



THE PEW RESEARCH CENTER
For The People & The Press

NEWS Release

1615 L Street, N.W., Suite 700
Washington, D.C. 20036
Tel (202) 419-4350
Fax (202) 419-4399

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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:
Andrew Kohut, Director
Michael Remez, Senior Writer

Gingrich, Romney Most Heard About Candidates Primary Fight and Obama Speech Top News Interest

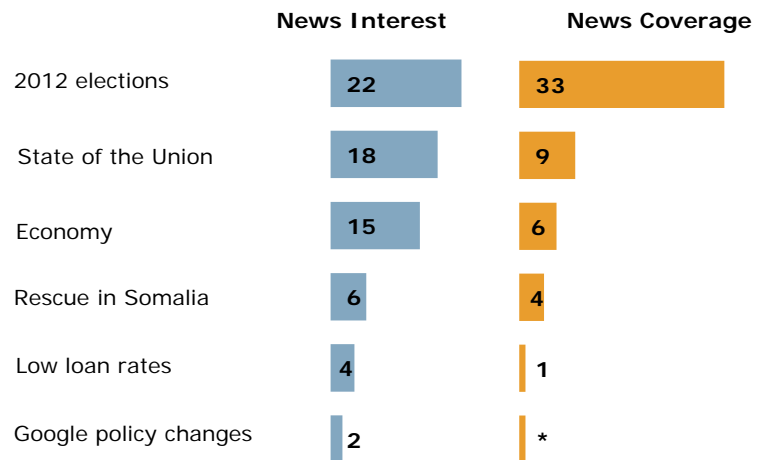
In the days before Tuesday's hard-fought Florida primary and just after the president's State of the Union address, political stories topped the public's news interest.

About two-in-ten (22%) say they followed news about candidates for the 2012 presidential elections more closely than any other news last week. About as many (18%) say their top story was Barack Obama's annual speech to a joint session of Congress on Jan. 24.

Another 15% say they followed news about the nation's economy most closely, according to the latest weekly News Interest Index survey, conducted Jan. 26-29 among 1,006 adults by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press.

By comparison, news coverage was not so evenly distributed. The 2012 campaign dominated coverage, accounting for a third of the newshole (33%), according to a separate analysis by the Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism (PEJ). The State of the Union made up 9% of coverage and the economy 6%.

News Interest Vs. News Coverage



News interest shows the percentage of people who say they followed this story most closely, Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, Jan. 26-29, 2012. News coverage shows the percentage of news coverage devoted to each story, Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism, Jan. 23-29, 2012.

Differing Partisan Interests

More than a third of Republicans (36%) say they followed news about the presidential candidates more closely than any other news last week. Reports about the condition of the U.S. economy ranked second (14% most closely). Just 8% of Republicans say President Obama's State of the Union was their top story.

Among Democrats, about a third (32%) say they paid more attention to the State of the Union speech than to any other story. Another 16% say they followed election news most closely and 9% cite economic news.

Independents are more evenly divided: 21% say their top story was news about the economy, while 18% cite the presidential election and 15% choose Obama's speech.

Looking at a separate measure, nearly half of Democrats (48%) say they followed news about the State of the Union *very closely*, much more than the 17% of Republicans and 25% of independents that say this. Republicans and Democrats are about equally likely to say they very closely followed news about the election (35% and 31%, respectively) or the economy (36% and 39%, respectively).

Campaign Top Story for GOP, Obama Speech for Democrats

<i>Story followed most closely...</i>	Total %	Rep %	Dem %	Ind %
2012 elections	22	36	16	18
State of the Union	18	8	32	15
Economy	15	14	9	21
Rescue in Somalia	6	9	2	6
Low loan rates	4	7	5	2
Google changes	2	2	2	2
Other	10	9	7	14
Don't know	<u>23</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>22</u>
	100	100	100	100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Jan. 26-29, 2012. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

Attention Focused on Two Battling Candidates

Two weeks ago, following his win in the New Hampshire primary, Romney was far and away the most visible GOP candidate. In a Jan. 12-15 survey, 51% said they had heard the most about Romney in the news recently. At that point, just 6% said they had heard the most about Gingrich.

But Gingrich's win in South Carolina – and Romney's effort to stop his momentum in Florida – has led to nearly equal levels of visibility for the contenders. Currently, 42% say they've heard the most about Gingrich recently, while 36% say Romney. This is true among Republicans and Republican-leaning independents as well; 45% say they have heard the most about Gingrich, while 41% say they have heard the most about Romney.

