



## Canadians' Attitudes Toward Abortion Issues

Commissioned Research  
Conducted for:  
**LifeCanada**

October 2006

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The survey was conducted on behalf of LifeCanada by telephone among a representative sample of 2,021 adult Canadians between September 18 and October 12, 2006. 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 2,021 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 about two-thirds say from conception on (31%), after three months of pregnancy (23%) or after six months of pregnancy (10%). Three in ten Canadians (30%) think human life should receive legal protection only from the point of birth. Six 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 end 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 four points lower than the peak, it is still eight points higher than the lowest level recorded in 2002 (when this question was first asked).
- Majorities across the country believe that human life should receive legal protection some time prior to birth, but this view is highest in Saskatchewan (70%), and lowest in British Columbia (63%, up 10 points from 2005) and Ontario (63%, up 5). However, since 2005, this view is up noticeably in British Columbia and to a lesser extent in Ontario.
- The view that human life should be protected from conception on is highest in Manitoba (36%) and lowest in British Columbia (26%). Support for this view also continues to be higher among women (34%) than among men (28%, up 4 points), but has increased among the latter.
- The view that human life should receive legal protection only from the point of birth is similar among women (29%) and men (31%), and has declined among the latter since 2005.
- 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.

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- When Canadians are asked if they support or oppose similar laws in Canada for women considering abortion, a large majority (71%) continue to be in favour of such laws, while fewer than three in ten (26%) are opposed. Since 2005, support for “informed consent” laws has levelled off after declining slightly last year.
  - Majorities of Canadians across the country support “informed consent” laws in Canada for women considering abortion, but support is highest in Alberta (81%) and lowest in British Columbia (67%), particularly in Vancouver (59%).
  - Interestingly, women continue to be as likely as men to be supportive of “informed consent” laws (71% and 72%, 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 (55%) continue to be in favour of such a law, while a considerable minority of four in ten (42%) continue to be opposed. These proportions have remained relatively stable since 2004, when this question was first asked.
  - Majorities of Canadians in nearly all areas of the country (except British Columbia) support a “parental consent” law, but support is highest in Atlantic Canada (63%) and the Prairies (60%). Since 2005, support is up significantly in Manitoba (up 10 points) and down in Saskatchewan (down 10). In British Columbia, opinion remains evenly divided (49% are supportive, 48% are opposed).
  - Majorities of Canadians aged 30 and older are supportive of a “parental consent” law, while a slight majority of those aged 18 to 29 are opposed to such laws (48% supportive, 52% opposed).
  - When Canadians are presented with three opinions on the funding of abortions, half (48%) 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 (31%) 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. These proportions remain relatively stable since 2005.
  - Overall, the opinion that abortion should be funded using tax dollars only in cases of medical emergencies is the prevalent view across most of the country. In Quebec and British Columbia, opinion is divided. 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 (40%), particularly Vancouver (44%), and lowest in Atlantic Canada and the Prairies (21% each).
  - The view that abortions should be a private responsibility is higher in Quebec (25%) than in the rest of Canada (15%).

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## LEGAL PROTECTION OF HUMAN LIFE

**A total of almost two-thirds of 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. Moreover, this proportion has increased 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. Moreover, this view has strengthened since 2005.

When Canadians are asked at what point in human development should the law protect human life, a total of about two-thirds say from conception on (31%), after three months of pregnancy (23%) or after six months of pregnancy (10%). Three in ten Canadians (30%) think human life should receive legal protection only from the point of birth. Six 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 end 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 four points lower than the peak, it is still eight points higher than the lowest level recorded in 2002 (when this question was first asked).

The current survey finds that there has been an increase in the proportion who think human life should be protected after three months of pregnancy (up 4 points from 2005 and 10 from 2002). However, this increase is mainly driven by a dramatic increase in Saskatchewan, and a smaller, but significant increase in Quebec, as views have shown no significant change in other regions.

There has been a decline in the proportion who believe human life should be given legal protection only from the point of birth (down 3 points from the peak level found in 2005). This view is down marginally in most regions of the country, except Atlantic Canada (where it has remained essentially stable).

Majorities across the country believe that human life should receive legal protection some time prior to birth, but this view is highest in Saskatchewan (70%), and lowest in British Columbia (63%, up

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10 points from 2005) and Ontario (63%, up 5). However, since 2005, this view is up noticeably in British Columbia and to a lesser extent in Ontario.

