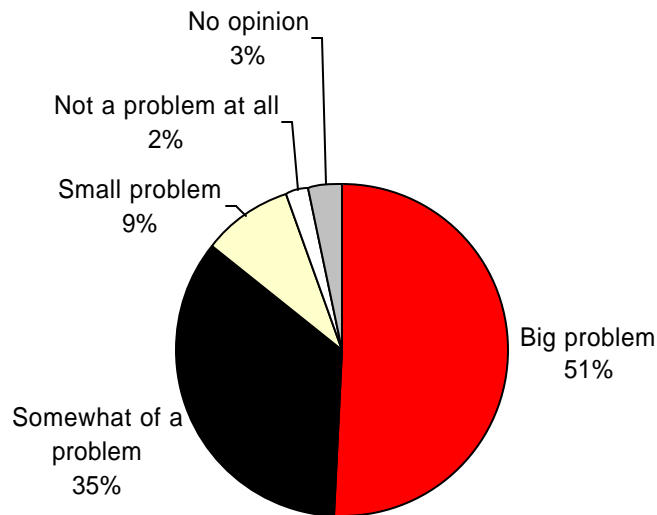


## Georgians' Views on the Sources of Poverty

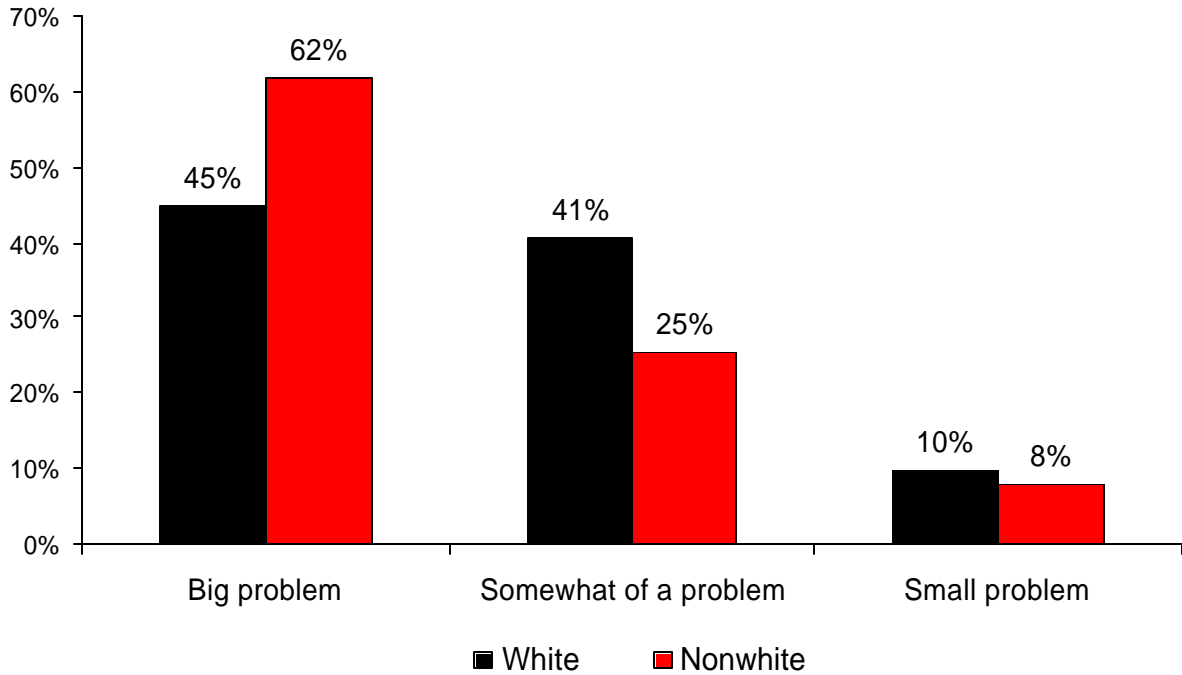
Georgians overwhelmingly agree that poverty is a problem in society today, according to results from the latest Peach State Poll. Eighty-six percent of those surveyed said that poverty was either a big problem (51 percent) or somewhat a problem (35 percent). The opinion was consistent across the board – at least 80 percent of respondents from all political parties, age groups, racial backgrounds, and income levels said that poverty was a problem.

