for women in Limerick”

Two responses spoke of the **Access** provided to women by the WCIL including:

“WCI stands for inclusivity for all women leading to empowerment through education in both feminist and community building services. WCI's values support a diverse range of women, overcoming barriers in a safe place to express their ideas and experiences with a focus on positive change”

The work that the WCI - Limerick carries out with **Disadvantaged Women** was also noted in four responses including:

“Feminism advocacy improved lives and status for women especially those who experience a lack of privilege or resources”

The largest number of responses concerned **Women's Empowerment and Identify** with ten responses falling into this category:

"Empowering women & bringing women together in a social setting"

"Support, empowerment, skill sharing, knowledge and above all acceptance"

"The WCI Limerick stands for women's empowerment. How women can be put in different roles to help other women, for example, women in political parties or Leaders in companies, cities, or communities—their Values are empowerment, resilience, leadership, and Empathy"

At the World Café, the idea of the WCI -Limerick providing women with a **Safe Space** came up on several occasions this was also noted in the survey responses including:

"Supporting women, provide them with a voice and safe space"

The WCI - Limerick's role in promoting Diversity and Inclusion was also stressed by 2 of the responses.

"Equality, inclusion, diversity and supporting grassroots women"

"The Women's Collective stands for Support, empowerment, skill sharing, knowledge and above all acceptance"

"Women's collective Ireland, shows the respect us women deserve it empowers us, educates us and guides us to take ownership of our life and wellbeing re our education, wellbeing, community and socially..."

Five responses mentioned WCI - Limerick's **Advocacy** role including:

"Feminism advocacy improved lives and status for women especially those who experience a lack of privilege or resources"
"To have a voice"

The issue of women feeling isolated also came up at the World Café; but was less present in the survey responses. **Isolation** was a matter of concern for one survey respondent, however.

"There for women who are isolated in their homes and for them to get out and meet people as days can be long for them"

Six respondents misunderstood the focus of the question and explained the WCI acronym rather than the values it upheld. Learnings for future research – rephrase this question so that it is more obvious that it is not the WCI acronym we are asking about

Question 4.

Which of the WCI - Limericks values are most important to you?

When asked which of the WCI - Limerick values were most important respondents ranked equality, support and empathy the highest - 19 responses used the word equality, either in relation to women's equality or gender equality. A further 13 used the words support/empathy. Other highly ranked values were inclusion/integration 8 responses, while advocacy, representation and leadership scored 7 responses. Other values mentioned were WCI -Limerick's work with disadvantaged women 2 responses, Individualism/Person Centred 1 response, Education 5 responses, Empowerment 2 responses, Integrity 1 response, Respect 1 response, Feminism 1 response.



There is a strong correlation between the values the respondents perceive the WCI - Limerick to have, and the values that are the most important to the respondents themselves. This suggests a high degree of cohesion and compatibility between the WCI - Limerick and those with whom they engage. The issue of equality - women's equality and gender equality are key.

Question 5.

When did you last use the services of the WCI - Limerick?



66% (23) respondents indicated that they had engaged with the WCI - Limerick in the last month, which infers a significant level of regular interaction among those who engage with the WCI - Limerick. Awareness of WCI - Limerick is certainly boosted in response to particular events and/or campaigns promoted by the WCI - Limerick.

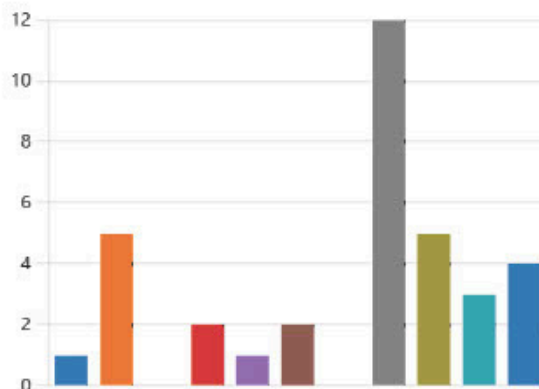
It should also be noted that the most engaged/most active service users are more likely to respond to surveys such as this, which may lead to biased results. For 20% of respondents, it has been over a year since they last engaged, this is a significant number in a small sample. However, their willingness to respond and engage with our survey suggests that a good, albeit, intermittent relationship between the WCI - Limerick and the women with whom they have worked.

Question 6.

What was the nature of your last interaction with the WCI - Limerick?

Question 7. If other please specify?

