

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:
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Iraq Tops Weekly Interest Index
GOP CANDIDATES DRAW COVERAGE, BUT CLINTON STILL MOST VISIBLE

The 2008 presidential campaign was once again a big story last week with most news coverage devoted to the Republican presidential candidates. While media coverage focused primarily on Republicans, the public directed most of its attention to the Democratic contenders.

When asked which candidate they have heard the most about in the news recently, 63% of Americans named a Democrat while just 16% named a GOP candidate. This pattern of greater visibility for the Democrats extends back to March when nearly the same proportions as today named Democrats (62%) in greater number than Republicans (7%). Even among Republicans themselves the pattern stands. Last week, 51% of Republicans named a Democrat as the most heard-about candidate in the presidential race, compared with 36% who named a GOP candidate.

Hillary Clinton is by far the most visible candidate in the public eye, a position she has held for several months. Roughly four-in-ten Americans (41%) said she was the candidate they had heard the most about in the news lately, while 20% named Barack Obama, the next most visible presidential hopeful. Only 2% named John Edwards.

Sen. Clinton's dominance is evident even among Republicans, 29% of whom said she was the candidate they'd been hearing about the most. Clinton also leads in terms of visibility across many demographic groups. For men and women, whites and blacks, and individuals from high-income and low-income households, Clinton is the candidate they've heard most about in the news. Only among young people is another candidate as visible: Three-in-ten Americans

Candidates in the News				
<i>Heard the most about in the news lately</i>	<u>Total</u> %	<u>Rep</u> %	<u>Dem</u> %	<u>Ind</u> %
Hillary Clinton	41	29	50	46
Barack Obama	20	19	23	18
John Edwards	2	3	2	1
Fred Thompson	8	17	5	6
Rudy Giuliani	4	9	1	3
Mitt Romney	2	7	1	1
John McCain	2	3	*	1
Other*	2	2	1	1
No answer	<u>19</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>23</u>
	100	100	100	100

*Includes respondents who named George W. Bush

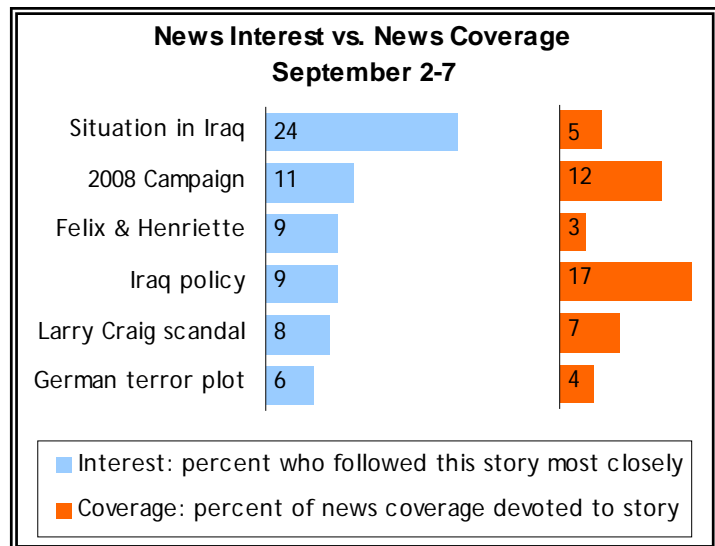
(29%) under the age of 30 named Barack Obama as the candidate they've heard the most about lately, compared with 31% who named Clinton as the most prominent candidate.

While the Democrats continued to dominate the public's attention, the same was not true of last week's media coverage of the campaign. From Sept. 2-7, news reports about Republican candidates outnumbered those about Democrats by a two-to-one margin (50% for Republicans, 25% for Democrats). The announcement by former U.S. senator and Hollywood actor Fred Thompson that he will enter the presidential race and a GOP debate in New Hampshire were prominent campaign stories last week. Fred Thompson's announcement attracted considerable media attention; however, fewer than one-in-ten Americans (8%) named him as the candidate they've been hearing most about lately. His announcement captured the attention of 17% of Republicans, but very few Democrats (5%) or independents (6%). Others in the Republican presidential field received far fewer mentions last week: 4% named Rudy Guiliani, while both Mitt Romney and John McCain were named by 2% of the public.

