

# Voter Attitudes Toward the Renewable Fuel Standard

**Celinda Lake  
Jonathan Voss  
Christine Matthews**

**July 27, 2015**

**Lake Research Partners**

Washington, DC | Berkeley, CA | New York, NY

[LakeResearch.com](http://LakeResearch.com)

202.776.9066

**Bellwether**  
RESEARCH & CONSULTING

**LRP** LAKE  
RESEARCH  
PARTNERS  
Strategy · Precision · Impact 

# Methodology

- Lake Research Partners and Bellwether Research and Consulting designed and administered this survey which was conducted by phone with professional interviewers using both landline and cell phones from July 6 through July 10, 2015 among the following audiences:
  - 1000 national likely 2016 voters (40% cell phone)
  - 200 likely Democratic primary voters in New Hampshire (30% cell phone)
  - 200 likely Republican primary voters in New Hampshire (30% cell phone)
  - 200 likely Democratic primary voters in South Carolina (40% cell phone)
  - 200 likely Republican primary voters in South Carolina (40% cell phone)
- The margin of error for the national sample +/- 3.1% and for the state primary samples is +/-6.9% at the 95% confidence interval. The margin of error is larger for subgroups.
- Respondents were selected randomly from a list of registered voters and screened for their likelihood to vote in the 2016 General Election. Primary voters were screened for their likelihood to vote in the primary elections in their respective states.

# Key Findings



# Key findings

- Voters across party lines oppose requiring increasing amounts of corn ethanol be blended in gasoline. Overall 45 percent oppose, 31 percent favor, and 24 percent remain undecided.
- Nationally, 56 percent of self-identified Republicans oppose the corn ethanol mandate, as do 44 percent of independents and 36 percent of Democrats. More Democrats and independents oppose the ethanol mandate than support it.
- Informing voters about the impacts of increased ethanol usage in gasoline raises serious concerns. All facts generate significant concerns across party lines, particularly around the impacts of diverting corn for ethanol production on food costs, and the damage higher blends of corn ethanol can pose to engines in cars.
- Majorities of voters support two bi-partisan proposals before Congress, one to limit the amount of corn ethanol used in gasoline at 10% (54 percent favor), and another to repeal the corn ethanol requirements of the renewable fuel standard (55 percent favor).

# Key findings

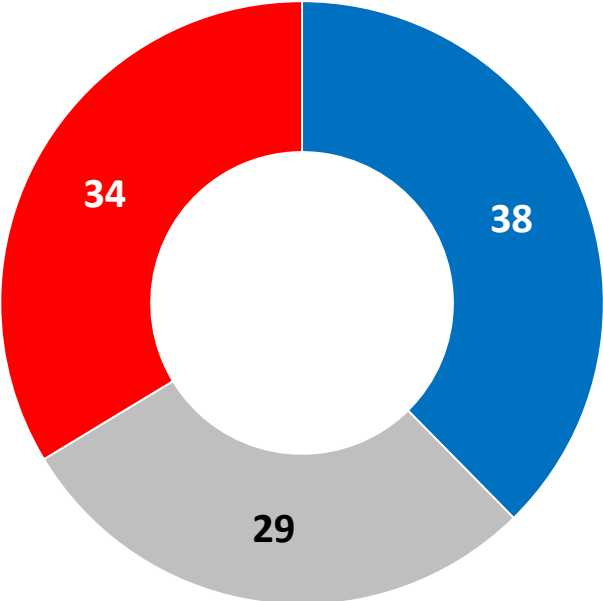
- Strong majorities across party lines favor the EPA reducing the amount of corn ethanol required by law (68 percent of Democrats, 60 percent of Independents, and 71 percent of Republicans).
- Voters indicate that they are less likely to vote for a candidate who supports the corn ethanol mandate, particularly Republican primary voters in South Carolina and New Hampshire.
- In South Carolina, 59 percent of Republican primary voters oppose a federal mandate requiring increasing amounts of ethanol in the fuel supply as do a 36 percent plurality of Democratic primary voters.
- In New Hampshire, 52 percent of Republican primary voters oppose a federal mandate requiring increasing amounts of ethanol in the fuel supply as do a 42 percent plurality of Democratic primary voters.

# Corn Ethanol

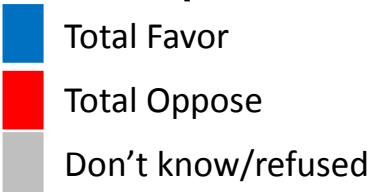
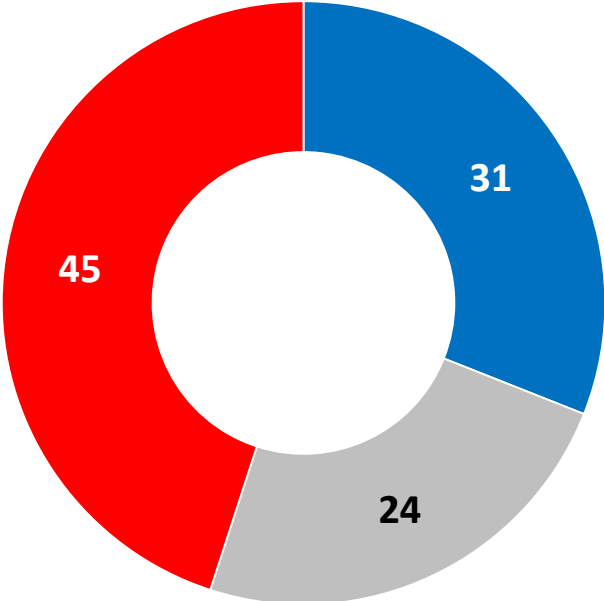


Voters are divided on the issue of using corn ethanol as a fuel additive in gasoline, while nearly 3 in 10 have no opinion. There is stronger opposition toward requiring increasing amounts of ethanol to be blended into the fuel supply.

Do you favor or oppose using corn ethanol as a fuel additive in gasoline? (National Sample)



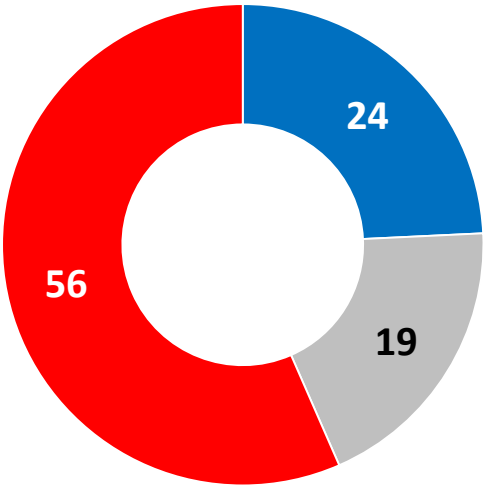
There is currently a federal mandate requiring increasing amounts of corn ethanol to be blended into the U.S. fuel supply. Do you favor or oppose this mandate? (National Sample)



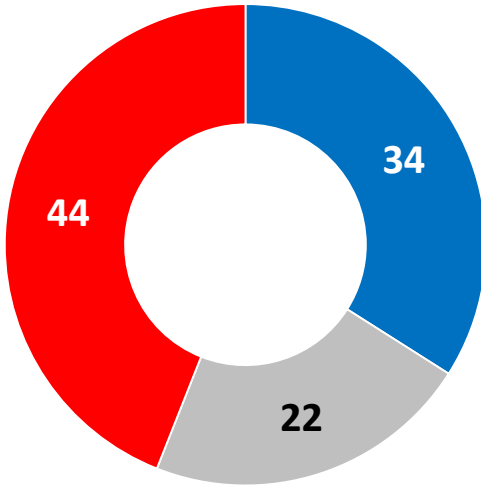
# Republicans and independents oppose the ethanol mandate, with a majority among Republicans. Democrats are divided in their support.

There is currently a federal mandate requiring increasing amounts of corn ethanol to be blended into the U.S. fuel supply. Do you favor or oppose this mandate? (National Sample)

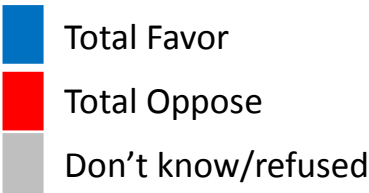
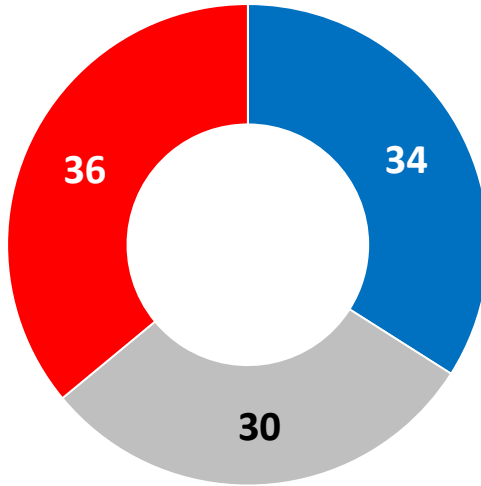
Republicans



Independents



Democrats





# Research on ethanol that show impacts to everyday life – higher food costs and engine damage – raise the strongest concerns.

