

PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE & THE PRESS
MARCH 2006 NEWS INTEREST INDEX
FINAL TOPLINE
March 8-12, 2006
N = 1,405

QUESTIONS 1-9 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED

ASK ALL:

Q.10 Now I will read a list of some stories covered by news organizations this past month. As I read each item, tell me if you happened to follow this news story very closely, fairly closely, not too closely, or not at all closely. [INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE. OBSERVE FORM SPLITS]

		<u>Very Closely</u>	<u>Fairly Closely</u>	<u>Not too Closely</u>	<u>Not at all Closely</u>	<u>DK/ Ref</u>
a.	News about the current situation in Iraq	43	38	12	6	1=100
b.	The debate over an Arab-owned company possibly running U.S. ports ¹	41	27	13	18	1=100
c.	Rebuilding efforts in areas affected by Hurricane Katrina	36	42	14	7	1=100

ASK FORM 1 ONLY [N=710]:

d.F1	Vice President Dick Cheney's hunting accident	31	32	20	16	1=100
e.F1	Reports about the financial links between lobbyists and members of Congress	16	20	30	32	2=100

ASK FORM 2 ONLY [N=695]:

f.F2	Outbreaks of bird flu in different parts of the world	21	36	24	19	*=100
g.F2	Iran's nuclear research program	24	31	22	22	1=100

ASK ALL:

h.	South Dakota's new law banning all abortions unless the mother's life is in danger	21	32	20	26	1=100
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NOTE: TRENDS FOR CERTAIN ITEMS IN QUESTION 10 ARE AVAILABLE IN THE MARCH 15TH RELEASE

¹ From March 8-9 the story was worded "The possibility that an Arab-owned company might be allowed to run U.S. ports."

Q.11 Recently, South Dakota passed a law that bans abortion in all cases except to save the life of the mother. Would you favor or oppose a law like this at the national level?

34 Favor
 58 Oppose
8 Don't know/Refused
 100

Q.12 Do you think the issue of abortion is **[READ]**

28 A critical issue facing the country
 38 One among many important issues
 32 Not that important compared to other issues
2 **[VOL. DO NOT READ]** Don't know/Refused
 100

Q.13 Over the past year, have you, yourself, done anything to express your views on abortion, such as by donating money to groups, participating in marches or meetings, or writing letters to the news media or your representatives?

13 Yes
 86 No
1 Don't know/Refused
 100

QUESTIONS 14-18 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED:

NO QUESTIONS 19 THROUGH 24

ASK ALL:

Q.25 As I list some programs and proposals that are being discussed in this country today, please tell me whether you strongly favor, favor, oppose, or strongly oppose each. The first one is... **(READ AND RANDOMIZE; OBSERVE FORM SPLITS).**

		----- FAVOR -----			----- OPPOSE -----			
		<i>Strongly</i>			<i>Strongly</i>			Don't
		<u>Net</u>	<u>Favor</u>	<u>Favor</u>	<u>Net</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>know</u>
a.	The death penalty for persons convicted of murder	65	27	38	27	8	19	8=100
	July, 2005	68	32	36	24	8	16	8=100
	Mid-July, 2003	64	28	36	30	10	20	6=100
	March, 2002	67	33	34	26	9	17	7=100
	March, 2001	66	30	36	27	10	17	7=100
	September, 1999	74	41	33	22	7	15	4=100
	June, 1996	78	43	35	18	7	11	4=100

		----- FAVOR -----			----- OPPOSE -----			Don't
		<i>Strongly</i>			<i>Strongly</i>			<u>know</u>
		<u>Net</u>	<u>Favor</u>	<u>Favor</u>	<u>Net</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	
b.	Making it more DIFFICULT for a woman to get an abortion	37	15	22	56	24	32	7=100
	December, 2004	36	19	17	55	29	26	9=100
	Early February, 2004	36	17	19	58	30	28	6=100
	November, 2003	35	19	16	57	29	28	8=100
	August, 2003 ²	36	17	19	57	30	27	7=100
	May, 1993	32	15	17	60	35	25	8=100
	May, 1992	30	--	--	62	--	--	8=100
	May, 1990	38	21	17	55	29	26	7=100
	May, 1987	41	18	23	51	33	18	8=100
	May, 1985	47	--	--	49	--	--	4=100