Public Remains Focused on Iraq News

Events in Iraq were by far the most closely followed news story of the week. One-in-four Americans (24%) said this was the story they followed more closely than any other, greater than twice the number citing any other story listed.

The Iraq policy debate in Washington also captured substantial public attention while finishing first (17%) in terms of news coverage. For 9% of Americans, this was the story they followed most closely. The significant amount of coverage devoted to the president's unannounced visit to Iraq and discussions leading up to the Iraq progress report from Gen. David Petraeus contributed to the story's prominence in the news.



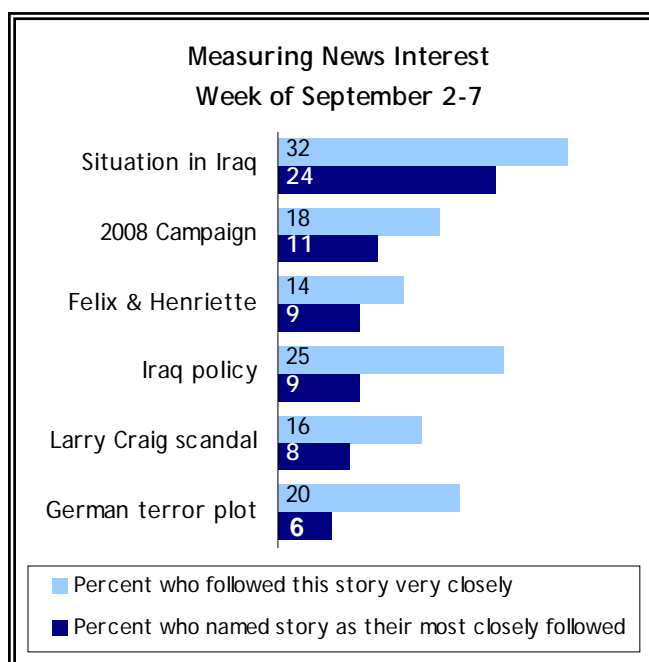
These findings are based on the most recent installment of the weekly *News Interest Index*, an ongoing project of the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press. The index, building on the Center's longstanding research into public attentiveness to major news stories, examines news interest as it 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 September 2-7 and survey data measuring public interest in the top news stories of the week was collected September 7-10 from a nationally representative sample of 1,043 adults.

Storms, Terrorist Plots and Other News

Hurricanes Felix and Henriette, that simultaneously struck Central America from the Caribbean and the Pacific Ocean, captured less attention than other storms of the recent past. About one-in-seven (14%) followed the storms very closely last week, compared with far greater numbers who followed Hurricane Wilma in November 2005 (34%, very closely) or Hurricane Katrina (70%) in September 2005, both of which impacted Americans more directly.

Questions about the political future of Idaho Sen. Larry Craig following his arrest for disorderly conduct in an airport restroom made him a prominent figure in the news for a second straight week. News about Sen. Craig was followed very closely by 16% of the public, down only slightly from two-in-ten (19%) closely following news about his arrest the week before. A congressional sex scandal in October 2006 involving then-U.S. Rep. Mark Foley (R-Fla.) who sent inappropriate messages to young people, attracted greater interest: At that time, 26% said they were following news about Foley's actions and his subsequent resignation very closely.



German officials last week stopped a terrorist plot by a group of Islamic militants to bomb several locations including Ramstein U.S. military base. One-in-five followed this story very closely and just 6% said it was the story they followed most closely. News about this foiled plot received roughly the same level of public interest as a similar new story in May, when six men were charged with plotting an attack on Fort Dix Army base in New Jersey (19% followed that news very closely).

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.

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 six 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
Carolyn Funk, Richard Wike and Kim Parker, Senior Researchers
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PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE & THE PRESS
SEPTEMBER 7-10, 2007 NEWS INTEREST INDEX OMNIBUS SURVEY
FINAL TOPLINE
N=1043

Q.1 There are already many candidates for the 2008 presidential election. Can you tell me the name of the candidate you've heard the MOST about in the news lately? [OPEN-END. DO NOT READ LIST. RECORD FIRST MENTION ONLY]

		July 20-23, 2007	June 1-4, 2007	April 27-30, 2007	March 16-19, 2007
41	Hillary Clinton	42	32	41	37
20	Barack Obama	22	20	23	24
8	Fred Thompson	2	4	*	--
4	Rudy Giuliani	2	4	3	3
2	Mitt Romney	2	3	1	1
2	John Edwards	2	2	3	1
2	John McCain	2	2	4	3
1	George W. Bush	3	1	1	2
1	Other	2	2	1	4
19	Don't know/Refused	21	30	23	25
100		100	100	100	100

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?"]

