

Friends,

Below you will find the weekly Anzalone Liszt Research National Polling Summary, which provides a pollster's take on data and trends that affect political campaigns.

This week, we'll explore the record economic gap between the wealthiest Americans and everyone else. We'll look beneath the surface of those data and identify the Americans that have been disproportionately impacted over the last few years. We'll also summarize recent polling data on Americans' opinions of the widening income gap.

Following our analysis are additional news items and data we thought you'd enjoy.

John Anzalone and Jeff Liszt

Who's Winning the "Class War"?

The Great Recession of 2008 has affected every facet of American life. With the Wall Street collapse hitting in September 2008, the 2012 elections will be the first presidential contest in which the recession, perceptions of Wall Street, and stark new economic realities are front and center for the American electorate. With a high degree of economic anxiety and governments at all levels facing budget crunches of varying degrees, the political debate has increasingly centered on differing priorities of middle and lower income families versus those with higher-incomes and corporate America. The extension of the Bush-era tax cuts, Tea Party and OWS demonstrations, tax breaks for big corporations, and the 9-9-9 plan, are only a few issues whose resonance is driven by the political and economic uncertainties of the Great Recession.

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In the aftermath of the Great Recession, income disparities between rich and poor Americans are greater than at any time since such data have been recorded.

According to the [U.S. Census Bureau](#), the income gap between the richest and poorest Americans reached a record high last year. The top 20% of American earners received roughly 50% of all the income generated in the U.S., compared to 3.4% of total income earned by those under the poverty line. This ratio of 14.5 to 1 is higher than the same measure in 2008 (13.6 to 1) and roughly twice as high as it was in 1967 (7.7 to 1). The Gini measure is a statistical measure of income inequality and the Census

Bureau also finds it reaching record levels (.469), up from .468 in 2008 and .340 in 1967. Such measures do not historically swing dramatically from year to year, but by virtually any measure America's top earners are increasingly leaving behind the middle class and lower income households.

Americans under age 35, African Americans, and Hispanics have been disproportionately affected by the Great Recession.

A recent [Pew study](#) finds the income disparity between older Americans and younger Americans dramatically on the rise. Pew shows that in the last 25 years the net worth of American seniors has risen by 42%, while the net wealth of Americans under age 35 has shrunk by 68%. Over the past four years, senior households lost roughly 6% of their wealth, while households headed by those under 35 lost 55%. The current income disparity between older and younger Americans is the largest in the 25 years in which the data have been collected. Pew counts the housing bubble as a driving factor in this disparity. Many older Americans bought their homes before the housing bubble developed, helping to mitigate their losses after the housing market collapsed. Conversely, younger Americans were more likely to buy homes during the peak of the housing bubble and were thus more adversely impacted by the market collapse.

Pew released a similar [study in July of this year](#), focusing on the widening wealth gap between whites and African-Americans and Hispanics. Utilizing recent census data, Pew finds this gap reaching a record high in the 25 years during which the data has been recorded. The median net worth of white households is \$113,000, compared to \$6,300 for Hispanics and \$5,600 for African Americans. Over the past four years, median net wealth has decreased across the board, but has fallen at a much more precipitous rate for African Americans (53% decrease) and Hispanics (66%), than for whites (16%). As with the age gap, Pew attributes much of the decrease of net wealth of African Americans and Hispanics to the collapse of the housing market.

Income inequality had been increasing well before the 2008 recession.

The widening of the wealth and income gaps is not purely a post-Great Recession phenomenon. By virtually every measure, income inequality has risen dramatically over the past few decades. This is not just about rich vs. poor, as the middle class are being affected as well. [Economist Martin Sullivan](#) recently pointed out that of the economic growth of the thirty years prior to the 2008 recession, almost 60% of the total economic growth was captured by the top 1% of earners. From 1976-2008, the average income growth of the top 1% was 4.8%, compared to 0.6% annual growth for the bottom 99% of earners. In that same time, the total share of income earned by the top 1% has quadrupled from 2% to 7.8%. To put it in even starker terms, Sullivan indicates the richest 400 Americans have nearly tripled their share of America's wealth over the past thirty years (from 1.2% to 3.2%).

Americans sense a growing wealth and income gap, and want governmental policies to address it.

Recent polling shows that Americans intuitively understand what's happening. According to an [ABC/ Washington Post poll](#) from earlier in the month, a clear majority of Americans believe the “gap between how much money the wealthy have compared with how much money the rest of the population has” is larger than it has been historically. More than six in ten Americans (61%) feel the gap is larger, with 37% feeling the gap is “much larger”. Only 5% of Americans say this income gap is smaller than it has been historically.

Polling conducted around the same time by [Pulse Opinion Research on behalf of The Hill](#) show similar results. Their polling finds a greater than 4:1 margin who believes the middle class is shrinking (67%) as opposed to growing (14%). They also find a majority of Americans (55%) identify “income inequality in the U.S.” as a “major problem”, with another 19% declaring it “somewhat of a problem”. Polling released last month from the [Public Religion Research Institute](#) finds very similar numbers. They show that 60% of Americans agree “society would be better off if the distribution of wealth was more equal”.

