



THE PEW RESEARCH CENTER  
For The People & The Press

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2011

Strong Focus on Asia, Less Interest in Europe

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## Global Trouble Spots Top Public's News Interests

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The public expresses far more interest in news from global hot spots, including Iraq, Afghanistan and North Korea, than in news from many less troubled countries.

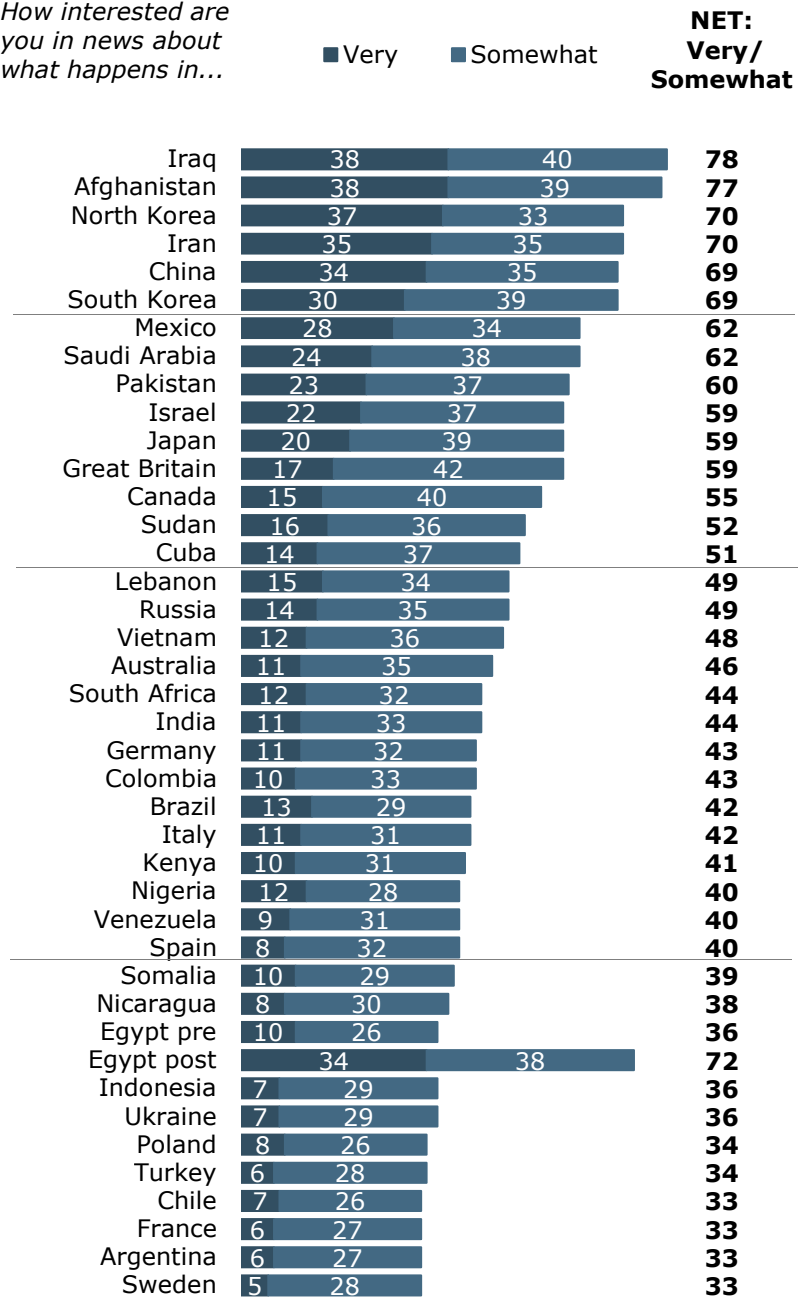
And while most Americans express interest in what happens in Canada and Great Britain, far fewer are interested in developments from other traditional U.S. allies – notably France.

