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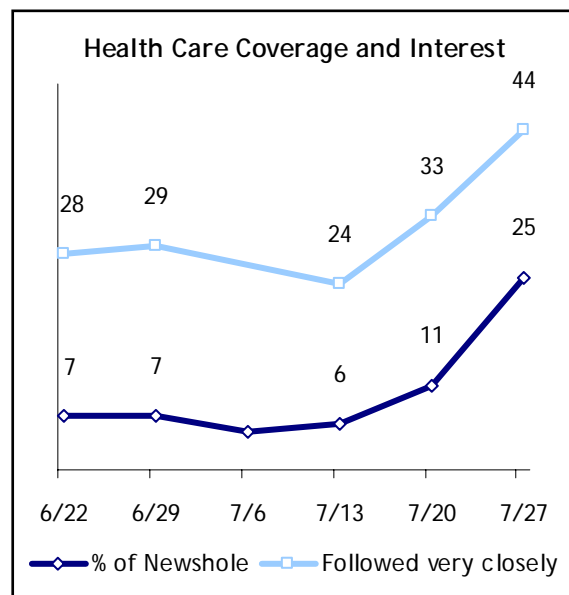
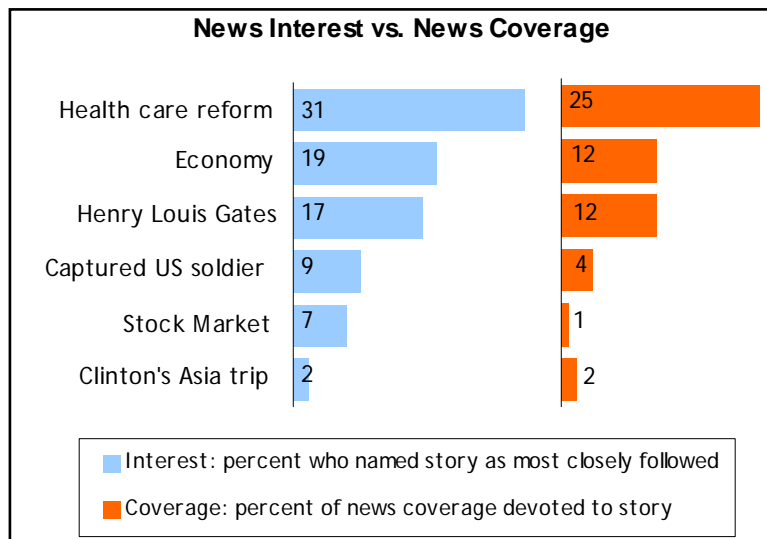
Interest, Coverage Spike

HEALTH CARE FRONT-AND-CENTER ON PUBLIC'S NEWS AGENDA

The public sharpened its focus on health care reform last week, following news about the debate in Washington more closely than any other story. Interest in health care reform has steadily increased in recent weeks as coverage – including a prime-time presidential news conference – has intensified.

Nearly a third (31%) name the debate in Washington over health care reform as their top story, more than the share who cite the economy (19%) or the arrest of Henry Louis Gates Jr. (17%). In addition, the latest weekly News Interest Index survey, conducted July 24-27 among 1,018 adults by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, finds that more than four-in-ten (44%) say they followed health care news very closely, up from 33% in the previous week and 24% two weeks prior.

Public interest in health care has risen hand-in-hand with the level of media coverage the story has received. According to the Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism



(PEJ), a quarter of the newshole was devoted to health care last week, more than double the level of overall coverage given to any other story. This marks the highest level of media attention given to the topic since PEJ began the News Coverage Index in 2007. And, as coverage has risen steadily over the past three weeks, public attention to health care has also climbed: almost doubling since mid-July.

News about health care reform captured the very close attention of Republicans (42%), Democrats (44%) and independents (45%) alike. Men and women were equally likely to follow the story very closely. By contrast, a greater share of those with a college degree (50%) followed news about health care very closely than those with no more than a high school diploma (35%).

