

STATE OF GEORGIA RECYCLING RESEARCH OVERVIEW

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted for the Georgia Department of Community Affairs to determine Georgia residents' opinions on and participation in recycling in Georgia, as well as their reactions and ratings of various messages to encourage recycling.

The study entailed a telephone survey of randomly selected Georgia residents 18 years old and older. Interviews were conducted in September and October 2008. A total of 808 completed interviews were conducted statewide.

For the statewide sample of Georgia residents in the general population survey, the sampling error is +/- 3.45%

FINDINGS AT-A-GLANCE

- Georgians are concerned with the environment.
- The biggest barrier to recycling is the lack of curbside recycling in communities.
- Providing more information on recycling options will make more residents more likely to start recycling or become more diligent.
- There is no "magic bullet" message but facts and information that are personalized to Georgia or about children (their future, setting a good example, etc.) seemed to resonate when surveyed.
- Non-committed recyclers (45% of the pop) are the target audience for the state-wide marketing campaign, with 25-34 year old being a sub-audience.

AWARENESS AND INTEREST IN THE ENVIRONMENT

- 67% of Georgians say the environment is the most important or/very important issue, compared to other GA issues. Top concerns:
 - Water-related (40%); Energy-related (25%); Air quality or pollution (29%)
 - Recycling only listed by 5% -- however, on a scale of 1-10, they rated recycling as a 6.77 in helping address environmental issues.
- 74% think one person can either make a great deal (42%) or a moderate (32%) impact on the environment.

NOTE: This survey was conducted just as the economic meltdown was beginning.

RECYCLING BEHAVIOR

- 84% Georgia residents have recycled something in the past 12 months.
 - Just over half (58%) say that they recycle always or often (these 58% are defined as "committed recyclers.")
 - 21% recycle sometimes, and 22% do so rarely or never.
- The most commonly recycled materials at home are aluminum cans, plastic bottles/containers, newspapers, magazines and cardboard; and at work, office paper, aluminum cans, plastic bottles/containers and cardboard. **Committed recyclers recycle a greater variety of materials, relative to non-committed recyclers.**

CURBSIDE:

- One of the primary correlations to participation in recycling is the availability of curbside recycling. About 2 in 5 Georgia residents (41%) say they live in a community that offers curbside or bin pick-up recycling.
- 34% of Georgians say most/some of their neighbors recycle;
 - 15% do not know and 21% say none of their neighbors recycle.
- **Of those with curbside recycling available:**
 - 75% use the program to recycle
 - 86% have a bin; 9% have a cart
 - 85% set their bin/cart out weekly
- **Of those *without* curbside or bin pick-up recycling available, just under half (55%) recycle always or often.**
 - 75% of those without curbside say they would be “very” likely to participate if it were offered; 15% “somewhat likely”
 - 55% strongly or moderately agree that not having a curbside program is a source of frustration for them
- 62% would be willing to pay a “reasonable fee”
 - \$6-\$10 month (35%)
 - \$11-\$20 month (19%)
 - More than \$20 (7%)
 - \$0-\$5 (17%)

DROP-OFF:

- Two-thirds of Georgia residents take recyclables to drop-off sites (even if only about once a year). Among those who do not have curbside recycling available, 89% take recyclables to drop-off sites, even if only about once a year.
 - The average distance a resident drives to a drop-off location is 6 miles (28%), with only 14% saying they would drive over 16 miles and 42% say they drive between 0-5 miles

RECYCLING AT WORK:

- 42% of Georgians who have recycled anything in 12 months always recycle at work with 31% saying sometimes or often; 16% never recycle at work.

MOTIVATORS

- #1 reason: To help the environment.
 - This is distantly followed by reducing trash/landfills (31%) and/or that it is simply the right thing to do (13%).
 - Only 5% do so for money (personal gain/fundraisers)
- There is agreement among Georgians:
 - Recycling should be a high priority for GA residents (79%)
 - I personally can have an impact on the environment by recycling (67%)
 - I feel bad when I throw away an item that could have been recycled (56%)

BARRIERS TO RECYCLING PARTICIPATION

- #1 reason: Lack of a recycling program in their community (43%). Others:
 - General: Too much work to recycle, not caring or thinking about recycling, not knowing about recycling/where to take materials and not thinking that items are really recycled.
 - More than half of Georgians rate the availability of recycling facilities/services in their community as fair or poor.
 - “I would recycle if it were easier to do” (64%)
 - Curbside: Too much work, do not want to pay the fee involved and/or that the bin or cart was not provided.

MESSAGES

When ranked 1-10, the top-ranked messages are:

- HIGHEST: “By recycling, you are setting a good example for your children” (mean of 8.83 -- 68% give a rating of 9 or 10)
- “We should worry about running out of natural resources, such as trees, oil, energy, and water” (mean of 8.62 – 66%)
- “40% of what is in a Georgia landfill could have been recycled” (mean of 8.41 – 54%).
- “By recycling, I feel like I’m doing my part for Georgia” (mean of 8.15 -- 52%)
- “Recycling conserves energy” (mean of 8.06 -- 50%).

Messages with the lowest rankings (but still favorable):

- LOWEST: “Everyone is recycling, even your neighbors and friends” (mean of 6.06)
- “Recycling helps fight global warming (mean of 7.42)
- “Georgia is home to some of the strongest industrial and manufacturing users of recycled products in the country, and they need your recyclables” (mean of 7.51)

Note: there is no message that tests markedly better among non-committed recyclers than among committed recyclers.

INFORMATION ABOUT RECYCLING:

- $\frac{3}{4}$ of Georgia residents say that they know a great deal or moderate amount about recycling.
 - **Knowledge level is positively correlated to participation in recycling.**
- A little less than half say they get too little info; about a quarter say they never receive info.)
 - More than half of Georgians say they would be very likely to recycle/recycle more if they received more information about recycling in their community.
- The most common sources from which residents **receive** information about recycling are TV, newspapers, the Internet, and word-of-mouth. An interesting difference between committed recyclers and non-committed recyclers is that the former are more likely than the latter to receive information by word-of-mouth, **suggesting that the committed recyclers live within a “culture of recycling.”**
- The source most commonly named by residents as being where they **would look** for information is the Internet, far exceeding any other source.
- The methods considered the most effective for providing information to residents about recycling are direct mail (the top answer), the Internet, TV, and newspapers.