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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:
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Most Americans Believe They Understand New Law’s Impact on Them
HEALTH CARE DEBATE TOPS PUBLIC INTEREST, COVERAGE

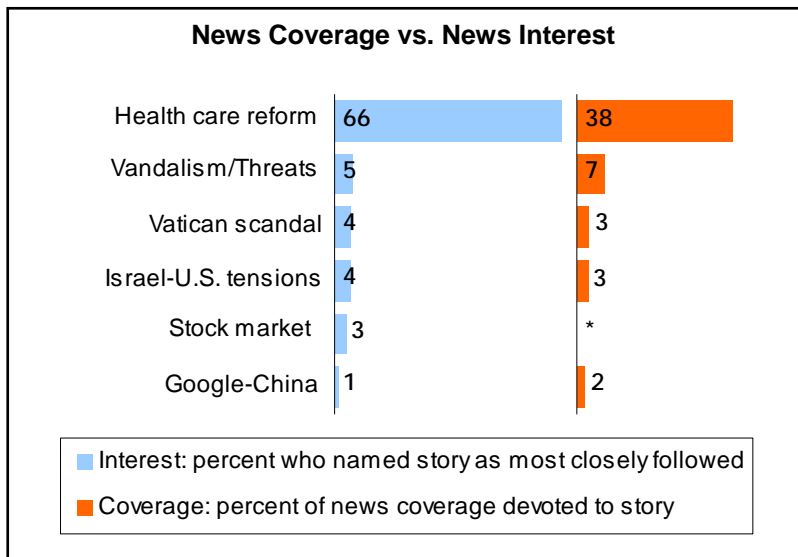
The long-running debate over health care reform continued to dominate public attention and media coverage last week as the final skirmishes played out on Capitol Hill and President Obama set out to promote the newly-enacted law.

Two-thirds of Americans (66%) say they followed the health care debate more closely than any other major news story last week.

Another 5% say they followed news about vandalism and threats directed at Democrats who voted for the legislation most closely, according to the latest News Interest Index survey conducted by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press among 1,018 adults March 26-29.

The news media and the public were on the same page last week. Stories about the final steps in enacting the legislation and analysis of its expected impact accounted for 38% of the newshole, while reporting about the vandalism and threats made up another 7%. Together, they made up 45% of coverage last week, according to an analysis by the Pew Research Center’s Project for Excellence in Journalism.

More than half of the public (55%) says they feel they understand at least somewhat well how the new health care reform law will affect them and their families. About two-in-ten (18%) say they feel they understand the impact very well, while 37% say they feel they understand how



it will affect them somewhat well. More than four-in-ten (44%) are more uncertain: 21% say they feel they understand the personal impact “not too well,” while 23% say they do not understand this at all.

A large majority (81%) says they have gotten information about the new health care law from the news media, while just under half (46%) say they have gotten information from family and friends. Just 7% each say they have gotten information about the new law from their employer or their church or religious community.

About four-in-ten (39%) say they are surprised that the health care reform bill passed, while 58% say they are not surprised. During the weekend of the Sunday, March 21, House vote clearing the legislation, about a third of Americans (35%) – including almost half of Republicans – still said the bill would not pass this year; 55% thought it would.

Most Say They Have Some Understanding of Law’s Impact on Them

More than half of the public (55%) says they understand at least somewhat well how the new health care law will affect them and their families. That includes 18% who say they understand this very well and 37% who say they understand the impact somewhat well. Still, 44% say they understand how they will be affected either not too well (21%) or not at all (23%).

Close to two-thirds of Democrats (64%) say they understand how they and their families will be affected at least somewhat well, compared with 54% of independents and 47% of Republicans. Those with family income at \$75,000 or more are also more likely to say they understand the likely impact (67% say very or somewhat well) than those in families with lower incomes (51% each for families earning between \$30,000 and \$74,999 and families earning less than \$30,000).

