



## Canadians' Attitudes Toward Abortion Issues

Commissioned Research  
Conducted for:  
**LifeCanada**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The survey was conducted on behalf of LifeCanada by telephone among a representative sample of 2,024 adult Canadians between September 19 and October 16, 2005. The survey was done in conjunction with Environics' FOCUS CANADA survey.

The survey looks at Canadians' attitudes toward abortion issues, such as the point at which human life should be protected by law, support for "informed consent" laws and for requiring parental consent for minors under the age of 18 to have an abortion, and funding for abortions.

The margin of error for a sample of 2,024 is 2.2 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. The reader is cautioned that margins of error for smaller subsamples are larger.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- When Canadians are asked at what point in human development should the law protect human life, a total of six in ten say it should be protected some time before birth including those who say: from conception on (30%), after three months of pregnancy (19%) or after six months of pregnancy (11%). One-third of Canadians (33%) think human life should receive legal protection only from the point of birth. Seven percent offer no opinion on this question.
- Interestingly, about a third each of Canadians support the view on one end of the spectrum that human life should be legally protected from conception on and on the other side of the spectrum that it should be protected only from birth on. Another third think it should be protected prior to birth but some months after conception.
- Longterm tracking data indicate that since this question was first posed in 2002, majorities of Canadians have held the belief that human life should be legally protected some time prior to birth (at conception or after 3 or 6 months of pregnancy), with this view hitting a peak of 68 percent in 2004. Although, the total proportion holding this view is down eight points from 2004, it is still four points higher than in 2002.
- Majorities across the country believe that human life should receive legal protection some time prior to birth, but this view is lower in British Columbia (53%).
- The view that human life should be protected from conception on is highest in Saskatchewan (37%) and lowest in British Columbia (22%). Support for this view also continues to be higher among women (34%) than among men (24%).
- The view that human life should receive legal protection only from the point of birth is somewhat higher among men (36%) than among women (31%), but has strengthened among both sexes since 2004.
- Canadians were told that in some states in the U.S. there are “informed consent” laws concerning abortion. These laws require that before a woman has an abortion procedure, her physician must provide her with certain information, such as details on the stages of foetal development including an ultrasound scan, the possible complications and side effects following an abortion and alternatives to abortion.
- When Canadians are asked if they support or oppose similar laws in Canada for women considering abortion, a large majority (70%) continue to be in favour of such laws, while just under three in ten (27%) are opposed. Since 2004, support for “informed consent” laws in Canada has weakened slightly by three points.

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- Majorities of Canadians across the country support “informed consent” laws in Canada for women considering abortion, but support is highest in Saskatchewan (81%) and Atlantic Canada (79%, up 7 points), and is up somewhat since 2004 in the latter region. Support is lowest in British Columbia (61%), particularly in Vancouver (52%) where it has fallen 12 points.
  - Interestingly, women are as likely as men to be supportive of “informed consent” laws (70% and 69%, respectively).
  - Canadians were told that at present in Canada it is legal for minors under the age of 18 to have an abortion without the consent of their parents. When asked if they support or oppose a law that requires minors under the age of 18 to have their parents’ consent in order to have an abortion, a majority (56%) continue to be in favour of such a law, while a considerable minority of four in ten (41%) continue to be opposed. Since 2004, these proportions have remained essentially unchanged.
  - Majorities of Canadians in most areas of the country (except Quebec and British Columbia) support a “parental consent” law, but support is highest in Saskatchewan (71%) and Atlantic Canada (68%, up 9 points), and has increased in the latter region since 2004. In British Columbia and Quebec (50% each) opinion is more divided.
  - Majorities of Canadians aged 30 and older are supportive of a “parental consent” law, while those aged 18 to 29 are evenly divided on the issue (49% supportive, 49% opposed).
  - When Canadians are presented with three opinions on the funding of abortions, half (50%, down 4 points from 2004) think abortions should be financed using tax dollars, but only in medical emergencies, such as a threat to the mother’s life or in cases of rape or incest. Three in ten (29%, up 3) think abortions should always be paid using the tax-funded health care system, while two in ten (18%) take the view that paying for abortions should be a private responsibility, either out-of-pocket or using Blue Cross or other private health care plans.
  - Overall, the opinion that abortion should be funded using tax dollars only in cases of medical emergencies is the prevalent view across nearly all of the country and demographic cohorts. Only in Quebec are residents divided on this question. Interestingly, there are no significant differences between men and women in response to this question.

