

ABORTION

Canadians Have Mixed Feelings on Abortion, But Shun a New Debate

Respondents are evenly split on whether the health care system should fund abortions on demand, or only in medical emergencies.

[VANCOUVER – Jan. 28, 2013] – Many Canadians are unaware of the circumstances in which a woman can have an abortion, a new Angus Reid Public Opinion poll has found.

In the online survey of a representative national sample of 1,009 Canadian adults, 45 per cent of respondents mistakenly assume that a woman can have an abortion only during the first three months of her pregnancy, with no other restrictions.

Regulation

More than a third of Canadians (35%) currently support the status-quo, with women being able to have an abortion at any time during their pregnancy, with no restrictions whatsoever. Only one-in-twenty respondents (5%) would actually forbid women from having an abortion.

However, a majority of Canadians express a preference to regulate abortion in different ways, such as allowing the procedure only during the first three months of a pregnancy or exclusively in cases such as danger to the mother, if a woman has been the victim of rape, or if the fetus has serious defects. In fact, while 43 per cent of men would like to keep the status-quo, this notion is supported by only 27 per cent of women.

KEY FINDINGS

- **35% believe women should be able to have an abortion at any time during their pregnancy, with no restrictions whatsoever**
- **43% believe the health care system should fund abortions whenever they are requested; 42% think the health care system should only fund abortions in the event of medical emergencies**
- **59% think there is no point in re-opening a debate about abortion in Canada right now**

Full topline results are at the end of this release.

From January 11 to January 12, 2013, Angus Reid Public Opinion conducted an online survey among 1,009 randomly selected Canadian adults who are Angus Reid Forum panellists. The margin of error—which measures sampling variability—is +/- 3.1%, 19 times out of 20. The results have been statistically weighted according to the most current education, age, gender and region Census data to ensure a sample representative of the entire adult population of Canada. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding.

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Personal Feeling and Legality

When asked about their personal feelings on abortion, more than two-in-five Canadians (44%) believe the procedure should be permitted in all cases, while five per cent think it should never be allowed. An additional 45 per cent of respondents would place greater restrictions, or consent to abortion in cases such as rape, incest and to save the woman's life.

Almost half of Canadians (47%) think abortion should be legal under any circumstances, including 57 per cent of Quebecers and 49 per cent of British Columbians. Two-in-five Canadians (41%) would allow a pregnancy to be terminated only under certain circumstances, while seven per cent would deem the procedure illegal in all circumstances.

The Health Care System and a New Debate

Canadians are divided when assessing the role of the health care system in providing abortions. While 43 per cent of respondents think the health care system should fund abortions whenever they are requested, 42 per cent believe the procedure should only be funded in the event of medical emergencies. An additional seven per cent of Canadians think the health care system should not fund abortions at all.

Still, three-in-five Canadians (59%) believe there is no point in re-opening a debate about abortion in Canada right now, while three-in-ten (30%) think a debate about abortion is long overdue in Canada, and the discussion should be re-opened.

Analysis

A quarter century has passed since the R. v. Morgentaler Supreme Court of Canada decision that effectively deemed the abortion provision in the Criminal Code as unconstitutional. Across the country, some regional differences persist. Albertans are definitely more likely to back regulations on abortion, while Quebecers and British Columbians are less supportive on the personal feelings and legality questions.

Canadians over the age of 55 are decidedly more skeptical about particular issues related to abortion. Half of them would like to see the health care system fund abortions only in the event of medical emergencies, and a plurality would allow abortion only under certain circumstances.

Despite the fact that Canadians continue to have mixed personal feelings on abortion, and are divided on the way they perceive the legality and funding of the procedure, the appetite for true legislative action is lacking. The proportion of Canadians who are unwilling to re-open the debate on abortion outnumbers that of those who believe a debate on the issue of overdue by a 2-to-1 margin.

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About Angus Reid Public Opinion

Angus Reid Public Opinion is a public affairs practice headed by Dr. Angus Reid: an industry visionary who has spent more than four decades asking questions to figure out what people feel, how they think and who they will vote for. A team of talented and experienced practitioners with a unique and profound understanding of global issues conduct high quality research throughout the world on a daily basis for corporations, governments, academic researchers, and non-profit organizations.