These are the findings from surveys conducted over the past few months by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press. The surveys asked people to gauge their general level of interest – not tied to any particular event – in what happens in 40 different countries.

Recent events in Egypt demonstrate that public interest in news from a country can rise quickly. In mid-December, prior to the wave of popular protests

## High Interest in News from Asia, Middle East

*How interested are you in news about what happens in...*



PEW RESEARCH CENTER. Surveys conducted Dec. 2-5, 2010, Dec. 9-12, 2010, Dec. 16-19, 2010, Jan. 6-9, 2011, Jan. 13-16, 2011, Jan. 20-23, 2011, Feb. 17-20, 2011. Egypt pre figures from Dec. 16-19, 2010, post figures from Feb. 17-20, 2011.

in Egypt, just 36% said they were very (10%) or somewhat (26%) interested in news about that country.

In mid-February, following the resignation of Hosni Mubarak, twice as many (72%) said they were either very (34%) or somewhat (38%) interested in news about what happens in Egypt.

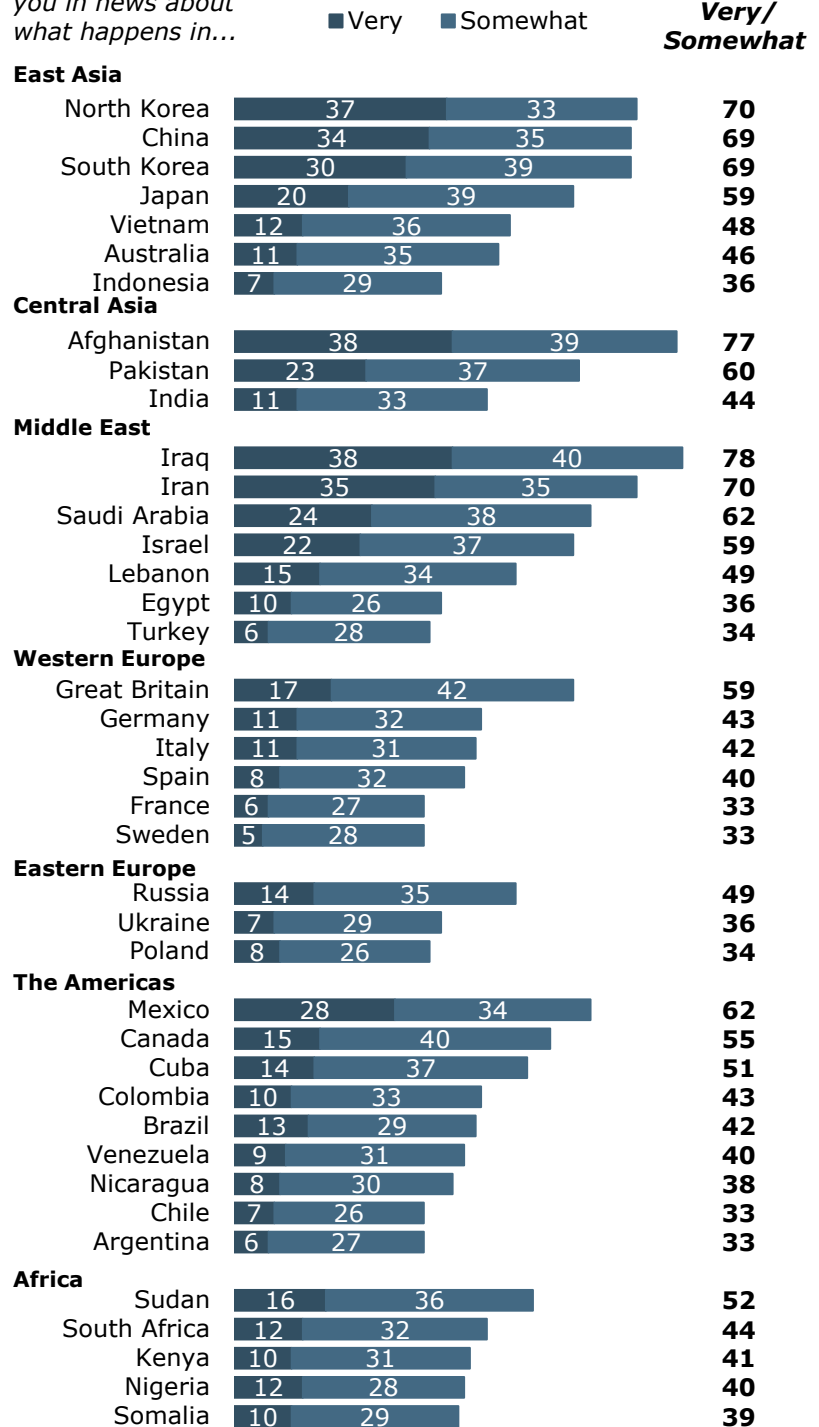
In general, the public expresses the most interest in news from Iraq and Afghanistan, where thousands of U.S. forces have been stationed for years. Nearly eight-in-ten say they are very or somewhat interested in what happens in Iraq (78%) and Afghanistan (77%).

