

FOR RELEASE OCTOBER 6, 2014

# Public Divided Over Whether Secret Service Lapses Signal ‘Broader Problems’

*Most Have Some Confidence  
Embattled Agency Can Improve*

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION  
ON THIS REPORT:**

Carroll Doherty, Director of Political Research

Seth Motel, Research Analyst

Rachel Weisel, Communications Associate

202.419.4372

[www.pewresearch.org](http://www.pewresearch.org)

# Public Divided Over Whether Secret Service Lapses Signal ‘Broader Problems’

*Most Have Some Confidence Embattled Agency Can Improve*

Following a White House security breach and reports of other Secret Service problems, roughly equal shares of the public think the recent issues are mainly isolated incidents (42%) as think they are signs of broader problems with the agency (43%).

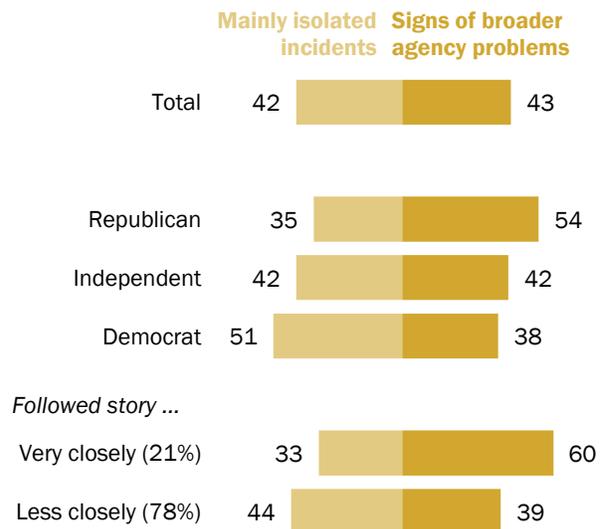
The new national survey by the Pew Research Center, conducted Oct. 2-5 among 1,007 adults, shows that Republicans are more likely to see these episodes as signs of broader Secret Service problems (54%) than mainly isolated incidents (35%). Among Democrats, about half (51%) say the occurrences were mainly isolated, while 38% think they are signs of broader problems.

Those who paid close attention last week to Secret Service problems and the resignation of Director Julia Pierson are the most likely to see signs of broader agency problems. Among the 21% who closely followed the reports, six-in-ten (60%) say the incidents show signs of broader problems and just one-third (33%) see them as mainly isolated. About a quarter each of Democrats (27%) and Republicans (24%) followed news about Secret Service security problems very closely, compared with 15% of independents.

A majority of the public has at least some confidence in the Secret Service to improve its job performance. About seven-in-ten, including roughly equal shares of Republicans and Democrats, say they have a great deal (19%) or fair amount of confidence (50%) in the agency to improve the job it does providing security. Roughly three-in-ten offer not too much confidence (21%) or no confidence at all (8%) in the agency to get better.

## Partisan Differences Over Depth of Recent Secret Service Problems

*% saying recent problems w/ Secret Service are ...*



Survey conducted Oct. 2-5, 2014.

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Blacks and whites have similar views about whether recent security slips by the Secret Service represent isolated incidents or signal broader problems; about half of blacks (48%) and whites (47%) say the latter.

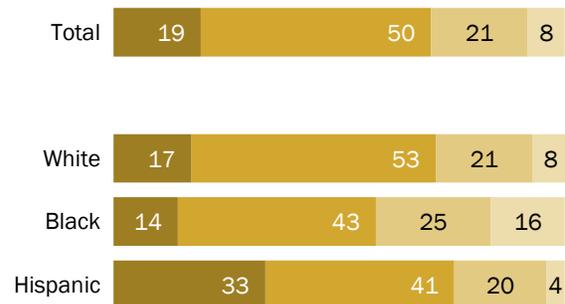
However, blacks show less confidence in the agency to provide better security going forward. Roughly four-in-ten blacks have little or no confidence in the Secret Service to improve its performance, compared with 29% of whites. Blacks are twice as likely as whites to say they have “no confidence at all” in the agency to improve (16% vs. 8%).

