



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**  
**Thursday, November 5, 2009**

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:**  
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**68% Hearing “Mostly Bad News” about Jobs**  
**SWINE FLU INTEREST OUTPACES COVERAGE**

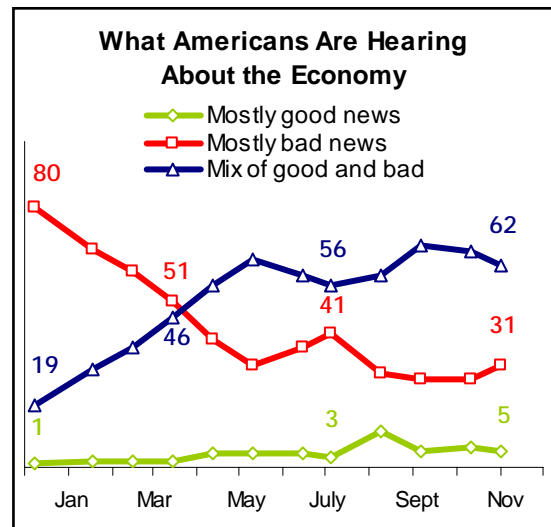
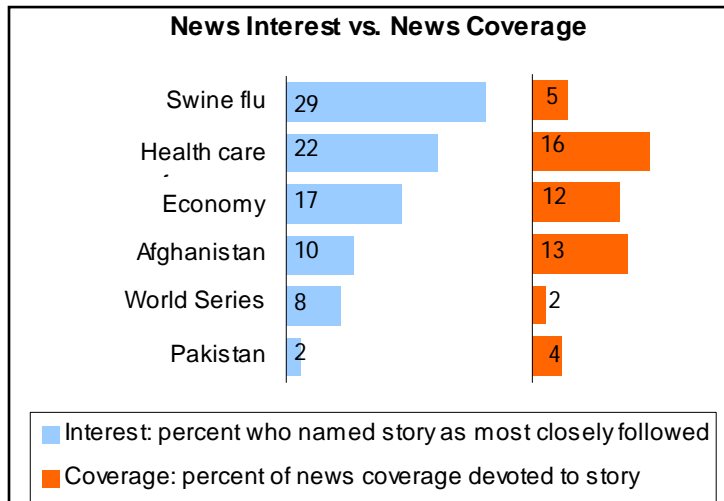
For the second week in a row, Americans followed news about the swine flu and its vaccine more closely than any other news story – with public interest outpacing the amount of national media coverage devoted to the story.

About three-in-ten (29%) name reports about the fast-spreading flu and its vaccine as the story they followed more closely than any other last week,

according to the latest weekly News Interest Index survey, conducted October 30-November 2 among 1,001 adults by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press. Somewhat fewer mention news about health care reform (22%) or the economy (17%) as their top story.

A separate analysis by the Pew Research Center’s Project for Excellence in Journalism (PEJ) finds that the national news media devoted 5% of the newshole to swine flu, much less than the coverage given to the health care debate (16%), Afghanistan (13%) or the economy (12%).

In addition, the public’s impression of economic news remains mixed at best, with very few saying they have been hearing mostly good news



about the economy. About six-in-ten (62%) say they have been hearing a mix of good and bad news about the economy, while half as many (31%) say they have been hearing mostly bad news about the economy. Very few (5%) report hearing mostly good economic news. These views have changed little in recent months.

### Job News Still Mostly Bad

When asked about specific aspects of the economy – including the job situation, real estate values, the financial markets and consumer prices – the public sees little good news on any front. Americans are particularly dour when it comes to evaluating news about employment.

<i>News about ...</i>	<u>Good</u> %	<u>Bad</u> %	<u>Mixed</u> %	<u>DK</u> %
Job situation	3	<b>68</b>	27	2=100
Real estate values	13	43	37	6=100
Prices for food and consumer goods	12	39	42	7=100
Financial markets	12	33	48	7=100

