Public Skeptical of Decision to Hold Olympic Games in Russia

Terrorism and Security Drive Concerns
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Terrorism and Security Drive Concerns

With the 2014 Winter Olympics approaching, more say it was a bad decision (44%) than a good decision (32%) to hold the games in Russia. About one-in-four (24%) say they don’t know.

Concerns about terrorism and safety are foremost among those who think it was a bad decision to hold the Olympics in Russia. In an open-ended question, 62% of those who say it was a bad decision to hold the Winter Olympics in Russia mention terrorism or general security in Sochi as a reason they feel this way.

Far fewer (5%) mention the Russian government or President Vladimir Putin as reasons why it was a bad decision to hold the games there, while 4% say Russia’s treatment of gays and lesbians make the country a bad choice to host the games.

Most adults are planning to watch either “a lot” (18%) or some (37%) of the Olympics, according to the new national survey by the Pew Research Center, conducted Jan. 30-Feb. 2 among 1,003 adults. About one-in-four
adults (26%) say they plan to watch “very little” and 19% say they will not watch at all. Nearly one-in-four of those 50 and older (23%) plan to watch a lot, compared with 14% of those younger than 50.

Young adults stand out in their support of Russia’s hosting of the Olympics. Among adults ages 18-29, about twice as many say it was a “good decision” as a “bad decision” to hold the Winter Olympics in Russia – 49% vs. 25%. By contrast, a 55% majority of adults 50 and older say it was a bad decision, compared with about one-in-four (24%) saying it was a good decision. Among adults ages 30-49, 42% say it was a bad decision and 33% say it was a good decision.

Across all demographic groups, concerns about terrorism and safety are dominant among those who think it was a bad decision to hold the Olympics in Russia. Seven-in-ten Republicans (70%) and 63% of Democrats who said it was a bad decision cite concerns about security. And 7% of Democrats and 2% of Republicans mention Russia’s policies toward gays and lesbians as a reason it was a bad decision.

In 2008, opinions about hosting the Summer Olympics in China changed over time and became more positive as the games began. In a survey four months before the event, the public was evenly divided about whether it was a good idea to hold the Summer Olympics in China (41% good, 43% bad). But during the games’ opening weekend, more viewed the decision to hold the games in China as good than bad (52% good, 31% bad).

### The Week’s News

One-in-five (20%) closely followed the State of the Union last week, down from 26% last year and the lowest news interest during Obama’s tenure. (By comparison, 24% of the public followed George W. Bush’s 2006 State of the Union address to start his sixth year in office.) Twice as many Democrats (33%) as Republicans (16%) and independents (15%) followed Obama’s speech closely.

#### Winter Weather Draws News Interest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% following news very closely</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cold winter weather in much of U.S.</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. economy</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Super Bowl</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State of the Union</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration debate</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olympics preparations</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


PEW RESEARCH CENTER

www.pewresearch.org
Cold winter weather in much of the country was the most followed news story of the week, with nearly four-in-ten (38%) saying they paid very close attention. People living in the South (45%), the Northeast and the Midwest (42% each) were much more likely than those in the West (21%) to closely follow news about the cold weather.

About three-in-ten (29%) closely followed news about the economy last week. The Super Bowl was closely followed by 23%, which is roughly equal to interest in past years. An additional 17% closely followed debate over immigration policy in the U.S., while about one-in-ten (9%) paid close attention to preparations for the Olympics.
About the Survey

The analysis in this report is based on telephone interviews conducted January 30-February 2, 2014 among a national sample of 1,003 adults, 18 years of age or older living in the continental United States (501 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 502 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 285 who had no landline telephone). 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 and Spanish. 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 2012 Census Bureau's American Community 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 2013 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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Unweighted sample size</th>
<th>Plus or minus ...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total sample</td>
<td>1,003</td>
<td>3.6 percentage points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>7.0 percentage points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>7.0 percentage points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>6.0 percentage points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Say it was a bad decision to hold 2014 Winter Olympics in Russia</td>
<td>473</td>
<td>5.3 percentage points</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.