	Very Closely	Fairly Closely	Not too Closely	Not at all Closely	DK/ Refused
a. News about the current situation and events in Iraq	32	34	20	14	*=100
August 30 – September 2, 2007	31	34	18	16	1=100
August 24-27, 2007	34	36	18	12	*=100
August 17-20, 2007	33	34	18	15	*=100
August 10-13, 2007	36	37	14	13	*=100
August 3-6, 2007	29	40	19	12	*=100
July 27-30, 2007	28	36	19	16	1=100
July 20-23, 2007	28	34	21	16	1=100
July 13-16, 2007	25	41	17	16	1=100
July 6-9, 2007	36	34	18	12	*=100
June 29-July 2, 2007	32	35	19	13	1=100
June 22-25, 2007	30	36	18	15	1=100
June 15-18, 2007	30	37	20	13	*=100
June 8-11, 2007	32	38	15	14	1=100
June 1-4, 2007	30	36	20	13	1=100
May 24-27, 2007	33	36	18	12	1=100
May 18-21, 2007	36	34	15	14	1=100
May 11-14, 2007	30	34	18	17	1=100
May 4-7, 2007	38	37	15	10	*=100
April 27-30, 2007	27	35	21	16	1=100
April 20-23, 2007	28	35	22	15	*=100
April 12-16, 2007	34	33	20	13	*=100
April 5-9, 2007	33	39	16	11	1=100
March 30-April 2, 2007	34	37	16	13	*=100

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>
March 23-March 26, 2007¹	31	38	18	12	1=100
March 16-19, 2007	34	34	17	15	*=100
March 9-12, 2007	34	37	16	13	*=100
March 2-5, 2007	37	37	16	9	1=100
February 23-26, 2007	36	36	15	13	*=100
February 16-19, 2007	30	36	19	14	1=100
February 9-12, 2007	37	34	18	11	*=100
February 2-5, 2007	38	38	17	7	*=100
January 26-29, 2007	36	38	15	11	*=100
January 19-22, 2007	37	34	18	10	1=100
January 12-15, 2007	38	36	17	8	1=100
January, 2007	46	40	8	5	1=100
January 5-8, 2007	40	32	16	12	0=100
December, 2006	42	39	12	7	*=100
November 30-December 3, 2006	40	36	13	11	*=100
Mid-November, 2006	44	38	12	6	*=100
September, 2006	33	43	14	8	2=100
August, 2006	41	39	12	7	1=100
June, 2006	37	43	13	6	1=100
May, 2006	42	35	15	7	1=100
April, 2006	43	36	13	7	1=100
March, 2006	43	38	12	6	1=100
February, 2006	39	42	12	6	1=100
January, 2006	40	40	12	7	1=100
December, 2005	45	38	11	5	1=100
Early November, 2005	41	40	13	6	*=100
Early October, 2005	43	36	15	6	*=100
Early September, 2005	32	40	20	7	1=100
July, 2005	43	37	13	6	1=100
Mid-May, 2005	42	42	11	5	*=100
Mid-March, 2005	40	39	14	5	2=100
February, 2005	38	45	13	4	*=100
January, 2005	48	37	11	4	*=100
December, 2004	34	44	15	6	1=100
Mid-October, 2004	42	38	11	8	1=100
Early September, 2004	47	37	9	6	1=100
August, 2004	39	42	12	6	1=100
July, 2004	43	40	11	6	*=100
June, 2004	39	42	12	6	1=100
April, 2004	54	33	8	5	*=100
Mid-March, 2004	47	36	12	4	1=100
Early February, 2004	47	38	10	4	1=100
Mid-January, 2004	48	39	9	4	*=100
December, 2003	44	38	11	6	1=100
November, 2003	52	33	9	5	1=100
September, 2003	50	33	10	6	1=100
Mid-August, 2003	45	39	10	5	1=100
Early July, 2003	37	41	13	8	1=100
June, 2003	46	35	13	6	*=100
May, 2003	63	29	6	2	*=100
April 11-16, 2003 ²	47	40	10	2	1=100

