

## **Giving the Gift of Life: Half of Americans Say They're Registered Organ Donors**

**NEW YORK, N.Y.** – According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, over [120,000 people](#) are currently on the waiting list to receive a lifesaving organ transplant. Just one organ donor can save up to eight lives. However, with a new name joining this list every 10 minutes and 22 people dying each day while waiting, the gap between supply and demand continues to grow as donation rates stagnate.

According to a recent Harris Poll, just over half of American adults (51%) say they are currently registered organ donors. There remains sufficient room to increase this number, however. While a total of 44% of Americans say they aren't registered donors, 23% state they'd consider becoming one.

These are some of the results of **The Harris Poll®** of 2,212 U.S. adults surveyed online between August 12 and 17, 2015.

### **The registered**

Organ donors identify two key reasons why they chose to register: it's comforting to know their organs will serve a purpose after they die (69%) and they want to help someone in need (60%).

- Millennials and Gen Xers are particularly likely to say they registered because they want to help someone in need (69% & 63% vs. 52% Baby Boomers & 47% Matures).
- The same is true for college grads compared to all other education levels (71% vs. 54% post grad, 58% some college, & 57% high school or less).

Another 15% indicate it's because they know someone who has benefited from a donation, and 7% say they registered because they know someone currently on the waiting list.

Among registered donors, some key demographic differences exist. Those most likely to say they have registered include:

- Liberals, who are more likely than both conservatives and moderates (58% vs. 49% & 48%) to have done so,
- Midwesterners (59% vs. 46%, East, 50% South & 51% West), and
- Those with an education level beyond high school (58% post grad, 53% college grad & 57% some college vs. 44% high school or less).

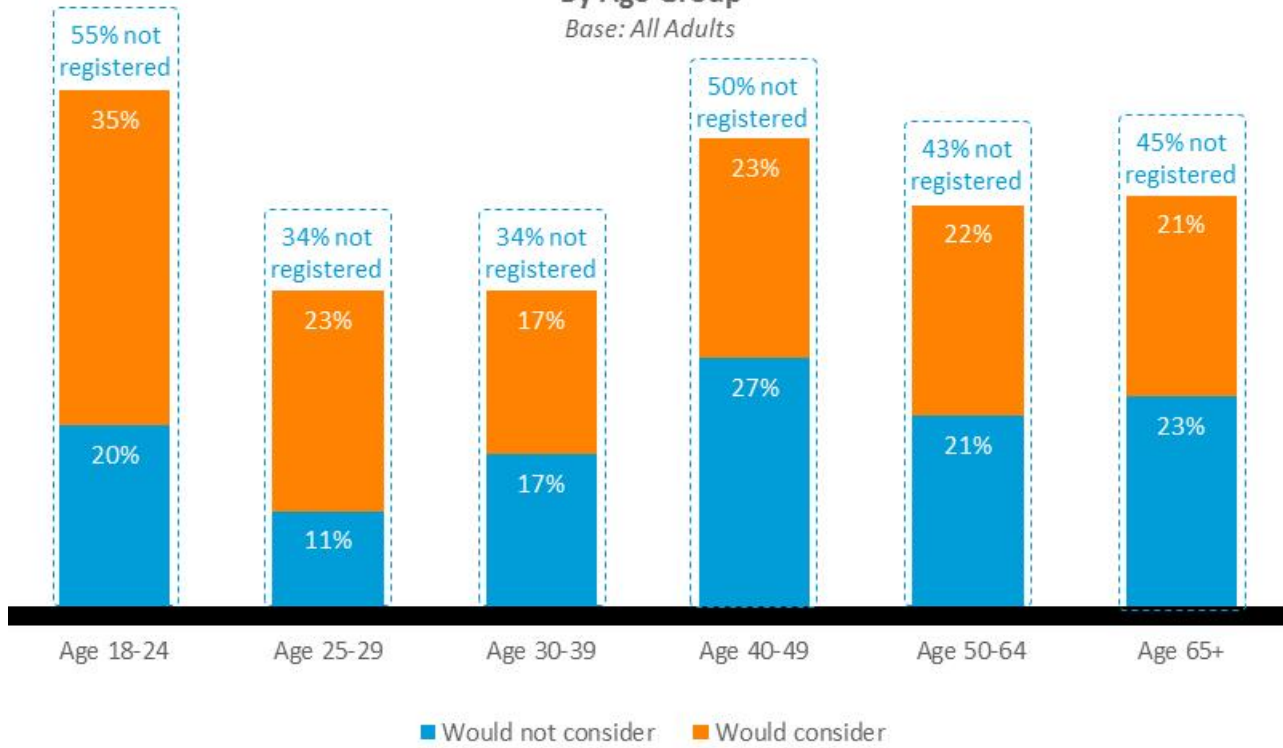
### **The willing**

When looking to increase registered donors, the obvious opportunity exists among the 23% of Americans who are non-registered donors, but who indicate they'd be willing to consider it. Within this subgroup, the most common reasons they haven't registered include: they don't like to think about what will happen when they die (21%), they're not in good enough health (19%), and they don't know how to register (16%). Increased education on the benefits and simplicity of organ donor registration may be enough to sway a segment of these already willing individuals.