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- The view that abortions should always be paid using the tax-funded health care system is highest in British Columbia (35%), particularly Vancouver (41%, up 15 points from 2004) where it has grown noticeably since 2004, and lowest in Atlantic Canada and the Prairies (20% each).
  - The view that abortions should be a private responsibility is higher in Quebec (27%) than in the rest of Canada (16%).

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## LEGAL PROTECTION OF HUMAN LIFE

**A total of six in ten Canadians think human life should be legally protected some time prior to the point of birth, including three in ten who think it should be protected from conception on. However, these proportions have declined over the past year.**

Most Canadians continue to think there should be legal protection of human life at some time before the point of birth – ranging from those who think it should be from conception on to those who think it should be protected after six months of pregnancy. However, this view has weakened since 2004.

When Canadians are asked at what point in human development should the law protect human life, a total of six in ten say from conception on (30%), after three months of pregnancy (19%) or after six months of pregnancy (11%). One-third of Canadians (33%) think human life should receive legal protection only from the point of birth. Seven percent offer no opinion on this question.

Interestingly, about a third each of Canadians support the view on one end of the spectrum that human life should be legally protected from conception on and on the other side of the spectrum that it should be protected only from birth on. Another third think it should be protected prior to birth but some months after conception.

Longterm tracking data indicate that since this question was first posed in 2002, majorities of Canadians have held the belief that human life should be legally protected some time prior to birth (at conception or after 3 or 6 months of pregnancy), with this view hitting a peak of 68 percent in 2004. Although, the total proportion holding this view is down eight points from 2004, it is still four points higher than in 2002.

The current survey finds that there has been a decline in the proportion who think human life should be protected from conception on (down 3 points from 2004 and 7 from 2002), and this view is at its lowest level since this question was first asked in 2002. However, the decline found in the current survey is mainly driven by significant declines in Alberta and Atlantic Canada, as views have shown no significant change in other regions.

There has also been a decline in the proportion who think human life should be protected after three months of pregnancy (down 5 points from 2004, but 6 points higher than in 2002), but this view is still higher than that found in 2002. Moreover, the decline in this view is primarily driven by notable declines in Quebec and Ontario, as views have shown no significant change in the rest of the country.

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There has been an increase in the proportion who believe human life should be given legal protection only from the point of birth (up 5 points from 2004) and this view is at its highest level ever. However, the increase in the current survey is mostly driven by notable increases in Alberta and Ontario, as views have shown no significant change in other regions.

Longterm tracking data also indicate that Canadians are more likely than in 2002 to offer an opinion on this question (14% in 2002 did not offer an opinion versus 7% in 2005).

Majorities across the country believe that human life should receive legal protection some time prior to birth, but this view is lower in British Columbia (53%). Since 2004, this view has declined across the country, most noticeably in Ontario and Alberta (down 10 points each from 2004).

Looking at opinion for legal protection of human life at different points in human development, the survey finds that the view that human life should be protected from conception on is highest in Saskatchewan (37%) and lowest in British Columbia (22%). Since 2004, significant declines have occurred in Alberta (down 13 points from 2004) and Atlantic Canada (down 10). Support for this view also continues to be higher among women (34%) than among men (24%). It is also higher among those who live in rural communities and those with less education and income. Looking at political affiliation, support is higher among Conservative Party supporters and undecided voters, but since 2004 is down noticeably among the latter group and among Liberal supporters.

