



Abortion Rights
Coalition of Canada

Coalition pour le droit à
l'avortement au Canada

*Your
Voice for Choice*

Canada's only national political pro-choice advocacy group

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Position Paper #52

Statistics and Demographics on Abortion

In many movies, TV shows, and even advertisements, there is a common image: the teenage girl nervously fretting in the bathroom at her parents' house as she contemplates the positive indication on the pregnancy test. Abortion is commonly shown as a young woman's issue, but is this portrait accurate?

Age Demographics

There were 100,104 abortions performed in clinics and hospitals in Canada in 2015, according to the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI).¹

Of those, the *smallest* number was the under-17 demographic. (See Table 1). The largest was the 18-24 group, followed closely by ages 25-29. This isn't surprising when you look at the rise in contraceptive use by teenagers: In a national survey, "more than 30% of women were using both condoms and oral contraceptives, with the rate of combined OC and condom use highest in the group aged 15 to 19 years (47%)"² As more young people use contraceptives, the less likely they will be needing to choose to have an abortion.

Likewise, it makes sense that the largest group to have abortions is women and transgender people in their 20s – the age when they are attending school, starting their careers, and dating but not necessarily ready to "settle down" or raise a family. These 18-29 year-olds likely did not benefit from as in-depth a sexual education as teenagers today, so the chances of their making mistakes with contraception may be higher.

The next age groups may be surprising to many: 30-34 year-olds comprised almost 20% of those having abortions in 2015, followed closely by those 35 and older.³

Table 1: Abortions by Age Group (2015)

Age group (years)	Total	Percentage
≤17	2,233	2.2
18–24	23,778	23.8
25–29	23,598	23.6
30–34	18,328	18.3
35+	17,343	17.3
Unknown	14,824	14.8
Total	100,104	100

Similarly, while 34% of abortions were performed on those who had never delivered previously, 28% were on women or transgender people who already had children. Of those, 9% had had more than three previous deliveries.⁴

Women do not have to state a reason for abortion in Canada, but studies from countries around the world have shown that women often cite multiple reasons, including socioeconomic concerns, the wish to postpone or space childbearing, the desire to have no more children (or none at all), partner issues, being too young or parents/others object, and risks to maternal or fetal health.⁵

Location Demographics

The number of abortions performed across Canada is to be expected – the numbers are higher in provinces with larger populations and those with easier access to the procedure (such as Ontario and Quebec). Table 2 reflects where the procedure was performed, not the person’s location of residence. For example, the number for PEI says zero, but residents of PEI obtained 120 abortions in other provinces in 2015.⁶

Table 2: Abortions by Province (CIHI, 2015)

Province/territory	Number of induced abortions reported by hospitals	Number of induced abortions reported by clinics	Total
Newfoundland and Labrador	155	864	1,019
Prince Edward Island	0	0	0
Nova Scotia	1,924	0	1,924
New Brunswick	676	0	676
Quebec	8,350	15,843	24,193
Ontario	10,266	29,413	39,679
Manitoba	2,228	1,531	3,759
Saskatchewan	1,855	0	1,855
Alberta	1,955	11,403	13,358
British Columbia	4,027	9,139	13,166
Yukon	116	0	116
Northwest Territories	266	0	266
Nunavut	93	0	93
Total reported	31,911	68,193	100,104 ⁷

CIHI does not provide economic or social data or other situational concerns, and does not make correlations between its various tables. For example, we don't know the proportion of abortions performed in Ontario on older or younger women compared to other provinces.

Other Statistics and Data

For a comprehensive collection of CIHI statistics since 2007, including additional data and calculations, see ARCC's resource: *Statistics - Abortion in Canada*, <http://www.arcc-cdac.ca/backrounders/statistics-abortion-in-canada.pdf>.

Here's some quick facts, based on 2015 CIHI data:

100,104	Total number of abortions, both in clinics and hospitals
23,561	Total number of abortions done in hospitals
76,543	Total number of abortions done in clinics
2.1%	Complication rate for abortions done in hospitals, excluding clinics (total 23,561)
90.6%	Estimated percentage of abortions done by 12 weeks
0.59%	Estimated percentage of abortions at 21+ weeks
14	Estimated abortion rate per 1000 women aged 15-44

¹ Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI). *Induced Abortions Reported in Canada in 2015*. <https://www.cihi.ca/sites/default/files/document/induced-abortion-can-2015-en-web.xlsx> (Excel spreadsheet)

² Black A, Yang Q, Shi WW, Lalonde A, Guilbert E, Fisher W. Contraceptive Use Among Canadian Women of Reproductive Age: Results of a National Survey. *JOGC*. July 2009. [http://www.jogc.com/article/S1701-2163\(16\)34242-6/pdf](http://www.jogc.com/article/S1701-2163(16)34242-6/pdf) Page 3 (629).

³ CIHI, *ibid.* Table 2, Age

⁴ CIHI, *ibid.* Table 5, Previous Deliveries

⁵ Chae S, Desai S, Crowell M, Sedgh G. Reasons Women Have Induced Abortions: A Synthesis of Findings from 14 Countries. *Contraception*. July 2017, 96:4; 233 – 241 [http://www.contraceptionjournal.org/article/S0010-7824\(17\)30188-9/fulltext](http://www.contraceptionjournal.org/article/S0010-7824(17)30188-9/fulltext)

⁶ CIHI, *ibid.* Table 3, Residence

⁷ CIHI, *ibid.* Table 1, Location