

PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE & THE PRESS
July 17-20, 2009 NEWS INTEREST INDEX OMNIBUS SURVEY
FINAL TOPLINE
N=1002

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. Controversy surrounding Michael Jackson’s death	17	22	25	34	2
July 10-13, 2009: <i>Michael Jackson’s funeral and controversy surrounding his death</i>	25	26	24	24	1
July 2-5, 2009: <i>The death of singer Michael Jackson</i>	25	29	28	18	1
June 26-29, 2009	30	28	23	19	*
TREND FOR COMPARISON—celebrity deaths:					
March 20-23, 2009: <i>Death of actress Natasha Richardson in a skiing accident</i>	18	28	24	30	*
October 3-6, 2008: <i>Death of Paul Newman</i>	19	29	28	23	1
June 13-16, 2008: <i>Death of Meet the Press host Tim Russert</i>	28	23	19	30	*
January 25-28, 2008: <i>Death of actor Heath Ledger</i>	13	29	27	30	1
November 30-December 3, 2007: <i>Death of NFL player Sean Taylor</i>	14	25	22	38	1
March 2-5, 2007: <i>Death of Anna Nicole Smith</i>	14	19	30	36	1
February 23-26, 2007	13	22	33	31	1
February 16-19, 2007	14	25	29	31	1
February 9-12, 2007	11	27	31	30	1
September, 2006: <i>Death of the Crocodile Hunter, Steve Irwin, from a stingray strike</i>	30	36	21	12	1
December, 2001: <i>Death of former Beatle George Harrison</i>	10	23	30	35	2
July, 1999: <i>Death of John F. Kennedy Jr., his wife and sister-in-law in a plane crash near Martha’s Vineyard</i>	54	29	13	4	0
March, 1999: <i>Death of former baseball player Joe DiMaggio</i>	18	33	27	21	1
June, 1998: <i>The death of Frank Sinatra</i>	17	31	31	20	1
September, 1997: <i>The death of Princess Diana</i>	54	31	11	4	*
August, 1995: <i>The death of Jerry Garcia</i>	9	19	23	45	4
August, 1995: <i>The death of Mickey Mantle</i>	24	36	21	18	1
May, 1994: <i>The suicide of rock star Kurt Cobain</i>	7	14	25	52	2
TREND FOR COMPARISON—Michael Jackson:					
June, 2005: <i>Michael Jackson trial</i>	13	31	29	26	1
Mid-March, 2005	12	23	32	32	1
February, 2005	8	17	30	44	1
November, 2003: <i>Recent charges of child molestation against Michael Jackson</i>	29	27	22	20	2
January, 1994: <i>Michael Jackson’s personal problems</i>	19	30	30	20	1
December, 1993	15	25	27	32	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>
b. Reports about a CIA program to kill Al Qaeda leaders that was hidden from Congress	12	19	20	47	3
TREND FOR COMPARISON:					
April 24-27, 2009: <i>Calls for a bi-partisan commission to investigate harsh interrogation techniques used by CIA officials</i>	21	26	22	31	*
April 17-20, 2009: <i>The release of memos describing harsh interrogation techniques used by CIA officials</i>	17	24	22	37	*
c. Reports about the condition of the U.S. economy	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
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	*

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>
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
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	*

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>
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
d. Debate in Washington over health care reform	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	*
June 12-15, 2009	29	26	18	26	*
TREND FOR COMPARISON:¹					
May 15-18, 2009: <i>Debate over Obama's health care plans</i>	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
e. The confirmation hearings for Supreme Court nominee Sonia Sotomayor	20	32	20	27	1
TREND FOR COMPARISON:					
May 29-June 1, 2009: <i>The nomination of Sonia Sotomayor to the Supreme Court</i>	29	29	19	23	1
January, 2006: <i>The nomination of Samuel Alito to the Supreme Court</i>	14	23	25	36	2
December, 2005	14	20	31	32	3
Early November, 2005	21	28	24	25	2
Early October, 2005: <i>The confirmation of John Roberts as chief justice of the Supreme Court</i>	28	33	18	20	1
Early October, 2005: <i>The nomination of Harriet Miers to the Supreme Court</i>	22	33	21	23	1