The view that human life should be protected after three months of pregnancy is higher in Alberta (26%). Since 2004, there have been significant declines in this view in Quebec (down 8 points from 2004) and Ontario (down 6). This view is also somewhat higher among Canadians aged 30 to 44 and Liberal and Bloc Québécois supporters.

Support for the view that human life should be protected after six months of pregnancy is somewhat higher among Canadians with more education and income.

Since 2004, the view that human life should receive legal protection only from the point of birth has increased significantly in Alberta (up 8 points) and Ontario (up 7). This view is somewhat higher among men (36%) than among women (31%), but has strengthened among both sexes since 2004. It is also somewhat higher among those residing in larger communities and those aged 60 and older. Looking at political affiliation, support is higher among Liberal and Bloc Québécois supporters, but has grown noticeably among the former, and to a lesser extent among Conservative Party supporters and undecided voters.



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**Human life should be legally protected...**

2002-2005

	2002	2003	2004	2005
	%	%	%	%
From conception on	37	31	33	30
After three months of pregnancy	13	21	24	19
After six months of pregnancy	6	11	11	11
From the point of birth	30	28	28	33
DK/NA	14	9	4	7

*Q.61C In your opinion, at what point in human development should the law protect human life? Should it be...?*

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## INFORMED CONSENT LAWS

### **Seven in ten Canadians support “informed consent” laws in Canada similar to those in the United States for women considering abortion.**

In this question, Canadians were told that in some states in the U.S. there are “informed consent” laws concerning abortion. These laws require that before a woman has an abortion procedure, her physician must provide her with certain information, such as details on the stages of foetal development including an ultrasound scan, the possible complications and side effects following an abortion and alternatives to abortion.

When Canadians are asked if they support or oppose similar laws in Canada for women considering abortion, a large majority (70%) continue to be in favour of such laws, while just under three in ten (27%) are opposed.

Tracking data indicate that though support for “informed consent” laws has declined three points from 2004, it is back at the level found in 2003 when this question was first posed. Also, the decline found in the current survey is mainly driven by a noticeable decline in support in British Columbia, particularly in Vancouver, as support has risen slightly in Atlantic Canada and has shown no significant change in the rest of the country.

Majorities of Canadians across the country support “informed consent” laws in Canada for women considering abortion, but support is highest in Saskatchewan (81%) and Atlantic Canada (79%, up 7 points), and is up somewhat since 2004 in the latter region. Support is lowest in British Columbia (61%), particularly in Vancouver (52%) where it has fallen 12 points.

Majorities in all demographic cohorts are also supportive of “informed consent” laws, but support is higher among those living in rural communities and Canadians aged 18 to 44, and somewhat lower among both the least and most educated Canadians. Interestingly, women are as likely as men to be supportive of such laws (70% and 69%, respectively).

Looking at political affiliation, support for “informed consent” laws is higher among Conservative Party supporters (77%).

Support for “informed consent” laws vary considerably based on opinions of the point at which human life should receive legal protection. Support is far higher among those who think human life should be legally protected from conception on (82%) and after three months of pregnancy (78%) than among those who think human life should receive legal protection only from the point of birth (59%). However, even among this latter group, a majority are supportive of “informed consent” laws.

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### Should Canada have “informed consent” laws?

October 2003-2005

	2003*	2004	2005
	%	%	%
Yes, support	69	73	70
No, oppose	24	25	27
DK/NA	7	3	3

\*In 2003, the preamble was the same, but the question wording read “Would you support similar laws in Canada for women considering abortion?”

