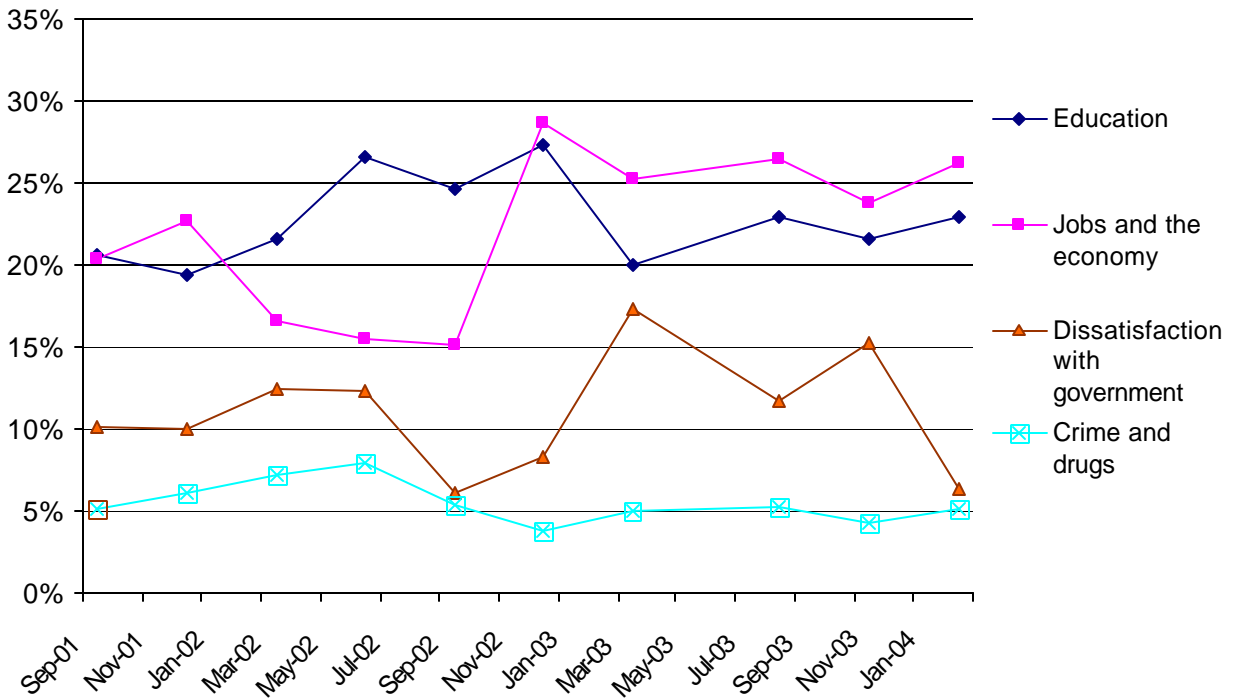


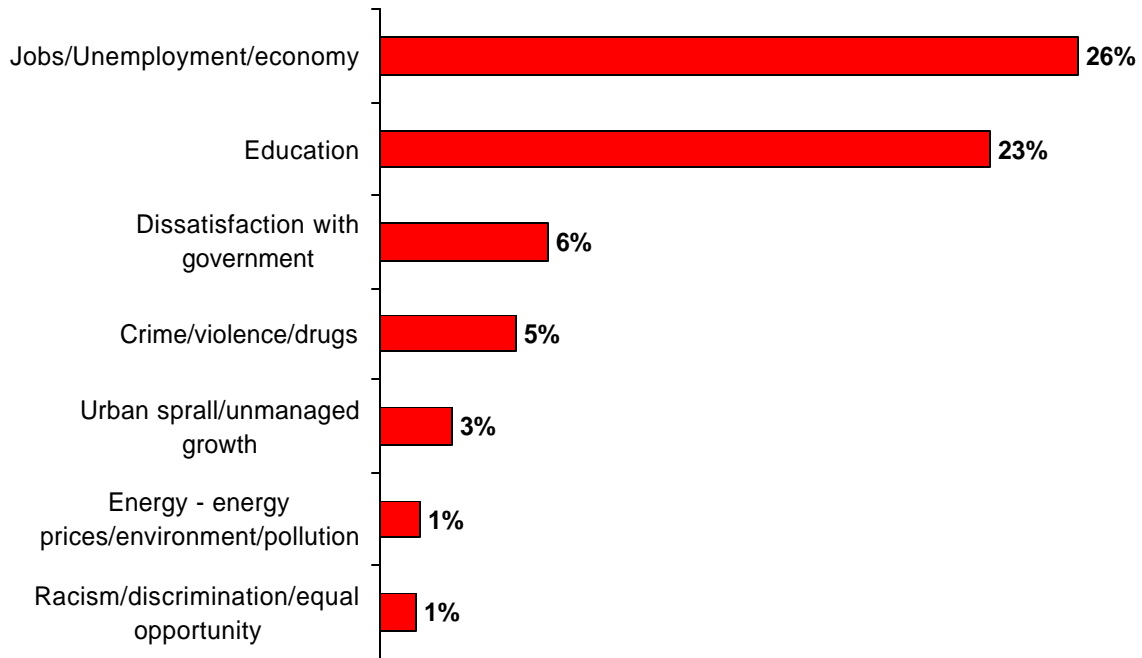
It's still the economy

For the past year, Georgians cite jobs and the economy as the most important problem facing the state, with education maintaining its spot as the second most important problem. Responses indicating dissatisfaction with government have dropped in number since the previous quarter but remain the third most common response to the question of what is the most important problem for the state.

What is the most important problem facing Georgia today?



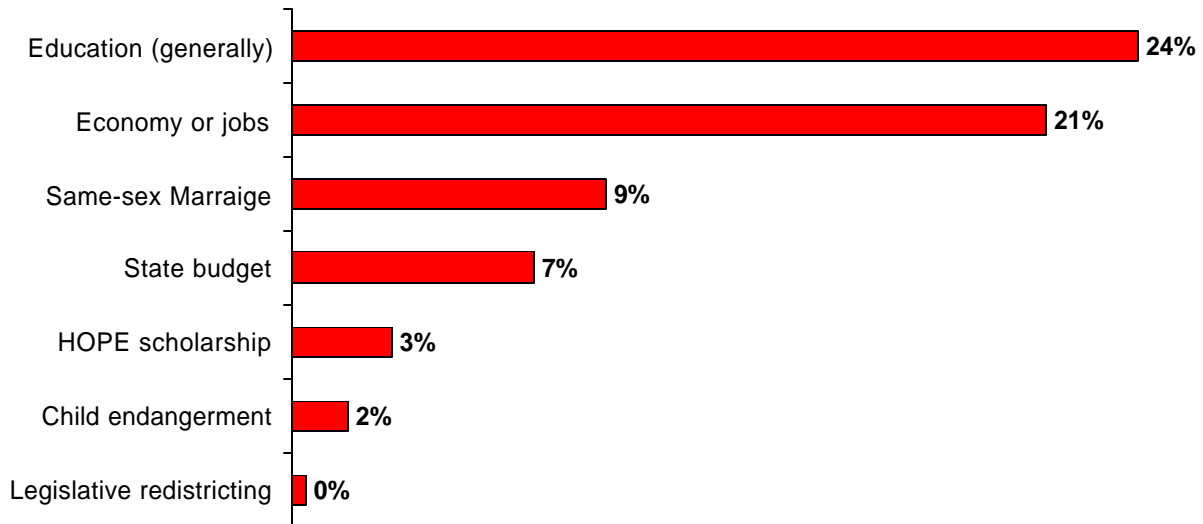
What is the most important problem facing Georgia today? (Feb. '04)



When asked what is the most important issue facing the Georgia General Assembly in the 2004 session, Georgians again turned to the economy and education, although other issues also emerged. While the plurality of respondents (24 percent) cited the need to address education generally throughout the state, a small number (3 percent) singled out HOPE as a primary concern for the legislature. The responses of those citing the economy and jobs as the primary issue (21 percent) differed from those citing the budget (7 percent) in that the former were primarily concerned with job creation while the latter were primarily concerned with service provision. Those citing the budget as the most important issue facing the legislature were largely divided on whether the budget could be balanced by reducing wasteful spending or by finding ways to increase revenue.

