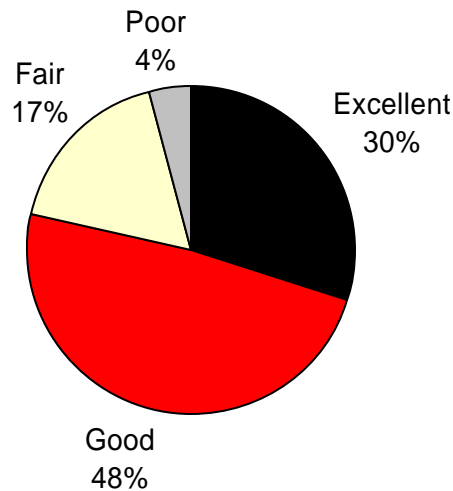


Georgian Self Reporting on Health and Fitness Behaviors

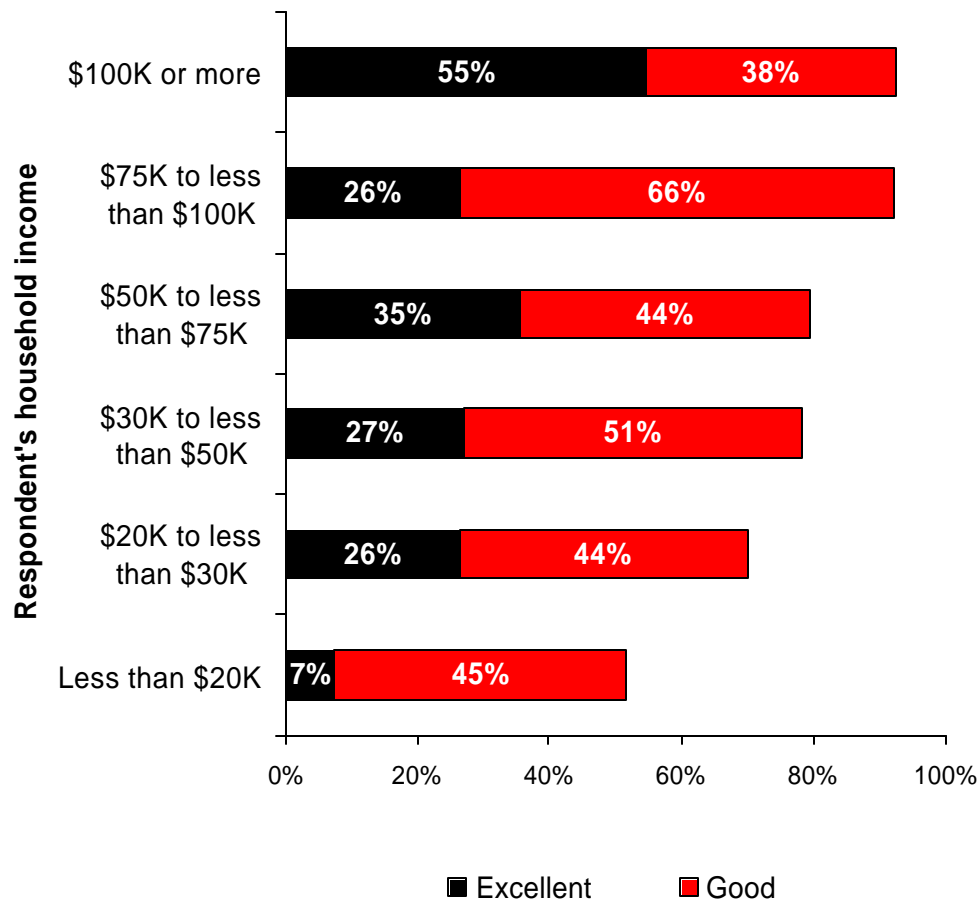
In the summer of 2003, the Peach State Poll surveyed Georgians about their diet, health, and exercise habits and attitudes. In this poll, 78 percent of Georgians assessed their own health as either excellent (30 percent) or good (48 percent). Not surprisingly, the younger and better educated are more likely than older and less-educated Georgians to report their health as excellent. There are no meaningful differences between men and women in the way they assess their health.

Do you consider yourself in excellent health, in good health, in just fair health, or in poor health?



Wealthier Georgians have a far more optimistic assessment of their own health than do the less affluent. More than half (55 percent) of those with self-reported annual incomes of \$100,000 or greater in 2002, the most recent tax year, report their health as excellent. By contrast, only 7 percent of Georgians with an annual household income less than \$20,000 in 2002 report their health to be excellent.

