

# May 7, 2012

## Anzalone Liszt Research

### National Polling Summary

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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 take a break from the presidential election to spotlight public opinion on food safety in America.

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

John Anzalone and Jeff Liszt

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#### **STORY THIS WEEK: IF YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT, THEN WE'RE ALL PINK SLIME**

Food safety raises broad, bipartisan concern among the American public. The periodic panic that seeps into the news stream - stories of pink slime, mass recalls, or rumors of mad cow - is underpinned by some unsettling statistics. The FDA, for instance, inspects [only about 1%](#) of food imports, even though 60% of our produce and 80% of our seafood is shipped from other countries. Under George W. Bush, the USDA decreased mad cow testing by 90% while [blocking private sector companies](#) from proving their food was safe. And [1 in 6 Americans](#) contracts a food-borne illness every year.

Voters are willing to pay extra to ensure the safety of what they put on their family's tables. In a 2011 [Pew poll](#), 57 percent of Americans said they worried "somewhat" or "a great deal" about food contamination, and 66 percent favored increasing federal funding for the FDA in order to enforce tougher safety regulations. That same poll found almost three-quarters (74%) of Americans favoring tighter food safety measures even if it causes a 1 to 3 percent increase in cost. And concern is highest among the poorest Americans. In a recent [Reuters poll](#), 53% of people making under \$25k a year were "very concerned" about how safe their food was, compared to only 31% of those making over \$100k.

### *Attack of the Pink Slime*

Food safety grabbed headlines earlier this year, with the revelation that “pink slime” – the ammonia-treated miscellany mix of cattle trimmings – finds its way into [70% of U.S. ground beef](#) as cheap filler. According to April [polling from Harris Interactive](#), a staggering 88% of Americans were aware of the issue, with three-fourths (76%) saying they were very or somewhat concerned. A majority of people aware of the issue (53%) said that, as a result of the controversy, they began researching the brands of ground beef in the supermarket; and a quarter (25%) decreased or stopped purchasing ground beef from grocery stores.

Until recently, pink slime also appeared in school lunches. (Pink slime is officially known as “lean finely textured beef”, though it is [not officially considered](#) meat.) School food options have become a growing concern for parents. A large majority of voters (84%) are concerned about the state of children’s health in the U.S., according to a [Hart Research / American Viewpoint poll](#) from March, and a similar proportion (80%) favor a national nutritional standard for foods sold in schools. The issue transcends political allegiance: 89% of Democrats, 78% of Independents, and 71% of Republicans want minimum nutritional requirements set for schools.

### *Slap a Label On It*

When the issue of genetically modified foods (or GMOs, for the genetically modified organisms used in making them) crops up, the food safety discussion quickly dissolves into heated debate. Supporters of GMOs – embodied by the \$13.3 billion biotech crop industry, and agro-giants like Monsanto, DuPont and Dow Chemical – insist that these products pose no real threat to consumers. Most consumers disagree. A 2011 [ABC News poll](#) found that a majority of Americans (52%) believe such foods to be unsafe, and an additional 13 percent are unsure about them. The perception of risk climbs even higher among women (62%). A near-unanimous 93 percent of Americans want to see labels on GMO products, according to a [2010 Reuters poll](#), including 96 percent of lower-income Americans (\$25k - \$49.9k). Awareness of GMO products dwindles down the income ladder: only 51% of the poorest Americans (<\$25k) knew that some food items in grocery stores contained GMOs, while 84% of the richest Americans (>\$100k) did.

[Lawmakers in 20 states](#) have been introducing GMO labeling bills over the past year. None have become law yet, but that might change in California: on Wednesday, pro-label groups there [announced they had collected](#) nearly 1 million signatures to back a referendum on the issue. GMO producers are vehemently opposed to labeling their products, and polling suggests it could hurt their business: 65 percent of [women](#), who do the [majority of shopping](#) the U.S., say they’d be less likely to buy food labeled as genetically modified.

Beyond disclosure of GMOs in food, Americans believe that food should also adhere to basic standards when labeled organic. A 2008 [Consumer Reports poll](#) found that 93% of consumers believed that fish labeled organic should be produced from 100% organic feed, like all other organic food animals. The same portion believe that only dairies producing milk and milk products without artificial growth hormones should be allowed to label their products as hormone-free, and 70% are concerned about dairy cows being dosed with synthetic growth hormones. Not surprisingly, 94% of consumers also believe that meat and dairy produced from cloned or genetically-engineered animals should be disclosed.