Although about 2 percent of respondents cited same-sex marriage as the most important problem facing the state, 9 percent cite this issue as important for the legislature to address. Nearly all of those citing same-sex marriage as an issue to address oppose extending the institution of marriage to same-sex couples.

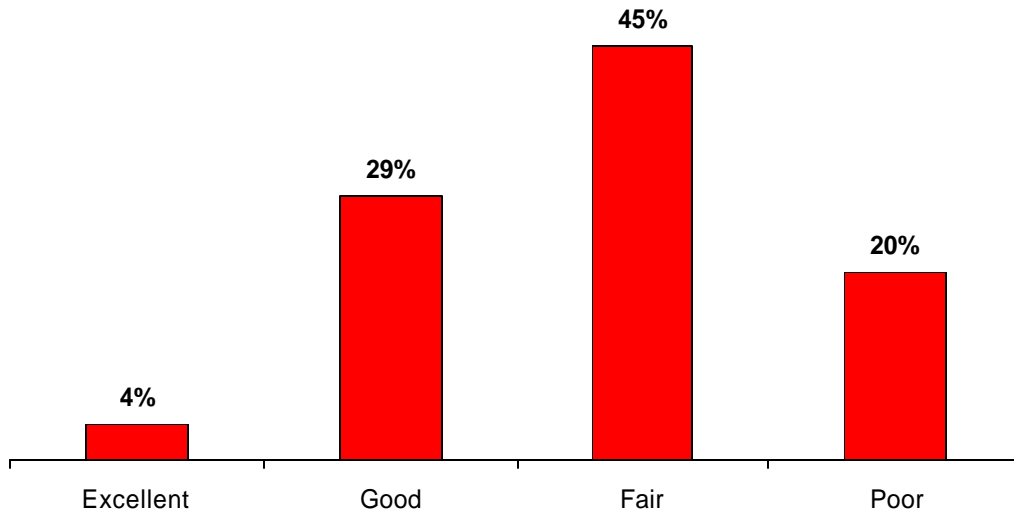
Most Important Issue for the General Assembly in the Current Session



The majority of Georgians (65 percent) rate current economic conditions in the state as either fair (45 percent) or poor (20 percent). African-Americans are more likely than whites to rate economic conditions as poor; while 37 percent of African-American respondents characterize economic conditions as poor, only 13 percent of whites say that economic conditions are poor.¹ Women are also more likely than men to rate the current economic conditions as poor, and those living outside the Atlanta metropolitan area also have a less positive view of economic conditions than do Atlantans.

