

# What Do Australians Think About Abortion?

## Who Are the Minority?

Australians fundamentally opposed to abortion under any circumstances represent the smallest minority.

*On average they constitute less than 5% of the Australian population*



## What the Majority Believes

The 2004 Australian Election Study (AES) reveals that over 50% of respondents believe a woman should be able to readily access "abortion on demand."

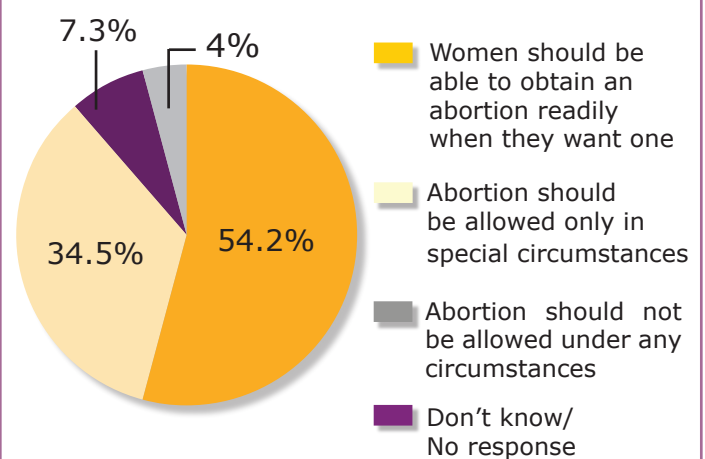
When including respondents who believe that abortion should be allowed

under special circumstances, support for abortion increases to almost 90%. In contrast, only 4% felt that 'abortion should not be allowed under any circumstances.'

*"It is overwhelmingly clear that the majority of Australians support liberal access to abortion" -*

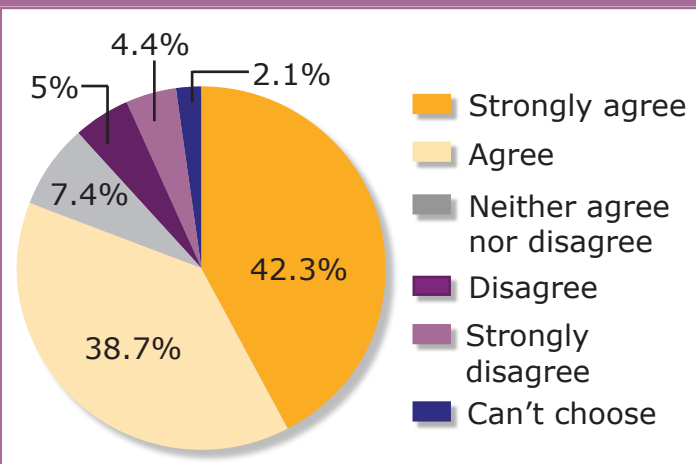
*Public Health Association of Australia*

## Which one of these statements comes closest to how you feel about abortion in Australia?



Source: Australian Election Study 2004

## A Woman should have the right to choose whether or not she has an abortion



Source: The Australian Survey of Social Attitudes 2003

## Over 80% Are Pro-Choice

The 2003 Australian Survey of Social Attitudes (AuSSA)<sup>1</sup> revealed 81.2% of respondents were pro-choice, agreeing that a 'women should have the right to choose whether or not she has an abortion'.

*"Over 80 per cent of Australians agree with a woman's right to choose an abortion, as do 84 per cent of GPs and the majority in all major religious groups."*<sup>2</sup>

Only 9.4% of those surveyed disagreed that a woman should have the right to choose, with only 4.4% disagreeing strongly with the statement.

