



LESSONS FROM THE IRISH CITIZENS' ASSEMBLIES

AUTUMN SCHOOL ON DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY 13-14 OCTOBER 2022 TARTU

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@JaneSuit



DCU Institute of Future
Media, Democracy
and Society



THE DELIBERATIVE EXPERIMENT

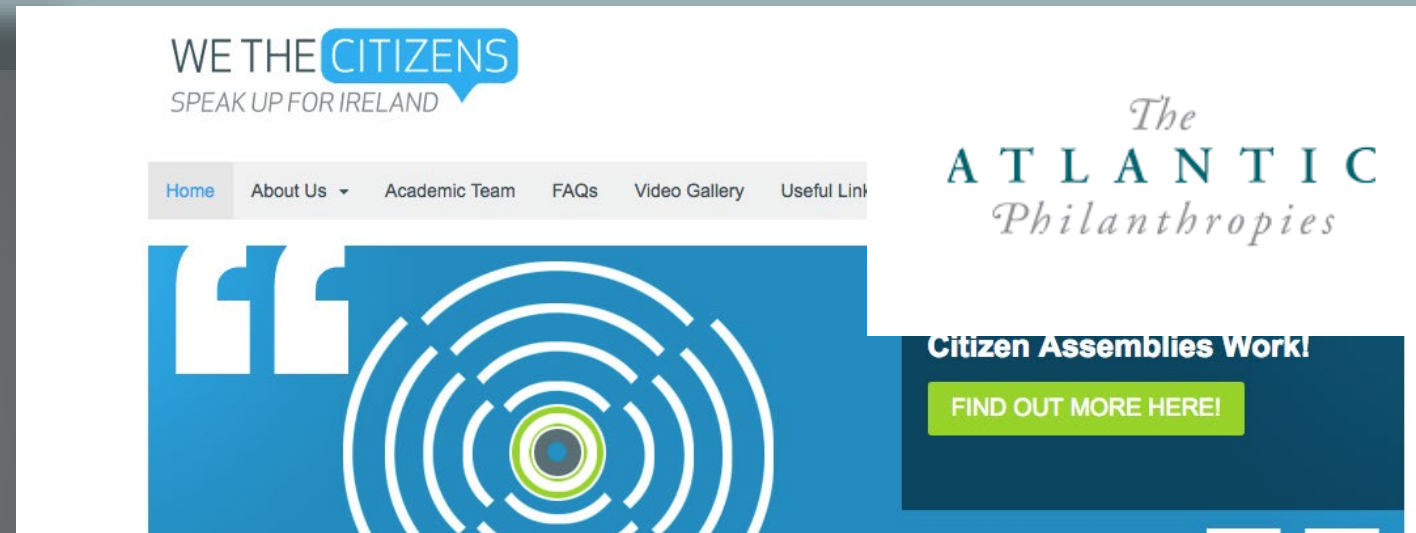
- Why citizens' assemblies?
- Which topics are suited?
- Connections with policymakers
- Connections with the mass public and mass media

WHY CITIZENS' ASSEMBLIES?

THE BACKGROUND



IRELAND'S FIRST DELIBERATIVE EXPERIMENT - WE THE CITIZENS



Trust People.. Listen
Must be randomly selected NOT
usual suspects
What matters to them NOT
representatives

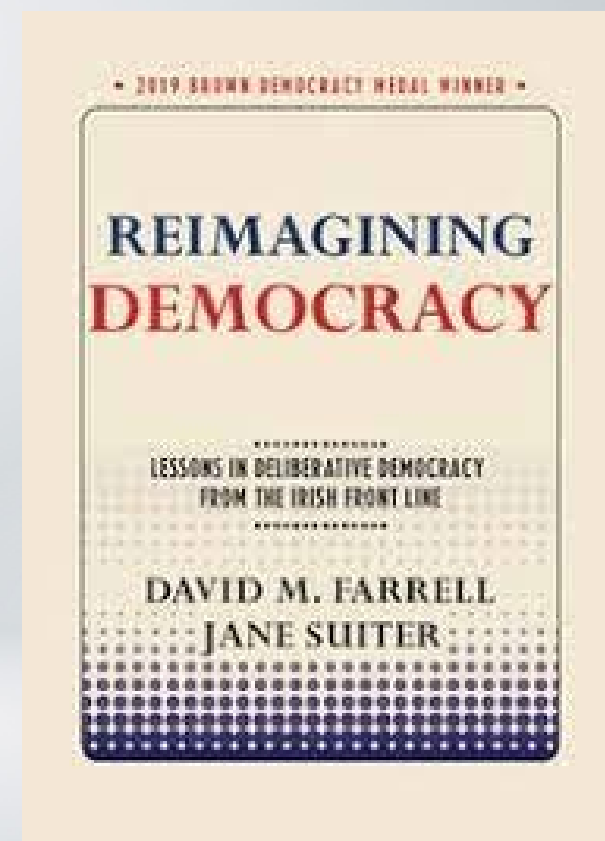
Critics (Journalists, civil society etc) say.....