### *Whole Foods, Whole Paycheck*

The outrage surrounding GMOs is emblematic of a more health-conscious public, which has turned in greater numbers to organic foods. A 2010 [National Research Center poll](#) found that two-thirds (66%) of organic food buyers worried about genetic engineering in their food, versus half (50%) of those who don't buy organic. In Reuters' [June 2011 health poll](#), 58% of Americans say they prefer to eat organic over non-organic food. The two biggest reasons cited are "exposure to toxins" in non-organic foods (34%), and a desire to "support local farmers" (35%). Only 12% opt for organics because they taste better. There is an age-gap in popularity, with seniors much less enthusiastic about organics than are other age groups.

The ceiling on organics' popularity, at least in this poll, is price. The poorest Americans still prefer organic food (56% organic / 31% non-organic), but at a lower rate than the wealthy (61% organic / 26% non-organic). Moreover, while organic food supporters cite a variety of reasons for their choice, most consumers of non-organic food point to one reason behind their preference: "organic foods are too expensive" (54%). Whole Foods Market, which has become the face of America's organic food phenomenon, exemplifies the push-and-pull between high prices and high demand. Nicknamed "[Whole Paycheck](#)" for its pricey items, the stores' sales and expansion plans took a hit during the Great Recession. But buoyed by increased demand and a healthier economy, the company [announced Wednesday](#) its revenues grew \$27 million since last year.

## **OTHER NEWS FROM THE POLLING AND POLITICAL WORLD**

**Obama Leads in Virginia.** Washington Post [poll](#) gives the President a 7-point edge over Mitt Romney (51% Obama – 44% Romney) among registered voters. Women support Obama by a wide margin, 56% - 38%.

**Other Swing States.** [Quinnipiac](#) finds Obama padding his lead in Pennsylvania (47% Obama – 39% Romney) while Ohio (44% Obama – 42% Romney) and Florida (44% Romney – 43% Obama) look to be too close to call.

**Small-Business Owners More Optimistic**, according to Gallup's Small Business Index, which measures their perceptions of the economic environment. April's number was 23, up from 15 in January, hitting its highest level since July 2008.

**Harsh Verdict.** The U.S. Supreme Court may be ideologically divided, but according to a new [Pew poll](#), its unpopularity is bipartisan. A bare majority (52%) rate the court favorably, the lowest number in twenty-five years, with both Democrats (52%) and Republicans (56%) unimpressed.

**National Pastime still popular.** Baseball beat basketball, hockey and NASCAR in a Washington Post [poll](#) among sports currently in season; African Americans rate basketball higher than whites do, while NASCAR is most popular among Republicans.

**Gingrich (Now) Supports Romney.** [Great video](#) from the Obama campaign, compiling the best clips of Newt slamming Romney during the primaries.

**Missed a past newsletter?** They can be found on our website, [here](#).

## PUBLIC POLLING

### PRESIDENT OBAMA'S JOB RATING

Polling Firm	Date	Sample	Approve	Disapprove
<i>Gallup</i>	April 30-May 2	Adults	51%	43%
<i>Democracy Corps</i>	April 28-May 1	Likely Voters	45%	50%

### PRESIDENTIAL HEAD TO HEAD

Polling Firm	Date	Sample	Obama	Romney
<i>Gallup Swing State Poll</i>	April 26-May 2	Reg. Voters	<b>47%</b>	45%
<i>Politico/GWU/Battleground</i>	April 29-May 3	Likely Voters	47%	<b>48%</b>
<i>Gallup</i>	April 28-May 2	Reg. Voters	<b>46%</b>	45%

### PARTY SELF ID

Polling Firm	Date	Sample	Dem	Rep	Ind/Other
<i>Pollster.com Trend</i>	May 4	Adults	36.3%	30.4%	30.7%

## GENERIC HOUSE BALLOT

Polling Firm	Date	Sample	Dem	Rep
<i>Democracy Corps</i>	April 28-May 1	Likely Voters	<b>46%</b>	45%

**OBAMA POPULAR VOTE SHARE**

Polling Firm	Date	Polly Vote	Polls	Iowa Electronic Markets	Econometric Models	Index Models
<i>PollyVote</i>	April 30	52.0%	51.8%	52.9%	49.9%	54.2%

**DIRECTION OF THE COUNTRY**

Polling Firm	Date	Sample	Right Direction	Wrong Track
<i>Democracy Corps</i>	April 28-May 1	Adults	33%	59%
<i>Rasmussen</i>	April 23-29	Adults	31%	62%