



THE PEW RESEARCH CENTER
For The People & The Press

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Parents Shield Young Children from News Coverage

Public Divided over What Newtown Signifies

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Parents Shield Young Children from News Coverage

Public Divided over What Newtown Signifies

The shootings at an elementary school in Newtown, Conn. on Friday have drawn widespread public interest. A weekend survey finds that 57% of Americans say they followed news about the tragedy there very closely. That is higher than interest in the shootings at an Aurora, Colo. movie theater in July (49% very closely), though not as great as interest in the Columbine shootings in 1999 (68%).

The survey by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, conducted Dec. 14-16 among 746 adults, finds the public is evenly divided over whether the Newtown shootings reflect broader problems in Americans society (47%) or are just the acts of troubled individuals (44%).

By contrast, clear majorities said that both the Aurora shootings, as well as the shootings in

Tucson, Ariz. in Jan. 2011, were just the isolated acts of troubled individuals; 67% said that after the Aurora shootings at a movie theater and 58% said that after the Tucson shootings, which killed six and left former Rep. Gabrielle Giffords seriously wounded. Opinions today are comparable to reactions to the shootings on the campus of Virginia Tech University in April 2007.

Most parents are talking with their children about the massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary School, according to a separate survey of more than 750 adults with children at home, conducted Dec. 14-17, using Google Consumer Surveys. About half (53%) of all the parents who participated in the survey, including 71% of those with younger children, say they are restricting how much news coverage of the tragedy their children watch.

Public Divided over Whether Shootings Reflect Broader Societal Problems or Not

	Apr 2007 VA Tech shooting	Jan 2011 Tucson, AZ shooting	July 2012 Aurora, CO shooting	Dec 2012 Newtown shooting
<i>Shootings like this one ...</i>	%	%	%	%
Reflect broader problems in society	46	31	24	47
Are just isolated acts of troubled individuals	47	58	67	44
Don't know	<u>7</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>
	100	100	100	100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Dec. 13-16, 2012.
Question asked Dec. 14-16 only, N=746.
Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

Isolated Acts or Indicative of Broader Problems?

Women, by 54% to 37%, say that Friday's shootings at the elementary school reflect broader problems in American society. Men express the opposite view: 51% say that shootings like this are just the isolated acts of troubled individuals.

College graduates (54%) are more likely than those with no more than a high school education (42%) to say that the massacre reflects broader societal problems.

There also are partisan differences in reactions to the tragedy: Democrats, by 54% to 39%, say the shootings reflect broader societal problems. Republicans are divided, with 49% saying such incidents are the acts of troubled individuals, while 45% say they reflect broader problems.

People who have followed news about the shootings very closely are more likely than those who have not to say that they represent broader problems in society (51% vs. 40%).

More Women Say Shootings Reflect Societal Problems

	Reflect societal problems	Isolated acts of individuals	DK
	%	%	%
Total	47	44	9=100
Men	39	51	9=100
Women	54	37	9=100
18-29	40	51	9=100
30-49	49	44	8=100
50-64	49	42	9=100
65+	47	41	11=100
College grad+	54	37	9=100
Some college	47	45	8=100
HS or less	42	48	10=100
Republican	45	49	6=100
Democrat	54	39	6=100
Independent	41	48	12=100
<i>Following news</i>			
Very closely	51	41	8=100
Less closely	40	49	11=100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Dec. 13-16, 2012.
Question asked Dec. 14-16 only, N=746.
Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

How Parents Are Coping

A separate survey of more than 750 internet users with school-age children in the household, conducted Dec. 14-17, 2012 using Google Consumer Surveys finds that most are talking with their children about Friday's shootings. Fully 62% of those with school age children have talked with their children about the shootings either a lot (20%) or some (42%), while 23% have not discussed the events with their children at all.

About half (53%) of parents say they have restricted how much coverage of the shootings their children watch. In a 2007 telephone survey, which was conducted shortly after the Virginia Tech shootings, 40% said they were restricting how much coverage their children watched.

Parents of elementary school-age children are discussing the recent events with their children far less than parents of older children. Only about half (48%) of parents with elementary school-age children have talked about the shootings with their children at least some, compared with 72% of parents only with children in 6th-12th grade.

Fully 71% of parents with children in elementary school are trying to restrict how much coverage of the events their children watch, compared with only 36% of parents with older children. Six-in-ten parents (60%) with both elementary school-age and older children are restricting how much coverage their children watch.

How Much are Parents Discussing Shootings with Children?

	April 2007	Dec 2012
<i>Talked with children about shootings ...</i>	%	%
A lot	19	20
Some	39	42
Not much	17	16
Not at all	24	23
Don't know	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>
	100	100
<i>Trying to restrict how much coverage children watch?</i>		
Yes	40	53
No	58	47
Don't know	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>
	100	100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Dec. 14-17, 2012. Results from Google Consumer Surveys. Based on adult internet users who live with school-age children. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

Shielding Children from Coverage of the Tragedy

	Parents with children in...		
	K-5 th grade	6 th -12 th grade	Both
<i>Talked about shootings with children...</i>	%	%	%
A lot	23	21	13
Some	25	51	45
Not much	20	13	18
Not at all	<u>32</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>23</u>
	100	100	100
N	261	357	179
<i>Restricting how much coverage children watch?</i>			
Yes	71	36	60
No	<u>29</u>	<u>64</u>	<u>40</u>
	100	100	100
N	284	318	160

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Dec. 14-17, 2012. Results from Google Consumer Surveys. Based on adult internet users who live with school-age children. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

High News Interest in Newtown Shootings

Nearly six-in-ten (57%) say they followed news about the Newtown shooting very closely, making it by far the public's top story last week. News interest in the Newtown shooting is higher than for other recent gun tragedies, including shootings in Aurora, Colo. (41% very closely), Tucson, Ariz. (49% very closely), and Virginia Tech (45% very closely). In April 1999, somewhat more followed news about shootings at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colo. very closely (68%).

News Interest in Recent Large-Scale Shootings

	<i>% following news very closely</i>
Dec 2012: Newtown, CT	57
July 2012: Aurora, CO	41
Jan 2011: Tucson, AZ	49
April 2007: Virginia Tech	45
April 1999: Littleton, CO	68

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Dec. 14-16, 2012.

About the Surveys

Much of the analysis in this report is based on telephone interviews conducted December 13-16, 2012, among a national sample of 1,006 adults 18 years of age or older living in the continental United States (601 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 405 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 191 who had no landline telephone). Questions about the shooting at an elementary school in Connecticut were added on Friday and were answered by a smaller number of respondents (see table below.) 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. 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 March 2011 Census Bureau's Current Population 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 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 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:

Group	Unweighted sample size	Plus or minus ...
Total sample	1,006	3.7 percentage points
Asked about CT shooting news interest (PEW.1c1)	752	4.3 percentage points
Asked about meaning of CT shooting (PEW.A)	746	4.3 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.

Some of the analysis in this report is based on survey data collected by Google among a sample of internet users. The survey questions were asked December 14-17, 2012 among a sample of about 800 adults with school age children using Google Consumer Surveys. The Google Consumer Surveys method has the ability to capture reactions from a broadly representative, though non-probability, sample of internet users in a relatively short period of time. Internet users are sampled by selecting a stratified sample of people visiting the websites of a diverse group of about 100 publishers that allow Google to ask one or two questions of visitors to their site. This sampling procedure is different from other internet surveys that rely on people who “opt-in” to participate or that randomly survey respondents who have agreed to be part of a pre-recruited online panel.

The data are weighted to match national parameters for internet users on age, gender and region or state; these demographic characteristics are inferred based on the types of websites the users visit as recorded in their DoubleClick advertising cookie and their computer's internet address. Because the final sample is not a probability sample of all internet users, it cannot be assigned a margin of sampling error.

