



# **The Changing Attitudes to Death 2018**

## **The Great Death Survey**

**Commissioned by Death.io  
Sourced through YouGov**



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## Let's talk death: a note from Paul Wiseall, UK Managing Director of Death.io

When I was 24, one of my best friends died in an accident.

Like most people after a death, I had no idea what I was supposed to do or how to cope, and what followed was one of the hardest experiences of my life. I dealt with the emotional fallout of telling all of our friends that one of the closest people to us had died. I organised pallbearers without knowing how many I needed, I carried a coffin, and I gave a eulogy I never expected to give.

The whole experience was confusing and I didn't know how to deal with it. My employer at the time gave me support in the form of a chatline, but the person trained to answer my questions was off and I was asked to call back another day. I kept thinking that there had to be a better way to deal with this.

Since then I've discovered that death is complicated and it's more than just a funeral and a few sad weeks. The feeling of bereavement never leaves you, it just continues in different ways. Beyond the emotional impact, we also have to think about the financials, the legals, and even our digital legacy.

There has to be an easier, more human way of dealing with death, so we set out to create a service to help change the way we all approach this personal and universal thing and to provide people with the tools to take control of end of life plans. This is why we started Death.io.

As a society, we need to talk about death more, and this report is one of our first steps in helping to open up this conversation. I think you'll be surprised by some of our findings. I certainly was when I saw that 55% of us are bereaved before we leave school, and 1 in 10 of us under 65 would like to live on as a chatbot.

Whatever your experience, I hope this report helps you to spark a positive conversation about death with those you love.

Paul



## Introduction

Death happens to us all, and yet that doesn't prevent many of us from avoiding discussing it. Deep set within our British culture is the feeling that death should be spoken about in hushed tones, if at all. Because of this, we as a nation have very little insight into our 21st-century cultural approaches to death and all that it entails: from funeral directors and digital legacy, to live streaming funerals and what we wear to them.

Here at Death.io, we wanted to change that. We believe passionately that death is something we need to talk about to ensure we are all best prepared for the sadly inevitable loss of a loved one. That's why we asked a snapshot of the UK population a series of 14 questions that deal with death in all its richness.

We wanted to know answers to the tricky questions, like plans for social media accounts, and whether a female undertaker would be preferable to a male one; if you'd like a chatbot version of yourself to exist after you have died, and just how many people consider being buried at sea.

So we worked with YouGov to ask those questions. What follows is our insight from the candid and, at times, emotional responses from people who had perhaps never considered these questions before. And there are some fascinating results.

- More than **1 in 10 of us under the age of 65** would like to exist as a chatbot after death
- 17% of us have no plan when it comes to what we want to do with our emails after death
- For all social media platforms that we asked about, the most popular option was simple deletion - but almost 1 in 10 of us have no plan at all
- **20% of 18-24 year olds** would choose to donate their body to science. This is the most popular choice for what happens to their body after death, as well as the age group most likely to choose this option
- Overall, bodily burial (10%) was almost as popular as donating one's body to science (11%).
- 50% of people want a celebration for a funeral, rather than a sad occasion
- When expressing a preference for the gender of their undertaker, at every age bracket women are preferred over men
- The majority of us are **first bereaved between the ages of 11 to 17 (27%)**, and by the time that we have left full-time education, 55% of us will have lost someone special
- Although 60% of young people (18-24) agreed that assisted suicide should be legal, that percentage rises up to 73% for 55-64s, then drops dramatically to 62% for 65-74s, and just down to 55% of those aged 75+

As you read the following report, let's start having more open conversations about death. The Great Death Survey of 2018 should just be the beginning.

*All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 2018 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 15th - 16th November 2018. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+).*



## Death in a Digital World

Never before have we as humanity had such access to the digital world. As recent studies suggest that [we spend on average 5.9 hours per day online](#), there is now a digital footprint of our lives just as much - if not more so - than a physical paper trail.

This means that our experience of death and bereavement has an additional element to those of our forebears: the digital landscape.

### Would you like to be a chatbot?

Have you considered whether leaving a digital or AI personification of yourself in the world is something you would want?

*Imagine that you could create an online chatbot that would exactly replicate your personality... Would you EVER consider creating a chatbot so that people could interact with your personality after you die?*

AI is a core part of our lives even now. Artificial intelligence predicts what you're about to text, suggests what restaurant you'd probably like, and tracks how often you take a certain route to work. It's a core part of our lives, and yet many of us have no idea. Only [9% of us have heard of machine learning](#), even though most of us interact with it regularly.

Although you may expect young people under the age of 24 to be predominantly positive towards chatbots, it's actually more widespread than that. While **32% of under 35s** are comfortable with it, **at least 1 in 10 under the age of 65 would say yes** to being converted into a chatbot: 15% of 18-24s, 17% of 25-34s, 12% of 35-44s, and 9% of 45-54s.

There is a gender divide here: 12% of men were happy with it, while only 8% of women were. But what's even more interesting is how this changes with different ages.

73% of our respondents would not want any sort of chatbot that could impersonate them - maybe because of [security concerns](#), maybe because of the ['uncanny valley'](#), or the discomfort of seeing someone represented through technology. The majority of those who replied 'yes' also stipulated that they would only like it to be accessible to certain people, friends and family.

Chatbots are typically used at the moment for customer service and to help people navigate websites or complex situations. We don't seem that ready as a nation to start accepting AI versions of ourselves, [no matter what Black Mirror may explore](#).

And yet it's just one way of expressing grief. With celebrities often reacting emotionally to deaths of friends, family members, or passing acquaintances, has this other, more sensationalised, and very public way of expressing grief moved into the general public?



So we asked.

### Emotional expression online

*Thinking about ANY occasions in the past when you have been bereaved...Have you EVER felt pressured, either personally or by others, to express your grief publicly online following a bereavement?*

**90% of our respondents** declared that they haven't felt pressured, either by themselves or others, to display their grief publicly. However, when you start to dig down into the respondents by age, a different picture starts to emerge.

7% of those aged between 18-24 have felt this pressure, whether inflicted internally or externally. In a world in which [a fifth of under-25s spend seven hours a day online](#), you may not find that surprising.

What is perhaps surprising is that **exactly the same percentage of 55-64 year olds** felt the same pressure: 7%.

Why is this? We have no definitive evidence through this report, but it could be because the 55-64 generation was one of the first to keep in touch with loved ones through email, with professional digital technology coming home with them for the first time in our human history. Perhaps this ['silver surfer' generation](#) is starting to feel as though they will be compared to others if they do not follow suit in what is becoming a pattern in online communication.

### Live-streaming your funeral

Sporting events, concerts, ballets and birthdays are all live-streamed by individuals and organisations. So why not funerals?

Again, we can see the influence of celebrity culture here, but in many ways this can be traced back to the emotional outpouring of grief that the UK experienced at the unexpected and tragic death of Diana, Princess of Wales.

Her funeral was broadcast live to the nation, but is this something that we would want for ourselves?

*Would you want your funeral to be live-streamed, if password protected?*

Despite living in a digital age, **only 2% of us** would actively want our funerals to be live-streamed. It's an unexpected result, given the broad nature of our friendships and familial ties, often across borders or continents.



And yet funerals or celebrations of life seem to have a deep need for personal attendance or none at all. We can see that although 6% of those aged 18-24 would happily have their funeral live streamed, this dips quickly to 3% for 25-34 year olds, and is not even considered an option by those in the 65-74 age group.

Is this fear of live-streaming based on concern in an increasingly 'hackable' world? Perhaps there are just aspects of our funerals and the commemoration of our lives that need to retain that element of personal connection.

### **Your social media legacy**

What is going to happen to your social media accounts after you die?

For some people, this will be a question that they have never considered - after all, when we asked we quickly realised that across the social platforms Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, and personal email, **an average of 11% of people had no plan at all.**

*Which, if any, of the following would you like to happen to your accounts after your death?*

For all platforms, there was a clear winner: most of us just want our accounts deleted. This is especially true of email (56%) and Facebook (40%), and for younger people. Those under the age of 35 predominantly requested that their accounts would be deleted.

However, of all platforms that we asked about, the one most likely to be left as a memorial is Facebook, suggesting that their [memorial functionality](#) is starting to seep into our consciousness.

What's most startling however is not the type of plans that people have for their social media accounts, but rather the lack of plans. **17% of us have absolutely no plan** when it comes to our emails, perhaps the most vitally important part of our digital lives.

Very few of our respondents chose to have embarrassing content deleted from their social media accounts, making it the least popular choice for every platform. Perhaps this is because we don't post embarrassing content online anymore - or perhaps because those are aspects of our characters that we would like to be remembered.

And yet there are big differences when you start to drill down by gender. On YouTube, for example, while 32% of men would be happy just leaving their YouTube accounts as they are, only 23% of women would be.

Without a plan for our social media accounts, how can we expect the executors of our wills (if we have them - more on that later...) to enact our wishes if they do not know what they are?



On average across the six platforms, **35% of the time** we just want the content to be deleted. Just 10% of us want content to be left exactly as it is.

This raises some serious questions about our digital legacy, and how our online lives - which is where we spend hours of our day, after all - will be left for our friends, family, and future generations.

How will archaeologists of the future discover our early 21st century culture if so much of the social narrative is deleted? What will our digital footprints - or lack thereof - suggest about censorship and self-destruction?

Perhaps the same [fears that were raised a few centuries ago](#) about the lack of permanence of cremation will soon be raised as entire individuals are wiped from the internet where they shared so much of their passions, time, and made such meaningful connections.

There are notable occasions in which a digital legacy of an individual has helped their loved ones process their loss. There are some people who like to [phone up, text, or email](#) those that they have lost, even if they know that they are not going to receive a response. A few years ago we discovered that the widow of one of the London Tube announcers at Embankment would spend time there [just to hear his voice](#).

Perhaps we should spend more time considering what we want to happen to our social media accounts after we die. Perhaps it could be a new tool to process grief, and enable us to feel closer to those we love and lose.





## Death and Gender

We all die, whatever gender we identify as. However, our experiences of death can alter dramatically depending on what gender we are.

For the purposes of our survey, respondents had the option to identify as male or female - which was the only approach available to us for market research purposes. And yet despite this constraint, we learned a huge amount about how the experience of death, bereavement, and funeral planning looked different for men and women.

### Organising a funeral

*In general, do you think that organising a funeral is primarily a woman's role or a man's role, or do you think it is neither of these?*

It is surely a positive sign of the times that unlike [60% of domestic chores being carried out by women](#), and [Finland being the only country that has equal childcare responsibilities being carried out by each parent](#), organising a funeral has not become a gendered role.

**92% of our respondents** believe that it is neither a man or a woman's role specifically to organise a funeral - something that the industry may not reflect, when you consider that [traditionally funeral directors were male](#).

When you start to break this down by gender, a slight bias starts to creep out. Women are more likely to think that it is a woman's role over a man's, and men are more likely to consider it a man's role. This could be because we have previously taken on the responsibility ourselves or because, as we have seen in our own experiences, every circumstance is different depending on the personality of the deceased.

And if we delve even deeper and start to examine by age, our results become even more interesting. Not a single 18-24 year old who responded to our survey believed that it is specifically a woman's role, and **only 1% thought it was specifically a man's**.

You see an even split throughout all age groups until you reach those aged 75+, when again, not a single person believed that it was exclusively a woman's role, but 5% believed that it was a man's.

### Do we see this with attitudes to undertakers?

An undertaker has a very personal role to play in the process of death, being the individual who prepares the body for burial or cremation. This involves washing and cleansing the body, and potentially embalming.

With that in mind, do we prefer to have an undertaker of a certain gender?



*After you die, would you prefer that a male or a female undertaker takes care of your body, or do you have no preference?*

Genders want to stick with their gender expression: of the 5% of men who expressed a preference, 80% would request a man and just 20% would request a woman. Not one woman in our survey would request a male undertaker, whereas 12% would actively prefer a female undertaker.

In the UK as of 2014, [there were 31,189 female midwives but only 103 male midwives](#). This means statistically the vast majority of us are born into predominantly female spaces, and as go through life we are conditioned to feel more comfortable with women touching us when we are most vulnerable.

When the responses are broken down into age brackets, **in every age group the majority of those who expressed a preference would choose a female undertaker**. The older the respondent, however, the less likely they are to care. 14% of people aged 18-24 expressed a gender preference, but only 4% of those aged 75+ did. Maybe by that time in our lives, we have already been prodded and tested by medical professionals of various genders, so these sorts of things start to matter less.

Overall, 7% of our respondents would prefer a woman whereas only 2% would prefer a man. What is startling is that there are almost double the number of people who do not plan to use an undertaker after death (73) than would prefer a male undertaker (40), leaving male undertakers right at the bottom of the preferences.

We're a complex nation when it comes to death, and what happens to our body after we have died is no exception. There are a myriad of approaches and many of them are more focused on those who we leave behind than the shell of what we inhabited on this earth.



## Planning your Funeral

No one likes the thought of planning a funeral. By its very definition, the only reason that you would have a funeral to plan in the first place is if you have lost someone very close to you.

But have you ever considered planning your own funeral? Here at Death.io, [we offer a free tool](#) to easily and quickly collect vital information about what you would want for your funeral, that can be sent to someone you love.

We wanted to ask the British public some of their opinions on how they would like their own funeral to be organised, and of course, they surprised us.

### What will happen to your body after death?

Hundreds of years ago in Britain, the thought of being cremated was feared, as it was preached that on the final day of Judgement, [the dead would rise from the grave and go to Heaven](#). How could one do that, people asked fearfully, if one was burned?

Not an unnatural question, but one that ceased to be a preventative to cremation over time. Today in 2018, 36% of our survey said that they would want to be cremated and then scattered - an option that was over 20% more popular than any other option.

Although being buried may seem to be the societal norm, it actually received almost the same number of responses (11%) as having **one's body donated to science (10%)**. This could be to prevent loved ones from bearing the burden of funeral costs (considered to be, on average, £4798 based on [Sun Life's 2018 Cost of Dying report](#)), or because we are more aware as a society now of the positive impact that research can have on illness.

The 18-24 year old age group seems to be uniquely aware of this option, with **20% of that age group choosing bodily donation to science** as their preferred option, a staggering number. This was not only the most of all age groups but also the most popular choice for that younger demographic.

And yet, just as we have seen with our social media platforms, not everyone is prepared for this question. 13% of respondents did not know what they would want to happen to their body, suggesting that they have not yet made a plan for their burial at all.

But there are some who have done some serious thinking on the matter, and their responses may surprise you. A selection of them are included below:

- I prefer not to know
- don't care, I shan't be there
- cheapest option, and then plant a tree in my memory
- shot into space
- scattered at sea



- ashes kept by children
- whatever is least harmful to the environment
- buried with my spouse/partner
- cremation then fired in fireworks
- cremation then buried in two countries
- cremation than made into a diamond

### **A sad or happy occasion?**

Before we talk about the tone that people would want their funeral to have, let's instead focus on another statistic: that **11% of our respondents** said that they would not want to have a funeral at all. It could be that this reflects the 11% who would want to donate their body to science, rather than have a physical place of memorial.

And yet, funerals are, in our culture, the norm, with 50% of the people we asked saying that they would like it to be a celebration and a happy occasion - and **6% wanting it to be a sad occasion**.

What we couldn't understand was why women are more likely to want it to be a celebration (53% of women vs 47% of men), while men want it to be more of a sad occasion (7% of men vs 5% of women).

In London the sadness is even more pronounced, with the highest proportion (10%) of all regions in the UK wanting it to be more sombre. Was this perhaps a greater reflection of the diversity of cultures in London, with more traditional mourning rituals?

It may feel startling to hear that 6% of people would want attendees to feel sad and mournful at the commemoration of their life, but it accurately reflects our human process of grieving: intense sadness is a natural stage and one that cannot be ignored just as it should not be wallowed in.

The age group who most felt that they wanted their funeral to be a sad occasion were the youngest: 18-24. The same percentage (**11% do not want it to be either a celebration or a sad occasion**), reflecting the complex nuances of how we process death.

It could be argued that a funeral is not 'for' the person who has died but for those who cared for that person who are hoping to find closure in the process.

### **So what do I wear?**

This is where things get really interesting. Although 6% of our survey wanted a sad funeral, 14% - more than double - would like people attending their funeral to wear black.

In many ways, this is a hangover from our Victorian heritage. The tradition of 'mourning clothes' was created in the nineteenth century as part of a complex mourning ritual that dictated what colours



women could wear after being widowed: black for six months, then in 'half mourning black and white' for six months, then 'half mourning' which included grey and even lavender.

Although in many ways we have progressed and developed beyond these strict social rules, in many ways we haven't. Almost every funeral that you see in a film or on television features people in black, top to tail.

Men are far more traditional in this, wanting black 2% more than women, but young people are also more traditional than you may think: the **18-24 year old age group chose black 21% of the time**, the highest age group to do so.

While 1 in 5 of us would request our loved ones to wear colour, and a tiny 4% would prefer fancy dress, the most popular option, with 43% of the total responses opting for something simpler: no rules at all.

We also received a high number of suggestions, beyond the options that we gave, that demonstrated just how personalised we want our funerals to be. Some of the options that were suggested to us included:

- their own choice
- whatever is sober and respectful
- pink for Breast Cancer charities
- anything but black
- floral clothes
- white
- football shirts

There is no one-size-fits-all when it comes to celebrating and commemorating the ones we love. Just as the uniqueness of our musical choices or taste in clothes define us when we are alive, so they do when we die.



## Bereavement and Loss

It has been said that one of the most traumatic and upsetting things that any of us will experience in life is the loss of a loved one: whether it be a parent, spouse, child, friend, or family member.

We wanted to learn more in a sensitive manner. Only by understanding what people's current experiences around bereavement and loss are, can we start to make it an easier or more manageable process.

And so we started from the very beginning.

### Age of your first bereavement

*How old were you when you were first bereaved?*

5% of our respondents challenged this question immediately: they did not consider themselves to have been bereaved at all. It's a fascinating statistic, and one that amazed us. Is this a societal outlook perhaps, that a loss of someone who was not emotionally close to you does not 'count' as a bereavement - or are there just some very fortunate people out there?

Despite this initially sunny outlook, things start to get bleak immediately. The **most common age to be first bereaved (27%) is between 11 and 17**, when we are undoubtedly unprepared emotionally to cope with the loss of a loved one.

However, another 1 in 5 of us are first bereaved between the ages of 6 and 10, when we may not fully understand the meaning of what death is. When you include those who are bereaved before the age of 6, there's a stunning 55% of us who are bereaved while we are still at school - when we are still legally children.

Our education can have a huge impact on our future, and it is shocking that **more than 1 in 2 of us will leave school having suffered a bereavement**. Should death and bereavement therefore be taught in schools?

Arguably, this education should occur before the transition to secondary school, as 1 in 3 children who make that leap have already been bereaved.

The [Child Bereavement Network](#) has responded to the Education and Health Committee's report on young people's mental health and the role of education, but we need to see institutional change.

We were heartened to read about app 'Apart of Me' [for bereaved children](#), to help them process the loss of a parent or sibling. But is this enough? Should we be doing more to help our young people who are growing up needing to process something that is highly complex?

### The impact of loss



*What was the MOST difficult part of the grieving process for you?*

We all experience loss differently, but there are some commonalities across us all:

- a decline in personal health, such as our mental health, lack of appetite, or difficulty sleeping
- dealing with finances, such as the cost of the funeral, medical bills, and loss of family income
- coping with parenting, from explaining death to children, to needing to parent alone
- telling others, which may include reliving the trauma, the sheer number of people to tell, and upsetting responses
- the impact on jobs, from lack of compassionate leave to difficulty focusing, and non-empathetic colleagues
- legal implications, from proving and executing the will, to familial disagreement over inheritance

When you see it all written out like that, it makes you wonder how anyone manages to cope with the loss of someone that they cared deeply about.

And yet what you may consider to be the most obviously impactful may not match up to our results. While for **21% of people the biggest impact was on personal health**, just 3% behind it at 18% was telling others about the death. The process of having to experience someone else's initial moments of grief, perhaps multiple times, came out as almost as impactful as one's personal grief.

However, we do seem to become more resilient to bereavement as we grow older - or perhaps, more practised. We see the choice of 'personal health' being the biggest impact decrease with each age group, from 33% of 18-24 year olds reporting it as the biggest impact, to 26% of 35-44 year olds, to just 12% of 65-74 year olds.

Women self-report as struggling with this impact more than men, choosing it as the most impactful consequence 25% of the time, when **men only selected it 17% of the time**. Despite this, we know that [suicide is the biggest killer of men under the age of 40](#), so perhaps the emotional impact is felt in different ways and is expressed in ways which do not generate external emotional support.

Of all working backgrounds, it was full-time students who felt the emotional impact the most, with 35% of them choosing this as the most impactful part of bereavement. We know that students can be emotionally vulnerable, many of them away from home for the first time, and our data shows just how imperative it is that they receive the right support at the right times.

The age group that found legal implications the most challenging were the 55-64 age group at 11%, the ones most likely to be losing parents as well as seeing their own child grow up and fly the nest. This generation is also more likely to be executors of wills, so have dealt with the complexities of probate.



And yet, despite the wide variety of impacts, physical, mental, emotional, economic, and parenting, **33% of our respondents** did not believe that any one of these options impacted them the most. This could be because there was something else that impacted them - or simply because it was so overwhelming that it is impossible to simply pick one.





## The Complexities of Death

There are some aspects of death that you just cannot get away from, but they are often the most difficult and emotionally charged questions. So, we asked sensitive questions around assisted suicide, organ donation, and just whether anyone knows where your will is.

### Assisted suicide

*Do you think assisted suicide should or should not be legal in the UK?*

The result was clear. **67% - a clear majority - believed that assisted suicide should be legal.**

Currently, at the time of writing, assisted suicide is only available in 6 countries and 6 US States around the world, with Switzerland being perhaps the one that is best known for hosting Dignitas, a company that helps people who decide that they would like to end their lives, to do so.

Although a hot topic for debate here in the UK, with parliamentary debates on the topic in years as recent as 2015, and [lawsuits as recently as November 2018](#), there are strong opinions on both sides, but it seems clear where the public feeling is.

This sentiment could be partly because of the financial cost of travelling to take a person who wishes to end their life, or the impact of the legal consequences that a loved one would have to face when they return to the UK. But with greater numbers of our loved ones living for longer, we are seeing more people living with chronic and untreatable conditions without an improvement in their quality of life.

Dementia. Parkinson's. Multiple sclerosis. These are conditions that leave emotional and physical scars, and it's not surprising that 2 in 3 people would wish to give others the option of assisted suicide.

However, this is not a truly accurate picture of Britain. To gain that, we need to delve deeper.

69% of men believed that assisted suicide should be legal while just 65% of women did. When you break this down by location, it's fascinating: although 66% believe that it should be legal in England, it's **71% in Wales**, and **74% in Scotland**.

When you start to examine the numbers based on age, you discover something startling. Although 60% of people aged 18-24 stated that they thought assisted suicide should be legal, that percentage rises up to 73% for those aged 55-64, dropping dramatically to 62% for those aged 65-74, and just 55% of those aged 75+.

In many cases, the person who indicates that they would like to gain help to end their own life are not those who have lived well into their seventies or eighties. They are those who have had their



lifetime and most importantly, their quality of life, cut short by illness. This is reflected in our survey, with those in the middle age groups finding it more acceptable that assisted suicide be made legal.

And of course, this decision colours other approaches to death. Of those who think that assisted suicide should be legal (67%), 81% of those would like to donate their body to science, demonstrating a keen interest in body ethics, and perhaps a determination to see the end of these illnesses.

### **Organ donation**

This determination towards research is reflected in our survey into approaches to organ donation. 68% of us are comfortable with organ donation, and yet [in 2015/16, only 1364 people who died](#) donated their organs.

In the opposite way to assisted suicide, women are more comfortable with organ donation, with 72% saying that they would be happy with it against the 64% of men who would be. We also see an increase in acceptance with the older generation, with **70% of the 55-64 age group** happy to donate their organs, but only 65% from the 25-34 age group.

Perhaps so few intended organ donations actually happen because of a lack of clarity in a person's will or last wishes. Perhaps in some cases, the organs simply are not in a healthy enough state to be donated. Perhaps family members change their minds at the last moment, finding the process too difficult and emotionally upsetting.

The calls for an 'opt-out' scheme which has [been heeded in Wales](#) needs to be heard across the UK if we are to prevent 3 people dying each day while waiting for an organ to be donated.

### **And the million dollar question is...**

*...Does your next of kin know where your will is?*

After all, what is the point in having all of these plans, hopes, wishes, and opinions if no one else knows about them? How will the executors of your will know whether you want all black at your live-streamed funeral, or your body to be donated to science after being cared for by a female undertaker if you do not tell them?

54% of our respondents do not have a will - although **this drops to 41% in Wales**, perhaps influenced by the aforementioned organ donation opt-out.

82% of 18-24 year olds do not have a will, but this percentage decreases with every age bracket. However, it is only until the 55-64 age group that this tilts beyond 50% (37%), and a huge 14% of those over the age of 75 still do not have a will.



But as we now know that the majority of us (55%) will be bereaved before we leave school, it is vital that people under the age of 50 have a will to prevent intestate estates (people dying without a will) being left in a way contrary to your wishes - without taking into consideration the multiple personal wishes that cannot be carried out without your explicit instructions in a will.

And yet despite actually making them, **8% of us have wills that could not be found by our next of kins**. Is this an over-reliance on solicitors, or do we simply assume that a lawyer will swoop in at the moment of death, ready to present the next of kin with a signed document including all the details that they could ever possibly hope to have?



## Prefer Not to Say

Death is indeed a complex thing. Without even considering the spiritual elements, we have so many different opinions and wishes, with multiple options at every stage of our bereavement process and for our own personal plans for after death.

And yet, despite the fact that in one way or another death will come to us all, it would seem that we are not only inadequately prepared, but also unable or unwilling to discuss it.

Throughout our survey, we gave our respondents the option to 'Prefer not to say', and these results alone are telling.

- *Should assisted suicide be legal or illegal?* **5%** preferred not to say.
- *What age were you first bereaved?* **1%** preferred not to say.
- *What was the most impactful part of your bereavement process?* **2%** preferred not to say.
- *Have you felt pressured to overexpress grief online?* **2%** preferred not to say.
- *Do you have a preference on the gender of your undertaker?* **9%** preferred not to say/did not answer.
- *What do you want to happen to your body after death?* **9%** preferred not to say/did not answer.
- *Do you want your funeral to be happy or sad?* **10%** preferred not to say/did not answer.
- *What do you want people to wear at your funeral?* **1%** preferred not to say.
- *Are you comfortable with your organs being donated?* **9%** preferred not to say/did not answer.
- *Do you want your funeral to be live-streamed?* **1%** preferred not to say.
- *Would you like to live on as a chatbot?* **9%** preferred not to say/did not answer.

Why is it that we are so hesitant to talk about death? What is it that frightens us so much? Why are we so ill-equipped to face this?

Because we do not talk about it. Talking about death is not normalised: we do not do it, it is socially frowned upon, and so we grow up feeling nervous and emotionally unprepared for death.

Let's talk death. Let's make it more normal to have these conversations with our loved ones so that they know our wishes. Let's make wills so that our executors don't have to guess. Let's make death a facet of our lives, because all of us, at some point, lose someone.

Let's not make that moment of grief the first time that you have to think about death.