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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?”]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very closely</th>
<th>Fairly closely</th>
<th>Not too closely</th>
<th>Not at all closely</th>
<th>(VOL.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Reports about the condition of the U.S. economy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| January 30-February 2, 2014 | 29           | 31             | 17              | 23                |       *
| January 9-12, 2014       | 28           | 29             | 19              | 23                |       1
| January 2-5, 2014        | 29           | 31             | 17              | 22                |       1
| December 12-15, 2013     | 26           | 27             | 21              | 24                |       1
| November 14-17, 2013     | 32           | 32             | 17              | 19                |       *
| October 31-November 3, 2013 | 31          | 37             | 16              | 15                |       *
| October 17-20, 2013      | 41           | 31             | 16              | 12                |       *
| October 3-6, 2013        | 34           | 30             | 19              | 16                |       1
| September 25-29, 2013    | 35           | 30             | 16              | 18                |       *
| September 19-22, 2013    | 28           | 33             | 20              | 19                |       1
| September 12-15, 2013    | 28           | 34             | 17              | 20                |       *
| August 1-4, 2013         | 28           | 35             | 19              | 17                |       1
| July 18-21, 2013         | 28           | 29             | 20              | 23                |       1
| June 20-23, 2013         | 28           | 30             | 19              | 22                |       1
| June 13-16, 2013         | 30           | 32             | 15              | 22                |       *
| June 6-9, 2013           | 33           | 31             | 15              | 21                |       *
| May 16-19, 2013          | 30           | 31             | 20              | 19                |       *
| May 9-12, 2013           | 28           | 30             | 21              | 20                |       1
| March 28-31, 2013        | 30           | 30             | 17              | 22                |       1
| March 7-10, 2013         | 35           | 30             | 16              | 19                |       *
| January 31-February 3, 2013 | 33          | 33             | 16              | 16                |       1
| January 17-20, 2013      | 36           | 32             | 15              | 16                |       *
| January 3-6, 2013        | 34           | 32             | 18              | 16                |       1


b. Barack Obama’s State of the Union speech

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very closely</th>
<th>Fairly closely</th>
<th>Not too closely</th>
<th>Not at all closely</th>
<th>(VOL.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| January 30-February 2, 2014 | 20           | 19             | 16              | 43                |       1
| February 14-17, 2013    | 26           | 20             | 16              | 37                |       *
| January 26-29, 2012     | 29           | 18             | 16              | 37                |       1
| January 27-30, 2011     | 28           | 22             | 13              | 36                |       1
| January 29-February 1, 2010 | 33         | 22             | 17              | 29                |       1

TRENDS FOR COMPARISON:

February 27-March 2, 2009: Barack Obama’s first address to a joint session of Congress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very closely</th>
<th>Fairly closely</th>
<th>Not too closely</th>
<th>Not at all closely</th>
<th>(VOL.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| February 1-4, 2008: President Bush’s State of the Union address | 37           | 26             | 14              | 23                |       *
| January 26-29, 2007: Reports about George Bush’s State of the Union address | 18           | 17             | 20              | 45                |       *
| February, 2006: George W. Bush’s State of the Union address | 25           | 26             | 20              | 28                |       1
| February, 2003         | 36           | 24             | 15              | 24                |       1
| January, 1994: Reports about Bill Clinton’s State of the Union address | 26           | 25             | 18              | 31                |       *
| February, 1992: President Bush’s State of the Union Address | 26           | 26             | 20              | 27                |       1
### PEW.1 CONTINUED...

#### c. Debate over immigration policy in the U.S.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Frame</th>
<th>Very closely</th>
<th>Fairly closely</th>
<th>Not too closely</th>
<th>Not at all closely</th>
<th>(VOL.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 30-February 2, 2014</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 11-14, 2013</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>*</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 27-30, 2013: The U.S. Senate passing immigration reform legislation</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>*</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 20-23, 2013: Debate over immigration policy in the U.S.</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>23</td>
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<td>June 13-16, 2013</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 6-9, 2013</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 23-26, 2013</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23</td>
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<td>May 9-12, 2013</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 25-28, 2013</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>32</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 18-21, 2013</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 4-7, 2013</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 31-February 3, 2013: Debate in Washington over immigration policy</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 28-July 1, 2012: The Supreme Court decision on Arizona’s immigration law</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 26-29, 2012: The issue of immigration</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 12-15, 2011</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 2-6, 2010</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>August 12-15, 2010</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21</td>
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</table>

#### d. The Super Bowl

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Frame</th>
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<th>Fairly closely</th>
<th>Not too closely</th>
<th>Not at all closely</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 30-February 2, 2014</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>37</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 31-February 3, 2013</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>23</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 2-5, 2012</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>34</td>
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**PEW.1 CONTINUED...**

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<th>(VOL.)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February 3-6, 2011</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>37</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 5-8, 2010</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 30-February 2, 2009</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 1-4, 2008</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 9-12, 2007</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February, 2000</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February, 1990</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**e. Preparations for the Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Very closely</th>
<th>Fairly closely</th>
<th>Not too closely</th>
<th>Not at all closely</th>
<th>(VOL.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>January 30-February 2, 2014</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TRENDS FOR COMPARISON:**