However, there also is considerable public interest in news from North Korea (70% very/somewhat interested) and Iran (70%). And, reflecting the public's growing focus on Asia, nearly as many say they are interested in news from China (69%) and South Korea (69%).

In a Pew Research survey last month, 47% said that Asia is most important to the United

## Modest Interest in News from Western Europe

*How interested are you in news about what happens in...*



PEW RESEARCH CENTER. Surveys conducted Dec. 2-5, 2010, Dec. 9-12, 2010, Dec. 16-19, 2010, Jan. 6-9, 2011, Jan. 13-16, 2011, Jan. 20-23, 2011, Feb. 17-20, 2011. Egypt figures are from Dec. 16-19, 2010.

States, while 37% considered Europe to be the most important region. In 1993, the balance of public opinion was reversed: 50% considered Europe most important, 31% Asia. (See *“Strengthen Ties with China, But Get Tough on Trade,”* Jan. 12, 2011.)

## East Asia Top Region

Most of the nations near the top of the list are in Asia, particularly East Asia, or the Middle East. One notable exception is Mexico, a U.S. neighbor plagued by drug violence and a focal point for the domestic debate over immigration policy. Six-in-ten (62%) say they are very or somewhat interested in news out of Mexico.

Among the nine countries in the Americas included in the surveys, Mexico, Canada (55% very/somewhat interested) and Cuba (51%) are the only ones in which half or more express at least some interest. There is less interest in news from other countries in the Americas, including Colombia (43%), Brazil (42%) and Argentina (33%).

Looking at East Asia, majorities are very or somewhat interested in what happens in North Korea, China, South Korea and Japan (59%). About half express that level of interest in news about Vietnam (48%) or Australia (46%). Slightly more than a third (36%) say they are very or somewhat interested in news about what is happening in Indonesia.

Aside from Iraq and Iran, majorities show strong interest in news from two other nations in the Middle East critical to U.S. foreign policy: Saudi Arabia (62% very/somewhat interested) and Israel (59%). The public shows somewhat less interest in news out of two other nations that also play important roles in the region: Lebanon (49% very/somewhat interested) and Turkey (34%). And there was only modest interest in Egypt (36% very/somewhat closely) before the weeks of protests and change in power.

In Central/South Asia, the public expresses strong interest in news from Pakistan, a key player in the troubled region (60% very/somewhat interested), but less in news about India, a growing economic power (44%).

Americans express more interest in news from Great Britain (59% very/somewhat interested) than other Western European nations included in the surveys. Just 33% say they are very or somewhat interested in news about what is happening in France or

Sweden. Interest in news from Germany (43%), Italy (42%) and Spain (40%) falls somewhere in between.

Nearly half (49%) say they are very or somewhat interested in news out of Russia. There is less interest in news about other former Soviet states that are less consistent players on the global stage. About a third say they are very or somewhat interested in news from Ukraine (36%) or Poland (34%). And among African countries, about half (52%) say they are very or somewhat interested in what happens in Sudan, while about four-in-ten say they are this interested in news out of South Africa (44%), Kenya (41%), Nigeria (40%) and Somalia (39%).

## Modest Partisan Differences

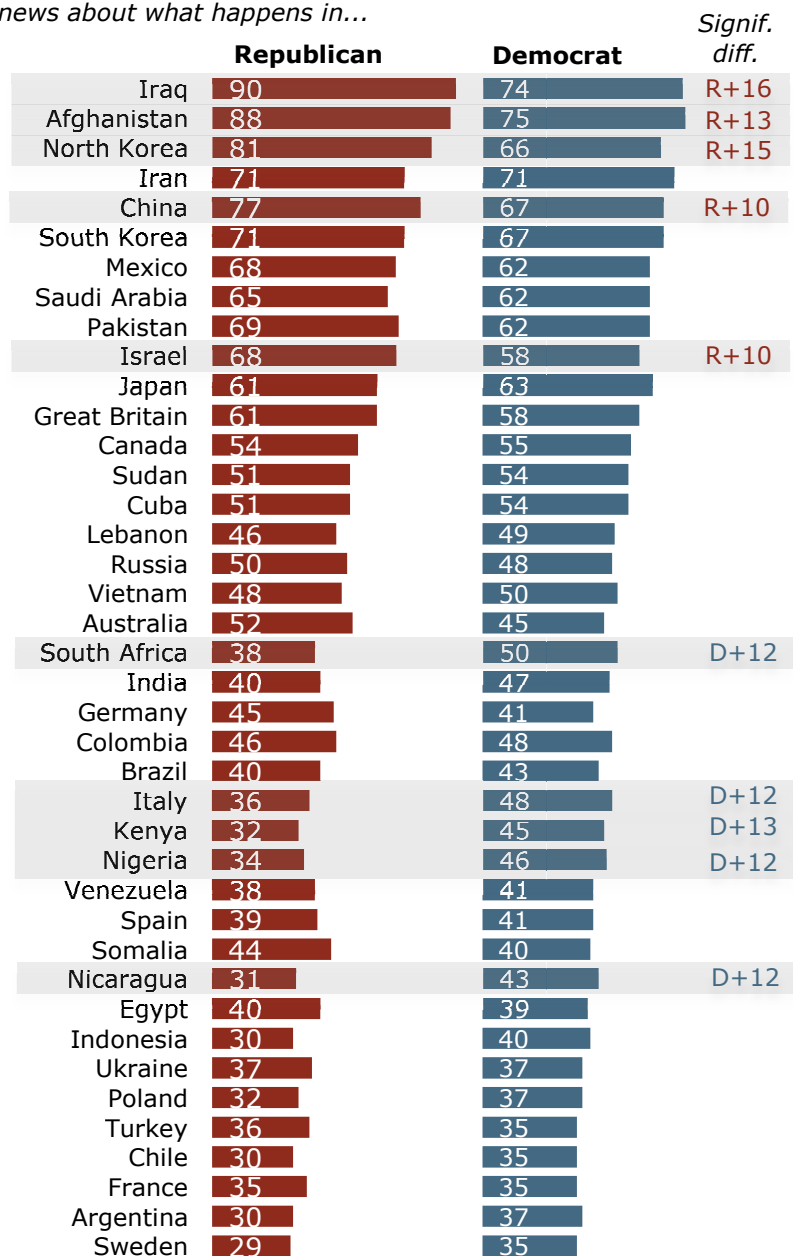
Republicans and Democrats show similar levels of interest in news about most of the countries included in the surveys. Republicans, though, show somewhat greater interest in several of the world's top trouble spots, while Democrats show greater interest in news about several developing nations.

About nine-in-ten Republicans say they are very or somewhat interested in news about what happens in Iraq (90%) or Afghanistan (88%). Three-quarters of Democrats say the same (74% for Iraq; 75% for Afghanistan). On the other hand, Republicans and Democrats are equally interested in news about Iran (71% very/somewhat interested).