Now I am going to read you some findings from research studies on the impacts of corn ethanol. For each one, please tell me if you think it raises very serious concerns, somewhat serious concerns, a little concern, or no concerns at all. (National Sample)

Diverting corn to produce ethanol is expected to increase food costs for Americans by 3 billion dollars each year over the next 7 years.



Higher blends of ethanol such as E-15 can cause severe damage in cars, motorcycles, boats, lawn equipment, and other small engines.



It takes 34 times more water to produce a gallon of corn ethanol gasoline than it does to produce a gallon of pure gasoline.



Very serious concerns

Somewhat serious concerns

# Impacts to farmland, efficiency and carbon emissions also raise serious concerns.

Now I am going to read you some findings from research studies on the impacts of corn ethanol. For each one, please tell me if you think it raises very serious concerns, somewhat serious concerns, a little concern, or no concerns at all. (National Sample)

The expansion of existing farmland to grow corn for ethanol impacts millions of acres of wetlands, grasslands, prairies, and conservation areas -- and the habitats of the animals that live on them.





The U.S. Department of Energy reports that ethanol contains 33 percent less energy than pure gasoline, meaning more fuel is burned to drive the same distance.



An analysis of data from the Environmental Protection Agency shows that emissions that contribute to climate change are 28 percent higher from the production and use of corn ethanol than from that of pure gasoline.



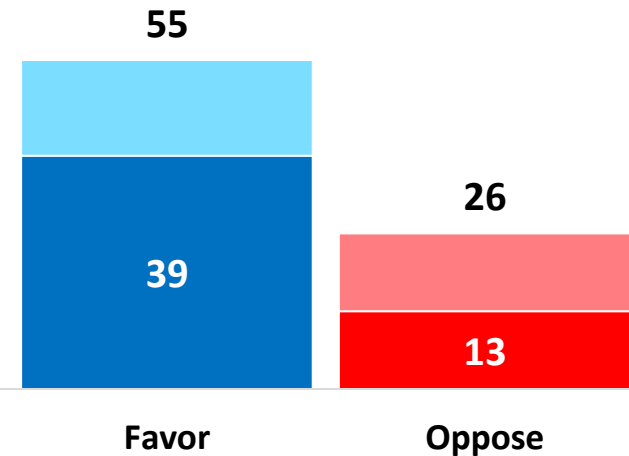
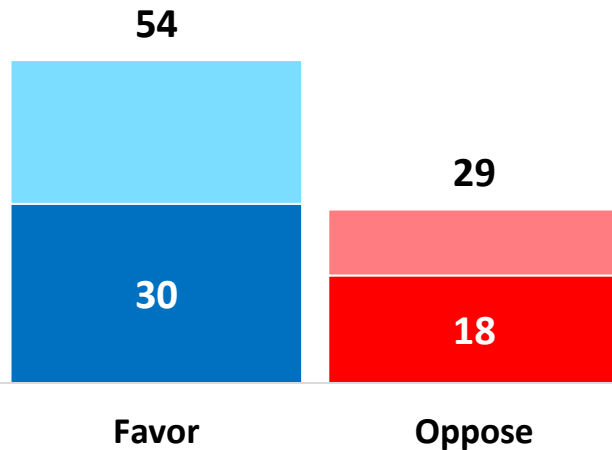
 Very serious concerns  
 Somewhat serious concerns

# Majorities favor bipartisan proposals in Congress to limit the amount of ethanol, with slightly more supporting repeal of the RFS.

Do you favor or oppose this proposal? (National Sample)

Currently there is a bi-partisan proposal in Congress that would set a limit on the amount of ethanol allowed in gasoline at 10 percent.

Currently there is a bi-partisan proposal in Congress that would repeal the corn ethanol requirements of the Renewable Fuel Standard.



Strongly favor

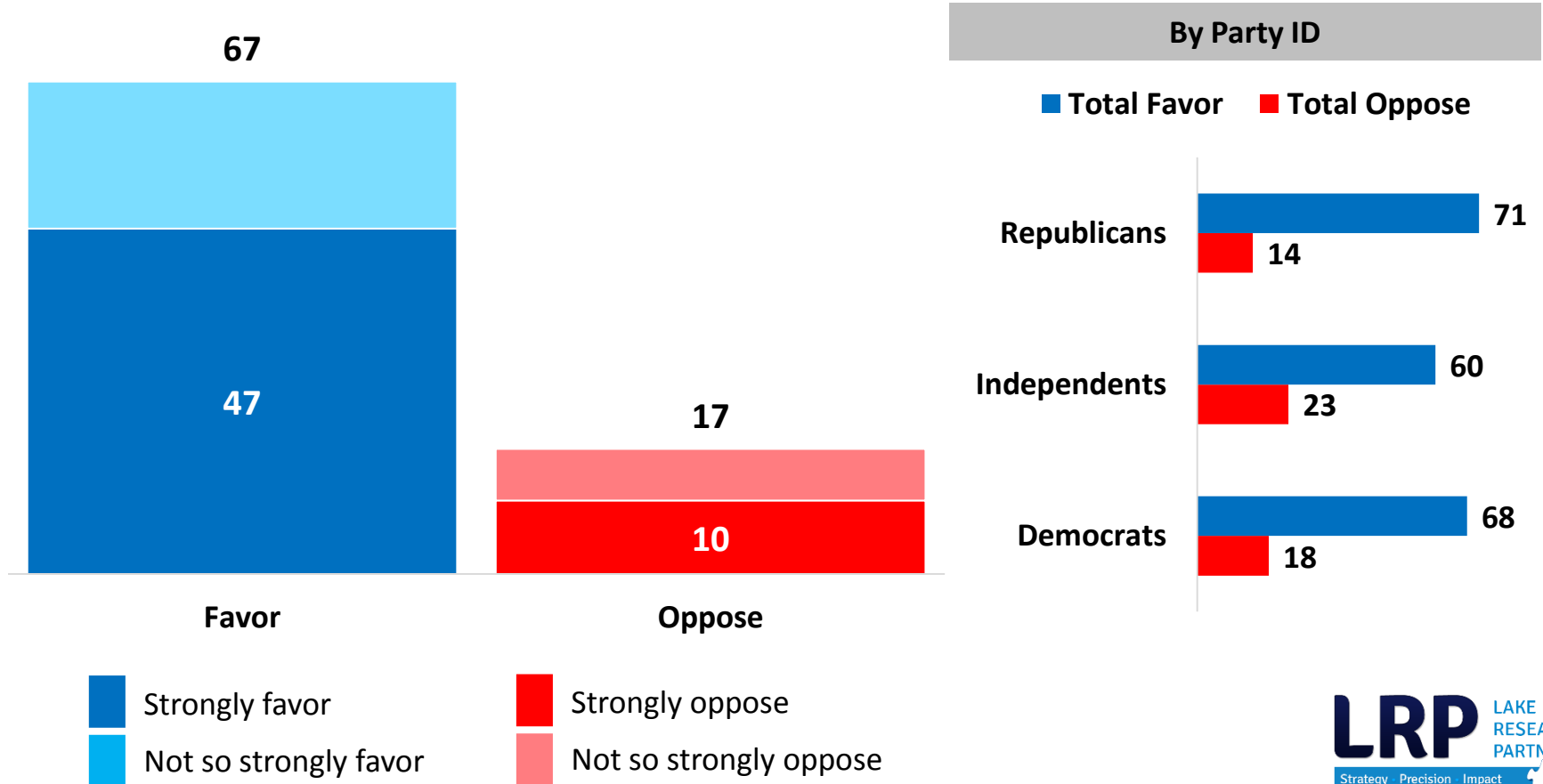
Not so strongly favor

Strongly oppose

Not so strongly oppose

# Majorities across party lines also support the EPA reducing the amount of corn ethanol required by law.

The EPA recently proposed reducing the amount of corn ethanol in gasoline required by law, because the mandate would produce an excess supply of ethanol that the gasoline market cannot absorb. Do you favor or oppose reducing the amount of corn ethanol required by law?

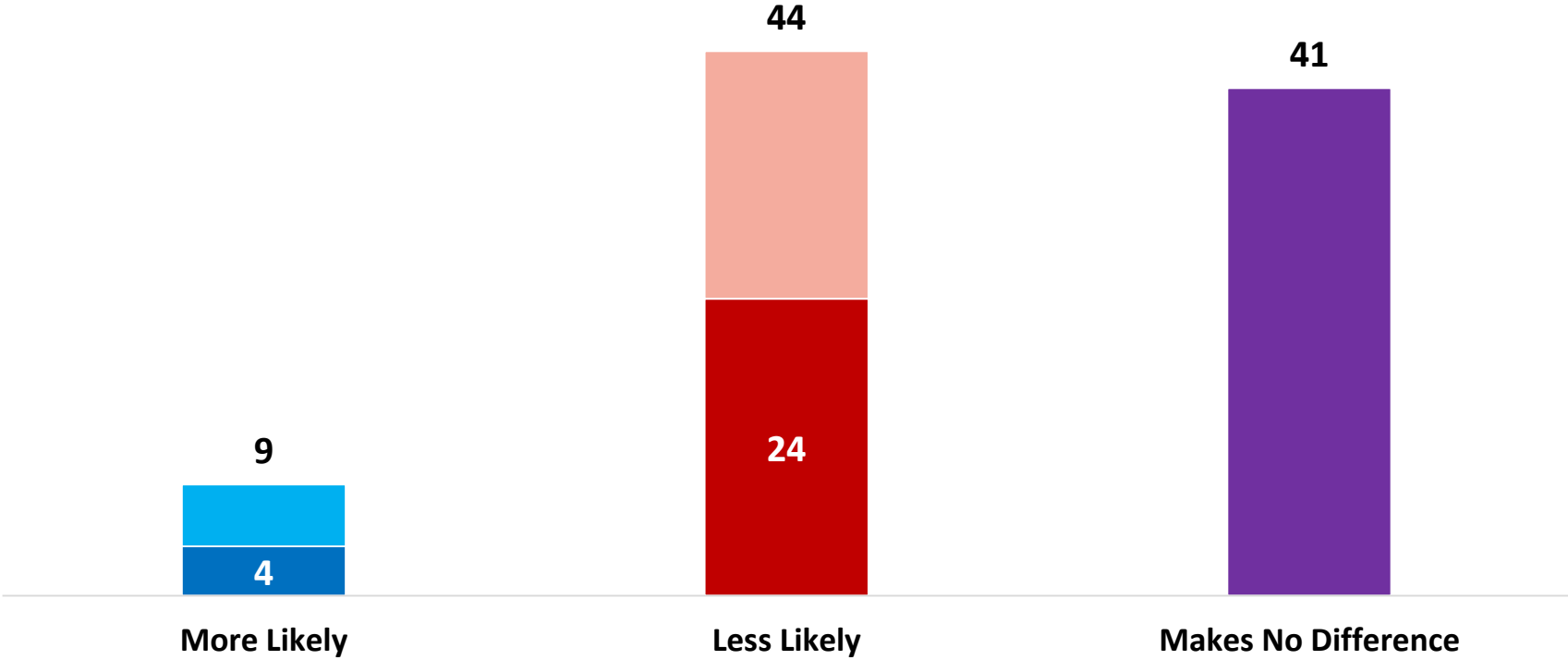


# Impact on RFS Support



# Voters are less likely to support a presidential candidate if that candidate supports the corn ethanol mandate.

If a candidate for president supports the corn ethanol mandate, would that make you more likely or less likely to support that candidate, or would it make no difference? (National Sample)



 Much less likely       Much more likely  
 Somewhat less likely       Somewhat more likely

# Republican voters and South Carolina Republican primary voters are among those who are more likely moved against supporting a candidate who supports the corn ethanol mandate.

If a candidate for president supports the corn ethanol mandate, would that make you more likely or less likely to support that candidate, or would it make no difference? (National Sample)

	Total	National Party ID			NH		SC	
		D	I	R	D	R	D	R
Total More Likely	9	10	12	6	8	10	9	5
Total Less Likely	44	41	44	49	42	42	42	50
Makes No Difference	41	43	41	40	43	42	42	40

Net Less likely minus More likely	35	31	32	43	34	32	33	45
-----------------------------------	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----

# LRP LAKE RESEARCH PARTNERS

Strategy • Precision • Impact



Washington, DC | Berkeley, CA | New York, NY

[LakeResearch.com](http://LakeResearch.com)

202.776.9066

Celinda Lake

[clake@lakeresearch.com](mailto:clake@lakeresearch.com)

Jonathan Voss

[jvoss@lakeresearch.com](mailto:jvoss@lakeresearch.com)

Bellwether  
RESEARCH & CONSULTING

Christine Matthews

[cmatthewspolls@gmail.com](mailto:cmatthewspolls@gmail.com)