¹ From May, 2003 to March 23-26, 2007, the story was listed as "News about the current situation 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>
April 2-7, 2003	54	34	9	2	1=100
March 20-24, 2003	57	33	7	2	1=100
March 13-16, 2003 ³	62	27	6	4	1=100
February, 2003	62	25	8	4	1=100
January, 2003	55	29	10	4	2=100
December, 2002	51	32	10	6	1=100
Late October, 2002	53	33	8	5	1=100
Early October, 2002	60	28	6	5	1=100
Early September, 2002 ⁴	48	29	15	6	2=100
b. The debate in Washington over U.S. policy in Iraq					
Iraq	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
TREND FOR COMPARISON:					
January 12-15, 2007: President Bush's proposal to increase the number of U.S. troops in Iraq	40	33	13	13	1=100
c. German officials stopping a terrorist plot to bomb several locations including a U.S. military base in Germany					
Iraq	20	27	23	28	2=100
TREND FOR COMPARISON:					
May 11-14, 2007: The arrest of six men charged with plotting an attack on the Fort Dix Army base	19	29	20	31	1=100
d. Reports about Idaho Senator Larry Craig's political future following his arrest for disorderly conduct in a men's restroom					
Iraq	16	27	27	29	1=100
August 30-September 2, 2007⁵	19	29	22	29	1=100

² From March 20-24, 2003 to April 11-16, 2003, the story was listed as "News about the war in Iraq."
³ From Early October, 2002, to March 13-16, 2003, the story was listed as "Debate over the possibility that the U.S. will take military action in Iraq."
⁴ In Early September, 2002, the story was listed as "Debate over the possibility that the U.S. will invade Iraq."
⁵ August 30-September 2, 2007 asked about: "Idaho Senator Larry Craig's arrest for disorderly conduct in a men's restroom in the Minneapolis airport."

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>
TREND FOR COMPARISON:					
October 2006: The resignation of Congressman Mark Foley, who sent inappropriate messages to young people	26	32	23	18	1=100
October 1989: The scandal involving Congressman Barney Frank and a male prostitute	6	19	26	48	1=100
e. The impact of Hurricanes Felix and Henriette on Mexico and Central America	14	29	29	27	1=100
TREND FOR COMPARISON:					
August 24-27, 2007: The destruction caused by Hurricane Dean in Mexico and the Caribbean	18	39	24	18	1=100
November, 2005: The impact of Hurricane Wilma on Mexico and Florida	34	37	21	8	*=100
September, 2005: Impact of Hurricane Katrina on New Orleans and the Gulf Coast	70	21	7	2	*=100
July, 2005: Recent hurricanes that have affected the Gulf Coast of the U.S.	38	37	17	8	*=100
September, 2003: Hurricane Isabel	47	28	15	10	*=100
Early October, 2002: Recent hurricanes in the Gulf of Mexico and Louisiana	38	34	18	10	*=100
f. News about candidates for the 2008 presidential election	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
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

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>
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, 2007⁶	24	27	22	26	1=100
2004 Presidential Election					
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 ⁷	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
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
2000 Presidential Election					
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
1996 Presidential Election					
November, 1996 (RVs)	34	45	15	6	*=100
October, 1996	31	39	18	12	*=100

⁶ January 19-22, 2007 asked about "Recent announcements by prominent Democrats about plans to run for president in 2008."

⁷ 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...

	Very <u>Closely</u>	Fairly <u>Closely</u>	Not too <u>Closely</u>	Not at all <u>Closely</u>	DK/ <u>Refused</u>
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
1992 Presidential Election					
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
1988 Presidential Election					
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. IF "IRAQ" UNSPECIFIED, PROBE: "Do you mean events IN Iraq or the debate over Iraq POLICY?]**

- 24 News about the current situation and events in Iraq
 - 11 News about candidates for the 2008 presidential election
 - 9 The impact of Hurricanes Felix and Henriette on Mexico and Central America
 - 9 The debate in Washington over U.S. policy in Iraq
 - 8 Reports about Idaho Senator Larry Craig's political future following his arrest for disorderly conduct in a men's restroom
 - 8 German officials stopping a terrorist plot to bomb several locations including a U.S. military base in Germany
 - 6 Some other story (SPECIFY)
 - 11 Don't know/Refused
- 22
100