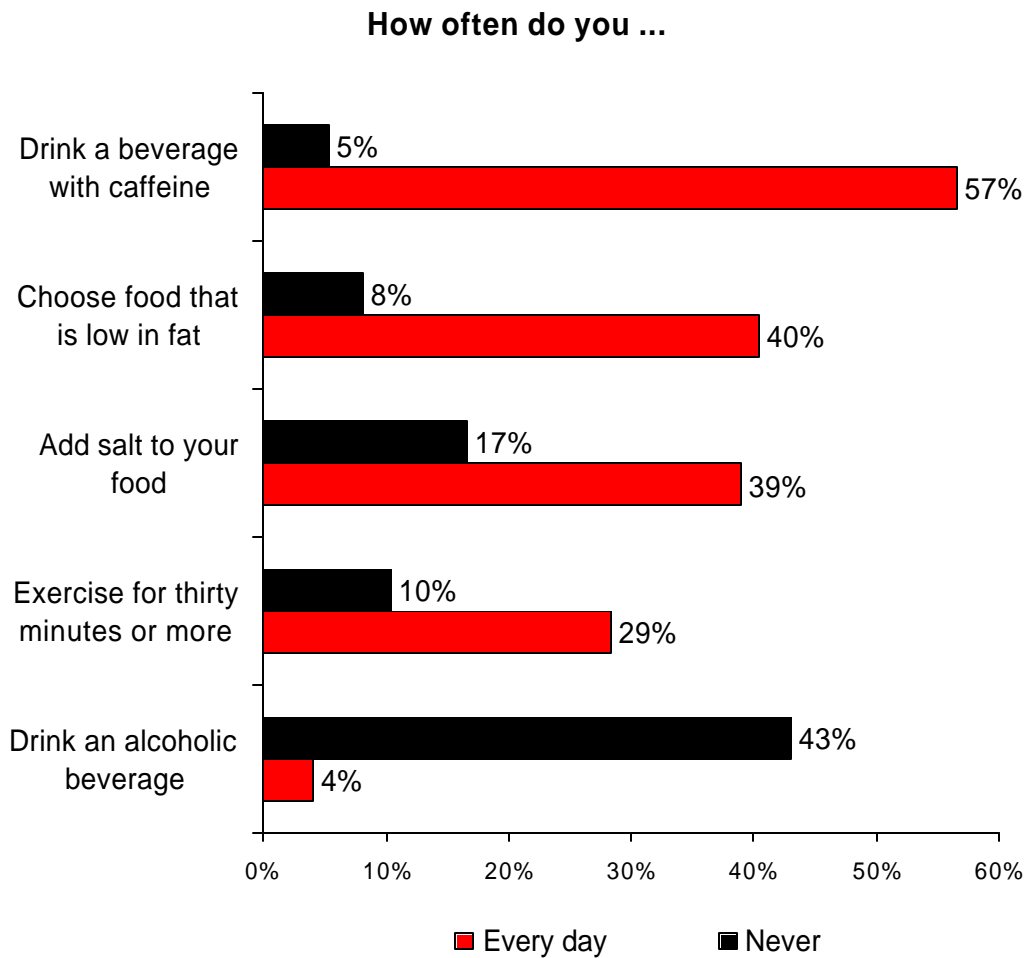
Do you consider yourself in excellent health, in good health, in just fair health, or in poor health?



Recent reports of high levels of obesity among people in the southeastern states raise questions about the degree to which the responses to these health and fitness questions reflect true behavioral patterns. On certain topics, some respondents to public opinion polls conducted over the telephone will tell interviewers what they believe they should be doing, as opposed to what they are actually doing; pollsters call this phenomenon social desirability bias—wherein the respondent portrays him or herself in the most favorable light. Social desirability explains why polls show higher levels of voting than turnout rates show and lower levels of prejudice than social scientists expect.

Health and fitness questions may be one of those topics influenced by social desirability bias. Thus, the responses to what Georgians are doing are likely to be overestimating socially desirable behavior such as eating well and exercising. Nevertheless, differences found among groups are likely to be real, since there is no reason to expect one group to be more susceptible to social desirability bias than any other.

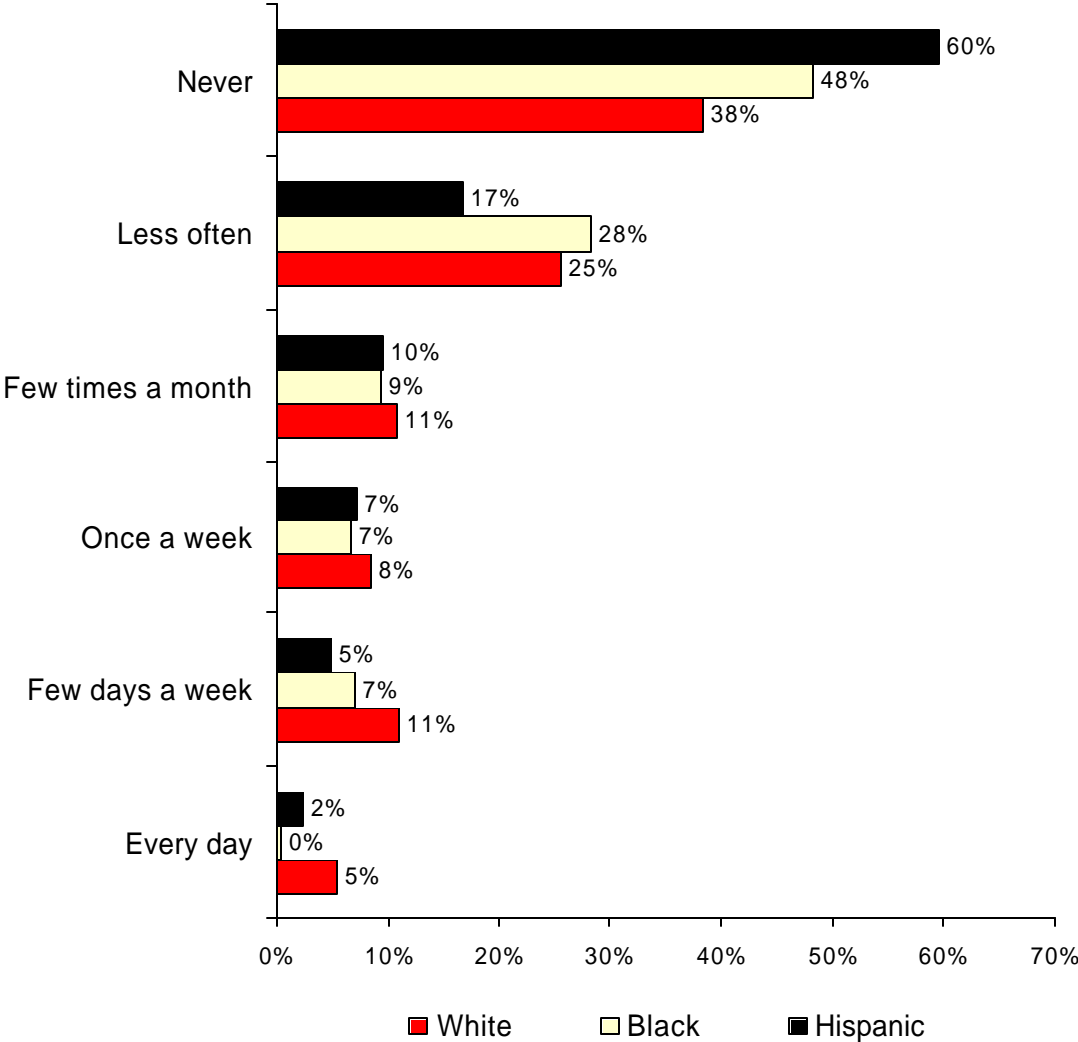
According to the Peach State Poll, 66 percent of Georgians report that they exercise for 30 minutes or more at least a few times a week—with 29 percent saying they exercise this much every day. In addition, two in five Georgians say that they choose food that is low in fat on a daily basis, and 43 percent say they never drink alcoholic beverages.¹ On the other hand, a majority of Georgians say they have a caffeinated beverage, and 39 percent add salt to their food every day.



