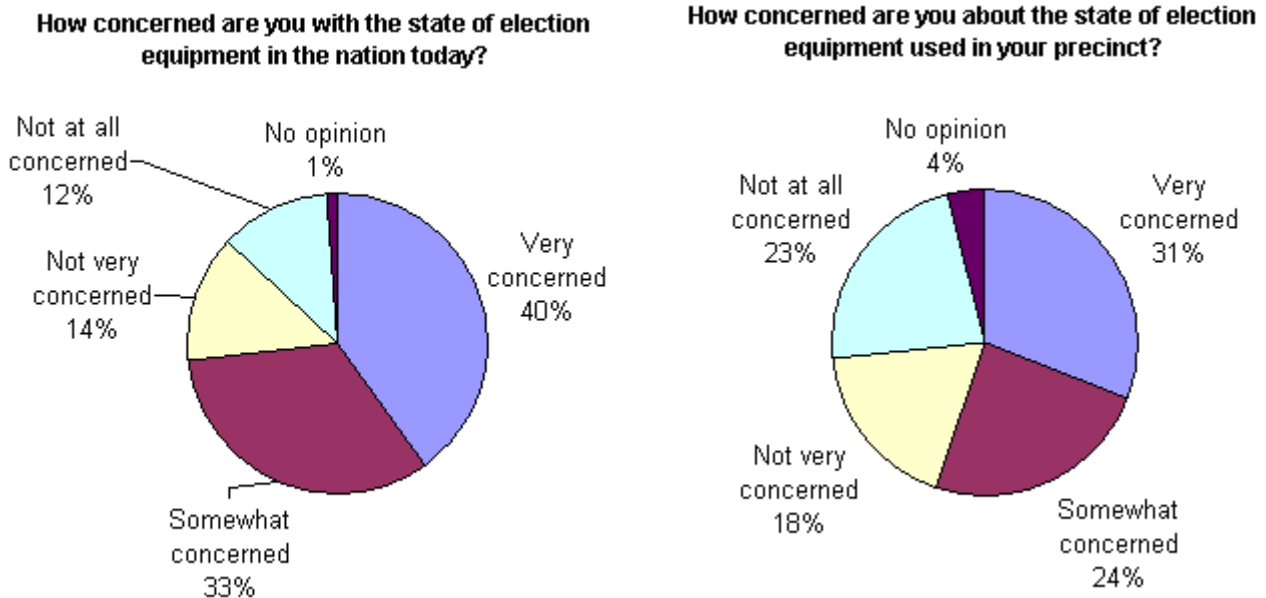


**PEACH STATE POLL, September 2001**  
**Attitudes and Perceptions Surrounding the State's Election Equipment**

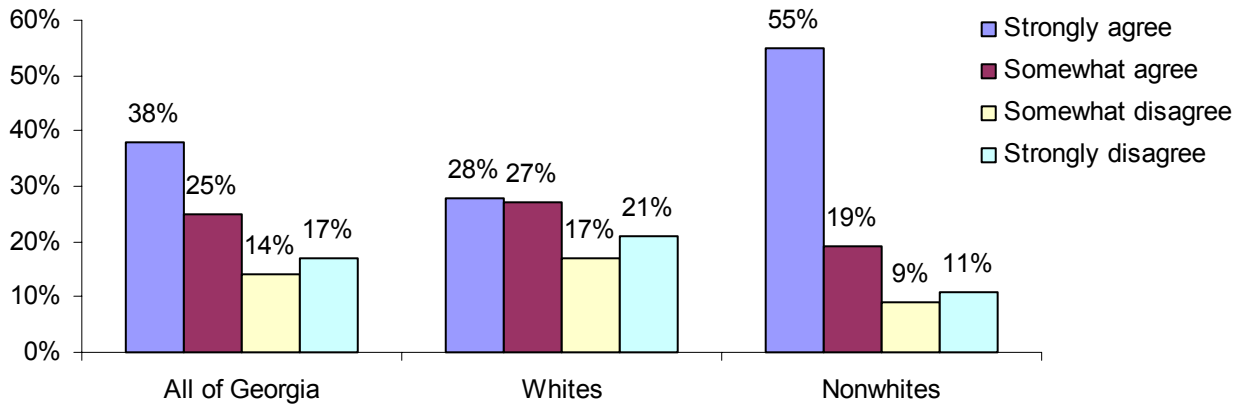
National public opinion polls show that the public is very reluctant to criticize the government in the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks, that public confidence in governmental institutions is at an all-time high, and that the public is extremely supportive of both the policies of the president and the president himself. Yet, despite the record levels of public approval that Pres. George W. Bush currently enjoys, there remains a lingering unease among many Georgians over the process of the 2000 Presidential Election and the problems associated with recording and counting votes. Forty percent of Georgia residents say that they are very concerned about the state of the election equipment being used in the nation today; an additional 33 percent say that they are somewhat concerned. That concern does diminish somewhat when Georgians are asked about the state of the election equipment used in their district, but still more than half say that they are either very concerned (31 percent) or somewhat concerned (24 percent) about the equipment used in their precinct.



