



## **PUBLIC WANT ABORTION LAWS TIGHTENED NOT LIBERALISED – NEW SURVEY**

Plans for loosening Britain's abortion laws have been overwhelmingly rejected by the public, according to a new poll.

A majority of people oppose proposals to make abortion available early in pregnancy on the authority of only one doctor, instead of two doctors as the law currently requires.

The public is even more hostile to plans for nurses, as well as doctors, to be allowed to perform abortions.

Similar proposals have been recently put forward by the ethics committee of the British Medical Association but the proposal for nurse abortion was rejected by delegates at the BMA's annual representative meeting in June.

The findings come from a ComRes survey commissioned by the pro-life charity LIFE and the All-Party Parliamentary Pro-life Group for the launch of the LIFE Begins at 40 Campaign – Time for a *Real* Choice on Abortion, which marks the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1967 Abortion Act next month.

The survey finds shows growing public support for new curbs on abortion.

Sixty eight per cent of people said the upper limit for abortion should be reduced to bring Britain in line with our European neighbours. 85 per cent of the public regard abortion as a last resort.

Women and the young are most in favour of a reduction.

More than two-thirds of people (68per cent) would support 'a substantial reduction in the upper time limit for abortion to around 13 weeks, bringing us into line with our European neighbours'.

This includes 72 per cent of women (65per cent of men).

In addition, a majority of the public agrees with the measures LIFE wishes to see introduced, such as a compulsory cooling-off period, a legal duty on doctors to promote alternatives to abortion, and protection for medical staff who object to assisting abortions.

### **More detailed analysis:**

Abortion law reform

- Six in ten (59%) believe the law should urgently be reviewed to reduce the number of abortions.
- Eight in ten (79%) agree that 'it is important to review the law on abortion regularly because of the speed of changes in our understanding of how babies develop' – including 82% of women and 83% of 18-24 year-olds.
- Fully 89% (92% of women) would support 'a legal duty on doctors to provide access to organisations offering counselling and support and promoting alternatives to abortion'.
- More than eight in ten (81%) would support 'a compulsory cooling-off period between diagnosis of pregnancy and any abortion'.
- Nearly seven in ten (68%) would support 'a right for healthcare workers not to have to sign abortion forms or to assist abortions where this would conflict with their ethical views.
- More than two-thirds of people (68%) would support 'a substantial reduction in the upper time limit for abortion to around 13 weeks, bringing us into line with our European neighbours'.
- Later in the survey we asked again about a reduction in the upper limit – with the same result: 68% support a law 'to reduce the time limit on abortion from the current 24 weeks, or nearly six months' pregnancy, to 12 weeks which is closer to the European average'. 70% of women and 66% of men agreed.
- 85% overall oppose selective abortion for gender.
- A majority of the public (57%) disagrees with any proposals to make abortion available early in pregnancy on the authorisation of only one doctor rather than two as the law currently allows. This includes 59% of women.
- Two-thirds of the public (68%), and exactly three-quarters of women, disagree that nurses as well as doctors should be authorised to perform abortions.

#### Women's health & rights

- 85% of people – including 89% of women – agree that 'abortion has very serious consequences both for the health of women and for the unborn, and should be regarded as a last resort if indeed it's used at all'. 93% of those aged 18-24 agree too.
- Importantly, 75% overall and 80% of women agree that 'preventing abortion by offering attractive alternatives is better for women'.
- Fully 91% (93% of women) would support 'a woman's legal right to be informed of the physical and psychological risks associated with abortion'.

#### Impact of abortion on society

- Seven in ten (69%) agree that 'making abortion too easily available cheapens the value of young life' – including 72% of women and 76% of those aged 18-24.

*Methodology note:*

*ComRes interviewed 1001 GB adults by telephone from 31<sup>st</sup> August to 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2007. Data were weighted to be representative of all GB adults. ComRes is a member of the British Polling Council and abides by its rules.*

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