

LIE
8

“You’ll get post-abortion syndrome”

Choosing to have an abortion is never easy and, as with any difficult decision, women may experience a variety of emotions. Anti-choice groups exploit these feelings to undermine women’s legal right to choose. They say that women will get “post-abortion syndrome,” an invented psychological disorder not recognised by any credible medical association or society. In fact, a study at Johns Hopkins University found that there was no difference at all in mental health outcomes between women who have had abortions and those who have not. Unlike anti-choice groups, the pro-choice movement advocates for services to support women regardless of the choice they make.

LIE
9

“Immoral women have abortions”

Anti-choice groups circulate negative judgments about women who have abortions with the goal of creating social stigma about abortion. Such views promote the idea that women’s sexuality should be regulated and that particular moral codes should be made into law. As the Supreme Court of Canada ruled in 1988: “[t]he decision whether or not to terminate a pregnancy is essentially a moral decision...in a free and democratic society it must be the conscience of the individual [that is paramount to that of the state].” Women have the right to use their own moral judgment to determine what is right for their bodies, rather than have someone else’s moral system imposed on them.

LIE
10

“This is an issue of free speech”

Some college and university students’ unions have objected to the tactics of anti-choice groups and have democratically decided to deny such groups access to the funding, space or club status through the students’ union. Anti-choice groups have erroneously characterised this as a violation of free speech. Students’ unions have limited resources and have a right to determine how to allocate them based on the priorities of their members and their organisational mandate. The role of students’ unions is to advocate on behalf of their members, whereas the promotion of debate is the mission of post-secondary institutions. Anti-choice groups are still free to voice their views, but cannot require students to be forced to support them.

pro•choice: the basic belief that women can decide for themselves.

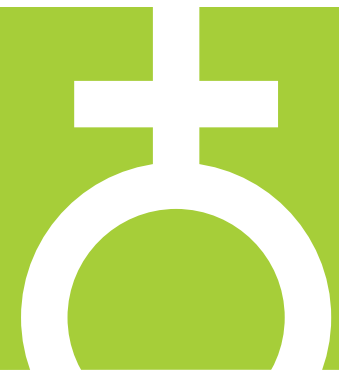
Regardless of what choice we make as individuals, people who are pro-choice believe that only one person is entitled to make the decision about whether a woman carries a pregnancy to term: **the woman herself.**

The good news is that **a clear majority of Canadians are also pro-choice** and we should keep it that way.

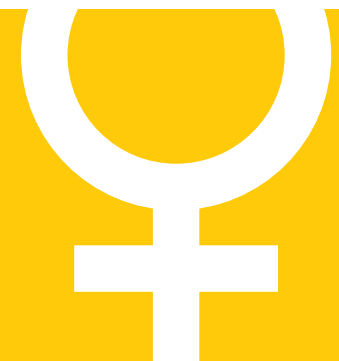
Pro-choice students across the country are fighting back against anti-choice groups who want to turn back the clock on sexual and reproductive rights and freedoms and send women to jail for choosing abortion.



Be a reproductive freedom fighter and join the fight to protect women’s rights!



10 LIES
that
ANTI CHOICE
groups
are telling you
about abortion



Combating Anti-choice Misinformation

Anti-choice groups advocate for the legal restriction and criminalisation of abortion and other sexual and reproductive rights. This political agenda is often based on subjective moral or religious beliefs held by its proponents. In order to make their case, these groups rely on various forms of misinformation, bullying tactics, and occasionally outright lies. Their strategy assumes that the people they are trying to sway will not take the time to find out for themselves.

That is why it is important to examine the arguments and misinformation spread by anti-choice groups and to accurately understand the issues surrounding the sexual and reproductive rights of women.

The ten arguments examined here are just a few of the pieces of misinformation that have been circulated by anti-choice groups.

