



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**  
 Wednesday, December 5, 2007

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:**  
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**Many Republicans Unaware of Romney’s Religion**  
**PUBLIC STILL GETTING TO KNOW LEADING GOP CANDIDATES**

Even as the 2008 presidential campaign draws increasing news coverage, the public shows limited awareness of the personal backgrounds of some of the top GOP candidates.

While 86% of the public is able to name Rudy Giuliani as the former mayor of New York City, only about half as many – 42% of the public – correctly identified Mitt Romney as a Mormon and even fewer (35%) knew that Romney was the former governor of Massachusetts.

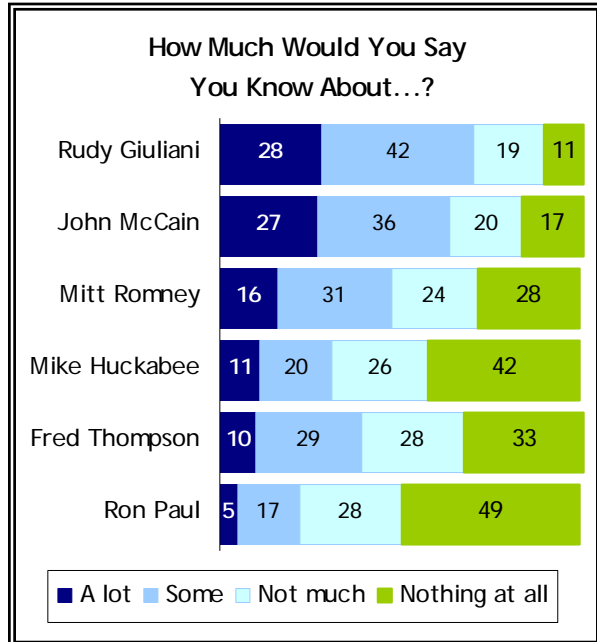
Name the candidate who is...	---Percent correct---			
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
Former mayor of NYC {Giuliani}	86	90	84	85
Former Vietnam POW {McCain}	56	65	49	61
Former TV & movie actor {Thompson}	47	59	42	46
Mormon {Romney}	42	60	33	40
Former governor of MA {Romney}	35	46	28	34
An abortion rights supporter {Giuliani}	30	41	25	30
Former governor of AR {Huckabee}	26	36	20	28
A former Baptist minister {Huckabee}	21	28	17	21
Opposed to the Iraq war {Paul}	14	21	12	13

Romney’s speech on religion and politics, scheduled for Dec. 6, is widely seen as an effort to assuage concerns that some religious conservatives in the GOP have raised about his Mormon faith. Among Republicans, 60% could name Romney as the Republican candidate who is Mormon, but 40% could not.

Mike Huckabee, whose support is surging in key primary states as well as in national polls, is still something of a mystery to the public. Only about a quarter of Americans (26%) – and just 36% of Republicans – correctly named Huckabee as a former Arkansas governor. Smaller percentages are aware that Huckabee is a former Baptist minister (21% of the public, 28% of Republicans).

There is greater public awareness of John McCain’s experience as a prisoner of war in Vietnam and Fred Thompson’s background as a TV and movie actor. Overall, 56% of the public named McCain as a former POW while 47% correctly identified Thompson as a former actor.

More Americans say they feel like they know a lot about Giuliani and McCain than the other leading Republican candidates. Even so, fewer than three-in-ten say they know a lot about Giuliani (28%) and McCain (27%). Just 16% say they know a lot about Romney, while 11% say they know a lot about Huckabee. More than four-in-ten Americans (42%) say they know “nothing at all” about the former Arkansas governor.