Q4a-d. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

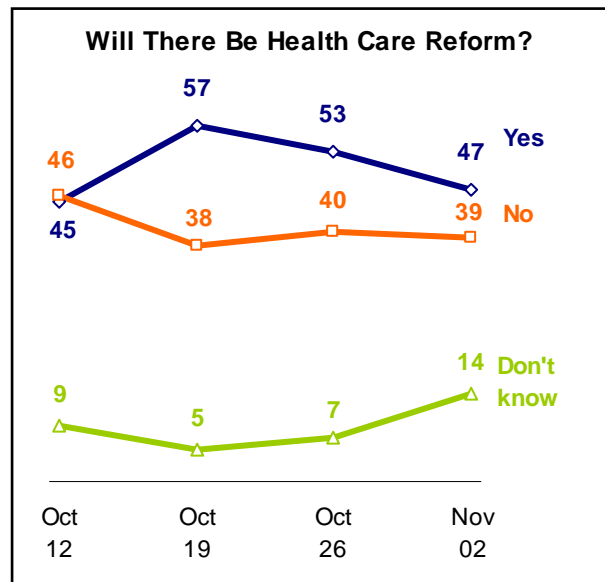
Nearly seven-in-ten (68%) say they have been hearing mostly bad news about the job situation; 27% say they have heard a mix of good and bad news and just 3% say they’ve been hearing mostly good news about jobs. Impressions of the job situation are somewhat more glum than they were in August, when 61% said they had been hearing mostly bad news. There also are significant partisan differences in these views with Republicans (73%) and independents (72%) more likely to offer negative impressions than Democrats (59%).

On the whole, impressions of news about real estate, consumer prices and financial markets are less negative and more mixed than those of employment news. Still, few report hearing outright good news about any area of the economy. More than four-in-ten (43%) say they’ve been hearing mostly bad news about real estate values, while 37% say they’ve been hearing a mix of good and bad news.

About as many call news about consumer prices mostly bad (39%) as say it is a mix of good and bad (42%). Impressions of the financial markets are the least negative: 48% say that news has been a mix of good and bad, while a third (33%) say it has been mostly bad news. For all three areas of the economy, no more than 13% characterize the news they have been hearing as mostly good.

## Prospects for Health Care Reform

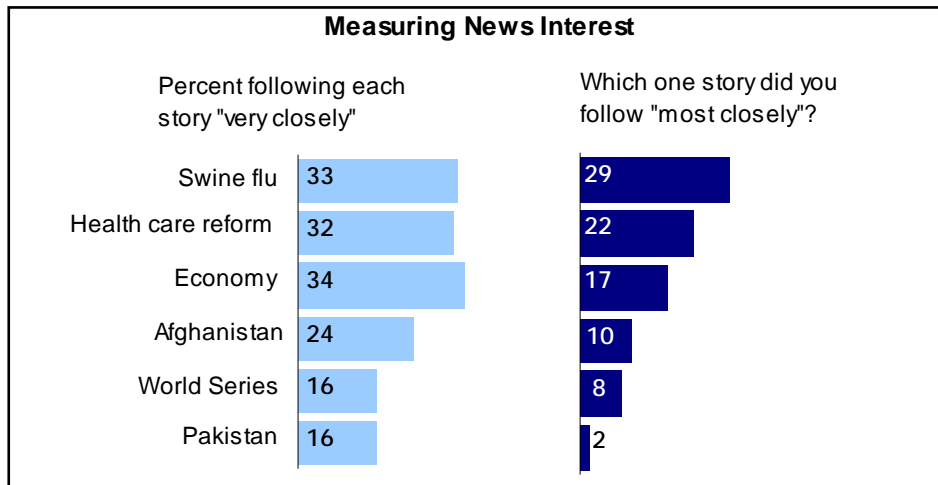
By a 47%-39% margin, more Americans say they expect a health care reform bill to pass over the next year than say they do not. While still a plurality opinion, the percentage expecting passage of a health care bill has dropped since mid-October, just after the Senate Finance Committee approved legislation with the support of one Republican, Olympia Snowe of Maine. Since mid-October, opinion on this question has declined 10 points, with Republicans, Democrats and independents all less likely to say they think a health care reform bill will pass over the next year.



But there are sharp partisan differences. In the current survey, a 61%-majority of Democrats say they expect a bill to pass over the next year, compared with far fewer independents (45%) and Republicans (36%). In contrast to Democrats, about half (51%) of Republicans say they do not think a reform bill will pass in the next year.

