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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:
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Many Follow Somali Pirate Story
MOST NOW SAY NEWS PAINTS MIXED ECONOMIC PICTURE

The proportion of Americans saying they are hearing a mix of good and bad news about the economy – rather than mostly bad news – continues to steadily increase.

Currently, 56% say they are hearing a mix of good and bad economic news, up from 46% in March and just 19% last

December. The proportion saying they are hearing mostly bad news has fallen dramatically over this period – from 80% in December and 51% in March to 39% currently. Very few Americans – just 4% in the current survey – continue to say they are hearing mostly good economic news.

The latest weekly News Interest Index survey, conducted April 9-13 by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, finds that the share saying they are hearing a mix of economic news has increased across partisan lines, but most notably among Republicans. Last month, nearly twice as many Republicans said they were hearing mostly bad economic news (65%) as said they were hearing both good and bad news (33%). Today, about as many Republicans say they are hearing a mix of both good and bad economic news (50%) as say they are hearing predominantly negative news (48%).

Among Democrats, 62% now see a mix of news, compared with 55% last month. And among independents, 56% see a mix of economic news, up from 44% in March.

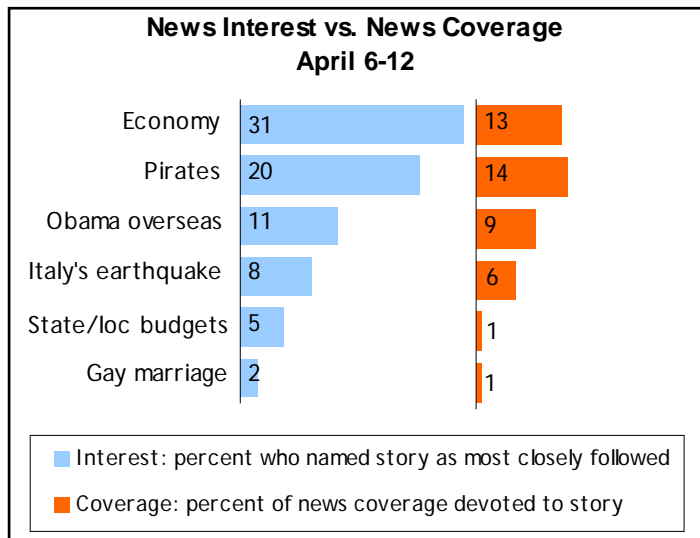
	Dec 2008	Jan 2009	Feb 2009	Mar 2009	Apr 2009
	%	%	%	%	%
Mostly bad news	80	67	60	51	39
Mix of good and bad	19	30	37	46	56
Mostly good news	1	2	2	2	4
Don't know	*	1	1	1	1
	100	100	100	100	100

	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Mar-Apr change
	%	%	%	%	%	
Republicans						
Mostly bad	80	68	73	65	48	-17
Mix of good/bad	19	30	26	33	50	+17
Mostly good	*	1	*	1	2	+1
Democrats						
Mostly bad	82	67	56	42	31	-11
Mix of good/bad	17	30	41	55	62	+7
Mostly good	1	2	3	3	7	+4
Independents						
Mostly bad	76	69	55	52	42	-10
Mix of good/bad	22	28	40	44	56	+12
Mostly good	1	2	3	3	1	-2

When asked about perceptions of news about their local economy, the public is more narrowly divided. Still, people in states struggling to manage their finances are more likely than people in other states to say they are hearing mostly bad news about the economy in their area.

Last week, the public continued to track economic news more closely than other major stories. More than three-in-ten (31%) say they followed reports about the condition of the economy most closely, while two-in-ten say they followed reports about the hijacking of a U.S. cargo ship by Somali pirates more closely than any other story. A separate analysis by the Pew Research Center’s Project for Excellence in Journalism (PEJ) found those two stories received the most coverage as well. Economic news took up 13% of the newshole (counting stories about state and local budget troubles separately). The standoff between Somali pirates and the U.S. Navy – and its dramatic conclusion on April 12 – took up 14%.

The change in perceptions on the tone of economic news comes amid signs that the worst decline in decades may be slowing. President Obama late last week said he sees “glimmers of hope,” though he cautioned that the economic problems facing the nation are severe and likely to persist for some time.



When asked about news about the economy in their local area, the public expresses fairly similar views as about national economic news. Nearly half (49%) say they are hearing a mix of good and bad news, while 44% say they are hearing mostly bad news. Another 5% say they are hearing mostly good news. There are no significant partisan differences in impressions of local economic news.

However, people who say they have been following news about state and local budget problems very closely are more likely than those paying less attention to say the news they’ve been hearing about the local economy is mostly bad. A majority (52%) of those who followed the week’s state and local budget news very closely report that what they’ve been hearing about their local economy is mostly bad; that compares with 41% of those who were less attentive to news about state and local budget troubles.

The balance of good and bad news that people are hearing about their local economy may be related to how well their states are managing state finances. In those states receiving below-average grades for fiscal management in an [analysis by the Pew Center on the States](#), half (50%) of the public reports hearing mostly bad news about the economy in their area; while 44% say they are hearing a mix of good and bad news. By contrast, those who live in states whose financial health is rated above average, a majority says (53%) say they are hearing a mix of good and bad news about their local economy and fewer (38%) report hearing mostly bad news.

There is some difference in perceptions of national economic news. Six-in-ten of those in the better performing states say they are hearing a mix of good and bad news about the broader economy, while 52% of those in the lowest rated states say the same.

<i>Economic news in your area is...</i>	<u>Total</u> %	<i>States finances graded...*</i>	
		<u>Above average</u> %	<u>Below average</u> %
Mostly bad	44	38	50
Mix of good/bad	49	53	44
Mostly good	5	8	3
Don't know	2	1	3
	100	100	100

<i>Following state and local budget problems...</i>	<u>Total</u> %	<i>States finances graded...*</i>	
		<u>Above average</u> %	<u>Below average</u> %
Very closely	28	24	34
Fairly closely	30	29	29
Not too closely	21	23	20
Not at all closely	21	24	17
Don't know	*	*	0
	100	100	100

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* State grades for financial performance are based on an analysis by the Pew Center on the States.

In addition, there is somewhat greater interest in state and local budget problems in states that get lower ratings for fiscal management. A third (34%) of those living in states graded below average say they are following news about state and local budget problems very closely, compared to one-in-four (24%) in states ranked average or above average.

Top Stories: Economy and Pirates

Americans continued to closely track reports about the condition of the U.S. economy last week, though many also closely followed the dramatic rescue of a cargo ship captain held by Somali pirates off the coast of Africa. Close to half (48%) say they followed economic reports very closely, the same share as the previous week. For about three-in-ten (31%), this was the most closely followed story of the week. Economic stories took up about 13% of the newshole, separating out stories on state and local budget problems.

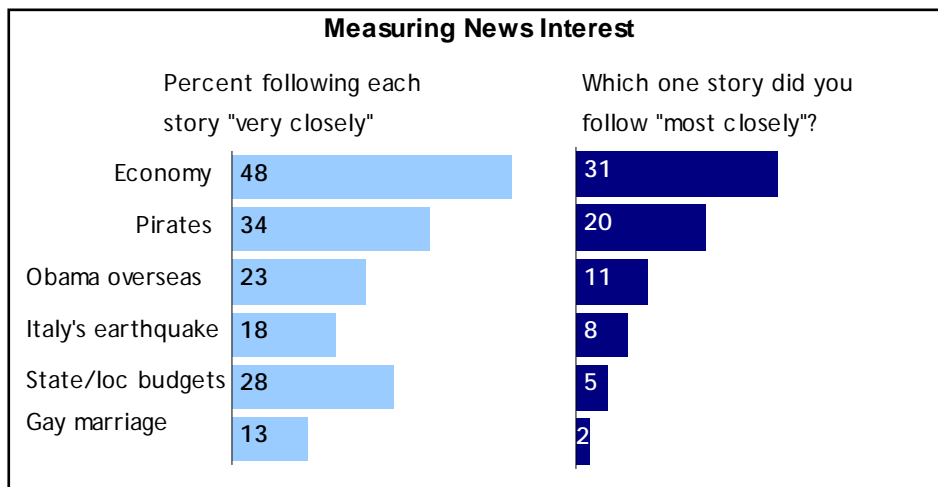
The standoff between the U.S. Navy and Somali pirates reached its dramatic and deadly conclusion Sunday while the survey was still in the field, but still about a third (34%) say they followed reports about the cargo ship hijacking very closely; another 35% followed this story

fairly closely. For 20%, this was the most closely followed story of the week. Coverage of the pirate story took up 14% of the newshole, according to PEJ.

About one-in-ten (11%) say they followed Obama’s trip to Turkey and Iraq most closely last week; 23% say they followed that story very closely, while 29% say they followed the trip fairly closely. Obama’s overseas travels took up about 9% of the newshole.

For 8%, the major earthquake that hit Italy was the story they followed most closely. Nearly one-in-five (18%) say they followed that story very closely, while 35% say they followed the earthquake fairly closely. Earthquake coverage made up 6% of the newshole.

A smaller share – 5% – say they followed news about state and local budget problems most closely. Close to three-in-ten (28%) say they followed that story very closely, while 30% say they followed it fairly closely. Those stories amounted to 1% of overall coverage.



Just 2% say they followed stories about the legalization of gay marriage in Iowa and Vermont more closely than any other story; 13% followed that story very closely, while 21% say they followed it fairly closely. Those stories also took up about 1% of the newshole as measured by PEJ.

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 from

April 6-12, 2009 and survey data measuring public interest in the top news stories of the week were collected April 9-11 and April 13, 2009 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. 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
APRIL 9-13, 2009¹ NEWS INTEREST INDEX OMNIBUS SURVEY
TOPLINE
N=1006

Q.1 In the past few weeks, have you come to have a MORE favorable opinion of Barack Obama, a LESS favorable opinion of Barack Obama, or hasn't your opinion of him changed lately?

	<u>More favorable</u>	<u>Less favorable</u>	<u>Opinion has not changed</u>	<u>Don't know/Refused</u>
Barack Obama				
April 9-13, 2009	20	18	60	2=100
March 20-23, 2009	22	19	56	3=100
February 27-March 2, 2009	23	20	56	1=100
February 6-9, 2009	23	16	60	1=100
2008 CAMPAIGN				
TREND FOR COMPARISON:²				
October 31-November 3, 2008	25	25	49	1=100
October 24-27, 2008	24	21	52	3=100
October 17-20, 2008	33	23	43	1=100
October 10-13, 2008	29	21	48	2=100
October 3-6, 2008	28	23	47	2=100
September 26-29, 2008	31	23	45	1=100
September 19-22, 2008	25	20	53	2=100
September 12-15, 2008	20	20	58	2=100
September 5-8, 2008	20	20	59	1=100
August 29-31, 2008	29	19	50	2=100
August 22-25, 2008	22	21	54	3=100
August 15-18, 2008	16	21	60	3=100
August 8-11, 2008	15	18	64	3=100
August 1-4, 2008	16	22	60	2=100
July 25-28, 2008	17	21	59	3=100
July 18-21, 2008	16	22	60	2=100
July 11-14, 2008	15	17	64	4=100
July 3-7, 2008	17	17	62	4=100
June 27-30, 2008	21	19	56	4=100
June 20-23, 2008	16	16	66	2=100
June 13-16, 2008	17	15	64	4=100
June 6-9, 2008	19	17	61	3=100
May 30-June 2, 2008	17	21	58	4=100
May 22-25, 2008	18	20	60	2=100
May 16-19, 2008	19	19	59	3=100
May 9-12, 2008	20	23	55	2=100
May 2-5, 2008	11	25	59	5=100
April 25-28, 2008	16	24	58	2=100
April 18-21, 2008	18	24	54	4=100
March 28-31, 2008	18	27	52	3=100
March 20-24, 2008	22	30	46	2=100

¹ Polling was not conducted on Sunday, April 12, 2009, which was Easter.

² For March 20-24, 2008, through October 31-November 3, 2008, the introduction read, "In the past few days." For September 12-15 through October 31-November 3, 2008, the question asked respondents to "Please think about each of the following candidates," Barack Obama, John McCain, Joe Biden and Sarah Palin in the 2008 presidential and vice presidential elections. For June 13-16, 2008, through September 5-8, 2008, the question was worded, "Please think about each of the following *presidential* candidates..." and asked about Barack Obama and John McCain. For March 20-24, 2008, through June 6-9, 2008, the list of presidential candidates included Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama and John McCain.

Q.2 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>	<u>DK/Refused</u>
a. News about state and local budget problems	28	30	21	21	*=100
b. Reports about the condition of the U.S. economy	48	29	13	10	0=100
March 27-30, 2009	48	32	10	10	*=100
March 20-23, 2009	52	34	8	6	*=100
March 13-16, 2009	48	33	9	10	*=100
February 27-March 2, 2009	56	30	8	6	*=100
February 13-16, 2009	55	29	10	6	*=100
January 30-February 2, 2009	52	31	12	5	*=100
January 23-26, 2009	57	30	8	5	0=100
January 16-19, 2009	43	35	13	9	*=100
January 2-4, 2009	42	36	15	7	*=100
December 12-15, 2008	51	33	9	7	*=100
December 5-8, 2008	42	38	13	7	*=100
November 21-24, 2008	59	24	9	8	*=100
November 14-17, 2008	56	29	9	6	*=100
November 7-10, 2008	54	31	8	7	*=100
October 31-November 3, 2008	63	27	6	4	*=100
October 24-27, 2008	52	35	7	5	1=100
October 17-20, 2008	62	29	6	3	*=100
October 10-13, 2008	65	25	7	3	*=100
October 3-6, 2008	69	23	5	3	*=100
September 26-29, 2008	70	22	5	3	*=100
September 19-22, 2008	56	27	12	5	*=100
September 5-8, 2008	44	33	16	7	*=100
August 29-31, 2008	41	34	13	11	1=100
August 15-18, 2008	39	36	15	10	*=100
August 8-11, 2008	39	35	16	10	*=100
August 1-4, 2008	47	34	11	8	0=100
July 25-28, 2008	46	32	10	12	*=100
July 18-21, 2008	45	33	13	9	*=100
July 11-14, 2008	44	33	12	10	1=100
June 27-30, 2008	49	31	12	7	1=100
June 13-16, 2008	42	33	14	11	*=100
May 9-12, 2008	45	31	13	11	*=100
May 2-5, 2008	43	31	15	10	1=100
April 18-21, 2008	41	35	13	10	1=100
April 4-7, 2008	39	37	12	12	*=100
March 28-31, 2008	42	36	14	8	*=100
March 20-24, 2008	45	33	13	9	*=100
February 29-March 3, 2008	38	35	15	11	1=100
February 15-18, 2008	37	36	11	16	8=100
February 1-4, 2008	40	37	14	8	1=100
January 18-21, 2008	42	31	16	11	*=100
January 11-14, 2008	36	32	15	16	1=100
November 2-5, 2007	27	37	16	19	1=100
October 19-22, 2007	25	34	20	21	*=100
August 10-13, 2007	28	36	18	18	*=100
Mid-November, 2006	31	40	17	11	1=100

Q.2 CONTINUED...

	<u>Very closely</u>	<u>Fairly closely</u>	<u>Not too closely</u>	<u>Not at all closely</u>	<u>DK/ Refused</u>
December, 2005	35	35	18	11	1=100
Early November, 2005	35	39	17	9	*=100
Mid-May, 2005	30	39	19	11	1=100
January, 2005	35	41	17	7	*=100
Mid-October, 2004	30	43	16	10	1=100
Early September, 2004	39	34	15	11	1=100
Mid-January, 2004	37	41	15	7	*=100
December, 2003	35	38	14	11	2=100
November, 2003	40	34	15	10	1=100
October, 2003	32	39	16	12	1=100
September, 2003	39	30	18	12	1=100
March, 2003	40	35	16	8	1=100
February, 2003	42	33	15	10	*=100
January, 2003	40	35	13	11	1=100
December, 2002	38	34	17	10	1=100
February, 2002	35	40	15	9	1=100
January, 2002	30	44	16	9	1=100
December, 2001	37	40	13	8	2=100
Mid-November, 2001	41	36	15	7	1=100
June, 2001	24	41	18	16	1=100
May, 2001	34	36	15	15	0=100
April, 2001	36	34	16	13	1=100
February, 2001	30	39	18	12	1=100
January, 2001	32	38	17	11	2=100
June, 1995	26	41	22	11	*=100
March, 1995	27	45	19	9	*=100
February, 1995	23	41	22	13	1=100
December, 1994	28	43	20	9	*=100
October, 1994	27	40	20	12	1=100
June, 1994	25	42	23	10	*=100
May, 1994	33	40	16	10	1=100
January, 1994	34	39	16	10	1=100
Early January, 1994	36	44	13	7	*=100
December, 1993	35	41	15	8	1=100
October, 1993	33	38	20	9	*=100
September, 1993	37	40	14	8	1=100
Early September, 1993	39	39	14	9	*=100
August, 1993	41	36	14	9	*=100
May, 1993	37	38	18	6	1=100
February, 1993	49	36	10	5	*=100
January, 1993	42	39	12	7	*=100
September, 1992	43	37	13	6	1=100
May, 1992	39	39	15	6	1=100
March, 1992	47	38	11	4	*=100
February, 1992	47	37	10	6	*=100
January, 1992	44	40	11	5	*=100
October, 1991	36	38	16	9	1=100
c. A major earthquake in Italy	18	35	25	22	*=100
TREND FOR COMPARISON:					
August 1-4, 2008: Los Angeles	17	29	31	23	*=100
May 30-June 2, 2008: China	26	39	21	14	*=100
May 22-25, 2008: China	23	42	24	11	*=100

Q.2 CONTINUED...

	Very <u>closely</u>	Fairly <u>closely</u>	Not too <u>closely</u>	Not at all <u>closely</u>	DK/ <u>Refused</u>
May 16-19, 2008: China	30	41	17	12	*=100
October 2005: <i>Pakistan</i>	22	39	23	16	*=100
January 2005: <i>Earthquake and Tsunami in Indian Ocean</i>	58	32	7	3	*=100
January 2004: <i>Iran</i>	16	34	31	19	*=100
February 2001: <i>India</i>	15	33	31	20	1=100
October 1999: <i>Taiwan</i>	17	36	31	16	*=100
September 1999: <i>Turkey</i>	27	37	23	12	1=100
February 1995: <i>Japan</i>	25	47	20	8	*=100
January 1994: <i>Southern California</i>	63	31	5	1	0=100
July 1990: <i>Iran</i>	20	36	28	16	*=100
November 1989: <i>San Francisco</i>	73	22	3	2	*=100
d. Barack Obama's visit to Turkey and Iraq	23	29	22	26	*=100
April 3-6, 2009: Trip to Europe and meetings with foreign leaders	25	35	21	19	*=100
TREND FOR COMPARISON:³					
July, 2001: <i>G.W. Bush's trip to Europe to attend G-8 Summit</i>	6	21	31	40	2=100
e. The legalization of gay marriage in Iowa and Vermont	13	21	23	42	1=100
TREND FOR COMPARISON:⁴					
Nov. 7-10, 2008: CA vote bans gay marriage	18	26	24	32	*=100
June 20-23, 2008: Same sex marriage in CA	22	26	25	27	*=100
May 16-19, 2008: CA Supreme Court ruling	19	27	25	28	1=100
May 2004: <i>Gay marriage</i>	20	27	25	27	1=100
March 2004: <i>Gay Marriage</i>	29	33	20	17	1=100
Early-February 2004: <i>Debate over gay marriage</i>	26	32	22	19	1=100
Mid-August 2003: <i>Debate over gay marriage</i>	19	30	22	28	1=100
f. Somali Pirates hijacking a U.S. cargo ship with 20 Americans aboard	34	35	14	17	*=100
TREND FOR COMPARISON:⁵					
Nov. 21-24, 2008: Hijack Saudi supertanker	19	28	23	30	*=100

³ July, 2001, asked about: "George W. Bush's trip to Europe to attend the G-8 Summit in Genoa, Italy." This question was not asked as part of a list.

⁴ November 7-10, 2008, asked about: "California voting to ban gay marriage." June 20-23, 2008, asked about: "The issue of same sex marriage in California." May 16-19, 2008, asked about: "The California Supreme Court's decision giving same sex couples the right to marry." March, 2004 and May, 2004 asked about: "The issue of gay and lesbian marriage." August, 2003 and February, 2004 asked about: "The debate about allowing gays and lesbians to marry."

⁵ November 21-24, 2008, asked about: "Pirates from Somalia hijacking a Saudi Arabian supertanker."

Q.3 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.]

- 31 Reports about the condition of the U.S. economy
- 20 Somali Pirates hijacking a U.S. cargo ship with 20 Americans aboard
- 11 Barack Obama's visit to Turkey and Iraq
- 8 A major earthquake in Italy
- 5 News about state and local budget problems
- 2 The legalization of gay marriage in Iowa and Vermont
- 11 Some other story (VOL.)
- 12 Don't know/Refused (VOL.)
- 100

Q.4 How much if anything, have you heard about each of the following? Have you heard a lot, a little or nothing at all? [READ AND RANDOMIZE]

	<u>A lot</u>	<u>A little</u>	<u>Nothing at all</u>	<u>DK/Refused</u>
a. Actor Kal Penn leaves the TV show House to take a job in the Obama administration	6	26	67	1=100
b. Reports that one out of every five four-year-olds fits the definition of being obese	20	45	35	*=100
TREND FOR COMPARISON:				
<i>Nov. 9-12, 2007: A new study that suggested that being overweight does NOT increase the risk of dying of certain diseases</i>	16	36	47	1=100
c. Reports that children of older fathers score lower on IQ tests than the children of younger dads	3	17	80	*=100
d. A report showing that ice in the Artic sea is melting faster than scientists expected	24	43	32	1=100
e. Reports that foreign spies have hacked into the U.S. electric grid	14	34	52	*=100

On another topic...

Q.5 Are you hearing mostly good news about the economy these days, mostly bad news about the economy or a mix of both good and bad news?

	<u>Mar 13-16</u>	<u>Feb 13-16</u>	<u>Jan 16-19</u>	<u>Dec 5-8</u>
	<u>2009</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2008</u>
4 Hearing mostly good news about the economy	2	2	2	1
39 Hearing mostly bad news about the economy [OR]	51	60	67	80
56 A mix of good and bad	46	37	30	19
<u>1</u> Don't know/Refused (VOL. DO NOT READ)	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>*</u>
100	100	100	100	100

Q.6 And thinking about the local area where you live. Are you hearing mostly good news about the economy in your area these days, mostly bad news about the economy in your area or a mix of both good and bad news?

5 Hearing mostly good news about the economy in my area
44 Hearing mostly bad news about the economy in my area **[OR]**
49 A mix of good and bad
2 Don't know/Refused (**VOL.**)
100