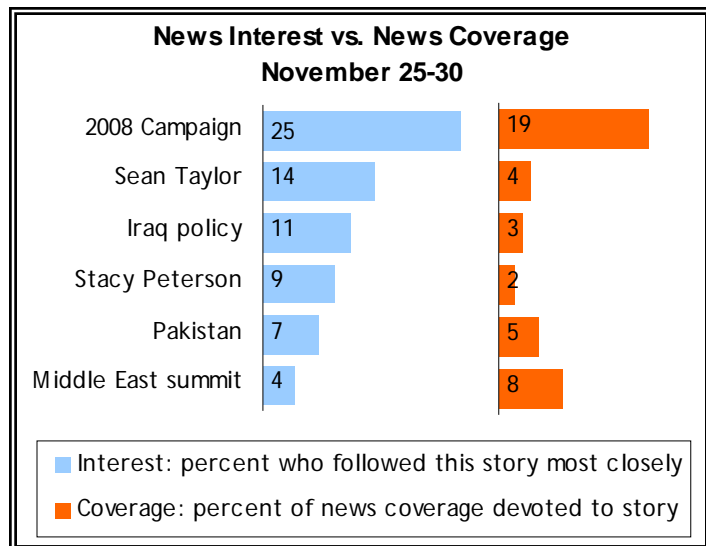
As expected, the GOP candidates are better known by Republicans than by Democrats or independents: 39% of Republicans know a lot about Giuliani and 38% know a lot about McCain. However, even among Republicans, only 29% say they know a lot about Romney. Fewer than one-in-five Republicans know a lot about Thompson and Huckabee, with 39% saying they know nothing at all about Huckabee.

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 agenda. 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 was collected from November 25-30 and survey data measuring public interest in the top news stories of the week was collected November 30 – December 3 from a nationally representative sample of 1,005 adults.

## Campaign Tops News Interest Index

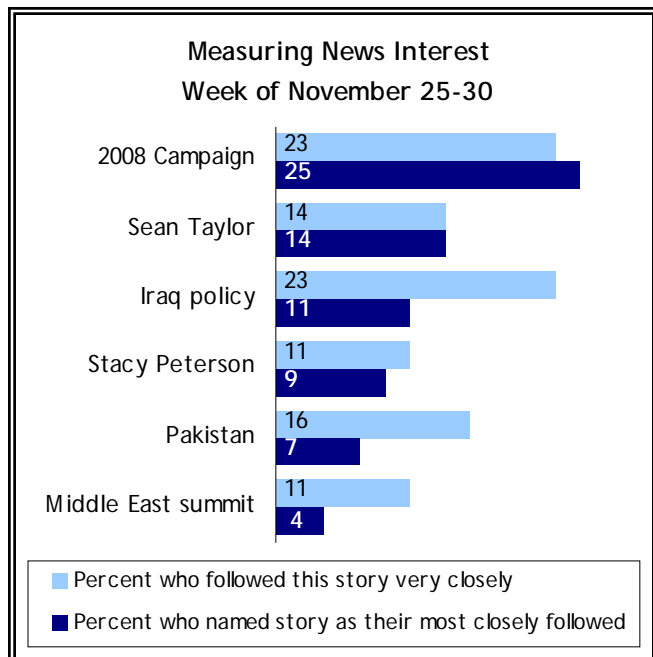
The presidential campaign was the most heavily covered news story last week, with much of the coverage focused on the Republicans' YouTube/CNN debate. More than half of the public (56%) say they either watched the debate (15%) or heard or saw news reports about it (41%). This is comparable with the proportions of the public that watched or heard about the Democrats' YouTube debate in July.

The campaign was by far the public's top news story last week: 23% followed campaign news very closely and 25% listed the presidential campaign as the single news story they followed more closely than any other. In spite of the media's heavy focus on the race for the Republican nomination, Democrats and Republicans followed the campaign in roughly equal proportions.



The shooting death of NFL player Sean Taylor also drew considerable public interest. Overall, 14% named Taylor's death as their top story of the week. More than twice as many African Americans as whites paid very close attention to Taylor's story (29% vs. 12%). Fully 26% of blacks named the Taylor story as their most closely followed news story of the week, putting it on par with the presidential campaign. In addition, more men than women tracked this story very closely (19% vs. 11% of women).

By contrast, women were more interested than men in news about the missing Illinois woman Stacy Peterson. About one-in-seven women (15%) followed this story very closely, compared with 7% of men. While the Peterson story attracted 2% of news coverage overall, the broadcast networks devoted 6% of their newshole for the week to Peterson's disappearance, making it the fourth most closely followed



story on that sector.

About a quarter of Americans (23%) say they followed news about the Iraq policy debate very closely, while fewer paid very close attention to news about Pakistan (16%) and the Middle East summit in Annapolis, Md. (11%). When people are asked to name the story they followed most closely, 14% named reports on Taylor's death, while 11% named Iraq policy. Smaller numbers cited either developments in Pakistan (7%) or the Middle East summit (4%) as their top story of the week.

## 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 Sunday through Friday) PEJ will compile this data to identify the top stories for the week. The News Interest Index survey will collect data from Friday through Monday to gauge public interest in the most covered stories of the week.

Results for the weekly surveys are based on telephone interviews among a nationwide sample of approximately 1,000 adults, 18 years of age or older, conducted under the direction of ORC (Opinion Research Corporation). For results based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling is plus or minus 3.5 percentage points.

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, and that results based on subgroups will have larger margins of error.

For more information about the Project for Excellence in Journalism's News Coverage Index, go to [www.journalism.org](http://www.journalism.org).

## About the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press

The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press is an independent opinion research group that studies attitudes toward the press, politics and public policy issues. We are sponsored by The Pew Charitable Trusts and are one of eight projects that make up the Pew Research Center, a nonpartisan "fact tank" that provides information on the issues, attitudes and trends shaping America and the world.

The Center's purpose is to serve as a forum for ideas on the media and public policy through public opinion research. In this role it serves as an important information resource for political leaders, journalists, scholars, and public interest organizations. All of our current survey results are made available free of charge.

All of the Center's research and reports are collaborative products based on the input and analysis of the entire Center staff consisting of:

Andrew Kohut, Director  
Scott Keeter, Director of Survey Research  
Carroll Doherty and Michael Dimock, Associate Directors  
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**PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE & THE PRESS**  
**NOVEMBER 30 – DECEMBER 3, 2007 NEWS INTEREST INDEX OMNIBUS SURVEY**  
**FINAL TOPLINE**  
**N=1005**

Q.1 As I read a list of some stories covered by news organizations this past week, 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 ITEMS] [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. The investigation into missing Illinois woman Stacy Peterson	<b>11</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>1=100</b>
<b>TREND FOR COMPARISON:</b>					
<b>June 22-25, 2007 A missing Ohio woman who was nine months pregnant when she disappeared</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>1=100</b>
April, 2004: Murder of Laci Peterson	20	37	24	17	2=100
July, 2003: The murder of Laci Peterson, the pregnant California woman whose husband has been charged in her death	22	34	26	17	1=100
May, 2003	31	31	21	16	1=100
b. The Middle East peace summit in Annapolis, Maryland	<b>11</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>1=100</b>
June, 2003 <sup>1</sup>	20	36	24	19	1=100
January, 2001	21	32	29	17	1=100
July, 2000	15	30	24	31	*=100
November, 1998	18	33	28	19	2=100
Early Oct, 1998 (RVs)	21	40	27	12	*=100
September, 1995	11	32	29	27	1=100
Late September, 1993	23	33	24	19	1=100
Early September, 1993	19	31	23	26	1=100
c. Political instability in Pakistan	<b>16</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>*=100</b>
<b>November 23-26, 2007</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>1=100</b>
<b>November 16-19, 2007</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>1=100</b>
<b>November 9-12, 2007</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>*=100</b>
<b>TREND FOR COMPARISON:</b>					
<b>October 19-22, 2007: A bombing in Pakistan aimed at former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto that killed over 120 people</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>*=100</b>
<b>July 13-16, 2007: The Pakistani government’s raid on a mosque held by Islamic radicals</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>1=100</b>
d. The death of NFL player Sean Taylor	<b>14</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>1=100</b>

<sup>1</sup> In June, 2003 the item was listed as “President Bush’s summit meeting with world leaders and with the prime ministers of Israel and the Palestinian Authority.” In January 2001 and Early October 1998 the item was listed as “Renewed efforts at reaching a peace agreement in the Middle East.” In July 2000 the item was listed as “The Middle East peace summit at Camp David.” In November 1998 and September 1995 the item was listed as “The latest Mideast peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians.” In Late September 1993 the item was listed as “The peace accords between Israel and the PLO.” In Early September 1993, the item was listed as “Talks between Israel and the PLO about Arab self-rule for the Gaza Strip and the West Bank town of Jericho.”

