

Should the rights of unmarried fathers be recognised in Irish law?

This Poll can be viewed at the following Link;

<http://www.irishtimes.com/polls/index.cfm?fuseaction=yesnopoll&pollid=9332&subsiteid=356>

 79% YES

 21% NO

The Irish Times Poll is a forum for people who wish to express their views on issues of topical interest. In order to represent as wide a range of opinions as possible and provide a stimulating platform for discussion, we ask all our contributors to only post comments which are relevant to the daily question.

Your Reaction

- who the hell is saying no? just for the sake of it.
Amy Ireland
- Amazing to think that the rights of any person, or group of persons, remain unrecognised in Irish law. It's 2010 ferchrissakes. That'd be a Yes.
k,eut Not Answered
- I'd love to know the reasoning of anyone who answers or who has answered 'no.'
Patrick Murray Ireland
- What Rights ? With rights come responsibilities and commitments. It used to be called Marriage.
pablo Ireland
- Yes. But the corresponding responsibilities that go with rights should be enforced by law so that every child has a father who pays child support and the state stops playing surrogate parent. Thosands of children in this country know only one provider, the tax-payer, who btw get precious little thanks.
margaretr Ireland
- Unmarried fathers have responsibilities and obligations under Irish law, so they must have rights. YES
John Mc Ireland
- Marriage should be banned and father and mothers should have equal rights
mose harper Ireland
- If men wants their rights as fathers recognised then let them choose their partners wisely, marry them first and then father children. If they are interested in the rights of children then they will zip up their pants until they are prepared to marry, settle down and provide a proper environment for their offspring. It's called acting responsibly. If not prepared to marry the mother, then they should be made pay support without any custodial rights.
Kathleen Browne Ireland
- Only if the rights are exactly equal to the rights of the mother. What I suspect we would get

is a watered-down set of rights enshrining the second class status of fathers in the law.

James *Not Answered*

- Of Course, We would be total hypocrites if made gender Rights a one-sided matter under our sacred Equality Laws and Social Justice Programmes. However, most normals will say, so what is new? Socialist movements are usually diametrically opposed to reality and sustainability. Just look at Greece and our Gardai/Civil Servants are trying to get Ireland in the same unsustainably as Greece. Will we ever learn, learn, learn??? Tough times require measures. Maybe the answer is, sack half the Teachers, half the Gardai and all of the Equality quango.

Jim, dubland 8 *Ireland*

Yes, the problem in this country is that people live in a virtual world rather than a real world when dealing with Guardianship of children, ask any social worker who are the greater abusers of children in reported cases in any year, yes women, women make up over 75% of child abusers confirmed by the HSE each year, this is reduced to 50% when dealing specifically with sexual abuse, however, many judges and others who are detached from reality suffer from selective blindness when dealing with the question "Who would best serve the child's interests?" we still live in a country where women are universally viewed as the best guardians for children when the reality of daily child abuse tells us something totally different - mindsets need to change and men need to have equality before the law.....

The Irish Observer *Ireland*

- Mammy, Yes Billy Bob? Why is Daddy not coming to see me this weekend? Because I said he couldn't.....

The Irish Observer *Ireland*

- Yes, definitely. The type of custody or visitation rights have to be determined by the court, just as they would have been in a divorce court. This brings up another point: the single parent allowance. There should be no such thing. Both parents have rights and both have responsibilities. Both should pay for their children's upbringing. If one parent is the principal wage earner, then that person should continue to support the family after the parents split up. The court can decide how much that support should be. It should not be the taxpayers' burden. If the laws relating to unmarried parents are to be updated, then our fearless leaders need to consider all aspects, including how to track down deadbeat moms and dads, regardless of where they might decide to live, in or out of the country.

Catherine, Ireland/ United States

- I want to say Yes but part of me says No, based on the amount of men that have walked away and left the woman with all the responsibility of bringing up the child alone! If men want a Yes vote they must be prepared to accept half the responsibility. This would have to be legislated for before this is brought into law. There are many men who genuinely want to be hugely involved in their children's lives and it is pitiful that they don't have that right. What happens when a father who does not, is forced with responsibilities he does not want. This is a very serious question, as ultimately it will hugely affect the life of that child in a very negative way. Much debate is needed in this area.

Jean *Ireland*

- Patrick Murray, p.1: I agree with recognising rights, in general. However, if a parent has abused his/her children, then visitation or custody rights might have to be curtailed for the children's safety.

