

A Survey of Medical Opinion on Abortion and Abortion Law in Antigua and Barbuda

Introduction (Please read)

As a member of an important professional group, we are seeking your engagement in completing this survey. Our goal is to use these data **to foster a more informed discussion on the questions of women's reproductive health and our value for life.**

The survey is **anonymous** and will take about **15 minutes** to complete. A small ask for a big, big issue. Each question can be quickly answered by clicking on the button that represents your view.

Please **do not check the law** before answering the questionnaire – this is not a 'test.' We are exploring your beliefs and your views – not your knowledge. This is not a quiz. We only care for your perceptions.

Once we have collected and analyzed the data, we will be delighted to share the results with you.

Thank you very much!

Sincerely,

Dane Abbott, B.Sc., M.D., FRCS, FACOG.

Yvette Delph, M.B., B.S., D.A.

Fred Nunes, B.Sc., MPA., Ph.D., Dip. MS., LL.B.

Section 1: Respondent information:

Please provide the following basic information about yourself: just circle the letter beside the answer which applies to you.

1. **Profession:** a. Senior Health Manager b. Doctor
c. Specialist Nurses: Nurse Practitioners, Ward Sisters, Departmental Nurses, Public Health Nurses, Clinical Nurses, Registered Nurses, Nurse Anesthetist, Mental Health Nurses, Port Health Nurses,
d. District Nurse Midwife e. Staff Nurse f. Nurse Assistant
g. Ward Assistant h. Community Health Aide i. Clinic Aide
j. Pharmacist, Pharmaceutical Technician & Assistant k. Social Worker
2. **Sex:** a. Female b. Male c. Intersex d. Prefer not to say
3. **Union status:** a. Single b. Visiting c. Common Law d. Married
e. Separated f. Divorced g. Widowed
4. **Age:** a. <25 b. 25-29 c. 30-39 d. 40-49 e. 50-59 f. >59

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Uncertain 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

5. **Sector of work:** a. Private b. Public c. Both d. Retired

6. **Race:** a. Black b. Mixed c. White d. Other

7. **Religious affiliation/denomination:** _____

Section 2: The Perception of the Current Criminal law of Abortion:

We are interested in your **perceptions** of the current criminal law in Antigua and Barbuda. Please do not check the law or consult your colleagues. This is not a test of your knowledge of the law. Our interest is in your impressions of the law.

Please use the following letters to indicate whether you consider the following statements to be true (T), or False (F) or you are unsure (U)

In Antigua and Barbuda:

- | | | | | |
|-----|---|---|---|---|
| 8. | Abortion is unlawful in all circumstances | T | F | U |
| 9. | Abortion is lawful to save a woman's life | T | F | U |
| 10. | Abortion is lawful to protect a woman's physical health | T | F | U |
| 11. | Abortion is lawful to protect a woman's mental health | T | F | U |
| 12. | Abortion is lawful for women and girls who get pregnant from a sexual assault | T | F | U |
| 13. | Punishments are severe for women who induce their abortions | T | F | U |
| 14. | Punishments are severe for doctors who perform abortions | T | F | U |

Section 3: The Usefulness of the Current Law of Abortion:

We are interested in your views regarding the **usefulness** of the current law of abortion in Antigua and Barbuda. Using the scale below to indicate the extent of your agreement or disagreement with the following statements:

- 1 Strongly Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 3 Uncertain, Unsure, Neutral
- 4 Agree
- 5 Strongly Agree

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Uncertain 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

15. The current law is essential for safeguarding our value for the sanctity of life _____

16. The current law of abortion effectively protects foetal life _____

17. In spite of our restrictive, criminal law, abortions are readily available _____

18. The abortion law is irrelevant to women who can afford private physicians _____

19. The law is harmful to poor women who cannot afford private physicians _____

20. Cases of unlawful abortion have been regularly brought before the courts _____

21. The law effectively prevents women from having abortions _____

Section 4: Familiarity:

We would like to have a sense of your exposure to factors affecting women's reproductive health.

Please indicate whether the follow statements are True of False in your personal experience.

22. I know of at least one woman who has had an abortion T F U

23. I know at least one woman who has been a victim of domestic violence T F U

24. I know at least one person who had an abortion as a teenager T F U

25. I know at least one woman who has had a tubal ligation T F U

26. I know at least one man who has had a vasectomy T F U

Section 5: The Practice of Abortion:

In this section, we are interested in your perception of the **practice** of abortion in Antigua and Barbuda. Please use the same 1 – 5 scale to respond to the following statements:

27. Abortion is a rare event in our society _____

28. Poor women still end up in our hospitals with complications of abortion _____

29. Today, there are more doctors performing abortions than 10 years ago _____

30. By age 44, most women here (*more than half*) have had at least one abortion _____

31. Today, through pills, more women have access to abortion than 10 years ago _____

32. Today, a woman can have a safe abortion without relying on a doctor _____

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Uncertain 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

33. Many women here have their first abortion as teenagers _____

34. Admissions for complications resulting from unsafe abortions, are an unnecessary drain on our hospital resources _____

35. Today, there are fewer admissions for complications of unsafe abortion than there were 10 years ago _____

Section 6: The Role of the Professional Health Associations:

We wish to learn your perception of the **role of professional health organisations** in providing leadership on medical aspects of controversial issues of social justice and specifically abortion law reform. Using the same scale, please express the extent of your agreement or disagreement with the following statements:

36. Abortion is a legal issue so there is no role for the health associations _____

37. Abortion is a religious issue so there is no role for our associations _____

38. Abortion is a medical issue so health associations should take an active role in the dialogue _____

39. Abortion is too divisive for health associations to develop a common position _____

40. Our associations have a duty to promote fairness within the health system _____

41. Our associations should explore the link between our current law and unsafe abortion _____

42. Our associations have nothing to gain from stepping into this controversy _____

Section 7: The Broad Objectives of any new Law of Abortion:

In this section, we would like to learn your views on the **main objectives and values** that should be considered in designing any new law of abortion. What should be the appropriate objectives and constraints in any new law? Please use the same 1-5 scale to respond to the following statements:

TO WHAT EXTENT do you agree that any new law of abortion should:

43. ... establish that life begins at the moment of conception _____

44. ... establish a woman's right of choice regarding her pregnancy _____

45. ... first, protect the life of the unborn child _____

46. ... first, minimize any risk of harm to girls/women with unwanted pregnancies _____

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Uncertain 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

47. ... aim to strengthen the abstinence component of sex education in schools _____
48. ... aim to improve education on sexual and reproductive health and rights in schools _____
49. ... aim to reduce the number of abortions _____
50. ... aim to eliminate the public health mischief of unsafe abortion _____
51. ... firmly establish that abortion at any stage of pregnancy is murder _____
52. ... establish equal access for all women seeking abortions _____
53. ... impose severe penalties on any persons who perform abortions _____

Section 8: The Expected Impact of a Liberal Law:

What **impact** would you expect a liberal abortion law to have in Antigua and Barbuda? Please use the same 1 - 5 scale to answer the following questions/statements:

TO WHAT EXTENT would you expect:

54. ... the number of abortions would increase _____
55. ... maternal health for poor women would improve significantly _____
56. ... interest in family planning would decline _____
57. ... women would prefer abortions to other forms of birth control _____
58. ... our value for the sanctity of life would be severely damaged _____
59. ... additional facilities would be required to meet the demand for abortions _____
60. ... hospitals would save money (now being used to treat complications of unsafe abortions) _____
61. ... the moral fabric of our society would be undermined _____

Section 9: The Specific Provisions of any New Law:

Assuming you had the opportunity to contribute to the formulation of a new law of abortion, what **specific provisions** would you want to make? Please use the same 1 - 5 scale to answer the following questions/statements:

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Uncertain 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

TO WHAT EXTENT do you agree that abortions should be lawfully permitted:

- 62 ... to protect the life of the pregnant woman? _____
63. ... to protect the physical health of the pregnant woman? _____
64. ... where the pregnancy is a threat to the woman's mental health? _____
- 65 ... where the woman or girl is mentally challenged? _____
66. ... where the child will probably be born severely physically or mentally deformed? _____
67. ... where pregnancy results from rape or incest _____

Section 10: Further Specific Provisions of any New Law

Assuming you had the opportunity to contribute to the formulation of a new law of abortion, what provisions would you want to make?

Please use the same 1 - 5 scale to answer the following questions/statements:

TO WHAT EXTENT do you agree that abortions should be lawfully permitted:

68. ... in cases of contraceptive failure? _____
69. ... in cases of unwanted pregnancy among unmarried teenage girls? _____
70. ... on social and economic grounds – where the woman feels she cannot afford the child? _____
71. ... access to abortion should become more restrictive as pregnancy advances _____
72. ...teenagers should have access to abortions without their parents' consent _____
73. ...abortions should be free to women who cannot afford to pay for them _____
74. ...health professionals other than doctors should be trained to provide non-surgical (medication) abortions _____
75. ... Healthcare professionals have the right to exercise their conscientious objection to performing abortions _____
76. ... A mandatory requirement that healthcare professionals who exercise a conscientious objection, have a duty to refer persons to a willing provider _____

Section 11: Interest

77. Please let us know if you are interested in seeing the results of this study. a. Yes b. No

1. Strongly disagree

2. Disagree

3. Uncertain

4. Agree

5. Strongly agree

Thank you very much for your time, interest, and co-operation.