¹ A national poll conducted by CBS News in January 2003 found only 23 percent of Americans reporting never drinking alcoholic beverages. The CBS data was provided by the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut. This question on the CBS poll and the Peach State Poll was worded identically, but some differences in results might be due to context effects.

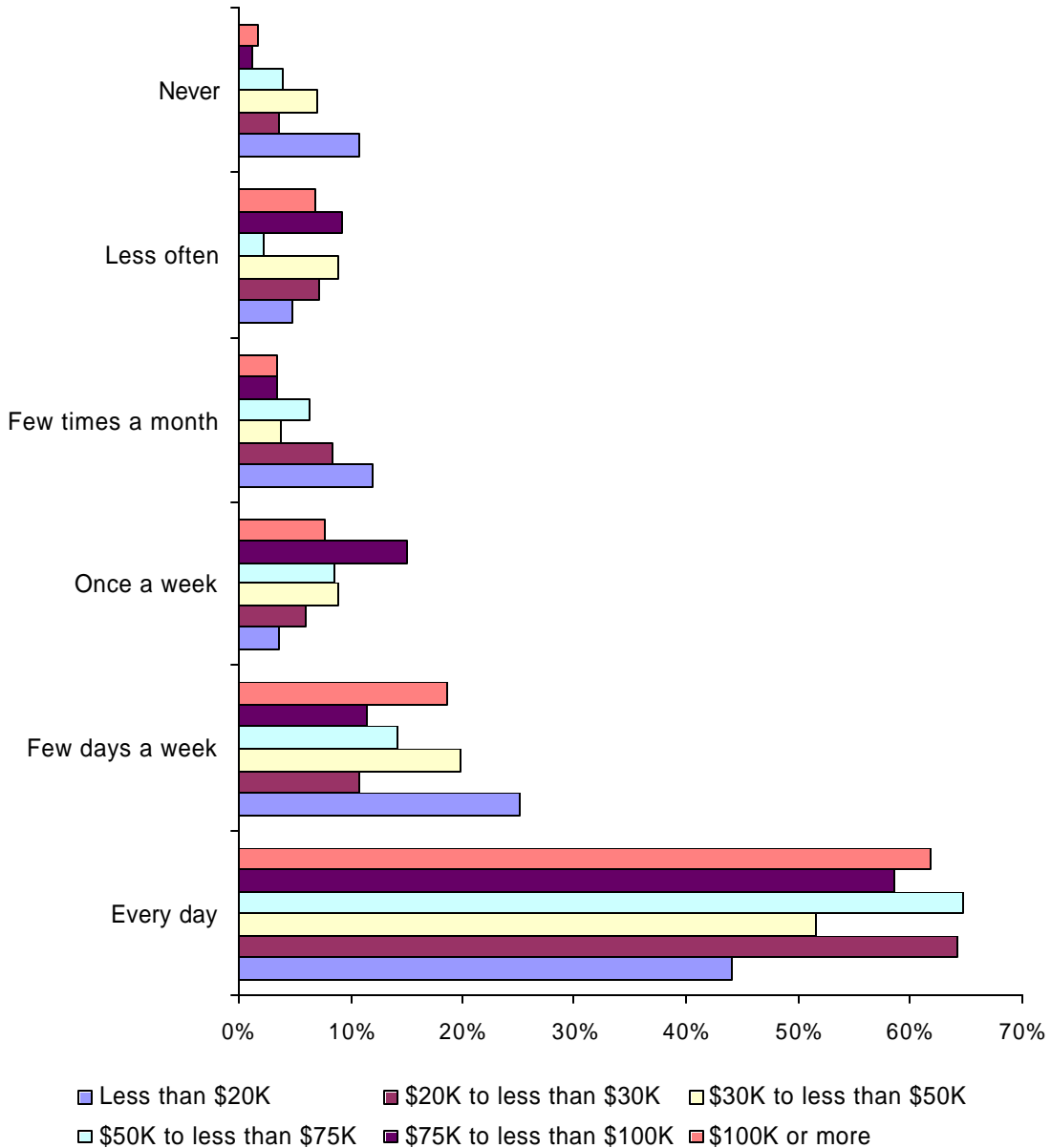
Georgians who classify themselves as white are much more likely to report drinking beverages with caffeine and adding salt to their food on a daily basis than are African Americans or Hispanics. Whites are also less likely to say they never drink alcoholic beverages.

How often do you ... drink an alcoholic beverage?