In general, people who see the recent Secret Service problems as signs of broader issues are less likely to express confidence in the agency to reform itself: Still, 57% of those who say the incidents are signs of broader problems have at least some confidence in the agency to improve its job, while 42% have little or no confidence. Among those who view recent reports of security problems as mainly isolated incidents, 84% have at least some confidence that the Secret Service will improve and just 15% lack confidence.

## Blacks Express Less Confidence in Secret Service to Improve Security

*Amount of confidence in Secret Service to improve the job it does providing security (%)*

■ Great deal ■ Fair amount ■ Not too much ■ None at all



Survey conducted Oct. 2-5, 2014. Don't know responses not shown. Whites and blacks include only those who are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race.

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## The Week's News

The current outbreak of the Ebola virus, including the first reported diagnosis in the U.S., garnered the most news interest last week. Fully 36% of the public closely followed the story, up 9 points from the prior week.

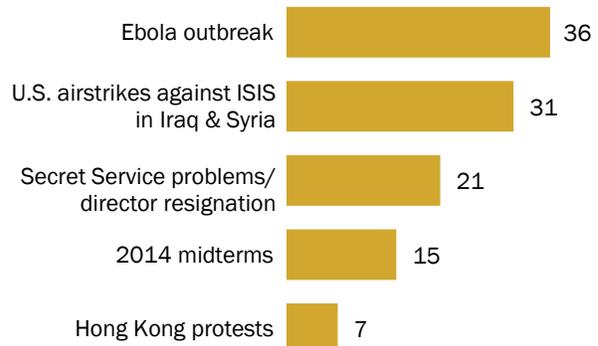
About three-in-ten (31%) closely followed news about U.S. airstrikes against ISIS in Iraq and Syria. In the week before, 37% followed news about the airstrikes.

Roughly two-in-ten (21%) tracked news about problems with White House security and the resignation of the Secret Service director. In addition, 15% were closely following news about next month's congressional elections and 7% paid close attention to political protests in Hong Kong.

Among all age groups, news about Ebola received considerable attention. Three-in-ten adults under age 30 (30%) closely followed the story, as did 45% of adults 65 and older. Interest in the week's other news stories was much higher among older adults than younger adults. For example, 25% of adults 65 and older were closely following the midterm elections, compared with 5% of adults ages 18-29.

### Public Pays Most Attention to Ebola, U.S. Airstrikes vs. ISIS

*% following each story very closely*



Survey conducted Oct. 2-5, 2014.

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### Ebola Draws Interest Across Age Groups

*% following each story very closely*

	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+
	%	%	%	%
Ebola outbreak	30	29	43	45
U.S. airstrikes against ISIS in Iraq & Syria	20	26	33	46
Secret Service problems/director resignation	13	14	27	33
2014 midterms	5	11	19	25
Hong Kong protests	6	4	9	11

Survey conducted Oct. 2-5, 2014.

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## About the Survey

The analysis in this report is based on telephone interviews conducted October 2-5, 2014 among a national sample of 1,007 adults 18 years of age or older living in the continental United States (501 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 506 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 288 who had no landline telephone). The survey was conducted by interviewers at Princeton Data Source under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International. A combination of landline and cell phone random digit dial samples were used; both samples were provided by Survey Sampling International. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. Respondents in the landline sample were selected by randomly asking for the youngest adult male or female who is now at home. Interviews in the cell sample were conducted with the person who answered the phone, if that person was an adult 18 years of age or older. For detailed information about our survey methodology, see: <http://people-press.org/methodology/>

The combined landline and cell phone sample are weighted using an iterative technique that matches gender, age, education, race, Hispanic origin and region to parameters from the 2012 Census Bureau's American Community Survey and population density to parameters from the Decennial Census. The sample also is weighted to match current patterns of telephone status, based on extrapolations from the 2013 National Health Interview Survey. The weighting procedure also accounts for the fact that respondents with both landline and cell phones have a greater probability of being included in the combined sample and adjusts for household size among respondents with a landline phone. Sampling errors and statistical tests of significance take into account the effect of weighting.

The following table shows the unweighted sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey:

<b>Group</b>	<b>Unweighted sample size</b>	<b>Plus or minus ...</b>
Total sample	1,007	3.6 percentage points
Republican	248	7.3 percentage points
Democrat	318	6.5 percentage points
Independent	347	6.2 percentage points
White, non-Hispanic	693	4.4 percentage points
Black, non-Hispanic	110	11.0 percentage points
Hispanic	121	10.5 percentage points

Sample sizes and sampling errors for other subgroups are available upon request. 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.

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER**  
**October 2-5, 2014 OMNIBUS**  
**FINAL TOPLINE**  
**N=1,007**

**ASK ALL:**

PEW.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>	<b>(VOL.) DK/Ref</b>
a. U.S. airstrikes against ISIS and other Islamic militant groups in Iraq and Syria					
October 2-5, 2014	31	30	21	18	1
<b>TRENDS FOR COMPARISON:</b>					
September 25-28, 2014: <i>U.S. airstrikes against ISIS and other Islamic militant groups in the Middle East</i>	37	32	16	14	1
September 11-14, 2014: <i>Reports about the Islamic militant group in Iraq and Syria, known as ISIS</i>	37	30	16	17	*
August 14-17, 2014: <i>U.S. airstrikes against an Islamic militant group in Iraq</i>	23	29	21	26	1
June 26-29, 2014: <i>Growing violence and political instability in Iraq</i>	25	29	18	27	1
December 15-18, 2011: <i>The complete withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq</i>	34	32	18	14	2
October 21-23, 2011: <i>President Obama announcing a complete withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq by the end of 2011</i>	30	30	19	20	1
December 16-19, 2010: <i>The current situation and events in Iraq</i>	19	30	27	24	*
September 2-6, 2010: <i>The withdrawal of U.S. combat troops from Iraq</i>	36	37	15	11	*
August 26-29, 2010: <i>The current situation and events in Iraq</i>	25	36	24	15	1
August 19-22, 2010: <i>The withdrawal of U.S. combat troops from Iraq</i>	31	33	19	17	1
August 5-8, 2010: <i>The current situation and events in Iraq</i>	23	35	22	18	1
May 13-16, 2010	31	34	21	13	2
March 12-15, 2010	22	36	28	14	*
March 5-8, 2010	26	34	20	20	*
January 29-February 1, 2010	23	33	27	17	*
January 15-18, 2010	20	35	28	17	*
October 16-19, 2009	23	30	24	23	*
September 11-14, 2009	21	33	30	16	*
August 21-24, 2009	25	35	22	18	1
August 14-17, 2009	19	38	23	18	*
July 2-5, 2009: <i>U.S. troops withdrawing from Iraqi cities</i>	25	34	20	21	0
April 24-27, 2009: <i>The current situation and events in Iraq</i>	21	35	25	19	*
March 20-23, 2009	25	37	21	17	*
February 27-March 2, 2009: <i>Barack Obama's plan to withdraw most U.S. troops from Iraq by August 2010</i>	40	37	13	9	1

## PEW.1 CONTINUED...

	<u>Very closely</u>	<u>Fairly closely</u>	<u>Not too closely</u>	<u>Not at all closely</u>	<b>(VOL.)</b> <u>DK/Ref</u>
December 12-15, 2008: <i>The current situation and events in Iraq</i>	24	35	25	16	*
November 21-24, 2008	32	31	24	13	0
November 14-17, 2008	24	33	27	16	*
October 31-November 3, 2008	30	35	22	12	1
October 24-27, 2008	29	35	25	11	*
October 10-13, 2008	23	34	30	13	*
October 3-6, 2008	29	33	28	10	*
September 5-8, 2008	24	37	26	13	*
August 29-31, 2008	22	32	29	16	1
August 22-25, 2008	26	31	27	15	1
August 1-4, 2008	27	40	23	10	*
July 25-28, 2008	28	33	22	17	*
July 18-21, 2008	33	35	20	12	*
July 11-14, 2008	24	35	24	16	1
July 3-7, 2008	25	35	25	15	*
June 20-23, 2008	25	36	24	15	*
May 9-12, 2008	29	35	21	14	1
May 2-5, 2008	26	35	25	13	1
April 25-28, 2008	29	35	23	12	1
April 18-21, 2008	29	39	20	11	1
April 11-14, 2008	25	39	20	15	1
April 4-7, 2008	25	37	23	15	*
March 28-31, 2008	29	40	19	11	1
March 20-24, 2008	30	38	19	13	*
March 14-17, 2008	29	38	23	10	*
March 7-10, 2008	28	39	18	15	*
February 29-March 3, 2008	28	40	19	13	*
February 8-11, 2008	24	35	25	16	*
February 1-4, 2008	28	39	22	11	*
January 25-28, 2008	23	35	26	16	*
January 18-21, 2008	31	33	20	15	1
January 11-14, 2008	25	38	21	16	*
January 4-7, 2008	27	38	20	15	*
December 14-17, 2007	26	32	24	18	*
December 7-10, 2007	28	37	21	14	*
November 23-26, 2007	25	37	21	16	1
November 16-19, 2007	31	37	19	12	1
November 9-12, 2007	29	38	19	13	1
November 2-5, 2007	31	35	18	15	1
October 26-29, 2007	28	37	21	13	1
October 19-22, 2007	28	37	20	15	*
October 12-15, 2007	26	36	18	19	1
October 5-8, 2007	29	33	22	16	*
September 28-October 1, 2007	30	41	18	11	*
September 21-24, 2007	32	38	17	13	*
September 14-17, 2007	31	36	18	15	0
September 7-10, 2007	32	34	20	14	*
August 30-September 2, 2007	31	34	18	16	1
August 24-27, 2007	34	36	18	12	*
August 17-20, 2007	33	34	18	15	*
August 10-13, 2007	36	37	14	13	*
August 3-6, 2007	29	40	19	12	*
July 27-30, 2007	28	36	19	16	1
July 20-23, 2007	28	34	21	16	1
July 13-16, 2007	25	41	17	16	1