Democrats, Affluent More Confident They Understand New Law’s Impact				
<i>How well do you understand effect?</i>	Very/ Somewhat %	Not too/ At all %	DK %	N
Total	55	44	1=100	1018
Men	58	41	1=100	509
Women	53	46	2=100	509
18-39	58	41	*=100	196
40-64	56	43	1=100	487
65+	48	47	4=100	311
<i>Family income</i>				
\$75,000 or more	67	32	*=100	254
\$30k-\$74,999	51	48	1=100	336
Less than \$30,000	51	46	2=100	230
Republican	47	52	1=100	282
Democrat	64	37	1=100	291
Independent	54	44	2=100	383
<i>Following health care:</i>				
Very Closely	69	31	1=100	571
Less Closely	42	56	1=100	440

Q4: “How well do you feel you understand how the new health care reform law will affect you and your family?”
 Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

Not surprisingly, those following the health care debate very closely are more likely than those following less closely to say they understand how they and their families will be affected.

About seven-in-ten of those following very closely (69%) say they understand the impact at least somewhat well, compared with 42% of those following less closely.

Most people (81%) say they have gotten information about the new health care law from the news media. Close to half (46%) say they have gotten information from family and friends, while 54% say they have not. Republicans are somewhat more likely to say they have gotten information from family and friends (53%) than Democrats (39%); 48% of independents say this as well.

Only 7% each say they have gotten information from an employer or a religious organization. There are no significant partisan differences on these questions.

**Most Turn to Media for Details
On New Health Care Law**

	Yes %	No %	DK %
News media	81	19	*=100
Family and friends	46	54	*=100
Employer	7	92	1=100
Church, religious org.	7	93	1=100

Q5a-d: "Have you gotten information about the health care reform law from each of the following, or not?"
 Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

Health Care Debate Very Closely Followed

About half of the public (49%) says they followed the debate over health care reform very closely last week. That's about the same as the 51% that said they were following it very closely one week earlier as the legislation headed to the climactic House vote. The public has shown high interest in the debate repeatedly since last summer, but the current numbers rival past peaks. During the week of Aug. 21-24, 2009, for example, 49% said they were very closely following the debate, which at that point included at-times angry town hall confrontations between lawmakers and constituents.

In the most recent week, 58% of Republicans say they followed the debate very closely, compared with 47% each of Democrats and independents. More than seven-in-ten Democrats (72%), 66% of Republicans and 63% of independents say this was the story they followed most closely.

Half of Republicans, meanwhile, say they are surprised that Congress passed a health care reform bill, compared with 36% each of Democrats and independents. About six-in-ten Democrats (62%) and independents (61%) say they are not surprised.

In recent weeks, Republicans had been least likely to say they thought a bill would pass

**Republicans Most Surprised
By Health Care Law's Passage**

<i>Are you surprised bill was passed?</i>	Yes %	No %	DK %	N
Total	39	58	3=100	1018
Republicans	50	47	3=100	282
Democrats	36	62	3=100	291
Independents	36	61	3=100	383

Q3: "Are you surprised the health care reform bill was passed, or not surprised?"
 Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

