

# Investigation of the phenomenology and impact of spontaneous and direct After-Death Communications (ADCs)

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

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## Presentation of research project

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### What are After-Death Communications (ADCs)?

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A spontaneous and direct After-Death Communication (ADC) occurs when a person unexpectedly perceives a deceased person through a variety of sensory perceptions, i.e. through sight, hearing, smell, or touch. Very commonly, persons who have an ADC (called experiencers) simply feel the presence of the deceased person or perceive a contact or a communication during sleep or when falling asleep or waking up. The deceased person is perceived in a manner that is interpreted as indicative of the continued survival of some aspect of that person.

#### ADCs are:

- **Spontaneous:** contacts or communications allegedly initiated by the deceased, without initiation by or solicitation from the experiencers;
- **Direct:** without intervention of other persons (e.g. spirit mediums), use of devices (Ouija<sup>1</sup>, Instrumental TransCommunication, ITC<sup>2</sup>), or an otherwise mediated contact;
- Typically conveying a **message**: **R**eassuring, **R**esolving, **R**eaffirming, **R**eleasing.

### A (hidden) major social phenomenon

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ADCs occur frequently, with an estimated 40-50% of people, in particular mourners, having experienced one or more spontaneous ADCs. Testimonies collected on all continents and for centuries suggest this phenomenon to be *universal* and *timeless*. Despite their widespread occurrence, ADCs, paradoxically, have been little researched and are absent from the media and public discourse. As a consequence, experiencers usually have no frame of reference in terms of which to understand, integrate and fully benefit from this experience, which does not appear to match mainstream conceptions of reality.

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1 A device consisting of a small board, or planchette, on legs that rest on a larger board marked with words, letters of the alphabet, etc., and that by moving over the larger board and touching the words, letters, etc., while the fingers of spiritualists, mediums, or others rest lightly upon it, is employed to answer questions, give messages, etc.

2 Instrumental TransCommunication is the name that has been given by Professor Ernst Senkowski, a German physicist, for the technique of contacting spirits, using any electronic means to capture the images of spirits (ITC), and to record their voices (EVP : Electronic Voice Phenomenon).

# An international research project for a better understanding of the nature and impact of ADCs

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Thanks to a generous grant from the Salvia Foundation, an ambitious project entitled *Investigation of the phenomenology and impact of perceived spontaneous and direct After-Death Communications (ADCs)* was conducted from February 2018 to January 2020.

## Project design

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This mixed methods, multinational survey conducted in English, French, and Spanish has three objectives.

### 1st objective:

#### Description of the circumstances and subjective experience (phenomenology) of ADCs

- Who has an ADC?
- Under what circumstances?
- In what form (type of ADC)?
- How do these experiences unfold?
- What are the messages of ADCs?
- Who are the deceased persons allegedly initiating the contact?
- What was/is their relation with the experiencers?
- Are there differences between countries?

### 2nd objective:

#### Analysis of the impact of ADCs on the people who have them

- How do people experience ADCs?
- What meaning do they attribute to them?
- What is the immediate and long term impact on experiencers ?
- How do ADCs influence the grieving process?
- Does the national and social context influence individuals' experiences?

### 3rd objective:

#### Dissemination of research results to the scientific community and the general public

By collecting information about how ADCs occur and unfold, and by analyzing their impact on individuals' lives, we aim to make these results accessible to people who face the death of a loved one, as well as to anyone

sensitized to the finite nature of human existence. We wish to contribute to raising awareness about ADCs and hope that our work will have a practical impact on a large number of people.

## Questionnaire

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To achieve the various objectives of the project, we needed a very detailed questionnaire. We developed **194** questions (including follow-up questions after affirmative responses) to cover all these aspects, some of which are presented in this publication.

We first proposed that participants describe their ADC with their own words in a free text box. In cases where participants had experienced several ADCs, we asked them to describe only one ADC, by choosing the most significant one. Then the questions were presented with multiple choice options. Many questions were combined with follow-up questions with a free text box. Two to three hours were necessary to fill in the questionnaire, with the possibility of completing it in several goes. Despite this important investment in time, very few participants dropped out along the way.

We concluded that experients appreciated being able to describe their ADC and its impact in a safe, nonjudgmental space, knowing that it is not always easy to share this experience which seems to be contrary to the materialist conception of reality of western societies.

The questionnaire was presented in English, French, and Spanish using a secure online survey platform. The link was sent out to interested parties (purposive sample) and was advertised on a website dedicated to this kind of experience. Initial pages described the project/phenomena and outlined ethical aspects, a description of how data would be used, and were followed by a request for consent.

The questionnaire was available online – in English, French and Spanish – for a period of six months.