Once off training	1
Workshop	5
Consultation	0
Walking Group	2
Social Hour	1
Online Event	2
Met WCI Limerick at an event w...	0
Course	12
Women & Politics	5
International Women's Day	3
Other	4



The most popular interaction with the WCI -Limerick is via its courses: 12 respondents or 34% indicated that these provided their last interaction with the WCI - Limerick. When WCI - Limerick workshops are added to this figure, it is apparent that just over half of all respondents (51%) interacted with WCI - Limerick through courses, workshops and training (18 respondents in total). This indicates that such activities are a core way that the WCI - Limerick can engage with women.

In recent times, the WCI - Limerick has invested in the rollout of the *Women and Politics* initiative. It is encouraging to see that for 5 or 14% of respondents, this initiative represents their last interaction with WCI - Limerick. One of the respondents who selected the other category explained that their last interactions were related to the Women and Politics initiative as follows:

“Our feminist reading group meets once a month and that is a follow on for us from the women and politics course”

The remainder of the other responses were as follows: WCI - Limerick open day, telephone enquiry, friendship/confidentiality and through a women's group. Interestingly this suggests that one third of the women who completed this survey most recently interacted not through training, courses, and workshops but through other more social activities. This points to the importance of the social activities of the WCI - Limerick.

The research team recognize that there may be a political or educational aspect to some of these social activities - it can be consciousness raising or perhaps building solidarity among diverse groups of women (diversity already noted as a strength through the World Café). This finding also emphasises the important desire that people have for sociability – something more apparent since Covid-19 and provides evidence of the need to invest in social activities. This finding may be also be a consequence of the calendar of recent events which may have had more social events than is typical in recent months.

Question 8. Please specify the course, event, advice/support or other activity you have accessed.

The responses to this question confirmed the importance of courses as a mechanism for engaging women. We have categorised these responses under three headings Social Interactions, Educational Interactions and Seeking Advice or Guidance.

Social Interactions

Singing Group,
International Women's Day

Educational Interactions

Creative Writing, Consent Matters
Women in Politics, Representing
Women, Women's Group Crafts Class,
Introduction to IT, Training for
Transformation, Online event about
grief

Seeking Advice or Guidance - the
type of advice or guidance sought
not available.

Social Interactions

Educational Interactions

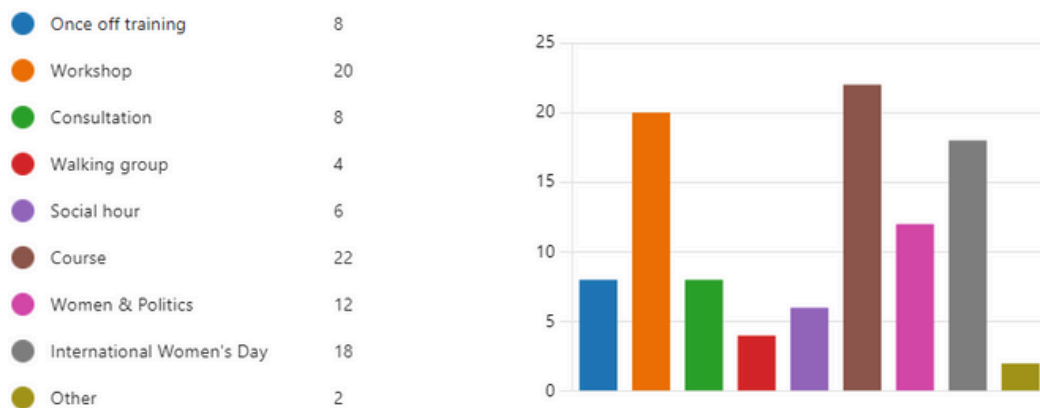
Seeking Advice or Guidance

Clearly education is a core pillar of the WCI - Limerick's work. It is important for the WCI - Limerick to continue and sustain this.

Question 9. How many of the WCI - Limericks activities have you availed of? Please tick all that apply.

36 respondents completed this survey question. Respondents gave multiple answers to this question. 2 respondents had not taken part in any activity with the WCI - Limerick. Of the 34 that had taken part in WCI - Limerick activities, most respondents 56% (19 respondents) had availed of more than one WCI - Limerick offered activities. 26% (9 respondents) of respondents had taken part in 5 or more activities with the WCI - Limerick.

Two respondents indicated that they engaged with 7 of the activity types offered by the WCI - Limerick. The responses to this question also corroborate the findings of other questions in the survey and those discussed at the World Café, namely, that educational interventions are the main pathway for engagement. Workshop, Courses, Women and Politics scored 21, 22 and 12 respectively. International Women’s Day was also an important engagement point represented as 18 people say they attended.



It is encouraging to learn that many of those who engage with the WCI - Limerick do so across a variety of activities including both both education and social activities.

Question 10. If other, please specify

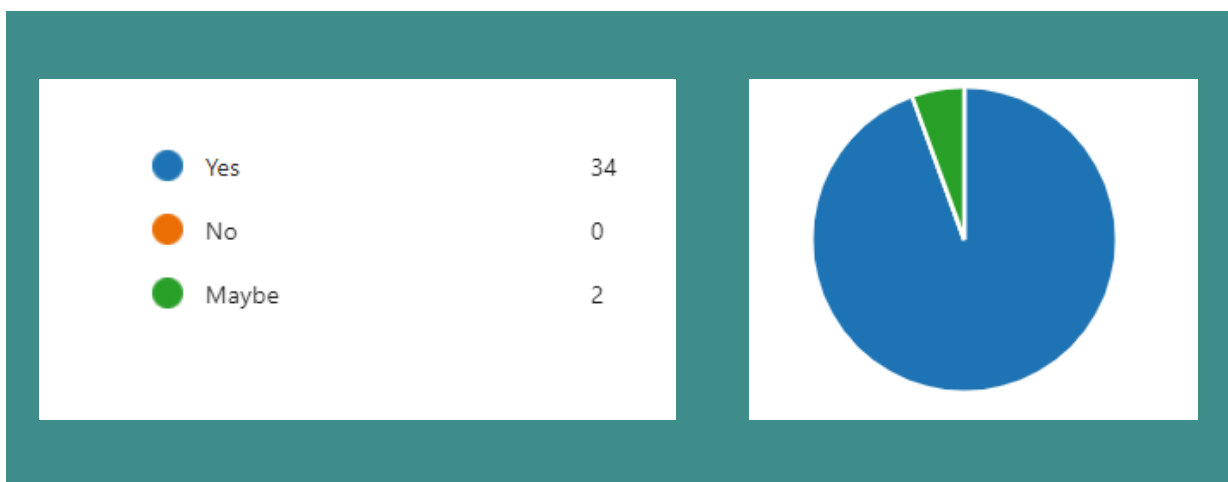
Of these 4 responses, two respondents stated that they had not taken part in any WCI - Limerick initiated activities. The first of the two remaining respondents indicated that they had engaged with the WCI - Limerick book club, while the second said “Workshop at a Limerick Hotel about end of life and dying” (This has been included in the numbers above for Workshop)

Question 11. Do you plan to engage with the WCI - Limerick again?

Of the 36 responses received an overwhelming majority 34 respondents or 94% said that they plan to engage with the WCI - Limerick again. The remaining 6% indicated that they might engage again. None of those surveyed indicated that they would not engage again. This is very encouraging and evidences the ongoing relationship between the WCI - Limerick and those who engage with them.

WCI - Limerick are successful at creating loyalty among those with whom they engage. This again suggests that the WCI - Limerick could expand its reach and influence by reaching out to other groups in the city, and also in the county. For example by holding more one-off events in other towns and villages across Limerick county.

94% of those who have accessed the WCI - Limericks courses, events or initiatives plan to do so again



Clare Dollard, CWELL Graduate, and regular attendee at WCI -Limerick events giving a reading at the WCI - Limerick International Women's Day Event February 19th 2024

Question 12. Please expand on your answer by explaining why you have made the selection you have.

Respondents' reasons for engaging with the WCI - Limerick ranged from: a need for a social outlet; a desire to learn; to feel included and accepted; the need for a safe place; and to feel empowered. The answers given were powerful and inspiring and underlined the impact that the WCI - Limerick is having on the lives of local women.

"There is no other organisation in Limerick that offer these services for women and I like what they are doing"

"WCI Limerick is a great Group and has a strong team that gives to best for women. They want us to achieve our goals although the way is not easy such as empowering women. All my admiration!!! "

"Attending their events and courses, has inspired me and increased my confidence"

"It has enhanced my life greatly, educated me, made me braver and opened my mind"

"WCI provides so much opportunity for education and empowerment local to me. No other service across the city in my opinion offers the same service. I love that it's just women too"

"I found it a lovely welcoming space and I'm interested in personal development"

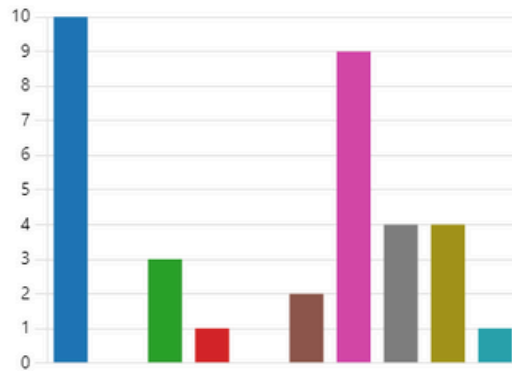
"I felt empowered by doing the online course with the WCI and I am looking forward to participating and learning more. It was such a safe space for sharing and learning with like-minded people"

"Love the people & place such a warm atmosphere"

Question 13. If yes, what activity do you plan to engage with next?

