



**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

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**  
**Tuesday, May 3, 2011**

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

## Too Much Coverage: Birth Certificate, Royal Wedding

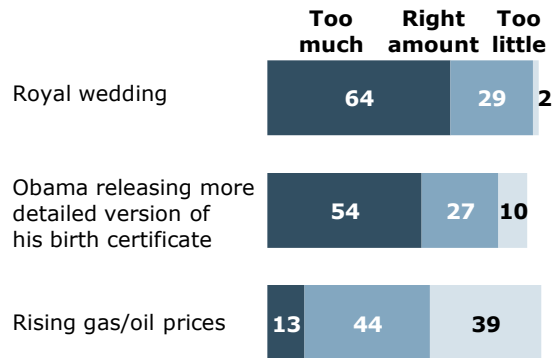
Majorities of Americans say news organizations focused too much last week on both the royal wedding in England and the release of the long-form version of Barack Obama's birth certificate.

Nearly two-thirds (64%) say the press gave too much coverage to the April 29 wedding in London of Prince William and Kate Middleton, while 54% say the media gave too much coverage to the release of Obama's long-form birth certificate, according to the latest weekly News Interest Index survey, conducted April 28-May 1 among 1,006 adults. *(This survey was conducted before U.S. forces killed Osama bin Laden; a [survey](#) released earlier today found that while most Americans heard about bin Laden's death from television, many young people first learned about the news from social networking.)*

On the other hand, roughly four-in-ten (39%) say news organizations provided too little coverage of news about rising gas and oil prices, while 44% say the media got the amount of coverage about right. Just 13% say the press gave too much coverage to this critical pocketbook concern.

News about gas and oil prices and a series of deadly storms in the U.S. South topped the public's news interest last week. Three-in-ten (30%) say they followed news about the powerful storms and tornadoes most closely, while 24% say their top story was rising

### Amount of Coverage



PEW RESEARCH CENTER April 28-May 1, 2011.  
 Don't know/Refused responses not shown.

fuel prices. About one-in-ten (9%) say they followed news about the royal wedding most closely, while 8% say they followed the White House release of Barack Obama's Hawaiian birth certificate this closely.

Media coverage for the week was divided across several top stories, according to a separate analysis by the Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism (PEJ). Coverage of the tornadoes and devastation in the South accounted for 15% of coverage, while news about the royal wedding accounted for 11%. While news specifically about gas and oil prices accounted for just 2% of coverage, news about the economy in general made up another 12%.

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### News Interest vs. News Coverage

	News Interest	News Coverage
Deadly storms	30	15
Gas and oil prices	24	2
Royal wedding	9	11
Unrest in Middle East	8	6
Obama birth certificate	8	8
Obama admin changes	1	2

News interest shows the percentage of people who say they followed this story most closely, Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, April 28-May 1, 2011. News coverage shows the percentage of news coverage devoted to each story, Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism, April 25-May 1, 2011.

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### Obama's Birth Certificate

Obama's decision to release his long-form birth certificate – and comments to reporters about his desire to end the questions by some about whether he was actually born in the United States – accounted for about 8% of coverage. But the numbers were much higher for cable news (18% of coverage) and talk radio (21%).

The public showed modest interest in this story. About two-in-ten (18%) say they followed this news very closely, while more than half say they followed news about the birth certificate not too closely (27%) or not at all closely (35%). Roughly comparable numbers of Democrats (23%) and Republicans (17%) say they followed this news very closely; 14% of independents say this as well.

And, despite easy access to a copy of the birth certificate at many news web-sites or in many daily newspapers, just 11% say they took a close look at the document. Two-in-ten (21%) say they took a look – but not closely. But about two-thirds (68%) say they did not look at all. That includes roughly equal numbers of Republicans (65%), Democrats (66%) and independents (69%).

Looking at the amount of coverage, six-in-ten Democrats (61%) say the media gave this story too much, more than the 50% of Republicans and 49% of independents that say the same. On the other hand, 14% of Republicans say the story got too little coverage, compared with 8% of Democrats. One-in-ten independents (10%) say this as well.

## The Big Wedding

Women – specifically women age 50 and over – proved most interested in the royal wedding pageantry in London last Friday. About a third of the public (34%) says they watched the wedding; 65% say they did not. One week earlier, 19% had said they planned to watch, but the wedding was hard to miss Friday morning on television or online.