## The Week's Top Stories

News about health care reform ran a close second to news about swine flu in terms of public interest. About a third (32%) followed health care reform news very closely, while 22% say this was their top story of the week. According to PEJ, health care reform topped the news media's agenda, accounting for 16% of the newshole.



Reports about the condition of the U.S. economy were followed very closely by 34% of the public; 17% say they followed economic news more closely than any other story. The media devoted 12% of the newshole to stories about the economy.

The public continued to devote modest attention to the U.S. military effort in Afghanistan. About a quarter (24%) say they followed Afghanistan news very closely, while 10% name this their top story. Despite relatively limited interest, Afghanistan was the media's second biggest story of the week, filling 13% of the newshole.

Few paid close attention to the World Series or news about political instability in Pakistan. Some 16% say they paid very close attention to each of these stories; 8% name the World Series as their top story, 2% news about Pakistan.

Not surprisingly, interest in the baseball championship series between the New York Yankees and the Philadelphia Phillies attracted the greatest interest in the northeast. About a quarter (26%) in the northeast say they followed the World Series very closely last week, compared with no more than 15% in any other region.

These findings are based on the most recent installment of the weekly News Interest Index, an ongoing project of the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press. The index, building on the Center's longstanding research into public attentiveness to major news stories, examines news interest as it relates to the news media's coverage. The weekly survey is conducted in conjunction with The Project for Excellence in Journalism's News Coverage Index, which monitors the news reported by major newspaper, television, radio and online news outlets on an ongoing basis. In the most recent week, data relating to news coverage were collected from October 26-November 1, 2009 and survey data measuring public interest in the top news stories of the week were collected October 30-November 2, 2009 from a nationally representative sample of 1,001 adults.

## **About the News Interest Index**

The *News Interest Index* is a weekly survey conducted by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press aimed at gauging the public's interest in and reaction to major news events.

This project has been undertaken in conjunction with the Project for Excellence in Journalism's *News Coverage Index*, an ongoing content analysis of the news. The News Coverage Index catalogues the news from top news organizations across five major sectors of the media: newspapers, network television, cable television, radio and the internet. Each week (from Monday through Sunday) PEJ compiles this data to identify the top stories for the week. The News Interest Index survey collects data from Friday through Monday to gauge public interest in the most covered stories of the week.

Results for the weekly surveys are based on landline telephone interviews among a nationwide sample of approximately 1,000 adults, 18 years of age or older, conducted under the direction of ORC (Opinion Research Corporation). For results based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling is plus or minus 4 percentage points.

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls, and that results based on subgroups will have larger margins of error.

For more information about the Project for Excellence in Journalism's News Coverage Index, go to [www.journalism.org](http://www.journalism.org).

## **About the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press**

The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press is an independent opinion research group that studies attitudes toward the press, politics and public policy issues. We are sponsored by The Pew Charitable Trusts and are one of seven projects that make up the Pew Research Center, a nonpartisan "fact tank" that provides information on the issues, attitudes and trends shaping America and the world.

The Center's purpose is to serve as a forum for ideas on the media and public policy through public opinion research. In this role it serves as an important information resource for political leaders, journalists, scholars, and public interest organizations. All of our current survey results are made available free of charge.

All of the Center's research and reports are collaborative products based on the input and analysis of the entire Center staff consisting of:

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**PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE & THE PRESS**  
**October 30-November 2, 2009 NEWS INTEREST INDEX OMNIBUS SURVEY**  
**FINAL TOPLINE**  
**N=1001**

Q.1 As I read a list of some stories covered by news organizations this past week, please tell me if you happened to follow each news story very closely, fairly closely, not too closely, or not at all closely. First, **[INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE] [IF NECESSARY “Did you follow [ITEM] very closely, fairly closely, not too closely or not at all closely?”]**

	<u>Very closely</u>	<u>Fairly closely</u>	<u>Not too closely</u>	<u>Not at all closely</u>	<u>DK/ Refused</u>
a. Reports about the condition of the U.S. economy					
October 30-November 2, 2009	34	32	17	16	*
October 23-26, 2009	44	30	15	10	1
October 9-12, 2009	41	29	16	13	*
October 2-5, 2009	44	30	15	11	0
September 25-28, 2009	44	37	10	10	*
September 18-21, 2009	44	34	15	7	*
September 11-14, 2009	45	32	14	9	*
September 3-6, 2009	41	31	15	13	*
August 28-31, 2009	45	30	13	12	1
August 21-24, 2009	50	27	13	10	1
August 14-17, 2009	41	37	11	12	*
August 7-10, 2009	42	34	13	10	*
July 31-August 3, 2009	46	34	11	8	*
July 24-27, 2009	45	35	12	8	*
July 17-20, 2009	43	35	11	11	1
July 10-13, 2009	37	38	13	11	*
July 2-5, 2009	38	35	15	12	*
June 19-22, 2009	42	33	15	10	*
June 12-15, 2009	41	35	12	12	*
June 5-8, 2009	41	34	11	14	*
May 29-June 1, 2009	43	37	11	8	*
May 21-24, 2009	44	35	13	9	*
May 15-18, 2009	44	35	12	8	*
May 8-11, 2009	42	34	12	12	*
May 1-4, 2009	47	36	11	5	1
April 17-20, 2009	52	30	10	7	1
April 9-13, 2009	48	29	13	10	0
March 27-30, 2009	48	32	10	10	*
March 20-23, 2009	52	34	8	6	*
March 13-16, 2009	48	33	9	10	*
February 27-March 2, 2009	56	30	8	6	*
February 13-16, 2009	55	29	10	6	*
January 30-February 2, 2009	52	31	12	5	*
January 23-26, 2009	57	30	8	5	0
January 16-19, 2009	43	35	13	9	*
January 2-4, 2009	42	36	15	7	*
December 12-15, 2008	51	33	9	7	*
December 5-8, 2008	42	38	13	7	*
November 21-24, 2008	59	24	9	8	*
November 14-17, 2008	56	29	9	6	*
November 7-10, 2008	54	31	8	7	*
October 31-November 3, 2008	63	27	6	4	*
October 24-27, 2008	52	35	7	5	1

**Q.1 CONTINUED...**

	<u>Very closely</u>	<u>Fairly closely</u>	<u>Not too closely</u>	<u>Not at all closely</u>	<u>DK/ Refused</u>
October 17-20, 2008	62	29	6	3	*
October 10-13, 2008	65	25	7	3	*
October 3-6, 2008	69	23	5	3	*
September 26-29, 2008	70	22	5	3	*
September 19-22, 2008	56	27	12	5	*
September 5-8, 2008	44	33	16	7	*
August 29-31, 2008	41	34	13	11	1
August 15-18, 2008	39	36	15	10	*
August 8-11, 2008	39	35	16	10	*
August 1-4, 2008	47	34	11	8	0
July 25-28, 2008	46	32	10	12	*
July 18-21, 2008	45	33	13	9	*
July 11-14, 2008	44	33	12	10	1
June 27-30, 2008	49	31	12	7	1
June 13-16, 2008	42	33	14	11	*
May 9-12, 2008	45	31	13	11	*
May 2-5, 2008	43	31	15	10	1
April 18-21, 2008	41	35	13	10	1
April 4-7, 2008	39	37	12	12	*
March 28-31, 2008	42	36	14	8	*
March 20-24, 2008	45	33	13	9	*
February 29-March 3, 2008	38	35	15	11	1
February 15-18, 2008	37	36	11	16	8
February 1-4, 2008	40	37	14	8	1
January 18-21, 2008	42	31	16	11	*
January 11-14, 2008	36	32	15	16	1
November 2-5, 2007	27	37	16	19	1
October 19-22, 2007	25	34	20	21	*
August 10-13, 2007	28	36	18	18	*
Mid-November, 2006	31	40	17	11	1
December, 2005	35	35	18	11	1
Early November, 2005	35	39	17	9	*
Mid-May, 2005	30	39	19	11	1
January, 2005	35	41	17	7	*
Mid-October, 2004	30	43	16	10	1
Early September, 2004	39	34	15	11	1
Mid-January, 2004	37	41	15	7	*
December, 2003	35	38	14	11	2
November, 2003	40	34	15	10	1
October, 2003	32	39	16	12	1
September, 2003	39	30	18	12	1
March, 2003	40	35	16	8	1
February, 2003	42	33	15	10	*
January, 2003	40	35	13	11	1
December, 2002	38	34	17	10	1
February, 2002	35	40	15	9	1
January, 2002	30	44	16	9	1
December, 2001	37	40	13	8	2
Mid-November, 2001	41	36	15	7	1
June, 2001	24	41	18	16	1
May, 2001	34	36	15	15	0
April, 2001	36	34	16	13	1
February, 2001	30	39	18	12	1

**Q.1 CONTINUED...**

	<u>Very closely</u>	<u>Fairly closely</u>	<u>Not too closely</u>	<u>Not at all closely</u>	<u>DK/ Refused</u>
January, 2001	32	38	17	11	2
June, 1995	26	41	22	11	*
March, 1995	27	45	19	9	*
February, 1995	23	41	22	13	1
December, 1994	28	43	20	9	*
October, 1994	27	40	20	12	1
June, 1994	25	42	23	10	*
May, 1994	33	40	16	10	1
January, 1994	34	39	16	10	1
Early January, 1994	36	44	13	7	*
December, 1993	35	41	15	8	1
October, 1993	33	38	20	9	*
September, 1993	37	40	14	8	1
Early September, 1993	39	39	14	9	*
August, 1993	41	36	14	9	*
May, 1993	37	38	18	6	1
February, 1993	49	36	10	5	*
January, 1993	42	39	12	7	*
September, 1992	43	37	13	6	1
May, 1992	39	39	15	6	1
March, 1992	47	38	11	4	*
February, 1992	47	37	10	6	*
January, 1992	44	40	11	5	*
October, 1991	36	38	16	9	1

b. Debate over health care reform

October 30-November 2, 2009	32	26	19	23	*
October 23-26, 2009	40	27	16	17	1
October 16-19, 2009	36	28	15	21	*
October 9-12, 2009	37	29	14	19	1
October 2-5, 2009	39	29	16	16	*
September 25-28, 2009	45	31	12	12	0
September 18-21, 2009	44	26	19	11	*
September 11-14, 2009	44	27	14	15	*
September 3-6, 2009	40	26	16	17	0
August 28-31, 2009	40	28	17	14	1
August 21-24, 2009	49	24	12	15	1
August 14-17, 2009	39	31	15	15	1

**TREND FOR COMPARISON:<sup>1</sup>**

August 7-10, 2009: <i>Debate in Washington over health care reform</i>	40	27	17	15	1
July 31-August 3, 2009	47	26	14	13	1
July 24-27, 2009	44	28	15	13	*
July 17-20, 2009	33	31	13	21	2
July 10-13, 2009	24	29	20	27	*
June 26-29, 2009	29	26	20	25	1
June 19-22, 2009	28	28	20	23	*

<sup>1</sup> June 12-15, 2009 through August 7-10, 2009 asked about: "Debate in Washington over health care reform." May 15-18, 2009 asked about: "Debate over Barack Obama's health care plans." March 6-9, 2009 asked about: "Barack Obama proposing a \$630 billion fund for overhauling the U.S. health care system." September, 1993 through September, 1994 asked about: "The Clinton Administration's health care reform proposals." May, 1993 through August, 1993 asked about: "Reports about the White House task force on health care reform headed by Hillary Clinton."