Gingrich, Romney Equally Visible

	Jan 5-8	Jan 12-15	Jan 26-29
<i>GOP candidate heard most about?</i>	%	%	%
Newt Gingrich	11	6	42
Mitt Romney	39	51	36
Ron Paul	6	4	4
Rick Santorum	9	1	2

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Jan 26-29, 2012. Previous measures open ended; current measure offers four remaining candidates. For open-end measures, other candidates not shown.

The Week's News

Overall, 35% say they followed reports about the condition of the U.S. economy very closely, matching the number that said this one week earlier. Nearly as many (29%) say they followed the State of the Union speech very closely, a level of interest comparable to interest in Obama's previous two State of the Union speeches. Somewhat more (37%) very closely followed news about Obama's first address to a joint session of Congress shortly after taking office in 2009.

The week's other top stories attracted less attention. Fewer than one-in-ten (6%) say their top story was the successful mission by U.S. special forces to rescue two aid workers – one American and one Dane – held captive in Somalia. About two-in-ten (21%) say they followed this news very closely. News about the raid made up 4% of coverage.

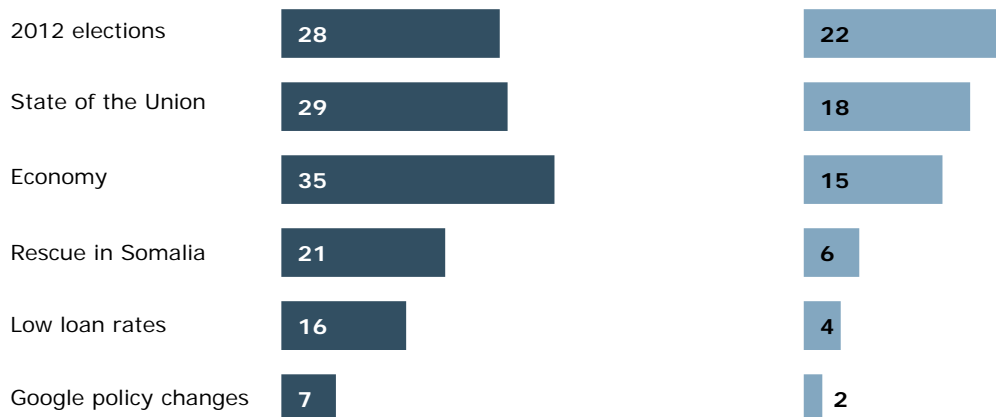
Few (4%) say they followed recent news about historically low interest rates for banks and home mortgages most closely; 16% say they followed this news very closely. This news accounted for 1% of coverage.

Just 2% say their top story was new policies announced by Google about how the internet giant would track people's web use; 7% say they followed this news very closely. The story made up less than 1% of the week's newshole.

News Interest

% following each story very closely

Which one story did you follow most closely



PEW RESEARCH CENTER. Jan. 26-29, 2012.

Two weeks ago, the on-line protests by prominent web-sites against proposed legislation in Congress targeting online piracy proved to be the top story for those ages 18-29. In the most recent survey, young people were somewhat more likely to follow news about the Google policy changes than those over 50, but just 6% say this was the news they followed most closely. That's well behind interest in Obama's speech (21% most closely) or the presidential campaign (19%) among younger Americans.

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 coverage. 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 were collected Jan. 23-29, and survey data measuring public interest in the top news stories of the week were collected Jan. 26-29 from a nationally representative sample of 1,006 adults.

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 Monday through Sunday) PEJ compiles this data to identify the top stories for the week. (For more information about the Project for Excellence in Journalism's News Coverage Index, go to www.journalism.org.) The News Interest Index survey collects data from Thursday through Sunday to gauge public interest in the most covered stories of the week.

Results for this survey are based on telephone interviews conducted January 26-29, 2012 among a national sample of 1,006 adults 18 years of age or older living in the continental United States (604 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 402 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 200 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. 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.

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 March 2011 Census Bureau's Current Population Survey and population density to parameters from the Decennial Census. The sample is also weighted to match current patterns of telephone status based on extrapolations from the 2011 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 within the landline sample. Sampling errors and statistical tests of significance take into account the effect of weighting. The following table shows the sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey:

Group	Sample Size	Plus or minus ...
Total sample	1,006	4.0 percentage points
Republicans	261	7.5 percentage points
Democrats	303	7.0 percentage points
Independents	358	6.5 percentage points
Rep/Rep-leaning	414	6.0 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.