### Should Canada have “informed consent” laws

By opinions on when law should protect human life

October 2005

	From conception on	After three months of pregnancy	After six months of pregnancy	From the point of birth
	%	%	%	%
Yes, support	82	78	65	59
No, oppose	16	19	33	39
DK/NA	2	2	1	2

*Q.62C Some states in the U.S. have “informed consent” laws concerning abortion. These laws require that, before a woman has an abortion procedure, her physician must provide her with certain information such as details on the stages of foetal development including an ultrasound scan, the possible complications and side effects following an abortion, and alternatives to abortion. Do you support or oppose similar laws in Canada for women considering abortion?*

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## PARENTAL CONSENT LAW

**Almost six in ten Canadians are supportive of a law that requires those under the age of 18 to get parental consent in order to get an abortion.**

In this question, Canadians were told that at present in Canada it is legal for minors under the age of 18 to have an abortion without the consent of their parents.

When Canadians are asked if they support or oppose a law that requires minors under the age of 18 to have their parents' consent in order to have an abortion, a majority (56%) continue to be in favour of such a law, while a considerable minority of four in ten (41%) continue to be opposed. Since 2004, these proportions have remained essentially unchanged.

Majorities of Canadians in most areas of the country (except Quebec and British Columbia) support a "parental consent" law, but support is highest in Saskatchewan (71%) and Atlantic Canada (68%, up 9 points), and has increased in the latter region since 2004. In British Columbia and Quebec (50% each) opinion is more divided.

Support for a "parental consent" law is somewhat higher among those living in smaller communities, those with less income, those with less than a high school education and those aged 30 and older. A slight majority of those with a university education are opposed to such a law, while those aged 18 to 29 are evenly divided on this issue. Women are as likely as men to be supportive of such a law (57% and 54%, respectively).

Looking at political affiliation, majorities of Conservative and Liberal Party supporters, as well as undecided voters express support for a "parental consent" law, while Bloc Québécois supporters are divided, and a slight majority of New Democrat supporters are opposed.

Support for "parental consent" laws vary considerably based on opinions of the point at which human life should receive legal protection. Support is far higher among those who think human life should be legally protected from conception on (74%) than among those who think human life should receive legal protection after six months of pregnancy (38%) and only from the point of birth (47%). In fact, majorities of these two latter groups are opposed to "parental consent" laws.

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**Should Canada have a parental consent law?**

October 2004-2005

	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005a</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes, support	55	56
No, oppose	42	41
DK/NA	3	3

**Should Canada have a parental consent law?**

By political affiliation      October 2005

	<b>Lib</b>	<b>Con</b>	<b>NDP</b>	<b>BQ</b>	<b>Undecided</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes, support	55	69	42	48	59
No, oppose	42	29	54	49	34
DK/NA	3	2	4	3	7

**Should Canada have a parental consent law?**

By opinions on when law should protect human life      October 2005

	<b>From conception on</b>	<b>After three months of pregnancy</b>	<b>After six months of pregnancy</b>	<b>From the point of birth</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes, support	74	58	38	47
No, oppose	24	40	60	51
DK/NA	2	2	2	2

*Q.63C At present in Canada it is legal for minors under the age of 18 to have an abortion without the consent of their parents. Do you support or oppose a law that requires minors under the age of 18 to have their parents' consent in order to have an abortion?*

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## FUNDING FOR ABORTIONS

**One-half of Canadians think abortions should be financed using tax dollars, but only in emergency situations, such as a threat to the mother's life or in cases of rape or incest.**

Canadians continue to be supportive of funding abortions via tax dollars, but only in emergency situations. There continues to be far less support for public funding of all abortions or for the view that all abortions should be paid for by individuals or private insurance plans.

When Canadians are presented with three opinions on the funding of abortions, half (50%) think abortions should be financed using tax dollars, but only in medical emergencies, such as a threat to the mother's life or in cases of rape or incest. Three in ten (29%) think abortions should always be paid using the tax-funded health care system, while two in ten (18%) take the view that paying for abortions should be a private responsibility, either out-of-pocket or using Blue Cross or other private health care plans.

Tracking data find that since 2004, there has been a slight decline of four points in the proportion who think abortions should be financed using tax dollars only in cases of medical emergencies, and this proportion is now at a similar level to that found in 2002 when this question was first posed. However, the decline in the current survey is mainly driven by significant declines in British Columbia, particularly in Vancouver, and Ontario, as this view has not shown any significant change in other regions of the country.