Henry Louis Gates Controversy

While health care reform topped the public’s news agenda, the arrest of Harvard professor Henry Louis Gates Jr. received relatively high levels of public attention. Three-in-ten say they followed the story very closely and 17% named it their top story of the week. According to PEJ, 12% of the newshole was devoted to the arrest and subsequent comments on the incident by President Obama, tying it for the second most-covered story of the week.

The president’s involvement in the story was undoubtedly a major factor in public interest and media attention spiked in the days following Obama’s comments at his July 22 news conference. In general, the Gates arrest received relatively high levels of public attention when compared with other recent news events that involved tensions over race. The 30% of the public who followed the story very closely surpassed interest in stories such as Don Imus’s 2007 comments about the Rutgers’s women’s basketball team (24%), a shooting this year in Oakland, Calif., in which four police officers were killed (20%), demonstrations in Jena, La., in 2007 over black teens involved in a schoolyard fight (18%), and the acquittal in 2008 of three New York City police officers in the shooting of an unarmed man (13%).

Obama Fatigue?

In another week where the president was the top newsmaker according to PEJ, four-in-ten say they have been hearing too much about Barack Obama, 12% say too little, and a 46% plurality say they have been hearing the right amount about the president. Compared with late March, somewhat more now say they’ve been hearing too much about Obama, while fewer say they’ve heard the right amount. Predictably, there are stark partisan differences on this question: two-thirds (66%) of Republicans say they’ve heard too much about Obama, while just 23% say

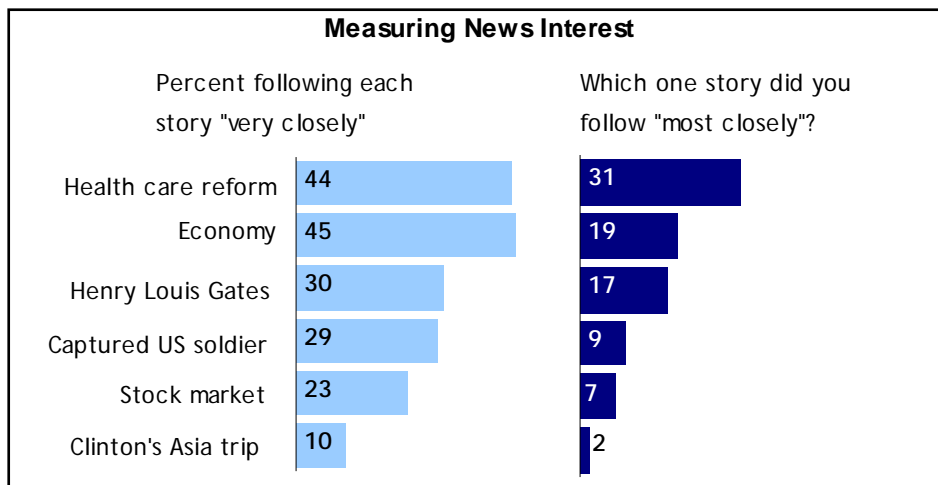
| Hearing _____ about Obama | | | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| | Aug 1-4 <u>2008</u> | Oct 24-27 <u>2008</u> | Mar 27-30 <u>2009</u> | July 24-27 <u>2009</u> |
| Too much | 48 | 41 | 34 | 40 |
| Too little | 10 | 10 | 8 | 12 |
| Right amount | 41 | 47 | 54 | 46 |
| Don't know | 1 | 2 | 4 | 2 |

they've heard the right amount. Among Democrats, opinion is reversed: 58% say they've heard the right amount, while 25% say they have heard too much. The views of independents track more closely with Democrats than Republicans: 51% say right amount, 36% say too much.

Economic News Remains Important

In other news last week, the public continued to track reports about the condition of the U.S. economy; 45% followed economic news very closely, on par with the share that followed health care reform very closely. While more name health care reform as their top story of the week, 19% say the economy was the story they followed more closely than any other.

About three-in-ten (29%) followed news that a U.S. soldier had been captured by the Taliban in Afghanistan very closely and 9% say they followed this story more closely than any other. Interest was higher in the South than it was in other regions of the country. According to PEJ, news out of Pakistan, including the soldier's capture, made up 4% of the newshole.



News about the recent gains in the stock market was tracked very closely by 23% of the public, with 7% calling it their top story. Interest was lower for Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's trip to India and Southeast Asia: just 10% followed the story very closely and even fewer (2%) say this was the story they followed most closely. Nearly half (45%) say they didn't follow this story closely at all.

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 July 20-26, 2009 and survey data measuring public interest in the top news stories of the week were collected July 24-27, 2009 from a nationally representative sample of 1,018 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
July 24-27, 2009 NEWS INTEREST INDEX OMNIBUS SURVEY
FINAL TOPLINE
N=1018

Q.1 All things considered... these days have you been hearing too much, too little, or the right amount about Barack Obama?

| | | Mar 27-30, <u>2009</u> | Oct 24-27, <u>2008</u> ¹ | Aug 1-4, <u>2008</u> |
|----|---------------------------|---------------------------|--|-------------------------|
| 40 | Too much | 34 | 41 | 48 |
| 12 | Too little | 8 | 10 | 10 |
| 46 | Right amount | 54 | 47 | 41 |
| 2 | Don't know/Refused (VOL.) | 4 | 2 | 1 |

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 that a U.S. soldier had been captured by the Taliban in Afghanistan | 29 | 35 | 18 | 17 | 1 |
| TREND FOR COMPARISON: | | | | | |
| April 15-18, 1999: <i>The capture of three U.S. soldiers near Kosovo, Serbia</i> | 47 | 37 | 11 | 5 | 0 |
| b. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's trip to India and Southeast Asia | 10 | 20 | 25 | 45 | 1 |
| TREND FOR COMPARISON: | | | | | |
| March 27-30, 2009: <i>Hillary Clinton's recent trip to Mexico to discuss drug violence near the border</i> | 14 | 24 | 23 | 39 | * |
| April 19-May 12, 2002: <i>The secretary of state's recent visit to the Middle East</i> | 25 | 32 | 20 | 22 | 1 |
| c. Reports about the condition of the U.S. economy | 45 | 35 | 12 | 8 | * |
| July 17-20, 2009 | 43 | 35 | 11 | 11 | 1 |
| July 10-13, 2009 | 37 | 38 | 13 | 11 | * |
| July 2-5, 2009 | 38 | 35 | 15 | 12 | * |
| June 19-22, 2009 | 42 | 33 | 15 | 10 | * |
| June 12-15, 2009 | 41 | 35 | 12 | 12 | * |
| June 5-8, 2009 | 41 | 34 | 11 | 14 | * |
| May 29-June 1, 2009 | 43 | 37 | 11 | 8 | * |
| May 21-24, 2009 | 44 | 35 | 13 | 9 | * |
| May 15-18, 2009 | 44 | 35 | 12 | 8 | * |
| May 8-11, 2009 | 42 | 34 | 12 | 12 | * |
| May 1-4, 2009 | 47 | 36 | 11 | 5 | 1 |
| April 17-20, 2009 | 52 | 30 | 10 | 7 | 1 |
| April 9-13, 2009 | 48 | 29 | 13 | 10 | 0 |
| March 27-30, 2009 | 48 | 32 | 10 | 10 | * |

¹ For Aug. 1-4 and Oct. 24-27, 2008, the question was preceded by "Thinking about the presidential campaign. Also, the question then was asked about both Obama and John McCain, in random order."

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> |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------|
| March 20-23, 2009 | 52 | 34 | 8 | 6 | * |
| March 13-16, 2009 | 48 | 33 | 9 | 10 | * |
| February 27-March 2, 2009 | 56 | 30 | 8 | 6 | * |
| February 13-16, 2009 | 55 | 29 | 10 | 6 | * |
| January 30-February 2, 2009 | 52 | 31 | 12 | 5 | * |
| January 23-26, 2009 | 57 | 30 | 8 | 5 | 0 |
| January 16-19, 2009 | 43 | 35 | 13 | 9 | * |
| January 2-4, 2009 | 42 | 36 | 15 | 7 | * |
| December 12-15, 2008 | 51 | 33 | 9 | 7 | * |
| December 5-8, 2008 | 42 | 38 | 13 | 7 | * |
| November 21-24, 2008 | 59 | 24 | 9 | 8 | * |
| November 14-17, 2008 | 56 | 29 | 9 | 6 | * |
| November 7-10, 2008 | 54 | 31 | 8 | 7 | * |
| October 31-November 3, 2008 | 63 | 27 | 6 | 4 | * |
| October 24-27, 2008 | 52 | 35 | 7 | 5 | 1 |
| October 17-20, 2008 | 62 | 29 | 6 | 3 | * |
| October 10-13, 2008 | 65 | 25 | 7 | 3 | * |
| October 3-6, 2008 | 69 | 23 | 5 | 3 | * |
| September 26-29, 2008 | 70 | 22 | 5 | 3 | * |
| September 19-22, 2008 | 56 | 27 | 12 | 5 | * |
| September 5-8, 2008 | 44 | 33 | 16 | 7 | * |
| August 29-31, 2008 | 41 | 34 | 13 | 11 | 1 |
| August 15-18, 2008 | 39 | 36 | 15 | 10 | * |
| August 8-11, 2008 | 39 | 35 | 16 | 10 | * |
| August 1-4, 2008 | 47 | 34 | 11 | 8 | 0 |
| July 25-28, 2008 | 46 | 32 | 10 | 12 | * |
| July 18-21, 2008 | 45 | 33 | 13 | 9 | * |
| July 11-14, 2008 | 44 | 33 | 12 | 10 | 1 |
| June 27-30, 2008 | 49 | 31 | 12 | 7 | 1 |
| June 13-16, 2008 | 42 | 33 | 14 | 11 | * |
| May 9-12, 2008 | 45 | 31 | 13 | 11 | * |
| May 2-5, 2008 | 43 | 31 | 15 | 10 | 1 |
| April 18-21, 2008 | 41 | 35 | 13 | 10 | 1 |
| April 4-7, 2008 | 39 | 37 | 12 | 12 | * |
| March 28-31, 2008 | 42 | 36 | 14 | 8 | * |
| March 20-24, 2008 | 45 | 33 | 13 | 9 | * |
| February 29-March 3, 2008 | 38 | 35 | 15 | 11 | 1 |
| February 15-18, 2008 | 37 | 36 | 11 | 16 | 8 |
| February 1-4, 2008 | 40 | 37 | 14 | 8 | 1 |
| January 18-21, 2008 | 42 | 31 | 16 | 11 | * |
| January 11-14, 2008 | 36 | 32 | 15 | 16 | 1 |
| November 2-5, 2007 | 27 | 37 | 16 | 19 | 1 |
| October 19-22, 2007 | 25 | 34 | 20 | 21 | * |
| August 10-13, 2007 | 28 | 36 | 18 | 18 | * |
| Mid-November, 2006 | 31 | 40 | 17 | 11 | 1 |
| December, 2005 | 35 | 35 | 18 | 11 | 1 |
| Early November, 2005 | 35 | 39 | 17 | 9 | * |
| Mid-May, 2005 | 30 | 39 | 19 | 11 | 1 |
| January, 2005 | 35 | 41 | 17 | 7 | * |
| Mid-October, 2004 | 30 | 43 | 16 | 10 | 1 |
| Early September, 2004 | 39 | 34 | 15 | 11 | 1 |
| Mid-January, 2004 | 37 | 41 | 15 | 7 | * |
| December, 2003 | 35 | 38 | 14 | 11 | 2 |

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> |
|---|-------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------|
| November, 2003 | 40 | 34 | 15 | 10 | 1 |
| October, 2003 | 32 | 39 | 16 | 12 | 1 |
| September, 2003 | 39 | 30 | 18 | 12 | 1 |
| March, 2003 | 40 | 35 | 16 | 8 | 1 |
| February, 2003 | 42 | 33 | 15 | 10 | * |
| January, 2003 | 40 | 35 | 13 | 11 | 1 |
| December, 2002 | 38 | 34 | 17 | 10 | 1 |
| February, 2002 | 35 | 40 | 15 | 9 | 1 |
| January, 2002 | 30 | 44 | 16 | 9 | 1 |
| December, 2001 | 37 | 40 | 13 | 8 | 2 |
| Mid-November, 2001 | 41 | 36 | 15 | 7 | 1 |
| June, 2001 | 24 | 41 | 18 | 16 | 1 |
| May, 2001 | 34 | 36 | 15 | 15 | 0 |
| April, 2001 | 36 | 34 | 16 | 13 | 1 |
| February, 2001 | 30 | 39 | 18 | 12 | 1 |
| January, 2001 | 32 | 38 | 17 | 11 | 2 |
| June, 1995 | 26 | 41 | 22 | 11 | * |
| March, 1995 | 27 | 45 | 19 | 9 | * |
| February, 1995 | 23 | 41 | 22 | 13 | 1 |
| December, 1994 | 28 | 43 | 20 | 9 | * |
| October, 1994 | 27 | 40 | 20 | 12 | 1 |
| June, 1994 | 25 | 42 | 23 | 10 | * |
| May, 1994 | 33 | 40 | 16 | 10 | 1 |
| January, 1994 | 34 | 39 | 16 | 10 | 1 |
| Early January, 1994 | 36 | 44 | 13 | 7 | * |
| December, 1993 | 35 | 41 | 15 | 8 | 1 |
| October, 1993 | 33 | 38 | 20 | 9 | * |
| September, 1993 | 37 | 40 | 14 | 8 | 1 |
| Early September, 1993 | 39 | 39 | 14 | 9 | * |
| August, 1993 | 41 | 36 | 14 | 9 | * |
| May, 1993 | 37 | 38 | 18 | 6 | 1 |
| February, 1993 | 49 | 36 | 10 | 5 | * |
| January, 1993 | 42 | 39 | 12 | 7 | * |
| September, 1992 | 43 | 37 | 13 | 6 | 1 |
| May, 1992 | 39 | 39 | 15 | 6 | 1 |
| March, 1992 | 47 | 38 | 11 | 4 | * |
| February, 1992 | 47 | 37 | 10 | 6 | * |
| January, 1992 | 44 | 40 | 11 | 5 | * |
| October, 1991 | 36 | 38 | 16 | 9 | 1 |
| d. Debate in Washington over health care reform | 44 | 28 | 15 | 13 | * |
| July 17-20, 2009 | 33 | 31 | 13 | 21 | 2 |
| July 10-13, 2009 | 24 | 29 | 20 | 27 | * |
| June 26-29, 2009 | 29 | 26 | 20 | 25 | 1 |
| June 19-22, 2009 | 28 | 28 | 20 | 23 | * |
| June 12-15, 2009 | 29 | 26 | 18 | 26 | * |

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> |
|--|-------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------|
| TREND FOR COMPARISON:² | | | | | |
| May 15-18, 2009: <i>Debate over Obama's health care plans</i> | 25 | 30 | 20 | 24 | * |
| March 6-9, 2009: <i>Obama proposing a \$630 billion fund for overhauling health care</i> | 41 | 32 | 13 | 14 | * |
| September, 1994: <i>The Clinton administration's health care reform proposals</i> | 32 | 41 | 18 | 9 | * |
| June, 1994 | 34 | 40 | 19 | 7 | * |
| May, 1994 | 37 | 37 | 16 | 9 | 1 |
| January, 1994 | 38 | 38 | 15 | 9 | * |
| Early January, 1994 | 40 | 40 | 14 | 6 | * |
| December, 1993 | 45 | 35 | 12 | 7 | 1 |
| October, 1993 | 44 | 32 | 17 | 6 | 1 |
| September, 1993 | 49 | 34 | 11 | 6 | * |
| August, 1993: <i>Reports about the White House task force on health care reform headed by Hillary Clinton</i> | 27 | 32 | 25 | 15 | 1 |
| June, 1993 | 28 | 38 | 19 | 15 | * |
| May, 1993 | 30 | 30 | 25 | 14 | 1 |
| e. The arrest of Henry Louis Gates, a black Harvard professor, at his home after a dispute with a police officer | 30 | 31 | 17 | 21 | 1 |
| f. Recent gains in the stock market | 23 | 25 | 24 | 28 | * |
| March 13-16, 2009 ³ | 38 | 31 | 14 | 17 | 0 |
| March 6-9, 2009 | 35 | 31 | 15 | 19 | * |
| February 20-23, 2009 | 31 | 32 | 20 | 17 | * |
| November 21-24, 2008 | 50 | 23 | 15 | 12 | * |
| October 17-20, 2008 | 54 | 31 | 9 | 6 | * |
| October 10-13, 2008 | 59 | 26 | 9 | 6 | * |
| July 3-7, 2008 | 22 | 29 | 23 | 26 | * |
| March 14-17, 2008 | 25 | 31 | 23 | 21 | * |
| January 25-28, 2008 | 29 | 28 | 19 | 23 | 1 |
| August 17-20, 2007 | 21 | 24 | 22 | 33 | * |
| July 27-30, 2007 | 15 | 26 | 21 | 37 | 1 |
| March 2-5, 2007 | 21 | 28 | 25 | 26 | * |
| Early September, 2002 | 27 | 30 | 20 | 22 | 1 |
| Late July, 2002 | 33 | 33 | 15 | 18 | 1 |
| March, 2001 | 27 | 27 | 18 | 27 | 1 |
| Mid-October, 2000 | 20 | 26 | 23 | 31 | 1 |
| April, 2000 | 18 | 28 | 23 | 31 | * |

² May 15-18, 2009 asked about: "Debate over Barack Obama's health care plans." March 6-9, 2009 asked about: "Barack Obama proposing a \$630 billion fund for overhauling the U.S. health care system." September, 1993 through September, 1994 asked about: "The Clinton Administration's health care reform proposals." May, 1993 through August, 1993 asked about: "Reports about the White House task force on health care reform headed by Hillary Clinton."

³ October 10-13, 2008 and November 21-24, 2008 through March 6-9, 2009 asked about "Recent major drops in the U.S. stock market." March 2-5, 2007 asked about "The recent drop in the U.S. stock market." In Early November, 1997, the story was not asked as part of a list and was worded: "Thinking about last Monday when the stock market dropped, how closely did you follow what was happening?" For all other dates, the story was listed as "Recent major ups and downs in the U.S. stock market."

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> |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------|
| Early April, 2000 | 19 | 29 | 20 | 32 | * |
| March, 2000 | 23 | 29 | 21 | 26 | 1 |
| March, 1999 | 18 | 29 | 22 | 31 | * |
| January, 1999 | 24 | 28 | 19 | 28 | 1 |
| Early September, 1998 | 32 | 31 | 20 | 17 | * |
| Mid-August, 1998 | 17 | 23 | 21 | 39 | * |
| January, 1998 | 21 | 25 | 23 | 31 | * |
| Mid-November, 1997 | 25 | 36 | 18 | 20 | 1 |
| Early November, 1997 | 16 | 29 | 22 | 33 | * |
| September, 1997 | 14 | 22 | 23 | 40 | 1 |
| April, 1997 | 17 | 21 | 22 | 40 | * |
| February, 1996 | 12 | 20 | 25 | 42 | 1 |

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 Debate in Washington over health care reform
- 19 Reports about the condition of the U.S. economy
- The arrest of Henry Louis Gates, a black Harvard professor, at his home after a dispute
- 17 with a police officer
- 9 News that a U.S. soldier had been captured by the Taliban in Afghanistan
- 7 Recent gains in the stock market
- 2 Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's trip to India and Southeast Asia
- 7 Some other story (VOL.)
- 8 Don't know/Refused (VOL.)