

**For Immediate Release**

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**Statewide Survey Reveals Support and Demand Is Strong for Recycling Programs**

*Georgians see recycling as easy way they can make an impact on the environment*

**ATLANTA—** When it comes to the environment, Georgians get it! According to a statewide survey, conducted by Responsive Management and commissioned by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA), the majority of Georgians *do* care about the environment and agree that they can make an impact through personal action.

Recycling also was seen as an effective way to help the environment. As a matter of fact, 97% of Georgians feel that recycling should be a high priority for their fellow residents. Findings provide insight into residents' awareness and attitudes about recycling. With extremely tight budgets available to promote recycling, the survey results will serve as the foundation for developing a very targeted and cost-effective statewide recycling education campaign.

"We were pleasantly surprised to hear that 67% of Georgians strongly agree that they personally can have an impact on the environment by recycling," said Randy Hartmann, Director of DCA's Office of Environmental Management. "The research reaffirms our belief that people do want to make a difference and believe they can, by taking a small step like recycling. We know we have work to do to increase recycling rates throughout the state, but this is a great place to start."

**Recycling Behavior and Barriers**

When it comes to current recycling behavior, the good news is that a whopping 84 percent of Georgia residents have recycled something in the past 12 months. In addition, 82% of Georgians also admitted to feeling guilty when they throw away an item that could have been recycled. The bad news is that only 58 percent say they recycle always or often, with 21 percent recycling only sometimes and 22 percent doing so rarely or never.

A primary barrier to recycling in Georgia is the lack of curbside collection in many communities. Only two in five Georgia residents (41 percent) say they live in a community that offers curbside or bin pickup recycling. And 90 percent said they would recycle if it "were easier to do."

"We know that curbside is *the* most convenient way to recycle. This survey showed us that when communities lack these programs many would-be recyclers are deterred," says Hartmann. "Many communities offer alternative programs such as drop-off and workplace recycling, programs that many use. But convenience still plays a role, and having a program at your front door, literally, is the most effective option for the average resident."



The survey further revealed the extent to which accessibility to programs impacts where and how much Georgians recycle. More specifically:

- 70 percent of residents with curbside recycling take advantage of the program and recycle.
- Meanwhile, when asked of those WITHOUT curbside access, only 45 percent recycle “always” or “often.”
  - Not surprisingly, 55 percent of those without curbside access strongly or moderately agree that not having a program is a source of frustration for them.
- Two-thirds of Georgia residents take recyclables to drop-off sites (even if only once a year). Among those who do not have curbside recycling available, 89 percent 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.
- 42 percent of Georgians who have recycled in the past 12 months and who work outside of home say they always recycle at work, with 31 percent saying often or sometimes; 16 percent never recycle at work.

“The global economic crisis has hit recycling markets hard. Yet, despite recent volatility, communities can rest assured there is strong demand for programs,” says Gloria Hardegree, Executive Director for the Georgia Recycling Coalition. “When 76 percent of Georgians without a curbside program say they would be very likely to participate in a program if it were offered, that is a statistic that cannot be ignored.”

### **Need for Education**

The survey also indicated that lack of ongoing education is keeping many Georgians from participating; suggesting communities need to improve their communications efforts. Specifically, more than half of Georgians say they would be “very likely” to recycle or recycle more if they received more information about recycling in their community, indicating that knowledge increases participation in recycling.

“The results of this survey gave us a positive direction regarding recycling in Georgia. Georgians, as a whole, may not need as much ‘convincing’ as we initially thought to understand the benefits of recycling,” says Lena Davie, Vice President of Hill & Knowlton, the public relations firm hired by DCA to help promote recycling to Georgia residents. “Instead of focusing on the ‘why recycle?’ we need to make recycling more personal. It’s not about adding complications to their daily life, it’s about showing them how easily recycling can become a habit and how folks who don’t want to participate are really **not** the norm.”

**About DCA:** The Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) was created in 1977 to serve as an advocate for local governments. As outlined in its mission statement, DCA seeks opportunities that support "*partnering with communities to help create a climate of success for Georgia's families and businesses.*" DCA operates a host of state and federal grant programs; serves as the state's lead agency in housing finance and development; promulgates building codes to be adopted by local governments; provides comprehensive planning, technical and research assistance to local governments; and serves as the lead agency for the state's solid waste reduction efforts.

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*Note to the Editor: Full survey results are available for review upon request. Email: [laura.mulhern@hillandknowlton.com](mailto:laura.mulhern@hillandknowlton.com). The survey was conducted by Responsive Management in September and October 2008. Confidence level is +/- 3.45%. Total population of respondents is 808 Georgia residents 18 years of age and older.*



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