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Language

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## Republic of Ireland

The Republic, which was created in 1921 when it became independent of Britain, granted the Catholic Church a prominent role in Irish politics and society. Catholic doctrine therefore strongly influenced social policy on issues such as treatment of unmarried mothers, family planning and abortion. Church influence, combined with conservatism in rural areas, meant that the changing social attitudes to sexual issues experienced in the 1960s-70s in many European countries, and the demands of the second wave Women's Liberation movement on issues like contraception and abortion, had less impact in the Republic. Indeed, in 1983 the Irish voted by a majority to enshrine a 'right to life' ban on abortion in the Irish Constitution. The ban was so rigorous that doctors still feared criminal prosecution in the first decade of the 21st century if they intervened to save the life of a mother. But many Irish girls and women travelled to Britain, where abortion was legalised (within certain limits) in 1967, in order to get safe abortions.

Attitudes within the Republic began to change, however, under the impact of EU membership and rising economic prosperity, as was dramatically confirmed when, in May 2015, Ireland became the first country to legalise same sex marriage as the result of a popular vote in a referendum. This change in social attitudes was confirmed by the strong vote in the 2018 referendum in favour of removing the ban on abortion from the Constitution, leading to new legislation.

## Northern Ireland

When the Irish Republic was created in 1921, six of the provinces of Ulster (in which Protestants were in a majority) were allowed under the Treaty with Britain to become part of the United Kingdom. Northern Ireland was, however granted its own government and assembly (Stormont) and given certain devolved powers, including social policy and issues like abortion. Religious beliefs in the North, both of many Protestants (divided into a number of different churches and sects, including Presbyterians and Methodists), and of many in the Catholic minority, tended to oppose abortion. The major changes in politics in Northern Ireland as a result of the Good Friday Agreement of 1998, which resulted in power sharing between Protestant and Catholic political parties (see Vol. 2 section J for details) did not alter the restrictive policy on abortion. The result of the 2018 referendum in the South mobilised many women to demand change in the North. But change was brought about by the Westminster Parliament in July 2019, after internal disputes in the North had prevented elected members of Stormont sitting, and an executive being formed, for over two years. Back bench Labour MPs at Westminster had long campaigned for liberalisation in Northern Ireland, and as a result of the suspension of the government there were able to secure amendments to a technical bill covering budgetary and other matters in Northern Ireland on the grounds that government there was inoperative. As a result, the law on abortion in Britain would apply to Northern Ireland (the only part of the UK where abortion was still illegal). A last ditch attempt by Northern Irish politicians, through a hurried special session at Stormont, to prevent this process (and a similar liberalisation on gay rights) failed.

[Timeline: the history of abortion in Ireland](#) [1], the journal.ie, 23/12/2018,

Traces the most important steps that in the last 40 years have shaped the public debates and attitudes towards abortion, until the 25<sup>th</sup> May 2018 referendum that legalised it in Ireland.

See also <http://time.com/5286910/ireland-abortion-laws-history/> [2]

[Young and old, city and country: Ireland unites to end abortion ban](#) [3], Observer, 27/05/2018, pp. 1-3

Analyses the referendum and the 66.4 per cent vote to repeal the amendment to the Irish Constitution forbidding



abortion.

See also:

Emma Graham Harrison "'The future is safe' - a long fight pays off", *Guardian Weekly*, 10/06/18, p. 4-5, which looks back at 35 years of courageous campaigning, and Karl McDonald, 'Irish battle goes global: Abortion campaigners from around the world are intervening in referendum', *the i*, 19 May 2018, p.35.

[When we are together, we are strongest](#) [4], Abortion Rights Campaign (ARC), 27/05/2019,

This blog post received criticisms for the failure to include the voices of migrants, people of colour, trans and non-binary people in the Irish referendum campaign. The original blog post is preserved for transparency and accountability. It includes, however, a more recent response acknowledging the criticisms that have been made against it. It is a good source of information for activists on how to establish a more inclusive type of communication on issues related to abortion rights.

[The referendum that changed Ireland](#) [5], Foreign Policy, 24/05/2019,

To celebrate the first anniversary from the repeal of the Eight Amendment of the Irish Constitution that prevented women accessing abortion even in cases of rape and incest, Ailbhe Smyth, the co-director of the 'Together for Yes' campaign in Ireland, is interviewed on *First Person* and describes what it was like for women in Ireland to live under the ban, and how the predominantly Catholic country managed to overturn it. She also talks about the laws passed in 2019 in Alabama and other parts of the United States that ban most abortions.

See also <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/5050/world-reaction-ireland-historic-vote-abortion-rights/> [6]

[Ireland: one year since vote to end abortion ban](#) [7], amnesty International, 24/05/2019,

Amnesty International pays tribute to the Irish campaigners that led to the revolutionary referendum that repealed the Eight Amendment (25-26 May 2018), thus legalising abortion. It also highlights the human rights violation that women in Northern Ireland faced because of the harsh and restrictive anti-abortion law then applicable.

Browne, Kath ; Calkin, Sydney, [After Repeal. Rethinking Abortion Politics](#) [8], London, Zed, 2019, pp. 311

The 2018 referendum to overturn Ireland's abortion ban had worldwide significance. The campaign to repeal the Eight Amendment succeeded against a background of religious and patriarchal dogmatism, representing a major transformation of Irish society itself. This work explores both the campaign and the implications of the referendum result for politics, identity and culture in the Republic of Ireland. It explores activism, artwork, social movements, law, media, democratic institutions, and reproductive technologies in the country and beyond.

de'Londras, Fiona, [Repealing the 8th: Reforming Irish abortion law](#) [9], Bristol, Policy Press, 2018, pp. 152

This book was compiled before the 2018 constitutional referendum that liberalised abortion in the Republic of Ireland. It offers practical proposals for policymakers and advocates, including model legislation, making it an important campaigning tool for feminists in other countries.

Field, Luke, [The abortion referendum of 2018 and a timeline of abortion politics in Ireland to date](#) [10], Irish Political Studies, Vol. 33, issue 4, 2018, pp. 608-628

Ireland voted in 2018 to remove its constitutional ban on abortion in almost all circumstances. This overturned a previous vote by referendum to institute such a ban in 1983. The 2018 vote demonstrated how far Irish society has moved in a socially liberal direction. The 2018 referendum is also of interest to scholars of deliberative processes, given the key role played by Ireland's Citizens' Assembly in fostering the debate and shaping both the referendum



question and the draft legislation that was to follow. This report provides the historical context of this referendum and discusses the deliberative processes and the dynamics of the referendum campaign itself.

Fletcher, Ruth, [#RepealedThe8th: Translating Travesty, Global Conversation, and the Irish Abortion Referendum](#) [11], *Feminist Legal Studies*, Vol. 26, 2018, pp. 233-259

The author argues that feminism has been closely linked to reproductive rights, and Irish feminism contributed a significant 'legal win' with the landslide vote for lifting abortion restrictions in the 2018 referendum. This win is especially significant when right wing populist pressure is restricting women's reproductive rights in many countries. The movement #RepealedThe8th shows how legal tools like the vote can express care for reproductive lives. This paper 'reflects on the #Repeal movement as a process of feminist socio-legal translation in order to show how legal change comes about through the motivation of collective joy, the mourning of damaged and lost lives, the sharing of legal knowledge, and the claiming of the rest of reproductive life.'

Kennedy, Sinéad, [Ireland's fight for choice](#) [12], *Jacobin*, 25/03/2018,

Narrates the history of Ireland's constitutional ban on abortion and was published a few weeks before the referendum that legalized abortion in May 2018.

See also <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-05-27/abortion-referendum:-ireland-votes-to-liberalise-laws/9803848> [13]

Loughlin, Elaine ; O'Cionnaith, Fiachra, [How they did it: behind the scenes of how the Eight was repealed](#) [14], *Irish Examiner*, 02/06/2018,

A comprehensive overview of how the campaign for 'Yes' – which led to the repeal of the Eight Amendment of the Irish Constitution and legalisation of abortion in May 2018 - was organised in Ireland.