Most of those who responded to this question planned to engage next with an in-person event or course.

Event (in person)	10
Event (online)	0
Social Hour	3
Once off training/Workshop	1
Consultation	0
Walking Group	2
Course	9
Women & Politics	4
International Women's Day	4
Other	1



Previous (Limerick Women's Network) staff members Liz Price and Edel Geraghty attending a field trip with Jan O'Sullivan and Moyross women's group, Circle of Friends

Question 14. If other, please specify.

The single respondent responded to this question as follows:

"All of the above. If dates and times are suitable"

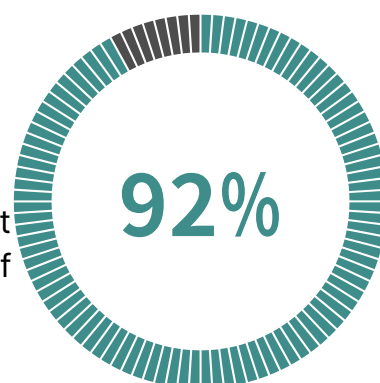
Question 15. Are there activities not currently offered that you would like the WCI - Limerick to deliver?

The answers given to this question represent several additional opportunities for the WCI - Limerick to respond to which could increase both their reach and impact.

- Mindfulness
- Chair Yoga
- Mental health supports
- Supports for Traveller women
- Disability support opportunities
- Dance classes
- More creative writing and literature classes
- More life skill classes like horticulture
- Shared activities with other countries
- Plumbing and DIY
- Different access routes into 3rd level education
- Group forum for political discussion for women
- Computer skills, for the older person
- Outings
- Wellbeing course
- Migrant Women's Discussion and Development group

Question 16. Has being involved in the WCI - Limerick had an impact on your life?

33 respondents or 92% stated that the WCI - Limerick had impacted their lives, with 3 respondents or 8% indicating that their engagement with WCI - Limerick did not impact their lives. The key objective of our research was to determine if the WCI - Limerick had had an impact on those who engaged with the organisation, with 92% of those, surveyed believing that the WCI - Limerick did impact their lives this is a powerful endorsement of the WCI - Limerick and its work.



Question 17. If your involvement has had an impact on your life, how would you describe this impact?

There was a strong correlation between the data gathered using this question in both the World Café and online survey themes of empowerment, opportunity, knowledge and positive self-esteem emerged in both this can be seen in the following quotes from attendees:

“Without WCIL, I’d be home listless, busy but not filling potential”

“Community work has given me voice, pushing boundaries, opening myself to opportunities”

“WCIL helped empower me and in turn, I empowered my two daughters”

“WCIL improved my creativity and opened doors for me”

“I can be my own role model”

In analysing the 30 survey responses we found that some women had been impacted through courses or workshops which increased their skills and knowledge, others enhanced their sense of empowerment and political engagement, others saw great benefits from networking, making friends and socialising and importantly others saw an increase in their confidence, assertiveness and wellbeing

“Positive educational thought provoking”

My confidence has grown and feeling like I belong as part of a group Very positive experience at an important time for me. Am so grateful for the opportunity to learn from a wonderful teacher, and meet some inspirational women. Truly fabulous.

It has become like a family to me. It allows me to express myself with the up most support and encouragement without judgement. It has changed my life. It has given me so much strength and empowerment for the ownership of my life. It has saved my life in my darkest times WCI has been there for me.

This suggests a sense of value and a ripple effect. It helps to capture the value of the WCI - Limerick to the women of Limerick. It shows the impact that organically grows out of the courses, groups, meetings etc that the WCI - Limerick runs.

This makes the case for more support to be given to the WCI - Limerick in order to grow the capacity of the organisation and to allow it to run more of the events that are clearly successful and add value to the fabric of the city – in terms of wellbeing, mental health, role models for younger women, safe spaces for diverse women.

WCI - Limerick is having a real impact and deserves greater acknowledgement and support.

