

# Reproductive Rights

Responses to  
Common  
Misunderstandings

**PRO-CHOICE**



It should be a basic human right to decide, freely and responsibly, when to have children as well as to determine their number and spacing.

# When Discussing the Abortion Issue...

## **You may hear:**

1. "Are pro-choice people pro-abortion?"
2. "There should be no need for abortions when contraceptives are easily available."
3. "Abortion is the killing of an unborn child."
4. "Women use abortion as a means of birth control. Some have more than one."

## **The response is:**

No, they think that women faced with unwanted pregnancy should be permitted to choose whether or not to continue the pregnancy. Far from being pro-abortion, they believe that contraception must be promoted and encouraged so as to reduce the need for abortion.

This statement ignores the fact that all contraceptives, even responsibly used, *effective* ones, occasionally fail. Furthermore, contraceptives are NOT easily available, especially for the poor, the young or for people in isolated or rural areas. Good sex education about effective methods is lacking in many schools, communities and homes, and ignorance, embarrassment or restrictive religious teachings lead many people to rely on *ineffective* methods. This situation is compounded by the fact that contraceptives are not advertised on radio or TV in Canada.

This statement is made by people who believe that personhood begins at the moment of conception. Many Canadians do not hold this view. Most consider abortion a humane and responsible decision by people who, because of their life circumstances, cannot welcome and properly care for a child.

Abortion is used as a method of last resort, an emergency solution needed when there is a failure of contraception or when there is human error. Failures and errors can arise from ignorance, inexperience or actual method failure. Even with great care the misfortune of contraceptive failure can occur more than once.

5. *"If abortion becomes acceptable, it will lead to euthanasia."*

Anti-choice groups purposely make false comparisons between abortion and other issues they think will raise strong reactions in people. Euthanasia and abortion are separate issues and this kind of emotional manipulation does nothing to further the discussion of important social concerns.

6. *"Abortion harms women physiologically and psychologically."*

Research evidence says not. An early abortion is many times safer than childbirth. However, the Canadian therapeutic abortion committee system delays the abortion for several weeks (or even denies it). Risks increase as pregnancy advances; thus, this delay increases the risk to a woman's physical health. In addition, uncertainty creates emotional stress. Whether she is affected psychologically depends on how she is treated during the procedure and whether she has support from family and friends.

7. *"Unwanted babies can be placed for adoption."*

Yes, unwanted babies can be placed for adoption but in a democratic society this should be a matter of choice. Women should never be forced to bear children for other people to adopt.

8. *"Women have abortions for convenience or for frivolous reasons."*

On the contrary, women choose abortion because they take motherhood seriously. They realize how important the spacing and the number of children can be to the well-being of their family. They also realize that abortion gives a woman the opportunity to have a child later on, when she can better welcome and provide for it.

9. *"She had her fun. Let her pay for it."*

This shockingly vindictive taunt, equating motherhood with punishment for sexual activity, could only be made by someone who does not value children or motherhood. As for paying, in the dollar sense of the word, often when young teens give birth instead of having an abortion, the financial costs to society are felt for many years to come.

10. *"Most unwanted children become wanted."*

Many unplanned children become loved and cared for when born into reasonably stable and fortunate circumstances. However, when a woman's circumstances lead her to seek an abortion, she has already rejected the pregnancy, and true unwantedness may well result if

11. *"Women don't bother with contraceptives if abortion is easily available."*

abortion is refused. Psychiatrists have long recognized the damage caused by parental rejection and many of them believe that elective abortion can benefit society by reducing child abuse, physical and mental health problems, delinquency and crime.

12. *"Abortion destroys family life."*

Many studies indicate the opposite. In Holland, for example, abortion is easily available and yet the abortion rate is very low due to extensive use of modern contraceptives (especially the pill), bolstered by strong government support for family planning services. Contraceptives have been provided free of charge there since 1971 as part of government-sponsored health care.

13. *"Abortion is morally wrong."*

On the contrary, family life is strengthened when people can plan the number and the spacing of their children. The spacing and timing of children is of utmost importance in building healthy, happy families—families whose children are most likely to become independent, productive adults.

14. *"A woman pregnant as a result of rape should not be allowed an abortion."*

On the contrary, many people believe that it is morally wrong to bring an unwanted child into the world.

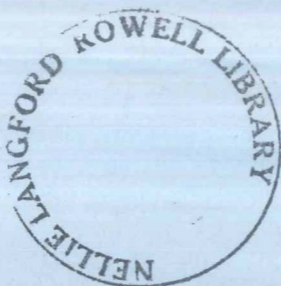
15. *"I am not in favour of abortion on demand."*

One must question the "morality" of people so cruel and insensitive as to think that rape victims should be forced to endure the double trauma of rape and unwanted pregnancy.

16. *"Is 'pro-choice' the opposite extreme from 'anti-abortion'?"*

Abortion on demand is really another way of saying the decision should rest with the woman. Pro-choice people favour childbearing by choice. They do insist that appropriate medical services should be made available equally to women who wish to continue a pregnancy or to have an abortion.

No. Anti-abortion groups want to prohibit women from obtaining abortions. The pro-choice position is that a woman should not be pressured either to bear a child against her will or to have an abortion against her will.



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