## PEW.1 CONTINUED...

	Very closely	Fairly closely	Not too closely	Not at all closely	(VOL.) DK/Ref
July 6-9, 2007	36	34	18	12	*
June 29-July 2, 2007	32	35	19	13	1
June 22-25, 2007	30	36	18	15	1
June 15-18, 2007	30	37	20	13	*
June 8-11, 2007	32	38	15	14	1
June 1-4, 2007	30	36	20	13	1
May 24-27, 2007	33	36	18	12	1
May 18-21, 2007	36	34	15	14	1
May 11-14, 2007	30	34	18	17	1
May 4-7, 2007	38	37	15	10	*
April 27-30, 2007	27	35	21	16	1
April 20-23, 2007	28	35	22	15	*
April 12-16, 2007	34	33	20	13	*
April 5-9, 2007	33	39	16	11	1
March 30-April 2, 2007	34	37	16	13	*
March 23-March 26, 2007: <i>News about the current situation in Iraq</i>	31	38	18	12	1
March 16-19, 2007	34	34	17	15	*
March 9-12, 2007	34	37	16	13	*
March 2-5, 2007	37	37	16	9	1
February 23-26, 2007	36	36	15	13	*
February 16-19, 2007	30	36	19	14	1
February 9-12, 2007	37	34	18	11	*
February 2-5, 2007	38	38	17	7	*
January 26-29, 2007	36	38	15	11	*
January 19-22, 2007	37	34	18	10	1
January 12-15, 2007	38	36	17	8	1
January, 2007	46	40	8	5	1
January 5-8, 2007	40	32	16	12	0
December, 2006	42	39	12	7	*
November 30-December 3, 2006	40	36	13	11	*
Mid-November, 2006	44	38	12	6	*
September, 2006	33	43	14	8	2
August, 2006	41	39	12	7	1
June, 2006	37	43	13	6	1
May, 2006	42	35	15	7	1
April, 2006	43	36	13	7	1
March, 2006	43	38	12	6	1
February, 2006	39	42	12	6	1
January, 2006	40	40	12	7	1
December, 2005	45	38	11	5	1
Early November, 2005	41	40	13	6	*
Early October, 2005	43	36	15	6	*
Early September, 2005	32	40	20	7	1
July, 2005	43	37	13	6	1
Mid-May, 2005	42	42	11	5	*
Mid-March, 2005	40	39	14	5	2
February, 2005	38	45	13	4	*
January, 2005	48	37	11	4	*
December, 2004	34	44	15	6	1
Mid-October, 2004	42	38	11	8	1
Early September, 2004	47	37	9	6	1
August, 2004	39	42	12	6	1
July, 2004	43	40	11	6	*
June, 2004	39	42	12	6	1
April, 2004	54	33	8	5	*

