

CARP Assisted Dying Poll Report October 17, 2014

Key Findings

The vast majority of CARP members approve of legalizing assisted dying, and they have for years, no matter how the question is asked. Agreement is increasing in recent years, as well. Two thirds of members would consider assisted dying for themselves if they were terminally ill, and a fifth know someone who has had assistance dying. There is wide (and sustained) agreement the decision on assisted dying is between a doctor and patient, or belongs to the patient alone. Few think the authorities should be involved.

The majority disagrees when asked if assisted dying should be permitted for those not terminally ill, but when asked to put a limit on access to assisted dying, the majority say any debilitating or degenerative condition justifies it. Most agree a doctor has to be involved in assistance in dying, but very few insist doctors need to take part against their consciences. About half agree a non-medical professional like a doula could supervise.

When asked how government should react to assisted dying, the majority call for legalization now, while the remainder calls for decriminalization. Very few want to see current penalties enforced or increased. Just less than half (the plurality) agree Canada doesn't need laws governing assisted dying.

There is very wide approval of Quebec's Bill 52 and even wider agreement the bill offers the requisite protection to unwilling or incompetent patients. In addition, a very strong majority approve of MP Stephen Fletcher's private member's bill on assisted dying, which is similar to Quebec's Bill 52. In short, the vast majority of members agree that end-of-life care, including assisted dying, is a right for every Canadian.

Electoral Preference

Just less than half of members will vote Liberal if the election were held today, while just more than one third would vote Conservative. One tenth or so will vote NDP.

Detailed Findings

The vast majority of CARP members support assisted dying (85%), one half strongly (50%). The tenth or so who are strongly in disagreement (7%) are a constant throughout this poll, and will not consider allowing assisted dying under any circumstances.

Do you agree or disagree physician assisted dying should be legal in Canada?

AGREE	85%
Agree strongly	50%
Agree	35%
DISAGREE	12%
Disagree	5%
Disagree strongly	7%
DON'T KNOW	4%

Two thirds or more of members have supported assisted suicide since we started asking this question in 2010, and this proportion has increased recently.

Do you believe/agree or disagree physician-assisted suicide for the terminally ill should be legal in Canada/Do you agree or disagree physician assisted dying should be legal in Canada?

	Aug 2010	Dec 2011	Jan 2013	Oct 2013	Oct 2014
Yes/agree	71%	68%	67%	81%	85%
No/disagree	19%	20%	19%	11%	12%
DON'T KNOW	10%	12%	15%	8%	4%

Two thirds of members know someone who would consider assisted dying if the circumstances included terminal illness (69%), and in most cases, this is the member (53%).

Do you know anyone who would consider the option of assisted dying if they were terminally ill?

YES	69%
Me	53%
A family member	7%
Someone I know	9%
No	27%
DON'T KNOW	5%

One fifth of members know someone who has had assistance dying (21%), and this is most likely someone they heard about (10%) rather than a friend (5%) or family member (5%).

Do you know anyone who has had help ending their life when they felt they couldn't continue?

YES	21%
A spouse	1%
A family member	5%
An acquaintance or friend	5%
Someone I heard about	10%
No	79%

A slight majority disagree assisted dying should be available to those not terminally ill (55%), although a sizeable minority have no opinion (14%).

Do you agree or disagree assisted dying should be legal for those who are not terminally ill?

AGREE	32%
Agree strongly	11%
Agree	21%
DISAGREE	55%
Disagree	29%
Disagree strongly	26%
DON'T KNOW	14%

In one half of cases, members think the decision on assisted suicide is one for the doctor and patient only (47%), followed by those who think it is the patient's alone (25%). Fewer think a judge should be involved as well (18%). The findings on this measure have not varied strongly from year to year.

If physician-assisted suicide were legal, who do you think should have the responsibility for deciding whether it was allowed?

	Aug 2010	Dec 2011	Oct 2013	Oct 2014
Patient, doctor(s)	52%	46%	48%	47%
Patient	18%	18%	25%	25%
Patient, doctor(s), judge	15%	17%	13%	18%
Patient, judge	1%	1%	1%	1%
Doctor(s), judge	*	1%	-	1%
OTHER/DON'T KNOW	4%	5%	5%	3%
NEVER SUPPORT THIS	10%	10%	8%	8%

Three quarters of members agree a doctor has to assist in assisted dying (73%).

Do you agree or disagree a doctor has to be involved in assisted dying?

AGREE	73%
Agree strongly	30%
Agree	43%
DISAGREE	21%
Disagree	16%
Disagree strongly	5%
DON'T KNOW	8%

The vast majority of members agree a doctor cannot be forced to assist in death against his conscience (88%).

Many doctors refuse to condone assisted dying. Do you agree or disagree doctors may be permitted to refuse to offer assistance with dying if it is against their conscience?

AGREE	88%
Agree strongly	31%
Agree	57%
DISAGREE	9%
Disagree	7%
Disagree strongly	2%
DON'T KNOW	3%

Close to half agree assisted dying could be carried out by a trained non-medical professional like a doula (45%), while just fewer disagree (39%).

Do you agree or disagree assisted dying could be performed by a trained non-medical professional, similar to a doula?

AGREE	45%
Agree strongly	10%
Agree	35%
DISAGREE	39%
Disagree	22%
Disagree strongly	17%
DON'T KNOW	16%

The vast majority of members (81%) think assisted dying should be legalized (56%) or decriminalized (25%). Very few call for prosecution (2%) or stiffer penalties (1%).

Which of the following options is the best course for the government to pursue in the case of assisted dying?

Act now to legalize assisted dying	56%
Decriminalize assisted dying	25%
Enforce the law as it is now	8%
Vigorously prosecute practitioners	2%
Turn a blind eye and do not prosecute	2%
Stiffen penalties	1%
SOMETHING ELSE	2%
DON'T KNOW	4%

The largest group of members believes assisted dying should be allowed for any debilitating or degenerative condition or more serious reason (47%). One third think it should be reserved for the terminally ill (34%), either at life's end (16%) or at any time (18%).

Where should the line be drawn in allowing assisted dying, if it were legal?

Should never be allowed at all	7%
Allowed only for terminally ill at the end of life	16%
Allowed only for terminally ill	18%
Allowed for debilitating/degenerative condition	47%
Allowed for healthy people over certain age	1%
Allowed for all adults	5%
Allowed for everyone	3%
DON'T KNOW	3%

The plurality agrees Canada can live without laws on assisted dying (43%).

In Canada, there is no law concerning abortion. Do you agree or disagree the government should take this position with respect to assisted dying?

AGREE	43%
Agree strongly	13%
Agree	30%
DISAGREE	36%
Disagree	23%
Disagree strongly	13%
DON'T KNOW	21%

The vast majority agrees end-of-life care should be a right for all Canadians, the way it is guaranteed by Quebec's Bill 52 (91%), and close to 6-in-10 agree strongly (59%).

In Quebec, Bill 52 makes end-of-life care, including palliative care, a right for all Quebecers. Do you agree or disagree end-of-life care should be a right for all Canadians?

AGREE	91%
Agree strongly	59%
Agree	32%
DISAGREE	7%
Disagree	3%
Disagree strongly	4%
DON'T KNOW	3%

Once again, the vast majority agree that the strictures embodied in Bill 52 will protect against coercion of unwilling patients (81%).

Bill 52 guarantees the right to assisted dying, but only if requested by the patient in a free an informed manner and confirmed after a wait period. Do you agree or disagree this is precaution enough against undue coercion?

AGREE	81%
Agree strongly	26%
Agree	55%
DISAGREE	13%
Disagree	7%
Disagree strongly	6%
DON'T KNOW	7%

When these strictures are spelled out in detail, a similar proportion agrees they will protect the unwilling or unknowing (84%).

Specifically, the criteria in Bill 52 which must be met for assistance in dying are:

- ***Patient must freely request assistance in dying***
 - ***Patient must be fully informed of consequences***
 - ***Patient must be fully informed of alternatives***
 - ***Second doctor must be consulted***
 - ***Second doctor must be unconnected with patient or first doctor***
- Do you agree or disagree this is precaution enough against undue coercion?***

AGREE	84%
Agree strongly	29%
Agree	55%
DISAGREE	10%
Disagree	5%
Disagree strongly	5%
DON'T KNOW	6%

The same high majority approves of Quebec's Bill 52 (81%).

Do you approve or disapprove of Quebec's Bill 52?

APPROVE	81%
Approve strongly	30%
Approve	51%
DISAPPROVE	11%
Disapprove	5%
Disapprove strongly	6%
DON'T KNOW	7%

The same strong majority of members approve of MP Stephen Fletcher's private member's bill on assisted dying (82%).

In Canada, suicide is not illegal but assisting in suicide is. MP Stephen Fletcher has proposed a private members bill that would allow a physician to assist in dying, if patient is:

- 18 or older and a Canadian citizen***
- Diagnosed with a condition causing intolerable suffering***
- Diagnosed with a degenerative condition with no hope of remediation***
- Of sound mind and fully capable of making an informed choice***

Do you approve or disapprove of this private member's bill?

APPROVE	82%
Approve strongly	37%
Approve	45%
DISAPPROVE	13%
Disapprove	6%
Disapprove strongly	7%
DON'T KNOW	5%

Electoral Preference

The Liberals (43%) are still in first place but sliding, and members are more likely this month to favour the Conservatives than recently (39%) The NDP (13%) remain in third place.

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decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

Almost 1800 CARP Poll™ online panel members responded to this poll between October 7 and 10 , 2014. The margin of error for a probability sample this size is about plus or minus 2%, 19 times out of 20