ITEMS c. AND d. HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE

e.	The U.S. government's policy of holding suspected terrorists at Guantanamo Bay without formal charges or trials	44	15	29	43	12	31	13=100
f.	Allowing gays and lesbians to adopt children	46	14	32	48	26	22	6=100
	September, 1999	38	10	28	57	30	27	5=100

ASK FORM 1 ONLY [N=710]:

g.F1	Allowing gays and lesbians to marry legally	39	10	29	51	28	23	10=100
	July, 2005	36	13	23	53	31	22	11=100
	December, 2004	32	14	18	61	38	23	7=100
	August, 2004	29	8	21	60	35	25	11=100
	July, 2004	32	10	22	56	33	23	12=100
	March, 2004	32	10	22	59	35	24	9=100
	Early February, 2004	30	9	21	63	42	21	7=100
	November, 2003	30	10	20	62	41	21	8=100
	October, 2003	31	9	21	58	33	25	12=100
	Mid-July, 2003	38	10	28	53	30	23	9=100
	March, 2001	35	8	27	57	34	23	8=100
	June, 1996	27	6	21	65	41	24	8=100

ASK FORM 2 ONLY [N=695]:

h.F2	Allowing gays and lesbians to serve openly in the military	60	20	40	32	13	19	8=100
	July, 2005	58	15	43	32	15	17	10=100
	July, 1994	52	16	36	45	26	19	3=100

**QUESTIONS 26-29 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED
QUESTIONS 30-31 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE**

² In August 2003 and earlier the question was worded: "Changing the laws to make it more difficult for a woman to get an abortion."

On a different subject...

ASK ALL:

Q.32 As I read from a list, tell me whether or not the item I read is a major problem for you and your family. First... (**READ AND RANDOMIZE; OBSERVE FORM SPLITS**) is this a major problem for you or not a major problem?

		Major Problem	Not a Major Problem	Don't Know
a.	Paying for the cost of routine medical care	38	61	1=100
	June, 1994	32	67	1=100
	April, 1993	40	60	*=100
b.	Paying for the cost of a major illness	54	44	2=100
	June, 1994	51	47	2=100
	April, 1993	63	36	1=100

ASK FORM 1 ONLY [N=710]:

c.F1	The possibility of paying the cost of long term care in a nursing home for you or a member of your family	55	43	2=100
	June, 1994	64	32	4=100
	April, 1993	68	29	3=100

ASK FORM 2 ONLY [N=695]:

c.F2	Paying for the cost of long term care in a nursing home for you or a member of your family	50	48	2=100
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ASK FORM 1 ONLY [N=710]:

d.F1	The possibility that your employer may cut back on health care benefits or make you pay a larger share of the costs	51	45	4=100
	June, 1994	42	52	6=100
	April, 1993	53	42	5=100

ASK FORM 2 ONLY [N=695]:

d.F2	Your employer cutting back on health care benefits or making you pay a larger share of the costs	52	45	3=100
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ASK FORM 1 ONLY [N=710]:

e.F1	The possibility that you might lose your insurance if you lose or change jobs	52	45	3=100
	June, 1994	50	46	4=100
	April, 1993	59	37	4=100

ASK FORM 2 ONLY [N=695]:

e.F2	Losing your insurance if you lose or change jobs	63	36	1=100
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ASK ALL:

f.	The availability of medical care in your community	25	74	1=100
	April, 1993	20	79	1=100
g.	The quality of hospital care in your community	26	71	3=100
	June, 1994	15	83	2=100
	April 1993	23	75	2=100
h.	Paying for the costs of prescription drugs	44	55	1=100

ASK FORM 1 ONLY [N=710]:

Q.33F1 Thinking about the country as a whole, do you think we spend too much, too little or the right amount on health care?

		June <u>1994</u>	April <u>1993</u>
26	Too much	38	36
57	Too little	40	49
9	Right amount	13	8
<u>8</u>	Don't know/Refused	<u>9</u>	<u>7</u>
100		100	100

ASK FORM 2 ONLY [N=695]:

Thinking about the country as a whole,

ROTATE Q.34AF2 AND Q.34BF2:

Q.34AF2 Do you think the government spends too much, too little or the right amount on health care?

11	Too much
70	Too little
11	Right amount
<u>8</u>	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)
100	

Q.34BF2 Do you think the average American spends too much, too little or the right amount on health care?

65	Too much
17	Too little
12	Right amount
<u>6</u>	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)
100	

ASK ALL:

Q.35 There is now a new Medicare law that includes some coverage of prescription drug costs for seniors. Overall, would you say you strongly approve, approve, DISapprove, or strongly disapprove of the way Medicare will now cover prescription drug costs?

		<u>Dec 2005</u> ³	<u>Dec 2003</u> ⁴
12	Strongly approve	13	12
39	Approve	35	43
22	Disapprove	20	17
10	Strongly disapprove	10	10
<u>17</u>	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	<u>22</u>	<u>18</u>
100		100	100

³ In December 2005 the question did not include the words "for seniors."

⁴ In December 2003 the question was worded "As you may know, Congress passed a new Medicare law that includes some coverage of prescription drug costs and changes the way Medicare covers other medical expenses for senior citizens. Overall, would you say you strongly approve, approve, DISapprove, or strongly disapprove of these recent changes?"

Q.36 Please tell me what first comes to mind when you think about the new Medicare prescription drug program... just the first word or thought that comes to mind. **(OPEN-END. PROBE ONCE IF RESPONDENT ANSWERS “DON’T KNOW”. ACCEPT UP TO TWO RESPONSES, BUT DO NOT PROBE FOR SECOND RESPONSE).**

		<u>Dec 2005</u>
48	NEGATIVE EVALUATIONS (NET)	44
18	Complicated/confusing	14
7	Costly/Expensive (SUB-NET)	9
6	– <i>Cost generally</i>	4
1	– <i>Costly to seniors/high deductible/loss of prior coverage/can’t afford it</i>	3
0	– <i>Cost to government/inefficient/deficits/higher taxes</i>	2
2	Not enough drug choices/limited options	2
2	Doesn’t go far enough	3
2	Scam/boondoggle/drug company/corporate scheme	3
1	Unfair/inequitable	3
1	Big government/socialism/welfare/bureaucracy	2
16	Other negatives	9
18	POSITIVE EVALUATIONS (NET)	20
5	Helpful/helps seniors	6
1	Timely/necessary/“About time”	2
1	Saves money/efficient	1
1	Affordability of drugs/cheaper drugs	1
*	Helps low income/poor	1
11	Other positives	10
10	NEUTRAL EVALUATIONS (NET)	10
2	Better than nothing/could be better	1
2	Mentions parents/grandparents/older people	4
1	Good step, but not enough	2
1	Not eligible/doesn’t affect me/don’t want it	1
4	Other Neutral/Mixed	3
5	All other mentions	7
19	Nothing/Don’t know	19

ASK FORM 2 ONLY [N=695]:

Q.37F2 On balance, do you think the new Medicare prescription drug plan will be very good, good, bad, or very bad for [READ AND RANDOMIZE]?

		(VOL)					
		Very <u>Good</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Bad</u>	Very <u>bad</u>	Not much <u>affected</u>	DK/ <u>ref.</u>
a.F2	Seniors on Medicare December, 2005	12 11	38 42	22 21	11 9	* 1	17=100 16=100
b.F2	Drug companies December, 2005	19 22	40 36	15 17	4 3	1 3	21=100 19=100
c.F2	The financial stability of Medicare December, 2005	5 5	32 36	28 28	10 7	1 2	24=100 22=100
d.F2	The federal budget deficit December, 2005	4 4	23 23	34 30	14 12	3 6	22=100 25=100

ASK ALL:

Q.38 Are you yourself eligible for the new Medicare prescription drug program?

		<u>Dec 2005</u>
21	Yes, eligible for new Medicare program	22
72	No, not eligible	71
<u>7</u>	Don't know/Refused	<u>7</u>
100		100

IF 'YES' (1 IN Q.38) ASK [N=369]:

Q.39 Have you already enrolled in the new Medicare prescription drug program, are you still learning about your options, have you not looked into it yet, or don't you plan to enroll?

34	Already enrolled
18	Learning about options
13	Haven't looked into it yet
33	Don't plan to enroll
<u>2</u>	Don't know/Refused
100	

IF 'NO' OR 'DK' (2,9 IN Q.38) ASK [N=1,036]:

Q.40 Have you helped a close friend or family member in learning about THEIR options under the new Medicare program, or not? [**IF YES:** Are you currently helping someone, or have they already enrolled?]

20	Yes, helped close friend or family member
8	Yes, currently helping
12	Yes, already enrolled/not helping anymore
*	Yes, both (VOL.)
79	No
<u>1</u>	Don't know/Refused
100	

IF ENROLLED/LEARNING (1,2 IN Q.39) ASK [N=191]:

Q.41 (Did you have/Have you had) any help from family or friends in learning about the program, or not?

27	Yes, family or friends
8	Yes other help (VOL.)
64	No
<u>1</u>	Don't know/Refused
100	

IF HELPED/HELPING (1,2,3 IN Q.40) READ:

I have a few questions about the help you gave someone with this program. If you have helped more than one person, think about the person that you've worked with the most RECENTLY when answering.

NOTE: QUESTIONS 42 THROUGH 50 WERE ASKED OF BOTH PEOPLE WHO ARE THEMSELVES "ALREADY ENROLLED" OR "LEARNING ABOUT OPTIONS" IN Q.39 AS WELL AS PEOPLE WHO "HAVE HELPED A CLOSE FRIEND OR FAMILY MEMBER" IN Q.40. SLIGHT DIFFERENCES IN QUESTION WORDING ACROSS THESE TWO GROUPS ARE SHOWN BELOW.

Q.42a/b (Was/Is) the process of enrolling in the new prescription drug program [READ]

Enrolled or <u>enrolling</u>	Helping <u>friend or family</u>	
34	8	Very easy
20	29	Fairly easy
14	30	Fairly difficult --OR--
24	30	Very difficult
<u>8</u>	<u>3</u>	Don't know/Refused [VOL.]
100	100	
N=(191)	(220)	

Q.43a About how many different prescription drug plans (did/do) you have to choose from... one, two, three, or more than that? [IF "More" ASK: "About how many options were there?"]

Q.43b About how many different prescription drug plans (did/do) the person you helped have to choose from... one, two, three, or more than that? [IF "More" ASK: "About how many options were there?"]

Enrolled or <u>enrolling</u>	Helping <u>friend or family</u>	
14	7	One
11	17	Two
18	29	Three
37	40	More than three
<i>17</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>4-9</i>
<i>3</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>10-29</i>
<i>5</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>30+</i>
<i>12</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>More than three, but don't know how many</i>
<u>20</u>	<u>7</u>	Don't know/Refused
100	100	
N=(191)	(220)	

Q.44a What (was/is) the main thing you (were/are) looking for in choosing a prescription drug plan?

Q.44b What (was/is) the main thing the person you helped (was/is) looking for in choosing a prescription drug plan? [OPEN END]

Enrolled or <u>enrolling</u>	Helping <u>friend or family</u>	
63	52	Cost/Affordability/Cheapest/Lowest copay-deductible-premiums
25	33	Coverage/Drug options/Fits my needs/Formulary
3	6	Convenience/Simplicity
2	1	Reputation of company/Service & help
1	0	Least change for me from before
1	0	Had no choices/Plan was chosen for me
2	0	Nothing/Not looking for anything
2	8	Other
5	5	Don't know/Refused
N=(191)	(220)	

- Q.45a Did you, or someone helping you, use the official Medicare website to compare plans, or not?
 Q.45b Did you, or the person you helped, use the official Medicare website to compare plans, or not?

<u>Enrolled or enrolling</u>	<u>Helping friend or family</u>	
24	37	Yes
73	61	No
<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	Don't know/Refused
100	100	
N=(191)	(220)	

Q.46a How confident are you that you (were/will be) able to choose the prescription drug plan that best fits your needs? **[READ]**

Q.46b How confident are you that the person you helped (was/will be) able to choose the prescription drug plan that best fits their needs? **[READ]**

<u>Enrolled or enrolling</u>	<u>Helping friend or family</u>	
43	28	Very confident
29	46	Somewhat confident
11	15	Not too confident
12	8	Not at all confident
<u>5</u>	<u>3</u>	Don't know/Refused
100	100	
N=(191)	(220)	

Q.47a About how many different prescription drugs do you take on a regular basis?

Q.47b As best you know, about how many different prescription drugs does this person take on a regular basis?

<u>Enrolled or enrolling</u>	<u>Helping friend or family</u>	
10	1	None
7	2	One
13	7	Two
13	10	Three
45	60	4 to 9
10	15	10 to 19
1	2	20 or more
<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>	Don't know/Refused
100	100	
N=(191)	(220)	

IF HAS PRESCRIPTIONS (1 – 100 IN Q.47a/b) ASK [N=383]:

Q.48a Compared to what you (were/are) paying for prescriptions (before/now), do you think the new program will save you money, cost you more, or will prescriptions be about the same for you as they were before?

Q.48b Compared to what this person (was/is) paying for prescriptions (before/now), do you think the new program will save them money, cost them more, or will prescriptions be about the same for them as they were before?

IF “SAVES MONEY” (1 IN Q.48a/b) ASK:

Q.49a Do you think it will save you a lot or only a little?

Q.49b Do you think it will save them a lot or only a little?

IF “COSTS MORE” (2 IN Q.48a/b) ASK:

Q.50a Do you think it will cost you a lot more or only a little more?

Q.50b Do you think it will cost them a lot more or only a little more?

<u>Enrolled or enrolling</u>	<u>Helping friend or family</u>	
43	43	Saves money
26	18	<i>A lot</i>
14	25	<i>Only a little</i>
3	0	<i>Don't know/Refused</i>
20	26	Costs more
14	13	<i>A lot</i>
6	11	<i>Only a little</i>
*	2	<i>Don't know/Refused</i>
29	27	About the same
8	4	Don't know/Refused
100	100	
N=(171)	(212)	

QUESTIONS 51-75 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED

Now, just a few questions for statistical purposes only.

ASK ALL:

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

	<u>Republican</u>	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Independent</u>	(VOL) No Preference	(VOL) Other Party	Don't know
March, 2006	28	34	30	4	*	4=100
February, 2006	30	33	31	3	*	3=100
January, 2006	28	32	32	5	*	3=100
December, 2005	29	34	31	4	*	2=100
Late November, 2005	27	34	29	5	1	4=100
Early November, 2005	28	34	31	5	*	2=100
Late October, 2005	29	33	31	5	*	2=100
Early October, 2005	26	34	34	4	*	2=100
September 8-11, 2005	31	32	33	3	*	1=100
September 6-7, 2005	27	33	33	4	*	3=100
July, 2005	31	34	29	4	*	2=100
June, 2005	30	32	32	4	*	2=100
Mid-May, 2005	30	34	29	4	*	3=100
Late March, 2005	29	32	36	2	*	1=100
Mid-March, 2005	30	34	29	4	*	3=100
Yearly Totals						
2005	30	33	31	4	*	2=100
2004	30	33	30	4	*	3=100
2003	30	31	31	5	*	3=100
2002	30	31	30	5	1	3=100
2001	29	34	29	5	*	3=100
2001 Post-Sept 11	31	32	28	5	1	3=100
2001 Pre-Sept 11	28	35	30	5	*	2=100
2000	28	33	29	6	*	4=100
1999	27	33	34	4	*	2=100
1998	28	33	32	5	*	2=100
1997	28	33	32	4	1	2=100
				No Preference/ Other/DK		
	<u>Republican</u>	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Independent</u>			
1996	29	33	33	5=100		
1995	32	30	34	4=100		
1994	30	32	34	4=100		
1993	27	34	34	5=100		
1992	28	33	35	4=100		
1991	31	32	33	4=100		
1990	31	33	30	6=100		
			Independent/ No Pref/Oth/DK			
	<u>Rep</u>	<u>Dem</u>				
1989	33	33	34=100			
1987	26	35	39=100			

IF ANSWERED 3, 4, 5 OR 9 IN PARTY, ASK:

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

	<u>Republican</u>	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Refused to lean</u>
March, 2006	11	14	13=38%
February, 2006	11	16	10=37%
January, 2006	10	16	14=40%
December, 2005	10	16	11=37%
Late November, 2005	9	13	17=39%
Early November, 2005	11	14	13=38%
Late October, 2005	11	15	12=38%
Early October, 2005	11	18	11=40%
September 8-11, 2005	10	18	9=37%
September 6-7, 2005	10	15	15=40%
July, 2005	9	15	11=35%
June, 2005	10	16	12=38%
Mid-May, 2005	9	13	14=36%
Late March, 2005	13	17	9=39%
December, 2004	14	12	9=35%
August, 2003	12	16	14=42%
August, 2002	12	13	13=38%
September, 2000	11	13	15=39%
Late September, 1999	14	15	16=45%
August, 1999	15	15	12=42%