

# Project Choice

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The  
Abortion  
Provider

A  
Self  
Analysis

FEBRUARY 1993

In early 1993, Life Dynamics went undercover inside the American abortion industry in an initiative called:

## **“PROJECT CHOICE”**

The goal was to interview as many Level I abortionists as possible, in order to document the lifestyle and experiences of those who actually perform this controversial procedure. This document details the results of that survey.

### **Some of its major findings were that:**

- ✓ 69% of the nation’s abortion providers say they are not respected in the medical community.
- ✓ 65% feel ostracized because they perform abortions.
- ✓ 61% have been verbally confronted by an anti-abortion physician.
- ✓ Almost 1 in 5 has been denied hospital privileges because they perform abortions.
- ✓ Almost half have had problems recruiting or keeping nurses or other staff because they perform abortions.
- ✓ 64% say that performing abortion causes a negative impact on the non-abortion part of their practice.
- ✓ Almost 60% say that their prestige as a physician is damaged by being identified as an abortion provider.
- ✓ Almost 80% say that pro-choice organizations and politicians are not doing enough to support them.
- ✓ 38% express moral misgivings about the abortion procedure.
- ✓ 87% have been the victims of anti-abortion harassment or violence.

**COMPLETE RESULTS BEGIN ON THE NEXT PAGE** 

## GOALS & METHODOLOGY

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Purposely designed not to broach the political or legal issues, the survey questionnaire was divided into four parts:

I. “Profile” II. “Motivation” III. “Social Environment” IV. “Harassment & Violence”

The “**PROFILE**” and “**MOTIVATION**” sections try to create a demographic picture of the average abortion provider, by anonymously gathering a small amount of information about his or her personal lifestyle.

In the “**SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT**” section, the survey examines the practical, everyday ramifications of being an abortion provider. The intent is not to discover how they perceive themselves, but to understand how they think being identified as an abortionist causes others to perceive them.

In the final section, “**HARASSMENT & VIOLENCE**”, the goal is to find out how broadly and deeply anti-abortion activity impacts the daily lives of those who actually face it, and determine whether the average abortion provider sees anti-abortion activity as an acute problem, a mere nuisance, or something in-between.

**On January 6, 1993, these surveys were sent to a mailing list of 961 abortion providers (the bulk of which was purchased from a professional mailing list company) representing every geographical region in America.**

These 961 names and addresses constituted one hundred percent of the *PROJECT CHOICE* mailing list, and as such there was no attempt to select or discriminate against specific abortion providers or clinics. The goal was to get the largest numbers, and the broadest base, of responses as possible. In some cases, the name of the doctor was unknown and the mailing list company was only able to supply the name of an abortion clinic. In those instances, the survey was sent to that clinic with the implication that it be directed to the doctor on staff.

**Several things were done in order to maximize the survey response rate.**

First, the packages sent included a stamped/addressed envelope allowing the addressee to easily and freely respond. Second, beginning on the fourth business day after the initial mailing, a follow-up phone call was made to all 961 addressees. Ostensibly, this call was made to insure that the survey had been received. However, its primary objective was to remind the recipients about the survey, while encouraging them to respond as quickly as possible. Finally, a follow-up postcard was mailed which again reminded those who had not yet responded to please do so.


The results were tabulated during the first week of February. At that point, the daily rate at which surveys were coming in convinced us that, for all practical purposes, those who intended to respond, had responded. The final count showed that 285 surveys had been returned, for a response rate of 29.66 percent.

Recognizing that this is an unusually large rate of return for a survey of this type, it seems obvious that the results of the *PROJECT CHOICE* survey have a very high probability of being representative of the entire target group. Of course, like any survey, not every respondent answered every question. Therefore, the percentages shown are a ratio of the total surveys received. It must be pointed out that, in no case were the non-responses a large enough group to significantly alter the overall findings.

**NOTE:** While compiling these results, there were instances in which an important relationship was found to exist between the answers to one question and the answers to another one. In those instances, the information was identified under the heading: **RELATED FINDINGS.**

## RESULTS - PROFILE --- ---

1.) Age: ..... 50.61 Years

 **RELATED FINDINGS:** According to the American Medical Association, the average age for all physicians in the U.S. is 45, with 29% of them over 55. The *PROJECT CHOICE* survey found that the average age of abortion providers is 50.61 years, with 33.64% over 55. Additionally, it also found that 54.07% are over 50. This means that without a sudden influx of younger practitioners, an abortion provider pool that is already relatively old is poised to become even older.

**2.) Sex:**

Female .....	19.57%
Male .....	80.43%

**3.) Marital Status:**

Married .....	78.55%
Divorced .....	13.09%
Single .....	7.27%
Widowed .....	1.09%

**4.) Number of times married:** ..... 1.41

**5.) Number of children living at home:** ..... 1.07

**6.) Religion:**

Jewish .....	26.38%
Methodist .....	11.42%
Catholic .....	10.63%
Episcopalian .....	5.51%
Presbyterian .....	3.54%
Baptist .....	3.15%
Other Protestant .....	6.30%
Non-Specified Protestant .....	8.66%
Other .....	8.27%
None / Atheist .....	16.14%


**7.) Was your medical education obtained in the U.S.?**

Yes .....	87.13%
No .....	12.87%

**8.) Do you provide abortion services in the community in which you live?**

Yes ..... 85.51%  
No ..... 14.49%

**9.) How many years have you been providing abortion care? ..... 14.54 Years**

 **RELATED FINDINGS:** One question the survey helped answer was whether the problems associated with being an abortion provider were related to length of service. In short, the issue was whether the negative aspects of being known as an abortion provider are part of the abortion provider’s world right from the start, or if they accumulate over an extended period of time.

To gauge that, responses were divided into those who have been providers for six years or fewer, and those who have been providers for over six years. Then the first group’s answers were examined to see how they differed from the total group, on those questions which indicate what an abortion provider perceives his or her image to be within the medical community. Those questions are **“SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT”** questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, and 10.


The result was that the differences were so small they became statistically irrelevant. The average difference for all questions was slightly more than 5% from the total group, with no example of it exceeding 7.5%.

The other issue the survey examined was how anti-abortion activity differed based on how long someone had been an abortion provider. The basic question was whether some sort of “grace period” exists at the beginning of a provider’s service, during which anti-abortion activity either does not occur, or occurs at a lower level.

The data showed that no such “grace period” exists. Among providers in the “six years or fewer” group, 84.21% answered yes to **“HARASSMENT & VIOLENCE”** question 1 compared to 86.59% for the whole group.

It seems that when **SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT** and **HARASSMENT AND VIOLENCE** comparisons are made between those who might be referred to as “rookie” providers, and those who might be called “veteran” providers, the only conclusion is that the consequences of being an abortion provider accrue equally in each group.

**10.) What percentage of your practice is abortion care? ..... 39.12%**

 **RELATED FINDINGS:** Another question the survey sought to answer was whether the problems associated with being an abortion provider varied based on what percentage abortion is of their total practice.

A virtually identical method was used to gather this data as was used in the **RELATED FINDINGS** section of question 9. Respondents who said that abortion was 20% or less of their practice were separated, then their answers were evaluated on the basis of how they differed from the total group, on the same **SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT** questions used in question 9. As in question 9, these particular questions were selected because they indicate what an abortion provider perceives his or her image to be within the medical community.

The results in this instance were even closer than they were in question 9. The average difference was less than 2% from the total group, and in no case was it as much as 5%.

The other issue examined was how anti-abortion activity differed based on what percentage a provider said abortion was of his or her total practice. As was the case in question 9, there was very little difference here. Among providers in the “20% and under” group, 84.47% answered yes to **“HARASSMENT & VIOLENCE”** question 1, compared to 86.59% for the whole group.

When analyzing these **SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT** and **HARASSMENT AND VIOLENCE** comparisons, it becomes apparent that no matter how small a percentage abortion represents in a provider’s overall practice, he or she experiences the same consequences as those faced by people whose primary practice is abortion.

**11.) After which point of gestation will you no longer perform an elective pregnancy termination? ..... 39.12%**

**NOTE:** Of the 261 abortion providers responding to this question, 76.25% said they would be willing to perform an elective abortion after the end of the first trimester.

**RELATED FINDINGS:** Another issue addressed was whether abortion providers who limit their practice to first trimester abortions experience consequences similar to those who do not so limit their practice.

In order to answer this question, the method used in the **RELATED FINDINGS** sections of questions 9 and 10 was employed here. And although the results were not as close as in the two previous questions, they were still remarkably close. The average difference was slightly more than 6% from the total group, with no instance of it being more than 9%.

When one looks at the **RELATED FINDINGS** of just these three questions (9, 10, and 11), it becomes obvious that within the medical community, and among anti-abortion forces, there are apparently no degrees or levels of abortion provider. In both arenas, one is either seen as an abortionist or one is not. In short, the data here suggests that a “rookie” provider, who only does early term abortions, and for who abortion represents a very small part of his or her total practice, will encounter the same environment as someone who has been a provider for twenty years, does nothing but abortions, and does them in the third trimester.

## **RESULTS - MOTIVATION**

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**1.) Did you ever personally see a tragedy as a result of an illegal abortion?**

Yes ..... 71.38%  
No ..... 28.62%

**2.) If yes to the above question, was that a motivating factor in your decision to provide abortion care?**

Yes ..... 67.01%  
No ..... 32.99%

**3.) Is the financial compensation you receive for providing abortion care sufficient to encourage you to continue providing that service?**

Yes ..... 57.31%  
No ..... 42.69%



# RESULTS - SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

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**1.) Do you feel that abortion providers are respected in the medical community?**

Yes ..... 30.80%  
No ..... 69.20%

**2.) Have you ever felt ostracized because you provide abortion care?**

Yes ..... 65.44%  
No ..... 34.56%

**3.) Have you ever been verbally confronted by an anti-abortion physician?**

Yes ..... 61.09%  
No ..... 38.91%

**4.) Have you ever been denied hospital privileges because you provide abortion care?**

Yes ..... 19.17%  
No ..... 80.83%

**5.) Have you ever experienced problems recruiting or keeping nurses or other staff because you provide abortion care?**

Yes ..... 48.15%  
No ..... 51.85%

**6.) Does providing abortion care ever negatively impact your non-abortion practice?**

Yes ..... 64.23%  
No ..... 35.77%

**7.) Do you ever perceive that your prestige as a physician is damaged by being identified as an abortion provider?**

Yes ..... 59.85%  
No ..... 40.15%

**8.) Does being an abortion provider ever cause you to feel isolated from the rest of the medical community?**

Yes ..... 50.75%  
No ..... 49.25%

**9.) When you meet someone new, are you ever reluctant to say you provide abortion care?**

Yes ..... 46.84%  
No ..... 53.16%

**10.) Do you feel respected by those patients on whom you perform pregnancy terminations?**

Yes ..... 86.84%  
No ..... 13.16%

**11.) Do you feel that pro-choice organizations and politicians are doing enough to support those who provide abortion care?**

Yes ..... 21.51%  
No ..... 78.49%

**12.) Do you ever find providing abortion care to be boring or repetitious?**

Yes ..... 31.20%  
No ..... 68.80%

**13.) Do you perceive that there is a shortage of abortion providers?**

Yes ..... 79.12%  
No ..... 20.88%

**14.) Have you ever considered retiring from the practice of providing abortion care?**


Yes ..... 52.40%  
No ..... 47.60%

**15.) Would you be willing to train other physicians in abortion care?**

Yes ..... 90.38%  
No ..... 9.62%

**16.) Do you feel non-physicians should be allowed to perform abortions?**

Yes ..... 21.03%  
No ..... 78.97%

 **RELATED FINDINGS:** At this point, a comparison was done between the answers given to questions 16 and 13. This was done in order to determine whether a relationship exists between a respondent’s perception that there is a shortage of abortion providers, and their acceptance of, or opposition to, the idea that non-physicians should be allowed to perform abortions.

The survey showed that 75.83% of those who answered yes when asked if they thought there is a shortage of abortion providers (question 13), still answered no when asked if they felt that non-physicians should be allowed to perform abortions (question 16). Obviously, even abortion providers who say there is a shortage of physicians willing to perform abortions, do not believe that the field should be opened up to people who are not physicians.

The survey was also used to find out whether abortion providers differ on this “non-physician” issue based on whether they are willing to perform late abortions or not. Since early abortions are less complicated, and therefore less risky, it would seem logical to assume that a higher percentage of “early-term” providers would approve of non-physicians being allowed to do abortions than would “late-term” providers. However, the results didn’t support that assumption. Even among respondents who said they would only perform first trimester abortions, 83.61% answered no to question 16. Surprisingly, this was actually a higher percentage than the total for all respondents.

**17.) Has any aspect of the abortion procedure ever caused you moral concern?**

Yes ..... 37.73%  
No ..... 62.27%

**RELATED FINDINGS:** From a strictly subjective viewpoint, it seemed remarkable that almost 38% of abortion providers expressed moral concern over the abortion procedure, and it begged the question of whether anti-abortion activity plays a role in this seemingly high number.

Upon examination, the *PROJECT CHOICE* data seems to indicate that it does not. Of the respondents who said they had been the victim of anti-abortion harassment and/or violence, 35.59% also answered yes to question 17 in this section. The fact that there is such an insignificant difference between this figure and the one given by the group as a whole (37.73%), suggests that the moral concerns abortion providers have about performing abortions is an internal phenomenon brought on by the nature of the act itself, and are not directly related to anti-abortion activity.

This led to the question of whether those abortion providers who say they will only terminate a pregnancy in the first trimester, express moral misgivings at the same rate as those who do second and/or third trimester abortions. To answer that question, that group's responses were out isolated and evaluated separately. Somewhat surprisingly, the results were that they actually had these concerns at a higher rate. The tabulations showed that providers who limit their practice to first trimester abortions answered yes to question 17 almost 10% more often than did the group as a whole.

**RESULTS - HARASSMENT & VIOLENCE** 

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**1.) Have you ever been the victim of anti-abortion harassment or violence?**

Yes ..... 86.59%  
No ..... 13.41%


**2.) If yes to the question above, where has the harassment / violence occurred?**

Office .....	94.98%
Home .....	56.07%
Other .....	19.25%

**NOTE:** Included in the “Other” category were: restaurants, airports, parties, schools, etc.

**3.) Has anti-abortion activity ever caused you to seriously consider no longer providing abortion care?**

Yes .....	36.71%
No .....	63.29%


 **RELATED FINDINGS:** Even among providers who said they had never personally been the victim of anti-abortion harassment or violence (answered no to question 1), 21.62% said that anti-abortion activity has caused them to consider quitting (answered yes to question 3).

**4.) Has anti-abortion harassment / violence ever forced you to curtail your personal activities?**

Yes .....	29.79%
No .....	70.21%

**5.) Has anti-abortion harassment / violence ever had a negative impact on your family?**

Yes .....	54.01%
No .....	45.99%

 **RELATED FINDINGS:** Even among providers who said they had never personally been the victim of anti-abortion harassment or violence (answered no to question 1), 8.11% said that anti-abortion activity has had a negative impact on their family (answered yes to question 5).

**6.) Has anti-abortion harassment / violence ever cost you income?**

Yes .....	63.48%
No .....	36.52%

**7.) Have you experienced problems buying insurance because of anti-abortion harassment / violence?**

Yes .....	33.78%
No .....	66.22%

**8.) Does your competence level decrease during anti-abortion harassment / violence?**

Yes .....	26.87%
No .....	73.13%

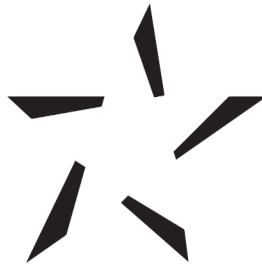
**9.) Has anti-abortion harassment / violence in your personal life ever caused problems between you and your spouse / partner?**

Yes .....	33.62%
No .....	66.38%

**10.) Has anti-abortion harassment / violence ever caused you:**

Anger? .....	75.31%
Nervousness? .....	41.42%
Rage? .....	40.59%
Insomnia? .....	25.10%
Depression? .....	23.43%
Paranoia? .....	15.06%
Guilt? .....	6.28%
Increased alcohol consumption? .....	5.02%
To seek psychiatric counseling? .....	3.77%
Thoughts of suicide? .....	2.09%
Drug use? .....	0.84%

**NOTE:** Of the respondents who said they have been the victim of anti-abortion harassment and/or violence (answered yes to question 1), 85.77% gave affirmative responses to at least one of the above; 66.95% indicated two or more; 39.33% indicated three or more; 27.20% indicated four or more; 15.06% indicated five or more; and 4.18% indicated six or more.



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