Catherine, Ireland/ United States

- Em did John Waters propose this one. Would this apply to ne're do wells as well as responsible fathers? Like all granting of rights it depends on the grantee dunnit?

Arthur McGuinness *Ireland*

- Yes, even if the father is a father or any other member of our clergy should take an active part of the child's life. Rights, and its twin 'responsibilities' go hand in hand to many drop the load on the single woman or the child with child. The child needs the village to rear it in today's violent society. But then again, success follows a gravel road.

paorach *Canada*

- Yes their rights should be recognised but their responsibility to provide for their children should be legally recognised also.

Eilish Lalor *Australia*

- Why use the term "Unmarried Fathers". Would You use the term "Unmarried Mothers". It was never part of Biology that Marriage was essential. Why should it be taken that a woman has automatic rights to guardianship. When couples make a Joint decision to have children, they are both signing to joint ownership of any issue that may arise.

tathi *Ireland*

- Yes! Not just their rights to access to their children, but also their responsibilities toward them. But the feminist agenda has the upper hand in most countries in that men are too often denigrated and demonized - even in throwaway remarks in conversation by women this can be detected. Of course men are also guilty of anti-women attitudes. Both sexes are at fault, although at the present time the female rules the roost. However this injustice cannot just be against unmarried fathers - surely it includes those who are divorced, separated, etc., It is a fact of modern society we have unmarried fathers and mothers as well as separated or divorced parents and all this is destructive to the lives of all concerned. Ours is a society with ever fragmenting moral values - indeed they are rapidly disappearing. The Ten Commandments are discarded as being outdated, archaic and without value. Was there ever a time they were adhered to both in the spirit and the letter? But if they were followed in that manner I have no doubt that society would be transformed for the better. Men and women would wait until married before engaging in sexual relations. Children would grow up in stable family atmospheres. Divorce would become unknown. Impossible? I think not! There are those who will say it is impossible to refrain from satisfying sexual urges? Yes - that is true . . . it is true that without God it is impossible. I will not be replying to any responses to this comment.

Hopeful! *Ireland*

Equal rights and equal responsibilities for both.

jaygee *United Kingdom*

- **NEGATIVE. NO LEGAL COMMITMENT, NO LEGAL RIGHTS!** Sorry gang, it takes a legal commitment and **RESPONSIBILITY**, which is sorely lacking in all areas of Irish society to earn the **RIGHTS** of a parent. Siring a child is the easy part of the mating game. But committing yourself in the eyes of the law and following the rules of the law over the long haul is the tough part. Obviously, there are lots of lads willing to plant the seeds but don't want the task of tend the crop once it takes root. I have often said monogamy isn't natural in the animal world. And the human species is part of that very same world. However, human children require the traditional maternal and paternal figures during their maturation stage. Daddy can't be just some guy who can come and go at his whim. Look at what "single" parents have produced in the past 15 years or so. A hugely dysfunctional and irresponsible gaggle of youngsters with no boundaries and no self discipline. **HOO RAH!**

eddie- the Aggravator *Ireland*

- Yes and also responsibilities. We need find a way so that valuing each parent becomes the norm. Going to court to solve these types of issues is a harrowing experience for both

parents. Both parents names should be on the birth cert and that should confer guardianship - very few men will go to court to apply for guardianship unless there is a problem, even then they may not want to exacerbate a bad situation. Apart from those who have their own reasons for not marrying there are some who are playing the system and claiming benefits as lone parents when they are not. The incentive to do this is having a very detrimental effect on family formation and stability.

TC *Antigua and Barbuda*

- Yes. I think that the British model should be copied/explored.

John McKeon *United Kingdom*

- "...zip up their pants until they are prepared to marry, settle down and provide a proper environment for their offspring..." Wow, that's something now. I didn't realise that it was just men and their zips that results in pregnancy.

Justin *Ireland*

- Ah, better late than never. Yes, the laws were written before DNA testing was available, and when marital status was the main yardstick for parental responsibility. The constitution will have to be changed of course, but this do-nothing government do not want to do that. Yet another reason why we need a general election and we need it now.

Richard *Bouvet Island*

- rhetorical question... together with the fact that all those proud parents ARE paying child support and not burdening the State (the and taxpayer) with the expense for THEIR "bundle of joy" (I guess that none of them are catholic, because according to that religion if people who are not married to each other have sex, they go to hell --so would their offspring, right?

Pearl Gray *Ireland*

- To Kathleen Browne (p1) : the decision to marry does not belong exclusively to men! You make it sound like there are poor girls out there being knocked up all over the place by men who can't keep it in their pants. Takes two to tango Kathleen! And what does marriage have to do with anything? People act responsibly or they don't, and a marriage contract does not oblige them to do so ! Yes, of course unmarried father's should have the same rights as mothers. However, those who wish to have a wee visit every second weekend need to realise that's not the same as bringing up a child.

JJ *France*

- You have to have a licence to have a dog but any muppet can be a parent. I'm one of the NO crew on this one because unfortunately, like every demographic, whilst you have 90% of great, respectable and responsible fathers out there, I shudder to think that 10% of feckless, irresponsible, egotistical wasters get the same rights as the others. Rights should only be given on a case by case basis and those in that 10% should actually have other rights denied until they live up to their responsibilities (PS this goes both ways as there are many single fathers out there).

Paul M *Ireland*

- Family Courts should be open to scrutiny just as any other court - at the moment the family courts are a kin to Institutions from the dark old days when secrets could be kept from the public view - if a certain matter is too sensitive to report a judge can make such an order - for too long the family courts have followed the Catholic Church methodology of secrecy and with that comes injustice.....throw open the gates of justice and let the light shine upon the dark corners that are so filled with lies and misconceptions.....

The Irish Observer *Ireland*

What rights, exactly? Can someone spell them out for me? The responsibilities I know but the rights, well, I'm a bit vague on these. In the interest of clarity for ALL of us, let's get the

definition right.

afreedom *Ireland*

- Are the Dad's supporting their children?

Deirdre *Ireland*

- Rights with responsibilities only. Responsibilities means more than finance, it means time, commitment and support, How do enshrine these in law. Marriage maybe??? and preferably before the fact of becoming a father.

Patrick Larkin *United Kingdom*

- Those advocating marriage as some sort of rubber stamp to parental rights need to get out and about a little more - marriage is a doomed institution and should not be used as a water mark for anything - a parent is someone who takes responsibility for their child - be that a shared responsibility or a single responsibility - the measure for parenthood should be good guardianship - giving birth to a child does not make a woman a good parent - just as having a one night stand that results in pregnancy does not make a good father - each case must be taken on its own merits - both parents should have equal rights until one of those parents breaks that covenant to be of good guardianship - it is a human rights violation that any parent be denied access to their child because of something written by the Catholic Church and their cheer leaders at the founding of this State.....

The Irish Observer *Ireland*

- people are saying no because it protects the institution of marriage to give marital families more rights in the Constitution.

jake *Algeria*

- Yes, it is a basic human right and it's an embarrassment to acknowledge that in this year of 2010 Irish law doesn't recognise that right yet - more shame.

Laurie *Ireland*

- It is noticeable how few comments there are (1.50pm) so consensus is strong. It is conceivable religious fundamentalists may be against it, also some who have particular insights into some cases will vote no and not be keen to share specific views. While many children are born into (nuclear) unmarried family situations there will still be some children whose birth is unplanned or whose parents split at a later stage (married or not). In these situations (and it can occur within marriage as well) a parent may not be interested in 'joint custody' or other forms of support. Since many children in one parent families where both parents are alive are in the custody of mothers, the rights issue does need to be broadened but children cannot be seen as 'commodities' and must have their own rights. Also parents who take primary responsibility in areas such as day-to-day guidance and who may not have much 'surplus income' cannot be judged by state authorities if a 'rights' situation is tainted by one party who is more associated with 'treats' to the detriment of the other parent who is shouldering far greater parental responsibilities.

No Moss Gathered *Ireland*

- people are saying no because it protects the institution of marriage to give marital families more rights in the Constitution.

jake *Algeria*

- The kids have rights (not to be used as pawns in an ongoing row between the biological progenitors), the parents have responsibilities.

Bass *Ireland*

- Have to say I'd agree with Joe Fenwick there today. An shuan de yi. Safety first.

smoKey the bare-arsed *Ireland*

There are imprescriptible rights. And nothing in what gives rise to them can present an obstacle to any law act or measure of certain sEUperStates ye lately turned the ignition on. And that's got a dashboard with all sorts of well-meaning instruments hooked up to we're not entirely sure quite what but...this ain't 4-d chess. But. There are similarities. Ware white rabbits and black swans equally. In every sense of the clinamen swerve.