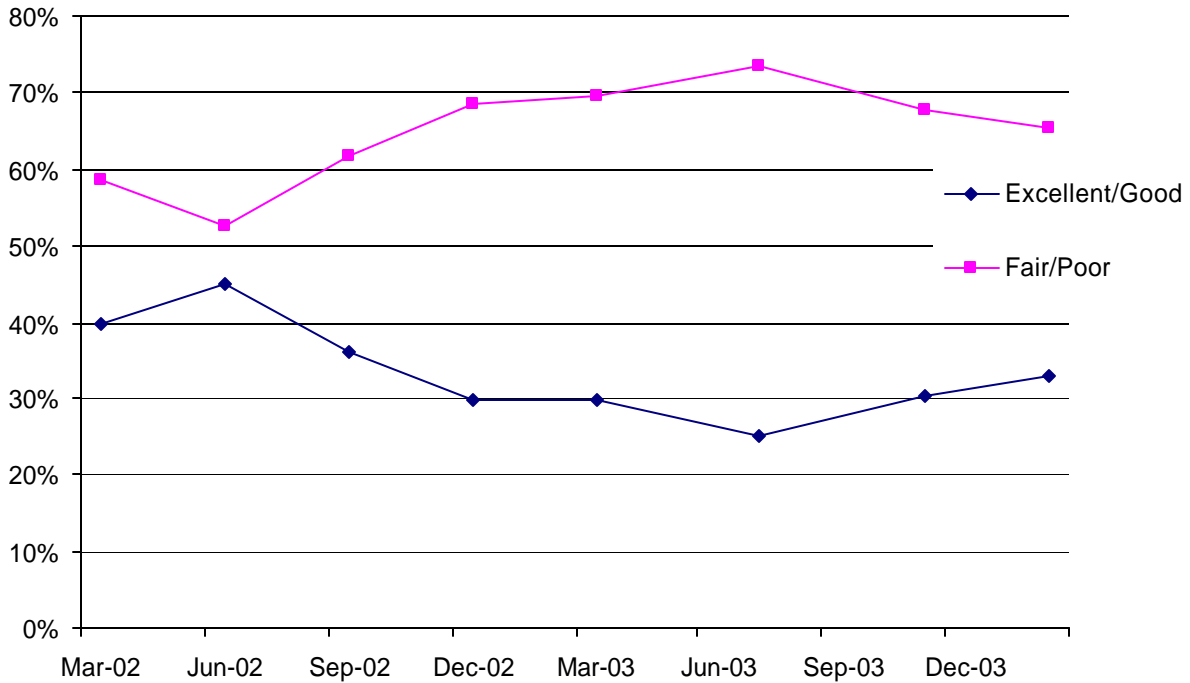
¹ Chi Square tests show a statistically significant relationship between race and ratings of the economy in Peach State Poll surveys ($p < .05$).

How would you rate current economic conditions in Georgia today? (Feb. '04)



Ratings of the economy have improved gradually over the past two quarters of the Peach State Poll. In summer of 2003, the ratings of the economy reached a nadir and have steadily improved since. Nevertheless, only a third of the general public or less have rated economic conditions as either excellent or good in every poll since September 2002.

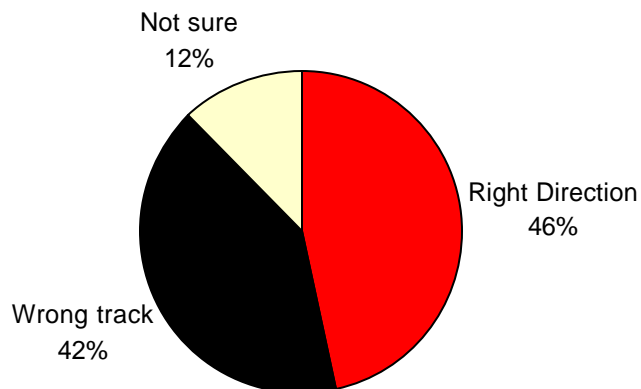
How would you rate economic conditions in Georgia today?