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 Manitoba (36%) and lowest in British Columbia (26%). Since 2005, this view is up in Ontario (up 5 points). Support for this view also continues to be higher among women (34%) than among men (28%, up 4 points), but has increased among the latter. It is also higher among those who live in smaller communities, those 30 years and older, and the least affluent and least educated Canadians. Looking at political affiliation, support continues to be higher among Conservative Party supporters and undecided voters.

The view that human life should be protected after three months of pregnancy is highest in Saskatchewan (36%), and lowest in Manitoba (19%) and Atlantic Canada (17%). Since 2005, there has been an increase in Quebec (up 6 points). This view is also somewhat higher among those living in larger communities and Canadians aged 18 to 44.

Support for the view that human life should be protected after six months of pregnancy is somewhat higher in British Columbia (16%). It is also higher among those living in large metropolitan areas with more than one million inhabitants, Canadians aged 18 to 44, and NDP and Bloc Québécois supporters.

The view that human life should receive legal protection only from the point of birth is somewhat higher among those residing in large metropolitan areas with more than one million inhabitants. This view is similar among women and men. Since 2005, this view has declined among men, the least affluent Canadians, those aged 30 to 44, and Bloc Québécois supporters and undecided voters.

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

2002-2006

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
	%	%	%	%	%
From conception on	37	31	33	30	31
After three months of pregnancy	13	21	24	19	23
After six months of pregnancy	6	11	11	11	10
From the point of birth	30	28	28	33	30
DK/NA	14	9	4	7	6

*Q.96C 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 (71%) continue to be in favour of such laws, while fewer than three in ten (26%) are opposed.

Tracking data indicate that support for “informed consent” laws has levelled off after declining slightly in 2005.

Majorities of Canadians across the country support “informed consent” laws in Canada for women considering abortion, but support is highest in Alberta (81%) and lowest in British Columbia (67%), particularly in Vancouver (59%).

Majorities in all demographic cohorts are also supportive of “informed consent” laws, but support is higher among Canadians aged 18 to 44, and somewhat lower among those living in large metropolitan areas with more than one million inhabitants, and the least affluent and most educated. Interestingly, women continue to be as likely as men to be supportive of such laws (71% and 72%, respectively).

Looking at political affiliation, support for “informed consent” laws continues to be higher among Conservative Party supporters (79%).

Support for “informed consent” laws continue to 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 (84%) than among those who think human life should receive legal protection only from the point of birth (58%). However, even among this latter group, a majority remain supportive of “informed consent” laws.

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

October 2003-2006

	2003*	2004	2005	2006
	%	%	%	%
Yes, support	69	73	70	71
No, oppose	24	25	27	26
DK/NA	7	3	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 2006

	From conception on	After three months of pregnancy	After six months of pregnancy	From the point of birth
	%	%	%	%
Yes, support	84	75	70	58
No, oppose	14	23	28	40
DK/NA	2	2	1	2

*Q.97C 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

**More than five 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 (55%) continue to be in favour of such a law, while a considerable minority of four in ten (42%) continue to be opposed. Tracking data indicate that these proportions have remained relatively stable since 2004, when this question was first asked.

Majorities of Canadians in nearly all areas of the country (except British Columbia) support a "parental consent" law, but support is highest in Atlantic Canada (63%) and the Prairies (60%). Since 2005, support is up significantly in Manitoba (up 10 points) and down in Saskatchewan (down 10). In British Columbia, opinion remains evenly divided (49% are supportive, 48% are opposed).

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 living in large metropolitan areas with more than one million inhabitants, those with a university education and Canadians aged 18 to 29 are opposed to such a law. Since 2005, opposition is up among those living in large metropolitan areas.