PeRisCope dept. *Ireland*

- The political elite in this country need to step out of the blinding light of myth - the traditional view of the gleaming white Mammy caring for her little baby is long gone - we know that men and women are equal in every manner possible - some remain in denial - but for those of us who know better - men and women come in good and bad in equal measure.....let equality rule the day...let the Catholic Church take its lies and its darkness out of the Irish Constitution, Irish law and social policy.....let the children be free and safe and not imprisoned and tortured due to misconceptions and duplicity.....

The Irish Observer *Ireland*

- What the hell are some of you talking about, my god, it depends on the grantee, much debate needed. Unmarried fathers is another label that shouldn't even come into a father rights. Unmarried fathers, is a saying that I find repulsive. Another church saying, it should be just phrased "A FATHERS RIGHTS" period. People who talk about debate should come spend xmas with the rest of us fathers, who are denied are basic rights out of pure and utter hatred on the mothers parts. For the person who thinks we should keep it buttoned up till were sure we know. Your sexist biased remark is saying that the guy is to blame, well let me fill you in on the real world, some women actually leave the men cause they've fallen in love (how bloody wonderful) again, they take the kids without a second thought, then low and behold the love life doesnt last long and they try and get back into the previous marriage, some men allow this cause of the kids, then theres some like me that says, take a hike. Before I know it i'm in court fighting for my rights and my kids, but shes swearing on the bible how bad a husband and father I am, only the judge doesnt believe her cause we had good friends who said in all the years they knew us, they never heard my voice raised in anger at her or my kids. Judge gives me visitation rights to become a weekend father,so before you start making a remark on this subject,becareful you know what your saying.

kenneth *Ireland*

- No. Only fathers who undertake their full responsibilities in the financial and emotional upbringing of thier offspring should be given rights equal to those of the mothers. Those who are merely sperm donors and think they should have all of the rights, but none of the responsibilities, should not be given equal rights with the mother. Fathers rights should be for those who earn them by being good fathers, not merely by being fathers.

Annezilla *Ireland*

- No. I'm with Eddie on this one. "Human children require the traditional maternal and paternal figures during their maturation stage. Daddy can't be just some guy who can come and go at his whim...": Well said sir, an excellent contribution from one of the bb's more colourful characters. Simply dishing out "rights" without demanding a formal recognition of "duties" simply discriminates against the truly committed parent, whether as the other partner of a child's partnership, or indeed as part of any other fully committed parenting partnership throughout the rest of society. No to the Q.

Dave Dublin *Ireland*

- Because of the dark stain of the Catholic Church on our Constitution children are today housed with their mothers in the over crowded womens prison at Mountjoy - is it the wisdom of anyone in this state to suggest that a child is better housed with convicted criminals - including those convicted of child molestation rather than with the childs father or the childs

grandparents or good foster care.....this State needs to be dragged from under the jack boot of the Devils in Skirts.....

The Irish Observer *Ireland*

- Yes, but it's also time to get rid of the "unmarried mother" allowance and make fathers pay for their kids. I know this scares the bejesus out of politicians because of political correctness. Politicians also fear that the 90,000 or so who are on this allowance would not vote for them and this could mean losing their seats, so they pander. In these times the cost of this on the taxpayer should be eliminated. In any society all should have equal rights, but we still live in feudal times where the rich make and break the laws. That said fathers should have equal rights to their children.

FreeDUMB *United States*

- Put yourself in this situation - the father of your child does not want to marry you and you can't rely on him to help financially. You have the chance for a fantastic job and a great man who wants to marry you . Unfortunately they are in England you and the child's father are in Ireland. The courts will not allow you to take the child out of the country because of his "rights "to access. Should a man like that really be enabled to ruin and control someone's life ? Yes this is the 21st century and as such many people of different nationalities marry. when the marriage ends women currently find themselves trapped in a country by the law. Atleast at the moment unmarried mothers are free to take their children to wherever they will get the most support for their children. That a good enough reason Patrick ?