**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>
e. The debate in Washington over U.S. policy in Iraq	23	28	21	28	*=100
November 16-19, 2007	23	30	21	25	1=100
November 2-5, 2007	21	29	23	26	1=100
October 26-29, 2007	21	25	25	28	1=100
October 19-22, 2007	21	28	20	31	*=100
October 12-15, 2007	19	23	22	36	*=100
October 5-8, 2007	20	28	23	29	*=100
September 28 – October 1, 2007	22	32	22	24	*=100
September 21-24, 2007	25	28	20	27	*=100
September 14-17, 2007 <sup>2</sup>	25	27	20	27	1=100
September 7-10, 2007	25	27	22	26	*=100
August 30-September 2, 2007	22	27	20	31	*=100
August 24-27, 2007	25	30	19	25	1=100
August 3-6, 2007	21	33	20	26	*=100
July 27-30, 2007	24	28	20	27	1=100
July 20-23, 2007	23	24	24	28	1=100
July 13-16, 2007	20	30	20	30	*=100
July 6-9, 2007	27	26	23	24	*=100
June 1-4, 2007	20	27	24	27	2=100
May 24-27, 2007	30	32	20	18	*=100
May 18-21, 2007	24	32	19	24	1=100
May 11-14, 2007	25	26	19	29	1=100
May 4-7, 2007	30	31	19	20	*=100
April 27-30, 2007	18	31	21	29	1=100
April 20-23, 2007	22	29	24	25	*=100
April 12-16, 2007	25	29	22	23	1=100
April 5-9, 2007	31	28	20	21	*=100
March 30-April 2, 2007	26	29	21	23	1=100
<b>TREND FOR COMPARISON:</b>					
January 12-15, 2007: President Bush's proposal to increase the number of U.S. troops in Iraq	40	33	13	13	1=100
f. News about candidates for the 2008 presidential election	23	35	23	19	*=100
November 23-26, 2007	20	33	26	20	1=100
November 16-19, 2007	26	33	21	19	1=100
November 9-12, 2007	21	33	25	21	*=100
November 2-5, 2007	27	30	21	21	1=100
October 26-29, 2007	21	34	26	19	*=100
October 19-22, 2007	23	32	22	23	*=100
October 12-15, 2007	13	31	26	30	*=100
October 5-8, 2007	22	30	24	24	*=100
September 28 – October 1, 2007	21	34	25	20	*=100
September 21-24, 2007	24	31	22	23	*=100
September 14-17, 2007	22	31	24	23	*=100
September 7-10, 2007	18	34	26	22	*=100
August 30-September 2, 2007	19	35	21	25	*=100
August 24-27, 2007	22	28	24	26	*=100
August 17-20, 2007	19	27	24	30	*=100

<sup>2</sup> September 14-17, 2007 asked about "General David Petraeus's report to Congress about how things are going in Iraq."

Q.1 CONTINUED...

	Very <u>Closely</u>	Fairly <u>Closely</u>	Not too <u>Closely</u>	Not at all <u>Closely</u>	DK/ <u>Refused</u>
August 10-13, 2007	23	32	21	24	*=100
August 3-6, 2007	19	31	25	25	*=100
July 27-30, 2007	19	32	22	26	1=100
July 20-23, 2007	16	26	30	27	1=100
July 13-16, 2007	17	29	27	27	*=100
July 6-9, 2007	24	29	24	22	1=100
June 29-July 2, 2007	20	32	25	23	*=100
June 22-25, 2007	18	31	21	30	*=100
June 15-18, 2007	17	32	26	25	*=100
June 8-11, 2007	19	30	24	26	1=100
June 1-4, 2007	16	27	32	24	1=100
May 24-27, 2007	22	33	23	22	*=100
May 18-21, 2007	18	31	24	27	*=100
May 11-14, 2007	18	30	23	28	1=100
May 4-7, 2007	23	34	21	21	1=100
April 27-30, 2007	14	30	29	26	1=100
April 20-23, 2007	18	28	27	27	*=100
April 12-16, 2007	18	28	27	27	*=100
April 5-9, 2007	25	30	26	19	*=100
March 30-April 2, 2007	20	29	27	23	1=100
March 23-26, 2007	20	32	22	26	*=100
March 16-19, 2007	15	28	29	27	1=100
March 9-12, 2007	24	30	23	23	*=100
March 2-5, 2007	19	31	26	23	1=100
February 23-26, 2007	22	33	24	21	*=100
February 16-19, 2007	18	32	22	27	1=100
February 9-12, 2007	24	30	24	21	1=100
February 2-5, 2007	24	36	22	18	*=100
January 26-29, 2007	24	33	23	20	*=100
January 19-22, 2007 <sup>3</sup>	24	27	22	26	1=100
<b>2004 Presidential Election</b>					
November, 2004 (RVs)	52	36	8	4	*=100
Mid-October, 2004	46	30	12	11	1=100
August, 2004	32	38	16	14	*=100
July, 2004	29	37	18	15	1=100
April, 2004	31	33	19	16	1=100
Mid-March, 2004	35	34	18	13	*=100
Late February, 2004	24	40	23	12	1=100
Early February, 2004 <sup>4</sup>	29	37	20	13	1=100
Mid-January, 2004	16	30	27	26	1=100
Early January, 2004	14	32	30	23	1=100
December, 2003	16	26	27	30	1=100
November, 2003	11	26	34	28	1=100
October, 2003	12	27	28	32	1=100

<sup>3</sup> January 19-22, 2007 asked about "Recent announcements by prominent Democrats about plans to run for president in 2008."

<sup>4</sup> From May 2003 to Early February 2004 and in March 1992, the story was listed as "The race for the Democratic nomination." In January 2003, the story was listed as "Recent announcements by prominent Democrats about plans to run for president in 2004." In September 2000, Early September and July 1996, and May 1992, the question asked about "the presidential election campaign." In January, March and April 1996, the story was listed as "News about the Republican presidential candidates." In August 1992, the story was listed as "News about the presidential election." In July 1992, the story was listed as "News about the presidential campaign." In January 1992, the story was listed as "News about the Democratic candidates for the presidential nomination." In 1988, the story was introduced as being from "this past year" and was listed as "News about the presidential campaign in 1988."



**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>
September, 2003	17	25	30	27	1=100
Mid-August, 2003	12	27	27	33	1=100
May, 2003	8	19	31	41	1=100
January, 2003	14	28	29	28	1=100
<b>2000 Presidential Election</b>					
Early November, 2000 (RVs)	39	44	12	5	*=100
Mid-October, 2000 (RVs)	40	37	15	8	*=100
Early October, 2000 (RVs)	42	36	15	6	1=100
September, 2000	22	42	21	15	*=100
July, 2000	21	38	20	20	1=100
June, 2000	23	32	23	21	1=100
May, 2000	18	33	26	23	*=100
April, 2000	18	39	22	20	1=100
March, 2000	26	41	19	13	1=100
February, 2000	26	36	21	17	*=100
January, 2000	19	34	28	18	1=100
December, 1999	16	36	24	23	1=100
October, 1999	17	32	28	22	1=100
September, 1999	15	31	33	20	1=100
July, 1999	15	38	24	22	1=100
June, 1999	11	25	29	34	1=100
<b>1996 Presidential Election</b>					
November, 1996 (RVs)	34	45	15	6	*=100
October, 1996	31	39	18	12	*=100
Early September, 1996	24	36	23	17	*=100
July, 1996	22	40	23	14	1=100
March, 1996	26	41	20	13	*=100
January, 1996	10	34	31	24	1=100
September, 1995	12	36	30	22	*=100
August, 1995	13	34	28	25	*=100
June, 1995	11	31	31	26	1=100
<b>1992 Presidential Election</b>					
October, 1992 (RVs)	55	36	7	2	0=100
September, 1992 (RVs)	47	36	11	6	*=100
August, 1992 (RVs)	36	51	11	2	0=100
July, 1992	20	45	26	9	*=100
May, 1992	32	44	16	8	*=100
March, 1992	35	40	16	9	*=100
January, 1992	11	25	36	27	1=100
December, 1991	10	28	32	30	*=100
October, 1991	12	26	31	29	2=100
<b>1988 Presidential Election</b>					
October, 1988 (RVs)	43	44	11	2	*=100
August, 1988 (RVs)	39	45	13	3	*=100
May, 1988	22	46	23	6	3=100
November, 1987	15	28	35	21	1=100
September, 1987	14	34	37	14	1=100

