



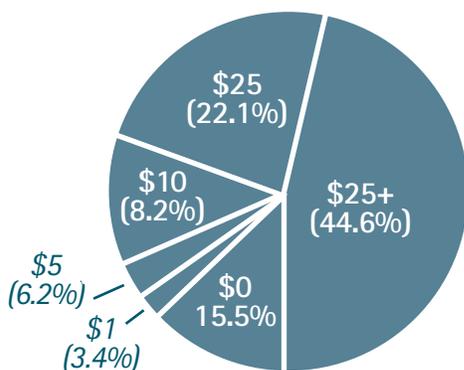
HealthVoices

Trauma Care in Georgia: Georgians Are Willing to Pay for a Statewide System

Issue 1, 2008

How much would you be willing to pay per year to have a trauma system in Georgia ready to provide care 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, if you or your family were seriously injured?

For the second year, a statewide survey shows that Georgians overwhelmingly favor building a statewide trauma care system that would save as many as 700 lives each year – and that they are willing to pay for the system.



Two-thirds of the Georgians who responded to a December 2007 telephone survey said they would be willing to pay \$25 or more a year to support a statewide trauma system because it saves lives.¹ Respondents said that government should use multiple funding sources to invest in a trauma network.

A year earlier, Georgians who responded to a similar public opinion poll² voiced strong support of a statewide trauma system that is capable of providing emergency services within the first “golden hour” following a life threatening injury.

an additional tax on guns (65.5%); and, increased insurance/Medicaid payments to hospitals providing trauma care (51.3%).

- Georgians said they support funding for trauma care because: between 600 and 700 lives would be saved each year (87.7%); lack of trauma care results in millions in costs for medical care (82.5%); it would cost less than a nickel a day to stabilize the system (82.3%); and, one of three Georgians will need trauma care (81.8%).

Key findings:

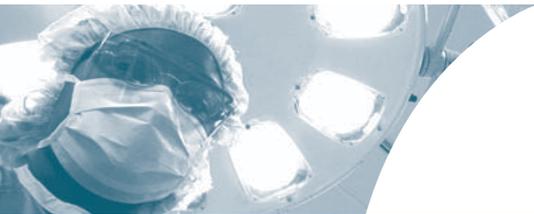
- 95.6% said it was extremely important or very important that a family member or close friend be treated in a trauma center.
- 66.7% of the respondents said they are willing to pay \$25 or more a year for a Georgia trauma system.
- 88.9% said they believe a trauma system is a government responsibility.
- 75.9% said that creating and maintaining a trauma system should be supported by public funds.
- Funding options supported by the respondents were: direct appropriation of state funds (74.7% extremely or somewhat supportive); increased fines on traffic violations (69.4%);

Who participated?

More than 500 people 18 years or older participated in the telephone poll conducted between December 3rd and 16th, 2007: 68.5% were women and 31.5% men; 66.7% were white, 28.2% black, 1.6% Hispanic, and 3.5% represented other races; 79% live in urban areas and 21% in rural areas; and 31.1% graduated high school or had less education. The median income reported was between \$50,000 and \$74,999 per year. When compared to 2005 U.S. Census data for Georgia, the respondents included a higher proportion of women, people between the ages of 45 and 64, people living in metropolitan areas, and individuals with a college education.

“While everyone is loathe to see an increase in government fees or taxes, we are even more loathe to see a death that could have been prevented with proper medical care... This is an issue that is especially important in Southwest Georgia... Ensuring that a solid statewide trauma network is functioning and properly funded ought to be a top priority...”

Albany Herald editorial
December 8, 2007

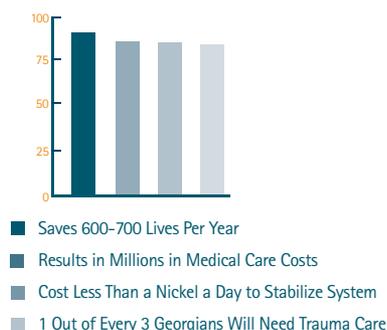


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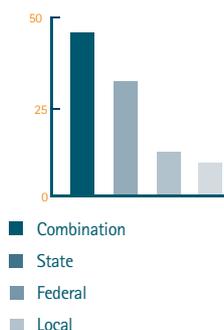
The Findings

Why would you support increased funding to improve trauma care?

% Much more likely/somewhat likely to support

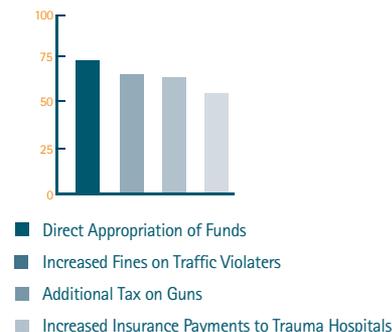


Which level of government is best suited to create and manage a trauma system?



Which approaches to paying for a statewide trauma system do Georgians support?

% Extremely/somewhat supportive



Why Do Georgians Want a Trauma System?

- The reasons most often mentioned for supporting increased funding for trauma centers were “Improving Georgia’s trauma system would save between 600 – 700 lives a year” (87.7%); “Lack of trauma care results in millions of dollars in costs for medical care” (82.5%); “It would cost less than a nickel a person a day to stabilize the system” (82.3%); and, “One out of every three Georgians will need trauma care.” (81.5%)
- 95.6% said it was extremely important or very important that a family member or close friend be treated in a trauma center.
- 42.7% said they had a family member or close friend who had experienced a serious life-threatening injury.
- Nearly one in four respondents (23.2%) said there was no trauma center within 60 minutes of their home.

Who Should be Responsible for a Trauma System?

- A plurality – 34.7% – said they think state government is the level of government best suited to create and manage a trauma system.
- 88.9% said they believe that creating and maintaining a comprehensive, statewide trauma system is a proper responsibility for federal, state or local government.

How Should a Trauma System Be Funded?

- The highest levels of support for funding options among respondents were direct appropriation of state funds (74.7% extremely or somewhat supportive); increased fines on people convicted of traffic violations (69.4%); an additional tax on guns (65.5%); and, increased insurance/Medicaid payments to hospitals providing trauma care (51.3%).
- Almost 76% said they think that creating and maintaining a trauma system is something that should be supported by public funds, whether taxes, fees or fines of some sort.

“One of the most critical issues facing the health of the state is the failing, stitched-together system of trauma hospitals. Lawmakers are aware of the crisis, but for some reason they believe the participating hospitals will continue to absorb the costs.”

Macon Telegraph editorial
April 10, 2007



HealthVoices

Conclusions

Strategic Investment in a Statewide Trauma System Is Needed

Georgians in many areas simply do not have fast access to trauma care. Only 15 of the state's 152 acute-care hospitals have trauma centers. As a result, Georgia's trauma death rate is significantly higher than the national average. More trauma centers are needed to assure that all Georgians have access to high quality trauma care within the crucial "golden hour." If Georgia's death rate improved to the national average, as many as 700 lives would be saved each year.³

Although the January 2007 report of the Joint Comprehensive State Trauma Services Study Committee⁴ suggested multiple options, specific trauma infrastructure and funding solutions remain unresolved. Stable, diversified sources of funding are needed to strengthen all elements of the trauma system: emergency medical services, communications, 911 systems, ground and air transportation, and hospital-based trauma care including specialized health care providers. Georgians have repeatedly indicated their desire for and willingness to pay for a trauma system. It is the right time to establish a statewide, coordinated and accountable trauma system in Georgia.

Endnotes

1 University of Georgia Survey Research Center, 2007 Poll on Knowledge and Perceptions Related to Trauma Centers and Systems in Georgia Follow-up Survey, December 2007, http://www.src.uga.edu/surveys/HGF_2007follow/index.html

2 University of Georgia Survey Research Center, 2006 Poll on Knowledge and Perceptions Related to Trauma Centers and Systems in Georgia, December 2006, http://www.src.uga.edu/surveys/HGF_2006/index.html

3 Georgia Statewide Trauma Action Team (GSTAT), It's About Time Fact Sheet, Revised October 2007, www.georgiaitsabouttime.com

4 Final Report of the Joint Comprehensive State Trauma Services Study Committee, January 2007, http://www.legis.ga.gov/legis/2007_08/senate/publications/trauma-report.pdf

More About Trauma Care

For additional information about trauma care in Georgia, and up-to-date news about trauma system development, funding and implementation, please visit the "It's About Time" Web site at <http://www.georgiaitsabouttime.com>. The Web site is sponsored by the Georgia Statewide Trauma Action Team (GSTAT), a coalition of hospitals, emergency medical services (EMS) providers, physicians, nurses and others interested in creating a statewide trauma system.

"...respondents made it clear in this year's survey that they believe that government should use multiple funding sources to invest in a trauma network that not only saves lives but also reduces future health care costs. Healthcare Georgia Foundation strongly encourages the development of a sound business plan to finance a comprehensive statewide trauma care network that serves all Georgians."

Gary Nelson
President, Healthcare Georgia Foundation



Recommended Citation:
HealthVoices: "Trauma Care in Georgia: Georgians are Willing to Pay for Statewide System," Healthcare Georgia Foundation, Publication #23, February 2008

Healthcare Georgia Foundation is a statewide, private independent foundation whose mission is to advance the health of all Georgians and to expand access to affordable, quality healthcare for underserved individuals and communities.

The Poll

The Survey Research Center at the University of Georgia conducted the Knowledge and Perceptions Related to Trauma Centers and Systems in Georgia Follow-up Survey with a grant from Healthcare Georgia Foundation. Data were generated from a telephone interview of a RDD (Random Digit Dial) probability sample of 504 Georgia residents 18 years old or older, conducted between December 3rd and December 16th, 2007. The purpose of the survey was to assess perceptions and knowledge of Georgia residents about trauma centers and existing trauma care systems in Georgia. Estimates based on a sample of this size are subject to sampling error of +/- 4.5% at the 95 percent confidence interval. Sampling error is the probable difference in results between interviewing a sample of the population of adult Georgians versus interviewing the entire population of adults in Georgia. Sample surveys are subject to other sources of error such as non-response error and error associated with the wording of questionnaire items. The cooperation rate for the study was 27.2%.

The questionnaire, methods and data tables for this survey, as well as previous research

conducted by the Survey Research Center with support from the Foundation, can be found at www.src.uga.edu. Links also are available at www.healthcaregeorgia.org and www.georgiaitsabouttime.com.

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Healthcare Georgia Foundation is a catalyst for better health and health care in Georgia. Through strategic grantmaking, Healthcare Georgia Foundation supports organizations that drive positive change; promotes programs that improve health and health care among underserved individuals and communities; and connects people, partners, and resources across Georgia.

HealthVoices is published periodically by Healthcare Georgia Foundation as an educational service to Georgians interested in health policy.

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