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## North Carolina 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 North Carolinians 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 food companies to report to the government tests that reveal contamination; and requiring a tracing system that would allow the FDA to track contaminated food back to its source. Over half of North Carolina voters worry about the safety of the food they eat, and a majority 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 North Carolinians support the federal government putting new safety measures into place.

- 89% of voters support the government putting a battery of new safety measures into place, including 64% 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 95% of Democratic voters and 86% of Republican voters, as well as 92% of “swing” voters—those who split their votes evenly between the two parties—supporting this.
- Support for individual measures similarly is very high. Almost nine in 10 voters or more favor:
  - Requiring food companies to test for contamination and report results to the government (91% favor, including 76% who *strongly* favor).
  - Requiring tracing systems that enable the FDA to trace food back to its source (91% favor, 73% strongly).
  - Giving the FDA the authority to mandate recalls of foods it has reason to believe are unsafe (90% favor, 72% strongly).
  - Requiring foreign countries that export to the United States to certify that their food safety systems are as strong as ours (89% favor, 76% strongly).
  - Allowing government food inspectors broad access to companies' food safety records (89% favor, 67% strongly).
  - Requiring the FDA to inspect food facilities every six to 12 months (88% favor, 71% strongly).

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- Support for requiring food companies to pay an annual fee of \$500 per facility to help fund FDA food safety activity is somewhat lower, but still very robust at 65% (including 37% who strongly favor this).
- North Carolinians, in fact, so support these measures that 71% say it would be worth it to pay 3% more in grocery costs to have these new safety measures—this is as true among lower-income voters (78% worth it) as it is among higher-income voters (72% worth it).

### **Voters widely agree that these measures should be mandatory.**

- Seven in 10 (72%) North Carolina voters say that these measures should be mandatory because it will ensure that all food businesses are meeting the same safety standards.
- 24% would prefer the measures be voluntary because food businesses already are required to meet many standards, and food safety is in their best business interest anyway.

### **More than four out of five North Carolina voters say the federal government should be responsible for ensuring that food is safe to eat.**

- 86% of voters say the federal government should be responsible, compared with just 8% 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, partisanship plays virtually no role here—92% of Democratic voters, 83% of Republican voters, and 86% of “swing” voters say the government should be responsible.
- Voters especially are focused on the safety of imported foods—62% 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 somewhat less focused on domestically produced food, though a still significant 43% say the government is doing too little to ensure safety in this area.

### **While not a top-of-mind concern for all North Carolinians, many say they have lost confidence in the safety of the food they eat.**

- A 53% majority of voters say that bacterial contamination of food worries them a great deal or somewhat; 32% say it does not worry them that much, and just 14% say they are not at all worried.
- Moreover, 51% 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; 15% are more confident, and 28% say it has made no difference.

*These findings are derived from a statewide survey of 501 registered voters, conducted October 8 through 10, by Hart Research Associates (D) and Public Opinion Strategies (R) on behalf of the Pew Charitable Trusts and Produce Safety Project. Respondents were randomly drawn 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 ±4.3 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](http://www.MakeOurFoodSafe.org).*