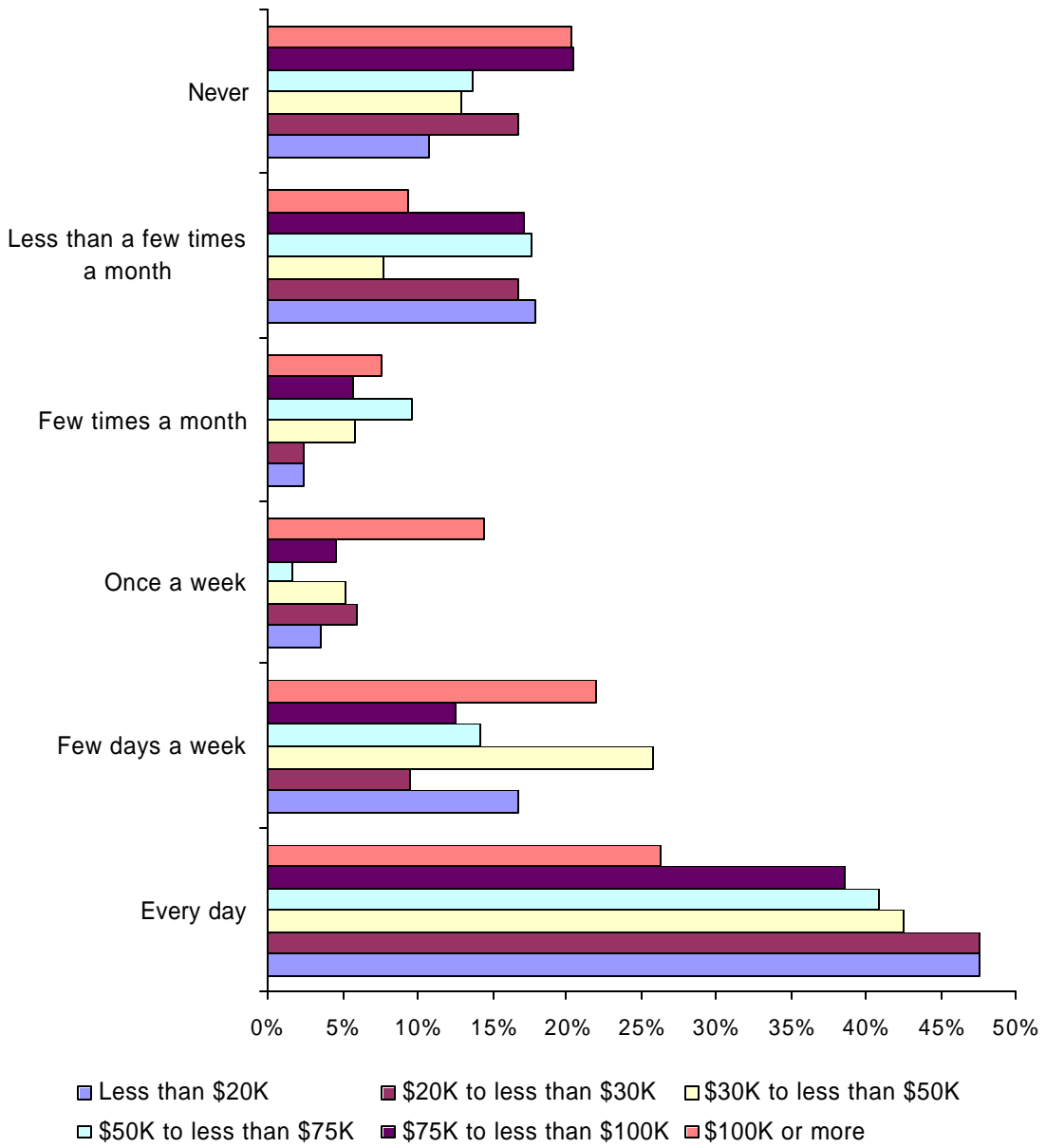


Household income is highly correlated with the tendency to report less healthy behavior. Lower income Georgians are more likely to be drinking caffeinated beverages and adding salt to their food and less likely to choose foods that are low in fat than are wealthier Georgians. On the other hand, those with lower household incomes are also more likely to never drink alcoholic beverages.

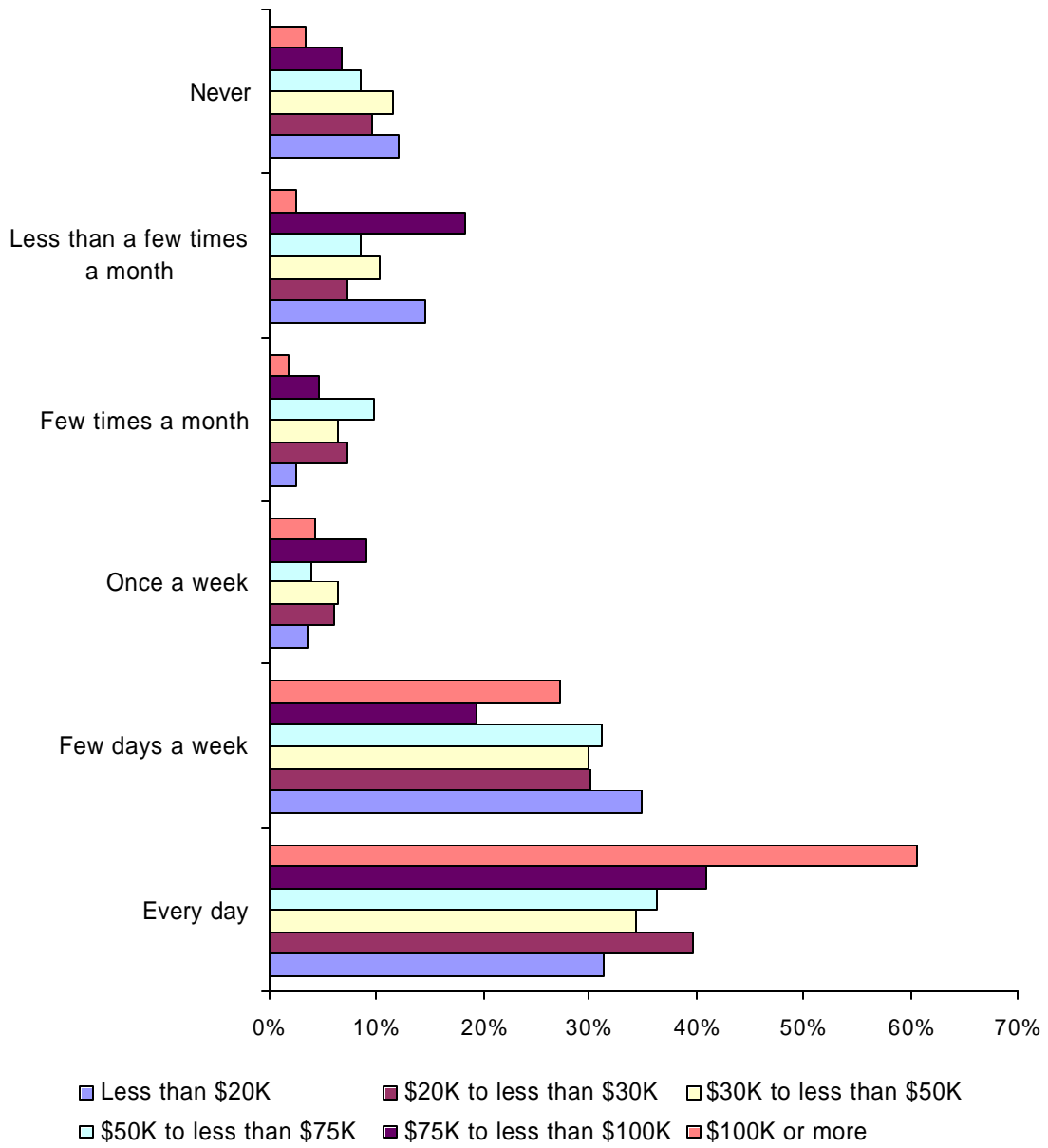
How often do you ... drink beverages with caffeine?