- August 1-4, 2008: News about the upcoming Olympic games in Beijing, China
  - 13
  - 33
  - 31
  - 23
  - *
- July 25-28, 2008: News about China as the Beijing Olympic Games approach
  - 12
  - 31
  - 29
  - 28
  - *
- April 4-7, 2008: News about the upcoming summer Olympics in Beijing, China
  - 5
  - 18
  - 31
  - 45
  - 1
- August, 2004: Preparations for the summer Olympics in Athens, Greece
  - 10
  - 22
  - 29
  - 38
  - 1

**f. Cold winter weather in much of the country**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Very closely</th>
<th>Fairly closely</th>
<th>Not too closely</th>
<th>Not at all closely</th>
<th>(VOL.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 30-February 2, 2014</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TRENDS FOR COMPARISON:**

- January 9-12, 2014: Cold winter weather
  - 44
  - 32
  - 12
  - 11
  - 1
- January 24-27, 2013: Cold winter weather
  - 37
  - 28
  - 15
  - 19
  - 1
- November 3-6, 2011: An unusual autumn snow storm on the East Coast
  - 20
  - 26
  - 26
  - 27
  - 1
- February 3-6, 2011: Snow and ice storms across the United States
  - 45
  - 34
  - 13
  - 8
  - *
  - 35
  - 32
  - 17
  - 16
  - 1
- December 16-19, 2010: Cold winter weather
  - 43
  - 27
  - 13
  - 16
  - 1
- February 12-15, 2010: Major snow storms affecting the East Coast and the South
  - 39
  - 31
  - 16
  - 14
  - *
- January 8-11, 2010: Unusually cold winter weather
  - 42
  - 30
  - 17
  - 12
  - *
- January 16-19, 2009: Cold winter weather in much of the country
  - 33
  - 31
  - 21
  - 15
  - *
- December 14-17, 2007: Snow and ice storms in the Midwest and Northeast
  - 30
  - 31
  - 21
  - 18
  - *
- February 16-19, 2007: Cold winter weather and snowstorms in the Northeast and Midwest
  - 30
  - 33
  - 18
  - 18
  - 1
- February 9-12, 2007: Cold winter weather
  - 36
  - 36
  - 15
  - 13
  - *
- January 19-22, 2007: Snow and ice storms in some parts of the country
  - 31
  - 32
  - 22
  - 14
  - 1
- January 5-8, 2007: Winter snowstorms in the western U.S.
  - 24
  - 30
  - 25
  - 21
  - *
- January, 2001: Cold winter weather and storms in the Northeast and Midwest
  - 42
  - 31
  - 15
  - 11
  - 1
- January, 1999: Cold winter weather and storms in the Midwest
  - 37
  - 34
  - 17
  - 12
  - *
- Early December, 1998: Unseasonable weather patterns
  - 39
  - 35
  - 13
  - 12
  - 1
- January, 1994: News about cold weather conditions in the Northeast and Midwest
  - 51
  - 30
  - 12
  - 7
  - *
ASK ALL:
Thinking about the Olympic Games...

ASK ALL:
PEW.2  All things considered, was the decision to hold the 2014 Winter Olympics in Russia a good or bad decision?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2008 Summer Olympics in China</th>
<th>(GAP)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Aug 8-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>Bad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Don't know/Refused (VOL.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ASK IF "BAD DECISION" (PEW.2=2) [N=473]:
PEW.3  Why do you think it was a bad decision to hold the 2014 Winter Olympics in Russia? [OPEN END. PROBE FOR CLARITY ONLY. DO NOT PROBE FOR ADDITIONAL MENTIONS. IF MORE THAN ONE MENTION, RECORD ALL IN ORDER OF MENTION.]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jan 30-Feb 2 2014</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>62</td>
<td>Terrorism concerns/Not safe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Vladimir Putin/Don’t trust their government/Corrupt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Treatment of gays and lesbians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Don’t like Russia (general)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Political turmoil/Instability/Unrest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Weather</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Bad relationship with U.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Cost/Economic concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Social/Human rights issues (general)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Communist country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Too far away/Difficult to get to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Not prepared/Not doing a good job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Don’t know/Refused</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figures add to more than 100% because of multiple responses.

ASK ALL:
PEW.4  How much of the Olympic Games do you plan to watch? [READ IN ORDER]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TREND FOR COMPARISON</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How much of the Olympic Games do you plan to watch/are you watching?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jan 30-Feb 2 2014</th>
<th>Aug 8-11 2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>A lot of it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>Some of it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Very little of it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*</td>
<td>Don’t know/Refused (VOL.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key to Pew Research trends noted in the topline:
(GAP) Pew Research Global Attitudes Project

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1 Item asked “do you plan to watch” on Aug. 8, 2008, the day before the opening ceremony (N=245). Item asked “are you watching” Aug. 9-11, 2008, the day of the opening ceremony and the two days afterward (N=760).