

## Most Republicans See “Too Much” Coverage Wide Racial, Partisan Gaps in Reactions to Trayvon Martin Coverage

The Trayvon Martin shooting is the public’s top story for the second consecutive week. But interest in the teenager’s death is deeply divided along partisan, as well as racial, lines. These differences also are apparent in reactions to news coverage of the incident: Far more Republicans (56%) than Democrats (25%) say there has been too much coverage of Martin’s death.

The latest weekly News Interest Index survey, conducted March 29-April 1 among 1,000 adults, finds that 30% say they followed Martin’s death more closely than any other story, little changed from a week ago (25%). The Supreme Court hearings on the 2010 health care law are a distant second; 15% say they followed the Court hearings most closely.

A separate analysis by the Pew Research Center’s Project for Excellence in Journalism (PEJ) found that the Court’s health care hearings accounted for 19% of news coverage. Slightly less coverage (18% of the newshole) was devoted to news about Trayvon Martin.

[As was the case last week](#), African Americans are far more likely than whites to say they are closely tracking news about the Florida teenager’s death. Fully 58% cite news about Trayvon Martin’s killing as their top story, compared with 24% of whites. Moreover, 43% of whites say the story has received too much coverage, compared with just 16% of blacks.

Democrats, regardless of race, are following Martin’s death more closely than are Republicans. Nearly four-in-ten Democrats (38%), including 31% of white Democrats, say the killing of Trayvon Martin is their top story; just 19% of Republicans are following this story most closely. More than half of Republicans (56%) say the story has been overcovered, compared with 25% of Democrats, including 33% of white Democrats.

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### Coverage of Teen’s Death Divides Public

<i>Following Trayvon Martin death most closely</i>	<b>Mar 29- Apr 1</b> %
Total	30
White	24
Black	58
Republican	19
Democrat	38
White Democrat	31
Independent	28
<i>% saying <u>too much</u> coverage of Martin’s death ...</i>	
Total	37
White	43
Black	16
Republican	56
Democrat	25
White Democrat	33
Independent	37

PEW RESEARCH CENTER  
Mar. 29-Apr. 1, 2012. Whites and  
blacks are non-Hispanic.

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## Too Much Coverage?

Overall, 37% of the public say that news organizations are giving too much coverage to Martin's death; about as many (40%) say the coverage has been about right. Just 14% say the story has gotten too little coverage.

About four-in-ten (39%) say that news about the 2012 presidential candidates have gotten too much coverage; 45% say the amount of coverage has been appropriate. One-in-ten (10%) say the campaign has gotten too little coverage. These opinions have changed little since January, when 36% said there was too much campaign news coverage.

Just 9% say that the Supreme Court hearings on the health care law have received too much coverage. Nearly half (48%) say that the hearings have drawn the right amount of coverage, while 34% say that news organizations have devoted too little coverage to this story.

In contrast to views of coverage of Martin's death, Republicans and Democrats have similar opinions about the amount of coverage of both the health care hearings and the 2012 campaign. About half of Republicans and Democrats say the Court health care hearings have gotten the right amount of coverage (52% each); 44% of independents say the amount of coverage has been appropriate.

Nearly six-in-ten Republicans (57%) and 51% of Democrats say there has been about the right amount of campaign coverage. Independents (38%) are less likely to say this; about as many independents (43%) say there has been too much coverage of the 2012 candidates.

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### Few See Martin's Death, 2012 Election as Undercovered

<i>Amount of press coverage...</i>	<b>Too much</b> %	<b>About right</b> %	<b>Too little</b> %	<b>DK</b> %
2012 presidential election	39	45	10	6=100
Death of Trayvon Martin	37	40	14	9=100
SC hearings about health care law	9	48	34	9=100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Mar. 29-Apr. 1, 2012. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

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## The Week's News

No story captured the public's attention last week nearly as much as the death of Trayvon Martin, which was the most closely followed story for the second straight week (30%). That was followed by a trio of topics—Supreme Court hearings about the 2010 health care law, 2012 election news and the economy—that divided the public's attention roughly equally.

Overall, 15% of the public followed the Supreme Court hearings about the 2010 health care law most closely. About three-in-ten (29%) say they followed this story very closely.

