

Public opinion

Public opinion in Australia has been moving in a strong pro-choice direction since the 1970s. Rigorous studies conducted in the twenty first century and as recently as 2020 have consistently shown that about 80% of Australians support the statement that ‘A woman should have the right to choose whether or not she has an abortion’.^{1,2}

- Differences of sex, or political party affiliation make little impact on attitudes toward abortion.^{1,3} Younger people and people living in regional and rural areas may be slightly less likely to support abortion access, but a majority of those in these groups still consider that abortion should be readily available.¹
- While religion is associated with a significant difference in attitudes toward abortion, no religious group falls below 80% in support of allowing abortion in some circumstances, nor rises above 10% in opposition to it in all circumstances. People not identifying with any religion have the highest rate of support for access to abortion in any circumstance (78%), a position supported by most respondents belonging to the Church of England (60%), Uniting Church (57%), and Presbyterian churches (53%). 45% of Catholic respondents support the availability of abortion in any circumstances, and only 7% believe it should not be available at all.⁴
- In a 2013 Newspoll surveying 600 Victorian women about that state’s abortion laws, 78% of women with a religious affiliation and 95% of women without agreed that the law should provide women with the right to decide whether or not to have an abortion.⁵
- One of the most recent major report on Australian public opinion of abortion was conducted in 2020 and surveyed 1012 South Australian residents.¹ The overwhelming majority— some 89% of respondents — believed that women should be able to have an abortion, with 64% agreeing that women should be able to obtain one at any time under any circumstances. A mere 4.5% indicated opposition to abortion regardless of circumstances.
- 79% of respondents were unaware that the legality of abortion was at that time was still defined in the criminal law in South Australia, and 80% were in favour of decriminalisation. The majority of respondents were also in favour of the establishment of measures to protect those accessing and providing abortion from harassment. ¹These results align almost exactly with those from the most recent survey before them, conducted by Lonergan Research in 2015 and including 1015 NSW residents.⁶

- Prior to the 2025 election, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) ‘Vote Compass’ polling of 436,001 people indicated that 65% of respondents thought that abortion should be more accessible.⁷
- A 2026 nationally representative survey demonstrated that support for abortion access in any circumstances exists across the political spectrum, ranging from 50% of One Nation voters to 82% of Greens voters. A further 34% of One Nation voters support access to abortion in some circumstances.⁸
- Australian surveys have rarely investigated public opinion about abortion with respect to gestational stage. The 2020 South Australian study challenged the belief that Australians strongly oppose women accessing abortion in the second and third trimesters.¹ More than 63% of respondents considered that later abortion should be available in any circumstance deemed necessary by the woman and her healthcare team. A further 22% of respondents felt that later abortion should be available in some circumstances, including where there is major health risk to the woman, serious foetal abnormality, situations of rape, incest or domestic violence, and failure to diagnose pregnancy at the usual time. In a Victorian survey conducted by Crosby Textor in 2008, a majority of respondents indicated that in a wide range of clinical and social circumstances doctors should not face professional sanctions for terminating a pregnancy after 24 weeks’ gestation.⁹

1 Cations M, Ripper M, Dwyer J, 2020, ‘Majority support for access to abortion care including later abortion in South Australia’, *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, 44:349-352.

2 Victorian Law Reform Commission, 2008, *Law of Abortion Final Report*, Melbourne: VLRC.

3 Betts K, 2009, ‘Attitudes to abortion: Australia and Queensland in the twenty-first century,’ *People and Place*, 17:3, 25–39.

4 *ibid.*

5 O’Rourke A, 2016, ‘The discourse of abortion law debate in Australia’, *Women’s Studies International Forum*, 56, 37–44.

6 O’Brien N, 2015, ‘Make it legal and accessible: poll on women’s right to choose in NSW’, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, September 27 2015.
<http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/polling-shows-overwhelming-support-for-a-womans-right-to-choose-20150925-gjvfyu>

7 Barbour I, Sweeney L, 2025, ‘Dollars, distance and political power: Inside the barriers to abortion access’, *ABC News*, June 1 2025.
<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-06-01/abortion-access-in-australia-financial-and-regional-disadvantage/105291406>

8 The Australia Institute, 2026, *Polling – Support for Abortion Access*, Canberra.

9 De Crespigny L et al, 2010 ‘Australian attitudes to early and late abortion’, *Medical Journal of Australia*, 193:1, 9–12.