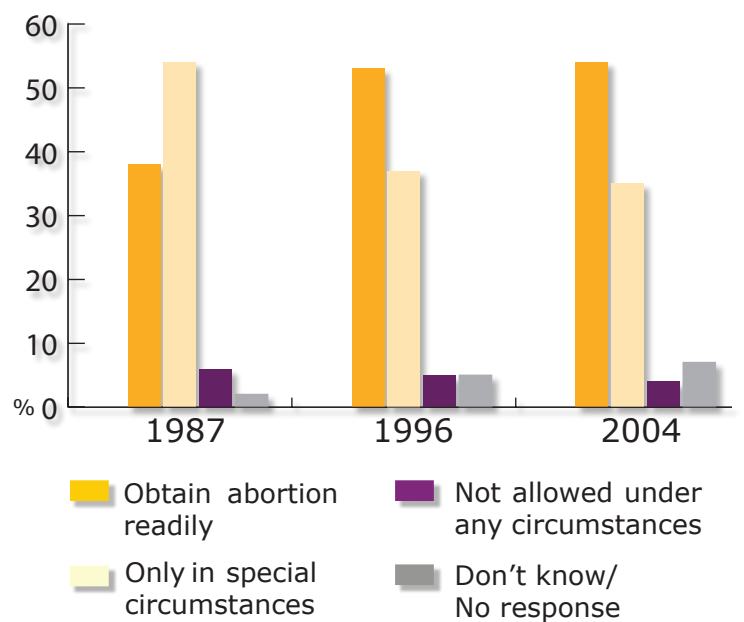


## Support Has Strengthened

Public support for access to abortion in Australia has steadily increased in the past twenty years. The series of polls conducted by the AES showed 38% of respondents in 1987 believed 'women should be able to obtain an abortion readily, when they want one.' In less than ten years support for "abortion on demand" had increased to 53% and by 2004 support had risen to 54.2%. Conversely, the percentage of respondents fundamentally opposed to abortion dropped from 6% to 4% in the same period.

**"In general very few Australians favour a ban on abortion, and the proportion favouring no restriction at all has grown steadily since the late 1980s"**<sup>3</sup>

## Which one of these statements comes closest to how you feel about abortion in Australia?



Source: Australian Election Study 1987, 1996 & 2004

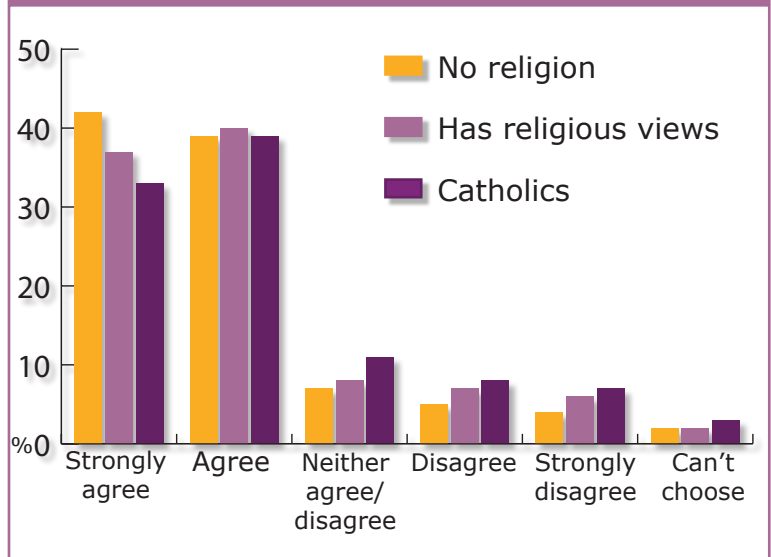
## The Religious View

According to the AuSSA 2003 77% of respondents who held religious views believed a woman should have the right to choose whether or not she had an abortion. This is very similar to the overall sample.

**"Recent international public opinion surveys of Catholics around the world reveal that the majority of Catholics support women having access to abortion."**<sup>4</sup>

The AuSSA 2003 also surveyed 1000 Catholics and found that 72% were in support of a woman's right to choose, with only 15% disagreeing. Evangelical Protestants were the group most likely to favour restrictions, but even among them 53% were pro-choice.

## A Woman should have the right to choose whether or not she has an abortion



Source: The Australian Survey of Social Attitudes 2003

<sup>1</sup>The AuSSA is conducted by the ACSPRI Centre for Social Research at the Australian National University, available at <http://assda.anu.edu.au/studies/D1070.html>

<sup>2</sup>de Crespigny, L (2005) *Australian abortion laws: do they pose a 'health hazard'?* O&G (RANZCOG); 7(1). Autumn: 52-55

<sup>3</sup> Betts, K. (2004). *Attitudes to abortion in Australia: 1972 to 2003*. People and Place. 12(4): 22-28.

<sup>4</sup> Catholics for a Free Choice. (2004) *A world view: Catholic attitudes on sexual behavior and reproductive health*. Washington, D.C.