The hearings accounted for 19% of news coverage, according to a separate analysis by PEJ. The broader debate over health care, which includes the hearings, was PEJ's top story of last week, making up 21% of the newshole.

The 2012 presidential elections was the top story for 14% of the public; 23% followed this story very closely. Election news comprised 10% of last week's news coverage, according to PEJ. The economy was the top story for 13% of the public, but far more—34%—followed this topic very closely. Just 6% of news coverage was devoted to the economy.

The public and the press paid far less attention to two other stories, the NCAA basketball tournament and Pope Benedict's visit to Cuba and Mexico.

College basketball's March Madness was the top story for 8% of the public, and 13% followed this very closely. Men and women differed in attentiveness to the NCAA: The tournament was the top news story for 11% of men, but just 5% of women. The basketball tournament garnered only 1% of news coverage.

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### News Interest Vs. News Coverage

	News Interest	News Coverage
Trayvon Martin	30	18
SC health law hearings	15	19
2012 elections	14	10
Economy	13	6
NCAA basketball	8	1
Pope visits Cuba, Mexico	1	1

News interest shows the percentage of people who say they followed this story most closely, Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, Mar. 29-Apr. 1, 2012. News coverage shows the percentage of news coverage devoted to each story, Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism, Mar. 26-Apr. 1, 2012.

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The pope's travels were the top story for 1% of the public, and 5% followed his visits to Mexico and Cuba very closely. Just 1% of the newshole was devoted to this story.

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## News Interest

*% following each story very closely*

*Which one story did you follow most closely?*



PEW RESEARCH CENTER. Mar. 29-Apr. 1, 2012.

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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 March 26-April 1, and survey data measuring public interest in the top news stories of the week were collected March 29-April 1, 2012, from a nationally representative sample of 1,000 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. (For more information about the Project for Excellence in Journalism's News Coverage Index, go to [www.journalism.org](http://www.journalism.org).) The News Interest Index survey collects data from Thursday through Sunday to gauge public interest in the most covered stories of the week.

Results for this survey are based on telephone interviews conducted March 29-April 1, 2012, among a national sample of 1,000 adults 18 years of age or older living in the continental United States (599 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 401 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 180 who had no landline telephone). The survey was conducted by interviewers 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. 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.

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 March 2011 Census Bureau's Current Population Survey and population density to parameters from the Decennial Census. The sample is also weighted to match current patterns of telephone status based on extrapolations from the 2011 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 within the landline sample. Sampling errors and statistical tests of significance take into account the effect of weighting. The following table shows the 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>Sample Size</b>	<b>Plus or minus ...</b>
Total sample	1,000	4.0 percentage points
Non-Hispanic White	732	4.5 percentage points
Non-Hispanic Black	109	11.0 percentage points
Republicans	239	7.5 percentage points
Democrats	334	6.5 percentage points
Independents	340	6.5 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**  
**March 29-April 1, 2012 NEWS INTEREST INDEX**  
**FINAL TOPLINE**  
**N=1,000**

