

DRCC Note on the Eighth Amendment and upcoming Referendum

The Dublin Rape Crisis Centre is a voluntary organisation which is committed to preventing the harm and healing the trauma of rape and other forms of sexual violence.

Our staff bear witness to the trauma of rape every day. They see the harm caused by the loss of power and control over a person's body, their most intimate self, which is at the heart of rape.

In advance of the upcoming Referendum and arising from questions that have been put to us, we want people to reflect on the following:

1. Women do get pregnant as a result of rape

There is no reliable Irish information available about the prevalence of pregnancy as a result of rape because there is such massive under-reporting of rape.

Using our own statistics* over 10 years, it seems that approximately **4%** of the total number of female clients who presented to the DRCC report a pregnancy as a result of rape. Therefore, approximately 96% of females presenting to us did not report pregnancy as a result of the rape.

The various pregnancy outcomes appear below

PREGNANCY DISCLOSURE (4% of total)	DRCC
Clients who went on to give birth and parent	35%
Clients who terminated their pregnancy	31%
Clients who miscarried	19%
Clients who had child placed for adoption / fostered	7%
Clients where the outcome was unknown	8%

These statistics cannot be taken as an indication of a woman's choice, but merely of the ultimate outcome. We must emphasise that we can only know about pregnancies that are disclosed to us. Clients do not need to tell their therapist about a pregnancy as a result of rape. We can only speculate on what proportion of clients might not tell a therapist.

2. We don't make decisions for anyone but we are there to support whatever decision is made

Rape impacts on everyone differently depending not just on the circumstances of the rape but on their own personal circumstances. One of the cornerstones of the work of the DRCC is to support a victim regain control over their bodies and their lives.

In the experience of our personnel, the trauma of rape is exacerbated for those who become pregnant as a result of the rape.

From the previous table we can see that our female clients made different decisions as to what they do as a result of the pregnancy.

Some clients will have difficulty acknowledging the reality of their rape. Some may only reveal that the rape resulted in pregnancy weeks, months or years later. A therapist may never hear about the pregnancy at all. While we note information on those who reveal to us that they have become pregnant as a result of rape, it is important to note that we will often only hear about it as a historical event in the client's past.

Rather than judging a caller or client's response to their trauma as right or wrong, good or bad; we provide them with information about available specialist services, we work with them at their pace and from their perspective. Why? so that they can feel empowered to explore their feelings, consider how the rape has impacted on them and make their own decisions about what to do and how to proceed or reflect compassionately on decisions made.

3. A rape exception

If there is to be special consideration of those who have suffered rape, this requires the pregnant rape victim to make a report and to claim that the rape occurred.

Requiring a pregnant rape victim to share the traumatising experience about her rape and subsequent pregnancy has the potential to not only re-traumatise, re-trigger and re-victimise her; it also leaves her in a situation where she has to convince people that her story justifies access to support.

If after exploring all of her options, a woman decides that she cannot go through with a pregnancy resulting from the crime of rape, we should not add any hurdles or barriers to the process.

An exception fails to address the reality of women who become pregnant against their will because the term limits our understanding of both the nature and extent of rape.

***APPENDIX 1**

DRCC Statistics

Year	Female Clients	Pregnancy Disclosure	Termination	Miscarriage	Parenting	Adopted / Fostered	Outcome Unknown
2006	545	36	10	5	13	1	7
2007	528	23	8	3	8	1	3
2008	506	24	7	4	11	0	2
2009	509	24	10	7	6	0	1
2010	479	25	10	6	6	2	1
2011	474	18	4	4	7	3	0
2012	491	19	7	0	9	3	0
2013	459	6	1	0	4	1	0
2014	432	10	2	4	1	2	1
2015	449	5	0	3	2	0	0
TOTAL	4872	190	59	36	67	13	15
		4% Average	31%	19%	35%	7%	8%

These figures are based on the pregnancy outcomes for females who disclosed a pregnancy as a result of rape