



PalliativeCare
AUSTRALIA

PROMOTING QUALITY PALLIATIVE CARE SINCE 1991



National Palliative Care

COMMUNITY SURVEY SNAPSHOT

KEY FINDINGS

Three quarters of Australians (76%) are likely to ask for palliative care for themselves or someone close to them if they have a serious, prolonged or terminal illness.

Only four in ten Australians (39%) think a person can first ask for palliative care when they are first diagnosed with a terminal, chronic, or degenerative illness.

Fewer than one third of Australians (31%) think that GPs can provide palliative care.

The majority of Australians (88%) think it is important to start thinking and talking about their wishes and preferences for care if they were to become seriously or terminally ill. However, half (50%) have done nothing regarding their end-of-life-wishes.

Respondents believe that talking about their preferences for the end of their life with their family will upset them (54%) and find the subject of death and planning for the end of their life too difficult to talk about (48%).

ABOUT THE POLLING

Every year Palliative Care Australia (PCA) commissions the National Palliative Care Community Survey as part of National Palliative Care Week. The survey explores community attitudes around palliative care, end-of-life, death and dying. PCA commissioned Pure Profile to undertake the 2021 survey. This report contains data relating to Australian residents.

FINDINGS

PALLIATIVE CARE

Nine out of ten Australians (90%) have heard of the term 'palliative care'. Most Australians would also be likely to ask for palliative care for themselves or someone close if they had a serious, prolonged or terminal illness (76%). The majority (76%) who have had an experience with palliative care reported it as positive. Despite these high levels of awareness, it is clear that many Australians do not understand the full scope of palliative care.

The World Health Organization defines palliative care as:

...an approach that improves the quality of life of patients and their families facing the problems associated with life-threatening illness, through the prevention and relief of suffering by means of early identification and impeccable assessment and treatment of pain and other problems, physical, psychosocial and spiritual.

Palliative care can be delivered across a variety of settings from primary to acute care, in the home, hospital or hospice. However, only four in ten Australians (39%) believe that a person can first ask for palliative care when they are first diagnosed with a terminal, chronic or degenerative illness. Additionally, only a third of Australians (31%) think that GPs can provide palliative care.

Just under seven in ten Australians (69%) indicated their preference to be cared for at home at the end of their life.

PREPARING FOR END-OF-LIFE

Australians understand the importance of talking about your end-of-life wishes but many are not prepared to have the necessary conversations or put plans in place. When considering care if they were to become seriously or terminally ill, eight in ten Australians believe:

- People should plan ahead for the end of their life (78%).
- It is important to start thinking and talking about your wishes and preferences for care if you were to become seriously or terminally ill (88%).
- Planning ahead for the end of your life reduces the stress on your family (81%), gives you control over the care you receive at the end of your life (83%) and gives you control over where you spend your final days (83%).

Despite this understanding, half of all Australians (50%) have done nothing regarding their end-of-life-wishes and a third of Australians (32%) do not have any plans in place, including a will, power of attorney, advance care plan, or nominated person. Half of all Australians say that talking about their preferences for the end of their life with their family will upset them (54%), and find the subject of death and planning for the end-of-life too difficult to talk about (48%).

THE APPROACH

Pure Profile was commissioned by PCA to conduct the annual National Palliative Care Community Survey. The survey was conducted online with a sample of 1,000 Australians during April 2021. Survey respondents were aged 18 years and older distributed throughout Australia. This paper provides an overview of all 1,000 respondents.