Nearly half of women (45%) say they watched the event. Just more than half (53%) of women age 50 and over say this, compared with 33% of men in this age group. Nearly four-in-ten women younger than 50 (39%) say they watched, compared with just 15% of men younger than 50.

But women are nearly as likely as men to say the wedding received too much coverage. Six-in-ten women (60%) say this, compared with 68% of men. Two thirds of women younger than 50 (66%) say the royal wedding received too

## Most Did Not Take a Look at Obama's Birth Certificate

<i>Did you look at Obama birth certificate...</i>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Rep</b>	<b>Dem</b>	<b>Ind</b>
	%	%	%	%
Closely	11	14	10	10
Not closely	21	21	23	21
Did not look at it	68	65	66	69
Don't know	<u>*</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>
	100	100	100	100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER April 28- May 1, 2011.

## Too Much Coverage Of Birth Certificate Release?

<i>Amount of coverage of birth certificate release...</i>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Rep</b>	<b>Dem</b>	<b>Ind</b>
	%	%	%	%
Too Much	54	50	61	49
Right Amount	27	29	25	30
Too Little	10	14	8	10
Don't know	<u>9</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>11</u>
	100	100	100	100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER April 28- May 1, 2011.

## Older Women Tuned into Royal Wedding

<i>Did you watch royal wedding?</i>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
	%	%
Total	34	65
Men	22	78
18-49	15	85
50+	33	66
Women	45	54
18-49	39	61
50+	53	47

PEW RESEARCH CENTER April 28-May 1, 2011.

much coverage. And, despite their interest in watching, a majority of women 50 and older (56%) agree.

Overall, the percentage of the public that says news organizations gave the royal wedding too much coverage (64%) matched the number that said this one week earlier during the run-up to the event. That week, 25% said news organizations were giving the wedding the right amount of coverage and 4% said too little.

## The Week's News

Americans focused most closely last week on the deadly storms in the South and news about rising fuel prices. They paid less attention to the other top stories.

While 51% say they followed news about fuel prices very closely, men were more likely to say this than women (56% vs. 45%). People with a high school degree or less education also were more likely to follow this story very closely (59%) than those with a college degree or more education (40%) or those with some college experience (49%).

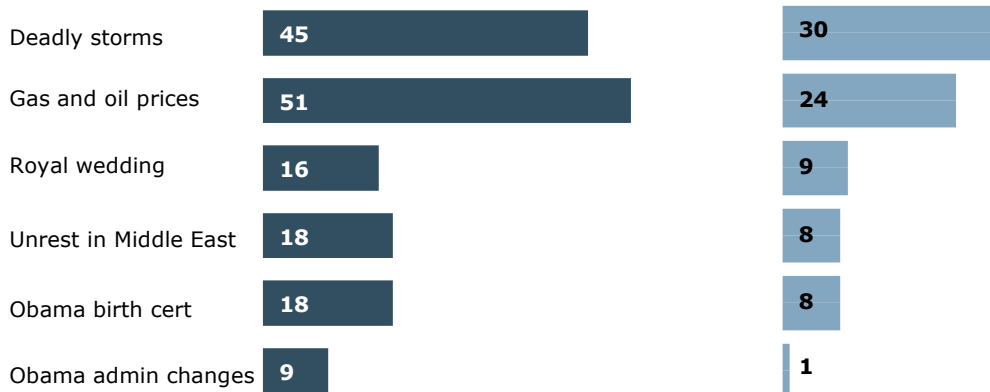
Nearly two-in-ten each (18%) say they very closely followed news about Obama releasing his long-form birth certificate or news about continuing unrest in the Middle East. About one-in-ten say the birth certificate news (8%) or Middle East developments (8%) was their top story of the week. News out of the Middle East accounted for 6% coverage, most

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## News Interest

*% following each story very closely*

*Which one story did you follow most closely?*



PEW RESEARCH CENTER April 28-May 1, 2011.

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focusing on the situation in Syria, according to PEJ.

Another 16% say they followed news about the royal wedding very closely; 9% say this was the story they followed most closely. The story accounted for 11% of coverage.

Just 9% say they followed news about changes to Obama's national security team very closely; 1% say this was their top story for the week. The announcement that Leon Panetta would become secretary of state and Gen. David Petraeus would replace him as director of the Central Intelligence Agency accounted for 2% of coverage.

