



# Impact SPOTLIGHT

November 2024, Issue 3

## Supporting Those Affected by Suicide – The Impact of International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day

### The Challenge

Each year, nearly 50,000 people die by suicide in the U.S. The impact of those losses is felt deeply by families, friends, colleagues, and communities. Navigating the personal journeys of loss and grief can be challenging. In 1999, the United States Congress designated **International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day (Survivor Day)** to support those affected by suicide, passing a resolution introduced by Senator Harry Reid. Held annually on the Saturday before American Thanksgiving, Survivor Day is an event in which survivors of suicide loss come together to find connection, understanding, and hope through their shared experience.

**Connect with your local chapter** to learn more about how you can attend or bring a Survivor Day event to your community.

Measuring impact – by collecting and leveraging data in strategic and thoughtful ways – plays a critical role in ensuring that we achieve real results with the actions we take, programs we produce, and partnerships and initiatives we embark on in our quest to prevent suicide and provide support to those affected.

The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention's *Impact Spotlight* series takes a look at some of the ways we're making a true difference in communities everywhere.

### Key Takeaways

1. In 2023, more than 6,700 people attended one of the 308 International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day events worldwide.
2. Most people who attended an event felt hopeful, supported, and connected to others.
3. After attending an event, most people indicated they would take concrete steps to support themselves or someone else through their grief journey.



## Taking Action

Together with our chapter network, AFSP conducted a robust evaluation of Survivor Day to assess its reach and impact in communities. Using data collected from over 300 events worldwide in November of 2023, our evaluation has helped us to:

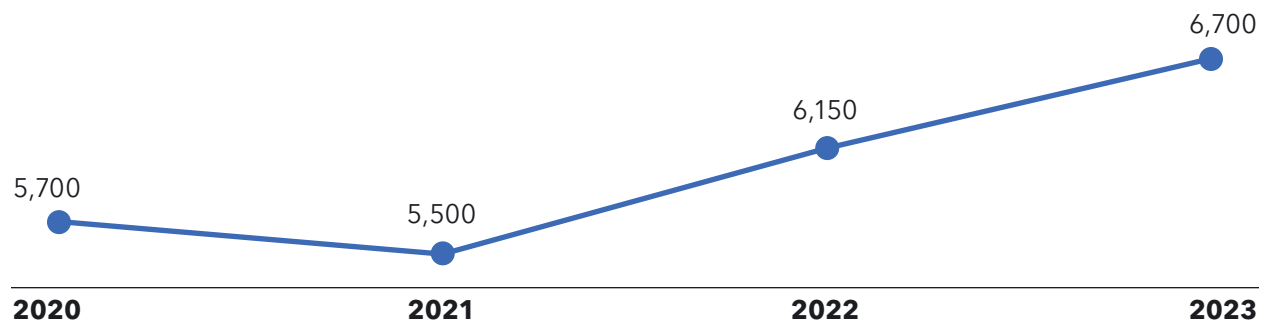
- Assess the effectiveness of Survivor Day in helping attendees feel supported in navigating their loss, and inspired to take concrete steps in order to help themselves or others
- Use participant feedback to improve future event planning and implementation

By implementing a comprehensive evaluation strategy, we can ensure our programs are meeting community needs and reaching their intended audience.

## Who Was Involved

In 2023, over 6,700 people participated in 308 Survivor Day events – a 10% increase in participation from 2022. Of these events, 284 took place across the United States, while 24 were held in 20 other countries worldwide.

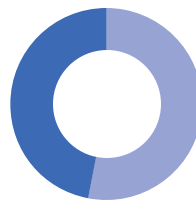
### Participation in Survivor Day events has increased by 18% since 2020



**9 out of 10 participants were suicide loss survivors (N=824)**



**47% of participants had attended a Survivor Day event before (N=922)**



**82%** of participants were women.

**46%** of participants were 45 to 64 years old.

### Nearly all participants had a positive perception of the event and would recommend it to others (N=859)

Would "definitely" or "probably" recommend the event to others **97%**

Found the activities at the events to be valuable **95%**

Rated the program as "excellent" to "good" **94%**

Note: 'N' refers to the total number of people who responded to that question.

## What We Found

Overall, Survivor Day was found to be a powerful and effective event for participants. Our evaluation highlighted three major themes from participants' feedback.

### Honoring Loved Ones

Participants expressed the significance of honoring their loved ones in a safe, supportive environment.



"International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day means hope to move forward remembering my best friend in a positive light."

"Participants' courage to keep going and connect with others while honoring their loved ones is a beautiful experience to witness."

### Shared Understanding

Being among other loss survivors who "get it" and understand the grief was incredibly powerful for participants.



"I know I am not alone."

"It's a wonderful opportunity to find comfort as we head into the holidays alongside other survivors who 'get it.'"

"We are all members of this club we don't want to be in. At least we can be there together and find comfort in each other."

### Healing and Hope

Survivor Day is an opportunity for people to find hope, chart a path forward, and learn to cope with their grief.



"It means finding hope for me, that I will grow with my pain, instead of letting it take over me."

"My life changed forever the day my brother died, but I now know the value of sharing our grief in order to begin the journey of healing."



**Nearly all (98%)** participants reported feeling supported, connected, and hopeful after attending the event (N=859).



**86% of participants** after attending a Survivor Day event reported intending to take concrete steps to help themselves and others (N=839).

**68% of participants** intend to attend another AFSP program.

**59% of participants** intend to take time for themselves and practice self-care.



"I look forward to Survivor Day each year. It is comforting and emboldening to be among a community that speaks my grief language. I am grateful to AFSP for the space and time to grow into, and out of, my grief."

## What Comes Next

**Building on these findings and feedback collected from event organizers, Survivor Day events will continue to be improved by implementing:**

1. More culturally relevant content for specific audiences, and
2. More opportunities for interaction and engagement with others.