Georgians claiming to be the most interested in news related to elections and voting are also the most concerned about the equipment used to record and count votes in their own precinct and in the nation. Not surprisingly, likely voters are more apt to express high concern over the state of election equipment than are those who are less likely to vote.<sup>1</sup> Seventy-eight percent of likely voters say that they are very concerned (47 percent) to somewhat concerned (31 percent) about the state of election equipment in the nation, as opposed to 64 percent of those unlikely to vote who are very concerned (29 percent) or somewhat concerned (35 percent).

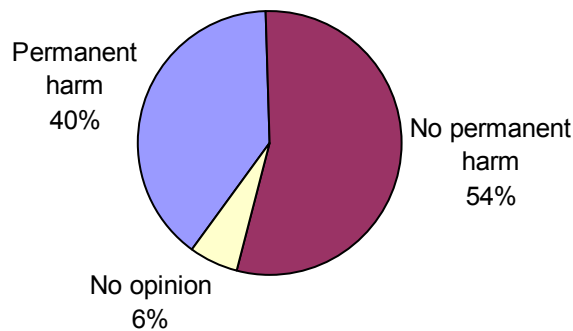
A majority of Georgia residents (63 percent) agree that the problems experienced in last November's election have led to a decline in the public's faith in democracy. In addition to the depth of this conviction is an intensity that is rare: more people are likely to feel strongly rather than moderately about this issue. This response is especially true among minorities, where a clear majority (55 percent) strongly agrees that the public's faith in democracy has been hurt.

**Do you agree or disagree that the problems with counting votes in the last election have led to a decline in the public's faith in American democracy?**



In December 2000, the Gallup Poll asked a national sample of respondents whether or not they believe that the problems surrounding the 2000 Presidential Election did permanent harm to the United States. At that time, 39 percent of the respondents said that permanent harm was done. Given the amount of time that has passed, the strong wording of the question, and the larger problems that loom for the country, it would be reasonable to expect that fewer people hold this position today, yet the Peach State Poll found that a similar percentage of Georgians (40 percent) also believe that it did permanent harm. This result is indicative of some deep-seated concerns over the process by which Americans cast their ballots.

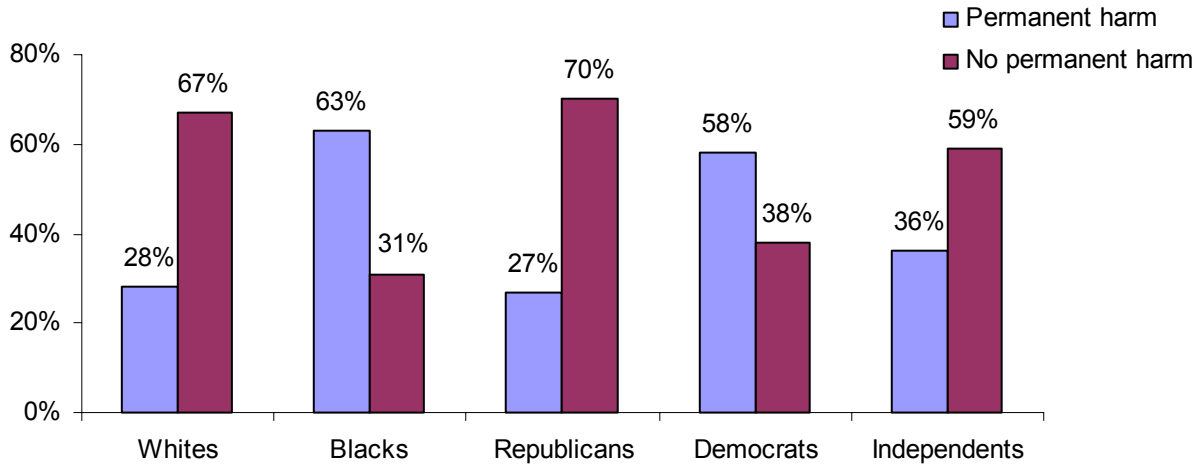
**Which comes closer to your view: a) there has been permanent harm done to the United States as a result of the 2000 Presidential Election process, or b) there has been no permanent harm done?**