LIE
1

“Pro-choice means pro-abortion”

Anti-choice groups often depict the pro-choice movement as promoting abortions. The fact is, when people say “pro-choice,” they are not promoting abortion over other options, but rather defending it as a central aspect of sexual and reproductive rights. Unlike anti-choice groups, the pro-choice movement also promotes sexual health education, contraception and services for mothers, such as public accessible childcare. Because of this, pro-choice and anti-choice are not two opposite sides of the abortion debate; anti-choice promotes forced pregnancy, the opposite of which is forced abortion. The pro-choice movement opposes both extremes, instead it holds the position that women should have the right to choose what is best for them. This means supporting a woman’s right to decide if to have children, when, and how many to have, through access to safe sexual health services. This is why many people who may be personally opposed to abortion are also pro-choice.

LIE
2

“Banning abortion will stop it”

Anti-choice groups assume that banning abortion will stop or significantly reduce the number of abortions that occur. This assertion is surprising because anti-choice groups generally disagree with sexual education and the use of contraceptives, favouring “abstinence only” sex education. The World Health Organization (WHO) has found that, contrary to this belief, a low abortion rate is not correlated with restrictive abortion laws. In fact, countries where abortion is made widely accessible typically witness a decline in abortion rates over time, especially with increased use of contraception and sex education.

LIE
3

“Banning abortion protects women”

Anti-choice groups often depict women as being pressured into having abortions, a depiction that assumes they are incapable of making informed choices about what is best for themselves and their families. Ironically, anti-choice “crisis pregnancy centres” are notorious for providing misinformation about abortions and pressuring women to remain pregnant. Rather than protecting women from “pressure,” criminalising abortion puts women’s lives at risk, forcing them to pursue unsafe means to terminate an unwanted pregnancy. The WHO estimates that, globally, 67,000 women die every year and five million are left injured from unsafe abortions. Protecting women is best achieved through legal access to abortion and the promotion of education that can assist women in navigating their options.

LIE
4

“Abortion is murder”

Anti-choice groups often argue that a fetus or embryo is a person and should have separate rights that override the pregnant woman’s rights to control her own body. In more extreme circumstances, anti-choice groups compare abortion to the Nazi holocaust and slavery. In 1973, the United States Supreme Court ruling *Roe v. Wade* found that a fetus is not a person under the law and thus does not have rights of its own. This ruling is based on the fact that a fetus is not a viable autonomous entity, fully depending on the woman for support. Because rights in Canada and the U.S. are accorded to individuals, not parts of individuals, a fetus can therefore not have separate legal rights and is not considered a person.

LIE
5

“Many abortions are late-term”

Anti-choice groups have argued that because Canada has no abortion law, many late-term abortions take place. They use large graphic images, often digitally altered or manipulated, depicting almost fully developed fetuses or stillbirths meant to represent aborted fetuses. According to Statistics Canada, less than 1% of abortions are performed after twenty weeks, usually for serious health reasons. Around 90% of abortions are performed within the first twelve weeks, at which point an embryo or fetus could not be as developed as the images portray. Given the above statistics, abortion rates historically and currently have been self-regulating, demonstrating that the choice of whether or not to have an abortion is best made by a woman and her doctor.

LIE
6

“You won’t be able to have children”

Anti-choice groups spread the myth that women who have an abortion cannot get pregnant again, or will be unable to carry a pregnancy to term. Ironically, this is more often the case when abortion is illegal and women obtain unsafe abortions, which can lead to infertility and even death. According to the WHO, tens of thousands of women around the world suffer long-term health consequences resulting from unsafe abortions. With the legal right to choose safe abortion, women can better ensure their ability to have a healthy pregnancy in the future.

LIE
7

“Abortion causes breast cancer”

Anti-choice groups have tried to link breast cancer with abortion. There is an overwhelming consensus in the scientific and medical community that there is no increased instance of breast cancer among women who have had an abortion. The Canadian Cancer Society, American Cancer Society, and the U.S.-based National Cancer Institute all support the conclusion that there is no causal link between abortion and breast cancer. Given that anti-choice groups oppose abortion even in circumstances where the woman’s life is threatened, this myth is clearly intended to scare women rather than protect their health and well-being.