- Already have a parliament
- Ireland is different
- Can't trust ordinary people
- Will be mad proposals

THE IRISH PROCESSES AND RESULTS

- The Convention on the Constitution (2012-2014); **Marriage Equality** Etc.
- The Citizens' Assembly (2016-2018); **Abortion, Climate Change**
- The Citizens' Assembly (2020-21); **Gender Equality**
- The Citizens' Assembly (2022) **Dublin; Biodiversity**

- Referendums v Legislation
- Polling co/ Postal recruitment
- Broad and narrow issues
- Values and Choices



WHICH TOPICS ARE SUITED

Electoral Reform:

British Columbia, Ontario and the Netherlands. Ireland.



Moral/ social Issues: Ireland



Policy, Climate, Biodiversity and more

Ireland, Scotland, England, France, Denmark..Estionia and more



FRAMING



- Values Easier
- Narrow Better than Broad
- Time for Evidence V Time For Deliberation
- Clear Choices
- Types of Evidence. Expert. Interests,, Experiences.
- Video. Audio. Text.
- Artificial Super Majorities.

EVIDENCE

Citizens' Assembly on biodiversity loss to visit three examples of biodiversity management

The assembly is tasked with making recommendations to the Oireachtas on how the State should tackle biodiversity loss.

Jun 11th 2022, 7:00 AM  8,313 Views  3 Comments  Share 16  Tweet  Email

THE THIRD MEETING of the Citizens' Assembly on Biodiversity Loss will take place today with a visit to three examples of biodiversity management in three different environments in Dublin.

99 randomly selected members who are participating in the assembly's eight-month programme of work will undertake a field trip to visit Dublin Port, Bull Island off the coast of the city's northside, and



Image: Alamy Stock Photo

- Experts
- Vested Interests
- Real world experience
- Experiential learning

CONNECTIONS WITH POLICYMAKERS

PERSUASION FOR POLITICIANS AND POLICYMAKERS



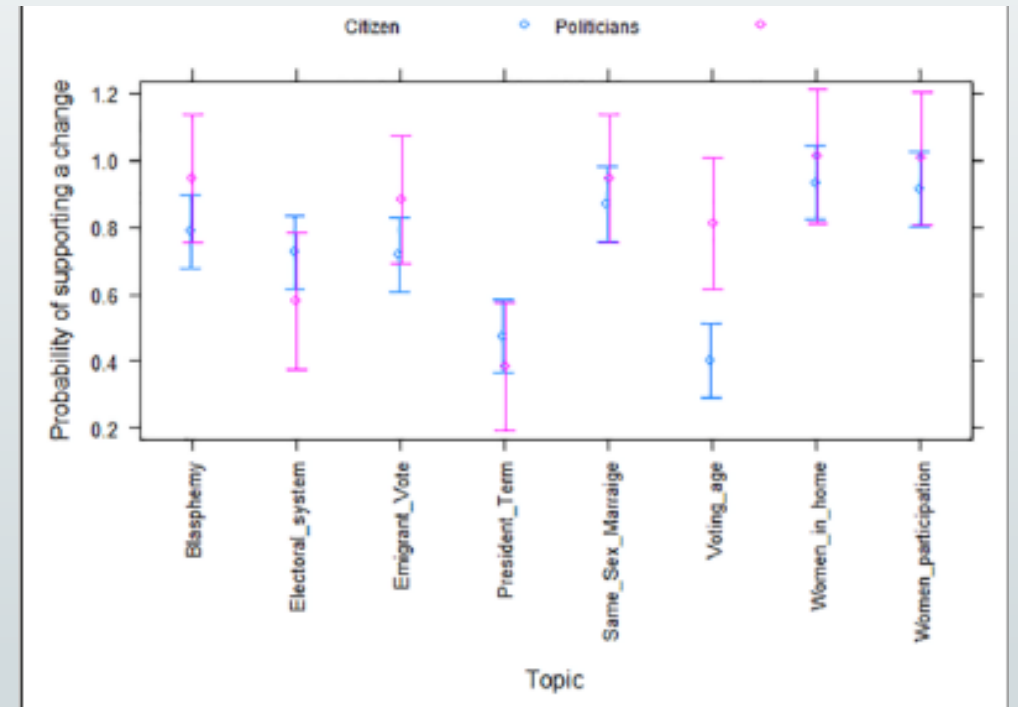
POLITICIANS IN THE ROOM AND IN COMMITTEE: PROS AND CONS



POLITICIANS AND CITIZENS TOGETHER

Table 1. Responses to the Question of whether Some Members Dominated Discussions.

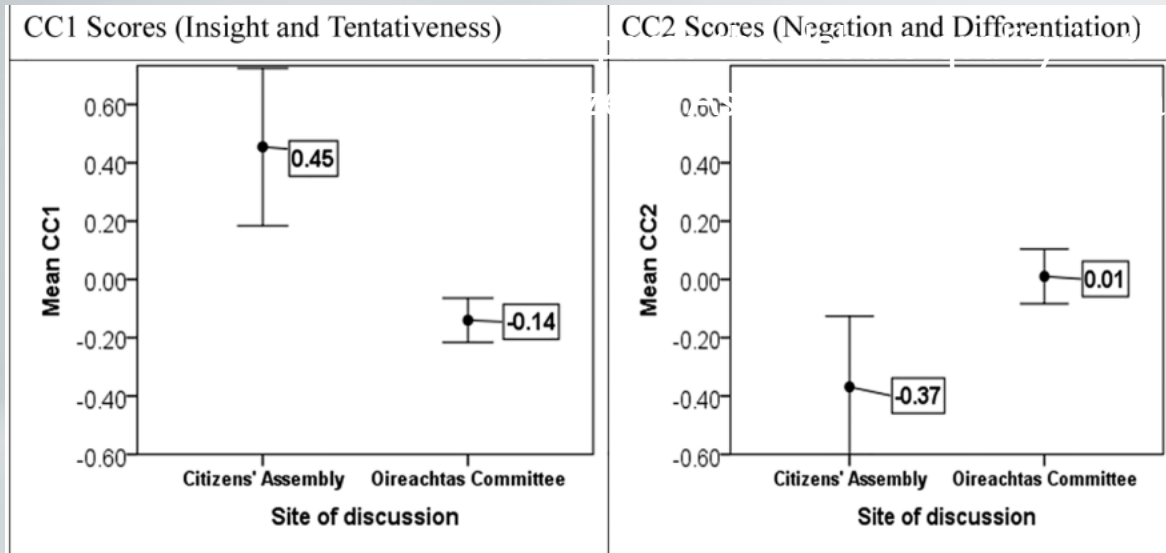
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Sample size
Citizens	5%	9%	16%	14%	57%	310
Politicians	3%	6%	26%	14%	51%	93
Total	4%	8%	18%	14%	56%	403