The number who think abortions should always be paid using the tax-funded health care system is up three points from 2004 and a total of six points from 2002 and is at its highest level ever. However, the increase in the current survey is mostly driven by significant increases in Ontario and Vancouver, as this view has shown no significant change in other parts of the country.

Overall, the opinion that abortion should be funded using tax dollars only in cases of medical emergencies is the prevalent view across nearly all of the country and demographic cohorts. Only in Quebec are residents divided on this question. Interestingly, there are no significant differences between men and women in response to this question.

The view that abortions should always be paid using the tax-funded health care system is highest in British Columbia (35%), particularly Vancouver (41%, up 15 points from 2004) where it has grown noticeably since 2004, and lowest in Atlantic Canada and the Prairies (20% each). It is also higher among those living in larger communities, those with more income, those with more education, particularly university graduates (43%), Canadians aged 45 and older, and NDP and Bloc Québécois supporters.

The opinion that abortions should be funded using tax dollars but only in cases of medical emergencies is highest in Alberta (63%), Saskatchewan and Atlantic Canada (62% each), and lowest in Quebec (37%). Since 2004, this view has fallen significantly in Vancouver (down 21 points), and to a lesser extent in Ontario (down 8). This view is also higher among those who live in rural communities (59%), Canadians aged 30 to 44 (58%) and Conservative Party supporters (58%).

The view that abortions should be a private responsibility is higher in Quebec (27%) than in the rest of Canada (16%). It is also higher among those with less income and education and among Bloc Québécois supporters.

Opinions on funding of abortion vary considerably with views on when human life should receive legal protection. Support for funding abortions using tax dollars but only in cases of medical emergencies is higher among those who think human life should be legally protected from conception on and after three months of pregnancy. The view that abortions should always be paid using the tax-funded health care system is higher among those who think human life should be protected after six months of pregnancy. The view that abortions should be a private responsibility is greater among those who think human life should be legally protected from conception on.

### Preferred view on funding of abortion

October 2002-2005

	2002*	2003*	2004	2005
	%	%	%	%
Abortions should always be paid using the tax-funded health care system	23	25	26	29
Abortions should be financed using tax dollars but only in medical emergencies, such as a threat to the mother's life or in cases of rape or incest	51	53	54	50
Paying for abortions should be a private responsibility, either out-of-pocket or using Blue Cross or other private health care plans	15	15	18	18
DK/NA	11	7	2	3

*Q.64C When it comes to the funding of abortions, which of the following three opinions is closest to your own?*

\*In 2002 and 2003, the question was “When it comes to the use of public funds for abortions...which of the following options most closely conforms to your opinion?”, with slightly modified response categories.

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**Preferred view on funding of abortion?**

By opinions on when law should protect human life

October 2005

	<b>From conception on</b>	<b>After three months of pregnancy</b>	<b>After six months of pregnancy</b>	<b>From the point of birth</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Abortions should always be paid using the tax-funded health care system	12	30	50	36
Abortions should be financed using tax dollars but only in medical emergencies, such as a threat to the mother's life or in cases of rape or incest	59	53	43	44
Paying for abortions should be a private responsibility, either out-of-pocket or using Blue Cross or other private health care plans	26	15	7	18

*Q.64C When it comes to the funding of abortions, which of the following three opinions is closest to your own?*

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## METHODOLOGY REPORT

The results are based on omnibus questions placed on an Environics' FOCUS CANADA survey, conducted with a representative sample of adult Canadians between September 19 and October 16, 2005.

### *QUESTION DESIGN*

The questions were designed by Environics senior researchers in conjunction with representatives from LifeCanada. Questions were pre-tested as part of the overall survey, prior to being finalized.

