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**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:**  
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**No One Network Singled Out as Too Easy**  
**FOX NEWS STANDS OUT AS “TOO CRITICAL” OF OBAMA**

When Americans are asked to assess television news coverage of Barack Obama, Fox News Channel stands out from other networks for being too critical of the president. Nearly three-in-ten (29%) select Fox when asked which of six broadcast and cable news networks have been too critical of the new Democratic president, a far greater share than any other network.

In contrast, no one TV network is singled out for being too easy on Obama. Each of five networks (CNN, MSNBC, NBC, ABC and CBS) was named by about one in six respondents in this regard. Again, the Fox News Network stands apart – just 5% named Fox as being too easy on the president.

The latest weekly News Interest Index survey, conducted April 17-20 by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, finds a substantial partisan divide in views of how TV news networks cover Obama. More than four-in-ten Democrats (44%) say Fox has been too critical of Obama, compared with 25% of independents and just 18% of Republicans. No other network comes close to Fox, though 11% overall – including 18% of Democrats – say CNN has been too critical of the president. Very few Americans cite the broadcast networks – ABC (4%), NBC (4%) or CBS (3%) – as too critical.

Which Networks Are Too Critical of Obama?				
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
	%	%	%	%
Fox News	29	18	44	25
CNN	11	5	18	9
MSNBC	8	5	9	9
ABC	4	3	6	4
NBC	4	2	5	4
CBS	3	4	3	4
All (VOL)	2	1	2	3
None (VOL)	34	51	18	38
Don't know (VOL)	19	22	17	17
<i>Named one or more</i>	<i>47</i>	<i>27</i>	<i>65</i>	<i>45</i>

And Which Are Too Easy?				
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
	%	%	%	%
CNN	16	26	8	16
MSNBC	16	25	7	18
NBC	15	28	6	17
ABC	14	22	6	14
CBS	13	24	5	16
Fox News	5	3	4	7
All (VOL)	6	11	1	7
None (VOL)	30	14	45	26
Don't know (VOL)	24	24	26	20
<i>Named one or more</i>	<i>46</i>	<i>62</i>	<i>29</i>	<i>54</i>

Note: Based on total. Figures add to more than 100% because respondents were allowed to offer multiple answers.

In the survey, no one network is particularly identified as too easy on Obama. That is despite the view of many media watchers that, among the cable stations, MSNBC’s prime time lineup tilts to the left, while Fox’s leans conservative. Some 16% of Americans identify MSNBC as too easy on Obama, the same percentage that cites CNN. Among Republicans, one quarter (25%) says MSNBC is too easy on Obama; about as many say the same about CNN and each of the broadcast networks.

The impression that there is a pro-Obama bias to media coverage is widespread among Republicans – a majority identifies at least one network as being too easy on Obama, and a quarter feels that at least five of the six major networks – if not all of them – are too easy on Obama. This criticism is cast evenly across all networks except Fox News.

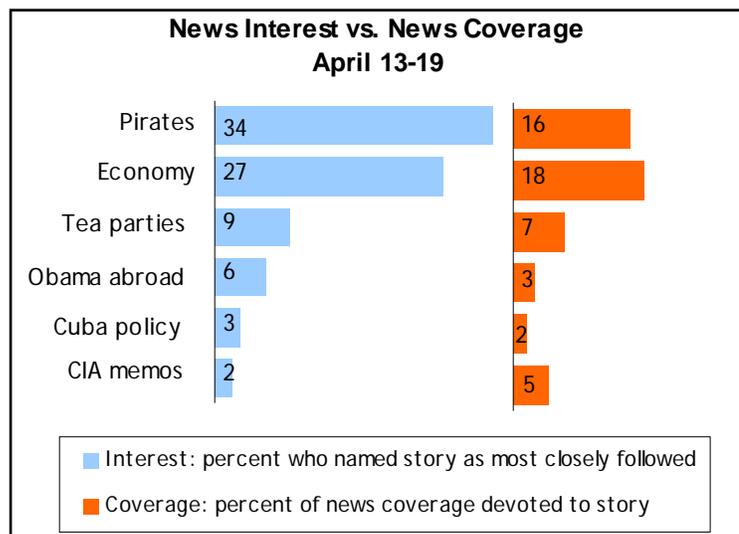
While many Americans see one or more networks as too critical or too easy on Obama, just more than half make no such distinctions. When it comes to being too critical, 53% either say that none of the networks is guilty, or offer no opinion. The same is true when it comes to whether any of the networks is too easy on Obama.

In a separate question on the media in general, the public sees coverage of the first months of the Obama administration as fair. Two thirds (66%) say the news organizations they follow are being fair to the new president, while 18% say they are being unfair. More than seven-in-ten (72%) Republicans say the coverage has been fair, compared with 66% of Democrats and 67% of independents.

Those who say they see the coverage as unfair – including 23% of Democrats, 16% of independents and 12% of Republicans – were asked to explain their answers. Among the common responses were that the media was expecting too much too quickly, that it was being too negative and critical and that Obama was getting blamed for steps taken by past administrations.

### Interest in Pirates Remains High

Both Fox and MSNBC devoted significant airtime last week to “tea party” protests against Obama policies, taxes and government spending – with decidedly different takes on the events nationwide [See [“Economy Shares Headlines with Pirates, Tea Parties and Waterboarding”](#) released April 21,

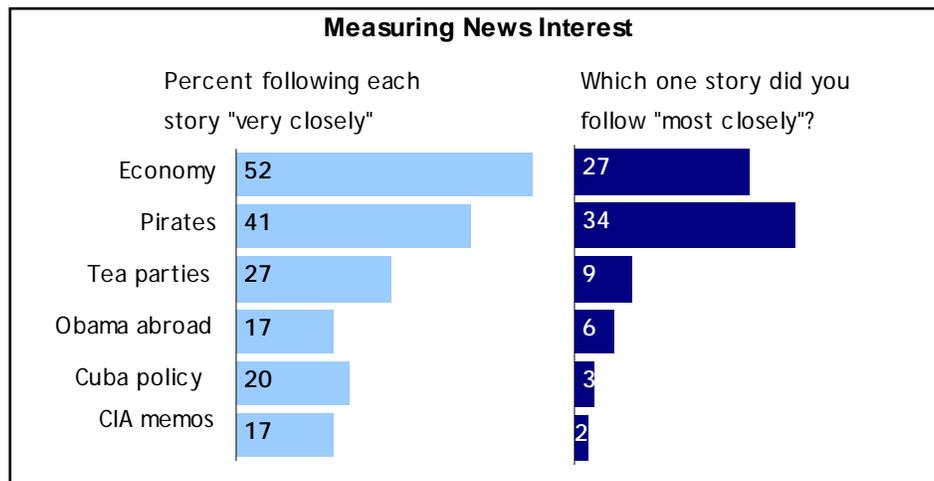


2009], but the public paid much closer attention to stories about pirates off the coast of Somalia and the troubled U.S. economy.

About a third (34%) say they followed stories about the continued attempts by pirates to hijack ships more closely than any other story last week, while 27% say they followed stories about the U.S. economy most closely. More than half of the public (52%) says they followed economic news very closely, while about four-in-ten (41%) say they followed news about the pirates very closely.

In terms of coverage, a separate content analysis by Pew Research Center’s Project for Excellence in Journalism finds that stories about the economic crisis took up 18% of the newshole last week, stories about the pirates took up 16% and stories about the tea party protests took up 7%. The protest stories made up a significantly larger share – 14% – of the cable network newshole.

About one-in-ten (9%) say they followed the tea party protests more closely than any other story, while just more than a quarter (27%) say they followed the protests very closely.



The share of Republicans following the tea party story very closely (43%) was more than twice the share of Democrats (18%). About a quarter of independents (26%) say they followed the tea parties very closely.

Some 17% of Americans say they followed news about Obama’s travels to

**Interest in Tea Party Protests**

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
<i>Following "tea parties"...</i>	%	%	%	%
Very closely	27	43	18	26
Fairly closely	25	22	23	26
Not too closely	22	17	28	22
Not at all closely	25	17	31	26
Don't know	1	1	*	0
	100	100	100	100

Mexico and Latin America last week very closely, while 6% say that was the story they followed most closely. PEJ reported this week that Obama’s trip to Mexico accounted for 3% of the newshole. The analysis did not include Obama’s second stop in Trinidad.

Two-in-ten say they followed news about Obama lifting certain restrictions on travel to Cuba; 3% say this was the story they followed most closely. Stories about Cuba, including changes in U.S. policies toward the island nation, made up 2% of the newshole.

A slightly smaller share (17%) say they very closely followed news about the release of Bush administration memos that detailed the harsh interrogation tactics the CIA was authorized to use to gather information following the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks; 2% say they followed that story most closely last week and those stories took up 5% of the newshole.

### California Murder Case Widely Known

News about charges against a Sunday school teacher in the murder of an 8-year-old California girl registered widely with the public last week. Fully half say they heard a lot about this and another 28% heard a

What the Public’s Been Hearing About...				
	A lot	A little	Nothing at all	DK
<i>How much have you heard about...</i>	%	%	%	%
Murder of 8-year-old Calif. girl	50	28	22	*=100
The Obamas’ new dog, Bo	43	42	14	1=100
Scottish woman singing on talent show	40	29	31	*=100
Football’s John Madden retiring	21	44	34	1=100

little about the story. The woman charged in the murder, Melissa Huckaby, was among last week’s lead newsmakers, according to the PEJ analysis. News about the case and the allegations against Huckaby accounted for 1% of news.

The highly anticipated arrival of Bo, the Obama family dog, also registered widely last week. More than four-in-ten (43%) say they heard a lot about the new dog, while 42% say they heard a little. Just 14% had heard nothing at all about this. The media, meanwhile, devoted 1% of total news coverage last week to the new Obama dog.

A performance by a Scottish woman on the British reality show “Britain’s Got Talent” became an internet sensation and registered almost as widely with the American public as did the White House dog. Four-in-ten (40%) say that they heard a lot about Susan Boyle’s impressive voice and another 29% say they heard a little about her.

**What Americans are Hearing About Differs by Age and Gender**

<i>How much have you heard about...</i>	% heard 'a lot'			---% heard 'a lot'---			>40 vs. <65
	<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>	<u>Diff.</u>	<u>&lt;40</u>	<u>40-64</u>	<u>65+</u>	<u>Diff.</u>
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Murder of 8-year-old Calif. girl	46	54	+8	42	54	57	+15
The Obamas' new dog, Bo	40	47	+7	38	47	48	+10
Scottish woman singing on talent show	38	42	+4	33	43	45	+12
Football's John Madden retiring	28	15	-13	21	20	27	+6

Just more than two-in-ten (21%) say they heard a lot about the announcement that veteran NFL commentator John Madden is retiring, while another 44% said that they had heard a little about this news. A third of the public (34%) says they heard nothing at all about Madden's plans. News about his retirement made up 1% of the newshole.

Women were more likely than men to have heard a lot about the California murder case (54% of women vs. 46% of men). Women were also more likely than men to have heard a lot about the Obamas' new dog (47% vs. 40%). Not surprisingly, a greater percentage of men (28%) than women (15%) heard a lot about Madden's decision to retire from sports casting; 42% of women heard nothing at all about that news.

While video of Susan Boyle's performance on "Britain's Got Talent" was one of the largest YouTube hits of the year, the story did not grab the attention of younger Americans. Just 33% of those younger than 40 heard a lot about Boyle, while 46% had not heard about the story at all. By comparison, 45% of people 65 and older heard a lot about this story; just 24% had heard nothing about it. The California murder and the Obamas' new dog show the same age pattern, with far more awareness among older than 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 from April 13-19, 2009 and survey data measuring public interest in the top news stories of the week were collected April 17-20 from a nationally representative sample of 1,004 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](http://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 17-20, 2009 NEWS INTEREST INDEX OMNIBUS SURVEY**  
**TOPLINE**  
**N=1004**

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] [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. Barack Obama’s trip to Mexico and Latin America	17	26	25	32	*=100
<b>TREND FOR COMPARISON:</b>					
April 9-13, 2009: <i>Visit to Turkey and Iraq</i>	23	29	22	26	*=100
April 3-6, 2009: <i>Trip to Europe and meetings with foreign leaders</i>	25	35	21	19	*=100
b. Reports about the condition of the U.S. economy	52	30	10	7	1=100
April 9-13, 2009	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

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>
<b>March 28-31, 2008</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>*=100</b>
<b>March 20-24, 2008</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>*=100</b>
<b>February 29-March 3, 2008</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>1=100</b>
<b>February 15-18, 2008</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>8=100</b>
<b>February 1-4, 2008</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1=100</b>
<b>January 18-21, 2008</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>*=100</b>
<b>January 11-14, 2008</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>1=100</b>
<b>November 2-5, 2007</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>1=100</b>
<b>October 19-22, 2007</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>*=100</b>
<b>August 10-13, 2007</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>*=100</b>
Mid-November, 2006	31	40	17	11	1=100
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