The same ABC/Washington Post Poll shows 60% of Americans want the “federal government to pursue policies to reduce the gap between the wealthy and less well-off Americans”, compared to 35% who believe the government should not pursue such policies. Additionally, the Public Religion Research Institute poll shows 60% of Americans favor “increasing the tax rate on Americans earning over \$1 Million a year”. Along those lines, and despite the prominence of flat tax and consumption tax plans among Republican Presidential candidates, the Pulse Opinion / Hill polling finds Americans prefer a graduated income tax (58%) over a flat income tax (35%) by a 23-point margin. Majorities across the board prefer the graduated income tax, with the only exceptions coming among Republicans (51% of whom prefer a flat tax) and those who earn \$100K a year or more (52% of whom prefer a flat tax).

An [Economist / YouGov](#) poll released last week tested support for new transportation / infrastructure spending funded by a 0.7% surcharge on annual incomes over \$1 Million. A solid plurality support a \$60 Billion plan funded by a millionaire surcharge (47%), with 28% opposed – and only 12% who favor the spending but oppose the surcharge. This is a limited, yet concrete, example of the electorate's desire to utilize a more progressive tax structure to fund programs and priorities that will benefit all Americans.

To put it simply, the wealthy are getting richer at everyone else's expense, Americans sense this growing inequality, and they prefer governmental policies that will narrow the gap.

OTHER NEWS FROM THE POLLING AND POLITICAL WORLD

ALR would like to congratulate our clients who put themselves forward last Tuesday. Among our clients who emerged victorious are Charlotte Mayor Anthony Foxx, Public Service Commissioner Brandon Presley (MS), State Senators Richard Codey (NJ), Barbara Buono (NJ), and Phillip Puckett (VA), and successful ballot measures to reform pensions in San Francisco and increased library funding in Pittsburgh.

The Public Religion Research Institutes recently released their annual [American Values Survey](#). They find really interesting data on American opinions on both public policy and religion in public life.

Despite statistics showing crime has decreased dramatically, [Gallup](#) finds most Americans believe the U.S.'s crime problem is getting worse. Perhaps due to the economic anxiety, overall pessimism, or sensationalism in news coverage, there is a real gap in the perceptions and reality of crime.

[Nate Silver](#) pens a thought-provoking piece on how Magic Johnson may have fundamentally changed the public's perception of AIDS.

[SmartPolitics](#) finds Mitt Romney is receiving a good deal more time during the last five GOP debates. They find Romney speaking for roughly twenty minutes more than runner-up Rick Perry.

On a sports note, [E-poll Market Research](#) finds Michael Vick is the NFL player Americans dislike the most, while [PPP finds Aaron Rodgers](#) popularity in Wisconsin to be the highest favorability measure they've ever seen (89% Favorable / 4% Unfavorable).

PRESIDENT OBAMA'S JOB RATING

Polling Firm	Date	Sample	Approve	Disapprove
NBC/Wall Street Journal	11/2-5/11	Adults	44%	51%
ABC/Washington Post	10/31-11/3/11	Adults	44%	53%
Ipsos/Reuters	10/31-11/3/11	Adults	49%	50%

OBAMA VS ROMNEY GENERAL ELECTION

Polling Firm	Date	Sample
NBC News / WSJ	11/2-5/11	Adults
Obama		49%
Romney		43%

PARTY SELF ID

Polling Firm	Date	Sample	Dem	Rep	Ind / other
Pollster.com Trend	11/10/11	Adults	31.2%	23.4%	42.3%

GOP NATIONWIDE PRIMARY

Polling Firm	Date	Sample
<i>USA Today/Gallup</i>	<i>11/2-6/11</i>	<i>Republican Registered Voters</i>
Cain	22%	
Romney	22%	
Gingrich	13%	
Perry	11%	
Paul	6%	
Bachmann	3%	
Santorum	2%	
Huntsman	1%	

GOP CAUCUSES AND PRIMARIES

	Iowa	New Hampshire	South Carolina
Polling Firm	<i>Des Moines Register</i>	<i>CNN/Time</i>	<i>Clemson University</i>
Date	<i>10/23-26/11</i>	<i>10/20-25/11</i>	<i>10/27-11/7/11</i>
Sample	<i>Likely GOP Caucus-goers</i>	<i>Republican Registered Voters</i>	<i>Likely Primary Voters</i>
Cain	23%	13%	20%
Romney	22%	40%	22%
Paul	12%	12%	4%
Gingrich	7%	5%	10%
Perry	7%	4%	9%
Bachmann	8%	2%	3%
Santorum	5%	1%	1%
Huntsman	1%	6%	1%

GENERIC HOUSE BALLOT

Polling Firm	Date	Sample	Dem	Rep	Unsure
Reuters/Ipsos	10/31-11/3/11	Registered Voters	48%	43%	6%
Quinnipiac University	10/25-31/11	Registered Voters	42%	34%	19%

OBAMA POPULAR VOTE SHARE

Polling Firm	Date	Polly Vote	Polls	Iowa Electronic Markets	Econometric Models	Index Models
PollyVote	11/10/11	50.5%	48.6%	49.6%	49.2%	54.4%

DIRECTION OF THE COUNTRY

Polling Firm	Date	Sample	Right Direction	Wrong Track
NBC News/Wall Street Journal	11/2-5/11	Adults	19%	73%
ABC News/Washington Post	10/31-11/3/11	Adults	22%	74%
Reuters/Ipsos	10/31-11/3/11	Adults	25%	70%
CBS News/New York Times	10/19-24/11	Adults	21%	74%