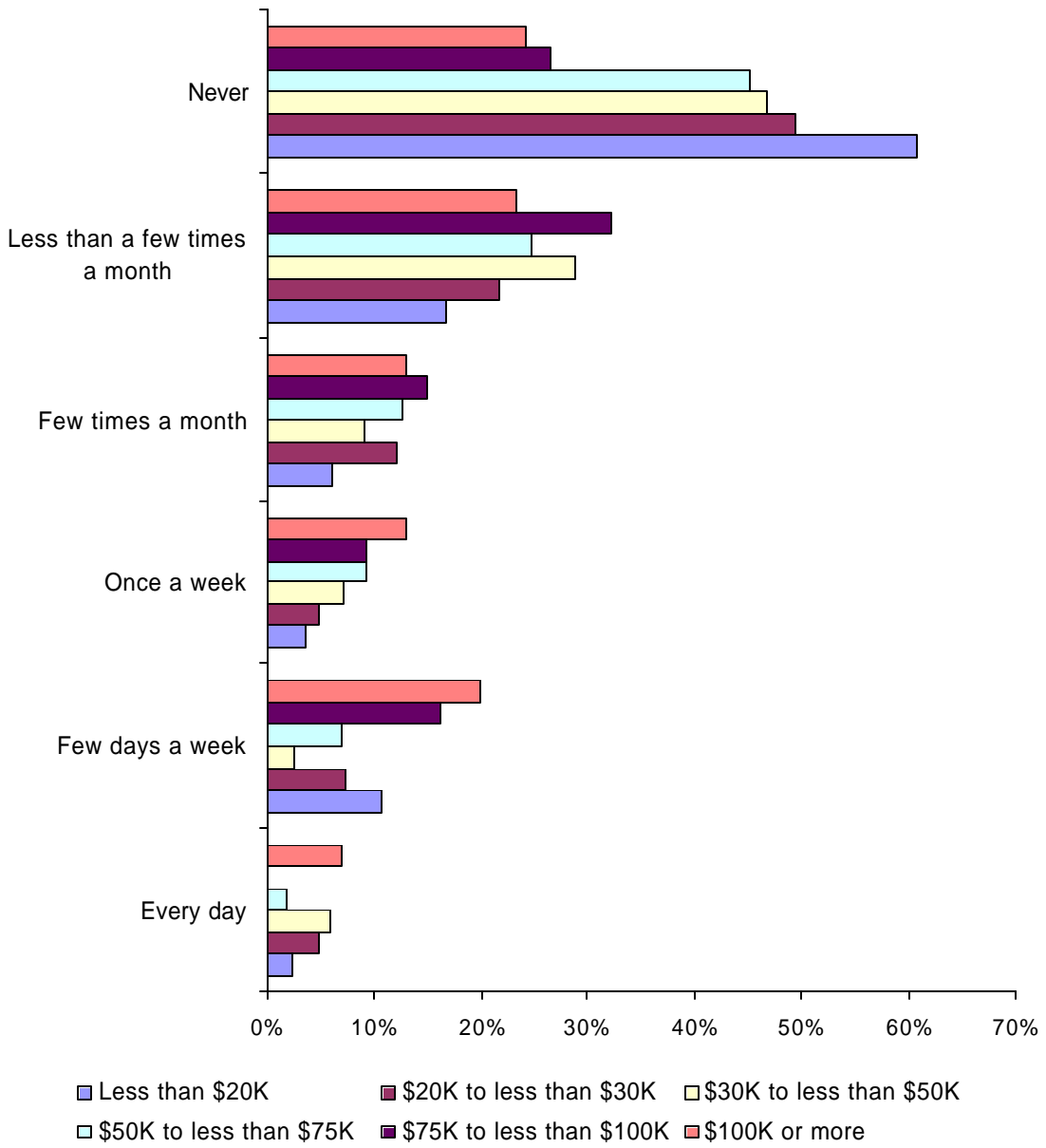
How often do you ... add salt to your food?



How often do you ... choose food that is low in fat?