Democrats, though, are more likely than Republicans to express interest in news from South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria and Nicaragua. Half of Democrats (50%) say they are very or somewhat interested in news out of

### Republicans More Interested in News from Iraq, Afghanistan

*Very/somewhat interested in news about what happens in...*



PEW RESEARCH CENTER. Surveys conducted Dec. 2-5, 2010, Dec. 9-12, 2010, Dec. 16-19, 2010, Jan. 6-9, 2011, Jan. 13-16, 2011, Jan. 20-23, 2011, Feb. 17-20, 2011. Egypt figures are from Dec. 16-19, 2010.

South Africa, compared with 38% of Republicans.

Republicans, especially conservative Republicans, are more likely than Democrats to say they are very or somewhat interested in news about Israel. Nearly seven-in-ten Republicans (68%) say this, compared with 58% of Democrats.

Three quarters of conservative Republicans (75%) say they are very or somewhat interested in news about Israel. About four-in-ten (41%) say they are very interested, almost double the 22% of the public that says this. Among Democrats, only 16% say they are very interested in news about Israel.

There are no partisan differences in interest in news from Egypt. Before the recent uprising, 40% of Republicans and 39% of Democrats said they were very or somewhat interested in what is happening there. Shortly after Hosni Mubarak's resignation, that rose to 76% for Republicans and 73% for Democrats.

## Neighbors Draw Strong Interest Along the Borders

More than eight-in-ten (82%) of those living in states that border Mexico say they are very or somewhat interested in news about what is happening in that country. And that interest is strong: 45% say they are *very interested* in news out of Mexico. Among the rest of the country, 57% say they are very or somewhat interested in this news; 24% say they are very interested.

People along the northern border of the U.S. take a stronger interest than most Americans in news out of Canada. Seven-in-ten (71%) of those living in states along the Canadian

### Conservative Reps Focus on Israel

<i>Interested in news about Israel...</i>	<b>Very</b> %	<b>Some-what</b> %	<b>Very/somewhat</b> %
Total	22	37	59
Republican	33	35	68
Cons Rep	41	34	75
Democrat	16	42	58
Lib Dem	20	36	56
Independent	21	37	58

PEW RESEARCH CENTER. Dec. 9-12, 2010.

### Border States Highly Interested in Neighboring Countries

<i>Interested in news about...</i>	<b>Very</b> %	<b>Some-what</b> %	<b>Very/somewhat</b> %
<b>Mexico*</b>	28	34	62
Border states	45	37	82
Other states	24	33	57
<b>Canada**</b>	15	40	55
Border states	24	47	71
Other states	13	38	51

PEW RESEARCH CENTER. \*Survey conducted Dec. 16-19, 2010. Border states include: AZ, CA, NM & TX.

\*\*Survey conducted Jan 6-9, 2011. Border states include: ID, ME, MI, MN, MT, ND, NH, NY, VT & WA.