Anon *Ireland*

- I go along with rights, and responsibilities. Despite John Waters campaigning, the low status of 'unmarried' fathers has traditionally stemmed from their own fecklessness, and lack of support for mothers, or even acknowledgement of their own paternity. If the unmarried are given 'rights' full financial responsibility needs to be taken for their offspring. Times have changed since family law was formulated. We have unravelled the human genome, and now more fully understand the importance of the DNA of both parents in forming the zygote. And the Church and traditional marriage has been undermined beyond repair. Family law needs to take cognisance of these changes. But a quick ejaculation should not be enough in itself to confer rights. Women carry a child for nine months, and breastfeed for another year or two. The huge biological differences need to be taken into consideration when formulating law. In my opinion, the entire single parent benefit system needs to be overhauled. It is a recipe for societal instability.

spiderwoman *Vatican City State (Holy See)*

- We have human rights, I am presuming that most unmarried fathers are actually humans, so should they have their rights recognized under Irish law? I would imagine that the clear answer is yes. If you can think of a coherent argument that one person would be discriminated over someone else on the basis of their sexual organs then by all means, fire away. You would think that in the 21st century that the concept of equity under the law regardless of gender would be fully established by now, but apparently not.

Paul *Ireland*

Eddie - every person who plays their part in bringing a child in to this world and particularly in Ireland - makes a legal commitment - from day dot - both the father and mother of the child are legally obliged under the law - if a woman does not wish to seek support from the father of her child that is her prerogative however the legal mechanism is there to insure that a father supports his child at least financially - equally if a mother neglects or abuses her child the law is there (to varying degrees) to protect the child as recent cases coming before the courts have shown - so the legal commitment is always there in various forms - getting

imprisoned in the institution of marriage for the sake of the child is something I would expect to hear from Sean Brady or some other G.. S....

The Irish Observer *Ireland*

- Society can't afford the "throw away the man" anymore. Both parents regardless of their relationship together have a moral and financial duty to the children that they help bring into the world. Ireland can't afford to be financially "GREEKED OUT"

Prof Dr Lohage *Germany*

- Absolutely YES - this country is a disgrace when it comes to father's rights -let alone unmarried father's rights. The looneys are in control in this one - if you are a father you have virtually no way of enforcing the meagre rights you are supposed to have, let alone an unmarried father's situation where you just don't count. it would not be allowed in any other civilised country.

Richard *Ireland*

- Barrister once told me you miss a tenner out of a week's wages she can put you in jail in a heartbeat thought I'd say she'd have to have little heart but there's no cop or court in this land can make an unreasonable custodial parent bring a child to the door no matter if the child wants to see her/his far-living parent. There. Hope that sates the Equality

Kwangyo *Ireland*

- The institution of marriage worked fairly well, people shouldn't be so irresponsible to have kids 'for fun' they should take it seriously. But fathers should have equal rights, its unfair that mothers have rights to claim maintenance but then the father has no rights.

Séanna *Ireland*

- It's now 2:41 p.m. and the topic has reached p. 4 where Jake has been able to explain why "people are saying no" and NoMossGathered has mentioned what is "conceivable"! Both have inferred reasons from others without explaining their own beliefs. This is my second letter; the first hasn't been printed. Maybe it was obscene although I didn't mention anything about zips as others have done. This bb is a mystery to me.

Biddy Earley *Ireland*

- Even Swans mate for life, does mother nature know something we dont ?

pablo *Ireland*

- Yes. And the financial responsibilities that go with them should be enforced with draconian ruthlessness! Then scrap child benefit and reduce my taxes accordingly! Why should I have to make donations towards the upbringing of somebody else's irresponsibility? And in response to Kathleen on P1: where you say that men should "zip up their pants until they are prepared to marry" may I suggest that if your going to put forward this argument that you include that women should keep their legs shut also (it just seems like your dumping all the blame on one side on the fence). As the old saying goes, it takes two to tango!

TrevB *Ireland*

- If the father is financially supporting the child, and mother, then yes, otherwise no. It is not enough to donate sperm. The tax payer, should not be left, with the cost.

W *Ireland*

- Hey Bass, good to see ya around again. Kathleen Browne, a man's rights are not dependent on his ability to pick a spouse, or his lack of wisdom in that dept. As I understand it, in Ireland the mother can deny access on any old whim, even if the father is an upstanding support-paying member of the community. And the Court routinely, without regard for the man's rights and dignity, backs up the wimmen's churlishness.

k, eut *Not Answered*

yes. by the way Kathleen page 1, it takes two to tango. If you want to look at it from your point of view then we could also argue what was wrong with the mothers ability to keep her pants zipped up.

Colm Ireland

- I was falsely accused of child sexual abuse. That's what women use now to get custody for years. Married or not it makes no difference and when you are found out to be innocent, years have gone by. Men in Irish family law are in the dark ages no matter what.

John Ireland

- Only if they paying their part towards the child's upbringing.

Howard Malaysia

- I voted no because of a personal experience with the father of our child. He turned out to be a violent man who wouldn't take responsibility for anything in life. He does not support the child financially but has weekly access. I work full time and am not living off the state. Yet this man was granted guardianship in court as the judges reckon that it is going to be the law soon. I believe from the family courts that this is a common occurrence now. The system is way too open to violent men. Ireland is way behind the UK in these matters such as supervised access etc. Sadly it's not all stories about hard done by fathers and their rights out there.

mna na heireann Ireland

- Kathleen Browne Page 1. You are a real christian aren't you. Or are you in the taliban? Your comment wouldn't be out of place in the 1940s. Maybe the women should keep their knickers on too! Of course fathers should have equal rights?

Do you feel lucky, punk? Ireland

- As to being married prior to pregnancy the Prato Evangelium (written AD150) of James the just is a biography of the "Virgin Mary . In which it says she was visibly pregnant before when she was not yet 13 summers old ."So unless my math and biology is wrong ,she could have been pregnant between the ages of 11 and 12 (not yet 13 is 12) . So in an absolute-based moral system that does not change , What does that tell you of our Gods view about marriage first ?

paorach Canada

- The question is wrong. It should ask about the responsibilities of these guys. How many of them are paying for their children's upbringing ?

mick, dublin Ireland

- With complete mutatis mutandis with regard to XX as to XY bearing in mind woman's special place in the family home. Ours is not to reason why. But it can be a comfort in the rain. Open an umbrella.

Kynos Ireland

- Single fathers should not just have more rights but should also shoulder their responsibilities towards their children. I tend to agree with Kathleen Browne.p.1..but not only should the men zip their pants...the women should also be more careful about choosing who to mate with. As usual the children are the ones caught in the middle. Parental rights and responsibilities should be equal but if single parents of either sex seek to use the children as pawns then there should be legislation enshrining the rights of children.

chris Ireland

- Rightsresponsibilitiesresponsibilitiesrights however yin and yang. Sperm donor. Atm. Heavyliftingequipment. Inter-railya? Up to you what you make of it then but those are the minimum operating standards. Lifetime contract. Contracts are instruments of rights or should be there's not much else between society and what's beyond the cave but spears.

Genetics. Certain notable characteristics found in nomadic tribes amongst scouts now classified as ADHD and as treatable with Omega 3 hi-strength and reflection as anything else imo though I'm no doctor non-qualified opinion only that. Facts are sacred whenever we happen to crash into undeniable truths. Truths. Duh. Keyboard. Typy.o.

Kynos Ireland

This is a no brainer, I can't believe unmarried dads don't have the same parental rights as the mums. What kind of sexist, draconian, Victorian, mysogic society are we living in when women are allowed get away with these abuses of power? I'm off now to buy a packet of crisps and play touch rugby ... just got a sudden urge.

Bumpkin Bob, De Slack Jawed Bog Ireland

- if they are recognised then the payment for the upbringing of the children should be enshrined in law also

martin Ireland

- What kind of rights do they have anyway. ?

Anne Ryan United States

- It's the child's right to know its parent. That right should be supreme. Along with the best interests of the child. And the parent has the responsibilities which may be considered privileges to look after the small stuff and the big stuff we stand on the frontiers of a new human life which one day may well split the infinitive we owe it to ourselves.

to go boldly festina lente Ireland

- "...a stimulating platform for discussion"? The twitching of a mummy about to be embalmed would be more stimulating. What a sign of a comatose society!

Biddy Earley Ireland

- Well actually I think the rights of the child are more important than that of the father. Having been an unmarried Irish mother whose child had the misfortune of having the most feckless of fathers, I fail to see how her father having any rights could have benefited her, other than giving him power over her mother. I left Ireland in the end to get away from this twisted individual. I arrived in London with a young child, no money, no home etc. She is now 26 years old, an honours university graduate and a real asset to this world. She just needed one good parent who loved her above all else.

rose United Kingdom

- How times have changed - fear for your sons, not your daughters!

kevbhoy Ireland

- As a matter of definition what are an unmarried fathers rights. Do they cover conjugality or is it just to do with unfettered access and responsibility to the offspring. What is this sudden new found dedication to fatherhood in Irishmen. I would venture there are at least 25% of marriages where the fathers do not take responsibility for their legal offspring regardless of their offsprings rights.

Arthur McGuinness Ireland

- Pablo - "even swans mate for life" - your conveniently forgetting what the Blackwidow does with her partner.....its a web of mystery....