Question 18. Do you think the WCI - Limerick have any impact on women locally? Why/Why not? Please expand on your answer.

When respondents were asked if they thought that the WCI - Limerick was having an impact on women locally the consensus was that they were. This impact was being achieved through the offering of a safe place, an opportunity to network and make friends and to learn about women's rights and the role of women in politics, society and the community. Some responses included:

"Yes, I believe they empower and inspire the women of Limerick"

"Absolutely the organisation has changed my life and so many others I have met. The education it offers and supports enables us women to contribute to our own lives in a dramatic way. We need the WCI to continue with the fantastic work with so much support from funding bodies to contribute to our lives and others lives nationally"

"Yes, definitely the organisation give the space for women to speak to connect and to support one another"

"With these skills and new knowledge, women have learned more about how to approach leadership and improve where they are through the commitment to participate in political parties or lead improvement projects in their community"

Respondents also suggested areas for improvement. Further impact may be gained by continuing to raise awareness of the WCI - Limerick in Limerick city, by hosting events and working with other organisations. Working with other organisations appears to work well for the WCI - Limerick.

Added attention to areas outside the city may also pay dividends. Reinforcing the message that all women are welcome is important.

At the World Café, several participants stated that they thought the WCI - Limerick was not for them as they were not staunch feminists. It is hoped that the result of this research will help dispel that myth and show that the WCI - Limerick works in many ways with women of all backgrounds and experiences.

"They have impacted many women locally but definitely can impact more. Issue I see currently is women don't know who they are"

"Yes, but I don't know how much people know about the organisation outside of the city"

"Probably just the kind of women who are invested in matters such as gender equality etc. However, women not directly involved may benefit by the ripple effect of those who do"

Question 19. Has your interaction with the WCI - Limerick made you more aware of women's issues and the importance of gender equality? Yes or No. Please expand on your answer.

100% of those who replied to this question believed that the WCI - Limerick had made them more aware of women's issues and gender equality. Some of the observations were very insightful.

"Yes, it has really opened our eyes to the issues women face locally and nationally. WCI highlight and discuss such important topics/issues"

"Yes. Discussions were held in one of the courses that made me aware of so much more than I knew. It allows me to have a greater understanding in these issues when I read or hear about them so encourages my continued interest in the subjects"

"For sure. I wasn't very fond of the word feminist as I thought it was anti man. Now I realise they want to elevate the women's status not down trod men"

"Yes, before engaging with the WCI-LIMERICK, I thought the issues I faced were personal but I now realize that all women face a lot of the same difficulties. But if we get together and educate ourselves around these issues, we have a better chance of equality"

Conclusion

The WCI - Limerick politicises women by encouraging their engagement. The *Women and Politics* course has been hugely important and successful in encouraging women's interest in politics. This success is the result of sustained commitment and investment on the part of the WCI - Limerick - it has involved several years of training, and holding events as well as ongoing consultation and reflection.

To continue this success, it is important that this work is developed further and built on in new ways. It may be worth thinking about this work as a springboard from which to consider women's role in more diverse areas of politics, leading to other topics such as: beyond elections, women and climate justice, exploration of workplace cultures, STEM, arts etc. In these areas, there may be scope for linking in with some of Limerick's many vibrant cultural institutions such as Hunt Museum, Ormston House, or third level institutions. In the wake of the election of Limerick's first democratically elected Mayor, the researchers of this study urge the new Mayor to give support to the WCI - Limerick to continue this vitally important educational work.

Table 1

Needs/Themes	Possible Projects
Need to raise awareness of the work of the Women's Collective Limerick	Create a communication strategy to promote the work of WCL – possibly include social media campaign, promotional leaflets and a video.
Need to raise awareness among women of their rights and entitlements	Research the rights and entitlements of women and create resources (leaflets, videos) to promote these.
Specific need to raise awareness among women of pension rights	Research the pension rights of women and create resources (leaflets, videos) to promote these. Perhaps arrange information sessions, one to one advice clinics.
Need to establish the impact of the WCIL on those with whom they engage	Research the impact of the work of WC to inform strategy, planning, budget allocation and to lobby authorities/ funders for additional support
Need to understand the barriers women face to participating in education/communities/society/politics	Research the barriers that women's face when trying to participate in education/communities/society/politics. This information can be used to lobby policy makers/funders.
Need to make more submissions to policy makers	Possibly help to recruit specialist volunteers/an advisory group to help WCI research and write more submissions.
Need for additional resources- staff, funding and a building of their own	Create resources to recruit and train fundraising volunteers. Create a fundraising plan and associated resources.



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