¹ 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>
Early September, 2005: <i>The nomination of John Roberts as chief justice of the Supreme Court</i>	18	26	25	29	2
August, 1993: <i>The nomination of Ruth Bader Ginsberg to the Supreme Court</i>	18	30	27	24	1
October 1991: <i>Nomination of Clarence Thomas</i>	28	35	18	18	1
July, 1991	33	33	19	14	1
August, 1990: <i>Nomination of David Souter</i>	16	27	27	29	1
September, 1987: <i>Nomination of Robert Bork</i>	17	23	29	29	2
f. The bombing of two hotels in Indonesia	13	26	23	36	2
TREND FOR COMPARISON²:					
December 5-8, 2008: <i>The terrorist attacks in Mumbai, India</i>	29	37	20	14	*
July 6-9, 2007: <i>Investigation into London car bombings</i>	34	30	19	16	1
June 29-July 2, 2007: <i>London car bomb</i>	34	31	16	18	1
August, 2006: <i>British officials stop terror plot</i>	54	26	9	9	2
October, 2005: <i>The recent terrorist bombings in Bali, Indonesia</i>	13	31	26	29	1
July, 2005: <i>The terrorist bombings in London, England</i>	48	37	11	4	*
March, 2004: <i>The terrorist bombings in Madrid, Spain</i>	34	35	18	12	1
Late October, 2002: <i>The terrorist bombing of a nightclub in Bali, Indonesia</i>	20	34	25	20	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.**]

- 21 Reports about the condition of the U.S. economy
- 21 Debate in Washington over health care reform
- 17 Controversy surrounding Michael Jackson's death
- 14 The confirmation hearings for Supreme Court nominee Sonia Sotomayor
- 3 Reports about a CIA program to kill Al Qaeda leaders that was hidden from Congress
- 2 The bombing of two hotels in Indonesia
- 9 Some other story (VOL.)
- 12 Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

² July 6-9, 2007 asked about: "The investigation into who was responsible for car bombs that were discovered in London and a car bomb that went off at an airport in Scotland." June 29-July 2, 2007 asked about: "British police finding and defusing a car bomb in London." August, 2006 asked about: "British officials stopping a terrorist plot to blow up planes flying to the U.S."

Q.3 Do you think news organizations are giving too much coverage, too little coverage or the right amount of coverage to each of the following? [INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE]

		Too much <u>coverage</u>	Too little <u>coverage</u>	Right amount of <u>coverage</u>	DK/ <u>Refused</u>
a.	Controversy surrounding Michael Jackson's death June 26-29, 2009 ³	82 64	1 3	13 29	4 3
	TREND FOR COMPARISON:				
	March 20-23, 2009: <i>The death of actress Natasha Richardson</i>	34	5	53	8
	January 25-28, 2008: <i>The death of actor Heath Ledger</i>	52	5	37	6
b.	Reports about a CIA program to kill Al Qaeda leaders that was hidden from Congress	19	40	30	12
c.	Reports about the condition of the U.S. economy	16	30	51	4
	March 20-23, 2009	21	26	51	2
	January 18-21, 2008	11	32	52	5
	February, 2001: <i>Signs of an economic slowdown</i>	21	25	46	8
d.	Debate in Washington over health care reform	6	45	44	6
e.	The confirmation hearings for Supreme Court nominee Sonia Sotomayor	21	15	55	10
f.	The bombing of two hotels in Indonesia	7	32	50	11

On another topic...

Q.4 All in all, do you think the government is on the right track or the wrong track in the way it is handling economic problems facing the nation?

		May 21-24, <u>2009</u>	Mar 27-30, <u>2009</u>	Feb 20-23, <u>2009</u>	Jan 16-19, <u>2009</u>
46	Right track	53	50	47	31
48	Wrong track	39	39	34	48
6	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	8	11	19	21

³ For June 26-29, 2009, this question was not asked as part of a list.

- Q.5 Thinking about the issue of health care reform, do you think it... **[INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE]**. DO you think it **[NEXT ITEM]**?
- a. 72 Is interesting [OR]
25 Boring
3 Don't know/Refused (**VOL.**)
 - b. 78 Affects you personally [OR]
21 Does not affect you personally
1 Don't know/Refused (**VOL.**)
 - c. 34 Is easy to understand [OR]
63 Hard to understand
3 Don't know/Refused (**VOL.**)
 - d. 95 Is important [OR]
4 Unimportant
1 Don't know/Refused (**VOL.**)
- Q.6 In the past few weeks, have you seen or heard any ads on the subject of health care reform? [If Yes, were these ads mostly a positive message about efforts to reform the health care system or mostly a negative message about efforts to reform health care?]
- 50 Yes [**NET**]
 - 16 Yes, have seen, mostly a positive message about health care reform
 - 18 Yes, have seen, mostly a negative message about health care reform
 - 14 Yes have seen, mix of positive and negative (**VOL.**)
 - 2 Yes, have seen, don't remember whether positive or negative (**VOL.**)
 - 47 No haven't seen
 - 2 Don't know/Refused (**VOL.**)