See also <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/27/world/europe/savita-halappanavar-ireland-abortion.html> [15]; <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/may/26/ireland-has-changed-utterly-the-cruel-eighth-amendment-is-history> [16]; <https://www.ft.com/content/b60d313e-f826-11e8-af46-2022a0b02a6c> [17] and <https://mobilisationlab.org/stories/how-powerful-conversations-yes-ireland/> [18]

Michie, Lydia ; Balaam, Madeline ; McCarthy, John ; Osadchiy, Timur ; Morrissey, Kellie, [From Her Story. to Our Story: Digital Storytelling as Public Engagement around Abortion Rights Advocacy in Ireland](#) [19], CHI '18: Proceedings of the 2018 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems, issue Paper no 357, 2018, pp. 1-16

The divisive nature of abortion within the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland meant that access to safe, legal abortion has been severely restricted. This paper focuses on how achieving legal reform requires changing public opinion, and contributes to a growing body of Health Care Informed (HCI) research that takes an activist approach to designing digital story-telling. The authors report findings from four design workshops with 31 pro-choice stakeholders across Ireland in which they used a digital storytelling platform – HerStoryTold - to promote critical conversations around sensitive abortion narratives. The findings show how digital storytelling can help reject false narratives and raise awareness of the realities of abortion laws. The authors also suggest the workshops provide design directions to curate narratives that 'provoke empathy, foster a plurality of voices, and ultimately expand the engaged community.'

Mulally, Una, [Repeal the 8th](#) [20], London, Unbound, 2018, pp. 224

A collection of stories, essays, poems and photographs recalling the movement that advocated reproductive rights in Ireland up to the May 2018 referendum.

O'Leary, Naomi, [Foreigners groups invade Ireland's online abortion debate](#) [21], *Politico*, 17/05/2018,



Reports on the ban that Facebook and Google put on foreign ads from activists in the US, UK and other countries' and from vloggers, which were directed at influencing an anti-abortion result in the 2018 Irish referendum.

See also <https://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/the-poisonous-online-campaign-to-defeat-the-abortion-referendum-1.3486236> [22] and <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/politics/overseas-influence-in-abortion-referendum-will-be-hard-to-stop-1.3406610> [23]

Sambaraju, Rahul ; Sammon, Myles ; Harnett, Frank ; Douglas, Emma, '[Her choice of course': Negotiating legitimacy of 'choice' in abortion rights deliberations during the 'Repeal the Eighth' movement in Ireland](#)' [24], Journal of Health Psychology, Vol. 23, issue 2, 2017, pp. 263-276

The authors provide a 'discursive psychological examination' of how 'choice' was interpreted in online debates during the movement for abortion rights. The interpretation of 'choice' was linked to alternative views of women, either as independent agents or as child-bearing mothers, which affected the legitimacy of women's rights to 'choice'.

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**Source URL (retrieved on 26/04/2024 - 19:18):**<https://civilresistance.info/section/f-feminist-movements-and-protests/f5-new-global-feminist-wave-2017-onwards/f5a-womens-3>

## Links

[1] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2018/timeline-history-abortion-ireland> [2] <http://time.com/5286910/ireland-abortion-laws-history/> [3] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2018/young-and-old-city-and-country-ireland-unites-end-abortion-ban> [4] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2019/when-we-are-together-we-are-strongest> [5] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2019/referendum-changed-ireland> [6] <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/5050/world-reaction-ireland-historic-vote-abortion-rights/> [7] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2019/ireland-one-year-vote-end-abortion-ban> [8] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2019/after-repeal-rethinking-abortion-politics> [9] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2018/repealing-8th-reforming-irish-abortion-law> [10] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2018/abortion-referendum-2018-and-timeline-abortion-politics-ireland-date> [11] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2018/repealedthe8th-translating-travesty-global-conversation-and-irish-abortion> [12] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2018/irelands-fight-choice> [13] <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-05-27/abortion-referendum:-ireland-votes-to-liberalise-laws/9803848> [14] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2018/how-they-did-it-behind-scenes-how-eight-was-repealed> [15] <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/27/world/europe/savita-halappanavar-ireland-abortion.html> [16] <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/may/26/ireland-has-changed-utterly-the-cruel-eighth-amendment-is-history> [17] <https://www.ft.com/content/b60d313e-f826-11e8-af46-2022a0b02a6c> [18] <https://mobilisationlab.org/stories/how-powerful-conversations-yes-ireland/> [19] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2018/her-story-our-story-digital-storytelling-public-engagement-around-abortion-rights> [20] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2018/repeal-8th> [21] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2018/foreigners-groups-invade-irelands-online-abortion-debate> [22] <https://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/the-poisonous-online-campaign-to-defeat-the-abortion-referendum-1.3486236> [23] <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/politics/overseas-influence-in-abortion-referendum-will-be-hard-to-stop-1.3406610> [24] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2017/her-choice-course-negotiating-legitimacy-choice-abortion-rights-deliberations>