IT’S TIME TO TALK
Embrace this once-in-a-generation opportunity. This is your country, and your future. It’s time to have our say.

“My complete ignorance of the abortion debate continued until a friend called to my door… We spoke for a while about my pregnancy before she revealed that the year before, she had had an abortion. I sat and I listened and I understood. I understood her reasons and I finally saw the woman, the young girl behind the abortion, behind those images. She was my friend and I agreed she had done the right thing… I had spent years being vehemently opposed to abortion but I finally gained some understanding.”

Lynn Ruane, Senator
A Once-in-a-Generation Opportunity

On May 25th, the people of Ireland will decide whether to repeal the Eighth Amendment to the Constitution. Since 1983, the Eighth Amendment has imposed a near total ban on access to abortion. No one under the age of 53 has had the opportunity to vote to make abortion more accessible in Ireland.

Since it was introduced, the Eighth Amendment has violated women’s and girls’ human rights—including the rights to health, life, privacy, equality and non-discrimination, and the right to be free from cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. Until it is repealed, the Eighth Amendment will continue to put the health, life and well-being of every pregnant person in Ireland at risk.

If we vote to repeal the Eighth Amendment, access to abortion in Ireland that is caring and that protects the human rights of women and girls can be introduced. By voting ‘yes’, we can make a statement about the people we are and the society we aspire to be—one where all people who become pregnant are treated with dignity, compassion, respect and equality.

It is clear from opinion polls that the overwhelming majority of people in Ireland want to repeal the Eighth Amendment and expand access to abortion. However, a critical number remain undecided about whether and how they will vote. We need to reach as many of these people as we can to have open and informed conversations about why it is so important to vote yes on May 25.

“The Eighth Amendment has caused grave harm to many women in Ireland, including death, and manifestly it has not achieved the original aim of its supporters, which was to prevent women in Ireland having abortions…the proposition that there will be abortion up to term in this country is without foundation and plainly wrong.”

Dr Peter Boylan, former Master of Holles Street Maternity Hospital
It’s Time to Talk

Change is possible, but there is work to be done in sharing the information and stories that can convince and mobilise voters. It’s time to start these conversations across Ireland.

We are asking you to commit to starting conversations in your families, communities, through your social networks, workplaces, and anywhere else you can, about why the Eighth Amendment must be repealed, and why we need abortion laws that respect women’s and girls’ human rights.

If everyone who receives this pack pledges to have one conversation a day between now and the referendum, we can have 250,000 conversations by polling day—enough to win this referendum!

This pack aims to support you in having those vital conversations, and working with us to successfully repeal the Eighth Amendment.

“We can’t keep sending people to England pretending it doesn’t happen… I favour a repeal of the Eighth Amendment for a variety of reasons relating to women’s health. We have in Ireland terminations only when there is a substantial risk to the life of the mother that can be removed only by terminating the pregnancy. We are making decisions based on risk, trying to quantify a risk and also in some cases we have to wait until a woman is sick enough to qualify. In some cases, that is medical roulette.”

Dr Rhona Mahony,
Master of Holles Street Maternity Hospital

“Abortion is an important medical procedure and when that’s taken off the table, then you’re not safe. A place without abortion puts two lives in danger, not one… I have always been very proud to be Irish but I am embarrassed by Ireland’s abortion laws. This is just something you can’t be proud of.”

Graham Linehan,
Creator of Father Ted
I Pledge to Share my Conversations

Together we can reach thousands of voters before the referendum, and create a movement of ‘It’s Time To Talk’ conversations by sharing quotes and photos from the chats we have!

We will also be keeping track of all the conversations happening around the country, so we can show the world that the whole country is talking.

Share your conversations on Social Media using #ItsTimeToTalk

Send us images and quotes from your chats so we can share them with the movement.

“The Irish Constitution currently dictates what I can and cannot do with my body, in a way that my brother and male friends are not even conscious of.”

Sinead Burke, academic, writer and disability rights campaigner
Sparking a Conversation

An ‘It’s Time to Talk’ conversation begins with one simple question: if a woman or girl is pregnant and doesn’t feel she can continue the pregnancy, who should decide what happens next?

Is it up to her doctor, legislators, the Constitution, or the woman herself? By providing people with the time and space to talk about this question, most will arrive at the logical and compassionate conclusion—that all people need to be empowered to make significant decisions about their own lives.

While most people, after thinking it through, will agree that the pregnant woman or girl is ultimately the best person to make a careful and considered decision, each will take a different route to this conclusion. Many will express reservations, concerns or have questions about what abortion access would mean in practice.

An ‘It’s Time to Talk’ conversation is an opportunity for people to ask questions and raise concerns about what repeal of the Eighth will mean for individuals, families, and communities. These are real concerns. Listening and responding to questions and concerns is a powerful way to contribute to the campaign. These conversations shouldn’t be seen as a debate to be won. As the initiator of a conversation, you offer yourself as a listening ear and a resource.

Having an ‘It’s Time to Talk’ conversation might seem like a small action, but it has a massive impact. This pack includes answers to commonly asked questions, as well as a range of facts that you can use to bust myths and help people better understand the issues.

Initiating an ‘It’s Time to Talk’ conversation is easy, it can take place anywhere—in the car, at the pub, over the dinner table, off the pitch, in the canteen at work, or over a cup of tea. What’s important is that we start having these conversations often between now and polling day.

“Thanks to the honour of being a member of the [Joint Oireachtas] Committee, I have had access to information that I did not have before. I am now coming at it from the perspective of being pro-women. I have had a gradual realisation that abortion is a matter for a woman’s health and wellbeing.”

Ned O’Sullivan, Fianna Fáil TD
Three Steps to ‘Yes’

To have an ‘It’s Time to Talk’ conversation, just follow these three simple steps:

01. Simply ask: if a woman or girl is pregnant and doesn’t feel she can continue the pregnancy, who do you think should decide whether she should have an abortion?

02. Really listen, answer any questions and speak directly to concerns raised

03. Share the five key reasons to vote yes (below), and feel free to add your own!

Key Reasons to Vote ‘Yes’

— We are better than this. For too long Ireland has abandoned, punished, hurt and harmed women. Ireland wants to treat women with compassion. Only you can change this. It’s time – vote yes for compassion.

— It’s time to respect women’s right to make decisions that are right for them and their families. This is no longer the Ireland of Magdalene Laundries and mother and baby homes, but we are still forcing women and girls onto planes and ferries to the UK. Only you can change this. It’s time – vote yes for respect.

— Until women are free to make decisions about their own bodies, health and lives, they will never be equal. In Ireland, men have complete control over their bodies. Even if a woman has been raped, or her health could be damaged by a pregnancy, she has no control over what happens next. Only you can change this. It’s time – vote yes for equality.

— It’s time to care for women at home, to end the indignity, the secrecy, the shame. For too long women have been exiled abroad and criminalised at home. Only you can change this: It’s time – vote yes for dignity.

— It has taken 35 years, seven governments, a European Court of Human Rights ruling, the tragic deaths of Savita Halappanavar and grave harm to countless other women, Ireland being repeatedly hauled before the United Nations, a massive public campaign, a Citizens’ Assembly, and a special Joint Oireachtas Committee to get us to this referendum. Only you can change this. It’s time – vote yes for compassion, respect, equality and dignity.
What the Facts Say

— Ireland’s abortion laws are among the most restrictive in the world.

— The overwhelming majority of people in Ireland want to see access to abortion expanded (87%).

— No one under the age of 53 has had the opportunity to vote on the Eighth Amendment.

— The opportunity to repeal the Eighth Amendment and revise Ireland’s abortion laws has been hard won. It took 20 years, 7 governments, 2 referendums, a case before the European Court of Human Rights and the deaths of Savita Halappanavar and countless others before Ireland legislated for access to abortion where a woman or girl’s life is at risk.

— Criminalising abortion does not decrease the number of abortions, it just makes those abortions less safe.

— A decisive majority of people in Ireland want abortion to be decriminalised (72%).

— Since 1980, at least 170,000 women and girls have had to travel to other countries to access abortion services that should be their right at home.

— Each year at least 3,500 pregnant people access abortion services in England and the Netherlands. And these are only the countries we know about.

— In the past six years at least 5,000 women on the island of Ireland ordered medical abortion pills online; an average of two women every day.

— Travelling for an abortion is not an option for everyone. The estimated average cost of travelling to the UK for a first trimester abortion is at least €1,000, including clinic fees, flights and accommodation.

“Migrant women are among those who suffer the most under the Eighth Amendment—think of Savita Halappanavar, of Miss Y. Travelling to another country to have a safe, legal abortion is only an option if you have the right visa or passport. Many migrant women can’t vote in the upcoming referendum, which makes it all the more important that you do. Stand in Solidarity with us. Vote yes.”