**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>
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. Tea party protests against taxes and government spending	<b>27</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>1=100</b>
d. The Obama administration relaxing travel restrictions to Cuba	<b>20</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>1=100</b>
<b>TREND FOR COMPARISON:<sup>1</sup></b>					
February 22-25, 2008: <i>Fidel Castro resigning</i>	<b>18</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>*=100</b>
August, 2006: <i>Fidel Castro handing control of Cuba to his brother</i>	19	34	23	23	1=100
e. The release of memos describing harsh interrogation techniques used by CIA officials	<b>17</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>*=100</b>
f. News about attacks on cargo ships by Somali pirates	<b>41</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>1=100</b>
<b>TREND FOR COMPARISON:<sup>2</sup></b>					
April 9-13, 2009: <i>Somali Pirates hijacking a U.S. cargo ship with 20 Americans aboard</i>	<b>34</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>*=100</b>
Nov. 21-24, 2008: <i>Hijack Saudi supertanker</i>	<b>19</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>*=100</b>

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.]

34	News about attacks on cargo ships by Somali pirates
27	Reports about the condition of the U.S. economy
9	Tea party protests against taxes and government spending
6	Barack Obama's trip to Mexico and Latin America
3	The Obama administration relaxing travel restrictions to Cuba
2	The release of memos describing harsh interrogation technique used by CIA officials
6	Some other story (VOL.)
<u>13</u>	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)
100	

<sup>1</sup> February 22-25, 2008, asked about: "Fidel Castro resigning as president of Cuba." August, 2006, asked about: "Fidel Castro handing control of Cuba to his brother because of an illness."

<sup>2</sup> April 9-13, 2009, asked about: "Somali pirates hijacking a U.S. cargo ship with 20 Americans aboard." November 21-24, 2008, asked about: "Pirates from Somalia hijacking a Saudi Arabian supertanker."

Q.3 In your opinion, are the news organizations you are familiar with being fair or unfair to the Obama administration?

	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Unfair</u>	<u>(VOL.)</u> <u>DK/Ref</u>
<b>April 17-20, 2009</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>16=100</b>
<b>G.W. Bush</b>			
July, 2007	57	32	11=100
April, 2006	56	31	13=100
Early November, 2005	50	31	19=100
Early July, 2003	62	24	14=100
February, 2001	65	19	16=100
<b>Clinton</b>			
Early September, 1998	52	40	8=100
February, 1998	49	44	7=100
September, 1994	67	26	7=100
May, 1994	52	36	12=100
August, 1993	66	21	13=100
June, 1993	51	43	6=100
February, 1993	72	17	11=100
<b>Bush, Sr.</b>			
January, 1992	77	15	8=100
November, 1990	72	15	13=100
January, 1990	76	14	10=100
August, 1989	82	12	6=100
<b>Reagan</b>			
January, 1988	66	21	13=100
January, 1987	67	25	8=100
July, 1985	78	12	10=100

**IF "UNFAIR" IN Q.3 (Q.3=2) ASK [N=177]:**

Q.4 In what ways are they being unfair? [OPEN END. PROBE FOR SPECIFICS. RECORD UP TO FOUR MENTIONS ] Any other ways?

**Q.4 RESULTS NOT SHOWN; USED FOR QUALITATIVE PURPOSES ONLY.**

**ASK ALL:**

Q.5 Thinking about television news, which of the following networks, if any, do you think has been TOO CRITICAL in its coverage of Barack Obama? [READ ENTIRE LIST AND ACCEPT MULTIPLE MENTIONS. RANDOMIZE LIST]

29	Fox News cable channel
11	CNN cable news
8	MSNBC cable news
4	ABC News
4	NBC News
3	CBS News
2	All have been too critical (VOL.)
34	None has been too critical (VOL.)
19	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

**ASK ALL:**

Q.5A And among the same networks, which, if any, do you think has been TOO EASY in its coverage of Barack Obama? **[READ ENTIRE LIST AND ACCEPT MULTIPLE MENTIONS. RANDOMIZE LIST]**

- 16 CNN cable news
- 16 MSNBC cable news
- 15 NBC News
- 14 CBS News
- 13 ABC News
- 5 Fox News cable channel
- 6 All have been too easy (VOL.)
- 30 None has been too easy (VOL.)
- 24 Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

On another topic...

Q.6 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. <b>The Obama family's new dog, Bo</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>1=100</b>
<b>NO ITEM B</b>				
c. <b>The murder of an 8-year-old California girl by a Sunday school teacher</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>*=100</b>
d. <b>A Scottish woman whose singing impressed judges and the audience of a British talent show</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>*=100</b>
e. <b>Football commentator John Madden announcing his retirement</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>1=100</b>