

February 23, 2012

Anzalone Liszt Research

National Polling Summary

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 look at the general election for the White House, Mitt Romney's recent decline in the polls, and how President Obama's numbers have improved.

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

John Anzalone and Jeff Liszt

STORY THIS WEEK: Falling 'Severely' Behind

In this tumultuous primary season, the Republican electorate has appeared easily enamored but hard to win over. While many pundits still consider Mitt Romney the frontrunner, the party has winked at a long line of hopeful suitors. In the wake of Rick Perry, Herman Cain and Newt Gingrich, their dalliance with Rick Santorum may be hardcore conservatives' last chance at an alternative to Romney. Romney's supposed advantage lies in his ability to attract the independent voters in the general election, but the latest batch of polling finds cracks in that notion.

Romney has fallen behind Obama in head-to-head match ups nationally and in key swing [states](#), a stark reversal from just a few months ago. More troubling, his standing among those prized independent voters has slid dramatically.

Romney: 'Severe' Decline on the National Ballot

Among all voters, Obama's 2-point over Romney has grown into an 8-point advantage according to [AP-GfK](#) (51% - 43%), just one-point smaller than his lead over Santorum (52% Obama - 43% Santorum). In a CBS/New York Times [poll](#), the President has come back from a 45% - 47% deficit against Romney in January to claim a 6-point lead in February (48% Obama / 42% Romney). Romney had held a solid 8-point lead over Obama among independent voters (46% Romney / 38% Obama). But now, independents prefer Obama by a 9-point margin (46% Obama / 37% Romney).

Romney's Decline by State

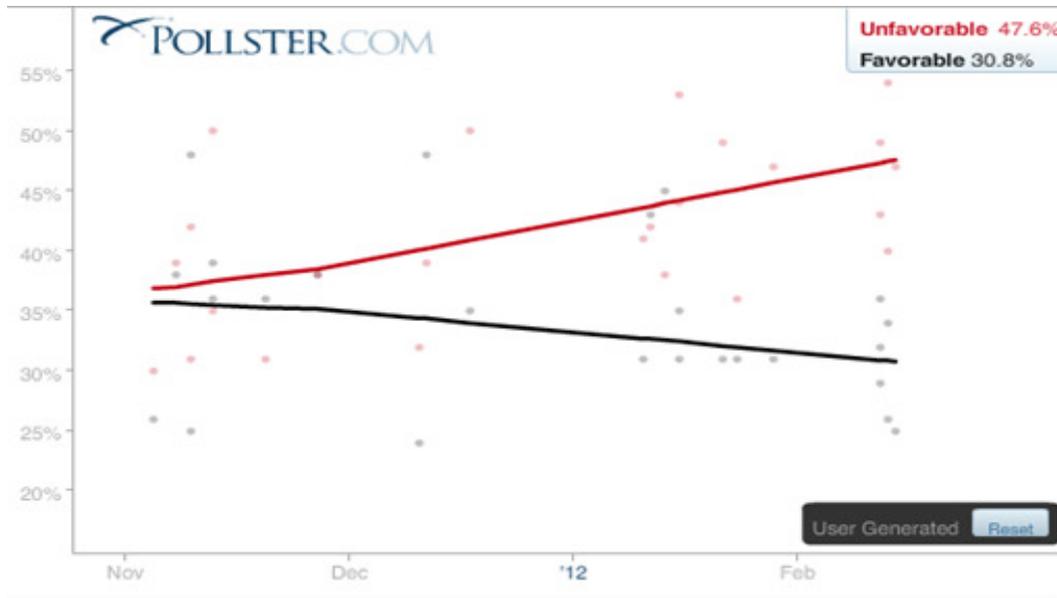
Electorally, swing states seem to share in the national optimism and currently prefer Obama by a small margin. A recent Fox News [poll](#) broke down the results by swing region.

Region	Obama - Romney Vote
Swing State Total	47% - 39%
Rust Belt Tier (IA, OH, PA, WI)	42% - 41%
Rocky Mountain Tier (CO, NV, NM)	47% - 40%
Dixie Tier (FL, NC, VA)	51% - 37%
Ohio	38% - 44%
National Total	47% - 42%

In this poll, Ohio is the most problematic swing state for Obama. Not only is Ohio more pessimistic than the rest of the country about the economy, it is the one state that gives Romney a solid edge. Ohioans prefer Romney over Obama 44% - 38%. Even Rick Santorum, who is 12 points behind Obama nationally, leads the President 43% - 40% in Ohio. The Rust Belt swing states as a whole (54 electoral votes) seem up for grabs: Obama leads Romney by only 1 point (42% - 41%), and sits tied with Rick Santorum (43% - 43%) in that critical region. The President will hope the positive momentum behind his national numbers can boost his performance there.