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] ?**

- 25 News about candidates for the 2008 presidential election
- 14 The death of NFL player Sean Taylor
- 11 The debate in Washington over U.S. policy in Iraq
- 9 The investigation into missing Illinois woman Stacy Peterson
- 7 Political instability in Pakistan
- 4 The Middle East peace summit in Annapolis, Maryland
- 11 Some other story (**SPECIFY**)
- 19 Don't know/Refused
- 100

Now thinking about the presidential campaign...

Q.3 How much would you say you know about each of the following REPUBLICAN presidential candidates? First **[READ AND ROTATE]**, would you say you know a lot, some, not too much or nothing at all?

	<u>A lot</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>Not too much</u>	<u>Nothing at all</u>	<u>DK/Ref</u>
a. Rudy Giuliani	28	42	19	11	*=100
b. Mitt Romney	16	31	24	28	1=100
c. John McCain	27	36	20	17	*=100
d. Fred Thompson	10	29	28	33	*=100
e. Mike Huckabee	11	20	26	42	1=100
f. Ron Paul	5	17	28	49	1=100

Now a few questions about some things that have been in the news about the presidential campaign. Not everyone will have heard of them.

Q.4 Did you happen to hear about a recent Republican debate where ordinary people submitted video questions through YouTube for the candidates to answer? **[IF YES, ASK: Did you watch the debate itself, or did you just hear or see reports in the news?]**

		<b>Democratic Debate</b> <u>July 27-30, 2007</u>	
15	Yes, watched the debate	13	
41	Yes, heard/saw reports but did not watch it	42	
43	No, haven't heard about it	44	
<u>1</u>	Don't know/Refused	<u>1</u>	
100		100	

Q.5 Do you happen to know the name of the Republican candidate who is **[READ AND ROTATE ITEMS a. THROUGH i.]?**

	<u>Rudy Giuliani</u>	<u>Mitt Romney</u>	<u>John McCain</u>	<u>Fred Thompson</u>	<u>Mike Huckabee</u>	<u>Ron Paul</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>DK/Ref</u>
a. A former mayor of New York City	86	0	*	0	0	*	*	14=100
b. A Mormon	0	42	1	*	1	1	1	54=100

<b>Q.5 CONTINUED...</b>	<u>Rudy Giuliani</u>	<u>Mitt Romney</u>	<u>John McCain</u>	<u>Fred Thompson</u>	<u>Mike Huckabee</u>	<u>Ron Paul</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>DK/Ref</u>
c. A former TV and movie actor	<b>0</b>	*	<b>1</b>	<b>47</b>	*	*	<b>5</b>	<b>47=100</b>
d. A former Baptist minister	*	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>72=100</b>
e. A former governor of Massachusetts	*	<b>35</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	*	<b>1</b>	<b>60=100</b>
f. A former governor of Arkansas	*	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>65=100</b>
g. A supporter of abortion rights	<b>30</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>61=100</b>
h. Strongly opposed to the Iraq war	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>70=100</b>
i. A former Vietnam prisoner of war	*	*	<b>56</b>	*	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>43=100</b>