

# New survey shows strong public support for medical research in Louisiana

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Louisiana's status as a leader in medical and health research is important to a strong majority of residents (89%), according to a state-based public opinion survey commissioned by Research!America. Sixty-nine percent of respondents agree that Louisiana state funds should be used to support scientific research at public universities, and 75% say spending money on medical research is important to Louisiana's economy in terms of jobs and incomes.

"Louisianans are not only proud of science currently conducted in their state but aspire to more, saying they strongly believe that public investments pay dividends in saving lives and bolstering the local economy," said Mary Woolley, president and CEO of Research!America. "The state's academic research institutions are conducting innovative studies on diseases that have real impact close to home, which carry a tremendous burden for citizens from both [health](#) and economic standpoint."

The University Medical Center of New Orleans and Research!America hosted the Louisiana Research Summit in New Orleans on February 16 which brought together the state's - and nation's - scientific leaders to discuss the need to capitalize on the state's existing research expertise with additional support, ensuring that what happens in Louisiana laboratories improves the lives of everyday citizens. Senator Bill Cassidy (R-LA) is the honorary host of the program.

Diabetes, obesity, cancer and heart disease are serious health issues in

Louisiana. In some Louisiana parishes, the rate of diabetes is 50% higher than the rest of the nation. Studies show that these health problems happen more often among minorities or citizens with lower incomes. Eighty-one percent of Louisianans say it is important for the state to fund and conduct medical or [health research](#) to understand and eliminate these differences.

In addition, 58% say the Louisiana state legislature should help fund prevention research to help people make behavioral changes that can help them overcome health threats such as smoking, while 62% say the state should fund research to address obesity, hypertension and diabetes.

"Simply put, research works," said F. King Alexander, president of Louisiana State University. "It leads to solutions for both the state's most pressing challenges and the nation's leading problems. Louisiana research has national impact, and prioritizing research funding serves as a direct benefit to everyone. More studies bring more results, which in turn deliver an improved quality of life for every citizen in the country."

When asked if our health care system treats mental health and physical health the same, 66% said no. And among those respondents, 75% said physical health is treated with more importance. More than a third (37%) say access to mental health services, such as counseling, is getting worse.

Louisianans also expressed strong support for science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education with 80% in agreement that the state legislature should assign a higher priority to improving STEM education and careers in those fields.

### **Among other survey findings:**

- 79% say it is important for Louisiana to be a leader in information technology.

- 47% of Louisianans say they would be willing to share their personal health information to advance medical research.
- 53% say gene therapy, the altering of human genes to treat disease, should continue.
- 82% of Louisianans say it's important that candidates running for national office assign a high priority to increasing funding for medical research.

The survey of 800 Louisianan adults, conducted by Zogby Analytics in February 2016, has a margin of error of +/- 3.5 percentage points. To view survey results, click <http://bit.ly/1Svd4dX>.

Provided by Research!America

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