### How big a problem is poverty in our society today?



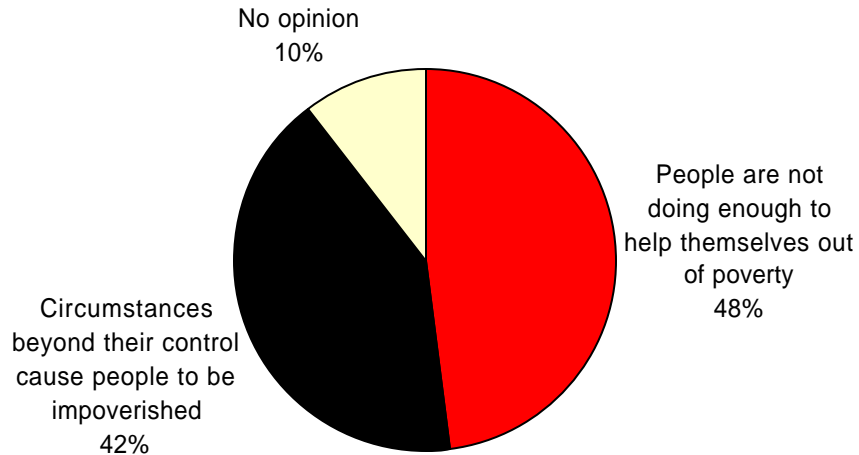
Race is a major factor in one's assessment of the degree to which poverty is a problem in our society. Nonwhite Georgians are significantly more likely than white Georgians to see poverty as a "big problem." It should be noted that nonwhites are also more likely to live in poverty (see the [Carl Vinson Institute's Study on Persistent Poverty](#)).

### How big a problem is poverty in our society today?

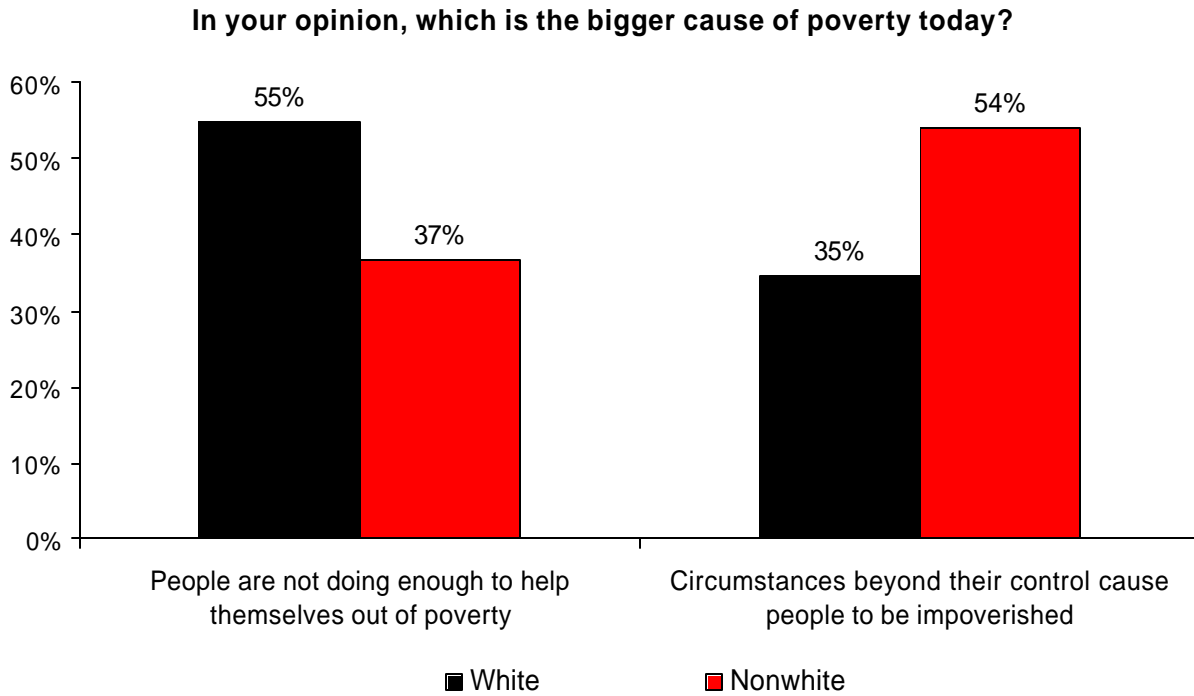


The public is nearly split over the question of whether people in poverty can do anything to break out of their current economic circumstances. Forty-two percent of the population believes that circumstances beyond the control of those in poverty are at fault for that poverty, while 48 percent believe that people in poverty are not doing enough to change their situation.

