

Less than 2 in 10 Canadian women are very knowledgeable about their abortion options, according to Ipsos Survey

Canadian women have their say on abortion options, access and knowledge

- *More than 8 in 10 Canadian women strongly advocate for choice and access to abortion options*
- *62% are concerned about their reproductive rights in Canada after the repeal of Roe v. Wade in the US*
- *57% of Canadian women agree they know enough about the options to safely terminate a pregnancy*

TORONTO, May 24, 2023 - Women's reproductive rights, sexual health, and abortion are regular topics of discussion worldwide leading up to and since the overturn of Roe v. Wade in the United States in June 2022 ending a landmark ruling that protected the constitutional right to abortion in the US. When it comes to abortion access and freedom of choice, Canadian women are very clear that they want to make their own choice when it comes to reproductive rights.

Abortion is one of the most common healthcare needs in Canada, with an estimated one in three¹ Canadian women having an abortion in their lifetime. Whether opting for a medication abortion, commonly referred to as the abortion pill (Mifegymiso) taken at home, which was approved in 2015, or a surgical abortion performed in a hospital or clinic setting, both options are safe, legal in Canada, and fully covered by provincial health care plans.

While strong support for choice and access to abortion methods exists, according to the recent Ipsos² poll of 1,139 Canadian women aged 16-50, commissioned by Linepharma International, gaps in understanding related to the availability, coverage, and what each method entails, signals the need for greater awareness and education around reproductive health. Among survey respondents, 62% are concerned about their reproductive rights following the reversal of Roe v. Wade by the United States Supreme Court.

"As a company dedicated to improving sexual and reproductive health, we are committed to expanding awareness and understanding when it comes to therapeutic options for abortion," says Dana Tenenbaum, Linepharma International's General Manager, based in Toronto. "This national survey highlights the need for expanded resources and information around reproductive health. We know that almost sixty percent of Canadian women first turn to their doctors for abortion related information over other resources such as online sources, family, friends, or their pharmacist. As such, partnering with and providing the healthcare community including doctors, midwives, and nurse practitioners with the guidance and tools they need to best support their patients is central to our mission." said Mr. Tenenbaum.

Key Findings

- Although 6 in 10 respondents have knowledge of both abortion options (63% for each surgical and medication methods), less than 2 in 10 Canadian women can confidently state that they are very knowledgeable about either method (surgical abortion: 19% and medication abortion: 16%).
- While 73% of women know they have access to surgical abortion, only 58% believe they have access to medication abortion. 52% are aware that both options are available (surgical and medication) and about 2 in 10 (20%) are unsure of the options they have access to.
- Regarding reimbursement, 50% of respondents say they are unsure if the surgical method is covered by their province, compared to 56% for medication abortion.
- Only 44% among those surveyed know that the *abortion pill* and the *morning after pill* are not the same, 18% believe these medications are the same and 37% reported not knowing.
- 84% agree (strongly/somewhat) that they want to be able to choose between medication abortion or surgical abortion.
- 84% trust that their doctor will present all the options available.

"With medication and surgical options for the termination of pregnancy available to women in Canada, and the on-going attention on abortion access in the US, it is surprising that awareness and understanding around reproductive health continues to remain low as the survey suggests," says Dr. Diane Francoeur, CEO, The Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada. "It is essential that women know their options and can make an informed choice with fact based and reliable support mechanisms in place to serve their needs. Further education and awareness are needed to support knowledge and understanding."

Despite knowledge gaps of the two abortion options and their accessibility, Canadian women want to be able to choose and have access to both medication and surgical abortion. If faced with the need to terminate a pregnancy, 84% of women agree that they should be able to choose between the two methods and 82% of women agree that *"Canadians should have the same access to a medication abortion (the abortion pill) and to a surgical abortion procedure performed in a hospital or an abortion clinic."*

The survey indicates women are in favour of medication abortion – with 40% who prefer it as their first choice if they had an abortion vs. 31% for surgical abortion. 64% of respondents would be comfortable having a medication abortion at home based on a telemedicine prescription.

The survey also found that women place the highest level of trust in their doctor to provide them with the information they need on abortion. Even though we live in an era where digital tools are a very common source of information, only 20% of respondents prioritize online research to access information on abortion, as opposed to 58% of women who would first consult their family doctor. This points to the essential role that healthcare professionals play, not only in being considered a credible source of information and counselling, but also as a primary gatekeeper of information. Ensuring that family physicians, nurse practitioners and midwives have effective resources to counsel patients is an important element to expanding knowledge.



"The facts don't lie," said Dr. Marc Steben, a general practitioner and expert in public and sexual health. "The survey results are very interesting and highlight the social acceptability of conversations about abortion and the right of women to make their own decisions based on all of the choices available to them. As a healthcare provider who is involved in reproductive health, I believe that regardless of who is providing reproductive counseling, be it a doctor, nurse, midwife, pharmacist, or other healthcare professional, it is incumbent on all to discuss the subject and provide information on all of the options available."

Rachel Cairns, whose lived experience with abortion was the impetus for the creation of her podcast series called *Aborsh*, summarizes it this way. "When I needed an abortion in 2019, I was surprised to learn I could access one with medication. This was a realization — which the survey findings confirm — that we still have further to go in normalizing abortion, and ensuring people have access to adequate sexual and reproductive health education so that Canadians can make informed choices about their lives."

About Linepharma International

Linepharma International is a pharmaceutical company founded in 2010, providing a safe, non-surgical abortion product approved by some of the world's most stringent health authorities with the aim of making safe abortion and sexual, reproductive healthcare accessible to every individual in the world. For more information on Linepharma International, visit www.linepharma.ca. For more information on abortion, visit www.myabortionoptions.ca.

Methodology

The survey was commissioned by Linepharma International and conducted by IPSOS, the third largest market research company in the world. An Ipsos online poll of 1,139 Canadian women aged 16-50 was conducted between October 21 and November 4, 2022. The precision of Ipsos polls is measured using a credibility interval. In this case, the poll is accurate to within ± 3.3 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, had all Canadian women aged 16-50 been surveyed. Quotas and weighting, via age and region (provinces), were employed to ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the Canadian population according to census parameters. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error, and measurement error. Where results do not sum to 100 or the 'difference' appears to be ± 1 more/less than the actual, this may be due to rounding, multiple responses, or the exclusion of don't knows or not stated responses.

For more information about the survey results, visit www.ipsos.com.

¹ Norman WV. Induced abortion in Canada 1974-2005: trends over the first generation with legal access. *Contraception* 2012; 85:185- 91.

<https://www.cfp.ca/content/66/1/42>

² Ipsos, online survey commissioned by Linepharma International. The current knowledge of abortion methods, preferences, and availability of options in Canada. October to November 2022.