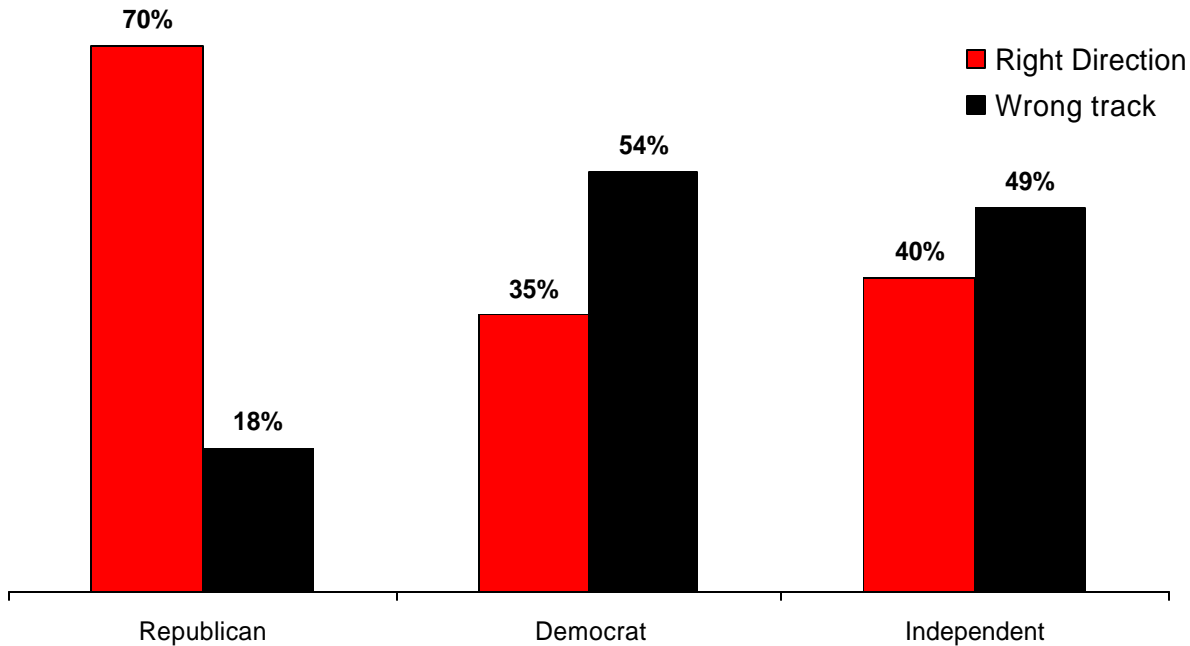
Perhaps the most often used method by pollsters to measure the general public mood is to ask whether the public thinks that the state or country is heading in the right direction or if it is on the wrong track. The responses to this question reflect very general attitudes, but often the question results have been a rough measure of the public's desire for change in society or government.

In the most recent Peach State Poll, a plurality (46 percent) responded that things in Georgia were heading in the right direction; 42 percent said that things are on the wrong track. The greatest determinate to how one responded to this question appears to be one's political party affiliation. Seventy percent of Republicans, as opposed to only 35 percent of Democrats, say that things are heading in the right direction. Independents are somewhat more likely to say that things are on the wrong track than to say that things are heading in the right direction.

Generally speaking, would you say that things in Georgia are heading in the right direction, or are they off on the wrong track?