**PEW.1 CONTINUED...**

	<u>Very closely</u>	<u>Fairly closely</u>	<u>Not too closely</u>	<u>Not at all closely</u>	<b>(VOL.) DK/Ref</b>
Mid-March, 2004	47	36	12	4	1
Early February, 2004	47	38	10	4	1
Mid-January, 2004	48	39	9	4	*
December, 2003	44	38	11	6	1
November, 2003	52	33	9	5	1
September, 2003	50	33	10	6	1
Mid-August, 2003	45	39	10	5	1
Early July, 2003	37	41	13	8	1
June, 2003	46	35	13	6	*
May, 2003	63	29	6	2	*
April 11-16, 2003: <i>News about the war in Iraq</i>					
	47	40	10	2	1
April 2-7, 2003	54	34	9	2	1
March 20-24, 2003	57	33	7	2	1
March 13-16, 2003: <i>Debate over the possibility that the U.S. will take military action in Iraq</i>					
	62	27	6	4	1
February, 2003	62	25	8	4	1
January, 2003	55	29	10	4	2
December, 2002	51	32	10	6	1
Late October, 2002	53	33	8	5	1
Early October, 2002	60	28	6	5	1
Early September, 2002: <i>Debate over the possibility that the U.S. will invade Iraq</i>					
	48	29	15	6	2
b. News about the current outbreak of the Ebola virus					
October 2-5, 2014	36	33	20	10	1
<b>TRENDS FOR COMPARISON:</b>					
September 25-28, 2014: <i>An outbreak of the Ebola virus in Africa</i>					
	27	35	21	17	1
August 14-17, 2014	25	33	22	19	1
July 31-August 3, 2014	26	27	19	26	2
May 15-18, 2014: <i>The lung disease called "MERS" that has spread from the Middle East</i>					
	13	23	25	38	1
December 18-21, 2009: <i>Reports about swine flu and the vaccine</i>					
	25	32	24	18	0
November 20-23, 2009	29	33	21	17	*
November 13-16, 2009	34	31	21	15	*
November 6-9, 2009	32	35	24	10	*
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: <i>Reports about swine flu and the availability of a vaccine</i>					
	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: <i>Reports about swine flu in the U.S. and elsewhere</i>					
	30	39	21	11	*
May 8-11, 2009	34	36	19	11	*
May 1-4, 2009: <i>The outbreak of swine flu in different parts of the world</i>					
	43	37	15	4	1

## PEW.1 CONTINUED...

	Very closely	Fairly closely	Not too closely	Not at all closely	(VOL.) DK/Ref
April 25-27, 2009: Reports of swine flu in Mexico and the U.S.	25	30	19	26	*
October 19-22, 2007: The growing danger of a drug-resistant staph infection in the U.S.	26	31	19	24	0
June 1-4, 2007: An Atlanta man with a dangerous form of tuberculosis who traveled to Europe against the advice of government health officials	24	34	21	19	2
March, 2006: Outbreaks of bird flu in different parts of the world	21	36	24	19	*
November, 2005: The outbreak of bird flu in Asia and Europe	22	37	25	15	1
Late October, 2005	22	33	24	20	1
January, 2004: Reports about a case of mad cow disease in Washington state	29	42	19	9	1
June, 2003: The lung disease called "SARS" that has spread from Asia	28	44	19	8	1
May, 2003	39	39	15	6	1
September, 2002: Cases of West Nile virus spread by mosquitoes	34	36	21	8	1
Early September, 2001: The spread of mad cow disease in Europe	18	34	27	20	1
March 2001: The outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease among livestock in Europe	22	33	22	22	1
January, 1998: The outbreak of an Asian flu spread by birds or chickens	19	36	25	20	*
c. News about this year's congressional elections					
October 2-5, 2014	15	22	25	39	*
September 25-28, 2014	16	23	28	32	1
September 11-14, 2014	14	23	26	36	1
July 24-27, 2014	14	19	29	38	*
June 26-29, 2014	16	23	20	41	1
June 5-8, 2014	14	23	23	38	1
May 15-18, 2014	13	24	25	38	1
March 20-23, 2014	15	22	22	39	1
<b>TRENDS FOR COMPARISON:</b>					
October 28-November 1, 2010	29	30	17	23	1
October 27-30, 2010: News about candidates and election campaigns in your state and district	27	35	17	20	1
October 21-24, 2010: News about this year's congressional elections	30	28	18	23	1
October 13-18, 2010: News about candidates and election campaigns in your state and district	24	34	22	19	1
October 14-17, 2010: News about this year's congressional elections	33	25	19	23	*
October 7-10, 2010	23	27	19	30	1
September 30-October 3, 2010	25	34	19	21	1
September 23-26, 2010	25	33	23	18	1
September 16-19, 2010	23	26	23	27	1
September 9-12, 2010	22	23	21	34	1
September 2-6, 2010	26	24	23	26	1