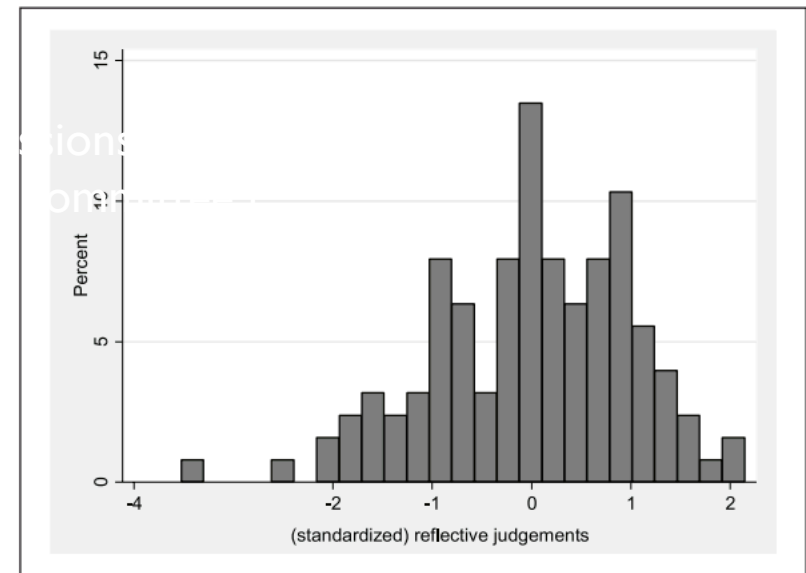
AN COINBHINSIÚN AR AN mBUNREACTH
THE CONVENTION ON THE CONSTITUTION



SOME RESEARCH: INTERNAL DYNAMICS



Epistemic quality (Suiter, Farrell, Harris, Murphy 2021)

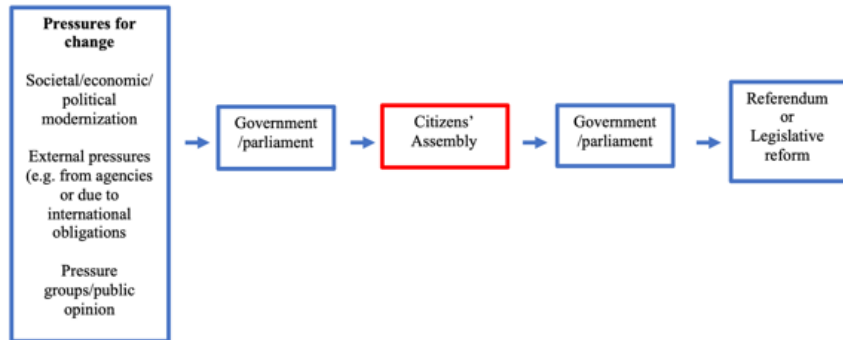


5. Distribution of Reflective Judgements among Participants.

Perspective taking and reflection (Muradova 2021)

THE IRISH MODEL: A TIGHT COUPLING?

Irish process of mixing representative and deliberative democracy



- The opportunities and challenges of a top-down system
 - The role of government
 - The role of expertise; vested interests and advocates
 - The opportunities and challenges of institutionalization

CONNECTIONS WITH MASS
PUBLIC AND MASS MEDIA