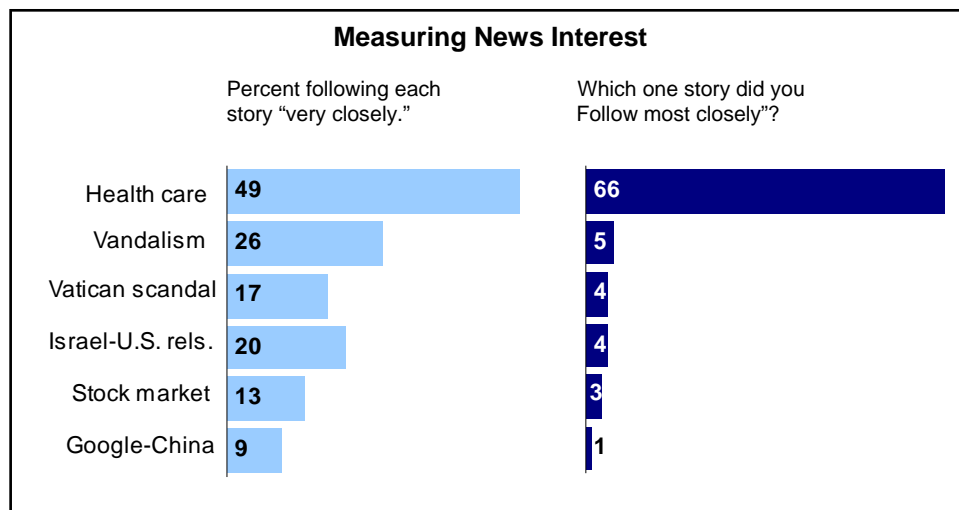
this year. During the weekend leading up to the House vote, 46% of Republicans still thought the legislation would not pass, compared with just 19% of Democrats. Close to four-in-ten independents (37%) said at that time they did not think the package would pass.

The Week’s Other News

While the debate over health care dominated public interest last week, this was the first week in recent months in which the state of the national economy was not a specific choice in the survey. Fewer people say they are closely following the ups and downs in the stock market (3% most closely) than typically say they are tracking broader economic news. No other story grabbed a large share of the public’s attention.

About a quarter (26%) of the public says they very closely followed news about vandalism and threats directed at Democrats following the health care reform vote; 5% say this was the story they followed most closely. Democrats (33%) were more likely to have followed this story very closely than were Republicans (20%). A quarter of independents (25%) followed this story very closely. Reporting on this topic made up 7% of news coverage, according to the PEJ analysis.

One-in-five say they very closely followed news about tensions between Israel and the United States, and 4% say this is the story they followed most closely. Republicans (28% very closely) followed this story more closely than did independents (19%) or Democrats (15%). News coverage of this topic accounted for 3% of the newshole.



Fewer than one-in-five (17%) paid very close attention to reports about the Vatican’s handling of sex-abuse scandals in the Catholic Church. Still, that was more than twice as many as followed the story very closely one week earlier (8%); 4% said this was the story they followed most closely. News about this story accounted for 3% of coverage.

As the Dow Jones Industrial Average flirted with 11,000 points, few Americans were paying close attention. Just 13% say they very closely followed recent ups and downs in the stock market, while 3% say this is the story they followed most closely. Men (18%) were more likely than women (9%) to have followed the stock market very closely, and Republicans (20%) were more likely than independents (12%) or Democrats (11%) to have kept a very close eye on the market. Stories about the stock market made up less than 1% of coverage.

About one-in-ten (9%) Americans paid very close attention to Google's decision to not use servers in mainland China as a way to avoid government censorship; 1% say this is the story they followed most closely. News about Google's choice made up 2% of the newshole last week.

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 March 22-28, and survey data measuring public interest in the top news stories of the week were collected March 26-29, 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 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 4 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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For more information about the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press' weekly News Interest Index, go to www.people-press.org.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE & THE PRESS
March 26-29, 2010 NEWS INTEREST INDEX OMNIBUS SURVEY
FINAL TOPLINE
N=1,018

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. Recent ups and downs in the stock market					
March 26-29, 2010	13	23	23	40	1
TREND FOR COMPARISON:					
October 16-19, 2009: <i>Recent gains in the stock market</i>	15	23	19	43	*
July 24-27, 2009	23	25	24	28	*
March 13-16, 2009	38	31	14	17	0
March 6-9, 2009: <i>Recent major drops in the U.S. stock market</i>	35	31	15	19	*
February 20-23, 2009	31	32	20	17	*
November 21-24, 2008	50	23	15	12	*
October 17-20, 2008: <i>Recent major ups and downs in the U.S. stock market</i>	54	31	9	6	*
October 10-13, 2008: <i>Recent major drops in the U.S. stock market</i>	59	26	9	6	*
July 3-7, 2008: <i>Recent major ups and downs in the U.S. stock market</i>	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: <i>The recent drop in the U.S. stock market</i>	21	28	25	26	*
Early September, 2002: <i>Recent major ups and downs in the U.S. stock market</i>	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	*
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: <i>Thinking about last Monday when the stock market dropped, how closely did you follow what was happening?</i>	16	29	22	33	*
September, 1997: <i>Recent major ups and downs in the stock market</i>	14	22	23	40	1
April, 1997	17	21	22	40	*
February, 1996	12	20	25	42	1

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. Google's decision to stop using computer servers in China to avoid government censorship					
March 26-29, 2010	9	16	25	49	1
TREND FOR COMPARISON:					
January 15-18, 2010: <i>Google announcing that it may leave China</i>	6	16	21	57	1
c. Reports about tensions between Israel and the United States					
March 26-29, 2010	20	27	21	31	1
TREND FOR COMPARISON:					
March 19-22, 2010: <i>Reports about tensions in the Middle East between Israelis and Palestinians</i>	15	28	27	30	1
June 19-22, 2009: <i>The situation between Israelis and Palestinians</i>	15	26	30	29	1
January 23-26, 2009: <i>Conflict between the Israeli military and Hamas forces in Gaza</i>	31	31	18	20	*
January 16-19, 2009	24	31	22	22	1
January 9-12, 2009	34	35	18	13	0
January 2-4, 2009	28	32	22	18	*
March 7-10, 2008: <i>Continued violence in the Middle East between the Palestinians and the Israelis</i>	20	33	26	21	*
January 11-14, 2008: <i>News about President Bush attending peace talks in Israel</i>	16	30	23	30	1
Nov. 30-Dec. 3, 2007: <i>The Middle East Peace Summit in Annapolis, Maryland</i>	11	25	24	39	1
August, 2006: <i>The military conflict between Israel and Hezbollah forces in Lebanon</i>	40	34	14	10	2
September, 2003: <i>Continued violence in the Middle East between the Palestinians and the Israelis</i>	31	36	20	13	*
June, 2003: <i>President Bush's summit meeting with world leaders and with the prime ministers of Israel and the Palestinian Authority</i>	20	36	24	19	1
Early June, 2003: <i>Continued violence in the Middle East between the Palestinians and the Israelis</i>	26	40	20	13	1
December, 2002	29	36	22	12	1
Early October, 2002	32	39	20	8	1
June, 2002	38	33	18	10	1
April, 2002	38	37	14	10	1
Early April, 2002	44	33	13	9	1
December, 2001	31	40	19	9	1
Early September, 2001	21	33	25	20	1
April, 2001: <i>Continued violence in the Middle East</i>	22	34	24	19	1
January, 2001: <i>Renewed efforts at reaching a peace agreement in the Middle East</i>	21	32	29	17	1
Mid-October, 2000: <i>Continued violence in the Middle East between the Palestinians and the Israelis</i>	30	38	18	13	1

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>
Early October, 2000: <i>Renewed violence in the Middle East between the Palestinians and the Israelis</i>	21	30	27	21	1
July, 2000: <i>The Middle East peace summit at Camp David</i>	15	30	24	31	*
November, 1998: <i>The latest Mideast peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians</i>	18	33	28	19	2
Early October, 1998 (RVs): <i>Renewed efforts at reaching a peace agreement in the Middle East</i>	21	40	27	12	*
January, 1997: <i>Renewed tensions between Israelis and Palestinians over Hebron</i>	12	23	29	35	1
October, 1996: <i>Renewed violence between Israelis & Palestinians on the West Bank and in Jerusalem</i>	17	34	26	23	*
September, 1995: <i>The latest Mideast peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians</i>	11	32	29	27	1
Late September, 1993: <i>The peace accords between Israel and the PLO</i>	23	33	24	19	1
Early September, 1993: <i>Talks between Israel and the PLO about Arab self-rule for the Gaza Strip and the West Bank town of Jericho</i>	19	31	23	26	1
January, 1993: <i>Israel's expulsion of 400 Moslem fundamentalists following the murder of an Israeli soldier in the West Bank</i>	10	25	31	33	1
October, 1991: <i>President Bush's decision to postpone loan guarantees to Israel</i>	15	25	30	29	1
June, 1990: <i>The incident in Gaza in which a deranged Israeli killed seven Palestinians and the West Bank riots that followed</i>	11	28	30	30	1
May, 1988: <i>The conflict in the Middle East between the Palestinians and the Israelis in the occupied territories</i>	18	37	34	9	2
d. Debate over health care reform					
March 26-29, 2010	49	29	12	10	*
March 19-22, 2010	51	24	11	14	*
March 12-15, 2010	40	31	16	13	*
March 5-8, 2010	42	27	17	15	*
February 26-March 1, 2010	29	29	19	22	*
February 19-22, 2010	33	28	19	19	*
January 29-February 1, 2010	39	27	16	17	*
January 22-25, 2010	41	32	15	11	*
January 15-18, 2010	37	27	19	18	*
January 8-11, 2010	39	26	20	15	*
December 18-21, 2009	42	27	16	14	*
December 11-14, 2009	42	30	15	14	*
December 4-7, 2009	42	28	15	14	1
November 20-23, 2009	42	29	14	15	*
November 13-16, 2009	38	26	17	17	1
November 6-9, 2009	35	28	15	22	1
October 30-November 2, 2009	32	26	19	23	*
October 23-26, 2009	40	27	16	17	1
October 16-19, 2009	36	28	15	21	*

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>
October 9-12, 2009	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:					
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 Barack 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. Vandalism and threats directed at Democrats who voted for health care reform					
March 26-29, 2010	26	29	20	25	1
f. Reports about the Vatican's handling of sex-abuse scandals in the Catholic Church					
March 26-29, 2010	17	24	28	30	*
March 19-22, 2010	8	18	31	42	1
TREND FOR COMPARISON:					
June, 2002: <i>Reports of sexual abuses by Catholic priests</i>	38	36	17	8	1
May, 2002: <i>The Pope and American cardinals meeting in Rome about sexual abuse by Catholic priests</i>	27	33	21	18	1

Q.1 CONTINUED...

	Very <u>closely</u>	Fairly <u>closely</u>	Not too <u>closely</u>	Not at all <u>closely</u>	DK/ <u>Refused</u>
Early April, 2002: <i>Reports of sexual abuses by Catholic priests</i>	27	34	25	13	1
December, 1993	18	32	31	18	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.**]

March 26-29

2010

66	Debate over health care reform
5	Vandalism and threats directed at Democrats who voted for health care reform
4	Reports about the Vatican's handling of sex-abuse scandals in the Catholic Church
4	Reports about tensions between Israel and the United States
3	Recent ups and downs in the stock market
1	Google's decision to stop using servers in China to avoid government censorship
6	Some other story (VOL.)
12	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

Q.3 Are you surprised that the health care reform bill was passed, or not surprised?

March 26-29

2010

39	Yes, surprised
58	No, not surprised
3	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

Q.4 How well do you feel you understand how the new health care reform law will affect you and your family?

March 26-29

2010

18	Very well
37	Somewhat well
21	Not too well
23	Not at all well
1	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

Q.5 We're interested in how people are learning about what's in the health care reform law and how it will affect people. Have you gotten information about the health reform law from each of the following, or not? [First...] [INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE] [ASK: "Did you get information about the health care reform law from [ITEM] or not?" AS NECESSARY]

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>DK/ Refused</u>
a. The news media March 26-29, 2010	81	19	*
b. Family and friends March 26-29, 2010	46	54	*
c. Your employer March 26-29, 2010	7	92	1
d. Your church or religious community March 26-29, 2010	7	93	1