

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE & THE PRESS**  
**DECEMBER 2003 NEWS INTEREST INDEX**  
**FINAL TOPLINE**  
**December 15 - 17, 2003**  
**N=815**

**ON FORM ONE Q.1 PRECEDES Q.2 --- ON FORM TWO, Q.2 PRECEDES Q.1**

Q.1 Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling his job as president? **[IF DK ENTER AS DK. IF DEPENDS PROBE ONCE WITH: Overall do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling his job as president? IF STILL DEPENDS ENTER AS DK]**

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>Don't know</u>
December, 2003	57	34	9=100
November, 2003	50	40	10=100
October, 2003	50	42	8=100
September, 2003	55	36	9=100
Mid-August, 2003	56	32	12=100
Early August, 2003	53	37	10=100
Mid-July, 2003	58	32	10=100
Early July, 2003	60	29	11=100
June, 2003	62	27	11=100
May, 2003	65	27	8=100
April 10-16, 2003	72	22	6=100
April 9, 2003	74	20	6=100
April 2-7, 2003	69	25	6=100
March 28-April 1, 2003	71	23	6=100
March 25-27, 2003	70	24	6=100
March 20-24, 2003	67	26	7=100
March 13-16, 2003	55	34	11=100
February, 2003	54	36	10=100
January, 2003	58	32	10=100
December, 2002	61	28	11=100
Late October, 2002	59	29	12=100
Early October, 2002	61	30	9=100
Mid-September, 2002	67	22	11=100
Early September, 2002	63	26	11=100
Late August, 2002	60	27	13=100
August, 2002	67	21	12=100
Late July, 2002	65	25	10=100
July, 2002	67	21	12=100
June, 2002	70	20	10=100
April, 2002	69	18	13=100
Early April, 2002	74	16	10=100
February, 2002	78	13	9=100
January, 2002	80	11	9=100
Mid-November, 2001	84	9	7=100
Early October, 2001	84	8	8=100
Late September, 2001	86	7	7=100
Mid-September, 2001	80	9	11=100
Early September, 2001	51	34	15=100
August, 2001	50	32	18=100
July, 2001	51	32	17=100
June, 2001	50	33	17=100
May, 2001	53	32	15=100

**Q.1 CONTINUED...**

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>Don't know</u>
April, 2001	56	27	17=100
March, 2001	55	25	20=100
February, 2001	53	21	26=100

**ON FORM ONE Q.1 PRECEDES Q.2 --- ON FORM TWO, Q.2 PRECEDES Q.1**

Q.2 All in all, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the way things are going in this country today?

	<u>Satisfied</u>	<u>Dissatisfied</u>	<u>No Opinion</u>
December, 2003	44	47	9=100
October, 2003	38	56	6=100
August, 2003	40	53	7=100
April, 2003 <sup>1</sup>	50	41	9=100
January, 2003	44	50	6=100
September, 2002 <sup>2</sup>	41	55	4=100
Late August, 2002	47	44	9=100
May, 2002	44	44	12=100
March, 2002	50	40	10=100
Late September, 2001	57	34	9=100
Early September, 2001	41	53	6=100
June, 2001	43	52	5=100
March, 2001	47	45	8=100
February, 2001	46	43	11=100
January, 2001	55	41	4=100
September, 2000	51	41	8=100
June, 2000	47	45	8=100
April, 2000	48	43	9=100
August, 1999	56	39	5=100
January, 1999	53	41	6=100
November, 1998	46	44	10=100
Early September, 1998	54	42	4=100
Late August, 1998	55	41	4=100
Early August, 1998	50	44	6=100
February, 1998	59	37	4=100
January, 1998	46	50	4=100
September, 1997	45	49	6=100
August, 1997	49	46	5=100
January, 1997	38	58	4=100
July, 1996	29	67	4=100
March, 1996	28	70	2=100
October, 1995	23	73	4=100
June, 1995	25	73	2=100
April, 1995	23	74	3=100
July, 1994	24	73	3=100
March, 1994	24	71	5=100
October, 1993	22	73	5=100

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<sup>1</sup> Asked April 8, 2003 only; N=395.

<sup>2</sup> The September 2002 trend is from a Pew Global Attitudes Project survey, fielded August 19 to September 8, 2002 and released December 4, 2002.

**Q.2 CONTINUED...**

	<u>Satisfied</u>	<u>Dissatisfied</u>	<u>No Opinion</u>
September, 1993	20	75	4=100
May, 1993	22	71	7=100
January, 1993	39	50	11=100
January, 1992	28	68	4=100
November, 1991	34	61	5=100
Late February, 1991 (Gallup)	66	31	3=100
August, 1990	47	48	5=100
May, 1990	41	54	5=100
January, 1989	45	50	5=100
September, 1988 (RVs)	50	45	5=100
May, 1988	41	54	5=100
January, 1988	39	55	6=100

Q.3 In the long run, do you think George W. Bush will be a successful or unsuccessful president, or do you think it is too early to tell?

		Early		----- Clinton -----									
		Oct	Jan	Jan	Early	Sept	Feb	Oct	May	Jan	Oct	Sept	Aug
		<u>2002</u>	<u>2001</u>	<u>1999</u>	<u>1998</u>	<u>1995</u>	<u>1994</u>	<u>1994</u>	<u>1994</u>	<u>1994</u>	<u>1993</u>	<u>1993</u>	<u>1993</u>
39	Successful	40	26	44	38	18	14	21	21	18	22	13	
20	Unsuccessful	15	15	24	24	34	35	26	19	25	22	25	
38	Too early to tell	44	58	29	35	43	48	52	57	56	54	60	
<u>3</u>	Don't know/Refused	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	
100		100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	

**IF "SUCCESSFUL" (1 IN Q.3) ASK [N=334]:**

Q.4 In your opinion, what has been the most important accomplishment in George W. Bush's presidency so far? **[OPEN-END, SEE PRECODES. ACCEPT MULTIPLE RESPONSES BUT DO NOT PROBE FOR ADDITIONAL]**

- 69 NET: FOREIGN AFFAIRS**
- 49 The war in Iraq / Capture of Saddam
- 23 The war on terrorism / Afghanistan / Response to 9-11
- 2 Foreign policy (general) / Foreign relations
- 15 NET: DOMESTIC AFFAIRS**
- 6 The economy
- 6 The tax cut
- 2 Stand on abortion
- 2 Medicare reform / Prescription drugs
- 9 NET: PERSONAL QUALITIES**
- 7 Leadership/Integrity/Honor
- 2 Morality/Religious values
- 2 Other [SPECIFY]
- 1 No major accomplishments so far
- 12 Don't know/Refused

**IF “UNSUCCESSFUL” (2 IN Q.3) ASK [N=162]:**

Q.5 In your opinion, what has been the biggest failure in George W. Bush’s presidency so far? [**OPEN-END, SEE PRECODES. ACCEPT MULTIPLE RESPONSES BUT DO NOT PROBE FOR ADDITIONAL**]

- 63 NET: FOREIGN AFFAIRS**
- 48 The war in Iraq
- 12 Foreign policy (general) / Foreign relations
- 9 The war on terrorism / Afghanistan / Response to 9-11
- 33 NET: DOMESTIC AFFAIRS**
- 19 The economy
- 6 Medicare reform / Prescription drugs
- 3 The tax cut
- 3 Poverty/Favoring rich over poor
- 2 Not enough attention to domestic issues
- 2 Environment
- 2 Other domestic issues
- 6 NET: PERSONAL QUALITIES**
- 5 Lack of leadership/Lying/Secrecy
- 1 Lack of morals
- 6 Other [**SPECIFY**]
- 0 No major failures so far
- 3 Don’t know/Refused

**ASK ALL:**

Q.6 Now I will read a list of some stories covered by news organizations this past month. As I read each item, tell me if you happened to follow this news story very closely, fairly closely, not too closely, or not at all closely. [**INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE WITH ITEM a. ALWAYS FIRST.**]

		Very Closely	Fairly Closely	Not too Closely	Not at all Closely	DK/Ref
a.	The capture of Saddam Hussein	44	37	14	5	*=100
b.	News about the current situation in Iraq	44	38	11	6	1=100
	November, 2003	52	33	9	5	1=100
	October, 2003	38	40	14	7	1=100
	September, 2003	50	33	10	6	1=100
	Mid-August, 2003	45	39	10	5	1=100
	Early July, 2003	37	41	13	8	1=100
	June, 2003	46	35	13	6	*=100
	May, 2003	63	29	6	2	*=100
	April 11-16, 2003 <sup>3</sup>	47	40	10	2	1=100
	April 2-7, 2003	54	34	9	2	1=100
	March 20-24, 2003	57	33	7	2	1=100
	March 13-16, 2003 <sup>4</sup>	62	27	6	4	1=100
	February, 2003	62	25	8	4	1=100

<sup>3</sup> From March 20 to April 16, 2003 the story was listed as “News about the war in Iraq.”

<sup>4</sup> From October 2002 to March 13-16, 2003 the story was listed as “Debate over the possibility that the U.S. will take military action in Iraq.” In Early September 2002 the story was listed as “Debate over the possibility that the U.S. will invade Iraq.”

**Q.6 CONTINUED...**

	Very <u>Closely</u>	Fairly <u>Closely</u>	Not too <u>Closely</u>	Not at all <u>Closely</u>	DK/Ref
January, 2003	55	29	10	4	2=100
December, 2002	51	32	10	6	1=100
Late October, 2002	53	33	8	5	1=100
Early October, 2002	60	28	6	5	1=100
Early September, 2002	48	29	15	6	2=100
<b>c. The race for the Democratic presidential nomination</b>	16	26	27	30	1=100
November, 2003	11	26	34	28	1=100
October, 2003	12	27	28	32	1=100
September, 2003	17	25	30	27	1=100
Mid-August, 2003	12	27	27	33	1=100
May, 2003	8	19	31	41	1=100
January, 2003 <sup>5</sup>	14	28	29	28	1=100
December, 1999	16	36	24	23	1=100
October, 1999	17	32	28	22	1=100
September, 1999	15	31	33	20	1=100
July, 1999	15	38	24	22	1=100
June, 1999	11	25	29	34	1=100
September, 1995	12	36	30	22	*=100
August, 1995	13	34	28	25	*=100
June, 1995	11	31	31	26	1=100
December, 1991	10	28	32	30	*=100
October, 1991	12	26	31	29	2=100
November, 1987	15	28	35	21	1=100
September, 1987	14	34	37	14	1=100
<b>d. Reports about the condition of the U.S. economy</b>	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

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<sup>5</sup> In January 2003, the story was listed as "Recent announcements by prominent Democrats about plans to run for president in 2004." In 1999, the story was listed as "News about candidates for the 2000 presidential election." In 1995, the story was listed as "News about the Republican presidential candidates." In September 1987, the story was listed as "Coverage of the Democratic and Republican candidates for the presidential nomination."

**Q.6 CONTINUED...**

	Very <u>Closely</u>	Fairly <u>Closely</u>	Not too <u>Closely</u>	Not at all <u>Closely</u>	DK/Ref
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
e. The Medicare reform legislation recently signed into law	25	28	22	23	2=100
November, 2003 <sup>6</sup>	26	28	25	21	*=100
July, 1999	19	35	25	20	1=100
January, 1998	18	30	27	25	*=100
June, 1997	24	27	25	23	1=100
February, 1997	20	27	23	28	2=100
January, 1996	30	36	22	12	*=100
September, 1995	31	40	18	11	*=100
August, 1995	27	37	21	15	*=100
June, 1995	28	34	23	14	1=100
f. Early outbreaks of the flu and a national shortage of flu vaccinations	41	33	16	9	1=100
g. The Supreme Court decision upholding campaign finance reform legislation	8	17	28	45	2=100
April, 2001 <sup>7</sup>	14	27	25	33	1=100

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<sup>6</sup> In November 2003 the story was listed as "The debate in Washington about how to reform the Medicare system." In July 1999 the story was listed as "President Clinton's proposals to change the Medicare system." In January 1998 the story was listed as "President Clinton's proposal to offer Medicare to younger retirees and uninsured Americans between 55 and 64." In January 1996 and September 1995 the story was listed as "The debate in Washington over the future of the Medicare (system/program)." In August and June 1995 the story was listed as "A proposal in Congress to reduce the growth in the rate of spending on Medicare."

<sup>7</sup> In April 2001 the story was listed as "The debate in Congress over campaign finance reform."

Thinking again about politics...

Q.7 Looking ahead, would you like to see George W. Bush re-elected president in 2004 or would you prefer that a Democratic candidate win the election? [INTERVIEWER: IF R SAYS "OTHER" OR "SOMEONE ELSE," PROBE ONCE: "If you had to choose, would you like to see George W. Bush re-elected or would you prefer that a Democratic candidate win the election?"]

	----- Total -----			----- Registered Voters -----			(N=623)
	Bush Re-elected	Prefer Democrat	Other/ DK	Bush Re-elected	Prefer Democrat	Other/ DK	
December, 2003	47	38	15=100	49	37	14=100	
October, 2003	40	44	16=100	42	42	16=100	
September, 2003	44	43	13=100	45	43	12=100	
August, 2003	40	39	21=100	43	38	19=100	
Mid-July, 2003	45	37	18=100	47	37	16=100	
April, 2003	46	35	19=100	48	34	18=100	
Late March, 2003 <sup>8</sup> (Gallup)	51	36	13=100	51	36	13=100	
Mid-March, 2003 (Gallup)	45	42	13=100	45	42	13=100	
February, 1992	40	48	12=100	39	49	12=100	
January, 1992	42	42	16=100	41	45	14=100	
November, 1991	41	43	16=100	41	44	15=100	

Q.8 As you may know, Congress passed a new Medicare law that includes some coverage of prescription drug costs and changes the way Medicare covers other medical expenses for senior citizens. Overall, would you say you strongly approve, approve, DISapprove, or strongly disapprove of these recent changes?

12	Strongly approve
43	Approve
17	Disapprove
10	Strongly disapprove
<u>18</u>	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)
100	

Q.9 In your opinion, does the Medicare legislation go too far, not far enough, or is it about right in how much it covers prescription drugs for seniors?

	Nov <u>2003</u> <sup>9</sup>	Aug <u>2003</u>
6	7	10
61	57	51
18	19	21
<u>15</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>18</u>
100	100	100

<sup>8</sup> The March 2003 trends are from Gallup and were worded: "If George W. Bush runs for re-election in 2004, in general are you more likely to vote for Bush or for the Democratic Party's candidate for president?"

<sup>9</sup> In November 2003 the question was worded: "There are currently proposals before Congress to include prescription drug coverage in Medicare benefits for seniors. What do you think... will the Medicare legislation go too far..."

Q.10 In general, do you think that free trade agreements like NAFTA, (the North American Free Trade Agreement) and the WTO (World Trade Organization), have been a good thing or a bad thing for the United States? [INTERVIEWER: READ OUT FULL NAMES ONLY IF RESPONDENT IS UNCERTAIN]

		Early Sept 2001 <sup>10</sup>	Nov 1997	Sept 1997
34	Good thing	49	45	47
33	Bad thing	29	34	30
<u>33</u>	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	<u>22</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>23</u>
100		100	100	100

Q.11 Thinking about the financial situation of you and your family... Do you think these free trade agreements (like NAFTA and the WTO) have definitely helped, probably helped, probably hurt, or definitely hurt the financial situation of you and your family? [INTERVIEWER: READ OUT FULL NAMES ONLY IF RESPONDENT IS UNCERTAIN]

2	Definitely helped
25	Probably helped
24	Probably hurt
14	Definitely hurt
15	Neither (VOL.)
<u>20</u>	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)
100	

Now thinking about Iraq...

Q.12 Do you think the U.S. made the right decision or the wrong decision in using military force against Iraq?

		Oct 2003	Sept 2003	Aug 2003	Early July 2003	---- April ---- 10-16 8-9 2-7	----- March 2003 ----- 28-4/1 25-27 23-24 20-22	Late Jan 1991
67	Right decision	60	63	63	67	74 74 72	69 74 74 71	77
26	Wrong decision	33	31	30	24	19 19 20	25 21 21 22	15
<u>7</u>	Don't know/Refused	<u>7</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>7</u> <u>7</u> <u>8</u>	<u>6</u> <u>5</u> <u>5</u> <u>7</u>	<u>9</u>
100		100	100	100	100	100 100 100	100 100 100 100	100

Q.13 How well is the U.S. military effort in Iraq going? [READ IN ORDER]

		Oct 2003	Sept 2003	Aug 2003	Early July 2003	---- April ---- 10-16 8-9 2-7	--- March 2003 --- 25-4/1 23-24 20-22
28	Very well	16	15	19	23	61 60 55	39 45 65
47	Fairly well	44	47	43	52	32 32 37	46 41 25
16	Not too well	25	26	24	16	3 3 3	8 6 2
6	Not at all well	11	9	11	5	1 3 2	2 2 1
<u>3</u>	DK/Ref.	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u> <u>2</u> <u>3</u>	<u>5</u> <u>6</u> <u>7</u>
100		100	100	100	100	100 100 100	100 100 100

<sup>10</sup> In Early September 2001 and earlier the question was worded: "So far, do you think that NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Agreement, has been a good thing or a bad thing from a U.S. point of view?"



**ASK FORM 1 ONLY [N=377]:**

Q.14F1 Do you think George W. Bush has a clear plan for bringing the situation in Iraq to a successful conclusion, or don't you think so?

		Oct <u>2003</u>	Sept <u>2003</u>
44	Has a clear plan	35	32
45	Doesn't have a clear plan	54	58
<u>11</u>	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	<u>11</u>	<u>10</u>
100		100	100

**ASK FORM 2 ONLY [N=438]:**

Q.15F2 Do you think George W. Bush has explained clearly his plans for bringing the situation in Iraq to a successful conclusion, or do you think he has not explained his plans clearly enough?

		Oct <u>2003</u>	Sept <u>2003</u>	March <u>2003</u> <sup>11</sup>	Feb <u>2003</u>	Jan <u>2003</u>	Dec <u>2002</u>	Late <u>2002</u>	Mid- <u>2002</u>	Late <u>2002</u>	<i>NY Times</i> Aug <u>1990</u> <sup>12</sup>
35	Explained clearly	32	30	49	53	42	48	48	52	37	50
59	Not clearly	63	63	47	40	53	45	45	37	52	41
<u>6</u>	Don't know/Refused	<u>5</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>9</u>
100		100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

**ASK ALL:**

Q.16 Do you think the war in Iraq has helped the war on terrorism, or has it hurt the war on terrorism?

		Sept <u>2003</u>	May <u>2003</u>	April <u>2003</u> <sup>13</sup>	Early Oct <u>2002</u>
59	Helped	54	65	63	52
26	Hurt	31	22	22	34
6	No effect (VOL)	7	6	--	--
<u>9</u>	Don't know/Refused	<u>8</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>14</u>
100		100	100	100	100

Q.17 Based on what you've seen and read, do MOST people in Iraq support or do most oppose America's current policies in Iraq?

		Sept <u>2003</u>
47	Support	39
34	Oppose	47
<u>19</u>	Don't know/Refused	<u>14</u>
100		100

<sup>11</sup> From 2002 through March 2003, the question was worded: "Do you think George W. Bush has explained clearly what's at stake as to why the U.S. might use military force to end the rule of Saddam Hussein, or do you think he has not explained the reasons clearly enough?"

<sup>12</sup> New York Times trend was worded: "Do you think George Bush has explained clearly what's at stake and why the U.S. is sending troops to Saudi Arabia, or do you think ..."

<sup>13</sup> In April 2003, the question was worded: "Do you think the war in Iraq will help the war on terrorism, or will it hurt the war on terrorism?" In Early October 2002 the question was worded: "If the U.S. uses military force in Iraq, do you think this will help the war on terrorism, or will it hurt the war on terrorism?"

Q.18 So far, has the U.S. suffered more casualties in Iraq than you expected before the war began, or fewer casualties than you expected?

		Sept <u>2003</u>
50	More than expected	42
39	Fewer than expected	49
5	About as expected (VOL.)	4
<u>6</u>	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	5
100		100

Q.19 In re-building Iraq, how good a job are the U.S. and its allies doing in taking into account the needs and interests of the Iraqi people? Is the coalition doing an excellent job, a good job, only a fair job or a poor job in taking into consideration the interests and needs of the Iraqi people?

		Sept <u>2003</u>	May <u>2003</u>
11	Excellent	9	18
35	Good	36	41
27	Only fair	35	26
16	Poor	11	6
<u>11</u>	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	<u>9</u>	<u>9</u>
100		100	100

Q.20 How did you FIRST learn about the capture of Saddam Hussein? Was it from talking with others; listening to the radio; watching television; reading a newspaper; or going online over the Internet?

**IF "TELEVISION" (3 IN Q.20), ASK:**

Q.20a Was this on an all-news cable channel such as CNN, MSNBC or the Fox CABLE news channel; on network broadcast television such as ABC, NBC, or CBS; or on a local television news broadcast in your area?

**IF "TALKING WITH OTHERS" (1 IN Q.20) ASK:**

Q.20b Was this in a face-to-face conversation with someone or in a telephone call?

**IF "INTERNET" (5 IN Q.20) ASK:**

Q.20c Was this from e-mail, an instant message, or from a web site?

		<i>Iraq War Starts</i>	<i>Terrorist Attacks</i>
		March <u>2003<sup>14</sup></u>	Sept <u>2001</u>
22	Talking with others	8	31
11	Face to face	5	16
11	Telephone calls	2	15
10	Radio	13	22
60	Television	73	44
26	Cable channel	37	11
20	Network news	22	20
11	Local news	11	9
1	Newspaper	2	*
6	Internet	3	1
*	Email	*	*
1	Instant message	*	0
5	Web Site	2	*
1	Other	1	2
0	Did not know about it	0	0
*	Don't know/Refused	*	*
<u>100</u>		<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>

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<sup>14</sup> In March 2003 the question was worded "... such as CNN, MSNBC, FOX News or CNBC." The September 2001 trend is from a survey conducted for the Pew Internet and American Life Project (N=2039). The question was worded "... such as CNN or CNBC."