

Autism BrainNet Survey Key Findings

Americans Support Autism Research, But Don't Know About Brain Donation

New survey findings reveal a significant disconnect between Americans' strong support of autism research and their limited understanding of the role postmortem brain donation plays in advancing it.

The survey found that 70 percent of respondents had never heard of brain donation, despite 92 percent agreeing that analysis of the autistic brain is extremely or very important to advance research.

Awareness of Brain Donation Lags Behind Organ Donation:

Nearly 80 percent of respondents said they are familiar with organ donation, and more than half are registered organ donors.

Only 15 percent of respondents correctly know that brain donation is not included when you sign up for organ donation; 75% aren't sure.

What Americans Believe Donated Postmortem Brain Tissue is Used For:

61%
Research

22%
Not Sure

16%
MYTH*
Research and Transplant

2%
MYTH*
Transplanting into another person

*Only organs can be donated for transplant or research whereas donated postmortem brain tissue is for research purposes only.

Many Americans Misunderstand Who Is Eligible for Brain Donation:

94% **GENERALLY A MYTH****
Aren't sure or believe that certain conditions exclude brain donation.

33% **MYTH****
More than 1/3 of respondents believe conditions such as autism, epilepsy, or concussion disqualify someone from future brain donation.

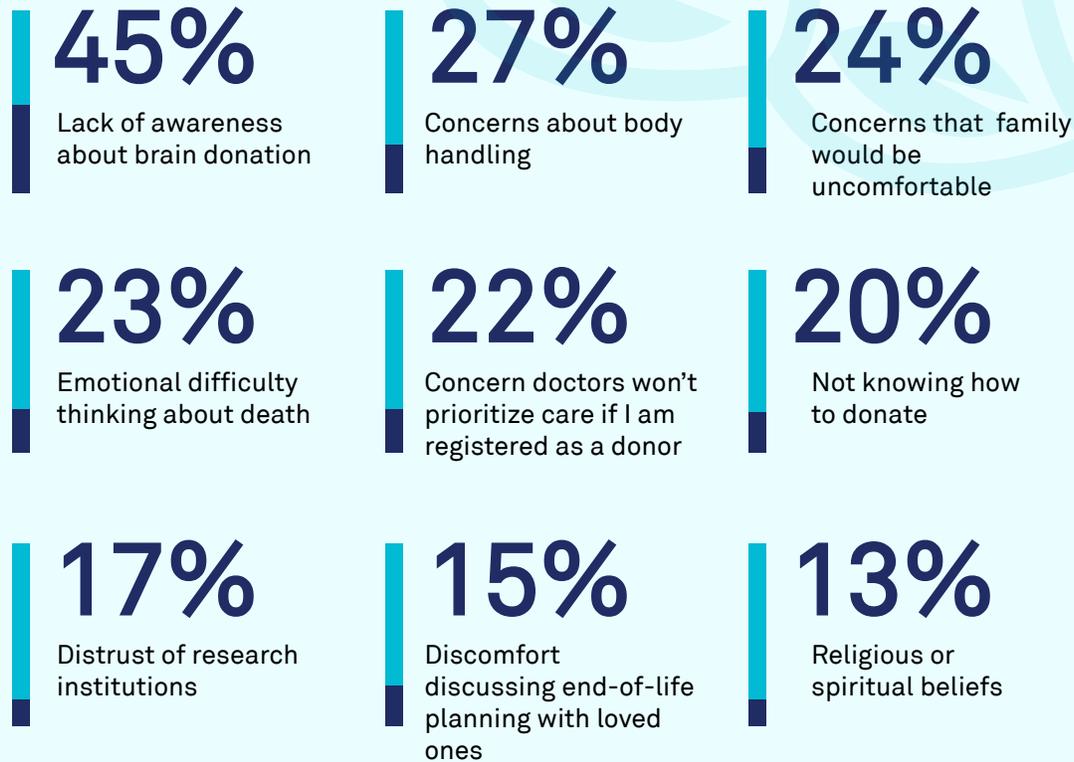
25% **MYTH****
More than 25% of respondents believe conditions like Parkinson's disease or Alzheimer's disease exclude future brain donation.

**Brain banks accept donated postmortem brains from individuals with many different and co-occurring conditions. Autism BrainNet accepts donations from people with a diagnosis of autism, even when other diagnoses are present, from people with a genetic diagnosis associated with autism, whether or not they have a diagnosis of autism, and from nonautistic people to advance research. Traumatic brain injury may preclude brain donation.

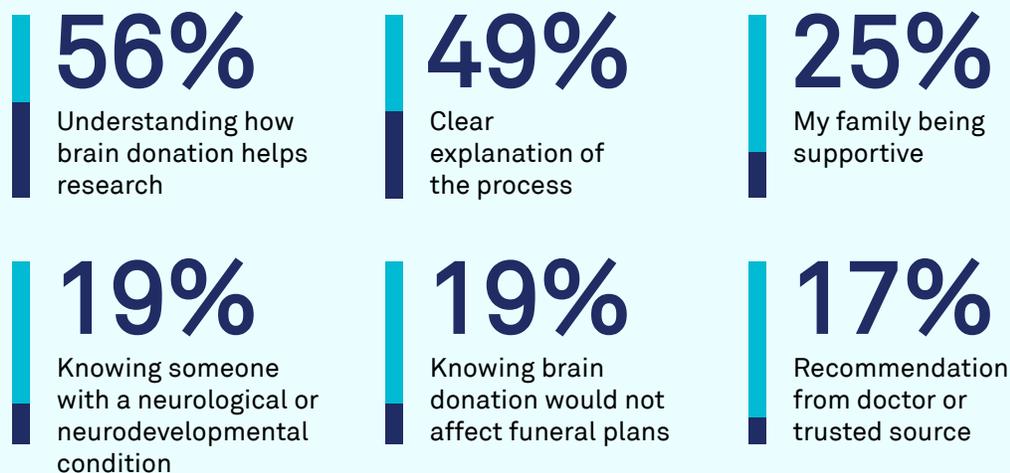


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Common Reasons Americans Are Uncomfortable About Brain Donation:



What Might Encourage People to Consider Postmortem Brain Donation:



ABOUT THE SURVEY: Autism BrainNet worked with Cousins & Co to field a 20-question, online survey of Americans aged 21 and older from February 26 to March 2, 2026. Among the 1,007 respondents, 54 percent were women, 44 percent were men, one percent were non-binary, and one percent preferred not to say. Ninety-four percent of respondents did not have a diagnosis of autism, but 22 percent had a close relative who did.



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