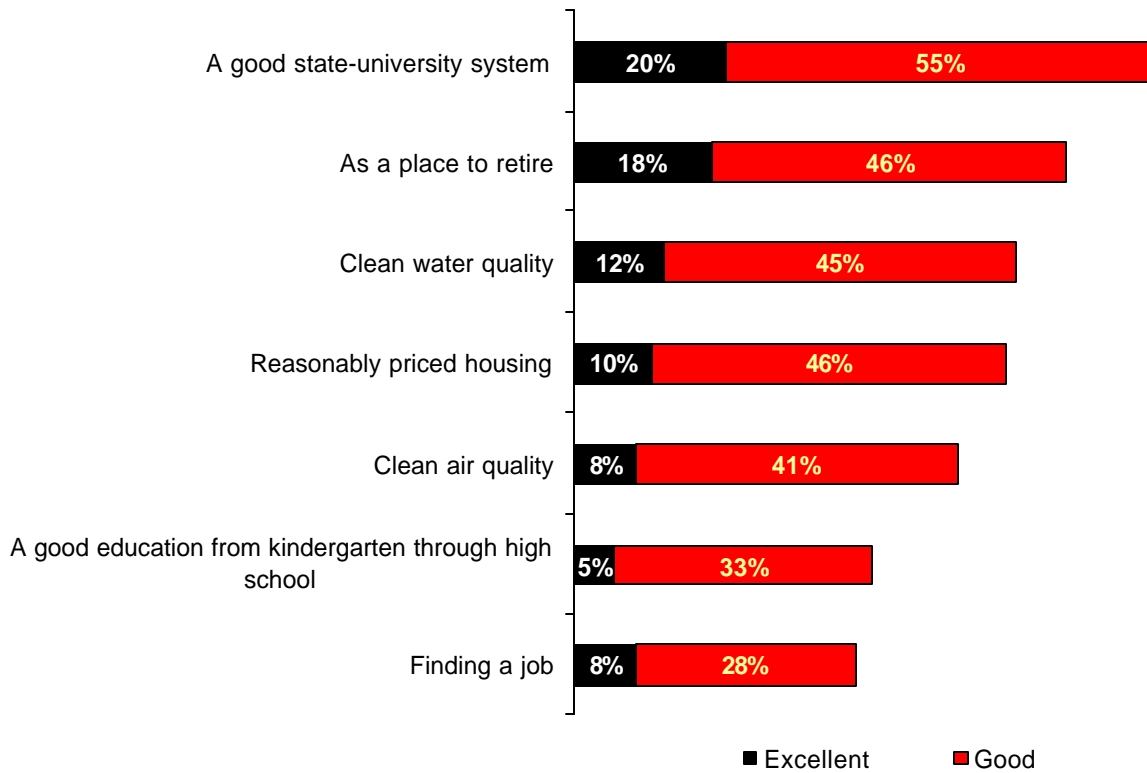


Attitudes about the Direction of the State by Political Party



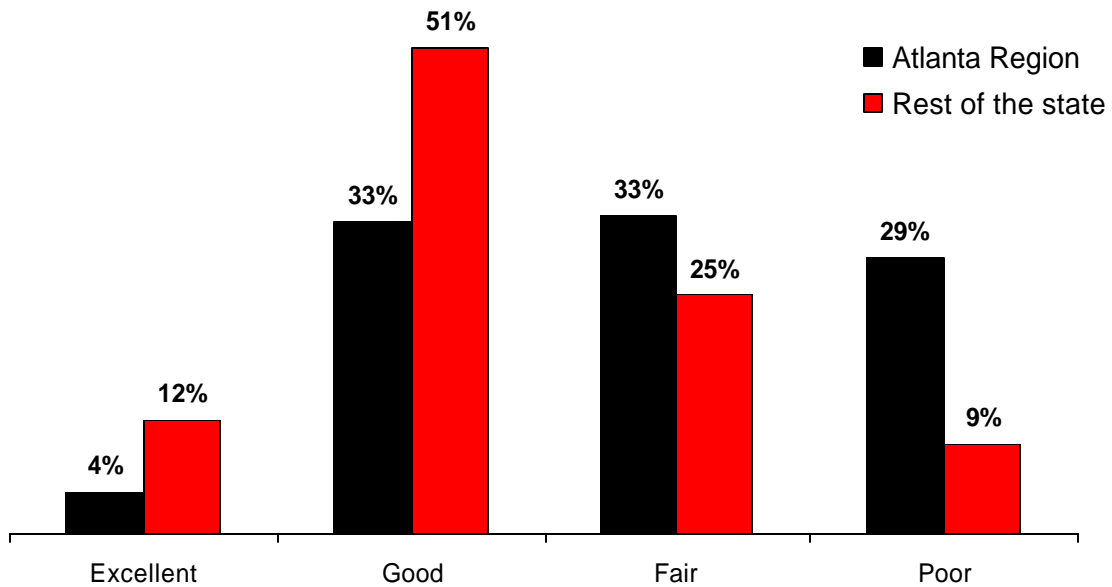
Residents of the Peach State generally rate Georgia highly as an overall place to live and as a place to retire. The public does not rate the state highly as a place for a good education (K-12) or as a place for finding a job. Most of the ratings of these items have remained fairly consistent throughout the past two years except that “Georgia as a place for finding a job” has declined 10 percentage points since the June 2002 Peach State Poll.

How would you rate Georgia as a place for ...



On the topic of air quality, one’s opinion depends largely on where in the state one lives. Residents of the Atlanta metropolitan area rate the quality of air much lower than do those living outside the Atlanta region.

