



THE PEW RESEARCH CENTER
For The People & The Press

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 5, 2012

Fewer Watch Convention Coverage than in 2008

RNC Highlights: Romney Shares Top Billing With Eastwood

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Andrew Kohut

President, Pew Research Center

Carroll Doherty and Michael Dimock

Associate Directors

Scott Keeter

Director of Survey Research

1615 L St, N.W., Suite 700

Washington, D.C. 20036

Tel (202) 419-4350

Fax (202) 419-4399

www.people-press.org

Fewer Watch Convention Coverage than in 2008

RNC Highlights: Romney Shares Top Billing With Eastwood

The public paid far less attention to this year's Republican convention than it did to the GOP convention four years ago. Just 37% say they watched all or some of the Republican convention, down from 56% in 2008.

And while there has been a modest increase in the percentage viewing Mitt Romney more favorably in the wake of the convention, his acceptance speech was not the highlight of the event: As many of those who watched at least a little convention coverage cited Clint Eastwood's speech as the convention highlight (20%) as named Romney's speech (17%). One-in-five say there was no convention highlight, about the same percentage as four years ago.

The latest national survey by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, conducted Aug. 31-Sept. 3 among 1,008 adults, finds that even among Republicans Romney's speech was not the standout event of the convention. A quarter of Republican convention-watchers (25%) said Romney's speech was the highlight, 19% named Eastwood's performance, 15% named Paul Ryan's speech and 13% cited Ann Romney's address.

More independents who watched convention coverage cited Eastwood's speech than Romney's speech as the convention highlight (26% vs. 17%), while a plurality of Democrats (40%) said there was no convention highlight.

Four years ago, GOP nominee John McCain's acceptance speech also was not the convention's signature event. Fully half (50%) named GOP vice-presidential candidate Sarah Palin's speech as the highlight of that convention, while 17% cited McCain's speech, which is identical to the percentage citing Romney's speech in the current survey.

GOP Convention Highlights

	Aug. 31-Sept. 2
<i>Speeches by ...</i>	%
Clint Eastwood	20
Mitt Romney	17
Ann Romney	10
Paul Ryan	9
Marco Rubio	3
Condoleezza Rice	2
Chris Christie	2
Susana Martinez	1
Other	12
Don't know	9
No highlight/It's over	20

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Aug. 31-Sept. 2, 2012, Open-ended question based on those who watched at least a little convention coverage. Figures may not add to 100% because of multiple responses.

Views of Romney: Before and After

Currently, 25% say their opinion of Romney has become more favorable in the past few days, up from 18% during the week before the GOP convention (Aug. 23-26). There has been a comparable decline in the percentage saying their views have become less favorable (from 26% to 20%). Still, a plurality says their opinion of Romney has not changed recently (44% today, 46% before the convention).

There was a similar change in views of McCain after the 2008 Republican convention: 35% said they felt more favorably toward the GOP nominee, up from 28% before the convention.

As was the case with McCain, most of the change in Romney's image has come among Republicans: In the current survey, 53% say their view of Romney has become more favorable, up from 43% a week ago. Independents also have a slightly better view of Romney than did so before the convention (21% more favorable after, up from 15%).

The overall ratings of Romney's convention speech also are similar to those for McCain in 2008. Overall, 52% say Romney's speech was excellent (21%) or good (32%); 34% say it was only fair (21%) or poor (13%). Four years ago, 52% also gave McCain's convention speech positive ratings while 32% viewed it negatively.

Modest Change in Views of Romney

<i>In past few days view of ___ has become ...</i>	Aug 23-26	Aug 31-Sept 3	Change
Mitt Romney	%	%	
More favorable	18	25	+7
Less favorable	26	20	-6
No change	46	44	-2
Don't know	<u>11</u>	<u>11</u>	
	100	100	

	Pre-convention	Post-convention	
Sept 2008			
John McCain			
More favorable	28	35	+7
Less favorable	22	24	+2
No change	47	40	-7
Don't know	<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>	
	100	100	

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Aug. 31-Sept. 3, 2012. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

Romney, McCain Convention Speeches Viewed Similarly

	McCain 2008	Romney 2012
<i>View of convention speech ...</i>	%	%
Excellent	16	21
Good	36	32
Only fair	23	21
Poor	9	13
Did not see speech (Vol.)/ Don't know	<u>16</u>	<u>14</u>
	100	100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Aug. 31-Sept. 3, 2012. Based on those who watched at least a little coverage of the GOP convention; N=677. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

Fewer Watch Coverage than in 2008

Only about four-in-ten Americans (37%) say they watched even some coverage of the Republican convention: 17% say they watched all or most of it, while 21% watched some of it. Most watched just a little of the coverage (21%) or none of it (40%). In 2008, 56% watched at least some coverage of the Republican convention; just 21% watched no coverage, only about half the percentage as say that today.

There is far less interest in the GOP convention this year than in the 2008 Republican convention among Republicans, Democrats and independents. Four years ago, 69% of Republicans watched at least some convention

coverage; 56% watched at least some coverage of the events in Tampa last week. Nearly half of Democrats (49%) watched at least some GOP convention coverage in 2008, but just 28% watched at least some of this year's convention. Interest among independents in the Republican convention also has fallen sharply, from 52% in 2008 to 34% in the current survey.

More generally, 29% of Americans say they are following news about the presidential campaign very closely, which is virtually unchanged from last week.

Current interest in the presidential campaign is on par with interest in two other news stories – the economy and Hurricane Isaac. A third (33%) followed news about the economy very closely, 31% tracked news about the hurricane very closely, while 29% paid very close attention to the presidential campaign.

Most Watched Little or No Coverage of GOP Convention

<i>How much convention coverage did you watch?</i>	2008	2012
	%	%
All or most	23	17
Some of it	33	21
Just a little	23	21
None of it	21	40
Don't know	*	1
	100	100

% watching at least some coverage among ...

Republican	69	56
Democrat	49	28
Independent	52	34

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Aug. 31-Sept. 3, 2012. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

Public's News Interests Divided During GOP Convention

<i>Followed news about each story very closely ...</i>	Economy	Hurricane Isaac	2012 Campaign
	%	%	%
Total	33	31	29
Republican	41	32	35
Democrat	28	32	29
Independent	31	31	28

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Aug. 31-Sept. 3, 2012.

About the Survey

The analysis in this report is based on telephone interviews conducted August 31-September 3, 2012 among a national sample of 1,008 adults 18 years of age or older living in the continental United States (606 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 402 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 180 who had no landline telephone). The survey was conducted by interviewers at Princeton Data Source under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International. A combination of landline and cell phone random digit dial samples were used; both samples were provided by Survey Sampling International. Interviews were conducted in English. Respondents in the landline sample were selected by randomly asking for the youngest adult male or female who is now at home. Interviews in the cell sample were conducted with the person who answered the phone, if that person was an adult 18 years of age or older. For detailed information about our survey methodology, see: <http://people-press.org/methodology/>.

The combined landline and cell phone sample are weighted using an iterative technique that matches gender, age, education, race, Hispanic origin and region to parameters from the March 2011 Census Bureau's Current Population Survey and population density to parameters from the Decennial Census. The sample also is weighted to match current patterns of telephone status, based on extrapolations from the 2011 National Health Interview Survey. The weighting procedure also accounts for the fact that respondents with both landline and cell phones have a greater probability of being included in the combined sample and adjusts for household size among respondents with a landline phone. Sampling errors and statistical tests of significance take into account the effect of weighting. The following table shows the sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey:

Group	Sample Size	Plus or minus ...
Total sample	1,008	3.6 percentage points
Republicans	299	6.6 percentage points
Democrats	294	6.7 percentage points
Independents	355	6.1 percentage points
Convention watchers	677	4.4 percentage points
<i>Republican watchers</i>	236	7.4 percentage points
<i>Democratic watchers</i>	177	8.6 percentage points
<i>Independent watchers</i>	239	7.4 percentage points

Sample sizes and sampling errors for other subgroups are available upon request.

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.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER
August 31-September 3, 2012 OMNIBUS
FINAL TOPLINE
N=1,008

ASK ALL:

PEW.1 Thinking about **[INSERT NAME, IN ORDER]**, in the past few days, have you come to have a MORE favorable opinion of him, a LESS favorable opinion, or hasn't your opinion of him changed lately? Now, thinking about **[INSERT NEXT NAME, IN ORDER]**, in the past few days, have you come to have a MORE favorable opinion of him, a LESS favorable opinion, or hasn't your opinion of him changed lately?

	<u>More favorable</u>	<u>Less favorable</u>	<u>Opinion has not changed</u>	<u>(VOL.) DK/Ref</u>
a. Mitt Romney				
August 31-September 3, 2012	25	20	44	11
August 23-26, 2012 ¹	18	26	46	11
b. Paul Ryan				
August 31-September 3, 2012	23	21	41	15

PEWWP.1 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE**NO QUESTION PEW.2****ASK ALL:**

PEW.3 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>(VOL.) DK/Ref</u>
a. Reports about the condition of the U.S. economy					
August 31-September 3, 2012	33	31	20	16	1
August 23-26, 2012	38	30	15	16	1
August 16-19, 2012	33	32	16	19	*
August 9-12, 2012	30	31	20	18	1
August 2-5, 2012	33	29	20	17	1
July 26-29, 2012	32	30	20	19	*
July 19-22, 2012	39	29	16	16	*
July 12-15, 2012	32	33	18	17	1
July 5-8, 2012	34	28	18	19	1
June 28-July 1, 2012	38	28	15	18	1
June 21-24, 2012	33	32	17	17	*
June 14-17, 2012	39	28	15	17	*
June 7-10, 2012	35	32	15	18	*
May 31-June 3, 2012	37	34	13	14	1
May 24-27, 2012	33	31	19	16	1
May 17-20, 2012	35	30	16	19	*
May 10-13, 2012	40	26	16	17	*
May 3-6, 2012	38	29	13	20	*
April 26-29, 2012	34	32	17	16	1
April 19-22, 2012	35	35	13	14	2
April 12-15, 2012	39	28	16	17	1
April 5-8, 2012	37	31	16	16	1
March 29-April 1, 2012	34	33	15	18	1
March 22-25, 2012	36	29	16	18	1
March 15-18, 2012	40	35	11	14	1

¹ For Aug 23-26, 2012, question began "Please think about each of the following candidates – Mitt Romney"

PEW.3 CONTINUED...

	<u>Very closely</u>	<u>Fairly closely</u>	<u>Not too closely</u>	<u>Not at all closely</u>	(VOL.) DK/Ref
March 8-11, 2012	37	32	14	17	*
March 1-4, 2012	41	27	15	17	1
February 23-26, 2012	37	33	14	15	1
February 16-20, 2012	33	32	16	17	1
February 9-12, 2012	42	30	14	13	1
February 2-5, 2012	38	32	16	13	1
January 26-29, 2012	35	31	16	19	*
January 19-22, 2012	35	30	16	19	1
January 12-15, 2012	33	32	14	20	1
January 5-8, 2012	39	31	15	15	*
December 15-18, 2011	36	32	14	16	1
December 8-11, 2011	41	29	13	16	1
December 1-4, 2011	40	33	13	13	1
November 17-20, 2011	35	33	16	15	1
November 10-13, 2011	39	31	15	14	*
November 3-6, 2011	37	31	15	17	1
October 27-30, 2011	38	33	14	15	1
October 20-23, 2011	38	32	14	16	1
October 13-16, 2011	39	32	14	14	*
October 6-9, 2011	43	28	14	14	1
September 29-October 2, 2011	46	26	14	14	*
September 22-25, 2011	44	33	11	11	*
September 8-11, 2011	40	30	15	14	1
September 1-4, 2011	44	30	11	15	*
August 25-28, 2011	44	28	14	13	1
August 18-21, 2011	44	29	12	14	1
August 4-7, 2011	46	30	11	13	1
July 28-31, 2011	43	30	13	13	*
July 21-24, 2011	41	32	13	13	1
July 14-17, 2011	41	30	14	14	1
July 7-10, 2011	36	30	15	18	1
June 30-July 3, 2011	38	32	13	16	1
June 23-26, 2011	37	29	15	19	*
June 16-19, 2011	39	33	14	13	*
June 9-12, 2011	39	30	15	16	1
June 2-5, 2011	35	34	17	14	*
May 19-22, 2011	33	34	17	16	*
May 12-15, 2011	32	32	17	18	2
May 5-8, 2011	40	35	15	9	1
April 21-25, 2011	41	33	12	14	*
April 14-17, 2011	44	30	14	12	1
April 7-10, 2011	46	30	14	10	*
March 31-April 3, 2011	42	31	16	11	0
March 24-27, 2011	36	32	17	15	*
March 17-20, 2011	38	32	17	13	*
March 10-13, 2011	40	30	16	13	*
March 3-6, 2011	37	31	17	13	1
February 24-27, 2011	49	29	11	10	*
February 17-20, 2011	35	33	14	17	*
February 10-13, 2011	36	34	13	16	*
February 3-6, 2011	35	37	14	14	*
January 20-23, 2011	37	33	14	15	1
January 13-16, 2011	37	29	15	18	1
January 6-9, 2011	39	37	11	12	1

[SEE TRENDS FOR PREVIOUS YEARS:](http://www.people-press.org/files/2011/11/NII-Economy-Trends.pdf) <http://www.people-press.org/files/2011/11/NII-Economy-Trends.pdf>

b. Hurricane Isaac

August 31-September 3, 2012	31	36	18	13	2
-----------------------------	----	----	----	----	---

PEW.3 CONTINUED...

	<u>Very closely</u>	<u>Fairly closely</u>	<u>Not too closely</u>	<u>Not at all closely</u>	(VOL.) DK/Ref
TRENDS FOR COMPARISON					
September 1-4, 2011: The impact of Hurricane Irene	39	33	17	10	*
August 25-28, 2011: Hurricane Irene	45	26	14	15	1
September 2-6, 2010: Hurricane Earl	28	31	19	21	1
September 19-22, 2008: Hurricane Ike	42	37	16	5	*
September 12-15, 2008: Hurricane Ike	50	32	13	5	*
September 5-8, 2008: Hanna (Southeast)	34	37	19	10	0
September 5-8, 2008: Gustav (Gulf coast)	42	35	17	6	*
August 29-31, 2008: Gustav (Gulf coast)	33	30	23	14	*
July 25-28, 2008: Dolly (Texas coast)	19	29	29	23	*
November 2-5, 2007: Noel (Bahamas and Cuba)	11	22	31	35	1
September 7-10, 2007: Felix and Henriette (Mexico and Central America)	14	29	29	27	1
August 24-27, 2007: Dean (Mexico and Caribbean)	18	39	24	18	1
November, 2005: Wilma (Mexico and Florida)	34	37	21	8	*
September, 2005: Katrina (New Orleans and Gulf Coast)	70	21	7	2	*
July, 2005: Recent hurricanes (Gulf coast)	38	37	17	8	*
September, 2003: Isabel	47	28	15	10	*
Early October, 2002: Recent hurricanes (Gulf of Mexico and Louisiana)	38	34	18	10	*
c. News about candidates for the 2012 presidential election					
August 31-September 3, 2012	29	29	20	20	1
August 23-26, 2012	27	31	19	22	1
August 16-19, 2012	32	27	19	22	1
August 9-12, 2012	27	27	21	24	1
August 2-5, 2012	31	25	19	23	1
July 26-29, 2012	25	28	21	25	1
July 19-22, 2012	35	22	17	25	1
July 12-15, 2012	33	24	20	23	*
July 5-8, 2012	29	26	20	25	*
June 28-July 1, 2012	32	24	19	25	*
June 21-24, 2012	27	30	17	25	1
June 14-17, 2012	31	30	15	24	*
June 7-10, 2012	30	29	16	25	1
May 31-June 3, 2012	29	28	19	23	1
May 24-27, 2012	32	28	16	24	1
May 17-20, 2012	31	26	19	23	*
May 10-13, 2012	34	23	18	24	*
May 3-6, 2012	29	27	19	24	*
April 26-29, 2012	29	29	18	23	1
April 19-22, 2012	29	29	20	20	1
April 12-15, 2012	32	28	16	23	1
April 5-8, 2012	31	27	18	23	*
March 29-April 1, 2012	23	29	21	27	*
March 22-25, 2012	28	28	18	25	1
March 15-18, 2012	28	31	17	24	*
March 8-11, 2012	28	27	21	23	*
March 1-4, 2012	31	24	20	24	1
February 23-26, 2012	28	29	18	24	1
February 16-20, 2012	25	29	19	25	2
February 9-12, 2012	35	25	18	20	1
February 2-5, 2012	30	27	20	21	1

PEW.3 CONTINUED...

