

IS THE 24 WEEK LIMIT IMPOSED BY THE ABORTION ACT 1967 FIT FOR PURPOSE?



WEEK 1

The secular and religious opposition to abortion at any stage of foetal development is grounded in the concept of sanctity of life. However, the spiritual and moral view has been aligned with the scientific view which is that from the “moment of conception when a single-cell embryo is created, a new human being or organism exist”.

WEEK 13

The Department of Health and Social Care’s report shows that 90% of abortions in 2017 were carried out within the first 13 weeks.

WEEK 20

The 20-week scan is also known as the ‘anomaly’ scan and, where risks of a potential condition (such as Down’s Syndrome) are identified, the woman is given the option to terminate the pregnancy. Some critics say that this has led to the unintentional practice of eugenics; for example, Down’s syndrome has all but been eliminated in Iceland.

WEEK 20

Where the gender of the foetus can be found out at week 20, 4 weeks prior to the legal cut-off for an abortion, it is argued that this creates an opportunity for prospective parents to make a decision in relation to abortion on the basis of gender. Commentators have stated that “...a gender-related abortion [could] ‘fit’ within the grounds for abortion permitted under the [Act]”.

WEEK 24

“a person shall not be guilty of an offence if... the pregnancy has not exceeded its twenty-fourth week...”

WEEK 38

The R v Catt (a termination at 38 weeks) case led to one judge, a member of the Lawyers Christian Fellowship, making the statement that the Abortion Act 1967 was “wrongly” and “liberally” construed to make abortion available “essentially on demand” prior to 24 weeks.