Not surprisingly, not all Georgians feel equally that the 2000 Presidential Election process caused permanent harm. African Americans in Georgia are far more likely to have a long-lasting and negative opinion about last November's election than are other Georgians, and Democrats are more likely to feel negatively than are Republicans or Independents. This negativity, however, should not be attributed to the outcome but rather to the process of the 2000

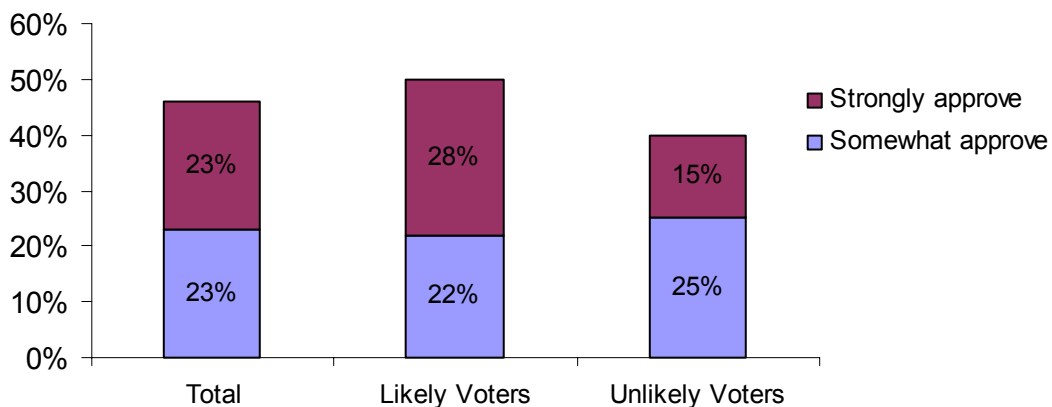
Presidential Election. Otherwise, we would expect to find lower approval ratings for the president in national polls and a reduced level of confidence in governmental institutions, particularly the Supreme Court, which we do not.<sup>2</sup>

**Which comes closest to your view: (a) there has been permanent harm done to the United States as a result of the 2000 Presidential Election process, or (b) there has been no permanent harm done?**



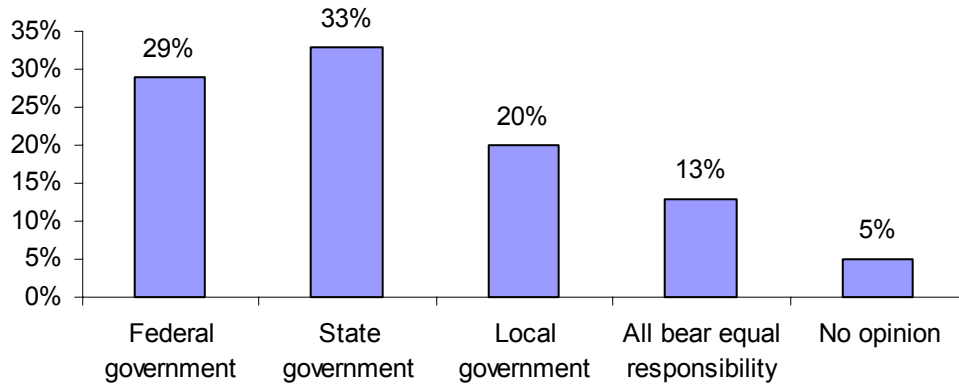
A majority of Georgians (69 percent) support increasing state spending for modernizing election equipment, but most are not in favor of raising taxes for that purpose. Fifty percent of the public disapprove of a hypothetical tax increase to fix the problems associated with the past election; 38 percent of the public strongly disapprove. On the other hand, those more likely to vote are also more willing to accept a tax increase, provided the extra state revenue is applied directly to fixing the problems with the election equipment; 50 percent of likely voters say they strongly approve (28 percent) or somewhat approve (22 percent) of a slight increase in taxes to fix problems associated with last November’s elections.