	Very <u>closely</u>	Fairly <u>closely</u>	Not too <u>closely</u>	Not at all <u>closely</u>	(VOL.) DK/Ref
January 26-29, 2012	28	30	21	21	1
January 19-22, 2012	28	30	17	24	*
January 12-15, 2012	29	29	18	23	1
January 5-8, 2012	29	30	16	25	*
December 15-18, 2011	26	24	20	29	1
December 8-11, 2011	27	27	18	28	*
December 1-4, 2011	25	28	20	26	1
November 17-20, 2011	24	31	21	23	1
November 3-6, 2011	22	31	20	26	1
October 27-30, 2011	21	26	21	30	1
October 20-23, 2011	21	28	22	28	1
October 13-16, 2011	26	29	22	23	1
October 6-9, 2011	25	25	23	27	1
September 29-October 2, 2011	27	26	21	25	*
September 22-25, 2011	25	26	23	25	1
September 15-18, 2011	24	28	21	27	1
September 8-11, 2011	22	26	21	31	*
September 1-4, 2011	22	23	22	32	1
August 25-28, 2011	22	22	22	33	1
August 18-21, 2011	27	26	19	28	1
August 11-14, 2011	19	24	20	36	1
August 4-7, 2011	18	21	22	37	1
July 28-31, 2011	17	27	21	35	1
July 21-24, 2011	17	22	28	32	*
July 14-17, 2011	18	26	27	28	1
July 7-10, 2011	16	23	27	33	1
June 30-July 3, 2011	21	28	24	25	2
June 23-26, 2011	19	26	24	31	*
June 16-19, 2011	23	29	23	25	*
June 9-12, 2011	18	30	22	30	1
June 2-5, 2011	21	31	22	26	*
May 26-29, 2011	20	27	24	28	*
May 19-22, 2011	15	27	24	32	1
May 12-15, 2011	15	22	26	35	1
May 5-8, 2011	16	24	27	32	1
April 21-25, 2011	18	26	23	32	1
April 14-17, 2011	20	23	29	27	1
March 24-27, 2011	13	19	26	41	1
March 10-13, 2011	15	21	26	38	0
February 10-13, 2011	16	19	24	40	*
February 3-6, 2011	15	20	23	42	*

[SEE TRENDS FOR PREVIOUS YEARS:](http://www.people-press.org/files/2011/11/NII-Election-Trends.pdf) <http://www.people-press.org/files/2011/11/NII-Election-Trends.pdf>

NO QUESTION PEW.4

ASK ALL:

PEW.5 Thinking about the Republican convention in Tampa, how much of the convention coverage did you watch? Did you watch all or most of the coverage, some of it, just a little, or none of it?

		<i>Republican Convention</i> Sep 5-8 <u>2008</u>	<i>Democratic Convention</i> Aug 29-31 <u>2008</u>
Aug 31-Sep 1 <u>2012</u>			
17	All or most	23	22
21	Some of it	33	24
21	Just a little	23	25
40	None of it	21	29
1	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	*	*

ASK IF WATCHED AT LEAST A LITTLE CONVENTION COVERAGE (PEW.5=1-3) [N=677]:

PEW.6 For you, what was the highlight of the Republican convention? [OPEN-END; ACCEPT MULTIPLE RESPONSES BUT DO NOT PROBE.]

Aug 31-Sep 1

2012

20	Clint Eastwood's speech
17	Mitt Romney's speech
10	Ann Romney's speech
9	Paul Ryan's speech
3	Marco Rubio's speech
2	Condoleezza Rice's speech
2	Chris Christie's speech
1	Susana Martinez's speech
12	Other
20	There was no highlight/That it's over
9	Don't know/Refused

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

TREND FOR COMPARISON...

For you, what was the highlight of the Republican convention? [OPEN-END; ACCEPT MULTIPLE RESPONSES BUT DO NOT PROBE.]

Sep 5-8

2008

50	Sarah Palin's speech
17	John McCain's speech
4	Seeing a woman on a major party ticket
2	Rudy Guiliani's speech
2	Fred Thompson's speech
1	Cindy McCain's speech
1	Joe Lieberman's speech
1	Selection of Sarah Palin as the Vice Presidential nominee
5	Other
19	There was no highlight/That it's over
5	Don't know/Refused

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

ASK IF WATCHED AT LEAST A LITTLE CONVENTION COVERAGE (PEW.5=1-3) [N=677]:

PEW.7 How would you rate Mitt Romney's speech at the convention? Would you say it was excellent, good, only fair, or poor?

Aug 31-Sep 3

2012

21	Excellent
32	Good
21	Only fair
13	Poor
12	Did not see speech (VOL.)
2	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

McCain

Sep 5-8

2008

16
36
23
9
15
1

Obama

Aug 29-31

2008

42
31
11
3
12
1