

How Canadians Perceive Euthanasia

Executive Report

June 22, 2001



1.0 Study Report

- ◆ A majority of Canadians feel that, if suffering from an incurable illness causing extreme pain, they would want to obtain assistance in dying.

(n=)	YES	NO	DNK/REFUSAL
1507	57.4%	34.0%	8.6%

- ◆ In the event that they, themselves were suffering from an incurable disease causing extreme pain and were therefore unable to make a decision about their fate, 90.8% of individuals who would want assistance in dying would want their doctor and a loved one to make this decision together.

(n=)	YES	NO	DNK/REFUSAL
1507	90.8%	7.4%	1.9%

- ◆ If a loved one were in a similar situation, a majority of Canadians would want this person to obtain assistance in dying.

(n=)	YES	NO	DNK/REFUSAL
1507	57.2%	32.6%	10.2%

- ◆ In the situation of a loved one assisting in dying a family member suffering from an incurable disease causing extreme pain, three-quarters of Canadians feel that this person should not be prosecuted.

(n=)	YES	NO	DNK/REFUSAL
1507	18.8%	75.5%	8.1%

- ◆ **Half of Canadian believers, including all religious denominations, practice their religion.**

(n=)	Practicing Believers	Non-Practicing Believers	Non-Believers	DNK/REFUSAL
1507	42.7%	42.8%	12.7%	1.9%

2.0 Study Results

2.1 If suffering from an incurable disease causing extreme pain, a majority of Canadian would want to obtain assistance in dying.

More than half (57.4%) of respondents polled would agree to having help in dying if they found themselves in such a situation while 34.0% would be opposed to it. Quebeckers (70.9%), Francophones (73.3%), males (60,3%) and respondents in the 45- to 54-age bracket (63.9%) were the most favourable to this idea.

Least in favour with assisted suicide, were respondents 65 years of age or older (49.3%), residents of the Prairie provinces, stay-at-home respondents (45.4%), those having an income of less than \$20,000 (41.1%) and the lesser educated (50.6%).

Non-practicing believers are more open-minded when it comes to this type of euthanasia. In fact, 70.7% of them answered "yes" to this question compared to 68.3% of non-believers and 41.0% of practicing believers.

The same opinion is shared by a similar number of respondents who were asked how they would react if one of their loved ones were in that situation.

Q1 NOW, LET'S IMAGINE THAT YOU ARE SUFFERING FROM AN INCURABLE ILLNESS AND THAT THIS ILLNESS IS CAUSING YOU EXTREME PAIN. WOULD YOU PERSONALLY WANT TO BE HELPED TO DIE?	Yes	No	DNK/Refusal
Maritimes	49.9%	38.2%	11.9%
Quebec	70.9%	25.1%	4.0%
Ontario	52.8%	36.9%	10.3%
Prairies	46.6%	45.4%	7.9%
Alberta	52.5%	38.3%	9.2%
British Columbia	59.1%	30.6%	10.3%
Canada	57.4%	34.0%	8.6%

2.2 Together, the physician and the family member should make the decision on behalf of a person who is ill and unable to do so.

If suffering from an incurable illness causing extreme pain and unable to make decisions, 90.8% of individuals would want a physician and a family member to make the decision together on their behalf.

These individuals are mostly stay-at-home (95.1%), with a household income between \$20,000 and \$40,000 (95.1%), lesser educated (97.4%), in the 55- to 64-age bracket (95.2%) and are, to a greater extent, residents of the Maritimes (96.7%).

Q3 IF YOU WERE SUFFERING FROM AN INCURABLE ILLNESS AND IN NO CONDITION TO DECIDE ON YOUR OWN THAT YOU WANT TO BE HELPED TO DIE, WOULD YOU WANT THIS DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY YOUR DOCTOR TOGETHER WITH SOMEONE CLOSE TO YOU?	Yes	No	Dnk/ Refusal
Maritimes	96.7%	3.3%	0%
Quebec	92.7%	5.3%	2.1%
Ontario	89.3%	9.4%	1.2%
Prairies	88.6%	5.5%	5.9%
Alberta	88.6%	9.5%	1.9%
British Columbia	89.7%	8.3%	1.9%
Canada	90.8%	7.4%	1.9%

2.3 Canadians feel, in a proportion of 75.5%, that individuals who have assisted a loved one, suffering from an incurable illness causing extreme pain, end his or her life should not be prosecuted.

Those opposed to the idea of prosecuting such individuals are mostly residents of Quebec (84.1%). It is in Alberta (25.0%) and in the Prairies (24.9%) that we find the highest number of individuals in favour of prosecution.

Practicing believers and non-believers are opposed to prosecution of such individuals in a proportion of 84.3% and 82.1% respectively. The figure for practicing believers reached 64.6%.

Q4 IN YOUR PERSONAL OPINION, SHOULD SOMEONE WHO HAS HELPED TO DIE A MEMBER OF HIS CLOSE FAMILY SUFFERING FROM AN INCURABLE ILLNESS CAUSING EXTREME PAIN BE PROSECUTED?	Yes	No	Dnk/ Refusal
Maritimes	19.9%	75.2%	8.5%
Quebec	9.8%	84.1%	6.1%
Ontario	16.0%	75.1%	9.0%
Prairies	24.9%	61.6%	13.5%
Alberta	25.0%	64.1%	10.8%
British Columbia	16.6%	76.8%	6.6%
Canada	16.3%	75.5%	8.1%

2.4 Taking into account all religious denominations, believers practice or do not practice their religion in equal proportion.

The Canadian population is comprised of 42.7% of practicing believers, 42.8% of non-practicing believers and 27.7% of non-believers.

The highest number of practicing believers can be found in the Maritimes (59.8%). The highest number of non-practicing believers can be found in Quebec (55.1%) while British Columbia has the highest rate of non-believers (20.4%).

Practicing believers are mostly women (50.3%), individuals in the over 65-year old bracket (70.2%), stay-at-home individuals (60.5%), retired persons (61.2%) and the lesser educated (62.7%).

Non-believers are more numerous among men (17.1%), individuals in the 18 to 24-age bracket (21.0%) and among students (23.0%).

Q5 IN TERMS OF RELIGION, ARE YOU...?	A practicing believer	A non-practicing believer	A non-believer	Dnk/refusal
Maritimes	59.8%	33.3%	4.6%	2.3%
Quebec	32.6%	55.1%	12.1%	0.2%
Ontario	45.1%	38.5%	13.8%	2.5%
Prairies	54.9%	34.8%	6.9%	3.5%
Alberta	44.3%	45.2%	10.4%	0%
British Columbia	36.0%	40.3%	20.4%	3.3%
Canada	42.7%	42.8%	12.7%	1.9%

3.0 Methodology

This study was conducted by Léger Marketing through telephone interviews among a representative sample of 1507 English- or French-speaking Canadians, 18 years of age or older.

The interviews were conducted from our Montreal and Winnipeg call centers between June 5 and 13, 2001. Up to ten recalls were made in the case of non-response.

Using data from Statistics Canada, the results were weighted according to geographic location, gender and language spoken at home to ensure a sample representative of the entire Canadian adult population. Finally, the maximum margin of error obtained for a sample of 1507 respondents, is of $\pm 2.6\%$, 19 times out of 20.