Ellie Kisyombe, Our Table Chef and Activist
“[The Eighth Amendment of the Constitution must be removed because it] has been shown to cause real damage to Irish women; because it has caused real harm to the quality of care available to pregnant women at critical moments; because it has not and cannot change the reality that abortion is a present and permanent part of Irish life; because it seeks to force women to carry a pregnancy to term when they have been the victim of a rape or incest or when they have received the diagnosis of a fatal foetal abnormality; because it requires that pregnant women and doctors are faced with criminal sanctions.”

Micheál Martin, Leader of Fianna Fáil

— For women and couples who receive a diagnosis of a pregnancy with fatal foetal impairment, the average cost of accessing an abortion is much more, as the treatment can cost up to €1500 and the stay abroad can last 4 – 5 days.

— Human rights experts recommend that abortion be made available on request, at least in early pregnancy, as best practice and in line with international human rights law.

— The majority of people in Ireland (60%) believe that pregnant people should have access to abortion on request, either outright or within specific time limits.

— 90% of abortions occur within the first 12 weeks of pregnancy. Only 1.5% occur after 21 weeks.

— Restrictive laws do not lower abortion rates. The lowest rates of abortion are found in states where it is readily available as part of a comprehensive package of sexual and reproductive health services.

— Contraceptive use and sexuality education can contribute to a reduction in the number of abortions, but they will never eliminate the need for abortion services.

— Access to safe abortion is a human right because women and girls have a legally recognised right to life, a right to health care, and a right to live free from violence, discrimination, torture or cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. The denial of abortion leads to violations of these human rights and others.
“Women’s health (as well as their lives) are at risk in Ireland because of the Eighth Amendment. Two women in very, very similar circumstances may make different decisions and that is personal to them. No one should be able to dictate what a woman does with her body in such circumstances.”

Lorna Sixsmith, author of ‘Would You Marry A Farmer?’, ‘How to be a Perfect Farm Wife’, and ‘An Ideal Farm Husband’

“I came in here [to Leinster House] thinking that there wasn’t a need for change in this country...Then I remember attending a briefing in Leinster House with the group ‘Terminations for Medical Reasons’. It was mums and dads who had found themselves carrying a baby with a fatal foetal abnormality. I’ve never before left a briefing so moved by it. Here was a situation where I’m very proud of this country, I love being Irish, I love living in this country and I love representing this country as a member of the Government, and yet here was a situation where I was really ashamed at how these people were treated. If the purpose of the Eighth Amendment was to stop abortions in Ireland and to stop Irish women from accessing abortions, it did not achieve that.”

Simon Harris, Minister for Health

“It’s a very difficult decision, but I believe women should have the choice. We should treat women who make this choice with compassion and respect. It’s an issue that needs to be discussed in every home. A huge number of women from rural Ireland are being forced to travel abroad to seek a termination and support year after year. As a country we can’t continue to treat our women this way.”

Eibhlin Murphy of Ballyhaunis agricultural machinery manufacturer Major Equipment
It’s Time to Support

It is wonderful that you’ve pledged to talk to your friends, family and colleagues about repealing the Eighth Amendment and for this we are truly thankful. Together we can embrace this once in-a-generation opportunity to bring an end to the daily violation of the human rights of women and girls.

Did you know you can help us deliver our vote yes message even further by supporting our campaign financially?

Here are three simple ways you can donate today:

Have a minute?
Simply donate whatever you can afford by visiting www.ItsTime.ie/ Every euro is critical and will help fund our campaign, and bring us one step closer to a Yes vote.

Have a bit longer?
Why not Dress for a Yes and buy an It’s Time t-shirt or sweater at shop.amnesty.ie

Have a few hours?
Could you host an It’s Time to Talk event, for example a coffee morning, with a group of friends or colleagues? If so, we’re here to help. Visit www.ItsTime.ie resources for more fundraising ideas or contact fundraising@amnesty.ie
For more information about the campaign please contact Amnesty International
itstimetotalk@amnesty.ie

Additional Supports

These conversations are about showing solidarity with everyone who has ever needed an abortion. Over 170,000 pregnant people have travelled to access abortion services or ordered medical abortion pills online. We should remember that any time we start a conversation about abortion, we may be speaking with someone who has direct experience of the impacts of the Eighth Amendment.

Engaging in conversations about abortion may provoke strong feelings, particularly for those who know the harms of the Eighth Amendment first hand. If you or someone dear to you has needed or had an abortion support is always available. You can contact any of the following services to book an appointment to speak with a counsellor near you:

1850 49 50 51 Irish Family Planning Association
1800 77 8888 Dublin Rape Crisis Centre