## PEW.1 CONTINUED...

	Very closely	Fairly closely	Not too closely	Not at all closely	(VOL.) DK/Ref
August 26-29, 2010	20	27	23	28	1
August 19-22, 2010	19	23	24	33	1
August 12-15, 2010	20	22	19	38	1
July 29-August 1, 2010	29	34	22	14	*
July 15-18, 2010	17	23	26	33	1
June 16-20, 2010: <i>News about candidates and election campaigns in your state and district</i>	15	33	31	20	*
June 10-13, 2010: <i>News about this year's congressional elections</i>	20	29	24	27	1
Early October, 2006	21	38	25	15	1
Early September, 2006	16	32	28	23	1
August, 2006	20	29	28	22	1
June, 2006	18	30	29	21	2
May, 2006	18	28	30	23	1
Early November, 2002 (RVs)	27	46	18	9	*
Late October, 2002 (RVs)	28	34	24	13	1
Early October, 2002 (RVs)	21	46	22	10	1
Early September, 2002	17	29	29	24	1
Late October, 1998 (RVs)	26	45	20	9	*
Early October, 1998 (RVs)	21	43	24	11	1
Early September, 1998	17	32	28	23	*
Early August, 1998	13	30	28	23	1
June, 1998	9	27	33	30	1
April, 1998 <sup>1</sup>	16	33	24	27	*
November, 1994	18	42	25	15	*
Late October, 1994	14	38	31	16	1
Early October, 1994	23	34	23	19	1
September, 1994	19	34	29	18	*
November, 1990	38	34	17	11	*
October, 1990	18	32	28	22	*
d. Political protests in Hong Kong					
October 2-5, 2014	7	16	28	48	1
<b>TREND FOR COMPARISON:</b>					
August, 1997: <i>The reunification of Hong     Kong and China</i>	14	34	23	28	1
e. Problems with White House security and the resignation of the Secret Service director					
October 2-5, 2014	21	24	25	29	1
<b>TRENDS FOR COMPARISON:</b>					
April 26-29, 2012: <i>Secret Service agents     allegedly hiring prostitutes while on     assignment in Colombia</i>	17	24	25	33	1
April 19-22, 2012	23	28	23	24	1

<sup>1</sup> In April 1998, September 1994 and October 1990, story was listed as "Candidates and election campaigns in your state." In November 1990, story was listed as "Candidates and elections in your state."

**QUESTIONS PEW.2-PEW.3 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED**

On a different subject ...

**ASK ALL:**

PEW.4 Do you think recent problems with the Secret Service are -- **[READ; RANDOMIZE]**?

Oct 2-5

2014

- 42 Mainly isolated incidents [OR]
- 43 Signs of broader problems with the agency
- 15 Don't know/Refused **(VOL.)**

**ASK ALL:**

PEW.5 Looking ahead, how much confidence do you have in the Secret Service to improve the job it does providing security -- **[READ IN ORDER]**?

Oct 2-5

2014

- 19 A great deal of confidence
- 50 A fair amount of confidence
- 21 Not too much confidence [OR]
- 8 No confidence at all
- 3 Don't know/Refused **(VOL.)**

**ASK ALL:**

PARTY In politics TODAY, do you consider yourself a Republican, Democrat, or independent?

**ASK IF INDEP/NO PREF/OTHER/DK/REF (PARTY=3,4,5,9):**

PARTYLN As of today do you lean more to the Republican Party or more to the Democratic Party?

				(VOL.)	(VOL.)	(VOL.)	Lean	Lean
	<u>Republican</u>	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Independent</u>	No	Other	<u>DK/Ref</u>	<u>Rep</u>	<u>Dem</u>
				preference	party			
October 2-5, 2014	22	30	37	6	1	4	14	13