THE CONVENTION ON THE CONSTITUTION: RESULTS



The first country to legalize marriage equality by popular vote

Yes = 62.1%;

No = 37.9%

- Repealed blasphemy
- Reform of Parliamentary rules... (Lynch et al 2017)
- Referendum on presidential age failed to pass
- Significant value shift along the deep seated liberal-conservative political cleavage (Elkink, Farrell, Reidy, Suiter 2015)

THE CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY (2016-2018): RESULTS

Irish parliament declares climate emergency

Greta Thunberg says Dublin decision to follow British MPs' lead is 'great news'



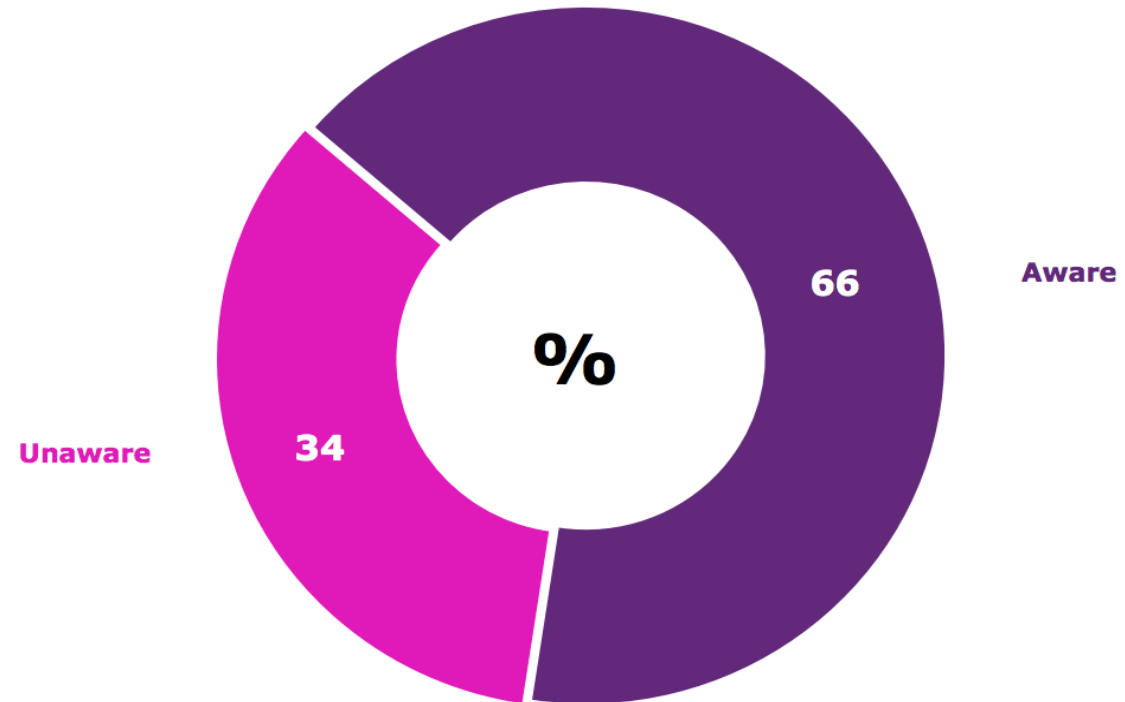
Dublin students marching for action to tackle climate change in March. Photograph: Niall Carson/PA



