



**Abortion Rights
Coalition of Canada**

**Coalition pour le droit à
l'avortement au Canada**

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Why Do Women Have Abortions?

Often when we talk about abortion or when we hear about it in the media, it is either in a political or moral context. Thus, when we think about women making the decision to have an abortion, it is easy to get caught in the idea that their decision is based on a moral stand or that it is a reflection of their values and belief system. While this may be a factor in the decision making process, for most women trying to decide what to do when faced with an unplanned pregnancy, their decision is based on the reality of everyday practicalities (such as finances). The circumstances of their lives are often a crucial part of the decision to choose abortion. It is also imperative to remember that women take their decision to abort very seriously.

The main considerations that women report as the reasons why they chose abortion include (but are not exclusive to) the following:

Relationship issues

The reaction of her partner, after being told about the pregnancy, is often a key component in a woman's decision to end a pregnancy. (For a teen, the reaction (or anticipated reaction) of her family members, can lead to the decision to abort).

A partner may not support the woman in continuing the pregnancy but will support her to have an abortion. If she continues the pregnancy, she risks losing the relationship and faces the prospect of being a single parent. Also, many women consider that though they may be in a stable relationship, they do not see it as a long term one.

The woman may be in an abusive relationship. Studies have shown that in such relationships, violence often escalates when women are pregnant. For other women this may be the first time that they are physically abused. Some women have planned pregnancies but once the cycle of violence begins, they decide that their safety is at stake and decide not to continue the pregnancy.

For some women the relationship has ended prior to the discovery of pregnancy, or the partner leaves once told of the pregnancy.

Pregnancy can also result from sexual assault, whether by a stranger, an acquaintance, or by a partner, prompting the woman to have an abortion.

Financial and practical reasons

Many women choose abortion for financial considerations. Many women state that they “have no real choice,” as they do not have the financial resources to support themselves and a child. Single mothers continue to be the largest group of people living below the poverty line, as financial resources are not available to women in Canada who choose to parent on their own. This larger context, including day care issues, minimum wage, and the lack of community support, is a common theme affecting women seeking abortion.

Not ready

Even women who have support and resources still choose abortion, as they feel “not ready” to provide for and meet the physical and emotional needs of a child. In counseling, women talk about circumstances such as financial security, marriage, school, work, and messages that they receive from society that impact their decision. Also, if women already have children, the consideration of being ready to add to their family is a factor. At the other end of the spectrum, women in their 30s and 40s may have grown children and don’t wish to go back to raising a baby. Finally, some women decide they don’t want to be a mother at all.

Birth control failure

Most women are using some method of birth control when they discover that they are pregnant. No birth control method, even sterilization, is 100% effective in preventing pregnancy. Most women “do everything right” but happen to be in the 1 out of every 100 women who becomes pregnant despite using some form of birth control.

Genetic reasons

There are many categories of women who fall under this reason: Women who use alcohol and drugs prior to finding out that they are pregnant; women receiving cancer treatments who discover a pregnancy; pregnancies with genetic birth defects (no brain development; lack of limbs; Down Syndrome); women suffering from severe nausea and vomiting; crisis pregnancies that put the mother at risk; women with mental health diagnoses who deem themselves unable to parent; and women who went through years of fertility testing/trials and resigned themselves to the fact that they were infertile and then years later are faced with an unplanned pregnancy.

Although this is by no means a complete list of the reasons women choose abortion, it does outline the major reasons that women report why they choose abortion.