

**Amnesty International Ireland  
Red C Polling Research  
February 2016**

**Strictly embargoed until Friday, March 4<sup>th</sup> 2016 at 10.00am GMT**

**Irish people believe that reforming Ireland's abortion law, which is one of the most restrictive in the world, should be one of the priority issues for the next government.**

- 55% agree that expanding access to abortion should be one of the priority issues for the next government, with only 25% disagreeing. When the 'don't knows' and those who are neutral are excluded, this figure rises to 69%. This view is spread relatively evenly across the regions with 61% support in Dublin, 51% in the rest of Leinster, 55% in Connaught/Ulster and 54% in Munster.
- About two-thirds of people agree that Irish politicians should show leadership and deal proactively with the issue of widening access to abortion.
- 73% of people think the government should hold a referendum to allow the people to vote on whether or not to remove the 8th amendment. Interestingly, this view is widely shared across all regions from 65% in Connaught/Ulster to 75% in Dublin.
- 87% of respondents are in favour of expanding access to abortion in Ireland, at least in the minimum circumstances required under international human rights law. This breaks down as follows:
  - 42% are in favour of allowing abortion in Ireland only where the woman's life is at risk, where there is diagnosis of a fatal foetal abnormality, where the pregnancy is a result of rape or incest, or where the woman's health is at risk. A further 38% are in favour of allowing women to access abortion as they choose.
  - 7% are in favour of allowing abortion in Ireland only where the woman's life is at risk or where there is a fatal foetal abnormality.
  - 7% are in favour of the current legal position, where abortion is allowed only when the woman's life is at risk.
  - Only 5% of people are opposed to abortion in all circumstances.
- There has been an increase in support from the last poll Amnesty International/Red C poll published in July 2015 where 81% of respondents are in favour of expanding access to abortion in certain circumstances. The number of people opposed to abortion in all circumstances has also decreased from 7% in the May 2015 poll to 5% in the February 2016 poll.
- Of the 5%, opposed to abortion in all circumstances, 77% are not aware of the possible 14 year criminal penalty for women who have abortions.

While opinions vary on the issue of when abortion should be allowed, there is overwhelming support for the expansion of access to abortion beyond the current legislation and the majority think that it should be a priority for the incoming government.

**80% believe that women's health must be the priority in any reform of Ireland's abortion law.**

- When the 'don't knows' and those who are neutral are excluded, this figure rises to 90% agreeing that women's health must be the priority in any reform with just 10% disagreeing.

- This figure was highest among farmers (90%) and in Connaught/Ulster where 85% of respondents agreed with this statement. All regions of the country broadly supported this view

**The Irish public have strong views on Ireland's current abortion law. The majority consider it to be hypocritical, cruel and inhumane. They believe that it unfairly discriminates against women and girls who cannot afford to or are unable to travel abroad for an abortion. Broadly speaking, these views are shared to the same extent by both male and female respondents.**

- 55% believe that Ireland's abortion ban is cruel and inhumane, with only 26% disagreeing. (When the 'don't knows' and those who are neutral are excluded, this figure rises to 68% agreeing that the current law is cruel and inhumane.)
- 65% agree that classifying abortion as a crime adds to the distress of the woman involved. Interestingly, more men (68%) than women (62%) believe that classifying abortion as a crime adds to the distress of the woman involved. This view is shared least by farmers (55%) and CDE2s (62%).
- Almost three quarters (72%) agree that the fact that women must travel abroad to access abortion unfairly discriminates against women who are unable to or cannot afford to travel. This view is highest among farmers of whom 84% describe the current law as discriminatory. The Irish people therefore recognise the unfair burden which the current law places on marginalised women and girls, including migrant women, girls who are in the care of the state and poorer women.
- Two-thirds believe that it is hypocritical that Ireland's constitution bans abortion in Ireland but allows women to travel abroad for abortions.
- 65% believe that travelling abroad for an abortion is traumatic. This figure is highest among women and those aged 25-34 (73%) and 35-44 (70%).

#### **Public knowledge, awareness and trust:**

Respondents were asked whom they trust when deciding their position on abortion. The most trusted sources of information are medical professionals (69%) and women who have had abortions (62%). The Irish public do not trust anti-abortion groups (16%), church leaders (16%), media outlets (14%) and politicians (7%) as a source of information on this issue.

- 52% of respondents agree that they do not know enough about the 8th amendment to know how they would vote and think the media should give better information on it. This view is particularly noteworthy outside of Dublin (47%), in Leinster (57%), Connaught/Ulster (54%) and Munster (51%).
- Only 38% of those who are opposed to abortion in any circumstances trust anti-abortion groups as a reliable source of information on this issue.
- Of those describing themselves as religious, just 19% trust church leaders to inform them accurately on this issue.
- There is also substantial agreement (68%) that we need to trust women when they say they need an abortion. This view is shared across the regions with a low of 64% in Connaught/Ulster and a high of 70% in Dublin. Both women(69%) and men (67%) agree with this view.
- 60% agree that men have a responsibility to be a part of the discussion on this issue too, with more than two-thirds of men (65%) agreeing with this view. This opinion was highest among farmers (65%) and is regionally balanced with the lowest figure in Munster (58%) and the highest figure in Leinster (63%).

- Only 14% were aware that having an abortion when the woman's life is not in danger is a criminal offence which carries a potential 14 year prison sentence. Interestingly, of those opposed to abortion in all circumstances, 72% are not aware that a 14 year criminal penalty exists. 75% of farmers are not aware that having an abortion when the woman's life is not in danger is a criminal offence. In fact, more than half of respondents believe it is not a criminal offence at all.
- 80% of people are aware that women have a right to access abortion in Ireland in certain circumstances under international human rights law. This has increased from 70% in the Amnesty International/Red C Poll published in July 2015. This awareness is highest in Munster (84%). More men (82%) than women (78%) are aware that access to abortion is a human right under certain circumstances.

**Interestingly, the poll finds that religion does not appear to strongly determine views on abortion.**

- 82% of people who describe themselves as religious do not believe that their views should not be imposed on others. This view is most strongly held by those aged 55-64 of whom 88% agree. Interestingly, the figure is lowest in Dublin where 80% agree. In Connaught/Ulster, 84% of religious people agree with this statement, with (81%) in Leinster and (83%) in Munster.
- 56% of religious people think that looking at abortion from a human rights viewpoint is useful because it balances one's right to freedom of religion with the rights of women who decide to have abortions. Younger religious people aged 25-34 hold this view most strongly (63%).
- Just one in five religious people say that they have very conflicted views on abortion because of their religion, with 70% disagreeing with this statement. Of those who agree, the highest percentage is in Dublin (23%) and lowest in Connaught/Ulster with just 12% of religious people feeling conflicted in their views. 13% of those who are opposed to abortion in any circumstances describe themselves as having conflicted views.
- Interestingly, 28% of religious people who support abortion in some circumstances hide their view because of their perception of how people who share their religion would feel about them.