



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:
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Fewer than Half Would Get Vaccine
GROWING INTEREST IN SWINE FLU, MANY SEE PRESS
OVERSTATING ITS DANGER

As the first vials of swine flu vaccine make their way into American communities, public interest in news about the disease is increasing. Nearly as many people now cite swine flu as their top news story of the week as mention the health care debate – the first time in several months that reports on health care have not clearly led the public’s news agenda.

Close to four-in-ten Americans (38%) say they are following news about the swine flu and vaccine very closely, the highest percentage tracking the issue very closely since spring. In early May, 43% said they were following news about the swine flu very closely.

The latest weekly News Interest Index survey, conducted October 9-12 among 1,003 adults by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, finds that fewer than half (46%) say news reports are presenting the swine flu’s danger about right, while nearly as many (43%) say news reports are overstating the danger; just 7% say the press is understating the potential threat from the swine flu. More than half of

	Very Closely %	Fairly closely %	Not too closely %	Not at all closely %	Don't know %
Oct 9-12	38	35	16	11	*=100
Sept 18-21	34	31	25	9	*=100
Sept 11-14	30	36	21	12	*=100
Sept 3-6	26	32	25	17	0=100
Aug 28-31	26	33	22	18	*=100
May 21-24	30	39	21	11	*=100
May 8-11	34	36	19	11	*=100
May 1-4	43	37	15	4	1=100
April 25-27	25	30	19	26	*=100

Q1d. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

News reports on swine flu...	Total %	Rep %	Dem %	Ind %
Present about right	46	41	53	44
Overstate danger	43	54	35	42
Understate danger	7	3	7	11
Don't know	4	2	5	3
	100	100	100	100

Q6. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

Republicans (54%) say news reports are overstating the swine flu’s danger, compared with 42% of independents and just 35% of Democrats.

Half of those younger than 40 think the press is overstating the danger, a view shared with 43% of those 40 to 64 and just 29% of those 65 and older. College graduates are more likely to say the dangers are overstated (51%) than are those with less education (39% of those with some college experience, 40% of those with a high school degree or less).

Overall, fewer than half of Americans (47%) say that they would get the swine flu vaccine if it was available to them; an identical percentage says they would not get the vaccine. A clear majority of Democrats (60%) say they would get the swine flu vaccine if it was available, compared with 41% of Republicans and the same percentage of independents.

Fewer Than Half Would Get Swine Flu Vaccine				
<i>If it was available, would you get swine flu vaccine?</i>	<u>Total</u> %	<u>Rep</u> %	<u>Dem</u> %	<u>Ind</u> %
Yes	47	41	60	41
No	47	54	34	54
Don't know	<u>6</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>6</u>
	100	100	100	100

Q3. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

Despite the public’s reservations over the vaccine, most Americans continue to express confidence in the government’s ability to deal with the swine flu. Currently, 64% say they are very (17%) or somewhat (47%) confident in the government’s ability to deal with the swine flu, which is virtually unchanged from late August (65% at least somewhat confident). Three-quarters of Democrats (75%) and 62% of independents express confidence in the government to handle this issue, compared with 51% of Republicans.

Why Not Get the Vaccine?

Those who say they would not get the swine flu vaccine point to a variety of reasons for their decision, including personal factors. But the most frequently mentioned reason – cited by 35% – is that the swine flu vaccine is too risky or that it has not been thoroughly tested.

Safety Concerns Cited Most Often By Those Unwilling to Get Vaccine	
<i>Why wouldn't you get the vaccine?</i>	<u>%</u>
Swine flu vaccine is too risky/new/Not tested	35
Don't get the flu/Don't get shots/Healthy person	23
Don't believe in vaccinations/Flu shots get me sick	16
Risk of swine flu exaggerated	10
Not in risk group/I'm older/Save for at-risk people	9
Careful/Will not be exposed	6
Allergies/Other medical reasons	4
Costs too much/Can't afford it	2
Other	8

Q4. Figures add to more than 100% because of multiple responses. Based on those who said they would not get the vaccine (N=469).

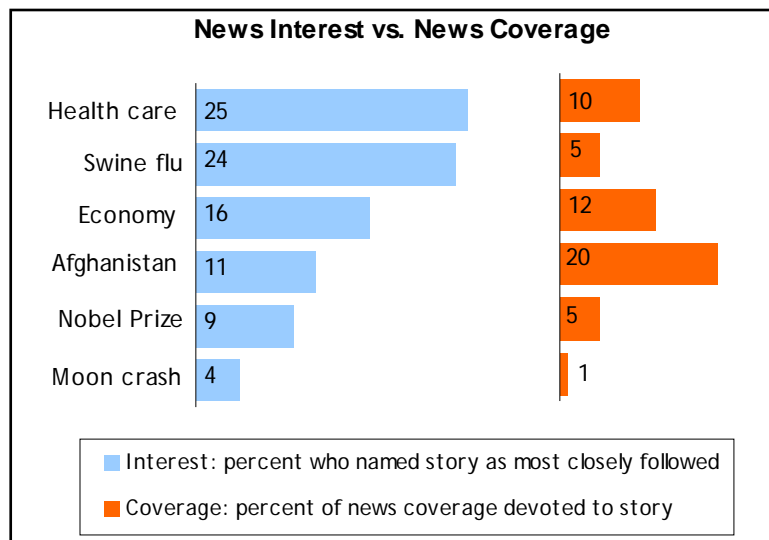
Nearly a quarter (23%) say that they are healthy and do not get the flu, or that they simply avoid getting shots. And 16% express a more general skepticism about vaccinations or say that flu shots in general get them sick

One-in-ten (10%) of those who say they would not get the vaccine say that the risk of swine flu has been exaggerated. A comparable percentage (9%) – including a relatively large proportion of those 65 and older – say that they are not in a high-risk group, or that they want to save the vaccine for at-risk people.

Health Care, Swine Flu Top Stories

A quarter of Americans (25%) followed news about the health care debate more closely than any other news story this week, while about as many (24%) cited reports about the swine flu and the vaccine as their top story. This marks the first time since mid-July that health care reform has not clearly been the public’s top story. At that time, the death of Michael Jackson was the most closely followed story.

The public is evenly divided over the prospects for congressional passage of health care reform legislation over the next year: 46% say a health care reform bill will not pass, while 45% say it will pass. A majority of Democrats (56%) expect a bill to pass, compared with 47% of independents and 28% of Republicans.



In terms of news coverage for the week, the U.S. military effort in Afghanistan was the top story, accounting of 20% of all coverage, according to separate analysis by the Project for Excellence in Journalism (PEJ). By contrast, 10% of coverage was devoted to the health care debate and 5% for swine flu during the week of Oct. 5-11, according to PEJ.

Only about one-in-ten Americans (11%) cited news about Afghanistan as their top story, which trailed mentions of the economy (16%) as well as swine flu and the health care debate. However, public interest in the U.S. military effort in Afghanistan has increased in recent weeks. Currently, 31% say they are tracking Afghanistan news very closely, the highest percentage this year.

Interest in economic news has remained fairly steady in recent weeks, and most Americans (66%) continue to say that they are hearing a mix of both good and bad news about the economy; 27% say they are hearing mostly bad economic news while just 6% say they are hearing mostly good news. Views of economic news are little changed from early September.

In other news, Barack Obama winning the Nobel Peace Prize was the top story for 9% of the public; less than quarter (23%) tracked this story very closely. Nearly twice as many Democrats (30%) as Republicans (17%) followed news about Obama's surprise Nobel victory very closely.

These findings are based on the most recent installment of the weekly News Interest Index, an ongoing project of the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press. The index, building on the Center's longstanding research into public attentiveness to major news stories, examines news interest as it relates to the news media's coverage. The weekly survey is conducted in conjunction with The Project for Excellence in Journalism's News Coverage Index, which monitors the news reported by major newspaper, television, radio and online news outlets on an ongoing basis. In the most recent week, data relating to news coverage were collected from October 5-11, 2009 and survey data measuring public interest in the top news stories of the week were collected October 9-12, 2009 from a nationally representative sample of 1,003 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 landline 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
October 9-12, 2009 NEWS INTEREST INDEX OMNIBUS SURVEY
FINAL TOPLINE
N=1003

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. Reports about the condition of the U.S. economy	41	29	16	13	*
October 2-5, 2009	44	30	15	11	0
September 25-28, 2009	44	37	10	10	*
September 18-21, 2009	44	34	15	7	*
September 11-14, 2009	45	32	14	9	*
September 3-6, 2009	41	31	15	13	*
August 28-31, 2009	45	30	13	12	1
August 21-24, 2009	50	27	13	10	1
August 14-17, 2009	41	37	11	12	*
August 7-10, 2009	42	34	13	10	*
July 31-August 3, 2009	46	34	11	8	*
July 24-27, 2009	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	*
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	*

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>
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
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	*

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>
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
b. Debate over health care reform	37	29	14	19	1
October 2-5, 2009	39	29	16	16	*
September 25-28, 2009	45	31	12	12	0
September 18-21, 2009	44	26	19	11	*
September 11-14, 2009	44	27	14	15	*
September 3-6, 2009	40	26	16	17	0
August 28-31, 2009	40	28	17	14	1
August 21-24, 2009	49	24	12	15	1
August 14-17, 2009	39	31	15	15	1
TREND FOR COMPARISON:¹					
August 7-10, 2009: <i>Debate in Washington over health care reform</i>	40	27	17	15	1
July 31-August 3, 2009	47	26	14	13	1
July 24-27, 2009	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	*
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	*

¹ June 12-15, 2009 to August 7-10, 2009 asked about: "Debate in Washington over health care reform." 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."

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>
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
c. The U.S. military effort in Afghanistan	31	31	21	17	0
September 25-28, 2009 ²	27	40	17	16	*
September 18-21, 2009	26	33	25	16	*
September 11-14, 2009	25	35	22	18	1
September 3-6, 2009	23	33	23	21	0
August 21-24, 2009	14	32	26	28	1
August 7-10, 2009	24	32	23	21	1
March 20-23, 2009	24	32	22	22	*
February 20-23, 2009	27	29	24	19	1
January 30-February 2, 2009	26	34	24	16	*
January 2-4, 2009	22	33	23	21	1
October 24-27, 2008	28	32	22	17	1
October 10-13, 2008	19	34	29	18	*
September 12-15, 2008	21	34	25	19	1
August 29-31, 2008	18	27	32	23	*
July 18-21, 2008	27	33	24	16	*
July 11-14, 2008	19	28	29	23	1
July 3-7, 2008	19	28	32	21	*
June 20-23, 2008	20	30	30	20	*
Late July, 2002	41	38	13	7	1
June, 2002	38	32	20	9	1
April, 2002	39	39	13	8	1
Early April, 2002	45	37	12	5	1
February, 2002	47	39	8	5	1
January, 2002	51	35	9	4	1
December, 2001	44	38	12	5	1
Mid-November, 2001	49	36	11	3	1
Early November, 2001	45	36	12	6	1
Mid-October, 2001	51	35	10	3	1

Q.1 CONTINUED...

² September 25-28 asked about "The debate over whether to send more troops to Afghanistan." August 21-24, 2009 asked about "Afghanistan's presidential election." February 20-23, 2009 asked about "The Obama administration's decision to send 17,000 additional U.S. troops to Afghanistan." From June 20-23, 2008 to October 10-13, 2008 the story was listed as "The military effort in Afghanistan against Taliban fighters." All other dates asked about "The U.S. military effort in Afghanistan."

	<u>Very closely</u>	<u>Fairly closely</u>	<u>Not too closely</u>	<u>Not at all closely</u>	<u>DK/ Refused</u>
d. Reports about swine flu and the vaccine	38	35	16	11	*
September 18-21, 2009 ³	34	31	25	9	*
September 11-14, 2009	30	36	21	12	*
September 3-6, 2009	26	32	25	17	0
August 28-31, 2009	26	33	22	18	*
May 21-24, 2009	30	39	21	11	*
May 8-11, 2009	34	36	19	11	*
May 1-4, 2009	43	37	15	4	1
April 25-27, 2009	25	30	19	26	*
e. Barack Obama winning the Nobel Peace Prize	23	27	21	29	*
TREND FOR COMPARISON:					
October 12-15, 2007: <i>Former Vice President Al Gore receiving the Nobel Peace Prize</i>	19	28	20	32	1
f. A NASA spacecraft striking the moon in search of water	11	23	28	38	*
TREND FOR COMPARISON:					
May 30-June 2, 2008: <i>Phoenix landing on Mars</i> ⁴	11	20	29	40	*
January, 2004: <i>Mars landing</i>	19	36	26	18	1
December, 1999: <i>Mars lander fails</i>	18	38	22	22	*
August, 1997: <i>Pathfinder explores Mars</i>	22	36	23	19	*
Sept., 1996: <i>NASA studies life on Mars</i>	8	19	31	41	1

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.]

25	Debate over health care reform
24	Reports about swine flu and the vaccine
16	Reports about the condition of the U.S. economy
11	The U.S. military effort in Afghanistan
9	Barack Obama winning the Nobel Peace Prize
4	A NASA spacecraft striking the moon in search of water
4	Some other story (VOL.)
7	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

³ From August 28-31 through September 18-21 question was worded "Reports about swine flu and the availability of a vaccine." May 21-24, 2009 and May 8-11, 2009 asked about: "Reports about swine flu in the U.S. and elsewhere." For May 1-4, 2009 the story was listed as: "The outbreak of swine flu in different parts of the world." For April 25-27, 2009 the story was listed as: "Reports of swine flu in Mexico and the U.S."

⁴ In May 30-June 2, 2008 the story was listed as "The NASA spacecraft Phoenix landing on Mars." In January, 2004 the story was listed as "The successful landing of a NASA spracecraft on Mars." In December 1999 the story was listed as "The failure of the Mars Polar Lander space craft to send data back to Earth." In August 1997 the story was listed as "The exploration of the planet Mars by the Pathfinder spacecraft." In Early September 1996 the story was listed as "NASA's discovery of possible life on Mars."

Now thinking about the swine flu that's been in the news lately...

Q.3 If the swine flu vaccine was available to you, would you get it or not?

- 47 Yes, would get it
- 47 No, would not
- * Already have gotten it (VOL.)
- 6 Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

ASK IF "WOULD NOT" (Q.3=2) [N=469]:

Q.4 Why wouldn't you get it [OPEN END. PROBE ONCE FOR ADDITIONAL MENTIONS. RECORD UP TO THREE RESPONSES. RECORD EACH MENTION ON SEPARATE SCREEN]

BASED ON THOSE WHO WOULD NOT GET THE VACCINE [N=469]

- 35 Vaccine is too risky/Not tested/Too new
- 23 Don't get flu/Don't get shots/Healthy person
- 16 Don't believe in vaccinations/Flu shots make me sick
- 10 Risk of swine flu is exaggerated/Not that dangerous
- 9 I'm not in risk group/I'm older/Save for the at-risk
- 6 I'm careful/Won't be exposed
- 4 Allergies/Other medical reasons
- 2 Costs too much/Can't afford
- 8 Other
- 7 No reason given

Figures add to more than 100% because of multiple responses.

Q.5 How confident are you in the government's ability to deal with the swine flu? **[READ]**

		August 28-31
		<u>2009</u>
17	Very confident	18
47	Somewhat confident	47
21	Not too confident	19
13	Not at all confident	15
2	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	2

Q.6 In general, do you think news reports are overstating the danger of the swine flu, understating the danger of the swine flu, or presenting it about right?

43	Overstating the danger
7	Understating the danger
46	Presenting it about right
4	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

On another topic...

Q.7 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>Hearing mostly good news</u>	<u>Hearing mostly bad news</u>	<u>A mix of good and bad news</u>	<u>DK/ Refused</u>
October 9-12, 2009	6	27	66	1
September 3-6, 2009	5	27	68	1
August 7-10, 2009	11	29	59	1
July 2-5, 2009	3	41	56	*
June 12-15, 2009	4	37	59	*
May 8-11, 2009	4	31	64	1
April 9-13, 2009	4	39	56	1
March 13-16, 2009	2	51	46	1
February 13-16, 2009	2	60	37	1
January 16-19, 2009	2	67	30	1
December 5-8, 2008	1	80	19	*

Q.8 From what you've seen and heard, do you think a health care reform bill will pass over the next year or not?

45	Yes, will
46	No, will not
9	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)