## Data collected

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The number of completed questionnaires far exceeded our expectations.

English: 416 | French: 440 | Spanish: 148

**A total of 1,004 completed questionnaires**

**More than 2 million words just for the full ADC accounts**

**Largest multilingual collection of spontaneous  
modern-day ADCs worldwide**

## Presentation of quantitative research findings

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The results presented in this booklet refer to the totality of the collected data, namely the combination of the replies of the 1,004 questionnaires completed in English, French, and Spanish. The purpose of this publication is to present some of the *quantitative results* of the survey. The thematic analyses of the collected data will be the subject of individual papers.

## Some demographics of participants

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There was a clear sex difference in the number of responses, with 853 women having completed the questionnaire, compared to only 144 men (7 persons checked “other”, e.g. transgender). However, literature shows that men and women have ADCs in roughly the same proportion, but women report them more. This important difference in the gender of participants may simply mean that women are more comfortable sharing personal and emotional experiences than men.

The age of participants ranges between 18 and 89 years, with a median age of 51 years.

We have a relatively well educated sample:

The next question was related to the professional status of our participants:

**85.0%  
of female  
participants, compared  
with only 14.3% of male  
participants**

**48.1%  
university  
17.7% college or  
equivalent  
22.1% technical training  
12.2% secondary  
school**

**58.4% with a job, 20.7% retired, 4.0% looking for work,  
3.8% housewife/husband, 2.4% in school or university, 1.2% on  
temporary leave, 0.7% in retraining, 0.2% in military or community  
service, and 8.6% none of above**

## Religious beliefs and spirituality

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**Religious beliefs** only increased slightly after an ADC.

The group was very moderately religious before the ADC, with only 94 persons of our sample who “strongly agreed” in considering themselves a religious person before the ADC, compared with 123 after the ADC. 396 participants had a neutral position on the subject before the ADC, with a small variation of 370 participants who remained neutral on the religious issue after the ADC (partially transcribed responses only).

9.4% considered themselves religious before the ADC, compared to 12.3% after the ADC; 39.8% were neutral before the ADC, against 37.2% remaining neutral after the ADC

Literature indicates that being a believer, agnostic or atheist does not influence the nature of the experience or the probability of having one. The belief in the survival of consciousness or the firm negation of this hypothesis does not seem to increase or diminish the probability of experiencing a spontaneous contact with a deceased person. The **interpretation** of the ADC, however, is individual since it is linked to the belief system and to the specific life experience of the person.

**Spirituality**, on the other hand, is strongly reinforced by these experiences. 362 participants “strongly agreed” in considering themselves spiritual before the contact, compared to 635 after. This shift is significant. 202 persons had a neutral attitude before the experience, while only 82 remained neutral after the ADC (partially transcribed responses only).

36.4% considered themselves spiritual before the ADC, compared with 63.6% after the ADC; 20.3% were neutral before the ADC, compared with only 8.2% after the ADC

## Multiple ADCs

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A large majority of our participants had multiple ADCs with one or several deceased persons. This was a surprise to us since the literature does not report such a high number of multiple ADCs.

79.8% experienced several ADCs and 9.6% were unsure, compared to 10.6% who had only one ADC.  
34.4% always perceived the same deceased person and 7.1% were unsure, against 58.5% who perceived different deceased persons

## Types of ADCs

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A variety of sensory experiences are reported, mainly related to the senses of hearing, touch, smell and vision. The sense of taste might come indirectly into play when people simultaneously smell and taste a scent. Often, several sensory organs are involved simultaneously. Experiencers report for example that they could hear a deceased loved one tell them that she was well and that they should not worry about her, while smelling the perfume she used to wear.

### Sensing a presence

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Experiencers feel the familiar presence of a deceased family member or friend, without seeing or hearing them, or feeling a physical contact, or smelling a fragrance characteristic of the deceased. **342** of our participants had an ADC of “sensing a presence”.

**34.4% felt  
the presence of the  
deceased**

The identity and personality of the deceased clearly emanate from this presence and allow for immediate identification.

The presence seems to have a certain density, almost physical, though invisible. 68.3% of our participants were aware where the deceased was positioned in space (e.g. at their left side, in front or behind them), and 64.4% knew exactly when they came and left. For 60.7% of our respondents, the impression of the deceased’s presence was different from the times when they thought about them or felt that they were always “by their side” or “in their heart”. For a majority, namely 73.6%, the deceased communicated something by their sheer presence.

### Hearing a voice

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**430** participants had auditory ADCs. These contacts come in two forms: either the experiencers hear a voice that seems to come from an outside source, in the same way that they would hear a living person (this was the case for 48.5% of our respondents), or they perceive the communication without an external sound (56.4% of our sample).

