
Wyoming Voters' Attitudes On Food Safety

*Findings from a statewide survey of registered voters, conducted by
Hart Research Associates and Public Opinion Strategies*

Key Findings From This Survey

An overwhelming majority of Wyoming voters support new federal food safety legislation. Individual measures enjoy very strong support, particularly those requiring other countries to certify their own food safety systems; requiring the FDA to inspect food facilities regularly; and requiring a tracing system that would allow the FDA to track contaminated food back to its source. A significant number of Wyoming voters worry about the safety of the food they eat, and a plurality have lost confidence in the safety of food. Far from being a partisan issue, voters across the political spectrum agree that the federal government should be responsible for ensuring that food is safe to eat.

Nearly nine in 10 Wyoming voters support the federal government putting new safety measures into place.

- 88% of voters support the government putting a battery of new safety measures into place, including 53% who *strongly* support this. Support is high across the board, regardless of age, gender, or economic status. Only minor differences exist among political partisans, with 86% of Republican voters, 96% of Democratic voters, as well as 86% of “swing” voters—those who split their votes evenly between the two parties—supporting this.
- Support for individual measures similarly is very high. Nearly nine in 10 voters or more favor the following:
 - Requiring foreign countries that export to the United States to certify that their food safety systems are as strong as ours (95% favor, 84% strongly).
 - Requiring the FDA to inspect food facilities every six to 12 months (90% favor, 72% strongly).
 - Requiring tracing systems that enable the FDA to trace food back to its source (90% favor, 70% strongly).
 - Requiring food companies to test for contamination and report results to the government (90% favor, 67% strongly).
 - Allowing government food inspectors broad access to companies' food safety records (88% favor, 59% strongly).
 - Requiring produce growers to meet standards for water quality, manure use, and worker sanitation (87% favor, 66% strongly).

- Support for requiring food companies to pay an annual fee of \$500 per facility to help fund FDA food safety activity is lower, but still very robust at 55% (including 29% who strongly favor this).
- Wyoming residents, in fact, so support these measures that 65% say it would be worth it to pay 3% more in grocery costs to have these new safety measures—this is as true among large majorities of lower-income voters (61% worth it) and higher-income voters (73% worth it).

A majority of voters agree that these measures should be mandatory.

- 56% of Wyoming voters say that these measures should be mandatory because it will ensure that all food businesses are meeting the same safety standards.
- 39% would prefer that the measures be voluntary because food businesses already are required to meet many standards, and food safety is in their best business interest anyway.

Four out of five Wyoming voters say the federal government should be responsible for ensuring that food is safe to eat.

- 80% of voters say the federal government should be responsible, compared with just 11% who say it should not be responsible for food safety.
- Voters across the board hold this belief, regardless of their gender, age, income, or area of residency. Again, voters across the partisan spectrum agree on this point—78% of Republican voters, 84% of Democratic voters, and 80% of “swing” voters say the government should be responsible.
- Voters especially are focused on the safety of imported foods—55% say the federal government is doing too little to ensure that food produced in other countries and sold in the United States is safe from contamination. They are less focused on domestically produced food, though still more than one in three (35%) says the government is doing too little to ensure safety in this area.

While not a top-of-mind concern for all Wyoming residents, many say they have lost confidence in the safety of the food they eat.

- 40% of voters say that bacterial contamination of food worries them a great deal or somewhat; 38% say it does not worry them that much, and 21% say they are not at all worried.
- Moreover, 41% of voters say that what they have seen and heard over the past year has made them less confident in the safety of food sold in the United States; 17% are more confident, and 37% say it has made no difference.

These findings are derived from a statewide survey of 402 registered voters, conducted October 15 to 17, 2009 by Hart Research Associates (D) and Public Opinion Strategies (R) on behalf of the Pew Charitable Trusts and Produce Safety Project. Respondents were drawn randomly from a list of all registered voters in the state, and were interviewed by telephone. The results of the poll are statistically representative of the opinions of voters statewide, and carry a margin of error of ± 4.9 percentage points for the full sample, and higher margins of error for subgroups of the sample. Full survey results are available at www.MakeOurFoodSafe.org.