

Canadian Grief Alliance

National Public Consultation on Grief Executive Summary

The survey

From November through December 2023, **3,874** people from every province and territory in Canada answered the call from the Canadian Grief Alliance to share their experiences of grief and loss. We heard from people who had experienced the death of someone close to them, as well as a variety of other losses including divorce, declines in health, family estrangement, employment and financial losses, pet loss, among others. This overwhelming response speaks to what the survey data confirms - people want to talk about their grief.



Key takeaways

50% didn't feel adequately supported in their grief.

53% felt their grief wasn't adequately recognized.

People want a dialogue on grief.

Non-death loss and grief is significant but less supported and understood.



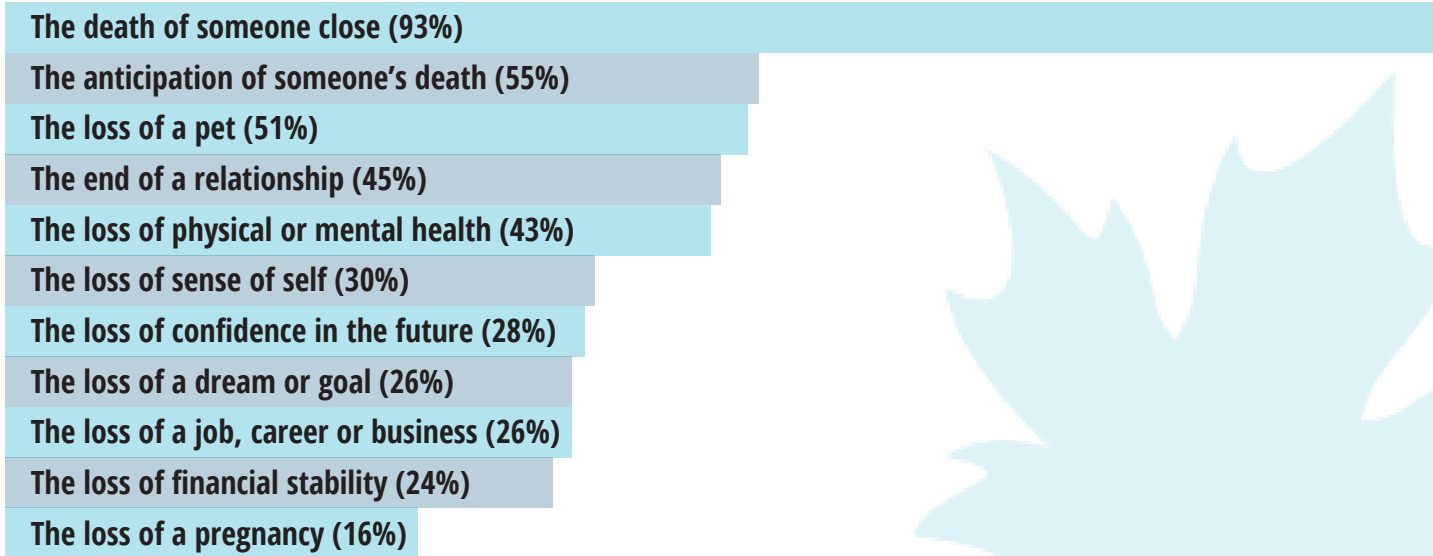
There is a disconnect between what people need and how others respond.

People's expectations of support are often not met.

People want more grief support. One size does not fit all.

Findings

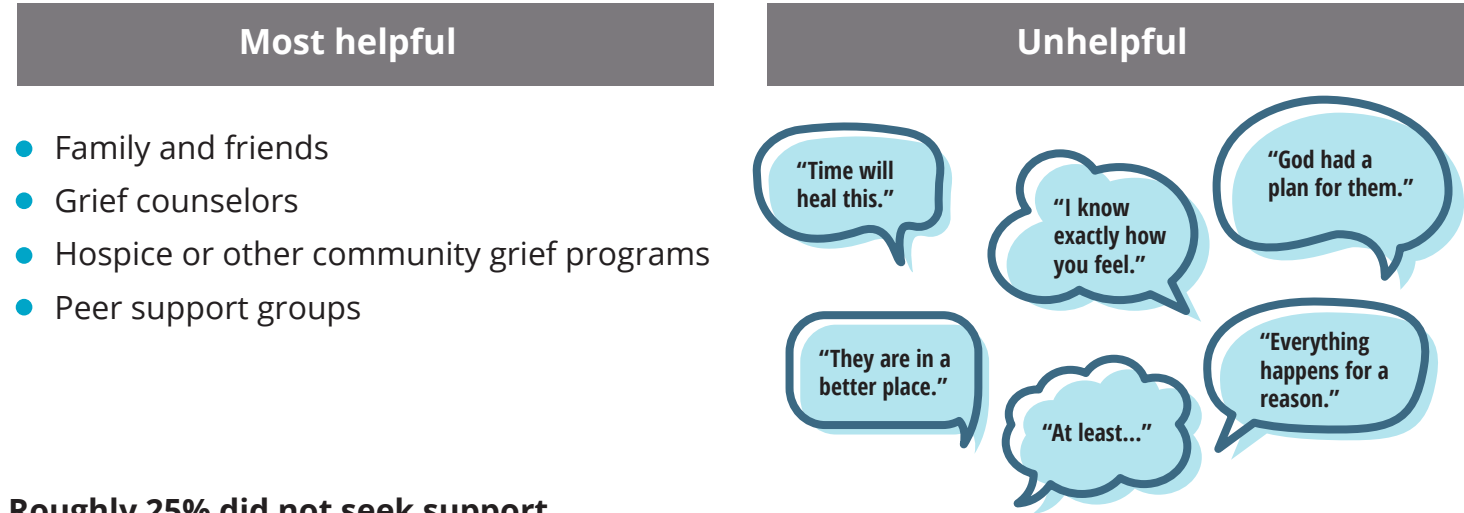
Commonly reported causes of grief



*Bar graph not to scale

Accessing support

Three-quarters of respondents sought support of some kind.



Roughly 25% did not seek support, citing reasons such as:

- Didn't need support (15%)
- Felt they should deal with it on their own (22%)
- Discomfort sharing their grief (12%)
- Wouldn't be understood (10%)
- Didn't recognize their loss as grief (6%)

Notably, a number of frequently accessed sources of support were reported to be less helpful than people hoped including healthcare systems, employer resources, and helplines.

Responses to grief

The gap between what's helpful vs. social norms

The survey results demonstrate a gap between the needs of people who are grieving and how those around them respond. Connection and feeling supported are critical to grieving. However, 53% said their grief went largely unrecognized by others and a similar percentage felt unsupported in their grief.



The missing ingredient

83% Identified being asked about their loss as helpful

93% Identified being asked how they could best be supported as helpful.

These findings stand in contrast to our society's typical response to grief, which is often to avoid mention of the loss.



There was also substantial support for making private grief services more financially accessible, holding community events that encourage talking and learning about grief and loss together, and more access to peer and group support.

What support do people want

54% More access to one-on-one grief counselling

52% Educating the public on how to better support each other

45% Increase access to supports tailored to specific types of loss

Responding to Canadians

These findings demonstrate the need to:

- Enhance understanding of loss and grief by public and health care providers to increase skills and comfort in providing support.
- Expand access to a spectrum of services for both death- and non-death losses.
- Explore in greater detail the grief experiences and needs of people who are:
 - From racialized and marginalized communities;
 - Non-binary;
 - People under 40 years.

A note on the survey

3874 respondents were asked to self-identify based on gender, age, and location. There were respondents from every Canadian province and territory, from all age groups, and respondents who identified as women, men, non-binary, or preferred to self-describe. While survey respondents were diverse, a number of demographics were not represented to the extent that we could draw meaningful conclusions. In addition, race and cultural data were not collected as a part of this initial survey. Ensuring that the voices of people from racialized and marginalized populations are heard is an essential next step.