The Unseen Impact of Treatment-Resistant Depression(TRD)

SURVEY INSIGHTS FROM PATIENTS AND CAREGIVERS LIVING WITH TREATMENT-RESISTANT DEPRESSION (TRD)

TRD is a form of depression, distinct from major depressive disorder (MDD), that is defined as an inadequate response to two or more courses of antidepressants of adequate dose and duration. To better understand the human impact of TRD, Compass Pathways partnered with the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA) to survey 261 people with TRD, as well as 73 caregivers for a loved one with TRD, in the United States. Their experiences reveal the toll of treatments that haven't worked, hope that begins to fade, lives put on hold and the ongoing search for a path forward.

Surviving, Not Living

Many respondents described life with TRD as getting through the day rather than fully living it.

~95%
describe themselves as either struggling, surviving day-to-day or barely getting by

60%
have reported living with TRD for five years or more

A majority
say their life has felt "on hold"

> [I've lost] time. Happiness. Moments I will probably never get to relive. Life is so short and I want to live, but I cannot."
>
> – PATIENT WITH TRD

The Treatment Cycle

For many people with TRD, the path to relief can mean years of trial and error, and the search can become a burden of its own.

~75%
feel that they have tried all available treatment options and are emotionally exhausted from trying treatments that have not worked.

62%
say they have spent far too much time cycling through treatments that did not work

77%
have considered stopping treatment altogether at least sometimes

When Hope Begins to Fade

As treatments continue failing to provide meaningful relief, the impact of TRD can extend beyond symptoms, shaping how people see themselves and envision their future.

< 1 in 5
say they often feel hopeful about their future

57%
feel they have lost part of their identity

69%
feel disconnected from who they really are

More than half
say one of the hardest parts of TRD is feeling like they are the problem rather than the medication

> I've lost my conviction and the reason to even continue. Why exist in a world where you can't be yourself and where no one cares about your wellbeing or existence.
>
> – PATIENT WITH TRD

Invisible, Misunderstood and Alone

Even while managing daily responsibilities, many people with TRD feel their struggle goes unseen.

- **62%** say TRD feels like an "invisible disease"
- **89%** have felt judged or misunderstood because their depression hasn't improved
- **71%** believe others think they should be able to overcome their depression
- **69%** say TRD has negatively affected their friendships
- **50%** say TRD has negatively affected a marriage or romantic partnership

Life Doesn't Wait

> I lost my career, I am on permanent disability because of it. I've missed out on years of my children's lives. My marriage is an everyday struggle. I don't have friends. I've lost everything."
>
> – PATIENT WITH TRD

For those affected by TRD, special moments and opportunities continue to pass around them.

Over half
say TRD has robbed them of years of their life

67%
have missed an important family event because of their TRD

52%
have reduced their work hours due to TRD

1 in 3
have lost a job because of TRD

The Ripple Effect on Caregivers & Families

The impact of TRD extends beyond those living with the condition, profoundly affecting the families and caregivers who support them through ongoing challenges and the search for meaningful relief.

~70%
say TRD affects the whole family's social, physical and/or mental health.

51%
have reduced the number of hours they work

41%
say their own lives are shaped by their loved one's TRD

Approximately half of caregivers:

- feel emotionally exhausted by repeated treatment attempts that have not worked for their loved one.
- wish they had an emotional support system of their own
- say caregiving has taken a major toll on their mental health

> At this point I would say I have lost my career momentum, my financial security and my hope for the future. My wife is surviving but not living which is really hard to watch.
>
> – CAREGIVER OF PATIENT WITH TRD

Emotional exhaustion affects roughly **half of caregivers** within three years of their loved one's TRD diagnosis, compared with nearly all (95%) caregivers after three or more years.

Reclaiming What TRD Has Put Out of Reach

For people with TRD, recovery means more than symptom relief. When asked what recovery means, respondents most often selected:

- ✓ Feeling like themselves again (64%)
- ✓ Laughing and feeling joy again (62%)
- ✓ Feeling hopeful about the future (55%)
- ✓ Being present for life's ordinary moments (48%)

Getting their life back (56%)

Despite these challenges, people continue searching for a path forward – one that allows them to move beyond simply getting through each day and toward reconnecting with the lives they want to lead. Click here to view the full report.

For more resources on TRD, visit www.dbsalliance.org.

Compass Pathways. Survey of Patients and Caregivers Living with Treatment-Resistant Depression. Data on file. 2026.

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DBSA Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance

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