**Would you approve of a slight increase in taxes if the extra revenue were applied directly to fixing the problems with recording and counting votes?**



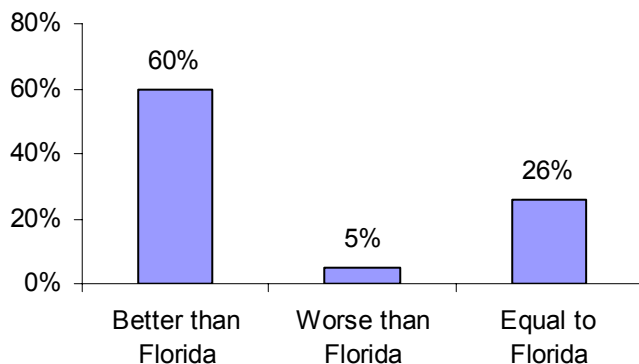
When asked which level of government should bear the greatest responsibility for fixing the problems concerning recording and counting votes in American elections, a plurality of Georgians (33 percent) look to their state government, although just slightly fewer (29 percent) believe that the federal government bears primary responsibility.

**In your opinion, which level of government bears the GREATEST responsibility for addressing the current problems with election equipment: federal, state, or local?**

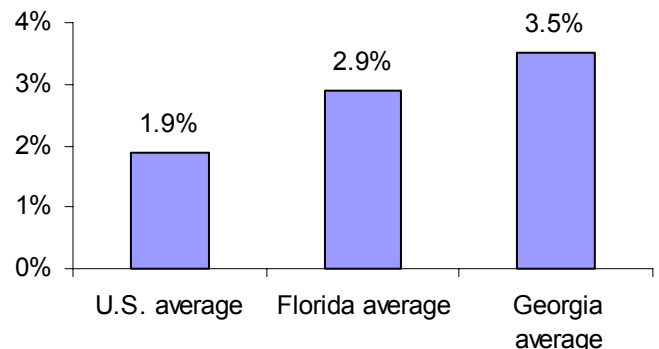


Georgia residents also believe that the system for recording and counting votes in their state is more accurate than that of Florida, despite a greater level of undercounts in Georgia than in Florida in the 2000 Presidential Election.<sup>3</sup> Even those respondents who are highly interested in election and voting news are convinced that Georgia fared better than Florida in terms of accurately counting the votes of the last election.

**From what you've read and heard, do you think the system for recording and counting votes in Georgia is better than, worse than, or equal to that of Florida in terms of accuracy?**



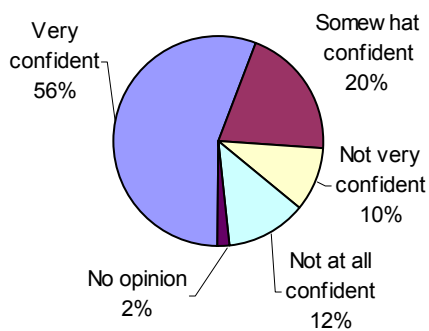
**Undercount (no vote for president recorded) as a percentage of the total vote**



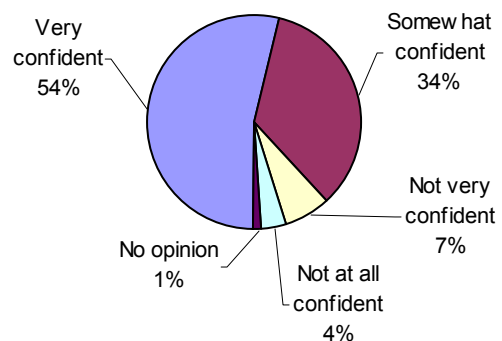
When asked if they plan to vote in the upcoming election, November 2001, 13 percent of the sample admit that they do not and another 4 percent said that it depends. The reasons most frequently given for not planning to vote are a general lack of interest in politics (11 percent of this subpopulation), no interest in the upcoming races (11 percent), and a lack of confidence in the system for counting votes (9 percent). Other reasons given range from a concern for falling into the jury pool to religious tenets opposed to voting.