**43.3% heard  
the deceased**

In this second case, they speak of a message “deposited in their consciousness”, while specifying that the origin of the communication lies outside them and that it is not a thought. It would therefore be a telepathic communication. Communication can be one-way or two-way. For both types of contact, the deceased are generally recognized without hesitation by



the intonation of their voice and by a certain way of expressing themselves characteristic of him or her. 67.8% stated that the voice they heard was the same than the one the deceased had in his or her lifetime.

How can one differentiate a perceived communication without an external sound from a thought? For 87.2% of our respondents, there was no doubt that the communication was different from a thought and that they did not generate it themselves.

## Feeling a physical contact

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**472** of those surveyed experienced a tactile ADC. During this type of ADC, experients feel a physical contact on a part of their body, for example a touch, a pressure, a caress, a kiss, a hand placed on the shoulder or a real embrace. The contact is comforting and the experients generally recognize immediately their loved one by the familiarity of the gesture. Some report that the contact was accompanied by an “electrical flow” or an “energy wave”.

**47.7% felt  
a physical contact**

For 54.8% the contact was familiar since it was characteristic of the deceased. We asked participants if they had tried to touch the deceased. 26.2% had taken this initiative. Of those who had sought physical contact, 43.4% could grasp the deceased and felt matter. 79.8% reported that a communication had been transmitted to them by the physical contact.

## Seeing the deceased

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**460** of our participants had a visual ADC. These experiences come in a variety of forms. Apparitions can occur indoors, for example at night in the bedroom, or outside, even in a car, on a plane, etc. Occasionally, apparitions are accompanied by a drop in ambient temperature, sometimes combined with draughts.

**46.2% saw  
the deceased**

The deceased can be perceived either as a whole or only partially (head and bust), with a graduation of sharpness. The descriptions of apparitions range from the vision of a vaporous and semi-transparent silhouette revealing the objects behind it to the perception of a perfectly solid body, passing through all the intermediate stages. For 61.6% of our sample, the deceased seemed solid like a living being, for 12.5% the apparition was semi-transparent, and 11.3% perceived a foggy silhouette. Sometimes there is a dynamic evolution in the perception: a hazy form is perceived first which

solidifies gradually passing through the silhouette stage to finally take the form of a solid person who appears to be alive.

60.2% of our respondents saw the apparition with open eyes and 31.1% with closed eyes. For 61.6% the deceased was within reaching distance. Apparitions seem sometimes brighter than their environment, as if a light surrounded them or came from them. For 34.7% of our sample, the apparition was indeed surrounded by light.

For 59.8% the apparitions were already there when they perceived them and for 28.5% they were materializing right before their eyes. After a few seconds or a few minutes, they were fading away gradually (14.4%), dissolving instantly (28.1%), or not there anymore when respondents blinked (18.0%).

79.8% claimed that the apparition conveyed a message, either in words, telepathically, or by expression of the face.

## Smelling a fragrance characteristic of the deceased

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**276** of our participants had an olfactory ADC, namely a contact during which fragrances associated with a deceased person are perceived. Typical scents are that of a perfume, after-shave lotion, soap or a characteristic body scent, but the range of odours reported is wide. It can be flowers, but also medicine, food, drinks, tobacco, etc. Fragrances appear suddenly, for no apparent reason and out of context, indoors or outdoors, without any source being detected. After a few seconds or a few minutes at most, the fragrance dissolves.

**27.9%**  
smelled a fragrance  
characteristic of the  
deceased

59.9% of our participants claimed that the deceased was conveying a message to them by way of a fragrance.

## Sleep ADC

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**618** participants had an ADC during sleep, when falling asleep or waking up. Sleep ADCs are very common. We asked participants if they were soundly asleep or just falling asleep or waking up when the ADC occurred. 61.2% were soundly asleep, 9.5% falling asleep, and 17.9% waking up.

**62.2%** had an ADC  
during sleep

According to experients, contacts that occur during sleep are completely different from an ordinary dream. They seem to have the same characteristics as waking ADCs. These contacts are clear, consistent, memorable and felt to be real and do not take on the complex, symbolic and fragmented nature of dreams which are quickly forgotten when we wake up. Although experients often cannot tell whether they were awake or not during the experience, they systematically state “It was completely different from a dream, it was much more real”. Those who have had dreams of deceased loved ones and also an ADC during sleep make a clear distinction between the two types of experiences.

## Crisis ADC

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**206** of our participants had a crisis ADCs. Crisis ADCs take place within a 24 hours window before and after death. They are particularly significant, and even evidential, since experients claim that they have been informed of the death of a family member or friend **by the deceased themselves**. In a waking state or waking up at night, experients hear or see the deceased who announce their death with serenity, sometimes even with joy (“*I came to say good-bye, I am leaving now*”). Incidentally, they often seem to use the verb *to leave*, as if they were preparing to embark on a journey.