- Successful referendum to legalize abortion (Elkink et al 2018)
- Declaration of climate emergency in parliament and Climate Bill (Devaney et al, 2020)
- Ageing and Referendums put to touch; no links to representative system

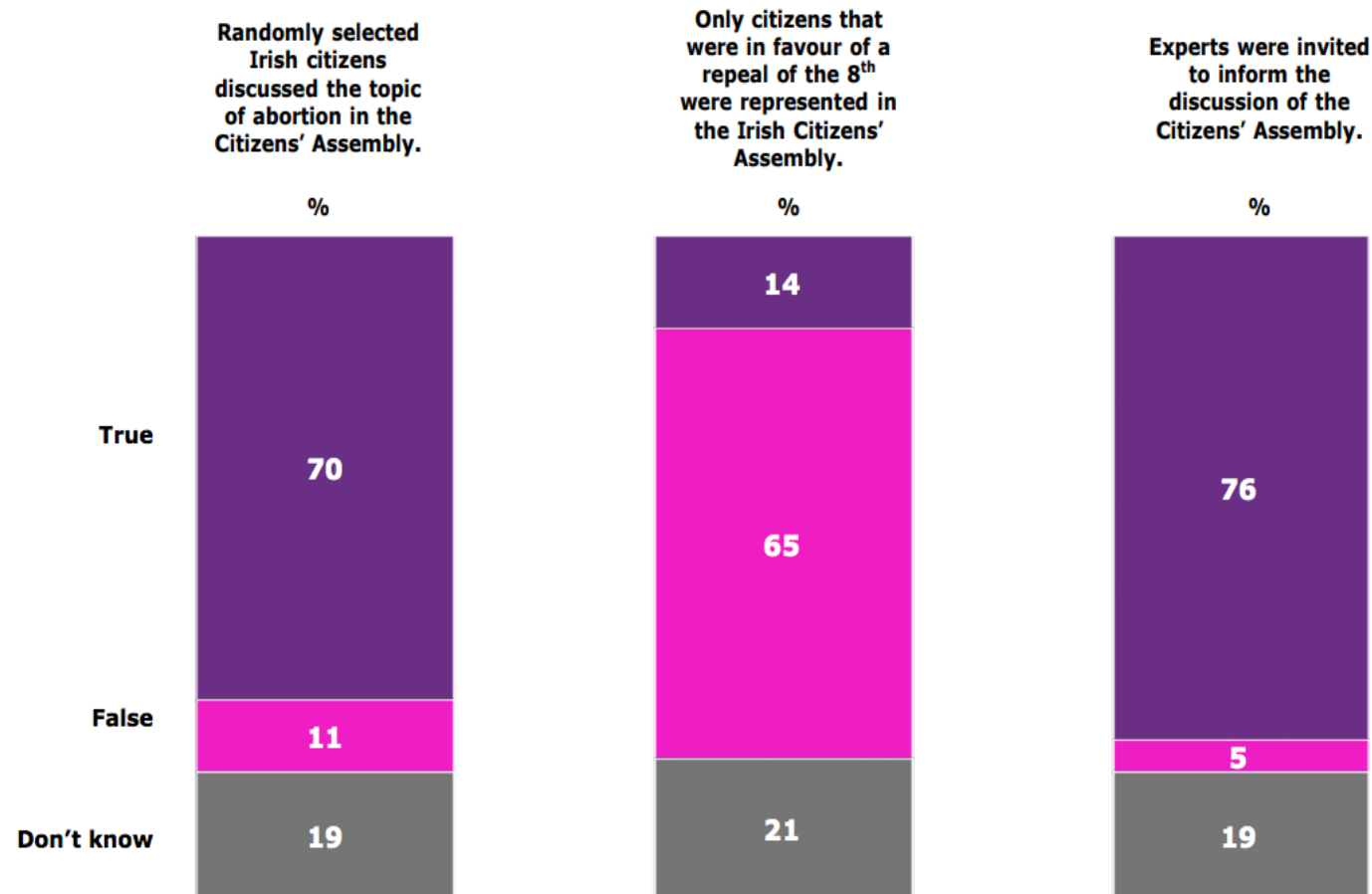
Awareness of Citizens' Assembly

Base : All Referendum Voters 1264



Citizens' Assembly Statements – True or False

Base : All aware of Citizens' Assembly 830



Referendum on women's place in home should be held next year, Oireachtas report says

Gender Equality committee recommends referendum on replacing wording in the Constitution

Expand



Ivana Bacik, who chaired the joint committee on gender equality, said: "Through this process and our ongoing work, we look forward to contributing to the strengthening of gender equality norms and policies generally." Photograph: Gareth Chaney/ Collins

independent.ie

Sections

In Focus:

LATEST STORIES >

Fiat, Alfa Romeo, and Jeep re-launch in Ireland

Ireland lose to Namibia in World Cup warm-up

Home retrofitting scheme hit with inflation and supply chain challenges - SEAI

Mirror publisher's UK ad sales hit by marketing 'blackout' after queen's death

Mercer raises concern about sustainability of Irish State pension

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Sections

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Ireland

Citizens' Assembly is an example to the world, says chairwoman

Two changes to the constitution were made following deliberations by 99-person juries

Expand



Chairwoman of the Citizens' Assembly Ms Justice Mary Laffoy. Photograph: Cyril Byrne

Ronan McGreevy

Thu Jun 21 2018 - 19:22

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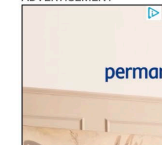
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Mercer raises concern about sustainability of Irish State pension

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Campaigners push for referendum as Assembly backs legal abortion



Anti-abortion protesters at the Citizens' Assembly in Dublin at the weekend. Photo: John McElroy

Laura Lynott April 24 2017 02:30 AM

How Far Does €1 Million Go In Retirement? Get your guide and ongoing insights.

Get Insights

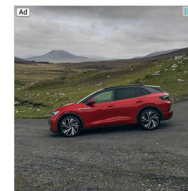
Premium

Tiernan Brady: 'The UK could learn from us about how referendum campaigns should be run'



Fair contest: The breadth and depth of the marriage equality debate meant Irish people knew what they were voting about. Photo: Scott Barbour/Getty Images

