

Responding To The Tough Questions

1. Marriage is between a man and a woman.

- 11 countries and several US states allow marriage equality, so definitions CAN evolve.
- Marriage equality is not about “redefining” marriage – marriage is already about love and commitment between two people.
- Civil marriage is determined by the State. The definition of who may or may not marry **has** changed over time (divorced people, for example).
- Religious institutions are free to determine their own definitions of marriage – just as churches are not forced to remarry divorced people.

2. Every child deserves a mother and a father.

- There are many different family types in Ireland today, and families with same sex parents are one of them. Denying them recognition and equal protection hurts these families and their children.
- Allowing same sex couples to marry will not stop other children being raised by a mother and father – what it means is that children born to same sex couples will be protected, treated equally and cherished equally by the State.
- Marriage equality is about valuing all children and all parents and the relationships between them.

3. Civil Partnership is enough.

- Civil Partnership was an important step forward for same sex couples and relationship recognition, but there are still inequalities in this form of relationship recognition
- Loving, committed same sex couples should be allowed to share the same responsibilities, obligations and same respect that marriage provides.
- It makes no sense to exclude loving couples already doing the work of marriage in their daily lives from the legal structure intended to reinforce that dedication, those meanings, and – at its heart – commitment and love.

Public Opinion In Ireland

- There is a strong majority of Irish people who support marriage equality.
- In 4 years, support has grown from 58% (2008, Lansdowne) to 74% (2012, Millward Brown).
- The campaign for marriage equality is all about Irish values – family, kinship, love, commitment and respect.
- A recent poll found that 75% of people aged 18+ would vote YES in a referendum on marriage equality. (2012, Millward Brown).



Marriage Equality

4th Floor, 2-3 Parnell Square East, Dublin 1
Telephone: +353-1-8734183

www.marriageequality.ie



Talking about Marriage Equality

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Who is Marriage Equality?

Marriage Equality is a not for profit, single issue, national grassroots advocacy organisation whose goal is to achieve equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people in Ireland through the extension of civil marriage rights to same-sex couples.

About the term 'marriage equality'

We use the term 'marriage equality' rather than 'gay marriage' or 'same-sex marriage' because we are campaigning for equality. When marriage equality is legalised, same sex couples won't have 'gay marriages' – they'll have marriages.

Why Marriage Matters

1. We are passionate about equal treatment – for everyone.

- Loving, committed relationships between two consenting adults should be treated equally. It should be called marriage.
- When heterosexual couples are asked why they got married, they say "love, commitment, etc" which are the very reason same sex couples want to marry. This is about being able to protect and care for the people we love.

2. We are pro marriage.

- We believe in the institution of marriage. What defines a marriage is love and commitment, and being able to protect and care for the people we love.
- You may think that same sex couples are somehow 'different' from heterosexual couples, but they have similar hopes, concerns and desire to make the exact same commitment. It's called marriage.
- Civil Partnership is just not the same as marriage. It is most welcome and absolutely to be celebrated, but the fact it is just not the same in some very practical ways. It also sends a negative message of separateness and inequality to the rest of society.

3. This is not just about children. This is about couples making a commitment.

- It's important to note that, just like some heterosexual couples, not all same sex couples have children
- Having children is not a pre-requisite for getting married.

4. We are pro family, and we'd like our families to be recognised.

- The meaning of 'the family' has changed drastically in Ireland over the years. Single parents, step-parents, grandparents, aunties and uncles are all raising children as a family unit. This reflects reality - that we have diverse families in Ireland.
- On a fundamental level, words matter. By stating that only a family (with or without children) based on marriage can be called a family, the legislation ensures that same sex couples who have registered a civil partnership are not recognised as (or even called) a family.
- There are a range of organisations (The Ombudsman for Children, UNICEF, etc) that recognise this need to recognise modern day families.

5. Children deserve loving parents.

- Whether or not you agree with same sex couples having children, the fact is these families exist – and there are children that need to be protected, and their families recognised in Irish law and by society.
- Have you talked to children with gay parents? We have. From our research – 2010's Voices of Children – what mattered most to these children was that their family relationships be recognised and protected, and that no other generation of children with lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender parents be discriminated against in such a way.
- Professor Sheila Greene of the Children's Research Institute at Trinity College Dublin spoke at our Voices of Children conference. She has peer reviewed many international studies in relation to the outcomes for children of same sex couples, and agrees that children in same sex families fare just the same as children raised by a mum and a dad.¹

¹ For more information on this research, visit our website.

6. We are not trying to change any religious sacrament.

- It's important to stress that we are campaigning for access to civil marriage i.e. marriage under state law. This has nothing to do with religion or churches.
- We are not campaigning to force religious institutions to marry same sex couples. Just as the Divorce legislation did not force churches to remarry divorced people, legalising marriage equality will not require churches to marry same sex couples – though several religious institutions (Unitarian Church, Quakers, etc) would be happy to do so.
- For example, Scotland has proposed an 'opt in' clause for religious institutions who do wish to perform ceremonies for same sex couples. Institutions that do not 'opt in' will not be required or compelled to perform these ceremonies.

7. We welcome the discussion at the Constitutional Convention.

- We are delighted the Government has included marriage equality in the upcoming Constitutional Convention. This Convention is a huge opportunity for us as a country to take the next step as a modern, democratic country that has respect for diversity and that believes in equality. The Constitutional Convention is our chance as a nation to further enshrine those essential Irish values of justice, equality, fairness and respect in the Constitution.

8. Marriage equality is good for business.

- Businesses such as Amazon, Starbucks, Ben & Jerry's, Lush, Google, Expedia and Microsoft have publicly stated their support for marriage equality. They realise that this issue is not only a social and moral issue – it also has business consequences.
- If companies (and our country) have a brand promise that they are open, welcoming and respectful of diversity, it stands to reason that they should support marriage equality.