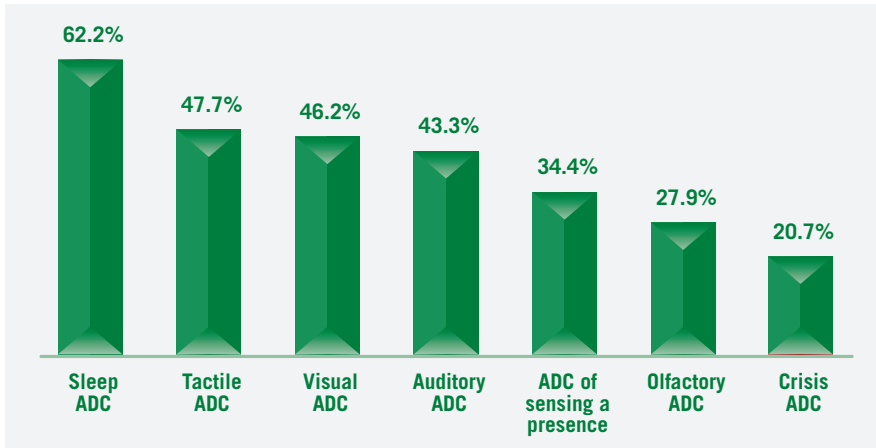
20.7% had a crisis ADC

Sometimes the apparitions don't transmit a message but experients immediately understand that this is a last farewell. These experiences, which occur at the precise time of death or shortly before or after, and often take place at a distant location, **precede** the announcement of death (by the hospital, the family, etc.). In some cases, these demises were not predictable because the person was not sick and passed away for example during an accident. **Expectation** of the imminent death of a very sick or elderly person could therefore only act as a trigger for the ADC in certain cases.

Among those who reported that they had experienced a crisis ADC, 59.9% were able to confirm later that the deceased did die at the time of the experience. For many (48.0%), the death was predictable so they may have been expecting it, but for a substantial number (44.1%) the death was not predictable. A majority (74.6%) was physically remote from where the person was dying and many (56.1%) had not had a chance to say goodbye or resolve unfinished business with them before they died.

## Comparative graph by type of ADC

The following graph presents the number of occurrences by type of ADC of our sample.



Sleep ADCs top our ranking. There are three types of sleep ADCs:

- 1) contacts that occur while people are asleep, but which they very clearly distinguish from an ordinary dream;
- 2) ADCs which occur when falling asleep or waking up, during what researchers describe as a hypnagogic state; and
- 3) contacts that wake up the experients. Once they are awakened, their experience fits into one of the other categories (ADC of sensing of presence, tactile, visual, auditory or olfactory). More than half of our sample (51.6%) were woken up by the ADC.

It is also noteworthy that visual ADCs, which are very striking, rank higher than we expected since literature does not suggest such a high number of occurrence.

## Immediate identification of the deceased

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Do experiencers instantly recognize the identity of the perceived deceased persons? Even if they only feel their presence, without seeing or hearing them, without smelling a characteristic fragrance and without feeling a physical contact? We asked participants if they “immediately and beyond doubt” recognized the identity of the deceased and the answer was overwhelmingly positive since, for the whole dataset, 833 persons (84.9%) answered in the affirmative. Occasionally, experiencers claim that they perceived an apparition they didn’t recognize. Subsequently, on the basis of a photo, they identified them as being an ancestor or a deceased distant relative.

## Circumstances of occurrence of ADCs

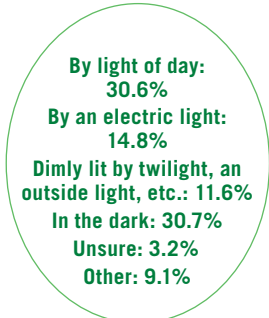
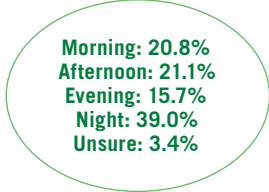
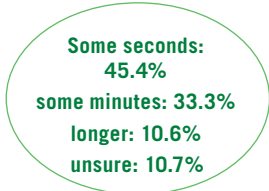
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We asked those surveyed a number of questions regarding the **circumstances** in which the ADCs occurred.