Because only two questions can be asked of any individual respondent, these questions were asked as two separate surveys. For each survey, adults with school age children in the household were first identified using a screening question and then were asked the question about the Connecticut shootings. The response rate for the initial question screening for parents was 26-28% and the response rate to the follow-up question was 59-62% among the adults with children identified in the screener. There are limited demographic variables (only inferred age, gender, location and income) available for analysis than from traditional survey questionnaires. More on the Google Consumer Survey Methodology is available [here](#).

Question wording and full results are available in the topline, including links to the surveys on the Google Consumer Surveys site.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER
December 13-16, 2012, OMNIBUS
FINAL TOPLINE
N=1,006

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>	(VOL.) DK/Ref
a. Disputes in Michigan about a law that puts new limits on labor unions					
December 13-16, 2012	16	18	18	47	1
TREND FOR COMPARISON:					
March 10-13, 2011 <i>Disputes in Wisconsin and other states between state governments and public employee unions</i>	30	26	18	25	1
March 3-6, 2011	29	24	19	27	1
February 24-27, 2011	36	22	15	26	1
b. Political violence in Syria					
December 13-16, 2012	14	26	26	33	1
December 6-9, 2012	19	28	23	29	1
November 29-December 2, 2012	15	23	23	39	1
August 16-19, 2012	12	24	26	37	2
July 19-22, 2012	17	24	23	36	1
June 28-July 1, 2012	13	19	26	42	*
June 14-17, 2012	15	24	21	40	1
May 31-June 3, 2012	12	25	25	37	1
TRENDS FOR COMPARISON:					
April 12-15, 2012: <i>International efforts to stop political violence in Syria</i>	14	23	25	37	1
April 5-8, 2012	15	21	27	37	1
March 15-28, 2012: <i>Political violence in Syria</i>	16	26	27	30	1
March 8-11, 2012	17	23	23	37	1
February 23-26, 2012	18	24	21	35	1
February 9-12, 2012	17	23	23	36	*
January 12-15, 2012	12	17	26	45	1
August 4-7, 2011: <i>Political violence following uprisings in Syria</i>	10	19	26	44	1
May 5-8, 2011	14	27	30	28	1
June 2-5, 2011: <i>Anti-government protests and violence in some Middle Eastern countries</i>	18	25	25	32	*
April 28-May 1, 2011	18	29	25	27	1
February 3-6, 2011: <i>Anti-government protests in Egypt and other Middle Eastern countries</i>	32	35	16	18	*
January 27-30, 2011	17	26	21	35	*

PEW.1 CONTINUED...