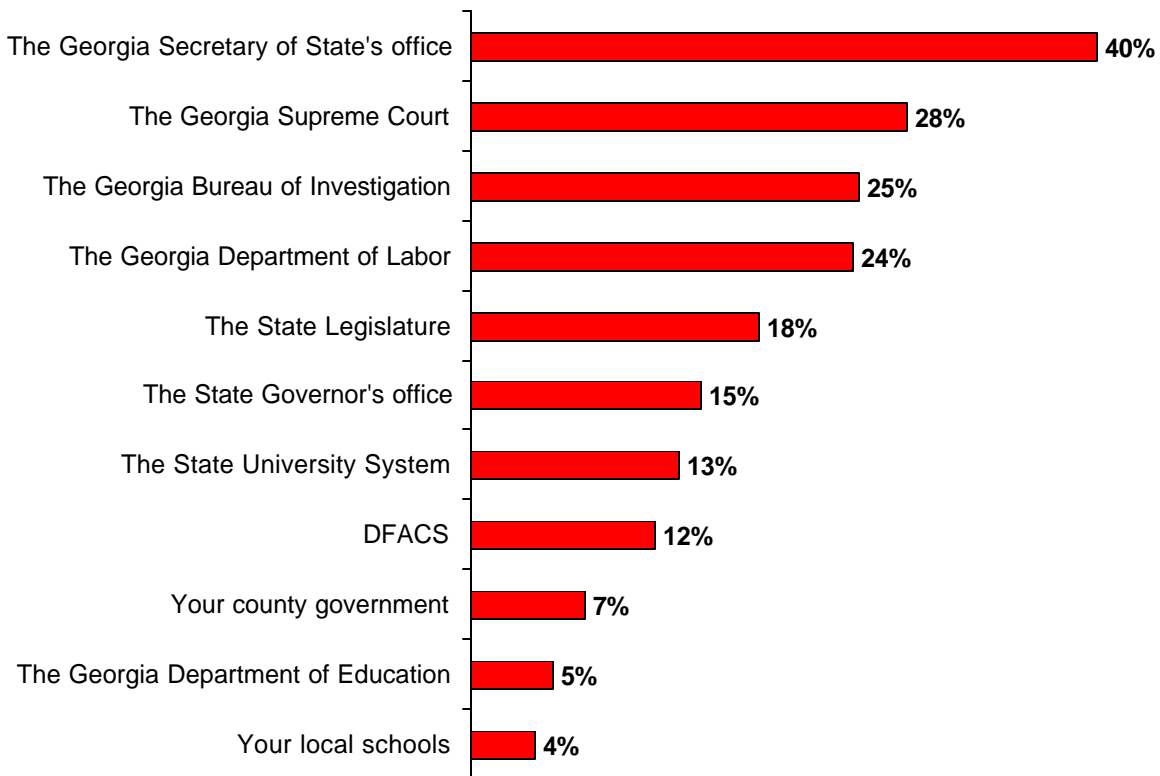
Rating of Clean Air Quality by Region of the State



Georgians' collective concern about the quality of education in the state is reflected in the battery of questions asking respondents to rate Georgia on a variety of issues. While three out of four Georgians rate higher education in the state as either excellent (20 percent) or good (55 percent), only 38 percent rate kindergarten through high school as either excellent (5 percent) or good (33 percent). It is likely that these low ratings reflect a perception of fair to poor education throughout the state and are not a reflection of how Georgians see their local schools. In another battery of questions, a majority of Georgians (64 percent) expressed either strong approval (31 percent) or mild approval (33 percent) of the performance of their local schools, but the public expressed less approval of the performance of the state's Department of Education (19 percent strongly approve and 32 percent mildly approve).

The February 2004 Peach State Poll for the first time asked respondents to assess the performance of several units of government, inviting respondents to let the interviewer know if the respondent is not familiar with that unit of government. Forty percent of Georgians are not familiar enough with the Secretary of State's office to make any judgment; given that the Secretary of State's office handles voter registration and oversees elections, this is a high percentage unaware. In addition, slightly more than a fourth (28 percent) of all Georgians are not familiar enough with the Georgia Supreme Court to assess its performance. Nearly all Georgians say that they are familiar enough with their local schools and the Department of Education to make an assessment about school performance.