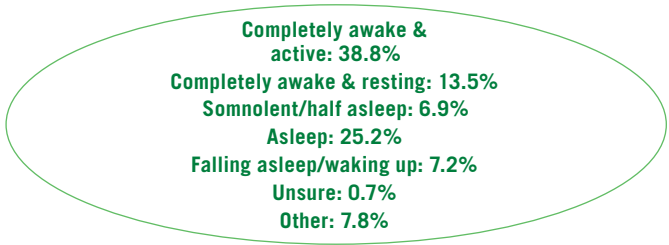
We queried how long the contact lasted. The data collected confirm previous research – these experiences are indeed very brief, and yet they mark experiencers in a profound and lasting way.

At what time of the day/night did the ADC occur? Night time seems to be a propitious moment for these experiences to unfold. Unusual experiences such as ADCs are associated in popular culture with nighttime, when people might be prone to over interpret ambiguous stimuli. In our sample it is true that experiences were most likely to occur at nighttime, but many were reported to have happened in the morning or afternoon when lighting conditions were better and the respondent wide awake.

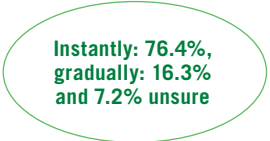
Was the place where the ADC occurred illuminated or in the dark? Although a good number of the ADCs of our sample took place during the night, it doesn’t necessarily mean that they happened in the dark.



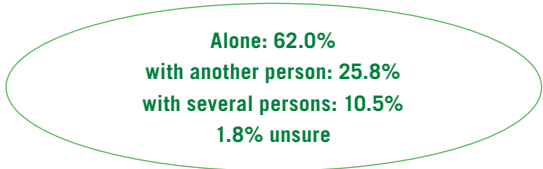
We look at the state of alertness of experients when the ADC took place. A majority were completely alert.



Did the experience happen instantly or gradually?  
For a large majority, the contact happened instantly.



We enquired if participants were alone or with other person(s) when they perceived the ADC. Most participants were alone.



ADCs can occasionally be perceived simultaneously by several people gathered in the same place. These contacts are called **shared ADCs**. Literature indicates that a majority of ADCs occur without third parties being able to witness it. Either the experient is alone at the time of the contact, or other people are present but don't perceive the deceased. Shared ADCs are supposed to be rare but they are particularly striking since the common experience of a contact reinforces the impression of reality of the event.

Our data confirm previous research on this point. Shared ADCs seem indeed to be rare since a majority of our participants were the only ones to perceive the contact, although other persons were present.



In a follow-up question, we enquired if another person(s) that participants know also had contact with the same deceased person at some point. This was the case for 34.8% of our sample.

It is well known and often observed that pets have a remarkable sensitivity for what might be called extrasensory perceptions. We were interested in learning if a pet (cat, dog, etc.) was in the same place at the time of the ADC.

**19.8% yes, 6.5% unsure, and 73.8% no**

For those who were indeed in the company of a pet at the moment of the ADC, close to a quarter noticed an unusual behaviour of the animal.

**24.7% unusual behaviour, 15.9% unsure, and 59.4% usual behavior**

Finally, we enquired about the state of mind during the ADC of those surveyed. Were they frightened by the contact allegedly initiated by the deceased? An overwhelming majority was not frightened by the experience, but a small minority was.

**85.4% not frightened, 2.5% unsure, and 12.1% frightened**

For those who were frightened, we queried at what moment of the experience they experienced fear.

**52.7% frightened during the whole contact, 31.8% at the beginning only, and 15.5% at the end only**

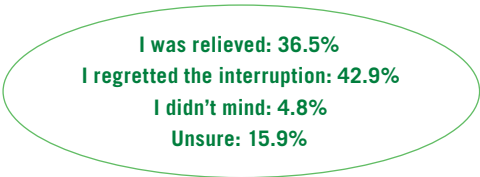
What element in particular triggered the fear?

**I was destabilized by the fact that the deceased was apparently able to establish a contact with me: 42.2%**  
**I feared losing my mind/hallucinating: 17.0%**  
**I thought the deceased's intention was to harm me: 15.6%**  
**Other: 25.2%**

We asked if the contact stopped immediately when participants were frightened.

**For 34.8% contact stopped immediately, 14.5% unsure, and for 50.7% the contact did not stop immediately**

For those concerned, we questioned how they felt about the interrupted contact.



I was relieved: 36.5%  
I regretted the interruption: 42.9%  
I didn't mind: 4.8%  
Unsure: 15.9%

## Partial temporary paralysis

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ADCs can sometimes cause discomfort or a slight fear. These sensations can even take more radical forms, notably when experiencers are unable to move and/or speak during the ADC. We have called this phenomenon a partial temporary paralysis.

Although partial temporary paralysis during a contact has not been described so far by researchers as being an identified characteristic of ADCs, 120 of our respondents have experienced it.

12.2% of our participants have noticed a partial temporary paralysis during the ADC, of which 54.5% felt that they could not move, and 47.1% felt that they could not speak during the contact. 25.3% reported other physical restrictions during the ADC.

However, 61.6% were not scared by the partial temporary paralysis, and for 25.2% the contact stopped when they were frightened.

## Message perceived

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Regardless of the type of ADC, the essence of these contacts is the **message** that is perceived.

As experiencers understand it, the very fact that the deceased seem to be able to communicate with the living implies that they seem to continue an existence – elsewhere – whose nature exceeds our understanding. The strongest impact undoubtedly comes from this apparent capacity for making contact, a revelation for some, the confirmation of a preexisting conviction for others (a form of consciousness survives physical death).

Each message is obviously unique because it is addressed to a particular person and shaped by a common past and a common history. However, we can schematize the contents because, in their essence, the perceived messages are relatively homogeneous.



They are:

**Reassuring:** I'm fine, don't worry about me, the troubles I had at the end of life are now behind me;

**Resolving:** Settling old conflicts, allowing space for apologies, providing closure;

**Reaffirming:** Continuing bond, affectionate, I love you, I will always be by your side; We'll meet again one day;

**Releasing:** Don't be sad, pursue your life, don't hold me back by your suffering.

It should be stressed that the messages do not contain any information on the alleged new form of existence of the deceased nor do they reveal anything about their "new home". Only the state of mind of the deceased relative or friend is briefly described ("I'm still alive and I'm happy").

We have asked our participants whether they have received a message from the deceased during the ADC. This was the case for a majority.

**59.1% perceived a message, 8.2% unsure, and 32.7% did not perceive a message**

We queried if participants received any information unknown to them previously during the ADC. These cases are of particular interest since they are evidential.

**24.3% yes, 7.1% unsure, and 68.6% no**

Finally, we asked how this information previously unknown to them was conveyed to them.

**By words that were audible,  
such as an external voice: 22.1%**  
**As if telepathically (the words were put "in their mind"): 44.0%**  
**By facial expression (for visual ADCs): 7.6%**  
**Unsure: 7.3%**  
**Other: 19.0%**

## Information on perceived deceased

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The following questions relate to the “profile” of the perceived deceased. They raise a number of questions, e.g. if the cause of death profile is different from that for the general population, and if it suggests that sudden deaths are over-represented in our sample. These interrogations are beyond the scope of this publication, but a website like *Eurostat*<sup>3</sup> might be useful.

The first question concerned the gender of the perceived deceased.

**54.6% male, 32.5% female,  
3.7% child, and 9.3% other**

The next question referred to the cause of death.

**Disease: 41.9%,  
Cardiac arrest: 13.9%, Accident: 10.6%, Old age: 7.3%  
Suicide: 7.3%, Murder: 1.8%  
Unsure: 3.6%, Other: 13.6%**

The circumstances of the death were the subject of our next questions.

If the person was ill, how did they die?

**Suddenly: 23.3%  
After a short illness: 34.8%  
After a long illness: 35.4%  
Unsure: 6.5%**

Where did the persons die?

**In hospital: 45.1%  
At home: 28.0%  
At the scene of the accident/ heart failure, etc.: 11.7%  
Unsure: 3.8%, Other: 11.4%**

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3 [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Causes\\_of\\_death\\_statistics](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Causes_of_death_statistics)

The belief system of the deceased gave us additional information, insofar as it was known to the experiencers. It emerges from the responses gathered that strong faith is by no means a prerequisite for having an ADC.

We asked if the deceased was a:

**Strong believer (in religious terms): 13.0%**  
**Moderate believer (in religious terms): 24.5%**  
**Spiritual (outside any specific religious institution): 18.4%**  
**Agnostic: 7.3%, Atheist: 13.9%**  
**Unsure: 23.0%**

Did the deceased believe in life after death? Only half of our participants had this information.

**28.5% did believe in life after death, 55.1% unsure, and 16.4% did not believe in life after death**

## Impact of ADCs on the belief system

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ADCs suggest the existence of a bond between the living and the dead that seems to survive physical death. We can assume that this strong experience impacts the belief system of experiencers and the conception of their own death. Let us see how participants replied to our questions:

Did you believe in life after death before your ADC?

**68.8% yes, 20.4% unsure, and 10.8% no**

Today, do you believe in life after death?

The change in beliefs in favour of an after-life is very significant. Only just over 1.0% do not believe in a life after death after an ADC.

**92.8% yes, 6.0% unsure, and 1.2% no**

Did you believe that deceased persons can contact living persons before your ADC?

**63.4% yes, 22.5% unsure, and 14.1% no**

Today, do you believe that deceased persons can contact living persons?

**94.6% yes, 4.9% unsure, and 0.5% no**

Again, changes in the belief system are highly significant since only half a percent of experients do not believe in the ability of the deceased to contact the living subsequently to their ADC.

Did you notice a change in your perception of death following the ADC?

**59.2% yes, 7.7% unsure, and 33.1% no**

Following your ADC, did your fear of death:

**Decrease: 31.4%**  
**Disappear: 29.5%**  
**Remain the same: 33.2%**  
**Increase: 0.8%**  
**Unsure: 5.1%**

How important are ADCs for experients? What place do they give them in the events that have marked their existence? Data show that these experiences are clearly very significant. For more than a third of our sample, the ADC “changed their lives”, and for almost half, it was “important”.

Do you consider the ADC to be:

**Life-changing: 36.4%**  
**Important: 49.1%**  
**Moderately important: 9.0%**  
**Not very important: 1.5%**  
**Not important: 1.7%**  
**Unsure: 2.2%**

Our last query in this section referred to the question whether our sample was in a habit of seeking a contact with the deceased through a spirit medium. This was not the case for a large majority.

Did you ever consult a spirit medium *before* your ADC?

**20.2% yes, 1.3% unsure, and 78.5% no**

However, there was a change after the ADC, since 352 persons were seeking an additional contact.

Did you ever consult a spirit medium *after* your ADC?

**35.9% yes, 0.9% unsure, and 63.2% no**

## Impression of reality of perceived ADC

We enquired whether participants had ever heard of ADCs before their own experience. A surprisingly high number had indeed preexisting knowledge.

**58.3% had prior knowledge; 6.7% unsure, and 35.0% no prior knowledge**

We queried if their prior knowledge of ADCs had influenced their own experience. Only a small number thought that this was the case.

**14.9% yes, 12.1% unsure, and 73.0% no**

Having knowledge of a phenomenon obviously does not mean that one's experience is consistent with expectation. We asked several questions about this particular issue.

If you had heard of ADCs before your own experience, did you think they:

**Were most certainly authentic: 40.6%**  
**Open to the idea, but needed evidence: 41.1%**  
**It was unlikely that they would be authentic: 2.2%**  
**Were certainly not authentic (but rather an hallucination/illusion created through grief): 3.9%**  
**I did not ask myself the question: 9.1%**  
**Unsure: 3.1%**

This suggests that their own experience reinforced their belief in the authenticity of ADCs and this is indeed largely the case as the answers to the following questions show.

Shortly after your experience (a few hours/days after the perceived contact), did you think that your ADC:

**Was authentic beyond doubt: 77.1%**  
**Could possibly really have happened: 14.4%**  
**It was unlikely that it was authentic: 0.5%**  
**Was certainly not authentic but rather an hallucination/illusion created by grief: 2.0%**  
**I did not ask myself the question: 4.7%**  
**Unsure: 1.3%**

As the answers to the following question show, the conviction of the authenticity of the contact has increased significantly in retrospect. ADCs often trigger a new or increased interest in spiritual matters which can lead experiencers to seek information from similar experiences of other people or from books. Over time, this information contributes to a better understanding and allows experiencers to assign deeper meaning to their ADC.

Today, with hindsight, do you think that your experience:

**Was authentic beyond doubt: 90.2%**  
**Could possibly really have happened: 8.2%**  
**It was unlikely that it was authentic: 0.2%**  
**Was certainly not authentic but rather an hallucination/illusion created by grief: 0.3%**  
**I did not ask myself the question: 0%**  
**Unsure: 1.1%**

## To what extent do ADCs reflect expectancy or yearning?

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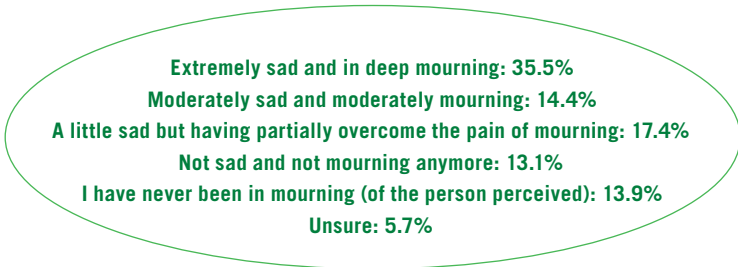
In order to identify their level of grief, we enquired if our participants have been thinking about the deceased person since their death.

**Almost constantly: 23.4%**  
**Several times per day: 21.9%, Often: 31.4%**  
**Sometimes: 13.0%, Rarely: 3.0%, Very rarely: 2.0%, Never: 1.6%**  
**Unsure: 0.3%, Deceased unknown to me: 3.2%**

We queried if participants were thinking about the deceased in the minutes preceding the ADC. The collected data show that the contact does not necessarily occur when the bereaved remember the deceased, perhaps in a moment of deep despair, but on the contrary when their mind is occupied with other matters.

**55.0% were not thinking about deceased, 15.0% unsure, and 30.1 were thinking about deceased**

We asked participants how they felt during the days/weeks previous to the ADC in terms of the bereavement process. Results show that, contrary to commonly held assumptions, roughly one quarter of experients were not sad and not mourning anymore or they didn't even know the perceived deceased. Therefore, grief cannot be the trigger for ADCs in all cases.



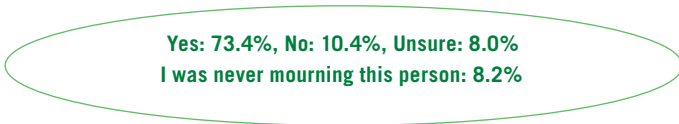
## Impact of ADCs on the bereavement process

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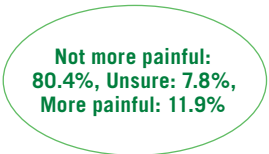
ADCs are known to be reassuring, comforting, and deeply transformative. Beyond the brief but striking perception of the deceased, which is in itself quite remarkable, it is the **information** conveyed and the **emotions** perceived and felt by experients that seem to be an essential element, and even the essence, of these experiences.

A series of questions has allowed us to gain more insight into the impact of ADCs on the grieving process.

We asked respondents if the ADC has brought them comfort and emotional healing. A large majority responded positively.



Although the contact could have brought out the physical absence of the loved one even more painfully, this is not how a majority of participants felt.



Has the ADC made it easier to accept your loss?

A majority answered affirmatively. At first glance, this result may surprise. One could imagine that having perceived the deceased, if only for a few seconds, would make their physical absence even more unbearable. When the contact stops, the loneliness must be devastating. And yet, the ADC made it easier for a majority of our participants to accept the loss. The reason is doubtlessly to be found in the impression of the continuity of the bond which persists beyond the brief perception of the deceased. Apparently, the conviction of the existence and sustainability of this bond no longer needs to rely on a short perception to last.

**For 61.2% ADC made it easier to accept loss, 13.0% unsure, and for 25.8% ADC didn't make it easier to accept loss**

Do you consider the ADC important for your bereavement process?

**68.4% important, 11.4% unsure, and 20.2% not important**

How would you describe your relationship with the deceased?

**My relationship ended when he/she died: 4.1%**  
**I thought the relationship ended with death but my ADC revealed that the bond continues: 33.6%**  
**I believed that my bond with the deceased continued after death and my ADC deepened the connection: 49.3%**  
**Unsure: 5.8%**  
**Other: 7.2%**

Do you really wish for more contact with the deceased?

**I really wish for a new contact: 46.9%**  
**The contact(s) is/are sufficient for me: 33.3%**  
**Unsure: 7.5%**  
**Other: 12.4%**

The messages of the deceased, which are mostly focused on the well-being of the experient and not on the alleged new form of existence of the deceased, often contain statements such as: *"Don't be sad, please stop crying, I watch over you, go on with your life, we will meet again one day"*. The advice of the deceased not to mourn them too long and to continue their lives in confidence and with the prospect of a future reunion is of paramount importance to the grieving process. In this, ADCs are therapeutic by nature because they meet the needs of the bereaved.



The subsequent questions shed light on this particular issue.

Do you believe that the bereavement process would have been the same or different if you had not experienced the ADC?

**21.5% the same,  
21.2% unsure, and  
57.4% different**

Do you think that your recovery and return of taste for life have been accelerated by the ADC?

**50.9% yes,  
19.5 % unsure, and  
29.7% no**

Finally, we asked respondents how they felt about having had the ADC. Results show that it is an experience that brings people joy and comfort since more than 90.0% “treasure” it or are “very glad” that they had it.

**I treasure it:  
71.1%**  
**Very glad: 20.4%**  
**I don't mind: 3.4%**  
**Very unhappy: 0.4%**  
**I wish it had never happened:  
1.1%**  
**Unsure: 3.5%**

### **Next steps – Academic collaborations**

Given the large number of questionnaires completed, we decided to associate other universities and research institutes with the thematic analysis of the data collected. We have identified fifteen research questions that will be the subject of individual publications. We will also replicate the survey, by using the same questionnaire, in other European countries and on other continents, particularly in Asia, to identify possible cultural differences in the phenomenology and impact of ADCs.

## Project team

### Team

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We thank you for your attention. For any questions or additional information, please contact Evelyn Elsaesser: [evelyn@evelyn-elsaesser.com](mailto:evelyn@evelyn-elsaesser.com).



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