

Referendums in Ireland: History and Outcomes

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Referendums in Ireland

- **Ireland is one of the few countries where every constitutional amendment requires the consent of the people**
- **38 proposed amendments**
- **27 approved and 11 rejected**

Referendums in Ireland

- **9 on moral issues**
- **9 on the European Union**
- **7 on voting**
- **4 on political, governmental and judicial framework**
- **One on Northern Ireland**
- **One on Children's rights**
- **Other 7 on relatively technical issues**

Referendums in Ireland

- Major changes have allowed
- Ireland to take a full part in process of European Integration (1972, 1987, 1992, 1998, 2002, 2009, 2012)
- Divorce to be legalised
- Ireland to fulfil its part of the Northern Ireland Agreement
- Legislation of same-sex marriage

Referendums in Ireland

- **4 repeat referendums where the people have been asked to vote on the same proposal**
- **Electoral System 1959 and 1968**
- **Divorce 1986 and 1995**
- **Nice 2001 and 2002**
- **Lisbon 2008 and 2009**

Referendums in Ireland

- Five referendums on abortion
- 1983, three in 1992, 2002



Referendums in Ireland on the same day

Year	Topic of amendments
1968	Dáil constituencies and electoral system
1972	Recognition of religions and votes at eighteen
1979	Adoption and Seanad reform
1992	Abortion: Travel, Information and Right to Life [and General Election]
1998	Good Friday Agreement and Amsterdam Treaty
2001	Nice Treaty [1], Death penalty and International Criminal Court
2011	Judges pay and Oireachtas Inquiries [and Presidential Election]
2013	Court of Appeal and Seanad reform
2015	Same Sex Marriage and Presidential candidate age

Referendums in Ireland

- Article 46 a powerful check on governments who might have wanted to make changes that do not have broad support across the political spectrum
- The requirement that no changes to the constitution can be made without a referendum certainly enhances the status of the constitution amongst the people as its contents remain under their control.

Referendums in Ireland

- Considering changing the constitution is an act of significant civic duty
- In that context citizens need as much information as possible before doing so
- Your constitution
- Your decision