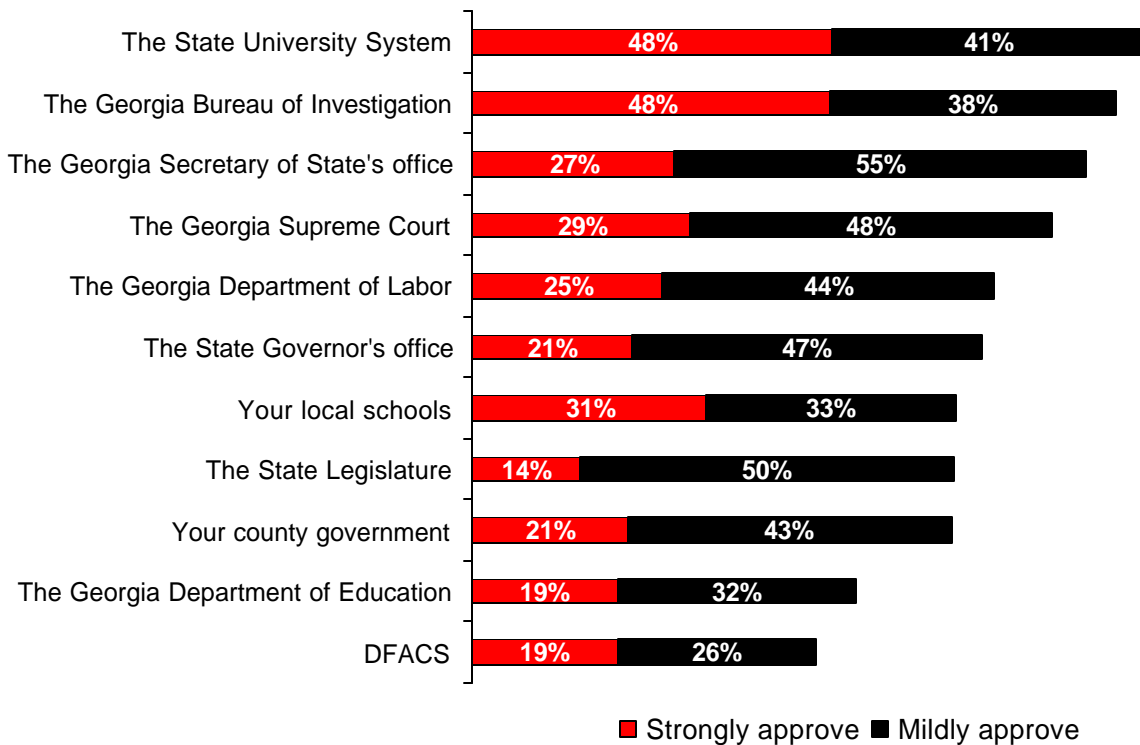
Percent of Georgians Unfamiliar with Various Units of Government



More than 80 percent of those who believe that they are familiar enough with an agency or unit of government to make an assessment of its performance approve of the performance of the state's university system (89 percent), the Georgia Bureau of investigation (85 percent), and the Secretary of State's Office (81 percent). In addition, 77 percent of respondents with sufficient awareness approve of the performance of the state Supreme Court. On the other hand, the Department of Family and Children's Services (DFACS) and the Department of Education are two agencies with which the public feels relatively familiar and in which the public expresses relatively low levels of performance approval (46 percent approval for DFACS and 51 percent

approval for the Department of Education). In fact, one-third of respondents (excluding those who say that they are unfamiliar with DFACS) strongly disapprove of the performance of DFACS.

Approval of the Performance of Institutions (of those who expressed an opinion)



The majority of data presented in this report are taken from a Peach State Poll conducted by the Carl Vinson Institute of Government between February 27 and March 8, 2004. 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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