### *SAMPLE SELECTION*

The sampling method was designed to complete approximately 2,020 interviews within households randomly selected across Canada. The sample is drawn in such a way that it represents the Canadian population with the exception of those Canadians living in the Yukon, Northwest Territories or Nunavut, or in institutions (armed forces barracks, hospitals, prisons).

The sampling model relies on the stratification of the population by ten regions (Atlantic Canada, Metropolitan Montreal, the rest of Quebec, the Greater Toronto Area, the rest of Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, the Greater Vancouver Regional District and the rest of British Columbia) and by four community sizes (1,000,000 inhabitants or more, 100,000 to 1,000,000 inhabitants, 5,000 to 100,000 inhabitants, and under 5,000 inhabitants). The final sample was distributed as follows.

#### Sample distribution

	2001 Census*	Weighted N=2,024	Unweighted N=2,024	Margin of Error
CANADA	100	2,024	2,024	+/- 2.2%
Atlantic Canada	8	157	251	+/- 6.2%
Quebec	24	489	501	+/- 4.4%
Ontario	38	772	600	+/- 4.0%
Manitoba	4	76	126	+/- 8.7%
Saskatchewan	3	66	125	+/- 8.8%
Alberta	10	201	201	+/- 7.0%
British Columbia	13	264	220	+/- 6.6%

\* Canadians aged 18 years or over in 2001, excluding those in Nunavut, the Northwest Territories and the Yukon

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Environics uses a sampling method in which sample is generated using the RDD (random digit dialling) technique. Samples are generated using a database of active phone ranges. These ranges are made up of a series of contiguous blocks of 100 contiguous phone numbers and are revised three to four times per year after a thorough analysis of the most recent edition of an electronic phonebook. Each number generated is put through an appropriate series of validation procedures before it is retained as part of a sample. Each number generated is looked up in a recent electronic phonebook database to retrieve geographic location, business indicator and “do not call” status. The postal code for listed numbers is verified for accuracy and compared against a list of valid codes for the sample stratum. Non-listed numbers are assigned a “most probable” postal code based on the data available for all listed numbers in the phone exchange. This sample selection technique ensures both unlisted numbers and numbers listed after the directory publication are included in the sample

### ***TELEPHONE INTERVIEWING***

Interviewing for this survey was conducted at Environics’ central facilities in Toronto and Montreal. Field supervisors were present at all times to ensure accurate interviewing and recording of responses. Ten percent of each interviewer’s work was unobtrusively monitored for quality control in accordance with the standards set out by the Canadian Association of Marketing Research Organizations – CAMRO (now the Marketing Research and Intelligence Association – MRIA). A minimum of five calls were made to a household before classifying it as a “no answer.”

From within each household contacted, respondents 18 years of age and older were screened for random selection using the “most recent birthday” method. The use of this technique produces results that are as valid and effective as enumerating all persons within a household and selecting one randomly.

### ***COMPLETION RESULTS***

A total of 2,024 interviews were completed between September 19 and October 16, 2005. A sample of this size will produce a sampling error of plus or minus 2.2 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. The margin of error is greater for results pertaining to regional or socio-demographic subgroups of the total sample.

The effective response rate is six percent: the number of completed interviews (2,024) divided by the total dialled sample (47,473) minus the non-valid/non-residential numbers, the numbers not in service, and ineligible households as well as those that presented a language barrier (11,953). The actual completion rate is 10 percent: the number of completed interviews (2,024) divided by the number of qualified respondents contacted directly (19,622). The following table presents the detailed completion results.

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<b>Completion results</b>		
	N	%
A. Total sample dialled	47,473	100
Household not eligible	0	0
Non-residential/not in service	10,679	23
Language barrier	1,274	3
B. Subtotal	11,953	25
C. New base (A – B)	35,520	100
D. No answer/line busy/not available	15,898	45
Refusals	17,325	49
Mid-interview refusals	273	1
E. Subtotal	33,496	94
F. Net completions (C – E)	2,024	6
Completion rate (F / [C – D])		10

Note: totals may not sum to 100 due to rounding.