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 April 25 to May 1, and survey data measuring public interest in the top news stories of the week were collected April 28 to May 1, 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](http://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 April 28-May 1, 2011, among a national sample of 1,006 adults 18 years of age or older living in the continental United States (675 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 331 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 150 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, region, and population density to parameters from the March 2010 Census Bureau's Current Population Survey. The sample is also weighted to match current patterns of telephone status based on extrapolations from the 2010 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:

<b>Group</b>	<b>Sample Size</b>	<b>Plus or minus ...</b>
Total sample	1,006	4.0 percentage points
Men	426	6.0 percentage points
18-49	187	9.0 percentage points
50+	230	8.0 percentage points
Women	580	5.0 percentage points
18-49	208	8.5 percentage points
50+	338	6.5 percentage points
Republicans	247	7.5 percentage points
Democrats	344	6.5 percentage points
Independents	325	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  
Scott Keeter, Director of Survey Research  
Carroll Doherty and Michael Dimock, Associate Directors  
Michael Remez, Senior Writer  
Leah Christian and Jocelyn Kiley, Senior Researchers  
Robert Suls, Shawn Neidorf, and Alec Tyson, Research Associates  
Danielle Gewurz, Research Assistant

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER NEWS INTEREST INDEX**  
**APRIL 28-MAY 1, 2011 OMNIBUS**  
**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>	<b>(VOL.) DK/Ref</b>
a. News about Barack Obama's birthplace and birth certificate					
April 28-May 1, 2011	18	19	27	35	1
b. The rising price of gas and oil					
April 28-May 1, 2011	51	26	13	10	1
April 14-17, 2011	53	25	11	11	*
March 17-20, 2011	46	28	14	12	*
<b>TRENDS FOR COMPARISON:</b>					
February 24-27, 2011: <i>The rising price of oil</i>	50	29	13	8	*
June 27-30, 2008	57	26	11	5	1
March 7-10, 2008	43	33	12	11	1
November 9-12, 2007	44	28	14	13	1
October 17-20, 2008: <i>The falling price of gas and oil</i>	53	33	11	3	*
July 3-7, 2008: <i>The rising price of gasoline</i>	62	25	8	4	1
June 6-9, 2008	66	19	7	7	1
May 22-25, 2008	65	22	9	4	*
May 16-19, 2008	64	21	10	4	1
May 2-5, 2008	63	23	9	4	1
April 25-28, 2008	62	23	10	5	*
May 24-27, 2007	52	29	10	8	1
May 18-21, 2007 <sup>1</sup>	48	27	16	8	1
August, 2006 <sup>2</sup>	60	26	7	5	2
June, 2006	58	26	10	5	1
May, 2006	69	21	6	3	1
April, 2006	65	22	8	4	1
December, 2005	61	27	7	4	1
Early November, 2005	61	27	9	2	1
Late October, 2005	67	23	7	3	*
Early October, 2005	65	25	6	3	1
Early September, 2005	71	19	7	3	*
Mid-May, 2005	58	27	9	5	1
Mid-March, 2005	50	32	13	5	*
Mid-October, 2004	64	22	8	5	1
August, 2004	52	29	10	8	1
July, 2004	56	25	11	7	1
June, 2004	58	26	9	6	1
April, 2004	46	30	15	8	1
Early April, 2004	58	23	10	8	1
Mid-March, 2004	47	27	14	10	2
September, 2003	45	27	15	11	1
March, 2003	52	27	11	9	1

<sup>1</sup> For May 18-21, 2007 the item was not asked as part of a list.

<sup>2</sup> From October, 2000 to August, 2006, the story was listed as "The high price of gasoline these days." From August, 1990 to June, 2000, the story was listed as "Recent increases in the price of gasoline."



**PEW.1 CONTINUED...**

	<u>Very closely</u>	<u>Fairly closely</u>	<u>Not too closely</u>	<u>Not at all closely</u>	<b>(VOL.) DK/Ref</b>
February, 2003	53	25	12	9	1
June, 2001	56	31	7	5	1
May, 2001	61	26	6	6	1
Early October, 2000	56	25	12	6	1
June, 2000	61	25	9	5	*
March, 2000	58	28	10	4	*
October, 1990	62	26	8	4	*
September, 1990	56	28	11	5	*
August, 1990	57	27	10	5	1
c. Anti-government protests and violence in some Middle Eastern countries					
April 28-May 1, 2011	18	29	25	27	1
<b>TRENDS FOR COMPARISON:</b>					
April 21-25, 2011: <i>The current situation and events in Libya</i>	21	35	20	22	1
April 14-17, 2011	21	30	25	23	1
April 7-10, 2011	28	35	21	16	*
March 31-April 3, 2011: <i>Military air strikes in Libya by the U.S. and its allies</i>	37	31	17	14	1
March 24-27, 2011	33	34	17	15	*
March 17-20, 2011: <i>The conflict between rebels and government forces in Libya</i>	26	28	21	23	1
March 10-13, 2011: <i>Growing violence in Libya</i>	29	29	21	20	*
March 3-6, 2011	31	31	18	19	1
February 24-27, 2011	38	30	15	16	*
February 17-20, 2011: <i>News about the situation in Egypt</i>	34	32	17	16	1
February 17-20, 2011: <i>Anti-government protests in other Middle Eastern and North African nations</i>	20	30	22	28	1
February 10-13, 2011: <i>Anti-government protests in Egypt and the resignation of President Hosni Mubarak</i>	39	31	14	15	1
February 3-6, 2011: <i>Anti-government protests in Egypt and other Middle Eastern countries</i>	32	35	16	18	*
January 27-30, 2011	17	26	21	35	*
January 20-23, 2011: <i>Political instability in Tunisia following the collapse of the government</i>	7	15	25	53	1
January, 2007: <i>The U.S. air strikes on suspected terrorist sites in Somalia</i>	17	32	27	23	1
May, 1999: <i>NATO air strikes against Serbian forces</i>	32	38	19	10	1
Late April, 1999	41	39	13	7	*
April, 1999	41	37	16	6	0
March, 1999: <i>NATO air strikes against Serbian forces in Kosovo</i>	43	32	15	9	1
August, 1998: <i>U.S. military strikes against sites linked to terrorists in Afghanistan and Sudan</i>	44	35	13	8	*
July 10-24, 1986: <i>The U.S. air strike against Libya</i>	58	27	11	3	1

## PEW.1 CONTINUED...

	Very closely	Fairly closely	Not too closely	Not at all closely	(VOL.) DK/Ref
d. Deadly storms in the South April 28-May 1, 2011	45	29	14	12	1
<b>TRENDS FOR COMPARISON:</b>					
April 21-25, 2011: <i>Deadly storms in the South and Midwest</i>	29	33	18	20	*
June 13-16, 2008: <i>A tornado that killed four Boy Scouts at a camp in Iowa</i>	32	35	17	16	*
May 30-June 2, 2008: <i>Midwest</i> <sup>3</sup>	30	33	21	15	1
February 8-11, 2008: <i>South and Midwest</i>	25	42	19	13	1
May 11-14, 2007: <i>Tornadoes and floods in the Midwest</i>	22	35	23	19	1
March 2-5, 2007: <i>South and Midwest</i>	33	38	18	11	*
May, 1999: <i>Oklahoma and Kansas</i>	38	40	15	6	1
e. The announcement that Leon Panetta would become Secretary of Defense and David Petraeus would become Director of the CIA April 28-May 1, 2011	9	17	22	50	1
<b>TRENDS FOR COMPARISON:</b>					
January 6-9, 2011: <i>Changes to Barack Obama's White House staff</i>	19	34	18	28	1
January 23-26, 2009: <i>Hillary Clinton becoming Secretary of State</i>	24	30	24	22	*
January 9-12, 2009: <i>Barack Obama's appointments and plans for his administration</i>	30	37	21	12	*
January 2-4, 2009	32	35	16	17	*
December 12-15, 2008	30	34	20	16	*
December 5-8, 2008	36	38	15	11	*
November 21-24, 2008: <i>Plans for the new Obama administration</i>	49	24	15	12	*
November 14-17, 2008	32	37	16	15	*
November 7-10, 2008	39	30	17	14	*
August 30-September 2, 2007: <i>Attorney General Alberto Gonzales' resignation</i>	16	28	23	33	*
August 17-20, 2007: <i>Karl Rove's resignation from his position in the White House</i>	14	20	23	42	1
Mid-November, 2006: <i>The resignation of Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld</i>	30	30	21	18	1
January, 2001: <i>George W. Bush's cabinet choices and other high-level appointments</i>	26	32	24	17	1
January, 1993: <i>Bill Clinton's cabinet choices and other high-level appointments</i>	24	42	22	11	1
December, 1991: <i>The resignation of White House Chief of Staff John Sununu</i>	8	25	31	36	0
f. The wedding of Prince William and Kate Middleton in England April 28-May 1, 2011	16	19	25	39	*
April 21-25, 2011: <i>The upcoming wedding of Prince William and Kate Middleton in England</i>	8	13	25	53	*
<b>TREND FOR COMPARISON:</b>					
May 9-12, 2008: <i>The wedding of George Bush's daughter Jenna</i>	4	7	25	63	1

<sup>3</sup> March 2-5, 2007 through May 30-June 2, 2008 asked about "Violent storms and tornadoes" in each region. May, 1999 asked about "Tornadoes in Oklahoma and Kansas."

**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.**]

Apr 28-May 1

2011

30	Deadly storms in the South
24	The rising price of gas and oil
9	The wedding of Prince William and Kate Middleton in England
8	Anti-government protests and violence in some Middle Eastern countries
8	News about Barack Obama's birthplace and birth certificate
	The announcement that Leon Panetta would become Secretary of Defense and David Petraeus would become Director of the CIA
1	
8	Some other story <b>(VOL.)</b>
12	Don't know/Refused <b>(VOL.)</b>

**NO QUESTIONS PEW.3-PEW.5****ASK ALL:**

PEW.6 Do you think news organizations are giving too much coverage, too little coverage or the right amount of coverage to each of the following? [**READ AND RANDOMIZE**]

	<u>Too much coverage</u>	<u>Too little coverage</u>	<u>Right amount of coverage</u>	<b>(VOL.)</b> <u>DK/Ref</u>
a. The wedding of Prince William and Kate Middleton				
April 28-May 1, 2011	64	2	29	5
April 21-25, 2011: The upcoming wedding of Prince William and Kate Middleton	64	4	25	7
<b>TRENDS FOR COMPARISON:</b>				
July 29-August 1, 2010: <i>The wedding of Chelsea Clinton</i> <sup>4</sup>	58	8	25	9

**ABC News Poll October, 1981**

*Now, I'm going to mention some news events from the recent past. After each tell me whether you think television news gave the event too much attention, not enough attention or about the right amount of attention...*

	<u>Too much attention</u>	<u>Not enough attention</u>	<u>About the right amount of attention</u>	<b>(VOL.)</b> <u>DK/No opinion</u>
The wedding of Prince Charles and Lady Diana in England <sup>5</sup>	61	2	34	3
	<u>Too much coverage</u>	<u>Too little coverage</u>	<u>Right amount of coverage</u>	<b>(VOL.)</b> <u>DK/Ref</u>
b. Barack Obama releasing a more detailed version of his birth certificate				
April 28-May 1, 2011	54	10	27	9
<b>NO ITEM c</b>				
d. The rising price of gas and oil	13	39	44	5
April 28-May 1, 2011				

<sup>4</sup> Chelsea Clinton married on July 31, 2010, during the field period.

<sup>5</sup> The October, 1981 ABC News poll asked a list of five recent events. Other events not shown here.

**ASK ALL:**

PEW.7 Many news organizations published copies of Barack Obama's more detailed birth certificate in print or posted it online. Did you look at Barack Obama's birth certificate closely, not closely, or did you not look at it at all?

Apr 28-May 1

2011

11	Closely
21	Not closely
68	Did not look at it
*	Don't know/Refused <b>(VOL.)</b>

**ASK ALL FRIDAY, APRIL 29, THROUGH SUNDAY, MAY 1 [N=799]:**

PEW.8 Did you watch the wedding of Prince William and Kate Middleton, or not?

**TREND FOR COMPARISON**

*Do you plan to watch*

Apr 28-May 1

2011

34	Yes
65	No
*	Refused <b>(VOL.)</b>

Apr 21-25

2011

19	Yes
75	No
5	Maybe/Not sure <b>(VOL.)</b>
*	Refused <b>(VOL.)</b>

**PEWWP.1 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE**