

**ABORTION**

# Many Canadians Would Like to See Restrictions on Abortion Procedures

*Respondents are almost evenly divided on whether the health care system should fund abortions whenever they are requested.*

[VANCOUVER – Jan. 15, 2010] – A significant number of Canadians would support changes to the country's status-quo on the subject of abortion, a new Angus Reid Public Opinion poll has found.

The online survey of a representative national sample of 1,002 Canadian adults sought to review the opinion of respondents on a wide range of topics related to abortion.

## The Status-Quo

Only one-in-five Canadians (20%) are aware of the current status-quo of abortion in Canada: a woman can have an abortion at any time during her pregnancy, with no restrictions whatsoever.

A large proportion of respondents (43%) mistakenly believe that, under current guidelines, a woman can have an abortion only during the first three months of her pregnancy, with no other restrictions.

Two other incorrect responses also garnered mentions. Ten per cent of Canadians think 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, and 14 per cent believe a woman

## KEY FINDINGS

- **40% say abortion should be permitted in all cases; 31% support it with some restrictions**
- **41% say health care system should pay for abortions only in emergency cases**
- **53% say under-aged girls should need parental consent for abortions**
- **79% would agree with making it mandatory for health workers to offer pregnant women information about alternatives to abortion**

Full topline results are at the end of this release.

*From January 7 to January 8, 2010, Angus Reid Public Opinion conducted an online survey among 1,002 randomly selected Canadian adults who are Angus Reid Forum panelists. The margin of error—which measures sampling variability—is +/- 3.1%. The results have been statistically weighted according to the most current education, age, gender and region Census data to ensure samples representative of the entire adult population of Canada. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding.*

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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.

### **Regulating Abortion**

When informed about existing regulations on abortion, three-in-ten Canadians (30%) endorse the status-quo: Women being able to have an abortion at any time during their pregnancy, with no restrictions whatsoever.

One-in-four respondents (24%) would prefer to see 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.

Other desired outcomes for a potential regulation are women being able to have an abortion only during the first three months of their pregnancy, with no other restrictions (15%), 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 (13%), and 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 (6%).

Only five per cent of Canadians believe women should be forbidden from having an abortion under any circumstances.

### **Personal Feeling**

When asked about their personal feeling toward abortion, 40 per cent of respondents say the procedure should be permitted in all cases, whereas 31 per cent say it should be allowed, but with some restrictions.

Sixteen per cent of Canadians say abortion should only be permitted under extreme circumstances, such as a threat to the mother's life, a case of rape or incest. Only five per cent of respondents would ban abortion altogether.

### **Legality**

Almost half of Canadians (48%) say abortion should be legal under any circumstances, but 43 per cent say it should be legal only in certain cases. Four per cent believe the procedure should be illegal in all circumstances.

### **Funding**

Respondents are split on whether Canada's health care system should maintain its policy of covering the cost of abortions in all cases for Canadian citizens and permanent residents. While 43 per cent would

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maintain this policy, 41 per cent say the system should only pay for abortions in the event of a medical emergency.

Women (50%) are much more likely than men (36%) to support the continuation of the current policy.

### **Women Under the Age of 18**

In the view of most Canadians (53%), women under the age of 18 should require the consent of their parents or legal guardians in order to be eligible for an abortion procedure. A third of respondents (34%) disagree with this notion.

### **Information for Pregnant Women**

Three-in-ten Canadians (31%) say women in this country lack enough access to information about alternatives to abortion, including adoption and counselling for pregnant women. However, 44 per cent of respondents disagree, saying that there is sufficient information available.

A large majority of Canadians (79%) would back an initiative in their own province that would make it mandatory for health care workers to offer information to pregnant women about alternatives to abortion. Half of Canadian women are strong supporters of an initiative of this kind.

### **Re-opening the Abortion Debate**

Despite the high support registered in the poll for advancing changes to the status quo of Canada's legal stance on abortion, 59 per cent of respondents say there is no point in re-igniting a debate on the subject. Almost three-in-ten Canadians (28%) disagree.

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Abortion									
Speaking about abortion in Canada, which of the following do you think is true?									
	Region							Gender	
	Total	BC	AB	MB/SK	ON	PQ	ATL	Male	Female
A woman can have an abortion at any time during her pregnancy, with no restrictions whatsoever	20%	28%	19%	13%	23%	18%	7%	23%	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	10%	10%	10%	8%	10%	11%	11%	12%	9%
A woman can have an abortion only during the first three months of her pregnancy, with no other restrictions	43%	42%	33%	46%	42%	45%	55%	36%	50%
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 or rape, or if the fetus has serious defects	14%	9%	23%	19%	11%	16%	15%	15%	14%
Not sure	12%	11%	14%	14%	13%	10%	12%	14%	10%

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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?

	Region							Gender	
	Total	BC	AB	MB/SK	ON	PQ	ATL	Male	Female
<b>The status-quo: Women being able to have an abortion at any time during their pregnancy, with no restrictions whatsoever</b>	30%	37%	24%	18%	34%	31%	11%	33%	26%
<b>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</b>	6%	3%	3%	5%	6%	10%	3%	7%	5%
<b>Women being able to have an abortion only during the first three months of their pregnancy, with no other restrictions</b>	15%	14%	7%	21%	15%	15%	16%	9%	20%
<b>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</b>	13%	5%	22%	17%	11%	12%	16%	12%	13%
<b>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</b>	24%	24%	27%	22%	21%	22%	41%	22%	26%
<b>Women being forbidden from having an abortion under any circumstances</b>	5%	4%	7%	6%	5%	2%	6%	6%	4%
<b>Not sure</b>	9%	14%	11%	10%	7%	8%	6%	11%	7%