Tiernan Brady January 10 2019 02:30 AM



Book A Test Drive

Book A Test Drive In A New Volkswagen

J Keane & Sons (Ros) Ltd

Citizens' assembly is the ideal forum to resolve the issue of Irish neutrality

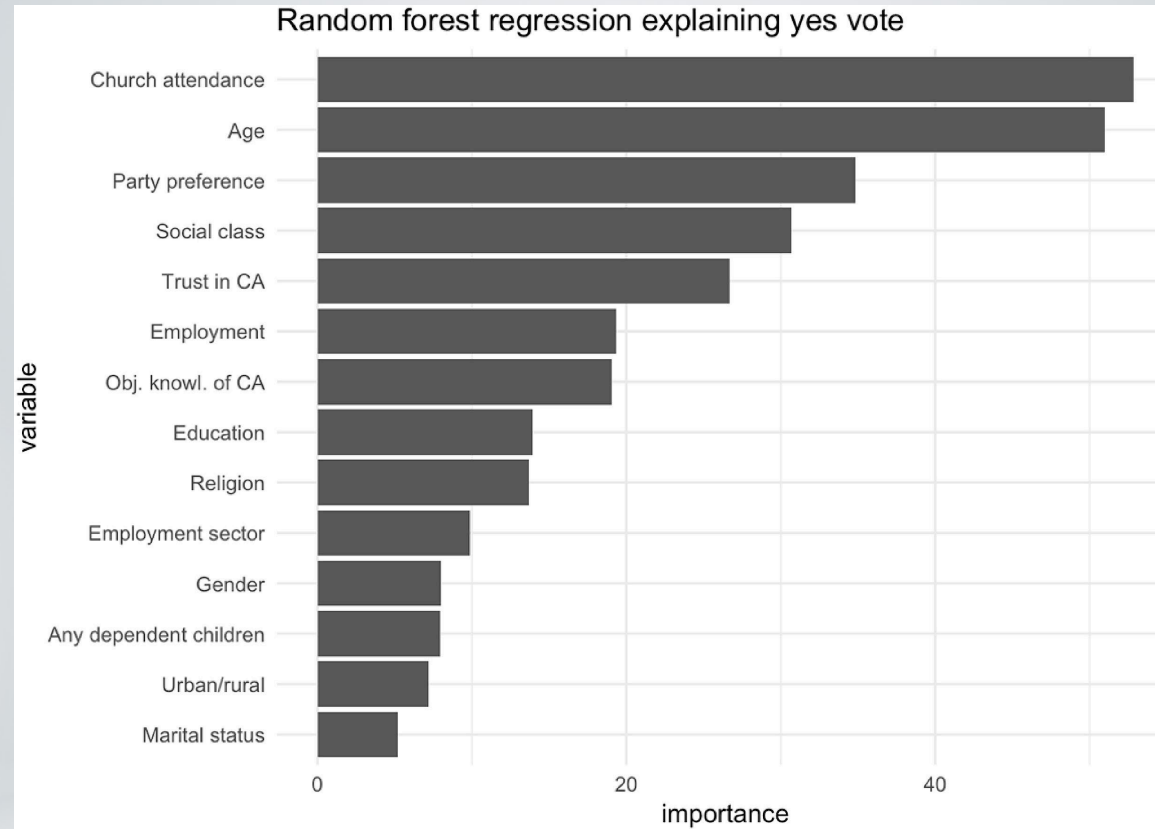
Arguments that assembly members are not elected and have no expertise miss the point