**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. Reports about the condition of the U.S. economy					
March 29-April 1, 2012	34	33	15	18	1
March 22-25, 2012	36	29	16	18	1
March 15-18, 2012	40	35	11	14	1
March 8-11, 2012	37	32	14	17	*
March 1-4, 2012	41	27	15	17	1
February 23-26, 2012	37	33	14	15	1
February 16-20, 2012	33	32	16	17	1
February 9-12, 2012	42	30	14	13	1
February 2-5, 2012	38	32	16	13	1
January 26-29, 2012	35	31	16	19	*
January 19-22, 2012	35	30	16	19	1
January 12-15, 2012	33	32	14	20	1
January 5-8, 2012	39	31	15	15	*
December 15-18, 2011	36	32	14	16	1
December 8-11, 2011	41	29	13	16	1
December 1-4, 2011	40	33	13	13	1
November 17-20, 2011	35	33	16	15	1
November 10-13, 2011	39	31	15	14	*
November 3-6, 2011	37	31	15	17	1
October 27-30, 2011	38	33	14	15	1
October 20-23, 2011	38	32	14	16	1
October 13-16, 2011	39	32	14	14	*
October 6-9, 2011	43	28	14	14	1
September 29-October 2, 2011	46	26	14	14	*
September 22-25, 2011	44	33	11	11	*
September 8-11, 2011	40	30	15	14	1
September 1-4, 2011	44	30	11	15	*
August 25-28, 2011	44	28	14	13	1
August 18-21, 2011	44	29	12	14	1
August 4-7, 2011	46	30	11	13	1
July 28-31, 2011	43	30	13	13	*
July 21-24, 2011	41	32	13	13	1
July 14-17, 2011	41	30	14	14	1
July 7-10, 2011	36	30	15	18	1
June 30-July 3, 2011	38	32	13	16	1
June 23-26, 2011	37	29	15	19	*
June 16-19, 2011	39	33	14	13	*
June 9-12, 2011	39	30	15	16	1
June 2-5, 2011	35	34	17	14	*
May 19-22, 2011	33	34	17	16	*
May 12-15, 2011	32	32	17	18	2
May 5-8, 2011	40	35	15	9	1
April 21-25, 2011	41	33	12	14	*
April 14-17, 2011	44	30	14	12	1
April 7-10, 2011	46	30	14	10	*
March 31-April 3, 2011	42	31	16	11	0
March 24-27, 2011	36	32	17	15	*