### In your opinion, which is the bigger cause of poverty today?

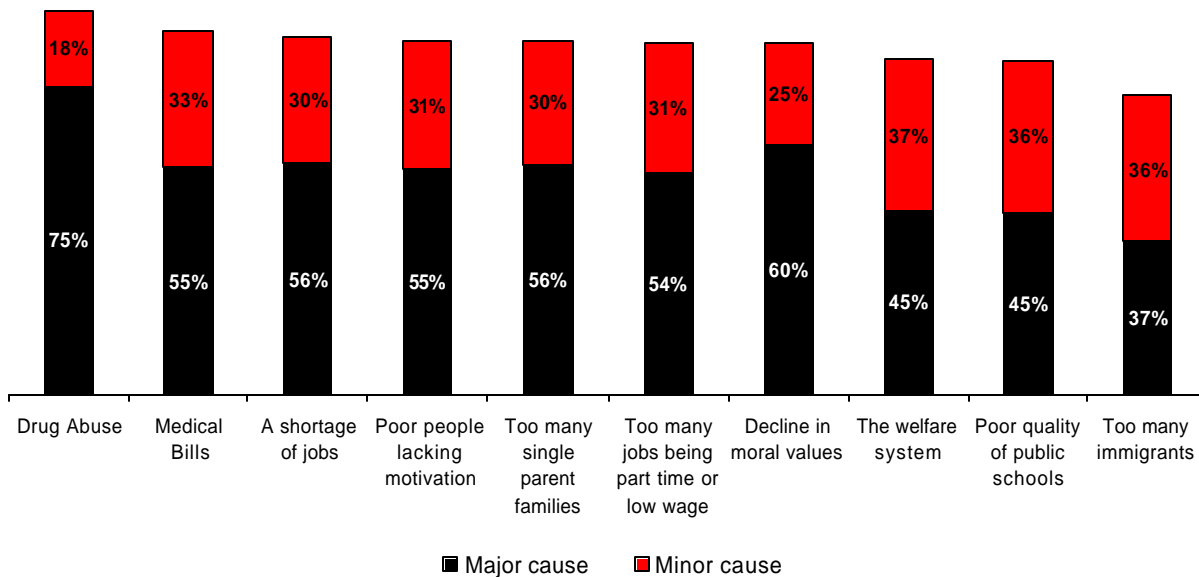


Again, the views of white Georgians differ from those of African-American and Hispanics. A majority of whites (55 percent) believe that people are not doing enough to help themselves out of poverty, while a majority of nonwhites believe that external circumstances beyond the control of those in poverty keep them impoverished. These differences are statistically significant.



As for the public’s perception of the specific underlying causes of poverty, three-fourths of all Georgians see drug abuse as one of the major causes, and three in five Georgians (60 percent) cite a decline in values as a major cause. Eighty-eight percent of the public see the burden of medical bills as either a major cause (55 percent) or a minor cause (33 percent) contributing to poverty.

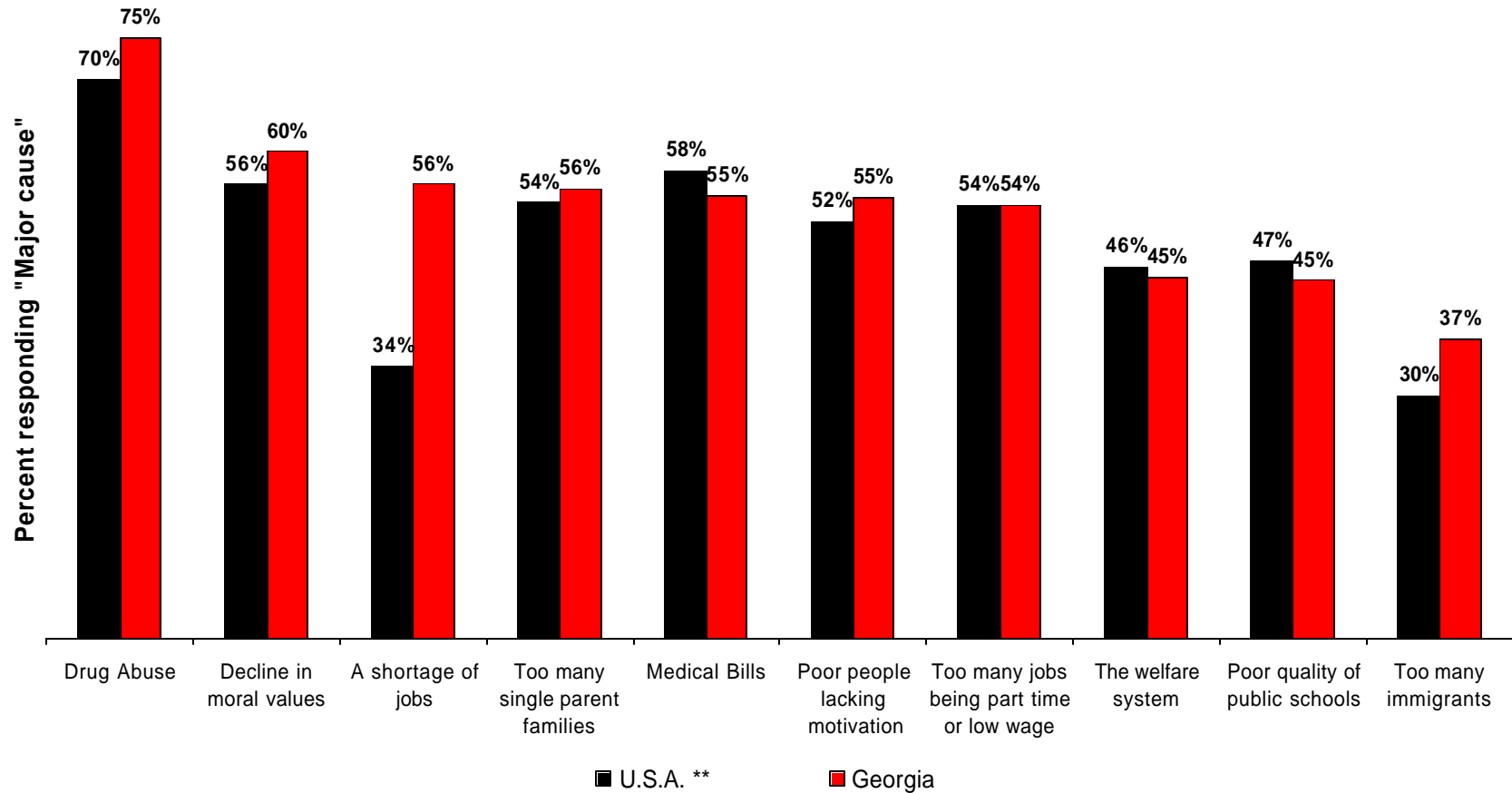
For each of the following, please tell me if this is a major cause of poverty, a minor cause of poverty, or not a cause at all.



