

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER
FEBRUARY 9-12, 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> | (VOL.) DK/Ref |
|--|-------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| a. Reports about the condition of the U.S. economy | | | | | |
| 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 | * |
| 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 | * |

PEW.1 CONTINUED...

| | Very <u>closely</u> | Fairly <u>closely</u> | Not too <u>closely</u> | Not at all <u>closely</u> | (VOL.) DK/Ref |
|--|------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|------------------|
| 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 |
| <u>SEE TRENDS FOR PREVIOUS YEARS:</u> http://www.people-press.org/files/2011/11/NII-Economy-Trends.pdf | | | | | |
| b. Political violence in Syria | | | | | |
| February 9-12, 2012 | 17 | 23 | 23 | 36 | * |
| January 12-15, 2012 | 12 | 17 | 26 | 45 | 1 |
| TRENDS FOR COMPARISON: | | | | | |
| 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 | * |
| c. A federal appeals court ruling that California's ban on gay marriage is unconstitutional | | | | | |
| February 9-12, 2012 | 16 | 23 | 24 | 37 | 1 |
| TRENDS FOR COMPARISON: | | | | | |
| February 24-27, 2011: <i>Recent developments in the debate over gay marriage</i> | 19 | 26 | 20 | 34 | 1 |
| May 29-June 1, 2009: <i>The California Supreme Court upholding a ban on gay marriage</i> | 22 | 35 | 19 | 23 | 1 |
| May 8-11, 2009: <i>Steps to legalize gay marriage in Maine and New Hampshire</i> | 16 | 16 | 22 | 45 | 1 |
| April 9-13, 2009: <i>The legalization of gay marriage in Iowa and Vermont</i> | 13 | 21 | 23 | 42 | 1 |
| Nov. 7-10, 2008: <i>California voting to ban gay marriage</i> | 18 | 26 | 24 | 32 | * |
| June 20-23, 2008: <i>The issue of same-sex marriage in California</i> | 22 | 26 | 25 | 27 | * |
| May 16-19, 2008: <i>The California Supreme Court's decision giving same-sex couples the right to marry</i> | 19 | 27 | 25 | 28 | 1 |
| May 2004: <i>The issue of gay and lesbian marriage</i> | 20 | 27 | 25 | 27 | 1 |
| March 2004: <i>The issue of gay and lesbian marriage</i> | 29 | 33 | 20 | 17 | 1 |
| Early-February 2004: <i>The debate about letting gays and lesbians marry</i> | 26 | 32 | 22 | 19 | 1 |
| Mid-August 2003: <i>The debate about letting gays and lesbians marry</i> | 19 | 30 | 22 | 28 | 1 |
| d. Debate over a new rule requiring religious employers, such as Catholic hospitals and universities, to cover birth control in their health insurance plans | | | | | |
| February 9-12, 2012 | 27 | 22 | 20 | 30 | 1 |

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> |
|---|---------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| TRENDS FOR COMPARISON: | | | | | |
| 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 |
| April 16-19, 2010: <i>News about the new health care reform law</i> | 40 | 30 | 16 | 14 | * |
| April 9-12, 2010 | 46 | 27 | 15 | 12 | * |
| April 1-5, 2010 | 42 | 27 | 14 | 16 | * |
| March 26-29, 2010: <i>Debate over health care reform</i> | 49 | 29 | 12 | 10 | * |
| March 19-22, 2010 | 51 | 24 | 11 | 14 | * |
| March 12-15, 2010 | 40 | 31 | 16 | 13 | * |
| March 5-8, 2010 | 42 | 27 | 17 | 15 | * |
| February 26-March 1, 2010 | 29 | 29 | 19 | 22 | * |
| February 19-22, 2010 | 33 | 28 | 19 | 19 | * |
| January 29-February 1, 2010 | 39 | 27 | 16 | 17 | * |
| January 22-25, 2010 | 41 | 32 | 15 | 11 | * |
| January 15-18, 2010 | 37 | 27 | 19 | 18 | * |
| January 8-11, 2010 | 39 | 26 | 20 | 15 | * |
| December 18-21, 2009 | 42 | 27 | 16 | 14 | * |
| December 11-14, 2009 | 42 | 30 | 15 | 14 | * |
| December 4-7, 2009 | 42 | 28 | 15 | 14 | 1 |
| November 20-23, 2009 | 42 | 29 | 14 | 15 | * |
| November 13-16, 2009 | 38 | 26 | 17 | 17 | 1 |
| November 6-9, 2009 | 35 | 28 | 15 | 22 | 1 |
| 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 |
| 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 | * |
| June 12-15, 2009 | 29 | 26 | 18 | 26 | * |

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> |
|--|---------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| May 15-18, 2009: <i>Debate over Barack 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 | * |
| e. Tension between Iran and Israel over Iran's nuclear program | | | | | |
| February 9-12, 2012 | 26 | 25 | 21 | 29 | * |
| TRENDS FOR COMPARISON: | | | | | |
| January 12-15, 2012: <i>Mounting tensions between the U.S. and Iran</i> | 24 | 30 | 18 | 27 | * |
| January 5-8, 2012: <i>Tensions between the U.S. and Iran over shipping in the Persian gulf</i> | 23 | 26 | 19 | 32 | * |
| December 1-4, 2011: <i>Tensions between Britain and Iran following an attack on the British embassy by Iranian protestors</i> | 12 | 19 | 24 | 44 | 1 |
| June 10-13, 2010: <i>New U.N. sanctions against Iran because of its nuclear program</i> | 19 | 28 | 25 | 27 | 1 |
| March 26-29, 2010: <i>Reports about tensions between Israel and the United States</i> | 20 | 27 | 21 | 31 | 1 |
| October 2-5, 2009: <i>Talks between the United States and Iran over Iran's nuclear program</i> | 30 | 32 | 18 | 20 | * |
| May 21-24, 2009: <i>Iran testing a missile that could reach Israel</i> | 20 | 29 | 25 | 26 | * |
| July 11-14, 2008: <i>The Iranian government firing test missiles capable of striking Israel</i> | 25 | 29 | 22 | 23 | 1 |
| January 11-14, 2008: <i>News about an encounter between U.S. and Iranian ships</i> | 25 | 26 | 21 | 27 | 1 |
| December 7-10, 2007: <i>A new intelligence report stating that Iran stopped its nuclear weapons program in 2003</i> | 25 | 31 | 20 | 23 | 1 |
| October 26-29, 2007: <i>Mounting tensions between the United States and Iran</i> | 26 | 34 | 21 | 18 | 1 |
| September 28 – October 1, 2007: <i>Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's recent trip to New York City where he spoke at Columbia University and the United Nations</i> | 23 | 31 | 20 | 25 | 1 |
| June 1-4, 2007: <i>Recent talks between the United States and Iran</i> | 19 | 27 | 27 | 26 | 1 |
| February 23-26, 2007: <i>Mounting tensions between the United States and Iran</i> | 29 | 37 | 18 | 15 | 1 |
| September, 2006: <i>Iran's nuclear research program</i> | 23 | 34 | 19 | 23 | 1 |
| August, 2006 | 24 | 34 | 20 | 20 | 3 |
| June, 2006 | 21 | 32 | 22 | 22 | 3 |
| April, 2006 | 26 | 30 | 23 | 20 | 1 |
| March, 2006 | 24 | 31 | 22 | 22 | 1 |
| f. News about candidates for the 2012 presidential elections | | | | | |
| 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 |

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 |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 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 |
| 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.]**

Feb 9-12

2012

| | |
|----|--|
| 25 | News about candidates for the 2012 presidential elections |
| 18 | Reports about the condition of the U.S. economy |
| | Debate over a new rule requiring religious employers, such as Catholic hospitals and |
| 12 | universities, to cover birth control in their health insurance plans |
| 9 | Tension between Iran and Israel over Iran's nuclear program |
| 5 | Political violence in Syria |
| 4 | A federal appeals court ruling that California's ban on gay marriage is unconstitutional |
| 8 | Some other story (VOL.) |
| 18 | Don't know/Refused (VOL.) |

ASK ALL:

PEW.3 Regardless of whom you might prefer, which Republican candidate have you heard the most about in the news recently? **[READ NAMES; RANDOMIZE]**

| Feb 9-12 <u>2012</u> | | Jan 26-29 <u>2012</u> |
|-------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 50 | Mitt Romney | 36 |
| 19 | Rick Santorum | 2 |
| 13 | Newt Gingrich | 42 |
| 6 | Ron Paul | 4 |
| 2 | Other (VOL.) | 1 |
| 11 | Don't know/Refused (VOL.) | 15 |

PEW.3 FULL TREND:

*Thinking about Republican candidates for president in 2012... Regardless of whom you might prefer, which Republican candidate have you heard the most about in the news recently? **[OPEN END. RECORD FIRST MENTION ONLY.] [PLEASE BE CERTAIN TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN "JOHN MCCAIN" AND "HERMAN CAIN".]***

| | Jan 12-15 <u>2012</u> | Jan 5-8 <u>2012</u> | Dec 1-4 <u>2011</u> | Oct 13-16 <u>2011</u> | Sep 8-11 <u>2011</u> | Aug 18-21 <u>2011</u> | Jul 21-24 <u>2011</u> | Jun 16-19 <u>2011</u> | Jun 2-5 <u>2011</u> | May 12-15 <u>2011</u> | Apr 14-17 <u>2011</u> |
|------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Newt Gingrich | 6 | 11 | 13 | * | 1 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 2 | 12 | 1 |
| Mitt Romney | 51 | 39 | 5 | 18 | 12 | 7 | 13 | 27 | 22 | 7 | 9 |
| Ron Paul | 4 | 6 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | * |
| Rick Santorum | 1 | 9 | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * |
| Rick Perry | 2 | 3 | 3 | 12 | 31 | 22 | 3 | * | * | * | * |
| Herman Cain | 1 | * | 43 | 23 | * | 1 | * | * | * | * | * |
| Michele Bachmann | * | 3 | * | 1 | 7 | 23 | 23 | 5 | 1 | 1 | * |
| Jon Huntsman | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * |
| Gary Johnson | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * |
| Other | | | | | | | | | | | |
| None/DK/Ref. | 32 | 26 | 32 | 39 | 37 | 35 | 44 | 45 | 41 | 50 | 53 |

PEW.4 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE