



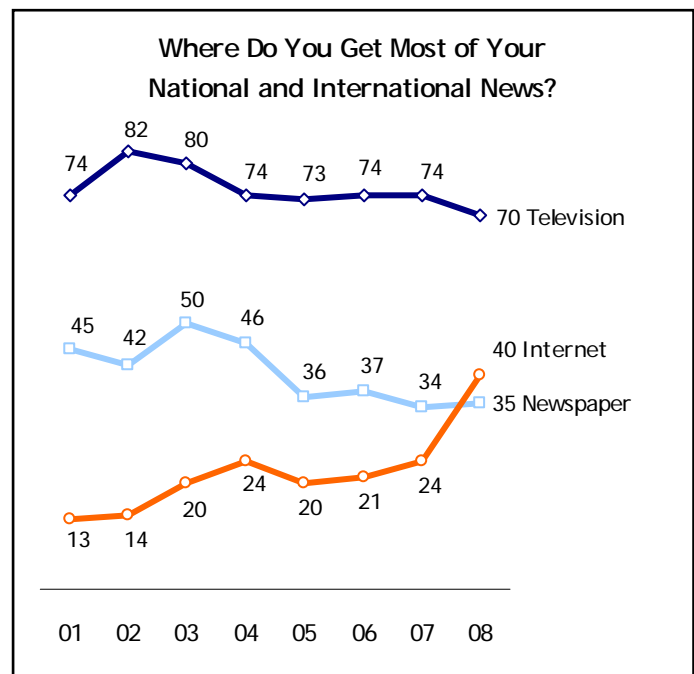
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:
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Biggest Stories of 2008: Economy Tops Campaign **INTERNET OVERTAKES NEWSPAPERS AS NEWS OUTLET**

The internet, which emerged this year as a leading source for campaign news, has now surpassed all other media except television as an outlet for national and international news.

Currently, 40% say they get most of their news about national and international issues from the internet, up from just 24% in September 2007. For the first time in a Pew survey, more people say they rely mostly on the internet for news than cite newspapers (35%). Television continues to be cited most frequently as a main source for national and international news, at 70%.



For young people, however, the internet now rivals television as a main source of national and international news. Nearly six-in-ten Americans younger than 30 (59%) say they get most of their national and international news online; an identical percentage cites television. In September 2007, twice as many young people said they relied mostly on television for news than mentioned the internet (68% vs. 34%).

The percentage of people younger than 30 citing television as a main news source has declined from 68% in September 2007 to 59% currently. This mirrors a trend seen earlier this year in campaign news consumption. (See “Internet Now Major Source of Campaign News,” *News Interest Index, Oct. 31, 2008.*)

<i>Main source of news</i>	Aug <u>2006</u> %	Sept <u>2007</u> %	Dec <u>2008</u> %	<i>07-08</i> <u>Change</u>
Television	62	68	59	-11
Internet	32	34	59	+25
Newspapers	29	23	28	+5
Radio	16	13	18	+5
Magazines	1	*	4	+4
Other (Vol.)	3	5	6	+1

* Ages 18 to 29.
Figures add to more than 100% because multiple responses were allowed.

The survey by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, conducted Dec. 3-7 among 1,489 adults, finds there has been little change in the individual TV news outlets that people rely on for national and international news. Nearly a quarter of the public (23%) says they get most of their news from CNN, while 17% cite Fox News; smaller shares mention other cable and broadcast outlets.

Top News Stories of 2008

While the 2008 presidential campaign attracted high levels of public attention, the economy was the top story of the year in terms of news interest, according to Pew’s Weekly News Interest Index. In late September, as the nation’s financial crisis deepened, 70% said they were following news about the economy very closely. That ranks among the highest levels of news interest for any story in the past two decades.

News about gas prices, both rising and falling, also attracted considerable public attention. In early June, two-thirds of Americans (66%) said they were tracking news about the rising price of gasoline very closely.

<i>Story...</i>	<u>Followed very closely</u> %
1. Conditions of U.S. economy (<i>Sept 22-28</i>)	70
2. Rising price of gasoline (<i>June 2-8</i>)	66
3. Debate over Wall St. bailout (<i>Sept 29-Oct 5</i>)	62
4. 2008 pres. general election (<i>Oct 13-19</i>)	61
5. Major drops in U.S. stock market (<i>Oct 6-12</i>)	59
6. Falling price of gas and oil (<i>Oct 13-19</i>)	53
7. Hurricane Ike (<i>Sept 8-14</i>)	50
8. Wall Street financial crisis hits (<i>Sept 15-21</i>)	49
9. Obama transition (<i>Nov 17-23</i>)	49
10. 2008 pres. primary election (<i>Feb 11-17</i>)	44
11. Hurricane Gustav (<i>Sept 1-7</i>)	42
12. Debate over auto bailout (<i>Nov 17-23</i>)	41
13. Rising unemployment (<i>Dec 1-7</i>)	40
14. Floods in the Midwest (<i>June 16-22</i>)	39
15. Beijing Olympic games (<i>Aug 18-24</i>)	35

For stories measured multiple times the highest percentage for “very closely” is shown.

The rising price of gasoline was the top news story in 2007, but far fewer followed news about rising gas prices very closely (52% in May). This year, the falling price of gas also drew broad interest (53% very closely in October).

The congressional debate over legislation to stabilize financial markets also drew extensive interest. In early October, just after President Bush signed the financial rescue measure, 62% followed this story very closely.

Interest in election news remained at historically high levels throughout the lengthy campaign. Interest in the general election peaked in mid-October (at 61%), but approached that level at other points in the campaign. Public interest in the primary campaigns also was higher than during previous primary contests. In mid-February, 44% said they were following news about the candidates for the presidential election very closely.

Notably, the war in Iraq was not among this year's 15 most closely followed news stories. In mid-July, a third of Americans (33%) said they were following news about the current situation and events in Iraq, the highest percentage measured this year. In 2007, interest in news about the war reached 40% in early January, just before President Bush announced his troop surge; the war in Iraq was the sixth-ranked story last year.

In Pew's final Weekly News Interest Index for 2008, nearly four-in-ten Americans (37%) say they followed news about the Bush administration's plan to provide emergency loans to U.S. automakers. That is in line with previous measures of public interest in the debate over whether to aid the struggling automakers. Three-in-ten (30%) paid very close attention to news about a Wall Street investor, Bernard Madoff, who allegedly cheated people out of billions of dollars. Nearly as many (28%) tracked news about an Iraqi journalist throwing his shoes at President Bush very closely, and 25% said they followed news about slumping retail sales during the holiday season very closely.

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. The most recent survey was conducted December 19-22 from a nationally representative sample of 1,013 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 Sunday through Friday) PEJ compiles this data to identify the top stories for the week. The News Interest Index survey collects 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 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:

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PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE & THE PRESS
DECEMBER 2008 POLITICAL & ECONOMIC SURVEY
FINAL TOPLINE
 December 3-7, 2008
 N=1,489

QUESTION 1 THROUGH 12 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED

ASK ALL:

On a different subject...

Q.13 How do you get most of your news about national and international issues? From **[READ AND RANDOMIZE]**? **[ACCEPT TWO ANSWERS: IF ONLY ONE RESPONSE IS GIVEN, PROBE FOR ADDITIONAL RESPONSE]**

	Tele- <u>vision</u>	News- <u>papers</u>	Radio	Maga- <u>zines</u>	Internet	(VOL.) <u>Other</u>	(VOL.) Don't Know/ <u>Refused</u>
December, 2008	70	35	18	5	40	2	1
September, 2007	74	34	13	2	24	2	1
July, 2007	65	27	15	2	26	2	1
Late September, 2006	74	37	16	4	21	3	1
August, 2006	72	36	14	4	24	2	1
November, 2005	73	36	16	2	20	2	*
Early Sept, 2005¹ (Hurricane Katrina)	89	35	17	*	21	3	*
June, 2005	74	44	22	5	24	2	1
December, 2004	74	46	21	4	24	2	3
October, 2003	80	50	18	4	20	2	1
August, 2003	79	46	15	3	18	2	1
Early July, 2003	79	45	16	5	19	1	*
March, 2003 (War in Iraq)	89	24	19	*	11	2	*
February, 2003	83	42	19	4	15	3	*
January, 2003	81	44	22	4	17	2	1
January, 2002	82	42	21	3	14	2	*
Mid-September, 2001 (Terror Attacks)	90	11	14	*	5	1	1
Early September, 2001	74	45	18	6	13	1	*
February, 2001	76	40	16	4	10	2	1
October, 1999	80	48	19	5	11	2	*
January, 1999	82	42	18	4	6	2	*
January, 1996	88	61	25	8	--	2	*
September, 1995	82	63	20	10	--	1	1
January, 1994	83	51	15	10	--	5	1
September, 1993	83	60	17	9	--	3	*
January, 1993	83	52	17	5	--	1	1
Early January, 1991 (Persian Gulf)	82	40	15	4	--	1	*

¹ In Early September 2005, the question was worded "news about the impact of Hurricane Katrina." In March 2003, the question was worded "news about the war in Iraq," and in Mid-September 2001, the question was worded "news about the terrorist attacks." In September 1995, question wording did not include "international." In Early January 1991 the question asked about "the latest developments in the Persian Gulf."

IF '1' TELEVISION AS EITHER 1ST OR 2ND RESPONSE IN Q.13 ASK:

Q.14 On television, do you get most of your news about national and international issues from [READ, RANDOMIZE ITEMS 2 THRU 4 AND 5 THRU 7 SEPARATELY, AND RANDOMIZE SETS OF ITEMS (LOCAL; NETWORK; CABLE). ACCEPT MULTIPLE ANSWERS BUT DO NOT PROBE FOR ADDITIONAL]

		<i>Hurricane Katrina</i>										
		Early										Early
BASED ON TOTAL [N=1,489]:		Sept	July	Aug	Nov	Sept	June	Dec	Oct	Aug	July	Jan
		<u>2007</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2006</u>	<u>2005</u>	<u>2005²</u>	<u>2005</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2003</u>	<u>2003</u>	<u>2003</u>	<u>2002</u>
15	Local news programming	18	12	13	16	19	13	15	17	17	17	16
12	ABC Network news	11	10	10	14	14	12	11	12	12	12	11
9	CBS Network news	8	7	9	12	8	9	9	8	10	11	11
10	NBC Network news	13	11	12	15	12	12	14	13	15	14	15
23	CNN Cable news	22	16	24	24	31	18	20	20	26	27	28
8	MSNBC Cable news	7	5	6	8	9	5	6	6	7	9	8
17	The Fox News Cable Channel	16	17	20	22	22	16	19	17	18	22	16
4	Other (VOL.)	3	2	6	5	3	2	3	--	3	3	4
2	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	2	1	1	3	3	4	3	4	4	3	2

QUESTION 15 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED

QUESTIONS 16 AND 17 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE

NO QUESTION 18

QUESTIONS 19 THROUGH END PREVIOUSLY RELEASED

²

In Early September 2005, the question was worded: "Have you been getting most of your news about the disaster from ..."

PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE & THE PRESS
DECEMBER 19-22, 2008 NEWS INTEREST INDEX OMNIBUS SURVEY
TOPLINE
N=1,013

Q.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 ITEMS] [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>	<u>DK/ Refused</u>
a. The Bush administration’s plan to provide billions in emergency loans to U.S. automakers	37	33	16	13	1=100
December 12-15, 2008³	40	33	18	9	*=100
December 5-8, 2008	34	38	17	11	*=100
November 21-24, 2008	41	26	17	15	1=100
TRENDS FOR COMPARISON: ⁴					
November 14-17, 2008: Problems facing automakers	30	35	20	15	*=100
October 31-November 3: Possible merger of GM and Chrysler	16	28	24	31	1=100
May 18-21, 2007: DaimlerChrysler sells Chrysler	8	20	25	46	1=100
September 28-October 1, 2007: Agreement between GM and UAW ending strike	14	28	28	30	*=100
December, 2005: <i>General Motors job cuts</i>	22	30	26	21	1=100
June, 1998: <i>Chrysler/Daimler Benz merger</i>	12	22	27	38	1=100
January, 1992: <i>General Motors job cuts</i>	35	38	18	9	*=100
b. Reports about an Iraqi journalist throwing his shoes at President Bush	28	33	17	21	1=100
c. News about a Wall Street investor who allegedly cheated people out of billions of dollars	30	26	18	25	1=100
d. Declining retail sales this holiday season	25	30	24	20	1=100

³ For December 12-15, 2008 the item was listed as: “The debate over a government bailout for the U.S. auto industry.” For November 21-24, 2008 and December 5-8, 2008 the item was listed as: “The debate in Congress over a government bailout for the U.S. auto industry.”

⁴ November 14-17, 2008 asked about: “News about problems facing U.S. automakers.” October 31-November 3, 2008 asked about: “The possible merger of automakers General Motors and Chrysler.” May 18-21, 2007 asked about: “DaimlerChrysler’s decision to sell Chrysler to a private equity firm.” January, 1992 and December, 2005 asked about: “The major job cuts announced by General Motors.” June, 1998 asked about: “The merger of the Chrysler Corporation and Daimler Benz.” September 28-October 1, 2007 asked about “An agreement between General Motors and the United Auto Workers union that ended a two-day strike over wages and job security.”