

## The Final Chapter Californians' Attitudes & Experiences with Death & Dying

A large majority of Californians say they would prefer a natural death if they became severely ill, rather than have all possible care provided. They would prefer to die at home instead of a hospital or nursing home, and they want to talk with their doctor about

their wishes for care at the end of their lives. However, as a recent survey shows, Californians don't always get what they want. The following are some results of a 2011 survey of 1,669 adult Californians, including 393 who had lost a loved one in the past 12 months.

- Californians say the most important factors at the end of their life are making sure their family is not burdened financially by the costs of care (67% say this is extremely important) and being comfortable and without pain (66%).
- Two-thirds of Californians say they would prefer a natural death if they were severely ill. Only 7% say they would want everything done to prolong life.
- Sixty percent say that making sure their family is not burdened by tough decisions about their care is "extremely important." However, 56% of Californians have not communicated their end-of-life wishes to the loved one they would want making decisions on their behalf.
- While a large majority of Californians (82%) say it is important to have end-of-life wishes in writing, only 23% say they have done so.
- Seventy percent of Californians say they would prefer to die at home. However, in 2009, 32% of deaths in California occurred at home, 42% in a hospital, and 18% in a nursing home.
- Almost 80% say they definitely or probably would like to talk with a doctor about end-of-life wishes, but only 7% have had a doctor speak with them about it.
- Over 80% think it would be a very or somewhat good idea for doctors to be paid for conversations about end-of-life care.
- Top concerns vary by race and ethnicity. For example, Latinos rate living as long as possible (56%) more highly than do other groups.
- Lack of insurance and language barriers strongly influence Californians' perceptions about whether a recently deceased loved one received excellent or very good care.

*The Final Chapter* was developed by the California HealthCare Foundation in collaboration with the Coalition for Compassionate Care of California and Lake Research Partners. To view the entire report, visit [www.chcf.org](http://www.chcf.org).

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