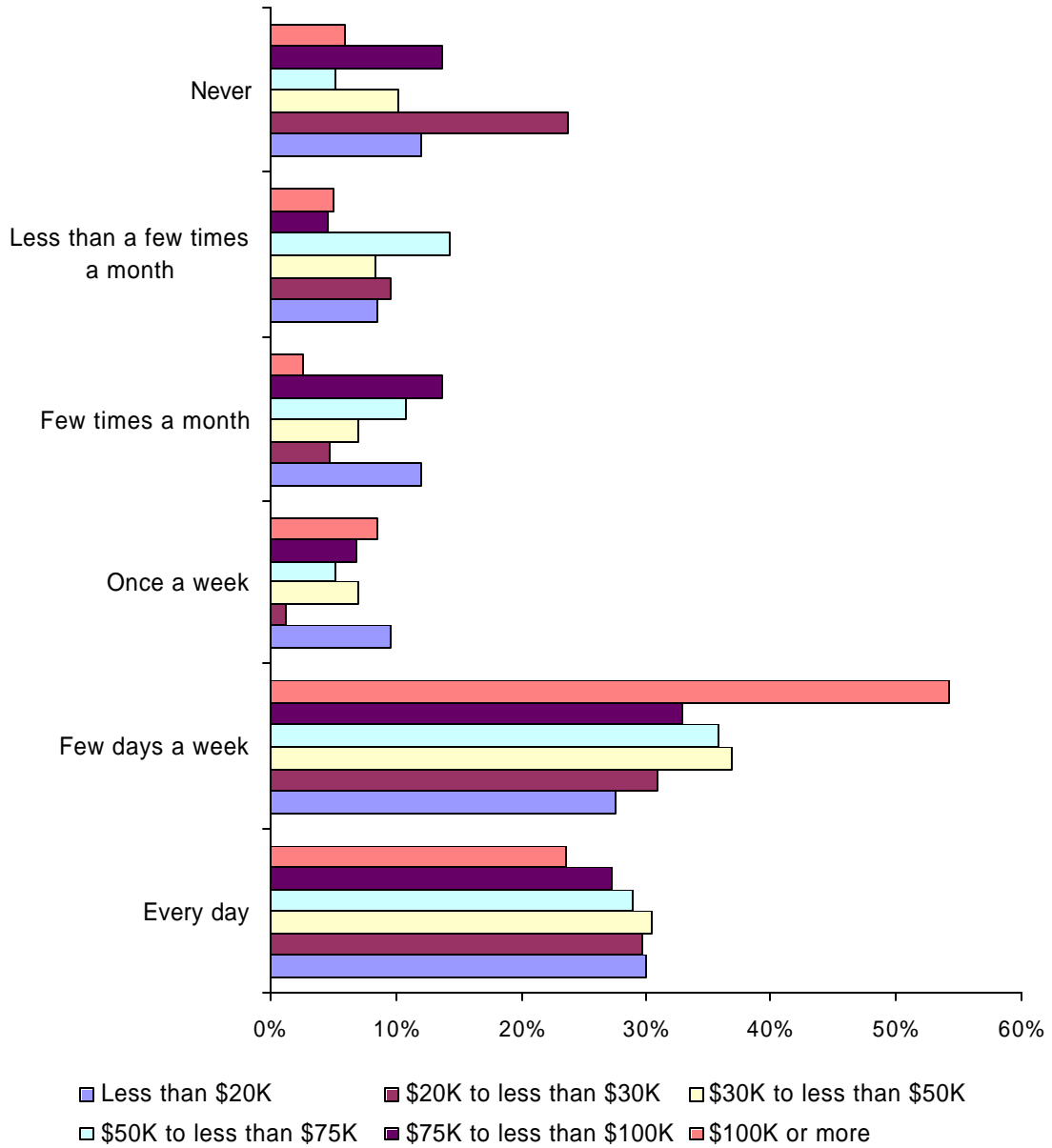


How often do you ... drink an alcoholic beverage?



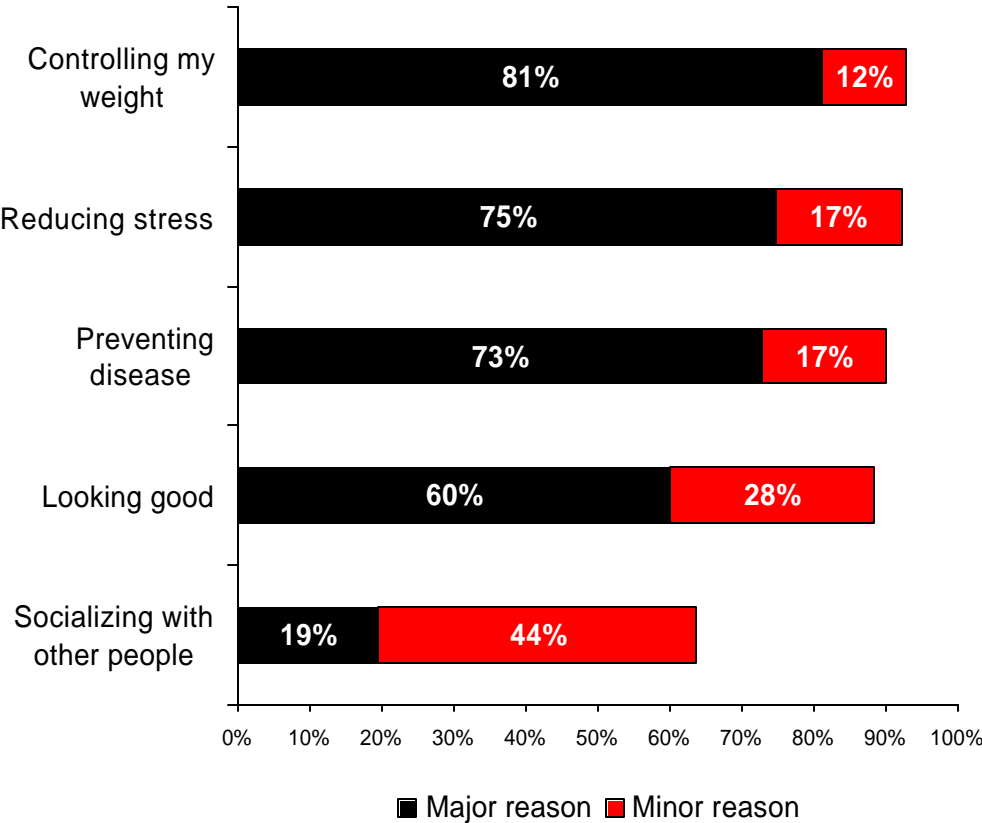
Lower income Georgians are more likely to say that they exercise on a daily basis than are those in higher income brackets. However, those in the highest income bracket (\$100 thousand or greater for the 2002 tax year) say they exercise frequently, generally a few days per week.