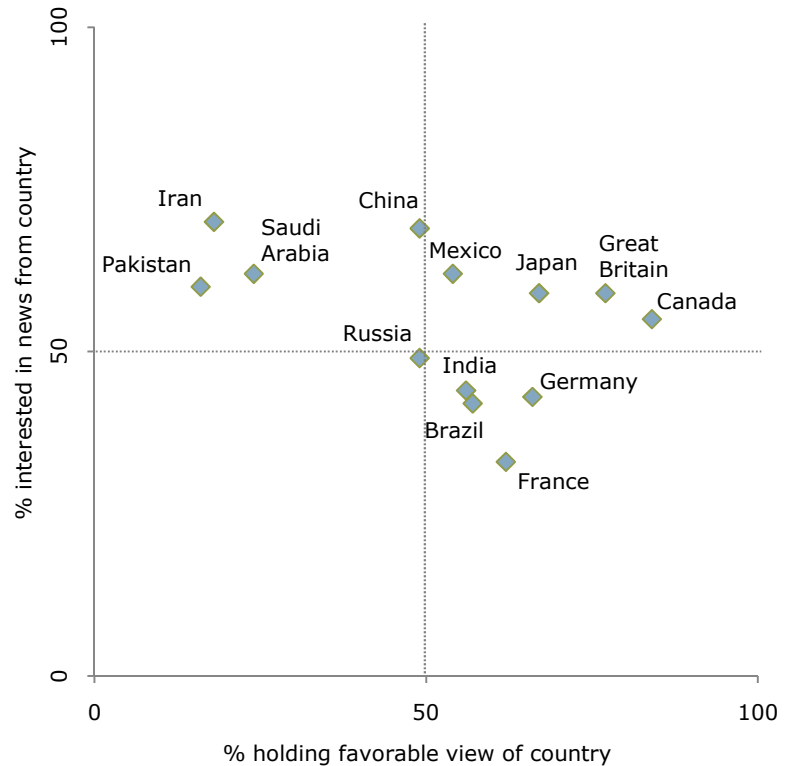
border say they are very or somewhat interested in news about what is happening in Canada. That drops to 51% for the rest of the nation.

### Country Favorability vs. News Interest

Many of the countries that draw the highest interest – such as Iran and Pakistan – are viewed very unfavorably by the public.

For example, seven-in-ten (70%) say they are very or somewhat interested in news about Iran. A 2010 survey by the Pew Global Attitudes Project found that 67% have an unfavorable opinion of Iran. (Data in accompanying graphic are drawn from [Pew Global Attitudes surveys in 2009 and 2010](#). A summary of these findings is [here](#). Favorability ratings available for 13 of 36 countries included in news interest surveys.)

#### High Interest in Several Unpopular Countries



PEW RESEARCH CENTER. Surveys conducted Dec. 2-5, 2010, Dec. 9-12, 2010, Dec. 16-19, 2010, Jan. 6-9, 2011, Jan. 13-16, 2011.  
Favorability ratings from Pew Global Attitudes Project surveys in 2009-2010.

A similar pattern holds true for Pakistan: 60% say they are at least somewhat interested in news from there, but 68% view the country unfavorably.

By contrast, the public is generally interested in news about Great Britain and has a favorable opinion of that country. Nearly six-in-ten (59%) say they are very or somewhat interested in news about Great Britain; in a 2009 Global Attitudes survey, 77% said they had a favorable view of Great Britain. Similarly, 55% express interest in news from Canada, while 84% have a favorable opinion of Canada.



But there is far less interest in some other positively viewed countries. The 2009 Pew Global Attitudes Project survey found that 62% of Americans have a favorable opinion of France, up from just 29% in 2003, amid tensions between the U.S. and France over the Iraq war. Just a third (33%) say they are very or somewhat interested in what happens in France; that ranked France last in overall interest, along with Sweden, Argentina and Chile, among the 40 nations included.

## About the Surveys

Results for the seven surveys used in this report are based on telephone interviews conducted by interviewers at Princeton Data Source under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International among national samples of approximately 1,000 adults 18 years of age or older living in the continental United States. A combination of landline and cell phone random digit dial samples were used and 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/detailed>. The table below shows the field dates and sample sizes for general public and for Republicans, Democrats and independents for each survey:

<b>Field dates</b>	<b>Total N</b>	<b>Landline</b>	<b>Cell Phone</b>	<b>Cell phone only</b>	<b>Rep</b>	<b>Dem</b>	<b>Ind</b>
December 2-5, 2010	1,003	671	332	146	265	322	308
December 9-12, 2010	1,011	676	335	139	278	305	328
December 16-19, 2010	1,034	703	331	152	270	328	306
January 6-9, 2011	1,018	687	331	136	276	294	377
January 13-16, 2011	1,000	670	330	134	257	293	367
January 20-23, 2011	1,001	671	330	135	283	307	311
February 17-20, 2011	1,001	670	331	137	277	325	319

