

LEO VARADKAR

b. January 18, 1979

PRIME MINISTER OF IRELAND

“Our democracy is vibrant and robust and can survive divisive debates and make difficult decisions.”

He is the youngest, the first of Indian extraction and the first openly gay prime minister of Ireland.

Leo Eric Varadkar is the first openly gay Taoiseach (prime minister) of the Republic of Ireland. He is also Ireland's youngest prime minister and the first of Indian extraction.

Varadkar was born in Dublin, the nation's capital, and raised Catholic. His father, a Hindu, was born in Mumbai, India, and immigrated to the United Kingdom to work as a doctor. His mother, a Catholic, worked as a nurse in Slough, England. The couple moved to Dublin six years before Varadkar was born.

Varadkar attended secondary school at The King's Hospital, a boarding school administered by the Church of England. He joined Young Fine Gael, the youth wing of Fine Gael, the Irish liberal-conservative and Christian democratic

political party. Varadkar maintained his party affiliation.

Varadkar studied medicine at Trinity College in Dublin and worked as a non-consultant hospital doctor before qualifying as a general practitioner. He earned his first significant political post in 2004 as a member of the Fingal County Council, located north of Dublin City, before serving as deputy mayor.

As a longtime statesman, Varadkar has held important and diverse roles within the Irish government. In 2007 he was elected to the Teachta Dála, the lower house of Ireland's parliament. He has since served consecutively as minister for transport, tourism, and sport; minister for health; and minister for social protection.

Varadkar came out in 2015 during the referendum that legalized same-sex marriage in Ireland. In June 2017, when the country formed its 31st government, he became Ireland's prime minister and minister for defence at the age of 38.

In becoming Ireland's first gay prime minister, Varadkar also became the world's fourth openly gay head of government. As Taoiseach, he also leads his political party, which promotes their support of LGBT rights and families by displaying ads in the Gay Community News (GCN).

By January 2018 Varadkar's approval rating had reached 60%—the highest of any Irish prime minister in 10 years. A few months later, TIME magazine named Varadkar to its list of the 100 Most Influential People of the year. In May the predominantly Catholic country voted to legalize abortion. Varadkar described it as “the culmination of a quiet revolution.”

Varadkar lives with his boyfriend, Dr. Matt Barrett, a cardiologist. In 2018 the couple marched hand-in-hand in the New York City St. Patrick's Day parade.



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