**Q.1 CONTINUED...**

	<u>Very closely</u>	<u>Fairly closely</u>	<u>Not too closely</u>	<u>Not at all closely</u>	<u>DK/ Refused</u>
June 12-15, 2009	29	26	18	26	*
May 15-18, 2009	25	30	20	24	*
March 6-9, 2009: <i>Obama proposing a \$630 billion fund for overhauling health care</i>	41	32	13	14	*
September, 1994: <i>The Clinton administration's health care reform proposals</i>	32	41	18	9	*
June, 1994	34	40	19	7	*
May, 1994	37	37	16	9	1
January, 1994	38	38	15	9	*
Early January, 1994	40	40	14	6	*
December, 1993	45	35	12	7	1
October, 1993	44	32	17	6	1
September, 1993	49	34	11	6	*
August, 1993: <i>Reports about the White House task force on health care reform headed by Hillary Clinton</i>	27	32	25	15	1
June, 1993	28	38	19	15	*
May, 1993	30	30	25	14	1
c. The U.S. military effort in Afghanistan					
October 30-November 2, 2009	24	32	21	22	*
October 23-26, 2009	32	29	21	18	*
October 16-19, 2009	25	31	20	24	*
October 9-12, 2009	31	31	21	17	0
September 25-28, 2009 <sup>2</sup>	27	40	17	16	*
September 18-21, 2009	26	33	25	16	*
September 11-14, 2009	25	35	22	18	1
September 3-6, 2009	23	33	23	21	0
August 7-10, 2009	24	32	23	21	1
March 20-23, 2009	24	32	22	22	*
February 20-23, 2009	27	29	24	19	1
January 30-February 2, 2009	26	34	24	16	*
January 2-4, 2009	22	33	23	21	1
October 24-27, 2008	28	32	22	17	1
October 10-13, 2008	19	34	29	18	*
September 12-15, 2008	21	34	25	19	1
August 29-31, 2008	18	27	32	23	*
July 18-21, 2008	27	33	24	16	*
July 11-14, 2008	19	28	29	23	1
July 3-7, 2008	19	28	32	21	*
June 20-23, 2008	20	30	30	20	*
Late July, 2002	41	38	13	7	1
June, 2002	38	32	20	9	1
April, 2002	39	39	13	8	1
Early April, 2002	45	37	12	5	1
February, 2002	47	39	8	5	1
January, 2002	51	35	9	4	1
December, 2001	44	38	12	5	1

<sup>2</sup> September 25-28 asked about "The debate over whether to send more troops to Afghanistan." February 20-23, 2009 asked about "The Obama administration's decision to send 17,000 additional U.S. troops to Afghanistan." From June 20-23, 2008 to October 10-13, 2008 the story was listed as "The military effort in Afghanistan against Taliban fighters." All other dates asked about "The U.S. military effort in Afghanistan."

**Q.1 CONTINUED...**

	<u>Very closely</u>	<u>Fairly closely</u>	<u>Not too closely</u>	<u>Not at all closely</u>	<u>DK/ Refused</u>
Mid-November, 2001	49	36	11	3	1
Early November, 2001	45	36	12	6	1
Mid-October, 2001	51	35	10	3	1
<b>d. Reports about swine flu and the vaccine</b>					
October 30-November 2, 2009	33	33	22	12	*
October 23-26, 2009	43	30	17	9	*
October 16-19, 2009	32	35	18	14	0
October 9-12, 2009	38	35	16	11	*
September 18-21, 2009 <sup>3</sup>	34	31	25	9	*
September 11-14, 2009	30	36	21	12	*
September 3-6, 2009	26	32	25	17	0
August 28-31, 2009	26	33	22	18	*
May 21-24, 2009	30	39	21	11	*
May 8-11, 2009	34	36	19	11	*
May 1-4, 2009	43	37	15	4	1
April 25-27, 2009	25	30	19	26	*
<b>e. News about political instability in Pakistan</b>					
October 30-November 2, 2009	16	23	26	35	1
October 23-26, 2009	17	22	29	31	1
May 8-11, 2009	18	23	23	36	*
April 24-27, 2009	15	27	27	31	*
March 13-16, 2009	14	20	26	40	0
August 15-18, 2008	10	25	29	35	1
January 11-14, 2008	19	33	20	27	1
November 30-December 3, 2007	16	28	26	30	*
November 23-26, 2007	13	27	31	28	1
November 16-19, 2007	20	30	21	28	1
November 9-12, 2007	20	29	23	28	*
<b>TREND FOR COMPARISON:<sup>4</sup></b>					
May 29-June 1, 2009: <i>Conflict with Taliban</i>	23	30	23	23	1
September 26-29, 2008: <i>Hotel bombing</i>	16	32	23	28	1
February 22-25, 2008: <i>Parliamentary elections</i>	9	24	28	39	*
January 4-7, 2008: <i>Bhutto assassination</i>	32	36	15	16	1
October 19-22, 2007: <i>Pakistan bombing aimed at Bhutto</i>	21	28	21	30	*
July 13-16, 2007: <i>Raid on Pakistani mosque</i>	10	19	23	47	1

<sup>3</sup> From August 28-31 through September 18-21 question was worded "Reports about swine flu and the availability of a vaccine." May 21-24, 2009 and May 8-11, 2009 asked about: "Reports about swine flu in the U.S. and elsewhere." For May 1-4, 2009 the story was listed as: "The outbreak of swine flu in different parts of the world." For April 25-27, 2009 the story was listed as: "Reports of swine flu in Mexico and the U.S."

<sup>4</sup> May 29-June 1, 2009 asked about "The military conflict between the Taliban and the Pakistani government." September 26-29, 2008 asked about "A bombing at a Marriott Hotel in Pakistan that killed over 50 people." February 22-25, 2008 asked about "Parliamentary elections and changes in party control in Pakistan." January 4-7, 2008 asked about "The assassination of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and resulting instability in Pakistan." October 19-22, 2007 asked about "A bombing in Pakistan aimed at former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto that killed over 120 people." July 13-16, 2007 asked about "The Pakistani government's raid on a mosque held by Islamic radicals."

**Q.1 CONTINUED...**

	<u>Very closely</u>	<u>Fairly closely</u>	<u>Not too closely</u>	<u>Not at all closely</u>	<u>DK/Refused</u>
f. The Major League Baseball World Series <sup>5</sup>					
October 30-November 2, 2009	16	16	18	49	*
October 24-27, 2008	12	12	18	58	*
October 26-29, 2007	20	16	20	43	1
November, 1989	23	17	22	38	*
October, 1988	31	21	19	28	1

Q.2 Which ONE of the stories I just mentioned have you followed most closely, or is there another story you've been following MORE closely? **[DO NOT READ LIST. ACCEPT ONLY ONE RESPONSE.]**

- 29 Reports about swine flu and the vaccine
- 22 Debate over health care reform
- 17 Reports about the condition of the U.S. economy
- 10 The U.S. military effort in Afghanistan
- 8 The Major League Baseball World Series
- 2 News about political instability in Pakistan
- 3 Some other story (VOL.)
- 10 Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

On another topic...

Q.3 Are you hearing mostly good news about the economy these days, mostly bad news about the economy or a mix of both good and bad news?

	<u>Hearing mostly good news</u>	<u>Hearing mostly bad news</u>	<u>A mix of good and bad news</u>	<u>DK/Refused</u>
October 30-November 2, 2009	5	31	62	2
October 9-12, 2009	6	27	66	1
September 3-6, 2009	5	27	68	1
August 7-10, 2009	11	29	59	1
July 2-5, 2009	3	41	56	*
June 12-15, 2009	4	37	59	*
May 8-11, 2009	4	31	64	1
April 9-13, 2009	4	39	56	1
March 13-16, 2009	2	51	46	1
February 13-16, 2009	2	60	37	1
January 16-19, 2009	2	67	30	1
December 5-8, 2008	1	80	19	*

<sup>5</sup> October 24-27, 2008 and October 26-29, 2007 asked about "The Major League Baseball Playoffs and World Series." November 1989 and October 1988 asked about "The World Series."

Q.4 Thinking about some specific aspects of the nation's economy... Please tell me if you are hearing mostly good news, mostly bad news or a mix of both good and bad news about each of the following. **[READ and RANDOMIZE]**

	Hearing mostly <u>good news</u>	Hearing mostly <u>bad news</u>	A mix of good and <u>bad news</u>	DK/ <u>Refused</u>
a. The financial markets				
October 30-November 2, 2009	12	33	48	7
August 7-10, 2009	20	31	43	6
June 12-15, 2009	9	43	45	3
b. Real estate values				
October 30-November 2, 2009	13	43	37	6
August 7-10, 2009	11	40	41	7
June 12-15, 2009	11	45	40	3
c. Prices for food and consumer goods				
October 30-November 2, 2009	12	39	42	7
August 7-10, 2009	10	36	46	9
June 12-15, 2009	9	39	46	6
d. The job situation				
October 30-November 2, 2009	3	68	27	2
August 7-10, 2009	6	61	32	1
June 12-15, 2009	1	71	27	1

Q.5 Thinking now about the issue of health care, from what you've seen and heard, do you think a health care reform bill will pass over the next year or not?

Oct 30-Nov 2 <u>2009</u>		Oct 23-26 <u>2009</u>	Oct 16-19 <u>2009</u>	Oct 9-12 <u>2009</u>
47	Yes, will	53	57	45
39	No, will not	40	38	46
14	Don't know/Refused ( <b>VOL.</b> )	7	5	9