Those who say they plan to vote in the upcoming election are also quite confident that their votes will be counted accurately.<sup>4</sup> In fact, those who plan to vote in the next election are somewhat more confident that their votes will be accurately counted in the upcoming election than they felt that they had been counted for the past election.

**How confident are you that your vote was accurately counted in the November 2000 election?**

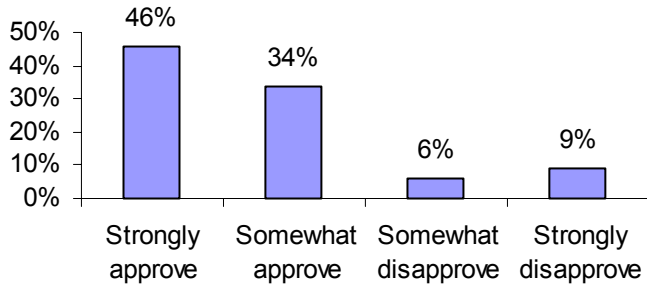


**How confident are you that your vote will be accurately counted in the upcoming election?**

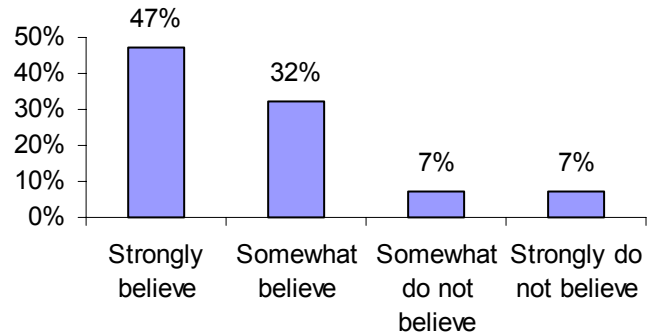


On the positive side, a majority of Georgians (64 percent) believe that government officials are working to address the problems brought to light in the 2000 Presidential Election. This belief may help explain why voters are more likely to express confidence in having their future vote counted accurately. Additionally, four of every five Georgians approve of the legislation, proposed by Secretary of State Cathy Cox and passed by the Georgia legislature this past March, that mandates that all voter precincts use the same type of voting machines by the July 2004 General Primary.<sup>5</sup> Those most familiar with the legislation were even more likely to support it strongly. Most importantly, 79 percent of Georgians believe that the legislation will improve the accuracy of vote counting. What impact a uniform, statewide system for recording and counting votes will have on the confidence of those who are most disaffected by last November's election is yet to be seen.

**Do you approve or disapprove of the legislation mandating that all voter precincts use the same type of voting machines by the July 2004 General Primary?**



**It is hoped that developing a statewide uniform electronic voting system will improve the accuracy of vote counting. Do you believe it will?**



The Peach State Poll is a quarterly survey of public opinion in Georgia conducted by the Carl Vinson Institute of Government. This poll, which included questions concerning environmental issues in addition to election issues, was conducted during the month of September and included 802 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%.

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. For more information about the Peach State Poll, contact Dr. Rich Clark at the Vinson Institute: 706-542-2736 or [clark@cviog.uga.edu](mailto:clark@cviog.uga.edu).

1. A likely voter in this context is defined as someone (1) who professes to have voted in the previous election and (2) who asserts that he or she will vote in the coming election. Any respondent who does not meet both of these criteria is not considered to be a likely voter.
2. The Peach State Poll found that 48 percent of respondents have either “a great deal” or “quite a lot” of confidence in the U.S. Supreme Court. Fewer than one in five respondents expressed “very little” or no confidence in the nation’s highest court (17 percent).
3. The percentage of those votes with a recorded no vote for president, known as an undervote, was 3.5 percent in Georgia and only 2.9 percent in Florida; the national average was 1.9 percent. While it is assumed that the undervote rate reflects a problem with the equipment’s ability to accurately record a vote, it is conceivable that voters simply did not choose to vote for any candidate.
4. Only 79 percent of those who say they plan to vote in the next election fall into our “likely voter” model.
5. The exact text of the question read as follows: “The Georgia State Legislature passed a law in March 2001 that mandates that all voter precincts will be using the same type of voting machines by the July 2004 General Primary. The state will purchase new machines, and the individual counties will be responsible for providing technical support. Do you approve or disapprove of this legislation?”