Women are as likely as men to be supportive of such a law (54% and 57%, 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 continue to 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 (73%) than among those who think human life should receive legal protection after six months of pregnancy (40%) and only from the point of birth (44%). 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 2004-2006

	2004	2005	2006
	%	%	%
Yes, support	55	56	55
No, oppose	42	41	42
DK/NA	3	3	3

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

By political affiliation October 2006

	Lib	Con	NDP	BQ	Undecided
	%	%	%	%	%
Yes, support	53	66	42	49	62
No, oppose	44	33	55	50	31
DK/NA	3	1	3	1	7

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

By opinions on when law should protect human life October 2006

	From conception on	After three months of pregnancy	After six months of pregnancy	From the point of birth
	%	%	%	%
Yes, support	73	55	40	44
No, oppose	24	44	59	54
DK/NA	3	1	1	2

*Q.98C 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 (48%) 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 (31%) 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 the proportion who think abortions should be financed using tax dollars only in cases of medical emergencies is down two points from 2005 and a total of six points from 2004, and at the lowest level recorded since this question was first asked in 2002. Since 2005, this view has remained relatively stable in nearly all regions of the country, but it has declined in Ontario.

Since 2005, the number who think abortions should always be paid using the tax-funded health care system has remained relatively stable across the country. Nationally, it is up two points from 2005 and a total of eight points from 2002 – and is at its highest level ever.

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. In Quebec and British Columbia, as well as among those living in large metropolitan areas with more than one million inhabitants, those with a university education, and NDP supporters, opinion is divided. It is also the minority view among Bloc Québécois supporters (a plurality of whom think abortions should always be paid using the tax-funded health care system). 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 (40%), particularly Vancouver (44%), and lowest in Atlantic Canada and the Prairies (21% each). It is also higher among those living in larger communities, those with a university education (39%), Canadians aged 45 and older, and NDP and Bloc Québécois supporters.

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The opinion that abortions should be funded using tax dollars but only in cases of medical emergencies is highest in Saskatchewan (68%) and lowest in Quebec (37%), and since 2005 is down in Ontario. It is also higher among those with less than a high school education and Canadians aged 30 to 44, and Conservative and Liberal supporters, as well as undecided voters. Since 2005, this view is up noticeably among those with less than a high school education, and down among Conservative supporters.

The view that abortions should be a private responsibility is higher in Quebec (25%) than in the rest of Canada (15%). It is also higher among those living in smaller communities, Canadians aged 18 to 29, and Conservative and Bloc Québécois supporters. Since 2005, this view is down dramatically among those with less than a high school education (down 17 points).

Opinions on funding of abortion continue to 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 and only from birth. 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 2002-2006

	2002*	2003*	2004	2005	2006
	%	%	%	%	%
Abortions should always be paid using the tax-funded health care system	23	25	26	29	31
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	48
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	18
DK/NA	11	7	2	3	3

*Q.99C 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 2006

	<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	15	32	45	43
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	52	40	38
Paying for abortions should be a private responsibility, either out-of-pocket or using Blue Cross or other private health care plans	23	15	13	18

*Q.99C 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 18 and October 12, 2006.

### QUESTION DESIGN

The questions were designed by Environics senior researchers in conjunction with representatives from LifeCanada. The 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=2,021	Unweighted N=2,021	Margin of Error
CANADA	100	2,021	2,021	+/- 2.2%
Atlantic Canada	8	156	249	+/- 6.2%
Quebec	24	488	502	+/- 4.4%
Ontario	38	771	600	+/- 4.0%
Manitoba	4	75	125	+/- 8.8%
Saskatchewan	3	66	125	+/- 8.8%
Alberta	10	201	200	+/- 6.9%
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 processed 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 that 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 Marketing Research and Intelligence Association – MRIA (formerly the Canadian Association of Marketing Research Organizations – CAMRO). 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 2,021 interviews were completed between September 18 and October 12, 2006. 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 five percent: the number of completed interviews (2,021) divided by the total dialled sample (51,542) minus the non-valid/non-residential numbers, the numbers not in service, and ineligible households as well as those that presented a language barrier (13,381). The actual completion rate is 10 percent: the number of completed interviews (2,021) divided by the number of qualified respondents contacted directly (20,554).

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### Completion results

	N	%
A. Total sample used	51,542	100
Household not eligible	0	0
Non-residential/not in service	11,920	23
Language barrier	1,461	3
B. Subtotal	13,381	26
C. New base (A – B)	38,161	100
D. No answer/line busy/not available	17,607	46
Refusals	17,940	47
Quota Full	275	1
Mid-interview refusals	318	1
E. Subtotal	36,140	95
F. Net completions (C – E)	2,021	5
Completion rate (F / [C – D])		10

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