How often do you ... exercise for 30 minutes or more?



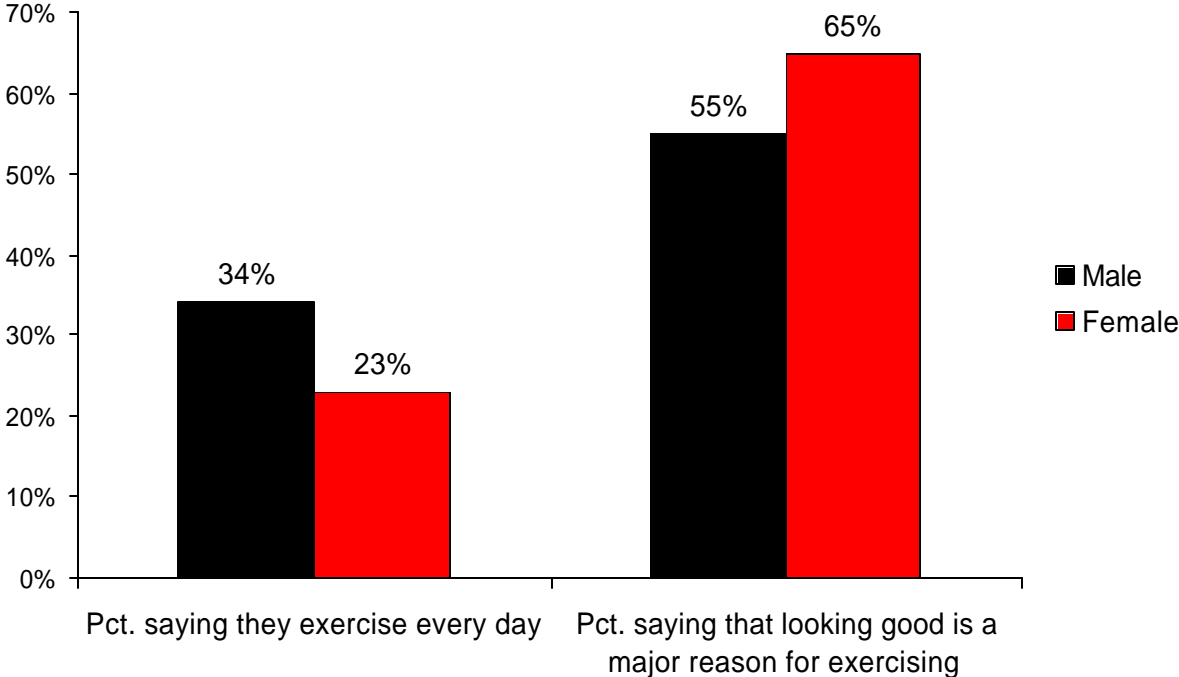
Individuals give many reasons for exercising, including preventing disease, losing weight, reducing stress, and looking good. Of these reasons, the most popular among Georgians is losing weight; 81 percent list weight loss as a major reason, and an additional 12 percent list it as a minor reason. Nearly as many Georgians cite reducing stress (75 percent) and preventing disease (73 percent) as major reasons for exercising. Looking good was cited as a major reason by a substantial majority (60 percent). The responses indicate that socializing is not a major reason for exercising.

Please tell me whether you feel each of the following is a major reason, a minor reason, or not really a reason why you exercise.

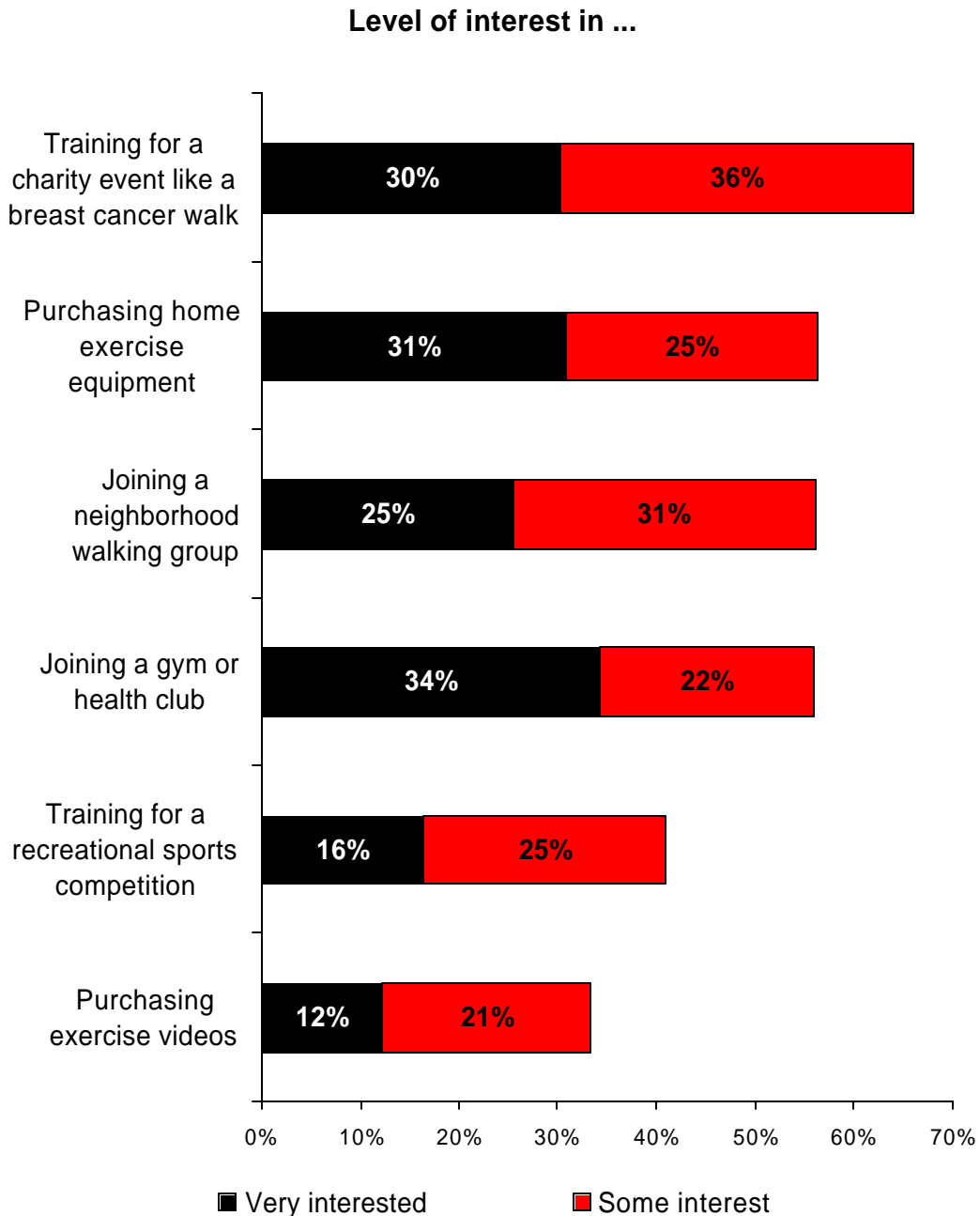


Although women are more likely than men to cite looking good as a major reason for exercising (65 percent compared with 55 percent), women are also less likely to claim that they exercise every day (23 percent compared with 34 percent).

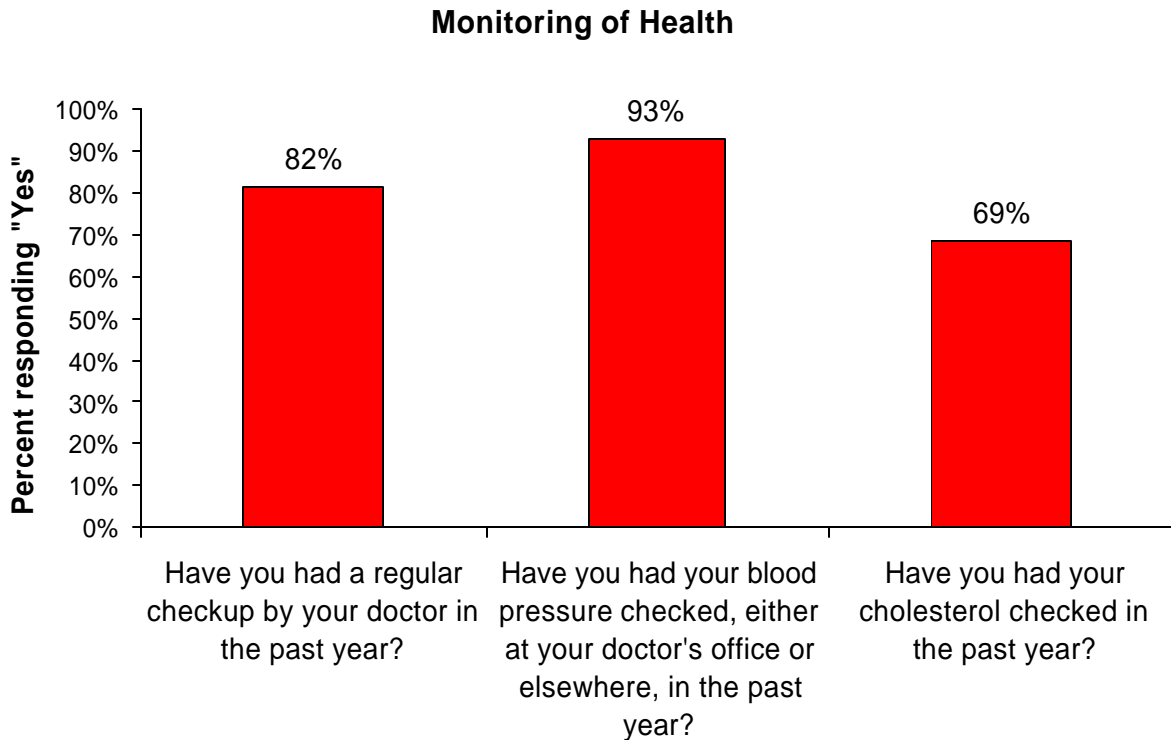
Differences Between Males and Females in Exercise



Georgians are just as likely to prefer exercising at home to exercising as a social activity. The Peach State Poll asked how interested each respondent would be in various avenues of exercise if cost were not a factor. Thirty-four percent of respondents say they are very interested in joining a health club or a gym—clearly a social form of exercise—and 31 percent are very interested in purchasing home exercise equipment.



A vast majority of Georgians (82 percent) have had a regular checkup by a physician in the past year. Ninety-three percent of the general public in Georgia say that they have had their blood pressure checked in the past year, but only 69 percent have had their cholesterol level checked.



The data presented in this report are taken from a Peach State Poll conducted by the Carl Vinson Institute of Government between August 8 and August 17, 2003. The poll included 804 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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