About Vision Critical®

Vision Critical is a global research and technology firm that creates software and services solutions for over 600 clients, including one third of the world's top 100 brands. The company has offices across North America, Europe and Australia as well as a Global Partner Program that provides other research companies and consultants with access to top-of-the-line technology. Its Sparq™ product is the most widely adopted community panel platform on the planet.

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**For more information, please contact
our spokesperson listed in the footnote.**

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Abortion

Speaking about abortion in Canada, which of the following do you think is true?

	Canada	Region					
		BC	AB	MB/SK	ON	PQ	ATL
A woman can have an abortion at any time during her pregnancy, with no restrictions whatsoever	23%	27%	20%	21%	21%	26%	19%
A woman can have an abortion at any time during her pregnancy, but only if her life is in danger, if she has been the victim of rape, or if the fetus has serious defects	7%	5%	4%	9%	8%	6%	6%
A woman can have an abortion only during the first three months of her pregnancy, with no other restrictions	45%	41%	42%	44%	46%	46%	43%
A woman can only have an abortion during the first three months of her pregnancy, and only if her life is in danger, if she has been the victim of rape, or if the fetus has serious defects	13%	13%	17%	10%	14%	12%	13%
Not sure	12%	14%	17%	16%	10%	9%	19%

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Abortion

Speaking about abortion in Canada, which of the following do you think is true?

	Canada	Gender		Age		
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+
A woman can have an abortion at any time during her pregnancy, with no restrictions whatsoever	23%	27%	19%	31%	22%	17%
A woman can have an abortion at any time during her pregnancy, but only if her life is in danger, if she has been the victim of rape, or if the fetus has serious defects	7%	9%	4%	6%	5%	9%
A woman can have an abortion only during the first three months of her pregnancy, with no other restrictions	45%	39%	50%	41%	49%	43%
A woman can only have an abortion during the first three months of her pregnancy, and only if her life is in danger, if she has been the victim of rape, or if the fetus has serious defects	13%	12%	15%	11%	14%	15%
Not sure	12%	13%	11%	10%	10%	16%

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Abortion

Abortion is currently not regulated in Canada, meaning that a woman can legally have an abortion at any time during her pregnancy, with no restrictions. Thinking about this, which one of these options would you prefer to regulate abortion in Canada?

	Canada	Region					
		BC	AB	MB/SK	ON	PQ	ATL
The status-quo: Women being able to have an abortion at any time during their pregnancy, with no restrictions whatsoever	35%	42%	30%	35%	35%	36%	28%
Women being able to have an abortion at any time during their pregnancy, but only if their life is in danger, if they have been the victim of rape, or if the fetus has serious defects	9%	11%	5%	14%	10%	8%	9%
Women being able to have an abortion only during the first three months of their pregnancy, with no other restrictions	18%	15%	14%	14%	19%	23%	17%
Women being able to have an abortion during the first three months of their pregnancy, and only if their life is in danger, if they have been the victim of rape, or if the fetus has serious defects	11%	9%	20%	7%	11%	7%	16%
Women being able to have an abortion during the first three months with no restrictions and then during the last six months but only if their life is in danger, if they have been the victim of rape, or if the fetus has serious defects	16%	14%	14%	20%	13%	19%	17%
Women being forbidden from having an abortion under any circumstances	5%	3%	10%	4%	7%	2%	1%
Not sure	6%	7%	7%	6%	6%	5%	12%

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Abortion is currently not regulated in Canada, meaning that a woman can legally have an abortion at any time during her pregnancy, with no restrictions. Thinking about this, which one of these options would you prefer to regulate abortion in Canada?

	Canada	Gender		Age		
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+
The status-quo: Women being able to have an abortion at any time during their pregnancy, with no restrictions whatsoever	35%	43%	27%	38%	37%	30%
Women being able to have an abortion at any time during their pregnancy, but only if their life is in danger, if they have been the victim of rape, or if the fetus has serious defects	9%	10%	9%	7%	9%	12%
Women being able to have an abortion only during the first three months of their pregnancy, with no other restrictions	18%	12%	24%	19%	20%	16%
Women being able to have an abortion during the first three months of their pregnancy, and only if their life is in danger, if they have been the victim of rape, or if the fetus has serious defects	11%	10%	11%	10%	9%	13%
Women being able to have an abortion during the first three months with no restrictions and then during the last six months but only if their life is in danger, if they have been the victim of rape, or if the fetus has serious defects	16%	14%	17%	16%	16%	15%
Women being forbidden from having an abortion under any circumstances	5%	4%	5%	5%	4%	5%
Not sure	6%	7%	6%	5%	6%	9%

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Abortion

What is your personal feeling about abortion?