The largest opportunity may exist among young adults (ages 18-24). While they are the most likely to say they're not registered (55%), they are also the most likely age group to consider registering (35%).

## Willingness to Consider Organ Donation By Age Group

Base: All Adults



### The wary

Among the 21% of Americans not currently open to donating, the top reasons for not registering include the perception that they're not in good enough health (26%), discomfort with their organs being used after death (26%), and a desire to avoid thinking about what happens when they die (23%). Less common but still notable reasons are concerns that their family could not afford the additional medical costs associated with organ donation (10%) and that perception that their family knowing their wishes means they don't need to register as a donor (9%).

In total among the unregistered (including both the willing and unwilling), some key demographic differences exist in their reasoning:

- Millennials are more likely than the older cohorts to say they don't like to think about what happens when they die (36% vs. 19% Gen Xers, 16% Baby Boomers & 11% Matures) and that they don't know how to register (18% vs. 5%, 4% & 6%).
- Those with a high school education or less are especially likely to say their family couldn't afford any additional costs associated with donation (16% vs. 8% some college, 3% college grad, & 5% post grad).

**TABLE 1a**  
**ORGAN DONOR STATUS**  
**By Generation & Region**

"Are you currently an organ donor?"

Base: All Adults

	Total	Age						Region			
		18-24	25-29	30-39	40-49	50-64	65+	East	Midwest	South	West
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes – I am currently an organ donor.	<b>51</b>	42	62	58	45	52	51	46	59	50	51
No (NET)	<b>44</b>	55	34	34	50	43	45	50	36	45	43
No – but I would consider becoming one.	<b>23</b>	35	23	17	23	22	21	26	19	25	21
No – and I would not consider becoming one.	<b>21</b>	20	11	17	27	21	23	24	17	20	22
I'm not sure whether I am registered as an organ donor.	<b>5</b>	3	3	8	5	5	5	5	4	5	6

Note: Percentages may not add up to exactly 100% due to rounding

**TABLE 1b**  
**ORGAN DONOR STATUS**  
**By Education & Political Philosophy**  
 "Are you currently an organ donor?"

Base: All Adults

	Total	Education				Political Philosophy		
		H.S. or less	Some college	College grad	Post grad	Conservative	Moderate	Liberal
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
Yes – I am currently an organ donor.	<b>51</b>	44	57	53	58	48	49	58
No (NET)	<b>44</b>	50	38	44	37	47	46	37
No – but I would consider becoming one.	<b>23</b>	27	21	21	20	23	23	23
No – and I would not consider becoming one.	<b>21</b>	23	17	23	17	24	22	14
I'm not sure whether I am registered as an organ donor.	<b>5</b>	6	5	3	5	5	5	5

Note: Percentages may not add up to exactly 100% due to rounding

**TABLE 2a**  
**REASONS FOR ORGAN DONATION**  
**By Generation & Region**

"Which of the following best describes why you chose to become an organ donor? Please select all that apply."

Base: Current organ donor

	Total	Generation				Region			
		Millennials (18-35)	Gen Xers (36-50)	Baby Boomers (51-69)	Matures (70+)	East	Midwest	South	West
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
It's comforting to know my organs will serve a purpose after I die	<b>69</b>	68	68	72	69	73	71	66	69
I want to help someone in need	<b>60</b>	69	63	52	47	58	64	58	59
I know someone who has benefited from an organ donation	<b>15</b>	19	15	14	12	11	20	16	13
I know someone who is currently on the waiting list for an organ donation	<b>7</b>	11	7	3	4	4	6	7	10
Other	<b>3</b>	2	5	3	3	6	4	2	3

Note: Multiple responses allowed

**TABLE 2b**  
**REASONS FOR ORGAN DONATION**  
**By Education & Political Philosophy**

"Which of the following best describes why you chose to become an organ donor? Please select all that apply."