Georgians do not differ very much from the rest of the nation in what they view as causes of poverty, based on comparisons to a national study (The Poverty Study) conducted by the Harvard Opinion Research Program for National Public Radio and the Kaiser Family Foundation. The most profound difference between the national findings and those of the Peach State Poll is in the ascription of a shortage of jobs, but this difference is likely more a factor of changing economic conditions than real differences in views between the two samples. The Harvard study was conducted early in 2001 when the economy was much brighter than it was in September 2002 when the Peach State Poll asked its questions about poverty.

Apart from this, attitudes about the extent to which immigration plays a role in causing poverty varied by 7 percentage points, with Georgians being more likely than the rest of the country to say that having too many immigrants is a major cause of poverty.

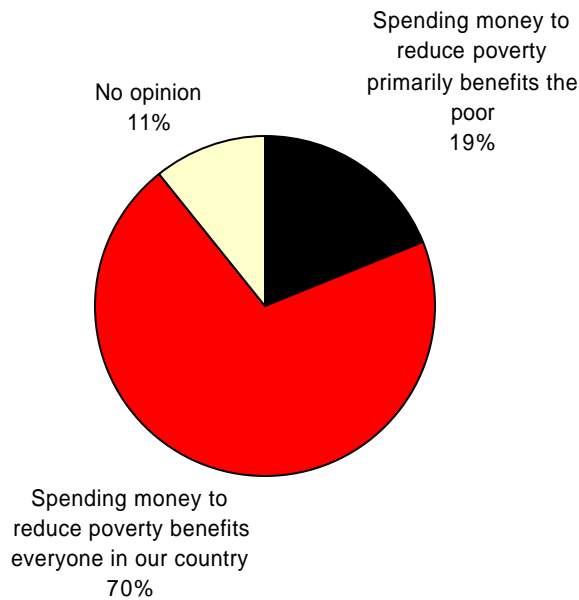
For each of the following, please tell me if this is a major cause of poverty, a minor cause of poverty, or not a cause at all.



\*\* The data for the entire country come from the Poverty in America study conducted by National Public Radio, Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, and Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, January 2001.

Georgians generally believe that public spending to reduce poverty is in the interest of the entire society, not simply in the interests of those receiving aid. Thus, a broad majority in the public does not view spending to reduce poverty as a handout or as charity.

**Which statement comes closest to your views?**



The data presented in this report are taken from a Peach State Poll conducted by the Carl Vinson Institute of Government between September 18 and September 24, 2002. The poll included 800 telephone interviews of randomly selected adults in Georgia. For a sample of this size, the margin of error at the 95 percent confidence level is +/- 3.5 percent. Although sampling error is only one source of potential survey error, all precautions have been taken to minimize other sources of error for this survey.

The Carl Vinson Institute of Government, a public service and outreach unit of the University of Georgia, has as part of its mission to provide policymakers with systematic, objective research to inform policy decisions. In accordance with that mission, the Peach State Poll aims to give voice to the public on important policy matters and issues pertaining to political, social, and economic life in Georgia.

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