	Canada	Region					
		BC	AB	MB/SK	ON	PQ	ATL
Abortion should be permitted in all cases	44%	50%	34%	37%	42%	54%	34%
Abortion should be permitted, but subject to greater restrictions than now	23%	21%	21%	24%	23%	23%	29%
Abortion should be permitted only in cases such as rape, incest and to save the woman's life	18%	16%	21%	23%	19%	16%	17%
Abortion should only be permitted to save the woman's life	4%	5%	6%	5%	4%	2%	6%
Abortion should never be permitted	5%	4%	9%	4%	7%	3%	1%
Not sure	6%	4%	9%	6%	5%	4%	13%

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Abortion

What is your personal feeling about abortion?

	Canada	Gender		Age		
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+
Abortion should be permitted in all cases	44%	46%	42%	45%	47%	39%
Abortion should be permitted, but subject to greater restrictions than now	23%	22%	24%	24%	24%	20%
Abortion should be permitted only in cases such as rape, incest and to save the woman's life	18%	19%	18%	16%	18%	22%
Abortion should only be permitted to save the woman's life	4%	3%	5%	4%	3%	6%
Abortion should never be permitted	5%	4%	6%	7%	4%	4%
Not sure	6%	6%	5%	4%	4%	9%

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Abortion

Do you think abortion should be legal under any circumstances, legal only under certain circumstances, or illegal in all circumstances?

	Canada	Region					
		BC	AB	MB/SK	ON	PQ	ATL
Abortion should be legal under any circumstances	47%	49%	38%	48%	43%	57%	36%
Abortion should be legal only under certain circumstances	41%	39%	44%	45%	44%	35%	48%
Abortion should be illegal in all circumstances	7%	8%	13%	5%	8%	5%	4%
Not sure	5%	4%	4%	2%	5%	3%	13%

Abortion

Do you think abortion should be legal under any circumstances, legal only under certain circumstances, or illegal in all circumstances?

	Canada	Gender		Age		
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+
Abortion should be legal under any circumstances	47%	46%	48%	49%	48%	42%
Abortion should be legal only under certain circumstances	41%	43%	40%	39%	40%	45%
Abortion should be illegal in all circumstances	7%	7%	7%	7%	8%	6%
Not sure	5%	4%	5%	5%	4%	6%

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Abortion

In Canada, abortions are provided on request to Canadian citizens and permanent residents, and are funded by the health care system. Thinking about this, which of these statements comes closer to your own point of view?

	Canada	Region					
		BC	AB	MB/SK	ON	PQ	ATL
The health care system should fund abortions whenever they are requested	43%	49%	42%	40%	38%	51%	37%
The health care system should only fund abortions in the event of medical emergencies	42%	40%	44%	47%	42%	39%	47%
The health care system should not fund abortions at all	7%	7%	8%	11%	9%	4%	4%
Not sure	8%	4%	5%	2%	11%	6%	12%

Abortion

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	Canada	Gender		Age		
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+
The health care system should fund abortions whenever they are requested	43%	42%	44%	43%	47%	38%
The health care system should only fund abortions in the event of medical emergencies	42%	43%	41%	38%	39%	49%
The health care system should not fund abortions at all	7%	7%	7%	12%	6%	4%
Not sure	8%	8%	7%	6%	8%	9%

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Abortion

Finally, which of the following statements comes closest to your own point of view?

	Canada	Region					
		BC	AB	MB/SK	ON	PQ	ATL
There is no point in re-opening a debate about abortion in Canada right now	59%	67%	58%	56%	59%	56%	54%
A debate about abortion is long overdue in Canada, and the discussion should be re-opened	30%	23%	31%	29%	30%	35%	30%
Not sure	11%	10%	11%	15%	11%	9%	16%

Abortion

Finally, which of the following statements comes closest to your own point of view?

	Canada	Gender		Age		
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+
There is no point in re-opening a debate about abortion in Canada right now	59%	63%	54%	60%	62%	53%
A debate about abortion is long overdue in Canada, and the discussion should be re-opened	30%	29%	31%	26%	29%	35%
Not sure	11%	8%	14%	13%	9%	12%

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