Expand

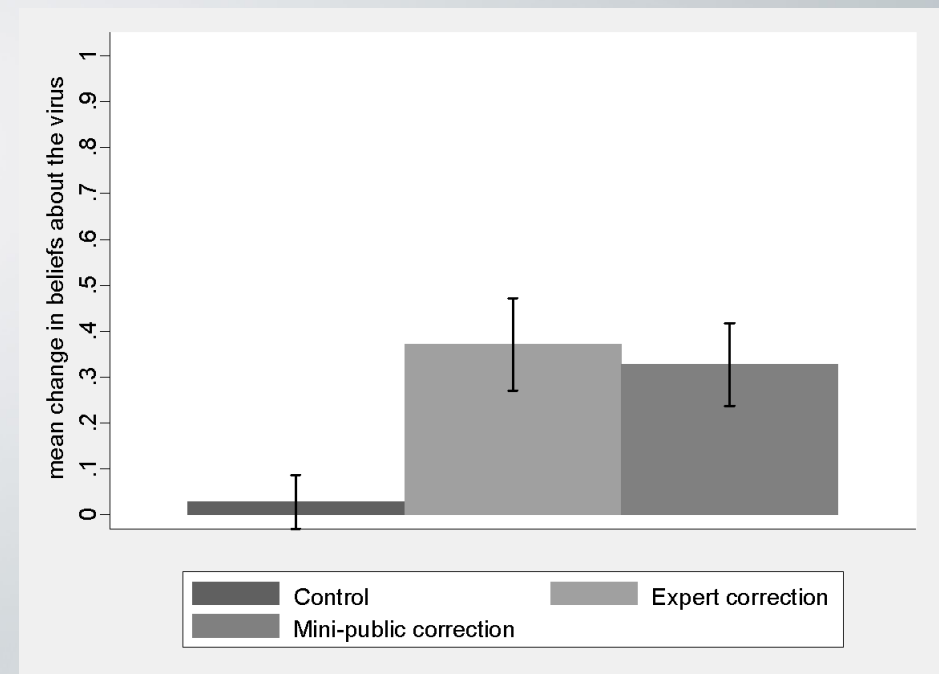
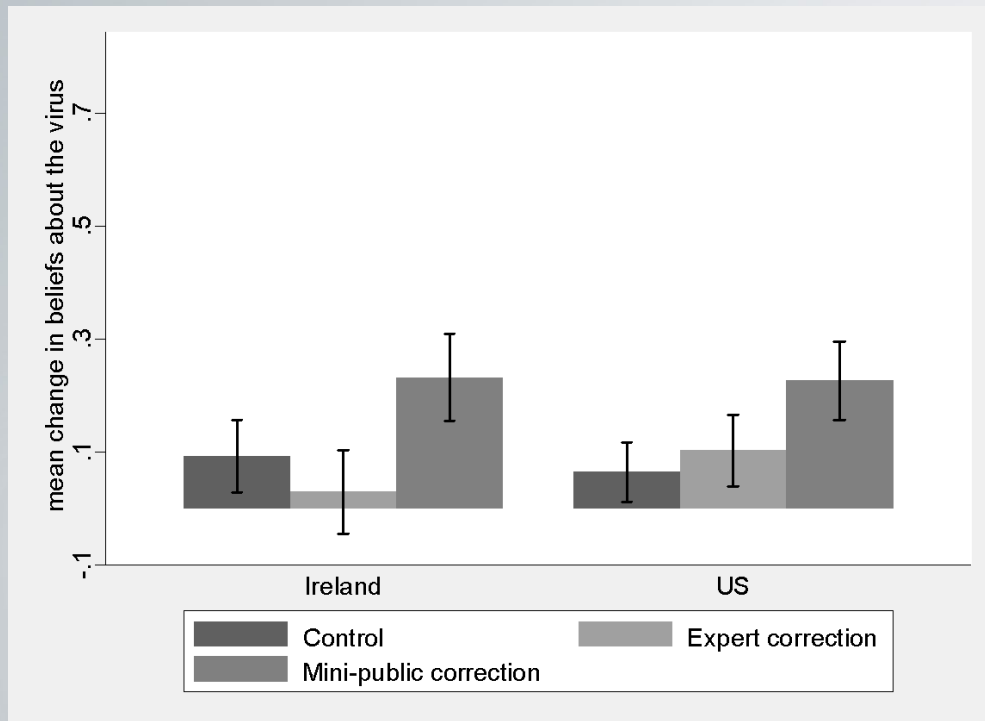


Citizens' assemblies have the potential to help bridge the gap between ordinary people and political elites, and to make sensible suggestions for reform. Photograph: Getty Images

EXPLAINING THE 'YES' VOTE



EXTERNAL LINKS: CORRECTING MISPERCEPTIONS?



Mean Change in Misperceptions Across Experimental Conditions

WHERE NEXT?

Citizens' assembly should consider Ireland's neutrality, Taoiseach says

Martin tells Dáil Ireland not 'politically neutral' as Opposition TD criticises Nato

© Tue, Mar 8, 2022, 15:53

Pat Leahy Political Editor



Taoiseach Micheál Martin has suggested that a citizens' assembly should be convened to discuss the future of Irish neutrality. Photograph: Brian Lawless/PA Wire



Taoiseach Micheál Martin has suggested that a citizens' assembly should be convened to discuss the future of Irish neutrality.



IN FOCUS: Live Events Creeslough Explosion Cost of Living

Citizens' assemblies needed 'to plan for border poll in next decade'



A Fine Gael TD said it was important to plan for a border poll in Northern Ireland and the Republic (PA)

SUN, 18 APR, 2021 - 07:30

JAMES WARD, PA

Two citizens' assemblies should be held in Northern Ireland and the Republic to lay



Taoiseach would like to see referendum on 'woman's place in the home' next year

Martin says votes on changes favoured by all political parties can be the 'most dangerous' and wording needs to be gotten right

Expand



03/10/2022 - NEWS - The Wheel and (NICVA) Taoiseach Micheál Martin speaking to media as The Wheel and the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA)



CONCLUSIONS

- **Strong Coupling: links to direct and representative democratic systems**
- Top down in terms of subject matter
- Danger of instrumentalization

- Link to specific questions/choices and values
- Different types of evidence crucial.
- Personal real world experience crucial