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<b>Abortion</b>									
What is your personal feeling about abortion?									
	<b>Region</b>							<b>Gender</b>	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>BC</b>	<b>AB</b>	<b>MB/SK</b>	<b>ON</b>	<b>PQ</b>	<b>ATL</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
<b>Abortion should be permitted in all cases</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>41%</b>
<b>Abortion should be permitted, but subject to greater restrictions than now</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>30%</b>
<b>Abortion should be permitted only in cases such as rape, incest and to save the woman's life</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>16%</b>
<b>Abortion should only be permitted to save the woman's life</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>5%</b>
<b>Not sure</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>8%</b>

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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?									
	Region							Gender	
	Total	BC	AB	MB/SK	ON	PQ	ATL	Male	Female
Legal under any circumstances	48%	58%	34%	32%	51%	49%	43%	44%	51%
Legal only under certain circumstances	43%	32%	56%	57%	39%	44%	50%	45%	41%
Illegal in all circumstances	4%	4%	6%	5%	5%	3%	4%	5%	4%
Not sure	5%	5%	4%	6%	5%	4%	3%	6%	4%

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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. Which of these statements comes closer to your own point of view?

	Region							Gender	
	Total	BC	AB	MB/SK	ON	PQ	ATL	Male	Female
<b>The health care system should fund abortions whenever they are requested</b>	43%	53%	35%	30%	47%	38%	43%	36%	50%
<b>The health care system should only fund abortions in the event of medical emergencies</b>	41%	29%	54%	53%	38%	44%	42%	46%	37%
<b>The health care system should not fund abortions at all</b>	7%	7%	6%	10%	8%	5%	5%	9%	5%
<b>Not sure</b>	9%	10%	4%	7%	7%	12%	10%	9%	8%

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Abortion									
In your view, should women under the age of 18 require the consent of their parents or legal guardians in order to have an abortion?									
	Region							Gender	
	Total	BC	AB	MB/SK	ON	PQ	ATL	Male	Female
Yes	53%	40%	65%	47%	58%	47%	56%	55%	50%
No	34%	42%	26%	29%	32%	40%	26%	33%	34%
Not sure	14%	18%	9%	25%	11%	13%	18%	11%	16%

Abortion									
From what you have seen, read or heard, would you say that pregnant women in Canada have access to enough information about alternatives to abortion, such as adoption, counseling for pregnant women, etc.?									
	Region							Gender	
	Total	BC	AB	MB/SK	ON	PQ	ATL	Male	Female
They DO have enough access to information about alternatives	44%	50%	45%	38%	49%	36%	37%	42%	45%
They DO NOT have enough access to information about alternatives	31%	24%	30%	29%	28%	39%	31%	29%	33%
Not sure	26%	26%	25%	33%	23%	25%	33%	29%	22%

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**Abortion**

Thinking about your own province, would you support or oppose your provincial health authority demanding that all health care workers offer information about alternatives to abortion, such as adoption, counseling for pregnant women, etc., to all women as soon as they notify them of their pregnancy?

	Region							Gender	
	Total	BC	AB	MB/SK	ON	PQ	ATL	Male	Female
<b>Support</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>84%</b>	<b>87%</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>81%</b>
<b>Oppose</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>12%</b>
<b>Not sure</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>7%</b>

**Abortion**

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

	Region							Gender	
	Total	BC	AB	MB/SK	ON	PQ	ATL	Male	Female
<b>There is no point in re-opening a debate about abortion in Canada right now</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>57%</b>
<b>A debate about abortion is long overdue in Canada, and the discussion should be re-opened</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>28%</b>
<b>Not sure</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>15%</b>

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*Angus Reid Public Opinion is a practice of Vision Critical—a global research and technology company specializing in custom online panels, private communities, and innovative online methods. Vision Critical is a leader in the use of the Internet and rich media technology to collect high-quality, in-depth insights for a wide array of clients. Dr. Angus Reid and the Angus Reid Strategies team are pioneers in online research methodologies, and have been conducting online surveys since 1995*

*Vision Critical is now one of the largest market research enterprises in the world. In addition to its five offices in Canada—located in Vancouver, Calgary, Regina, Toronto, and Montreal—the firm also has offices in San Francisco, Chicago, New York, London, Paris and Sydney. Its team of specialists provides solutions across every type and sector of research, and currently serves over 200 international clients.*

*Angus Reid Public Opinion polls are conducted using the Angus Reid Forum ([www.angusreidforum.com](http://www.angusreidforum.com)), Springboard America ([www.springboardamerica.com](http://www.springboardamerica.com)) and Springboard UK ([www.springboarduk.com](http://www.springboarduk.com)) online panels, which are carefully recruited to ensure representation across all demographic and psychographic segments of these populations. Panel members pass through rigorous screening and a double opt-in process ensuring highly motivated and responsive members. These premier online survey platforms present respondents with highly visual, interactive, and engaging surveys, ensuring that panel members provide thoughtful and reliable responses. Each survey is actively sampled and weighted to model that characteristics of the universe required and employs the latest in quality control techniques to ensure data validity.*

*Angus Reid, the only public opinion firm to exclusively use online methods to follow the views of the electorate during the 2008 federal campaign, offered the most accurate prediction of the results of Canada's 40th election.*  
<http://bit.ly/4zxf1S>

*Since 2006, Angus Reid has covered eight provincial elections in Canada—more than any other pollster in the country—and the results have accurately predicted the outcome of each of these democratic processes.*

*More information on the way Angus Reid conducts public opinion research can be found at*  
<http://bit.ly/3z0u1l>

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

**Copies of this poll are available on our website:  
<http://www.visioncritical.com/category/global-opinions-and-trends>**

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