**PEW.1 CONTINUED...**

	Very <u>closely</u>	Fairly <u>closely</u>	Not too <u>closely</u>	Not at all <u>closely</u>	<b>(VOL.)</b> <u>DK/Ref</u>
March 17-20, 2011	38	32	17	13	*
March 10-13, 2011	40	30	16	13	*
March 3-6, 2011	37	31	17	13	1
February 24-27, 2011	49	29	11	10	*
February 17-20, 2011	35	33	14	17	*
February 10-13, 2011	36	34	13	16	*
February 3-6, 2011	35	37	14	14	*
January 20-23, 2011	37	33	14	15	1
January 13-16, 2011	37	29	15	18	1
January 6-9, 2011	39	37	11	12	1
<a href="http://www.people-press.org/files/2011/11/NII-Economy-Trends.pdf">SEE TRENDS FOR PREVIOUS YEARS:</a> <a href="http://www.people-press.org/files/2011/11/NII-Economy-Trends.pdf">http://www.people-press.org/files/2011/11/NII-Economy-Trends.pdf</a>					
b. Pope Benedict's visit to Cuba and Mexico					
March 29-April 1, 2012	5	15	23	57	*
<b>TRENDS FOR COMPARISON:</b>					
September 16-19, 2010: <i>Pope Benedict's visit to Great Britain and his comments on the Catholic Church's handling of sex-abuse scandals</i>	10	16	26	47	1
April 18-21, 2008: <i>Pope Benedict XVI's visit to the U.S.</i>	13	32	27	27	1
c. Supreme Court hearings about the 2010 health care reform law					
March 29-April 1, 2012	29	27	17	27	*
<b>TRENDS FOR COMPARISON:</b>					
November 17-20, 2011: <i>The U.S. Supreme Court agreeing to hear legal challenges to last year's health care reform law</i>	18	24	24	33	1
February 3-6, 2011: <i>A federal judge ruling that part of the new health care law is unconstitutional</i>	25	28	19	28	1
January 20-23, 2011: <i>News about Republican efforts to repeal last year's health care law</i>	29	29	20	21	1
December 16-19, 2010: <i>A federal judge ruling that parts of the new health care law are unconstitutional</i>	28	24	17	30	1
September 23-26, 2010: <i>News about portions of this year's health care reform law beginning to take effect</i>	37	31	17	14	1
d. Controversy over the shooting death of Trayvon Martin, an African American teen in Florida					
March 29-April 1, 2012	30	35	15	20	*
March 22-25, 2012	35	24	15	26	1
<b>TRENDS FOR COMPARISON:</b>					
July 31-August 3, 2009: <i>Reports about the arrest of Harvard professor Henry Louis Gates and President Obama's response to the incident</i>	25	26	22	25	2
July 24-27, 2009: <i>The arrest of Henry Louis Gates, a black Harvard professor, at his home after a dispute with a police officer</i>	30	31	17	21	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>
April 25-28, 2008: <i>The acquittal of three New York City police officers in the shooting of an unarmed man on his wedding day</i>	13	24	24	38	1
September 21-24, 2007: <i>Demonstrations in Jena, Louisiana, about six black teenagers involved in a schoolyard fight</i>	18	27	25	30	*
April 2001: <i>Rioting in Cincinnati after an unarmed black man was shot by police</i>	24	32	23	20	1
July 2000: <i>The video showing Philadelphia police kicking and beating a carjacking suspect</i>	22	32	22	23	1
March 2000: <i>The acquittal of four New York policemen who shot and killed Amadou Diallo, an African immigrant</i>	28	35	20	17	0
February 1999: <i>The Texas murder trial of a man accused of dragging a black man behind a pickup truck</i>	24	41	20	14	1
May 1993: <i>The Rodney King trial and verdict in Los Angeles</i>	47	34	13	6	*
May 1992: <i>The verdict in the Rodney King case and the riots and disturbances that followed</i>	70	22	5	2	1
March 1991: <i>The videotaped beating by Los Angeles police of a suspect they apprehended in an auto chase</i>	46	30	13	10	1
e. The NCAA basketball tournament					
March 29-April 1, 2012	13	12	18	57	*
March 31-April 3, 2011	13	13	17	57	*
April 1-5, 2010	18	13	13	56	*
April 3-6, 2009	15	12	15	58	*
March 28-31, 2008	13	14	13	59	1
March, 1998	20	13	19	47	1
April, 1990	24	16	14	46	*
f. News about candidates for the 2012 presidential elections					
March 29-April 1, 2012	23	29	21	27	*
March 22-25, 2012	28	28	18	25	1
March 15-18, 2012	28	31	17	24	*
March 8-11, 2012	28	27	21	23	*
March 1-4, 2012	31	24	20	24	1
February 23-26, 2012	28	29	18	24	1
February 16-20, 2012	25	29	19	25	2
February 9-12, 2012	35	25	18	20	1
February 2-5, 2012	30	27	20	21	1
January 26-29, 2012	28	30	21	21	1
January 19-22, 2012	28	30	17	24	*
January 12-15, 2012	29	29	18	23	1
January 5-8, 2012	29	30	16	25	*
December 15-18, 2011	26	24	20	29	1
December 8-11, 2011	27	27	18	28	*
December 1-4, 2011	25	28	20	26	1
November 17-20, 2011	24	31	21	23	1
November 3-6, 2011	22	31	20	26	1
October 27-30, 2011	21	26	21	30	1
October 20-23, 2011	21	28	22	28	1
October 13-16, 2011	26	29	22	23	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.) DK/Ref</b>
October 6-9, 2011	25	25	23	27	1
September 29-October 2, 2011	27	26	21	25	*
September 22-25, 2011	25	26	23	25	1
September 15-18, 2011	24	28	21	27	1
September 8-11, 2011	22	26	21	31	*
September 1-4, 2011	22	23	22	32	1
August 25-28, 2011	22	22	22	33	1
August 18-21, 2011	27	26	19	28	1
August 11-14, 2011	19	24	20	36	1
August 4-7, 2011	18	21	22	37	1
July 28-31, 2011	17	27	21	35	1
July 21-24, 2011	17	22	28	32	*
July 14-17, 2011	18	26	27	28	1
July 7-10, 2011	16	23	27	33	1
June 30-July 3, 2011	21	28	24	25	2
June 23-26, 2011	19	26	24	31	*
June 16-19, 2011	23	29	23	25	*
June 9-12, 2011	18	30	22	30	1
June 2-5, 2011	21	31	22	26	*
May 26-29, 2011	20	27	24	28	*
May 19-22, 2011	15	27	24	32	1
May 12-15, 2011	15	22	26	35	1
May 5-8, 2011	16	24	27	32	1
April 21-25, 2011	18	26	23	32	1
April 14-17, 2011	20	23	29	27	1
March 24-27, 2011	13	19	26	41	1
March 10-13, 2011	15	21	26	38	0
February 10-13, 2011	16	19	24	40	*
February 3-6, 2011	15	20	23	42	*