Deteriorating Popularity and Trust

Romney has a real favorability problem, one that's not confined to the recent run of bad polling. A composite view of all public poll [results](#) from Pollster.com reveals a steady deterioration of his favorability since last November among all adults.



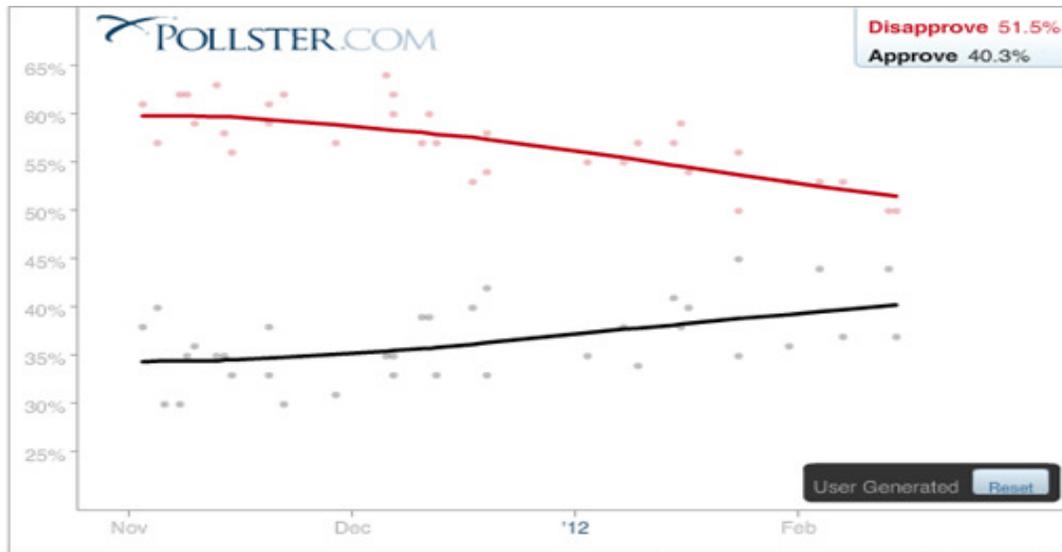
A February 13th CNN/ORC [poll](#) among adults finds Romney's popularity dropping to 34% favorable - 54% unfavorable. That same poll finds that Rick Santorum, who many speculate would be no match for Obama in the general election, shares a nearly identical favorable rating and with much lower unfavorables: 32% favorable - 38% unfavorable. The February [edition](#) of the PurplePoll conducted in twelve swing states finds that Romney's popularity in these critical states has shifted a net 23 points more negative since September, to 27% favorable - 57% unfavorable.

Among independent voters in particular, confidence in Romney as a candidate and as an honest broker has waned. A recent Pew [poll](#) compares Romney's standing in November to his position today, and the negative shift is glaring. Back in November, a majority of independents felt Romney was "well-qualified to be president" (58% Yes / 31% No), and that he was "honest and trustworthy" (53% Yes / 32% No). Now, fewer than half feel he is well-qualified (48% Yes / 41% No), and even fewer regard him as honest (41% Yes / 45% No). A majority of independents now disagree that Romney "takes consistent positions on issues" (53% No), and that he "understands the needs of people like you" (60% No).

Obama and the Economy

Romney's declining popularity isn't the only thing helping President Obama's chance for re-election. Job gains, other encouraging economic news, and the perception of an economic turnaround have helped expand Obama's lead over Romney and Santorum.

[CNN/ORC](#) pegs Obama's job approval at 50%, though Gallup's daily tracking has the number at 44% approve. Personally, 53% of Americans give Obama a favorable rating, up from 49% in January. Perhaps driving the overall improvement in the President's job rating and popularity is a more charitable assessment of the way President Obama is handling the economy, as reflected by this Pollster.com [trend](#) chart:



The most recent ABC News/Washington Post [poll](#) finds that 44% of Americans approve of the way he is handling the economy, up from 41% a month earlier, while just 53% disapprove (down from 57% the previous month).

To improve his standing on the economy, Obama will need to convince independent voters that progress is being made. The latest [jobs report](#) featured plenty of good news, and as Frank Newport, editor-in-chief of the Gallup Poll, [points out](#), "it's the sense of direction in the economy that matters more than numbers."

Another [poll](#) from the Pew Research Center shows improving economic outlook among voters. In December, only 28% of respondents thought the economy would be better in a year, while 18% thought it would be worse and 50% thought nothing would change. By February, the percentage of people who said "better" rose to 44% (+16), while the percentage of doubters fell from 18% to 10%. More independents now think that Obama's policies have made the economy better - up from 16% in October to 29% in February.

It's still early, of course, and Obama's national lead in the polls could evaporate if the economy worsens or one of the Republican candidates strengthens. One potential source of trouble is gas prices - with prices already at historic highs for this [time](#) of year, many speculate that we could approach \$5/gallon averages by the summer. As Nate Silver [articulates](#), a rise in gas prices threatens Obama because it threatens the overall economic recovery, not necessarily because the price of oil alone has a real impact.

It is hard to forecast where gas prices and the economy will be closer to Election Day, but two things are certain: Romney's likeability and Obama's handling of the economy will be two key variables to watch as the election takes shape. In the end, Romney could still be voters' Mr. Right

- but he is certainly not right now.

OTHER NEWS FROM THE POLLING AND POLITICAL WORLD

This is no 2008. An interesting [piece](#) by Jesse Contario refuting claims that this GOP primary is similar to the Clinton-Obama primary in 2008, and that the eventual nominee will emerge stronger for the general.

Reductio ad absurdum. On the heels of Virginia's transvaginal ultrasound controversy and Georgia's attempts to ban abortions after 20 weeks, we got a chuckle out of Georgia Democrats attempts to [drastically](#) limit the number of vasectomies that leave "thousands of children...deprived of birth." The Onion this week also [spoofs](#) the push for legislation with their own law, that would require women to name baby and paint a nursery before getting an abortion.

Gulf between Democratic voters and Democratic activists. Third Way put together an interesting [report](#) examining the divide between Dem voters and activists that has coincided with a lack of party loyalty unlike the GOP experiences.

PurplePoll results. The February 2012 edition of the [PurplePoll](#) looks at the key swing states that will determine whether President Obama will be elected to a second term. This poll finds that Obama's approve-disapprove has shifted a net 6 points since September to 44% - 50%, while Romney's popularity rating has shifted a net 23 (to 27% favorable - 57% unfavorable).

Interested in managing a congressional campaign? If so, come out to [Lola's](#) this Monday (the 27th) from 6pm-8pm to meet with staff from the DCCC and learn more about opportunities to manage top tier races this cycle. RSVP to jsmith@dccc.org to confirm your spot.

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>AP-GFK</i>	Feb. 16-20	Adults	49%	49%
<i>CNN/ORC</i>	Feb. 10-13	Adults	50%	48%

PRESIDENTIAL HEAD TO HEAD

Polling Firm	Date	Sample	Obama	Romney	Santorum
<i>AP-GFK</i>	Feb. 16-20	Adults	51%	43%	
<i>AP-GFK</i>	Feb. 16-20	Adults	52%		43%
<i>Quinnipiac</i>	Feb. 14-20	Registered	46%	44%	
<i>Quinnipiac</i>	Feb. 14-20	Registered	47%		44%

PARTY SELF ID

Polling Firm	Date	Sample	Dem	Rep	Ind/Other
<i>Pollster.com Trend</i>	Feb. 23	Adults	30.7%	25.5%	41.3%

GOP NATIONWIDE PRIMARY

Polling Firm	Date	Sample
<i>Quinnipiac</i>	Feb. 14-20	Republican Registered
Santorum	35%	
Romney	26%	
Gingrich	14%	
Paul	11%	

GOP PRIMARIES- AZ/MI Feb 28th

	Arizona	Michigan
Polling Firm	<i>RCP Average</i>	<i>RCP Average</i>
Date	Feb. 16-20	Feb. 18-21
Sample	Likely Voters	Likely Voters
Romney	38.2%	33.2%
Santorum	30.0%	33.8%
Gingrich	16.0%	8.6%
Paul	8.2%	10.4%

GENERIC HOUSE BALLOT

Polling Firm	Date	Sample	Dem	Rep
<i>Rasmussen</i>	Feb. 13-19	Likely Voters	41%	42%
<i>Reuters/Ipsos</i>	Feb. 2-6	Registered	46%	44%

OBAMA POPULAR VOTE SHARE

Polling Firm	Date	Polly Vote	Polls	Iowa Electronic Markets	Econometric Models	Index Models
<i>PollyVote</i>	Feb. 4	51.5%	50%	51.9%	49.8%	54.2%

DIRECTION OF THE COUNTRY

Polling Firm	Date	Sample	Right Direction	Wrong Track
<i>AP-GFK</i>	Feb. 16-20	Adults	39%	57%
<i>CBS/NY Times</i>	Feb. 8-13	Adults	35%	59%