The combined landline and cell phone samples are weighted using an iterative technique that matches gender, age, education, race, Hispanic origin, region, and population density. For the 2011 surveys, data were weighted to parameters from the March 2010 Census Bureau's Current Population Survey. For the 2010 surveys, data were weighted to parameters from the March 2009 Census Bureau's Current Population Survey. The samples also are weighted to match current patterns of telephone status and relative usage of landline and cell phones (for those with both), based on extrapolations from the 2010 National Health Interview Survey for the 2011 data and from the 2009 National Health Interview Survey for the 2010 data. 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 margins of error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey:

<b>Field dates</b>	<b>Plus or minus...</b>			
	<b>Total</b>	<b>Rep</b>	<b>Dem</b>	
December 2-5, 2010	4.0	7.5	7.0	percentage points
December 9-12, 2010	4.0	7.5	7.0	percentage points
December 16-19, 2010	4.0	7.5	6.5	percentage points
January 6-9, 2011	4.0	7.5	7.0	percentage points
January 13-16, 2011	4.0	7.5	7.0	percentage points
January 20-23, 2011	4.0	7.0	7.0	percentage points
February 17-20, 2011	4.0	7.5	7.0	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.

## 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 seven 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  
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Jacob Poushter and Gabriel Velasco, Research Analysts  
Danielle Gewurz, Research Assistant

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER NEWS INTEREST INDEX  
DECEMBER 2-5, 2010 OMNIBUS  
FINAL TOPLINE  
N=1003**

**PEW.1 THROUGH PEW.8 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED**

**ASK ALL:**

PEW.9 In general, how interested are you in news about what happens in **[INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE]**?

	<u>Very interested</u>	<u>Somewhat interested</u>	<u>Not too interested</u>	<u>Not at all interested</u>	<b>(VOL.) DK/Ref</b>
a. China December 2-5, 2010	34	35	10	19	1
b. Japan December 2-5, 2010	20	39	18	22	1
c. Saudi Arabia December 2-5, 2010	24	38	16	22	1
d. Nigeria December 2-5, 2010	12	28	26	33	2
e. Italy December 2-5, 2010	11	31	27	29	1
f. Brazil December 2-5, 2010	13	29	26	31	1
g. Poland December 2-5, 2010	8	26	29	36	1

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER NEWS INTEREST INDEX  
DECEMBER 9-12, 2010 OMNIBUS  
FINAL TOPLINE  
N=1,011**

**PEW.1 THROUGH PEW.3 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED**

**ASK ALL:**

PEW.5 In general, how interested are you in news about what happens in **[INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE]**?

	<u>Very interested</u>	<u>Somewhat interested</u>	<u>Not too interested</u>	<u>Not at all interested</u>	<b>(VOL.) DK/Ref</b>
a. India December 9-12, 2010	11	33	21	34	2
b. Israel December 9-12, 2010	22	37	15	24	1
c. Turkey December 9-12, 2010	6	28	26	37	2
d. South Africa December 9-12, 2010	12	32	23	31	2
e. Germany December 9-12, 2010	11	32	23	32	2
g. Argentina December 9-12, 2010	6	27	27	38	2

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER NEWS INTEREST INDEX  
DECEMBER 16-19, 2010 OMNIBUS  
FINAL TOPLINE  
N=1,034**

**PEW.1 THROUGH PEW.2 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED**

**NO QUESTION PEW.3**

**ASK ALL:**

PEW.4 In general, how interested are you in news about what happens in **[INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE]**?

	<u>Very interested</u>	<u>Somewhat interested</u>	<u>Not too interested</u>	<u>Not at all interested</u>	<b>(VOL.) DK/Ref</b>
a. North Korea December 16-19, 2010	37	33	13	17	*
b. Pakistan December 16-19, 2010	23	37	18	20	1
c. Egypt December 16-19, 2010	10	26	29	33	2
d. France December 16-19, 2010	6	27	29	36	1
e. Somalia December 16-19, 2010	10	29	27	32	1
f. Chile December 16-19, 2010	7	26	32	33	2
g. Mexico December 16-19, 2010	28	34	18	19	1

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER NEWS INTEREST INDEX  
JANUARY 6-9, 2011 OMNIBUS  
FINAL TOPLINE  
N=1018**

**PEW.1 THROUGH PEW.7 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED**

**ASK ALL:**

PEW.8 In general, how interested are you in news about what happens in **[INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE]**?

	<u>Very interested</u>	<u>Somewhat interested</u>	<u>Not too interested</u>	<u>Not at all interested</u>	<b>(VOL.) DK/Ref</b>
a. South Korea January 6-9, 2011	30	39	14	17	1
b. Iran January 6-9, 2011	35	35	11	18	1
c. Lebanon January 6-9, 2011	15	34	22	29	1
d. Great Britain January 6-9, 2011	17	42	17	23	1

<b>PEW.8 CONTINUED...</b>	Very <u>interested</u>	Somewhat <u>interested</u>	Not too <u>interested</u>	Not at all <u>interested</u>	<b>(VOL.)</b> <u>DK/Ref</u>
e. Ukraine January 6-9, 2011	7	29	26	37	2
f. Canada January 6-9, 2011	15	40	20	24	1
g. Cuba January 6-9, 2011	14	37	21	28	1

**PEW.9 THROUGH PEW.13 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED**

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER NEWS INTEREST INDEX  
JANUARY 13-16, 2010 OMNIBUS  
FINAL TOPLINE  
N=1,000**

**PEW.1 THROUGH PEW.8****NO PEW.9 OR PEW.10****ASK ALL:**

Next,

PEW.11 In general, how interested are you in news about what happens in **[INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE]**?

	Very <u>interested</u>	Somewhat <u>interested</u>	Not too <u>interested</u>	Not at all <u>interested</u>	<b>(VOL.)</b> <u>DK/Ref</u>
a. Indonesia January 13-16, 2011	7	29	27	36	2
b. Nicaragua January 13-16, 2011	8	30	24	36	1
c. Russia January 13-16, 2011	14	35	19	30	2
d. Spain January 13-16, 2011	8	32	25	34	1
e. Sweden January 13-16, 2011	5	28	27	38	2
f. Kenya January 13-16, 2011	10	31	24	34	1
g. Venezuela January 13-16, 2011	9	31	25	34	2

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER NEWS INTEREST INDEX  
JANUARY 20-23, 2011 OMNIBUS  
FINAL TOPLINE  
N=1001**

**PEW.1 THROUGH PEW.5 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED**

**ASK ALL:**

PEW.6 In general, how interested are you in news about what happens in **[INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE]**?

	<u>Very interested</u>	<u>Somewhat interested</u>	<u>Not too interested</u>	<u>Not at all interested</u>	<b>(VOL.) DK/Ref</b>
a. Iraq January 20-23, 2011	38	40	13	9	1
b. Afghanistan January 20-23, 2011	38	39	13	10	1

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER NEWS INTEREST INDEX  
FEBRUARY 17-20, 2011 OMNIBUS  
FINAL TOPLINE  
N=1001**

**PEW.1 THROUGH PEW.3 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED**

**ASK ALL:**

PEW.4 Next, in general how interested are you in news about what happens in **[INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE]**?

	<u>Very interested</u>	<u>Somewhat interested</u>	<u>Not too interested</u>	<u>Not at all interested</u>	<b>(VOL.) DK/Ref</b>
a. Australia February 17-20, 2011	11	35	21	31	1
b. Colombia February 17-20, 2011	10	33	22	33	1
c. Vietnam February 17-20, 2011	12	36	20	31	2
d. Sudan February 17-20, 2011	16	36	16	30	2
e. Egypt February 17-20, 2011	34	38	10	18	1
December 16-19, 2010	10	26	29	33	2