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PEW RESEARCH CENTER NEWS INTEREST INDEX
JANUARY 26-29, 2012
FINAL TOPLINE
N=1,006

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					
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	*
January 20-23, 2011	37	33	14	15	1
January 13-16, 2011	37	29	15	18	1

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 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. Barack Obama's State of the Union speech					
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
TREND FOR COMPARISON:					
February 27-March 2, 2009: <i>Barack Obama's first address to a joint session of Congress</i>	37	26	14	23	*
February 1-4, 2008: <i>President Bush's State of the Union address</i>	18	17	20	45	*
January 26-29, 2007: <i>Reports about George Bush's State of the Union address</i>	25	26	20	28	1
February, 2006: <i>George W. Bush's State of the Union address</i>	24	22	19	34	1
February, 2003	36	24	15	24	1
January, 1994: <i>Reports about Bill Clinton's State of the Union address</i>	26	25	18	31	*
February, 1992: <i>President Bush's State of the Union Address</i>	26	26	20	27	1
c. Google announcing new policies about how to track people's web use					
January 26-29, 2012	7	15	24	53	1
TRENDS FOR COMPARISON:					
August 18-21, 2011: <i>Google buying Motorola's cell phone business</i>	7	12	17	64	1
March 26-29, 2010: <i>Google's decision to stop using computer servers in China to avoid government censorship</i>	9	16	25	49	1
January 15-18, 2010: <i>Google announcing that it may leave China</i>	6	16	21	57	1
d. U.S. special forces rescuing aid workers in Somalia					
January 26-29, 2012	21	22	23	33	1
TRENDS FOR COMPARISON:					
May 5-8, 2011: <i>The killing of Osama bin Laden in a raid by American forces</i>	50	30	13	6	1
July 3-7, 2008: <i>The rescue of 15 hostages held by rebels in Colombia</i>	17	27	23	32	1
April 5-9, 2007: <i>Fifteen British sailors and marines held captive and later releases by the Iranian government</i>	31	37	18	14	*
March 30-April 2, 2007: <i>Fifteen British sailors and marines held captive by the Iranian government</i>	27	28	22	22	1
November, 1990: <i>The plight of American hostages and other Westerners detained in Iraq and Kuwait</i>	49	33	13	4	1
October, 1990	47	37	11	5	*
September, 1990	57	30	9	3	1
e. Historically low interest rates for banks and home mortgages					
January 26-29, 2012	16	21	24	38	2

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
TRENDS FOR COMPARISON:					
January, 1992: <i>The Federal Reserve Bank's interest rate reduction</i>	35	31	19	14	1
May, 1990: <i>Reports about renewed inflation and rising interest rates</i>	18	29	26	26	1
f. News about candidates for the 2012 presidential elections					
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
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>

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.]**

Jan 26-29

2012

22	News about candidates for the 2012 presidential elections
18	Barack Obama's State of the Union speech
15	Reports about the condition of the U.S. economy
6	U.S. special forces rescuing aid workers in Somalia
4	Historically low interest rates for banks and home mortgages
2	Google announcing new policies about how it tracks people's web use
10	Some other story (VOL.)
23	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

PEW.P.1 AND PEW.3 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED**ASK ALL:**

PEW.4 Regardless of whom you might prefer, which Republican candidate have you heard the most about in the news recently? **[READ NAMES; RANDOMIZE]**

Jan 26-29

2012

42	Newt Gingrich
36	Mitt Romney
4	Ron Paul
2	Rick Santorum
1	Other (VOL.)
15	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

PEW.4 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

ASK ALL:

PEW.5 Did you happen to watch President Obama’s State of the Union address on Tuesday night, or didn’t you get a chance to see it?

		Jan 26-29	Jan 27-30	Jan 29-Feb 1	TREND FOR COMPARISON: President Obama’s speech about health care Sep 11-14, 2009
		<u>2012</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>Sep 11-14, 2009</u>
	Yes, watched	42	40	45	41
	No, didn’t watch	58	59	55	59
	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	*	*	1	*

IF DIDN’T WATCH OR DON’T KNOW (PEW.5=2,9) READ:

From what you’ve read and heard about the speech...

ASK ALL:

PEW.6 Overall, did you have a positive or negative reaction to President Obama’s State of the Union address?

Jan 26-29	
<u>2012</u>	
42	Positive
27	Negative
13	Neither/Neutral (VOL.)
17	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)