	<u>Very closely</u>	<u>Fairly closely</u>	<u>Not too closely</u>	<u>Not at all closely</u>	(VOL.) <u>DK/Ref</u>
c.1 A deadly shooting at an elementary school in Connecticut ¹					
December 14-16, 2012	57	26	10	5	2
c.2 The shooting at a shopping mall near Portland, Oregon					
December 13, 2012	19	28	33	20	1
TRENDS FOR COMPARISON:					
August 9-12, 2012: <i>A deadly shooting at a Sikh temple in Wisconsin</i>	20	31	23	25	1
July 26-29, 2012: <i>The shooting at a movie theater near Denver, Colorado</i>	41	33	16	9	1
July 20-22, 2012	48	25	15	11	1
April 5-8, 2012: <i>A shooting at a small college in Oakland, California, that killed seven people</i>	21	28	25	25	2
March 1-4, 2012: <i>A deadly school shooting near Cleveland</i>	26	31	22	19	1
December 8-11, 2011: <i>Deadly shootings at Virginia Tech University</i>	20	27	29	24	1
August 7-10, 2011: <i>A shooting at a fitness club in Pennsylvania</i>	13	28	25	34	1
June 12-15, 2009: <i>A deadly shooting at the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C.</i>	26	34	17	23	*
January 13-16, 2011: <i>News about a Congresswoman and others shot in Tucson, Arizona</i>	49	28	12	11	1
April 3-6, 2009: <i>A shooter killing several people at an immigration services center in Binghamton, New York</i>	26	32	19	23	*
March 13-16, 2009: <i>A shooting spree in Alabama that resulted in the death of 11 people</i>	18	33	24	25	*
February 15-18, 2008: <i>The shootings at Northern Illinois University that resulted in the death of 7 people</i>	26	40	19	15	0
February 8-11, 2008: <i>A shooting at a city council meeting in Missouri where six people were killed</i>	13	28	25	33	1
December 14-17, 2007: <i>Shootings at two religious centers in Colorado</i>	17	31	24	27	1
December 7-10, 2007: <i>A shooting at a shopping mall in Omaha, Nebraska where eight people were killed</i>	30	36	18	15	1
October 12-15, 2007: <i>The shooting at a high school in Cleveland, Ohio</i>	22	32	25	20	1
April 20-23, 2007: <i>The shootings at Virginia Tech University that resulted in the death of 33 people</i>	45	37	13	5	*
October, 2006: <i>Recent shootings at schools in Pennsylvania and other states</i>	46	33	12	8	1
March, 2000: <i>The shooting of a 6-year-old girl at a Michigan school</i>	40	38	15	7	*
September, 1999: <i>The shootings in a Jewish community center in Los Angeles</i>	29	34	22	14	1

¹ The item about the Connecticut shooting was asked Friday, Dec. 14, through Sunday, Dec. 16, 2012 (N=752). The item about the Portland shooting was asked only on Thursday, Dec. 13, 2012 (N=254).

PEW.1 CONTINUED...

	<u>Very closely</u>	<u>Fairly closely</u>	<u>Not too closely</u>	<u>Not at all closely</u>	(VOL.) <u>DK/Ref</u>
Late April, 1999: <i>The shooting of students and teachers by two students at a Colorado high school</i>	68	24	6	2	*
June, 1998: <i>The shooting at a high school in Springfield, Oregon</i>	46	36	14	4	*
March, 1998: <i>The shooting at a middle school in Jonesboro, Arkansas</i>	49	33	12	5	1
d. The debate in Washington over automatic spending cuts and tax increases that would take effect in January unless the President and Congress act					
December 13-16, 2012	37	28	16	18	1
December 6-9, 2012	37	26	17	20	1
November 29-December 2, 2012	40	26	14	20	1
November 15-18, 2012	33	24	16	25	1
November 8-11, 2012	38	20	20	20	*
July 19-22, 2012	23	21	22	33	1
TRENDS FOR COMPARISON:					
February 16-20, 2012: <i>Congress passing a bill to extend payroll tax cuts and unemployment benefits²</i>	24	27	21	27	1
August 4-7, 2011: <i>Congress and the president agreeing to cut federal spending and raise the debt limit</i>	46	25	13	14	1
December 16-19, 2010 ³ : <i>The extension of tax cuts and unemployment benefits approved by Congress and signed by President Obama</i>	37	27	15	19	1
December 9-12, 2010: <i>The agreement reached between Barack Obama and Congressional Republicans to extend tax cuts and unemployment benefits</i>	37	29	15	17	1
December 2-5, 2010: <i>The debate in Washington over the federal income tax cuts passed when George W. Bush was president</i>	39	26	17	17	1
September 16-19, 2010: <i>The debate in Washington over competing Democratic and Republican tax plans</i>	21	24	21	34	*
September 9-12, 2010	16	19	22	42	1
May 8-11, 2009: <i>The debate in Washington over the federal budget</i>	22	28	19	31	*
March 27-30, 2009: <i>Debate over Barack Obama's budget proposal</i>	28	34	18	19	1
February 27-March 2, 2009: <i>Barack Obama's budget proposal for next year that raises taxes on wealthy Americans and increases spending on health care, education and other programs</i>	47	34	9	10	*
May, 2003: <i>George W. Bush's tax cut and economic stimulus plan</i>	25	36	22	15	2
February, 2003	26	33	23	16	2

² The wording of item PEW.1d was changed after the first night of interviewing (February 16, 2012) to reflect Congress passing this legislation. On February 16, 2012, the item wording was "Negotiations in Congress to extend payroll tax cuts and unemployment benefits."

³ The wording of item PEW.1c was changed after the first night of interviewing (December 16, 2010), to reflect Congress passing and Obama signing this legislation. On December 16, 2010 the item read "The debate in Washington over extending tax cuts and unemployment benefits."

PEW.1 CONTINUED...

	<u>Very closely</u>	<u>Fairly closely</u>	<u>Not too closely</u>	<u>Not at all closely</u>	(VOL.) DK/Ref
January, 2003	28	34	21	15	2
February, 2002: <i>Debate in Congress over G.W. Bush's budget and tax cut plan</i>	17	31	28	23	1
April, 2001	24	38	20	18	*
February, 2001: <i>G.W. Bush's tax cut plan</i>	31	35	19	14	1
September, 1999: <i>The debate in Washington over how much to cut taxes</i>	18	30	28	23	1
July, 1999	14	34	21	31	*
June, 1997: <i>Competing proposals on ways to cut taxes as part of the recent bipartisan budget agreement</i>	11	27	28	33	1
September, 1992 (RVs): <i>George Bush's plan to improve the economy by cutting government spending and cutting taxes</i>	28	44	18	9	1

ASK ALL:

Thinking about the shooting in Connecticut on Friday...

PEW.A Do you think this shooting reflects broader problems in American society, or are things like this just the isolated acts of troubled individuals?⁴

Dec 14-16	TRENDS FOR COMPARISON		
	<u>Jul 26-29 2012</u>	<u>Jan 13-16 2011</u>	<u>Apr 18-22 2007</u>
47 Broader problems	24	31	46
44 Isolated acts	67	58	47
9 Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	8	12	7

QUESTIONS PEW.2 AND PEW.3 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE.

⁴ This question was asked Friday, Dec. 14, through Sunday, Dec 16, 2012 (N=746).

⁵ July 2012 question asked about the shooting in Colorado. January 2011 question asked about the shooting in Tucson, Arizona. April 2007 question was asked after the shooting at Virginia Tech and asked about "this shooting and others like it."

PEW RESEARCH CENTER
December 14-17, 2012 Google Consumer Surveys
FINAL TOPLINE

ASK ALL:

S.1 Do you have any children living in your household who are attending school?

Dec 14-172012

25	Yes, have children attending school
10	In kindergarten through 5 th grade
9	In 6 th through 12 th grade
6	In both
75	No children in household attending school
<i>N=4,635</i>	

ASK IF HAVE CHILD/CHILDREN ATTENDING SCHOOL (S.1=1-3):

Q.1 Thinking about the recent shootings at a school in Connecticut, have you been trying to restrict how much coverage of the shootings your child/children watch?

TREND FOR COMPARISON*Virginia Tech Shootings*

April 18-22

Dec 14-172012

53	Yes
47	No
--	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)
<i>N=795</i>	

2007

40
58
2

ASK ALL:

S.1 Do you have any children living in your household who are attending school?

Dec 14-172012

27	Yes, have children attending school
10	In kindergarten through 5 th grade
10	In 6 th through 12 th grade
7	In both
73	No children in household attending school
<i>N=4,442</i>	

ASK IF HAVE CHILD/CHILDREN ATTENDING SCHOOL (S.1=1-3):

Q.2 Thinking about the recent shootings at a school in Connecticut, how much have you talked about the shootings with your child/children?

TREND FOR COMPARISON*Virginia Tech Shootings*

April 18-22

Dec 14-172012

20	A lot
42	Some
16	Not much
23	Not at all
--	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)
<i>N=815</i>	

2007

19
39
17
24
1