Base: Current organ donor

	Total	Education	Political Philosophy
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	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
I am not in good enough health to be an organ donor	<b>22</b>	9	21	30	37	25	22	21	21
I don't like to think about what will happen when I die	<b>22</b>	36	19	16	11	28	19	21	18
I'm uncomfortable with my organs being used after I die	<b>18</b>	23	21	12	13	15	21	16	22
My family knows what my wishes are, so I don't need to register as a donor	<b>13</b>	15	11	12	15	13	13	15	12
My family could not afford the additional medical costs associated with being an organ donor	<b>11</b>	16	7	9	8	12	22	10	11
I don't know how to register to become an organ donor	<b>9</b>	18	5	4	6	7	6	11	10
The hospital staff won't work as	<b>7</b>	11	6	6	8	12	6	7	5

hard to save my life if I'm a registered organ donor									
I will not be able to have an open casket if I am an organ donor	<b>5</b>	12	3	1	1	5	2	3	9
It is against my religion to be an organ donor	<b>4</b>	5	5	2	3	4	6	3	4
It's too difficult to register to become an organ donor	<b>2</b>	1	*	1	2	1	*	2	3
Other	<b>24</b>	17	24	32	18	25	26	22	22

Note: Multiple responses allowed

**TABLE 3b**  
**REASONS AGAINST ORGAN DONATION**  
**By Education & Political Philosophy**

"Which of the following best describes why you are not currently an organ donor? Please select all that apply."

Base: Not currently an organ donor

	Total	Education				Political Philosophy		
		H.S. or less	Some college	College grad	Post grad	Conservative	Moderate	Liberal
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
I am not in good enough health to be	<b>22</b>	27	21	10	25	21	23	22



an organ donor								
I don't like to think about what will happen when I die	<b>22</b>	22	24	21	13	21	20	29
I'm uncomfortable with my organs being used after I die	<b>18</b>	18	23	16	9	17	18	19
My family knows what my wishes are, so I don't need to register as a donor	<b>13</b>	13	15	9	15	15	12	14
My family could not afford the additional medical costs associated with being an organ donor	<b>11</b>	16	8	3	5	8	12	10
I don't know how to register to become an organ donor	<b>9</b>	10	7	9	8	6	9	12
The hospital staff won't work as hard to save my life if I'm a registered organ donor	<b>7</b>	7	8	8	7	6	7	12
I will not be able to have an open	<b>5</b>	4	4	12	1	8	4	3

casket if I am an organ donor								
It is against my religion to be an organ donor	4	3	5	3	5	4	4	3
It's too difficult to register to become an organ donor	2	2	3	1	-	1	2	3
Other	24	21	23	29	30	24	25	20

Note: Multiple responses allowed

**TABLE 3c**  
**REASONS AGAINST ORGAN DONATION**  
**By Organ Donor Consideration**

"Which of the following best describes why you are not currently an organ donor? Please select all that apply."

Base: Not currently an organ donor

	Total	Would Consider Becoming an Organ Donor	
		Yes	No
	%	%	%
I am not in good enough health to be an organ donor	22	19	26
I don't like to think about what will happen when I die	22	21	23
I'm uncomfortable with my organs being used after I die	18	11	26
My family knows what my wishes are, so I don't need to register as a donor	13	17	9
My family could not afford the additional medical costs associated with being an organ donor	11	11	10
I don't know how to register to become an organ donor	9	16	*

The hospital staff won't work as hard to save my life if I'm a registered organ donor	7	7	8
I will not be able to have an open casket if I am an organ donor	5	5	4
It is against my religion to be an organ donor	4	*	8
It's too difficult to register to become an organ donor	2	2	1
Other	24	26	21

Note: Multiple responses allowed

### Methodology

This **Harris Poll** was conducted online, in English, within the United States between August 12 and 17, 2015 among 2,212 adults (aged 18 and over). Figures for age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, region and household income were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including sampling error, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments. Therefore, The Harris Poll avoids the words "margin of error" as they are misleading. All that can be calculated are different possible sampling errors with different probabilities for pure, unweighted, random samples with 100% response rates. These are only theoretical because no published polls come close to this ideal.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in Harris Poll surveys. The data have been weighted to reflect the composition of the adult population. Because the sample is based on those who agreed to participate in our panel, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

***These statements conform to the principles of disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.***

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**The Harris Poll** <sup>®</sup> #65, October 20, 2015

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Begun in 1963, The Harris Poll is one of the longest running surveys measuring public opinion in the U.S. and is highly regarded throughout the world. The nationally representative polls, conducted primarily online, measure the knowledge, opinions, behaviors and motivations of the general public. New and trended polls on a wide variety of subjects including politics, the economy, healthcare, foreign affairs, science and technology, sports and entertainment, and lifestyles are published weekly.

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