The Irish Observer Ireland

- MargaretR wrote on Page 1..."Yes. But the corresponding responsibilities that go with rights should be enforced by law so that every child has a father who pays child support and the state stops playing surrogate parent. Thosands of children in this country know only one provider, the tax-payer, who btw get precious little thanks" ...as a taxpaying working single mother since 1980 myself (not a popular choice to keep baby back then! - such a

hypocritical, self-righteous, prejudiced nation...) whose partner absconded upon hearing the news, I mostly agree with the above comment. It was a financial and social struggle and I worked six days every week to merely get by. After childcare costs I was actually worse off financially (but not mentally) than if I had claimed welfare. However, it's not just the monetary support that is important - a child needs to at least know both parents. They will inevitably grow up and decide the rights and wrongs of it for themselves. Also, on the other side of the debate are that cohort of selfish and greedy (previously-married, now separated & smug) women that exploit those decent and responsible fathers by their belief that having children is a mealticket / atm - forever! Developing a legal process for reaching just and fair solutions for the many case variations would be a huge task but of greater benefit to the children - and society - in the long term.

RóisínDub *Ireland*

the answer is YES because a father should have exactly the same rights ie duties and responsibilities as a mother ... but as for the people who answer NO or who answer that the only solution is a marriage ... I would like to know who they are and if they have ever looked at their today surrounding good god ! marriage has never been necessary to make happy and healthy children and many women AND men don't want to marry for personal reasons but have created together happy partnership and their children are blossoming ! Is that not enough ?

anne marie *Ireland*

- just putting a few facts on the table for you who vote no. fathers who dont want to pay for their kids upbringing are not the fathers you see every year highlighten their struggle.I'm talking about fathers who want to be part of their kids life and are been denied that right by the mother and the law. The mothers stand in court and swear on the bible total lies, so the father suffers and the kids suffer, but that doesn't bother some mothers as their only goal is to cause as much pain to the father as possible. In a lot of court cases theres actually no need for the mother to go through all that, as the fathers are willing to pay for there kids upbringing. I know a lot of fathers who dont want the state paying for their kids, their loving fathers just like meself who want the same right as a mother. Granted some fathers don't want to know, and its their loss, but you want find them in fathers for equal rights. What some poeple find it hard to understand including the courts, is there are mothers out there who are just as bad as the fathers who dont want to know about the kids. At least when my kids get older and say 'dad where were you' i'll have the court papers to show them, so i can look in my kids eyes and say 'this is where I was and this is how much I love you' I keep telling her that they will ask and eventually turn on her, but all I get is at least you wont have the enjoyment of seen them grow, and thats a mother, thats a joke, cause shes doing more harm.

kenneth *Ireland*

- Certainly. There are enough of them also trying to deny their responsibility, especially when it allows them, with their partner, to claim social welfare.

colm *Iran (Islamic Republic of)*

- Of course. The current system is the most sexually discriminatory nonsense that for some unknown reason is still tolerated by the population. how many times do people have to hear it said? Children deserve to have access to a father figure. Some mothers seem to enjoy a monopoly on immeadiate custody to their children as soon as it is requested. It is obvious that the knee-jerk reactions of courts in allowing this to happen are denying many men access to their childre. This has repercussions, not only for the family, but also for the state. Mothers may be the natural choice in many respects when it comes to nurturing and rearing

their young, but this does not simultaneously denote an inability on the father's behalf. There is parity of esteem in most parts of Irish life nowadays, yet it seems that father's rights are seen by many 'experts' as being something of a non-issue. It is imperative that the power that assesses this current imbalance and remedies it. Otherwise tragedies that have occurred in the country where fathers have committed regrettable and tragic acts will continue. It seems that these have happened because these men have feared being castaways in the modern tide without access to the children they have reared and continue to live, despite whatever difficulties they may be encountering with their partners. Let the people who see this as a non-issue talk to the children of these men and justify their myopia. This IS an issue, this deserves attention, now.

macandochas *Ireland*

- People are saying No? What is wrong with them? Yes in the past women have been considered the main parent but we live in a modern world and men should be entitled to equal rights with women.. only really ignorant people would think different.

Grace *Ireland*

- A fairer question might have been 'should Irish males be treated as equal citizens to Irish females, even after they become fathers', because that's when the inequality starts. An unmarried Irish mother is automatically a guardian of her child. This legal status can never be revoked by the courts (unless the child is adopted). An unmarried cohabitating or unmarried single Irish father has absolutely no automatic rights. His child can be adopted without his knowledge or consent at anytime! Even if he has been the sole financial provider & has spent his life raising & supporting his child. If he applies for guardianship through the courts & is successful, the courts can revoke this legal status at any time. An unmarried father who is the sole parental custodian of his child is still not entitled to collect child benefit in this country. A female must collect it! That's not just a lack of basic rights, it's blatant discrimination based on sex. Marriage does not make a man into a good father (or a woman into a good mother). A loving, caring father should not be treated as a second-class citizen just because he is unmarried. If the tables were turned and this legal situation happened to be active in say, Afghanistan (I think it is), I wonder how many of us would accept it as a fair & appropriate way of treating mothers? So, who is the face of the Irish Taliban then; the priests, the politicians & the judges & 18% of the Irish Times readers.

Billy Bob *Ireland*

- What was the bill put through? "EQUAL RIGHTS".... We are living in a "supposedly" Democratic Equal World..... Yeah Right !!!! Only when it suits those in higher places or those who control the political society... Or if it makes "said" people look good in the journals or news circles.(i.e) "Brownie points for themselves".... My Motto: We all come and go the same way !!!!!

Tony B *Ireland*

- Couldn't have them losing the buke knowing that the da had rights and responsibilities. Although that would mean the state would be able to relinquish responsibility for the Johnnie Blue and Dutch Gold brigade and let them fend for themselves

Another problem would be how would they know who the da was given that the car park was bound to be quite dark.

RTBO *Ireland*

- I'm pretty well against the whole "rights" thing. Most of them are not rights at all. The "right" to a house for example implies that if you don't have a house someone else will be stolen from to provide you with one. The "right" to an attorney? Ditto. And we should not compound the wrong of giving "rights" to feckless women by giving them also the feckless

men. None of them should have "rights". Both of them should just have duties. Towards the innocent child that they have brought into the world. But they could earn rights. Like the rest of us. Grandparents should have a rebuttable presumption of rights. Married people should have a presumption of rights. But that's about it.

owen *United States Minor Outlying Islands*

- We could go the Saudi route for a while to see how it works out. Make the father the prime guardian of the child with the kid's mamma only getting a look in if he agrees to it. According to Mark Steyn we're going to get there anyway.

owen *United States Minor Outlying Islands*

alas all men are second class citizens when it come to the family- whether your married or not she can take BOTH of your home and kids whenever she wants! she cheats he is kicked out and never sees his kids. in bar at the weekend and a woman sitting beside me said if her fella cheated she would cut his privates off and beat him with a frying pan to which i replied just to show the comparison that if my significant other cheated i would headbutt her and cut out her womb- 4 women were outraged at my exact comparison - a vicious assault and removing their sexual organs, when i pointed out their hipocracy they said the usual 'its totally different' - how on earth is it different or is it just that men are second class citizens. you couldnt even have a debate about charging a woman more for car insurance than a man cause immediately it would be sexist - whats the difference, the only difference is that it is both legally and socially acceptable to discriminate against a man- imagine a male only gym, male studies at university, male hospitals, male free into clubs where women have to paid its acomplete crock of sh*t to be fair- regarding the family the only certainty a man has is that he must fork out his money based on whatever decision she makes as at the end of the day its her call and the courts will guarntee here whatever she wants- its time all father stopped paying any maintenance until we recieved equal rights

kenny *Ireland*

- What rights ? I know what I am talking about here. Go to the family law courts and see how judges treat unmarried fathers ! Lost my job and did not find one before my redundancy ran out, so went court to get a variance order on the maintenance I pay, judge took no evidence at all, told me to get a job and case over, took less then five mins. Rights my arse, and the whole thing is in camera. They do what they like..bloody Megalomaniacs !

Paul Scally *Ireland*

- Yes but only if they can prove they deserve it by paying consistent financial support to the mother or else in cases where they are doing most of the actual day to day parenting. If neither of these applies for whatever reason they don't deserve any rights since they are not taking responsibility and visitation is as good as it gets for them in the circumstances. The strong, natural bond between mother and child should always be given priority and protected over father's rights in the law while still preserving the father's relationship with the child insofar as it is possible.

trudy *Czech Republic*

- As parents married or otherwise we have a duty to our children, only the children have rights.

rose *United Kingdom*

- Yes,but only if they work as hard as unmarried mums & not 'breeze' in and out when visiting their children when it only suits them !

Fred *Ireland*