[SEE TRENDS FOR PREVIOUS YEARS:](http://www.people-press.org/files/2011/11/NII-Election-Trends.pdf) <http://www.people-press.org/files/2011/11/NII-Election-Trends.pdf>

**ASK ALL:**

PEW.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.]**

Mar 29-Apr 1

2012

30	Controversy over the shooting death of Trayvon Martin, an African American teen in Florida
15	Supreme Court hearings about the 2010 health care reform law
14	News about candidates for the 2012 presidential elections
13	Reports about the condition of the U.S. economy
8	The NCAA basketball tournament
1	Pope Benedict's visit to Cuba and Mexico
5	Some other story <b>(VOL.)</b>
14	Don't know/Refused <b>(VOL.)</b>

**ASK ALL:**

PEW.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? **[READ AND RANDOMIZE]**

	<u>Too much</u>	<u>Too little</u>	<u>Right amount</u>	<b>(VOL.)</b> <u>DK/Ref</u>
a. Supreme Court hearings about the health reform law				
March 29-April 1, 2012	9	34	48	9
<b>TRENDS FOR COMPARISON:</b>				
April 1-5, 2010: <i>News about the new health care reform law</i>	17	30	46	7
March 12-15, 2010: <i>Debate over health care reform</i>	14	36	46	4
January 22-25, 2010	11	38	47	3
October 16-19, 2009	16	36	46	2
October 2-5, 2009	21	35	40	4
July 17-20, 2009: <i>Debate in Washington over health care reform</i>	6	45	44	6
b. The 2012 presidential elections				
March 29-April 1, 2012	39	10	45	6
January 12-15, 2012: <i>News about candidates for the 2012 elections</i>	36	16	36	11
January 5-8, 2012	37	16	39	8
September 8-11, 2011: <i>Possible candidates for the 2012 presidential elections</i>	25	20	44	12
June 30-July 3, 2011	29	16	41	14
April 21-25, 2011	22	31	39	8
February 10-13, 2011	20	29	40	12
<b>TRENDS FOR COMPARISON:</b>				
<b>2008 Election</b>				
June 20-23, 2008: <i>News about candidates for the 2008 presidential election</i>	44	10	44	2
April 25-28, 2008	51	7	38	4
January 25-28, 2008	36	9	52	3
January 18-21, 2008	33	11	51	5
January 11-14, 2008: <i>The campaign</i>	40	11	44	5
January 4-7, 2008	40	11	43	6
December 14-17, 2007: <i>News about candidates for the 2008 presidential election</i>	32	16	48	4
November 16-19, 2007	32	13	51	4
July 20-23, 2007	32	18	43	7
June 1-4, 2007	33	12	47	8
<b>2004 Election</b>				
February, 2004: <i>The 2004 presidential campaign</i>	28	8	61	3
October, 2003	23	17	51	9
April, 2003: <i>The race for the Democratic presidential nomination</i>	15	38	38	9
<b>2000 Election</b>				
June, 2000: <i>The 2000 presidential campaign</i>	19	16	60	5
March, 2000	25	10	61	4
February, 2000	22	10	63	5
September, 1999	28	14	49	9
July, 1999	18	13	59	10
<b>1996 Election</b>				
March, 1996: <i>The 1996 presidential campaign</i>	29	10	58	3
October, 1995	18	18	60	4
<b>1992 Election</b>				
September, 1992: <i>The 1992 presidential campaign</i>	22	11	62	5
February, 1992	19	15	62	4
October, 1991	12	22	58	8
<b>1988 Election</b>				
May, 1988: <i>The 1988 presidential campaign</i>	24	7	62	7
November, 1987	21	16	58	5

**PEW.3 CONTINUED...**

- c. The killing of Trayvon Martin  
March 29-April 1, 2012

**TREND FOR COMPARISON:**

April 25-28, 2008: *The acquittal of three New York city police officers in the shooting of an unarmed man on his wedding day*

	<u>Too much</u>	<u>Too little</u>	<u>Right amount</u>	<b>(VOL.)</b> <u>DK/Ref</u>
	37	14	40	9
	14	32	41	1

**NO PEW.4-PEW.9****PEWWP.1a-b PREVIOUSLY RELEASED****PEW.10-PEW.14 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE**