



**Embargoed: For Release 12:01 a.m. August 20, 2007
Or publications dated that day**

Media Coverage of the Campaign Rises, War Coverage Falls, During the Second Quarter of 2007

The 2008 Presidential campaign—with its crowded field and accelerated timetable—emerged as the leading story in the American news media in the second quarter of 2007, supplanting the policy debate over Iraq. And the once lopsided gap favoring Democrats over Republicans in campaign coverage became more balanced, according to a new study of the U.S. media.

In the derby for “free media” exposure, Barack Obama overtook fellow Democrat Hillary Clinton, who led in the first three months of the year, the report found. Among Republicans, the race for media attention was a tight contest among John McCain, Rudy Giuliani and Mitt Romney. And one unannounced candidate, actor and sometime politician Fred Thompson, emerged as a leading recipient of coverage even without formally entering the race.

These are some of the findings drawn from the second quarterly report of the Project for Excellence in Journalism’s News Coverage Index, a weekly content analysis of a broad cross-section of American news media.

Another major change in the period from April through June of 2007 was that press coverage of the war in Iraq declined markedly. Together the three major storylines of the war—the policy debate, events on the ground, and the impact on the U.S. homefront—filled 15% of the total newshole in the quarter, a drop of roughly a third from the first three months of the year, when it filled 22%.

That decrease resulted largely from a decline in coverage of the Washington-based policy debate, which fell 42% from the first to second quarter, once the Democrats failed to impose timetables in legislation funding of the war.

The project’s weekly NCI examines the news agenda of 48 different outlets from five sectors of the media and allows a snapshot of the media agenda—what topics the media are choosing to highlight and which they are not.

The quarterly report considers 13 weeks of data together, more than 18,000 stories, allowing for deeper analysis across time, including comparisons of different news organizations and in the case of television, even different programs on the same network.

Among the findings in the second quarterly report of the PEJ's News Coverage Index:

- After Democrats received more than twice the coverage of Republicans in the first quarter of the year (61% to 24%), coverage evened out in the second quarter. Democrats received 42% of the coverage versus 41% for Republicans. That Republican gain came largely from a one month surge in May.
- Attention to the Iraq war fell across all five media sectors in the second quarter. The bulk of the decline occurred after May 24, when Congress approved funding without including troop withdrawal timetables, a move widely viewed as a White House victory. In all, the policy debate filled 7% of the space or airtime in the quarter, down from 12% in the three months of the year.
- There continues to be clear differences in the news judgments of different cable channels. As in the first quarter, the Fox News Channel devoted roughly half as much coverage to the war (8%) than its rivals, CNN (18%) and MSNBC (15%). On the subject of the presidential campaign, MSNBC stood out, providing more than twice the percent of airtime of either competitor.
- When it came to party breakdown of the campaign coverage, the cable distinctions were found not across networks but across programs. On CNN, for instance, Paula Zahn focused more on Democrats, while Anderson Cooper spent more time on Republicans. On the Fox News Channel, Bill O'Reilly and Shepard Smith focused most on Democrats, while Hannity & Colmes and Brit Hume were more evenly divided between the two parties.
- The Virginia Tech campus massacre that claimed 33 lives was the biggest story for any given week so far this year. It accounted for 51% of all coverage April 15-20. But the media's attention to the story was fleeting: by the end of April, coverage had virtually disappeared. The policy debate in Iraq was the second most covered event of the year so far the week the president announced the "surge." Don Imus' firing was the third most heavily covered story of the year in any given week.
- If media attention translates into political pressure, the argument that talk radio helped kill the immigration bill in Congress has some support in the data. Thanks to energetic opposition from Rush Limbaugh, Sean Hannity, and Michael Savage, immigration was the biggest topic, at 16%, on conservative talk radio in the second quarter. (Liberal radio hosts were much quieter.) In the media overall immigration was the fourth-biggest story of the quarter, tripling its level from the first three months of the year.

- Paris Hilton is no Anna Nicole Smith. Or perhaps a short stay in the slammer is no match for a mysterious death that leaves behind their heir to a fortune with uncertain parentage. In any case, the socialite’s jailhouse drama in the end attracted much less media attention than the playmate-turned-reality TV star’s death. Smith’s demise was a long-running saga that came in the eighth-biggest story of the first quarter. Hilton’s June jailing proved to be a mostly one-week story that failed to make the top-10 story list this quarter.

The Project’s News Coverage Index is designed to provide news consumers, journalists, and researchers with hard data about what stories and topics the media are covering, the trajectories of major stories and differences among news platforms (see methodology.)

The second quarterly report of the PEJ News Coverage Index includes an examination of 18,010 stories that appeared between April 1, 2007 and June 29, 2007. The Index encompasses 13 newspapers, eight radio outlets (a mix of talk, public radio, and headline feeds), five of the top online sites, several hours a day of all three cable news channels and both network morning and evening newscast; we believe it to be the most comprehensive ongoing audit of the American press conducted. The data for the year to date includes 35,426 stories.

The 2008 Campaign: An Escalating War

In the second quarter of 2007, the presidential campaign took over center stage. It was the top storyline overall, accounting for 9% of the newshole and edging out any one of the three Iraq story threads. (The Iraq war coverage combined amassed 15% of the newshole this quarter, but campaign coverage supplanted each of the three specific Iraq-related storylines, including the biggest—the debate over U.S. policy.

Top News Stories for the Second Quarter of 2007
Apr. 1, ‘07 – June 29, ‘07

Rank	Top Stories	Percent of Newshole
1	2008 Campaign	8.5%
2	Events in Iraq*	6.7
3	Iraq Policy Debate*	6.6
4	Immigration	5.7
5	VA Tech Shootings	4.9
6	Don Imus	2.4
7	Iran	2.1
8	Fired Attorneys	1.9
9	Iraq Homefront*	1.5
10	Palestinian Conflict	1.4
Iraq War Total* (a sum of the three starred stories)		14.8

Cable news was the most focused on the campaign. That sector of the media devoted 12% of the newshole studied in PEJ’s index to the campaign, up a quarter from 9% in the first three months of the year. And among the three competing channels there, MSNBC

far out-paced the others. It devoted fully 21% of its airtime on the campaign, more than twice that of either CNN (9%) or Fox News (10%).

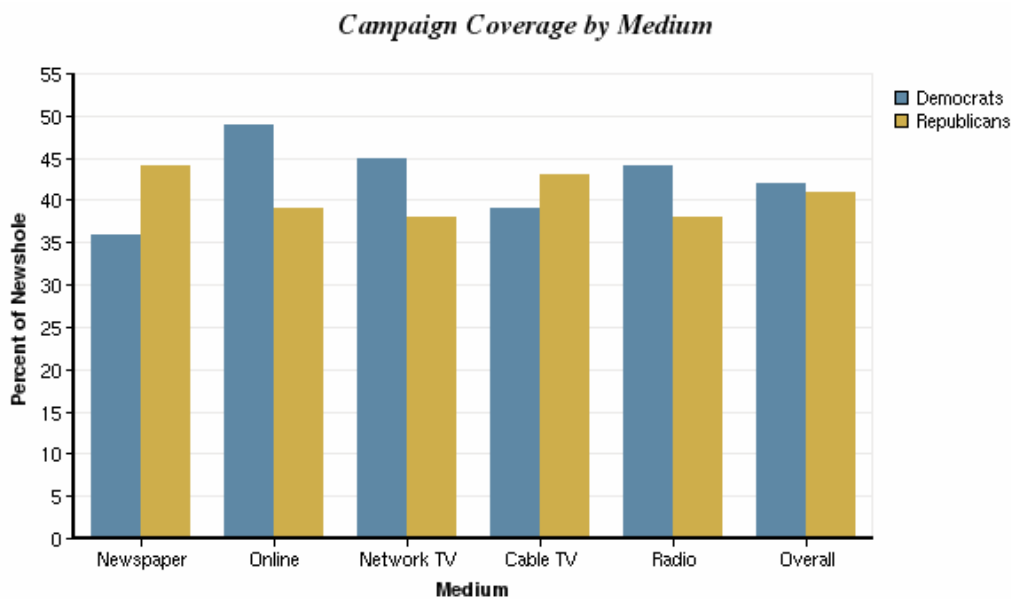
Election coverage also topped the list of stories in radio news (10% of its newshole) and newspapers (8%).

The election was a smaller story among the online news sites studied. Here it ranked third (5% of the newshole), behind events in Iraq and debate over the U.S. policy there.¹

The only other genre in which campaign news did not top the list was network TV, but here it ranked second and was a just a half a percentage point shy of the top story, events in Iraq. After rounding, both the campaign and events in Iraq accounted for roughly 7% of the newshole. It should be noted, though, that morning news shows are more focused on the campaign so far this year than the evening newscasts.

2008 Presidential Campaign Coverage

Apr. 1, '07 – June 29, '07

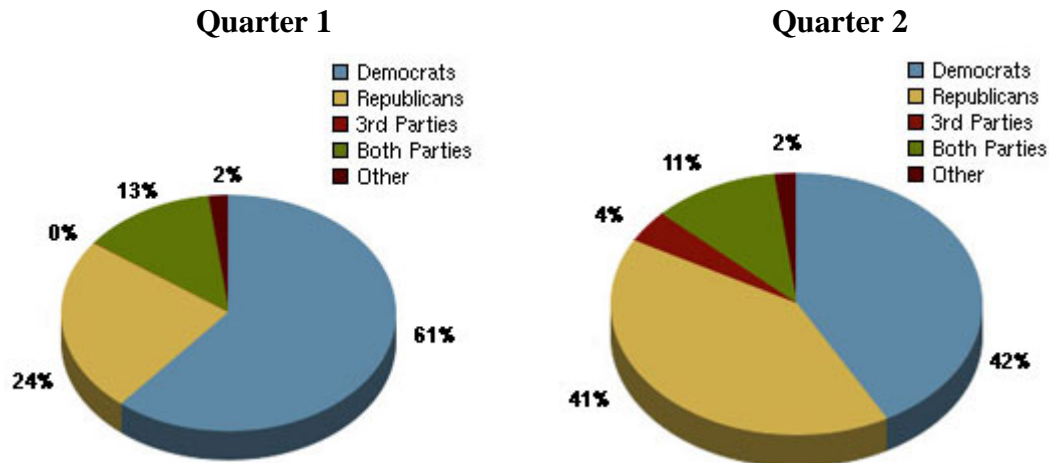


Coverage evens out (sort of) among Democrats and Republicans

Another change in campaign coverage in the second quarter of the year is that as reporting increased, the Democrats' big lead in exposure diminished. Earlier in the year, Democrats outscored Republicans by more than 2-to-1 (61% versus 24%). In the second quarter, however, the two parties ended up with nearly equal amounts of the newshole: 42% Democrats and 41% Republicans. Another 11% of the coverage considered both parties together.

¹ The Index studies the top five stories on five different websites, CNN.com, Yahoo News, MSNBC.com, Google News and AOL News. For details see complete index methodology.

2008 Presidential Campaign Coverage by Political Party



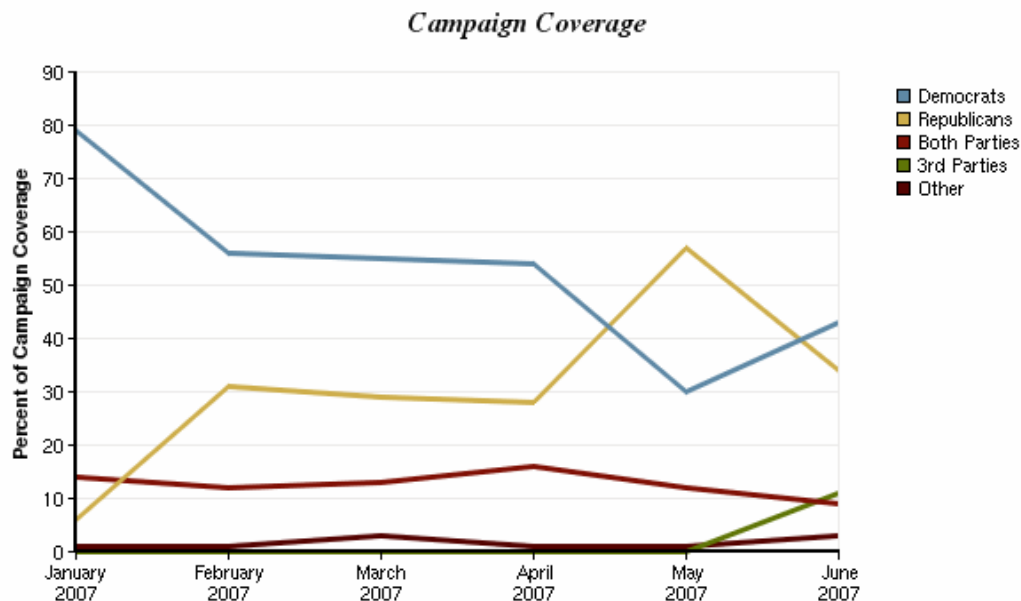
The second quarter also brought the addition of a potential 3rd party candidate—New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg, who switched his party affiliation to independent on June 19.² The press was fascinated. For June, coverage of Bloomberg alone accounted for 11% of all the election coverage in the PEJ News Index. For the quarter, coverage of Bloomberg made up 4% of the campaign coverage.

Despite the increased attention for the GOP, a look inside the numbers suggests that month in and month out, the media remain more interested in the seven competing Democratic candidates. They still dominated the coverage in both April (54% versus 28% Republicans) and June (43% versus 34% Republicans). It was only the month of May that the Republicans ran away with the headlines, outscoring Democrats by nearly 2-to-1. That month, Republicans captured 57% of the newshole, versus 30% for their Democratic counterparts and 12% that considered both parties together.

² PEJ began coding for Mayor Bloomberg on June 19th, the day he announced his party switch. Prior to that, any stories about him would have been coded as “other.”

2008 Presidential Campaign Coverage

Dec. 31, '06 – June 29, '07, by Political Party



The Republican dominance in May suggests also the degree to which the campaign coverage is driven by planned events—often events organized by the media themselves—rather than by anything the candidates have said about their plans for the country or certain voting groups.

The month Republicans finally outstripped Democrats in coverage was one in which there were two different Republican debates (and none on the Democratic side) as well as public statements by two potential new candidates—Fred Thompson and Newt Gingrich (neither of which have as yet announced).

In June, the pendulum quickly swung back to the Democrats and left them clearly in the lead for the first half of 2007. For the full six-months, Democrats grabbed 51% of the newshole in the Index, compared with 33% for Republican. Another 12% of the coverage was about both parties.

Campaign coverage across media

Does the amount of press coverage devoted to one party or another differ by media sector, or by news outlet?

There are some slight differences depending on which sector or type of media one consumes. Democratic candidates got more coverage in the second quarter in all sectors except for newspapers and cable. In those two sectors where Democrats did not get the

majority of the newshole, the Republican edge was so slight that over the course of the entire six month period, the Democrats still come out on top.

Campaign Coverage by Media Sector

Apr. 1, '07 – June 29, '07

	Democrats	Republicans	Both Parties	Third Parties	Other
Newspaper	36%	44%	15%	3%	1%
Online	49	39	6	4	2
Network TV	45	38	11	5	2
Cable TV	39	43	12	4	2
Radio	44	38	10	4	3

And what about the three cable news channels, where audience demographics—particularly along political lines—differ more than outlets in other genres? Data from the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press suggest that Fox News’ audience tilts Republican and conservative, while CNN’s and now MSNBC’s tilts Democratic and liberal.³ In covering the campaign, did the networks slot stories accordingly, giving more airtime to the party preferences of their core audiences?

Overall the three cable channels in the second quarter and year to date are strikingly similar in their party breakdowns. From April 1 though June 29, each devoted 37-40% of the air-time studied to Democrats and 41-44% to Republicans (the percentages spent on dual-party stories varied a bit more).

Differences do emerge, however, when one looks inside each network at party-line focus of specific programs—and program hosts. The differences were first noted for the second quarter. We then looked across all six months of the year and found that the differences remain—and in some cases are even greater.⁴

On Fox, for the first six months of the year, Brit Hume’s 6 pm program (EST) for the days captured was fairly mixed (40% of the campaign coverage about GOP candidates versus 33% about Democrats). His program also spent the greatest amount of story-time considering candidates from both parties (20%).

The next hour, though, Shepard Smith’s program was heavily focused on the Democrats: Nearly seven times as much airtime for Democrats as Republicans (73% versus 10%).

³ According to a 2006 survey by the Pew Research Center for the People & Press, Republicans are still much more likely than Democrats to say they regularly watch the Fox News Channel (34% for Republicans, 20% for Democrats), while Democrats are more apt to turn to CNN (28% vs. 19% for Republicans). Of MSNBC’s audience, 15% are Democrats and 8% are Republicans. The Pew Research Center for the People & Press, “Online Papers Modestly Boost Newspaper Readership,” July 30, 2006; See: <http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?PageID=1067>

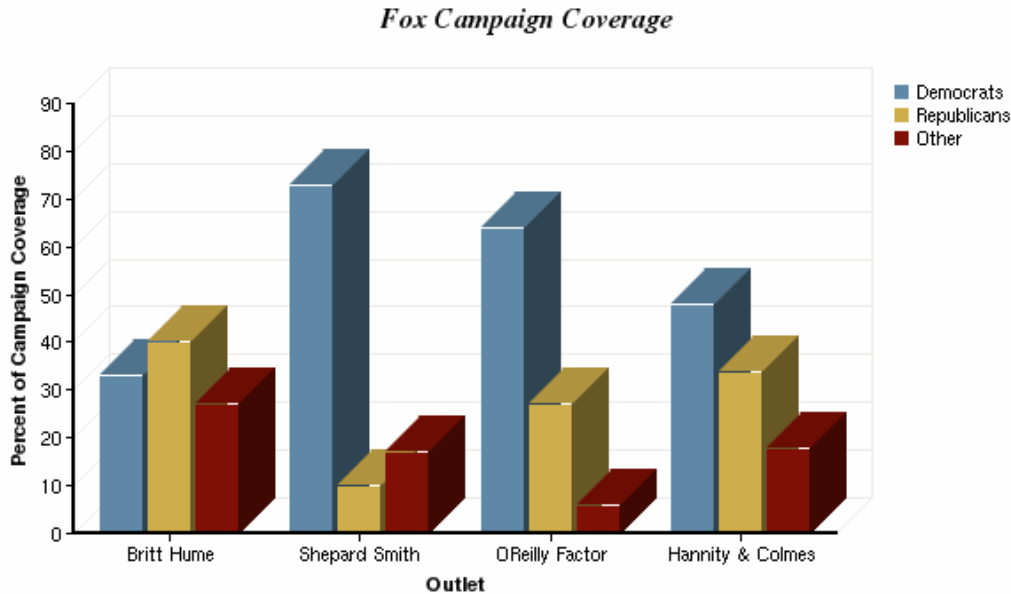
⁴ The prime time cable programs captured and analyzed rotate on a daily rotation. On Fox and CNN, three out of four programs are analyzed daily. On MSNBC, it is two out of four. For the rotation schedule see the Methodology..

(Smith’s program also devoted the greatest percent of airtime of any cable program studied, 9%, to 3rd party candidates like Mayor Bloomberg.)

At the 8 p.m. hour, The O’Reilly Factor stuck with them Democrats, 64% versus 27%. But at 9 pm, Hannity & Colmes moved the dial back toward the middle with Democrats outpacing Republicans over the first six months of 2007 (48% versus 34%).

2008 Presidential Campaign Coverage

Fox News, Dec. 31, ‘06 – June 29, ‘07



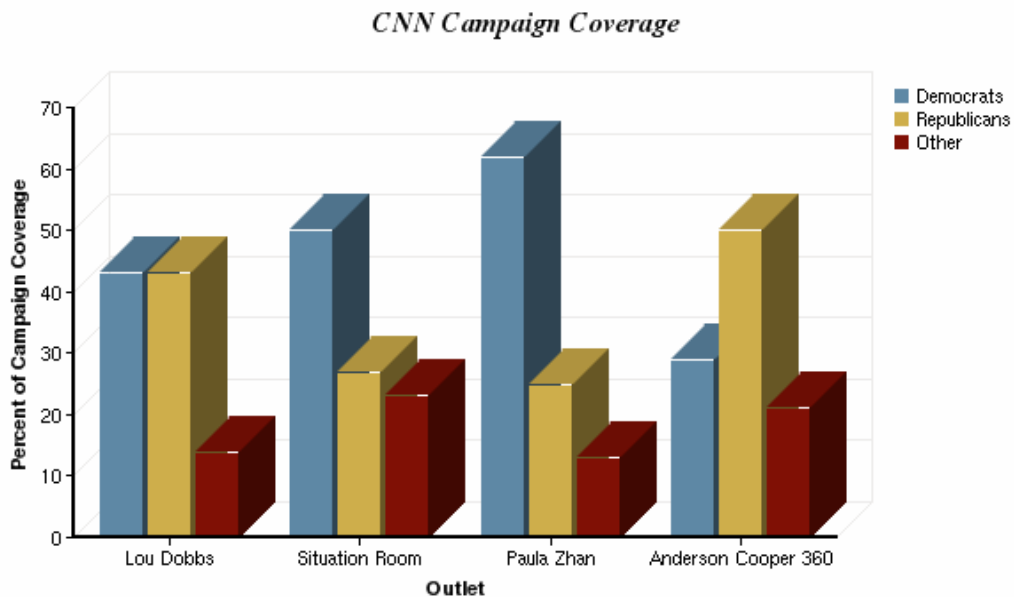
Note: “Other” category includes coverage of third party, both parties and other non-candidate stories

On CNN, the picture was also split. The early evening program hosted by Lou Dobbs was evenly divided, 43% Democrats versus 43% Republicans and 12% a mix of both. An hour later, on Wolf Blitzer’s “Situation Room,” a much larger gap emerged. Democrats had nearly twice the airtime of Republicans (50% versus 27%).

On Paula Zahn’s program at 8 o’clock, Democrats held even more of the stage (62% Democrats versus 25% Republicans and 11% mixed). But tune into Anderson Cooper at 10 pm and it was the near reverse: From January through June on the days studied, Republicans commanded 50% of the airtime versus 29% for Democrats and 17% mixed.

2008 Presidential Campaign Coverage

CNN, Dec. 31, '06 – June 29, '07



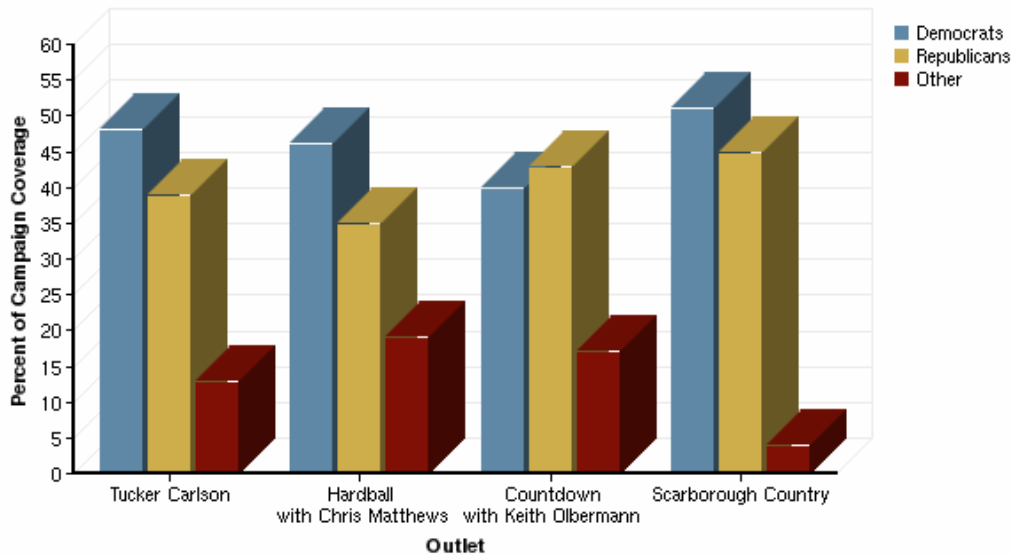
Note: "Other" category includes coverage of third party, both parties and other non-candidate stories

On the Washington-centric MSNBC, though, the programs studied proved much more similar to each other. On three of the four programs examined—Tucker Carlson at 6 pm, Chris Matthews at 7 pm, and Scarborough Country at 9:00 p.m.—Democrats ever so slightly edged out Republicans. The one exception was Countdown with Keith Olbermann whose coverage was fairly even – 43% for Republicans and 40% for Democrats. The largest gap found was on Hardball but even here, for the days studied, the gap was only 46% Democrats to 35% Republicans.

2008 Presidential Campaign Coverage

MSNBC, Dec. 31, '06 – June 29, '07

MSNBC Campaign Coverage



Note: "Other" category includes coverage of third party, both parties and other non-candidate stories

It is important to note that these data speak to the quantity of coverage given to each party's candidates, not tone of that coverage. A story about Republicans could be favorable, unfavorable or neutral to that party. Likewise for Democrats.

Nonetheless, the differences suggest something about the influence of hosts and their staffs over the content of their shows.

Candidate by candidate

Beyond party, which individual candidates were winning the "free media" race for the most ink and airtime?

To find out, we used the Lexis-Nexis database to conduct additional analysis. We gathered through Lexis-Nexis, all of the available newspaper and TV news content included in the Index. We then conducted a keyword search of the top three Democratic and top three Republican candidates according to survey favorability data.⁵ The search was conducted on the headline and first six sentences of these stories. . (As an internal check, we also initially searched mentions of some lesser known candidates and found that after the eight included here, the number of mentions sharply declines.)

⁵ "Hillary Clinton Most Visible Presidential Candidate, Republicans Say Campaign is being Over-Covered," Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, July 26, 2007, <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/553/hillary-clinton-most-visible-presidential-candidate>

In addition we separately examined mentions of two potential candidates that received significant attention in the press the quarter: Republican Fred Thompson and New York Mayor Bloomberg, who switched his party affiliated to Independent in June.

In the second three months of the year, Barack Obama, the first-term Illinois Senator, proved the top newsmaker on the Democratic side and overall, with the most total mentions (622) in both newspapers and on network television. Hillary Clinton, the frontrunner in the Democratic polls, was next at 566, followed by John Edwards at 367.

Search of LexisNexis Database

Number of Stories with Democratic Candidate's Name in Headline or Lead Paragraphs

Apr. 1, '07 – June 29, '07

	Hillary Clinton/ Hillary Rodham Clinton	John Edwards	Barack Obama	Top 3 Democrats
Newspapers	262	178	332	772
Network TV	304	189	290	783
Total	566	367	622	1555

That result is something of a reversal from the first three months of the year when Clinton led over Obama by roughly 10% (742 vs. 672). Edwards was a distant third at 249. It is also worth noting that mentions of both Clinton and Obama dropped in the second quarter while they rose for Edwards.

Obama's lead, however, was not across the board. The former First Lady still led on network TV by a 304 to 290 margin with Edwards next at 189. In newspaper stories, Obama did better than Clinton, 332 to 262 with Edwards at 178.

In the Republican field, the number of mentions among the three leading contenders was more evenly split, and none came close to the numbers of the top two Democrats: 383 for Senator John McCain this quarter, 341 for Rudy Giuliani and 318 for Mitt Romney.

The candidates were just as close to each other (if not a bit closer) in the first quarter and followed the same pecking order. McCain led with 284 mentions, followed by Giuliani at 266 and Romney at 241.

Search of LexisNexis Database

Number of Stories with Republican Candidate's Name in Headline or Lead Paragraphs

Apr. 1, '07 – June 29, '07

	Giuliani	Romney	McCain	Top Republicans
Newspapers	124	124	123	371
Network TV	217	194	260	671
Total	341	318	383	1042

Looking at newspaper and network TV coverage separately, the newspaper competition was virtually a three-way tie with Giuliani and Romney at 124 and McCain at 123. McCain outdistanced his rivals on TV, with 260 mentions compared to 217 for Giuliani and 194 for Romney.

The two newest additions to the press circuit—if not to the *official* candidate pages—seem to be catching up quickly. The candidate in waiting from Tennessee, Fred Thompson, garnered 221 mentions. And Mayor Bloomberg scored 135 mentions, certainly a more than a step behind the leading candidates. Still, considering that most of this attention came in one month, June, when he announced his party switch, and that he has not even officially announced yet, the numbers are sizable.

Search of LexisNexis Database

Number of Stories with Undeclared Candidate's Name in Headline or Lead Paragraphs
Apr. 1, '07 – June 29, '07

	Thompson	Bloomberg
Newspapers	109	106
Network TV	112	29
Total	221	135

The Lexis-Nexis search also confirms PEJ's findings that Republicans have clearly closed the coverage gap with Democrats in the last quarter.

In the first quarter, Clinton, Obama and Edwards generated more than twice the number of network and newspaper mentions as McCain, Giuliani and Romney—1663 to 791. This quarter that gap narrowed; 1,555 for the three Democrats compared to 1,042 for the three Republicans. And if you add in Thompson and Bloomberg the margin shrinks even further.

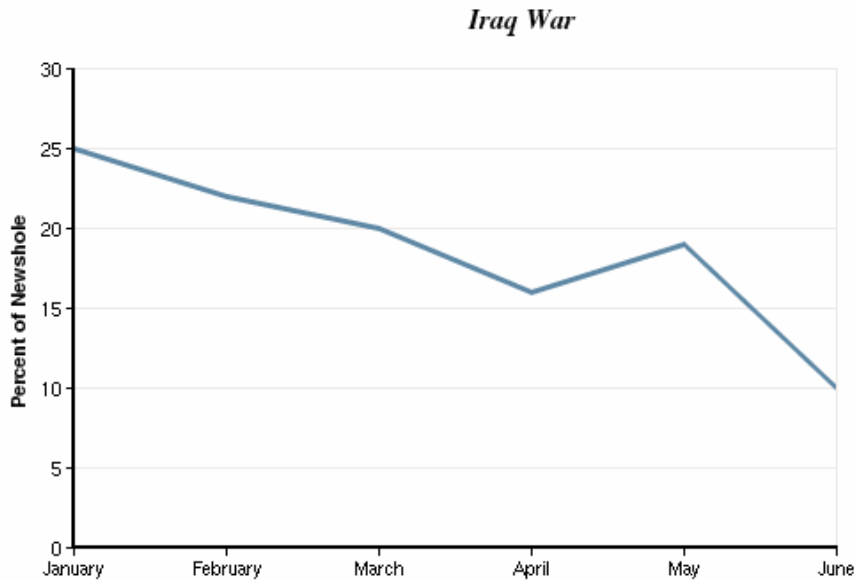
Iraq War Coverage Drops Off In 2nd Quarter

The Iraq War, while still the major story of the year when all its threads are combined, lost some momentum in media coverage in the second quarter of 2007.

Taken together, the newshole devoted to three story lines of the war—the debate over policy, events in Iraq itself, and the situation with veterans and families on the homefront—fell in the second three months of the year by roughly a third, to 15% of the Index, down from 22% of the newshole in the first quarter.

Iraq War Coverage over Time

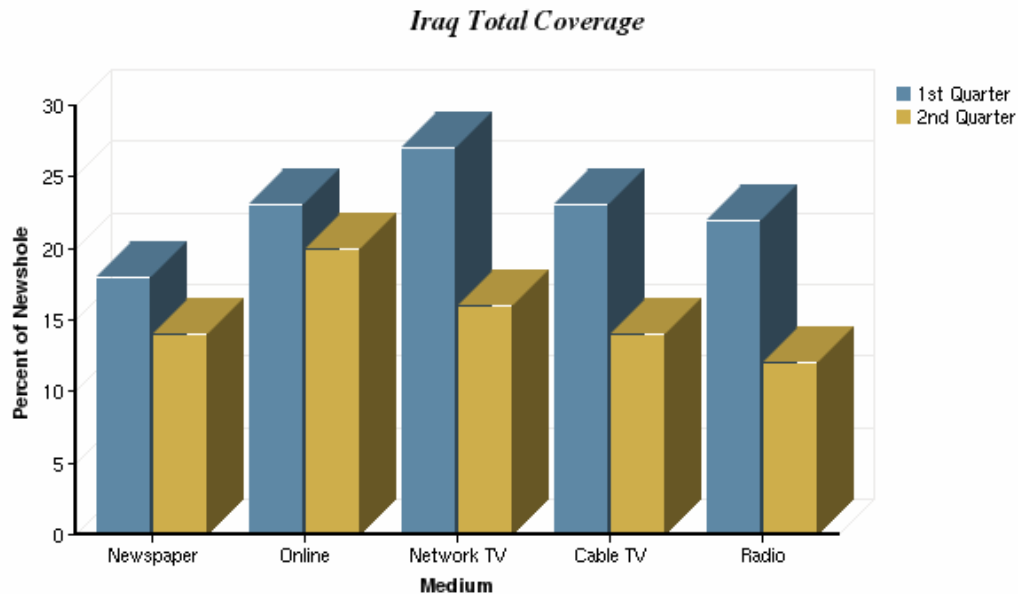
Apr. 1, '07 – June 29, '07



Attention dropped in all five media sectors studied. And some media that covered the war most heavily in the beginning of the year cut back most. Network evening news, the sector that gave the war the greatest percent of attention in the first quarter, scaled back more than 40% (from 33% in the first quarter to 19% in the second). For Cable TV, another leader in coverage in the first quarter, the decline was nearly as great (it fell from 23% to 14%, a drop of 39%).

The greatest pull-back was among the combined group of radio and cable talk show hosts that make up the Talk Universe in the PEJ Index. The subject that ate up more than a quarter of their time from January through March was about half that, 13%, in these next three months.

Iraq War Coverage by Media Sector Quarter 1 vs. Quarter 2



The one sector that stood out for maintaining its focus on the war was online news. Here, where coverage of the war made up a smaller percentage in the beginning of the year, that percentage dropped only slightly, from 23% in the first quarter to 20% in the second. Yahoo News gave the war the most play at 25%. Even on AOL News, the site least devoted to the war, it made-up 17% of the newshole studied. What also stands out online is the specific storyline stressed. Rather than the policy debate in Washington, it was events inside Iraq that led. News from the war torn country was the top story on all five websites studied.

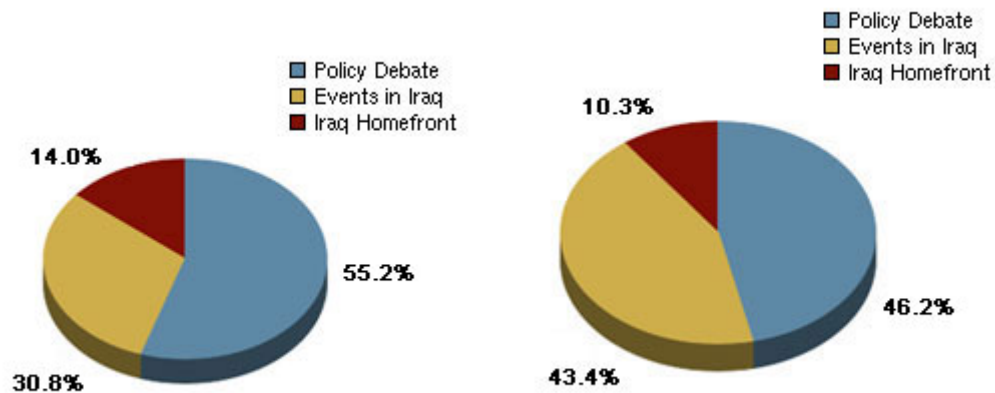
Politics versus Action

While devoting less time to the war overall, the media at same the time managed to broaden their focus. The Index breaks the coverage into three main storylines—U.S. policy debate, events in Iraq, and war-related issues back home. In the first quarter, the policy debate, largely in Washington, dominated, accounting for more than half (55%) of the war coverage (and at 12% of the media’s total newshole was also the top story overall).

Coverage about events in Iraq made up roughly 30% of the war coverage and just 14% focused on war-related issues back home (primarily the controversy over conditions at the Walter Reed Army Hospital). Most of what people learned about, then, was not the war itself but the argument over what to do about it.

In the second quarter of the year, the focus was not nearly so one-sided. The policy debate still led, making up 46% of the war coverage. But events in Iraq were nearly as prevalent at 43%. And coverage of issues back home fell to an even smaller portion—just 10%.

Breakdown of Iraq War Coverage Quarter 1 vs. Quarter 2



In total, coverage of the Beltway-based political debate over U.S. policy towards Iraq fell from 12% of the total newshole to 7% while coverage of events in Iraq itself remained constant, 7% both quarters, and still largely focused on U.S. casualties. Coverage of the war on the homefront dropped from 3% to 2% this quarter.

What was the genesis of the drop away from the policy debate? A key factor was the May 24 Congressional vote that funded the war, but did not—as many Democrats wanted—include troop withdrawal timetables. That vote was not only the culmination of a bitter months-long political battle over the war between the White House and Congress that began with the January 10 announcement of the “surge” policy. It was also widely viewed by the media as a victory for President Bush that, at least temporarily, settled the policy debate in favor of the administration.

“Congress Bows to Bush, OKs Iraq Funds” read the headline on the Associated Press story about the vote.

In the aftermath, the debate itself quieted, as did coverage. In the period between May 27 and the end of June, the Iraq policy debate accounted for only 3% of the total news coverage.

Another finding in the first quarter was how much the war coverage focused on Americans rather than on Iraqis. Fully half of the coverage about events inside Iraq was about American combat and casualties as opposed to Iraqi casualties, Iraqi internal affairs, reconstruction efforts or other matters.

In the second quarter, the picture looks similar. News from inside Iraq became even more U.S. focused. Fully 55% of coverage about events on the ground dealt with U.S. combat and casualties, U.S. troop activities and soldiers charged with crimes.

Events in Iraq
Breakdown of Specific Storylines across All Media

Storyline	Percent of Newshole	
	Q1	Q2
U.S. combat/violence/casualties	50%	45%
civil combat/violence/casualties not involving U.S.	20	16
Iraq Internal affairs	15	16
Other	5	7
US Troops in Iraq	n/a	8
reconstruction waste, corruption	3	1
Reconstruction efforts	3	1
Moqtada al-Sadr going to Iran	1	<1
Prince Harry going to Iraq	1	1
U.S. soldiers charged with crimes	<1	2
Iraqi refugees (added 3/7)	<1	2
Iraqi President Talabani's health (added 2/26)	<1	0

The War on Cable TV

Will where one goes for news influence how much coverage of the war they will see?

In the first quarter, one of the most commented on findings was that the cable news networks had not covered Iraq in equal degrees. Fox News spent a much smaller percentage of time on the war than did its two cable rivals (15% of the newshole versus 25% on CNN and 31% on MSNBC).

In the second quarter the gap remained and in some cases even widened, if looked at overall. Fox news devoted roughly half as much airtime as the other cable channels to the war. Total war coverage accounted for 8% of the Fox newshole, versus 18% for CNN and 15% for MSNBC.

Iraq War Coverage by Cable News Channel

Apr. 1, '07 – June 29, '07

	CNN	FOX	MSNBC
Iraq Policy Debate	10.1%	5.0%	13.3%
Events in Iraq	6.4	2.7	1.5
Iraq Homefront	1.3	0.2	0.3
Iraq War Total	17.8	7.9	15.1

The most prominent gap existed in coverage of policy debate. It was the top story on CNN in the second quarter (10%), and the No. 2 story on MSNBC (13%), behind the presidential campaign. However, the debate over the policy in Iraq ranked as the 4th biggest story on Fox, making up 5% of the newshole.

The differences were not as clear when it came to coverage of events in Iraq, however. Here, according to our data, Fox was half as likely to cover the story as was CNN, with events on the ground filling 3% of the airtime on Fox versus 6% on CNN. On MSNBC, events inside Iraq made up just 2% of the newshole.

The homefront story all but disappeared on cable generally, making up 1% of CNN and less than that on Fox and MSNBC, margins too small to make much difference among the three.

Looking at the full six months of 2007, CNN (at 21% of the newshole) and MSNBC (at 23%) were virtually equal in total coverage of the war in Iraq. The Fox News Channel, at 11%, devoted about half as much airtime to the conflict.

NBC AND MSNBC: THE 'B' STANDS FOR BELTWAY

One other finding becoming clearer in 2007 is a particular orientation of one news operation, that of NBC and its cable sibling MSNBC.

In a three-month span in which overall coverage of the 2008 presidential campaign accelerated and coverage of the Iraq policy debate lessened, the two NBC outlets distinguished themselves with their focus on Beltway politics.

That emphasis is clearest on the cable news channel. MSNBC in the second quarter aired more than twice the amount of campaign news as its two leading cable competitors. Slightly more than one-fifth (21%) of all MSNBC's coverage in the second-quarter was focused on the campaign compared to 10% at the Fox News Channel and 9% at CNN.

Those differences prevailed in both daytime and prime time cable. During the afternoon programming monitored in this study—which tends to focus more on live, breaking events—the campaign was still the lead MSNBC story, filling 9% of the time. But it was only the sixth-biggest daytime story on CNN (3%) and the ninth-biggest on Fox (2%).

In the prime time hours of the second quarter, MSNBC's anchor lineup includes a former GOP Congressman (Joe Scarborough), a former Democratic House Speaker Tip O'Neil aide (Chris Matthews), a veteran conservative pundit (Tucker Carlson) and an émigré from ESPN who has become the darling of liberals (Keith Olbermann). Across those prime time hours, more than a quarter (26%) of the time was spent on the presidential campaign compared with 11% at Fox and 10% at CNN.

The other dominant Beltway-centric story in the second quarter of 2007 was the policy debate over Iraq. Here too, MSNBC covered this story more heavily than its rivals.

MSNBC devoted 13% of its overall coverage to the policy debate, making it the second-biggest story of the quarter behind the campaign. That was measurably more than CNN's, which devoted 10% of its newshole was filled by the policy debate (though this was still

enough to make it the CNN's top story). And that was nearly three times as much as Fox, which devoted 5% of its newshole to Iraq policy.

As was the case with the presidential campaign, the big difference in priorities on cable emerged in prime time where the Iraq policy debate consumed 17% of MSNBC's airtime compared to 11% on CNN and 6% on the Fox News Channel.

When added together, the top two Beltway stories on MSNBC's prime time lineup—the campaign and the battle over Iraq strategy—accounted for nearly half (43%) of all its newshole. On CNN and the Fox News Channel, the top two stories only consumed about one-fifth of the prime time airtime, at 21% and 17% respectively.

For those who want a Washington orientation in their news and watch cable, they are more likely to get it on MSNBC.

Is the Beltway orientation limited to the company's cable channel, or does it also reflect a tendency at the commercial broadcast network? The numbers suggest that there is a measurable difference on the broadcast side as well, though less dramatic.

In the mornings, all three networks made the presidential sweepstakes the top story, during their first half hour, when they shows air most of their hard news. But it was biggest on NBC's Today show, where it filled 13% of the time. That compares with 11% on ABC's "Good Morning America" and 9% on CBS's "Early Show."

The split was similar in the evening. Brian Williams' "NBC Nightly News" devoted 5% of its airtime to the campaign (making it the fourth-biggest story in the quarter). "The CBS Evening News" with Katie Couric devoted 3% of its coverage to the campaign, which was its fifth-biggest story. And on ABC "World News Tonight" anchored by Charles Gibson, the subject filled 3% of the newshole as the sixth-biggest story.

Biggest Stories by Week: Virginia Tech Shooting Leads Tops Year

On the morning of Monday April 16, a deeply disturbed Virginia Tech student went on a shooting rampage on campus that claimed 33 lives, including his own. By the end of that wrenching week, some member of the student body exhausted by both the trauma and the press attention, composed this sign on the school's drill field: "VT stay strong. Media stay away."

In those few days, the Virginia Tech massacre became the most covered single story in any week so far this year. More than half of all coverage (51%) from April 15-20 was devoted to the massacre.

That put the shooting at the Virginia campus far ahead of any other story for such concentrated coverage this year.

The next most intensely covered story in any given week was the Iraq policy debate from Jan. 7-12, the week that President Bush announced his controversial “surge” policy. The story filled 34% of the newshole in the PEJ Index.

Next, or the third most heavily covered event of the year, was the firing of talk host Don Imus after he made crude remarks about the Rutgers women’s basketball team. During that week, April 8-13, the Imus saga accounted for 26% of all the coverage.

Nothing else this year filled even one fifth of the newshole in any given week. The next two most intensely covered stories in the first six months related to the ongoing probe of the U.S. Justice Department and Attorney General Alberto Gonzales following the firing of eight U.S. attorneys for what some suspected were political reasons.

During the week of March 18-23, when Congress authorized subpoenas of top Bush adviser Karl Rove and former White House Counsel Harriet Miers, that Justice Department scandal filled 18% of the newshole. From March 11-16, that subject filled 16% of the newshole in a week in which Gonzales admitted to mistakes in handling the issue and embarked on a media tour to help save his job.

Attention Deficit?

For all that Virginia Tech stands out as the most heavily covered event of the first six months of 2007, however, in the end the media didn’t stay on the story very long.

During that time frame the narrative followed a fairly well-defined arc, turning from the actual shooting to trying to make sense of the enigmatic, uncommunicative killer, Seung-Hui Cho (which also involved a chilling and controversial manifesto from him), and then to Virginia Tech community efforts to heal.

The media also turned to longer-term issues including the questions of student privacy and mental health and the highly political issue of gun control. Talk hosts in particular, quickly took up sides on this issue. Conservatives like Sean Hannity argued that guns are more frequently used for protection than harm: “The fallacy here is that guns are the problem. It’s not. It’s the evil intention in the heart of somebody that does not respect a human life.”

But none of the issues raised by the incident inspired any sustained national dialogue in the media, be it the ability of the mental health system to track disturbed patients, the public safety communications systems that made it impossible to alert students, or more.

Only one week after accounting for half the nation’s news coverage (April 22-27), the story nosedived down to 7%. By the week of April 29-May 4, the story had virtually disappeared from the news, generating less than 1% of the total coverage. It never again reached more than 1% of the newshole in any week in the second quarter.

Immigration: Did Talk Hosts Kill The Bill?

In the midst of the heated Senate debate over the immigration bill, one notable conservative made headlines for lashing out at a conservative-dominated medium.

“Talk radio is running America,” complained Mississippi Republican Senator Trent Lott. “We have to deal with that problem.”

On June 28—more than 40 days after the introduction of a compromise immigration bill backed by President Bush and some senators—the year’s most ambitious domestic legislative initiative was defeated in the Senate.

Lott was not alone in attributing the bill’s defeat to talk radio. Some Democrats even talked of reviving the long-repealed Fairness Doctrine as a way of potentially balancing the politics on conservative-dominated talk radio. In talk circles, this became known as the “Hush Rush” bill, a reference to conservative radio host Rush Limbaugh, who was a vocal critic of the immigration bill.

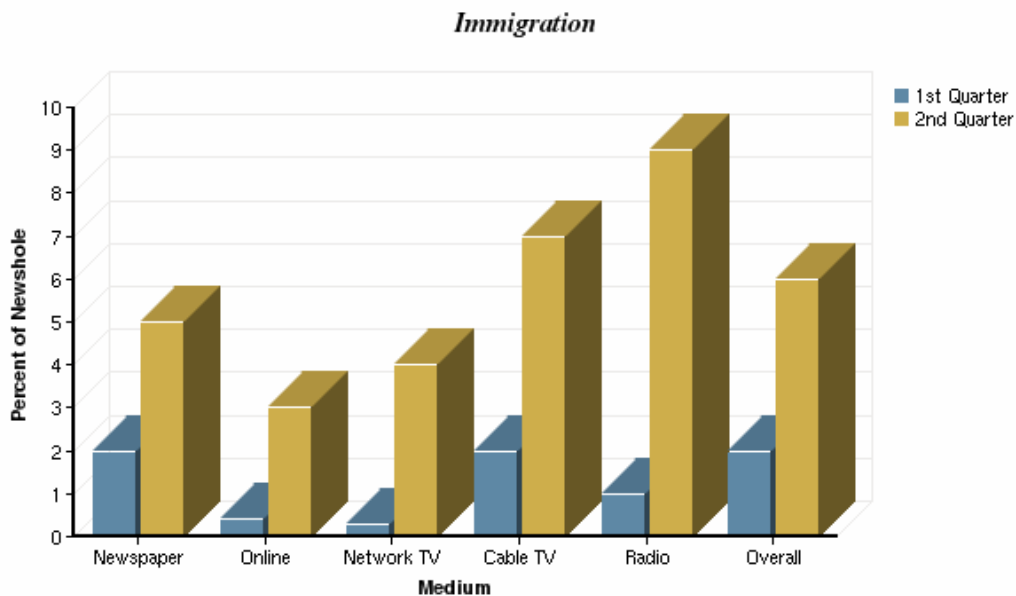
Is there any quantitative evidence to suggest Lott and other critics are right? To what extent did talk radio or the media in general help kill, at least for now, the immigration reform legislation?

If impact is measured in attention, then there is little doubt that it grew significantly this second quarter, according to the data in PEJ’s News Coverage Index. Immigration was the fourth-biggest story in overall this quarter, taking up 6% of the newshole, roughly triple the amount of coverage the issue received in first three months of the year.

Most of that rise was coverage of the legislation in Congress. In the period between the May 17 announcement of the compromise immigration bill and its June 28 demise, the subject accounted for 9% of all coverage and was the top story in the media.

The jump was also not just in talk radio. Coverage of immigration in the second quarter increased dramatically in every sector of the media. It was the second-biggest radio story (9% compared to 1% in the first quarter), the third-biggest newspaper story (5% compared with 2% in the first quarter), and third-biggest cable topic (7% up from 2%).

Immigration Coverage by Media Sector Quarter 1 vs. Quarter 2



Still, talk radio ran with the story with even more intensity. And derailing the bill was a clear priority of such conservative radio hosts as Limbaugh (13.5 million listeners), Sean Hannity (12.5 million), and Michael Savage (8.25 million).⁶

Among conservative talk radio hosts, the immigration debate was the # 1 topic in the second quarter, filling 16% of the airtime. (The second-biggest topic was the campaign at 13%). That is eight times the amount of attention that conservative talkers paid to the immigration debate in the first quarter of the year, when it accounted for only 2% of the newshole.

(Those listening to liberal radio hosts such as Ed Schultz and Randi Rhodes, in contrast, were not hearing nearly that much. They spent about a quarter as much of their time on the subject, 5%, which ranked immigration as the sixth-biggest liberal talk subject.)

What listeners of the conservative talk radio media were hearing, in large part, was that the legislation itself was little more than an “amnesty bill” for illegal immigrants, a phrase loaded with political baggage. On his show, Hannity paraphrased former House Speaker Newt Gingrich by declaring that “you cannot begin your career or your life as an American by first breaking the law.” Savage was blunter, conjuring up images of the nation being overrun by illegal intruders. “We’re not giving away the sovereignty of America,” he told listeners. “This is the Alamo right now!”

The radio hosts were joined by some of their colleagues on the cable side including the Fox News Channel’s Bill O’Reilly. But no one could match the attention devoted to the issue by CNN’s Dobbs, a relentless advocate of tougher immigration enforcement and a

⁶ Audience data attributed to Talkers Magazine, 2007.

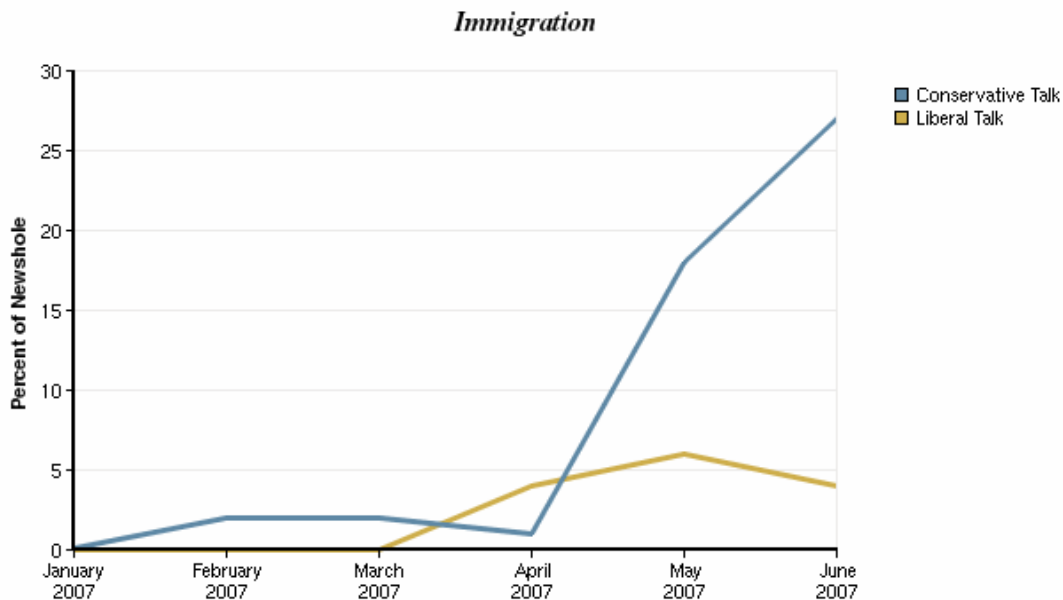
staunch opponent of the immigration bill. According to PEJ’s analysis, Dobb’s devoted a full 27% of the airtime on his nightly show to immigration during the second quarter of 2007, with much of that coverage highly critical of the measure. On June 29, the day after the bill went down to defeat, Dobb’s celebrated by reading the congratulatory emails he got from viewers.

“Thank you Lou Dobbs for leading the charge against this immigration bill,” wrote someone known as “E. from Washington.”

In all, immigration was the second-biggest story of the quarter on CNN at 9%. It was also second on the Fox News Channel at 8% and the fifth-biggest story on MSNBC at 5%. So Dobbs may have led the charge on cable, but he had plenty of company.

Immigration Coverage on Talk Radio

Conservative Talk Shows vs. Liberal Talk Shows



So, did talk radio kill the immigration bill? That is harder to prove.

What can be said is that talk radio made immigration a major issue--conservatives on radio made it their No. 1 issue. And the media generally made more of it than it had in earlier in the year.

What is unknowable from this data is whether that media attention translates into political pressure—in the form of letters, emails, blogs or phone calls, etc.—which in turn changes votes in Congress.

Paris was no Anna Nicole

It was one of those made-for-cable media moments. Early in the afternoon (EST) on June 8, a handcuffed Paris Hilton was taken from her home and unceremoniously deposited into sheriff's car #865. She was headed back to court for a date with an angry judge who was about to send her back to the jail cell she had just been prematurely released from. With TV cameras monitoring the police car's slow-motion odyssey through the LA streets, viewers could be forgiven for having an O.J. Simpson white Bronco flashback.

"The media frenzy is wild" declared CNN's entertainment reporter on the scene at the courthouse as the press hordes crowded in for a view of the socialite/party girl/jail bird.

Hilton's incarceration adventure for violating her drunk driving probation put her in the public spotlight she seems to crave. And for the week of June 3-8, her travails were the fifth biggest story of the week, consuming 4% of the overall newshole. For only the second time this year, a tabloid celebrity saga registered as a top-five story in any week—the first being the mysterious Feb. 8 death of pinup/heiress/actress Anna Nicole Smith.

When it comes to media attention, there's a tendency to lump the two camera-friendly blondes—Anna and Paris—together. Coverage of both seemed to be ubiquitous and inescapable. But a look at PEJ's data from the first half of the year suggests something very different. The Anna Nicole Smith case was a relatively long-running event that ended up the eighth-biggest story (at 2% of the newshole) in the first quarter of 2007. And, during the heart of the story (Feb. 8 – March 2), it climbed to the third-biggest story overall (8%) and the top story in cable (22%).

Paris's jailhouse blues represented a passing media moment that commanded considerably less coverage in the mainstream media.

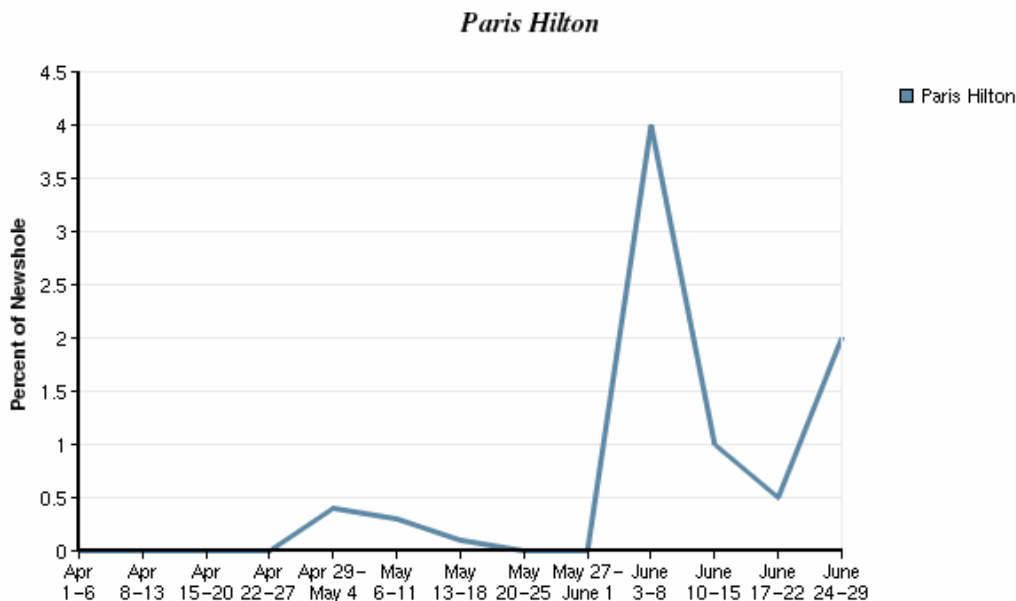
Her misadventures did not make the overall top-10 list of stories for the second quarter nor was she a top-10 story in any of the five media sectors over the three-month period. (The closest she came was #11 in the cable sector at 2%.)

Hilton made the most news in June. She was originally sent to jail in the first week of the month, was then prematurely released and sent back on June 8. After having served her debt to humanity and announced that she had found God, she emerged from lockup in the morning hours of June 26, walking to her freedom surrounded by a phalanx of reporters and photographers.

But even with her highly publicized release, Hilton was only a top-10 story during the one week of June 3-8. And in no other week in the month did she exceed 2% of the overall coverage. That's a far cry from the Anna Nicole Smith frenzy.

Paris Hilton Coverage

Apr. 1, '07 – June 29, '07



There may be a number of reasons that explain the coverage discrepancies in the two cases. The death of a celebrity—particularly under murky circumstances—is a far weightier matter than a brief incarceration, which is becoming more and more commonplace among the Hollywood crowd. The Hilton case did not entail the legal/courtroom drama that consumed much of the Smith coverage. Nor did her story feature the roster of media-friendly supporting players such as the two men, Howard K. Stern and Larry Birkhead, who both claimed to father Smith’s infant daughter Dannielyn. And let’s not forget Judge Larry Seidlin, who presided during the Smith case and generated plenty of coverage with his unorthodox behavior that included a crying jag in court.

Coverage of Anna Nicole Smith vs. Paris Hilton

By Cable News Channel

	CNN	FOX NEWS	MSNBC
Anna Nicole Smith (Dec. 31, '06 – Mar. 31, '07)	4%	10%	6%
Paris Hilton (Apr. 1, '07 – June 29, '07)	1	2	2

Yet it is also possible that the press felt some backlash against the criticism it suffered over the Nicole coverage. That is harder to know.

If Hilton’s jailing ever had the chance to expand into a meatier story, it was during that brief interval between her early release and when she was sent back by Judge Michael Sauer. That’s when the issue of a double standard in the legal system surfaced. Activists such as Al Sharpton protested what they called “celebrity injustice” and during a June 7

CBS report, correspondent Bill Whitaker reported that “a fed-up public is going ballistic” over Hilton’s early release.

At that point, it appeared possible that the Hilton saga could take on broader cultural and social implications. At one point, as Hilton was getting ready for her ride back to court, MSNBC abruptly interrupted a discussion of the retirement of Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Peter Pace with the anchor announcing: “here’s Paris Hilton now.”

But once she was ordered back to her cell, mainstream media coverage abated.

Despite the proliferation of glitzy supermarket magazines, gossip Web sites, and Hollywood-oriented tattle TV shows that traffic in the travails of the rich and famous, it is difficult for a celebrity behaving badly to make a major impact on the mainstream media’s news agenda (Britney Spears’s various indiscretions, for example, never crack the top-10 story list.). So far this year, the two tabloid sagas to emerge as major mainstream stories have been Anna Nicole Smith’s death and Paris Hilton’s jail stint. Aside from involving blondes, the two stories have something else in common—the protracted and deep involvement of the U.S. legal/ judicial system.

General Topics

When the top stories of the quarter are put into the larger category of general topics, even broader patterns emerge. The war in Iraq becomes part of a larger grouping of coverage of U.S. foreign affairs. The campaign becomes part of a broader topic of politics. Anna Nicole becomes part of a grouping that includes all celebrity and entertainment.

How do those categories break down?

What those groupings reveal is that a handful of broad topics command a lion’s share of the media’s time. U.S. Foreign policy, foreign events and politics, for instance, made up 39% of the media agenda in the second quarter. Add in crime, and you have another 10%, or four topics filling half the media newshole in the PEJ Index.

Government was the fifth biggest topic (6%). Immigration (5%), health/medicine (4%) and the media came next (4%).

What comes below that—or what gets relatively little coverage—is also worth noting.

Lifestyle, disasters, and business came next on the list (9th through 11th), making up 3% of the newshole each.

The economy was the 15th most covered topic (2% of the newshole). The environment was 16th (also 2%). Celebrity entertainment came next (again 2%), followed by domestic terrorism (18th at 2%).

That figure challenges the notion that the media is all about tabloid celebrity, at least when it comes to general interest news outlets, though the index does contain something of tilt toward more hard news media outlets.

A host of issues that might strike certain groups as major areas of public concern are further down the list. Science and technology was 19th out of 26 topics (1%). Education, a major concern for parents, was 20th (1%). Transportation was 24th (1%). The issue of development or sprawl was the least covered topic of all in the second quarter.

Interestingly, the hot-button topics of abortion, gun control, social security, and welfare each received less than 1% of the overall newshole.

Media Sector Summary
Broad Topic
(Percent of Newshole)

Topic	All	News-papers	Online	Network TV	Cable TV	Radio	Cable and Radio Talk
US Foreign Affairs	17%	15%	25%	19%	16%	11%	14%
Foreign (Non-US)	12	14	23	9	5	8	2
Elections/Politics	10	9	5	8	14	15	21
Crime	10	6	9	9	17	7	10
Government	6	6	6	5	6	7	7
Immigration	5	5	3	4	7	7	10
Health/Medicine	4	6	2	6	3	2	1
Media	4	2	1	2	6	12	13
Lifestyle	3	5	2	4	2	4	2
Disasters/Accidents	3	1	5	6	3	2	1
Business	3	7	2	2	1	1	<1
Miscellaneous**	3	2	3	4	3	2	2
Defense/Military (Domestic)	3	3	2	3	2	2	2
Additional Domestic Affairs*	2	2	2	3	2	4	3
Economics	2	3	2	3	1	2	1
Environment	2	3	1	3	1	3	1
Celebrity/Entertainment	2	1	1	2	4	1	3
Domestic Terrorism	2	2	1	1	2	3	2
Science and Technology	1	2	1	2	<1	1	<1
Education	1	2	<1	1	1	1	1
Race/Gender/Gay Issues	1	1	<1	1	2	2	2
Sports	1	2	1	1	<1	1	<1
Religion	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Transportation	1	1	<1	1	<1	2	1
Court/Legal System	<1	1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1
Development/Sprawl	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	0

*Additional Domestic Affairs consists of, but is not limited to, abortion, gun control, welfare, social security, labor, poverty, riots, protests, charity, privacy rights, and drug trafficking. Individually, each of these topics makes up less than 1% of the overall newshole.

** Miscellaneous consists of topics such as specific mishaps, parades, celebrations, obituaries, typical weather reports, and oddball news.

Note: There is a minor difference between the 2nd quarter percentage of newshole for “Immigration” as a Broad Topic (5%) and “Immigration” as a Top Story (6%). This difference is due to the fact that some news stories are about the national debate on immigration, but are focused on some element of immigration such as the impact on the economy, crime, diplomatic relations, or the political ramifications of the debate in Congress. Those types of stories are coded as “Immigration” for its Top Story, but for the appropriate Broad Topic such as politics, crime, or business.

Topline

PEJ News Coverage Index April 1 – June 29, 2007

All Media Top Stories (Percent of Newshole)

2 nd QTR Rank	Story	All Media		
		1 st QTR	2 nd QTR	YTD
1	2008 Campaign	7.4%	8.5%	8.0%
2	Events in Iraq*	6.8	6.7	6.7
3	Iraq Policy Debate*	12.4	6.6	9.5
4	Immigration	1.5	5.7	3.6
5	VA Tech Shootings	n/a	4.9	2.5
6	Don Imus	n/a	2.4	1.2
7	Iran	3.4	2.1	2.8
8	Fired Attorneys	3.6	1.9	2.8
9	Iraq Homefront*	3.0	1.5	2.3
10	Palestinian Conflict	0.1	1.4	0.8
11	Global Warming	1.4	1.2	1.3
12	TB Traveler	n/a	1.1	0.6
13	Domestic Terrorism	1.5	1.1	1.3
14	US Economic Numbers	0.9	1.0	0.9
15	Afghanistan	1.1	0.9	1.0
Iraq War Total* (sum of the three starred stories)		22.2%	14.8%	18.5%

Note: All other stories were less than 0.9% for the 2nd quarter.

Newshole is defined as the time or space available in an outlet for news content.

**All Media
Geographic Focus
(Percent of Newshole)**

Geographic Focus	All		
	1 st QTR	2 nd QTR	YTD
US National	63%	65%	64%
US Interests Abroad	27	23	25
Foreign (Non-US)	8	12	10
Local*	1	<1	1
No Specific Geographic Focus	<1	<1	<1

Note: For newspapers, we do not include a local newspaper story in our study unless that story also falls into the realm of one of the Top Stories we are tracking at the time.

**Newspapers
Top Stories
(Percent of Newshole)**

2 nd QTR Rank	Story	All		Top Tier		Second Tier		Third Tier	
		QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD
1	2008 Campaign	7.7%	7.4%	7.6%	7.3%	10.1%	10.8%	3.6%	2.7%
2	Events in Iraq*	7.1	6.8	7.2	7.0	7.6	7.4	5.7	5.0
3	Immigration	5.1	3.8	4.7	3.5	6.5	4.8	6.1	4.6
4	Iraq Policy Debate*	4.5	5.9	3.7	5.3	5.0	5.9	10.3	11.6
5	VA Tech Shootings	3.4	1.7	2.6	1.4	5.4	2.7	6.7	3.1
6	Iraq Homefront*	2.5	3.2	1.4	2.3	4.1	5.9	9.7	6.4
7	US Economic Numbers	1.7	1.4	1.4	1.4	2.9	1.6	2.2	1.5
8	Fired Attorneys	1.6	2.1	1.3	1.8	3.8	4.1	0.9	1.8
9	Palestinian Conflict	1.5	0.8	1.3	0.7	2.8	1.5	0.7	0.3
10	Global Warming	1.4	1.4	1.2	1.1	2.4	3.0	1.8	1.9
Iraq War Total (sum of the three starred stories)		14.1%	15.9%	12.3%	14.6%	16.7%	19.2%	25.7%	23.0%

Note: All other stories were less than 1.4% for all newspapers in the 2nd quarter.

Newspapers
Geographic Focus
(Percent of Newshole)

Geographic Focus	All		Top Tier		Second Tier		Third Tier	
	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD
US National	64%	64%	62%	62%	70%	65%	71%	70%
US Interests Abroad	21	22	21	22	20	22	21	20
Foreign (Non-US)	14	12	17	15	7	5	2	1
Local*	1	3	1	1	3	9	7	8
No Specific Geographic Focus	<1	<1	<1	<1	0	0	0	0

Note: For newspapers, we do not include a local newspaper story in our study unless that story also falls into the realm of one of the Top Stories we are tracking at the time.

**Online
Top Stories**
(Percent of Newshole)

2 nd Q T R R a n k	Story	All		AOL News		CNN.com		Google News		MSNBC.com		Yahoo News	
		QTR	YTD	QT R	YT D	QTR	YTD	QT R	YT D	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD
1	Events in Iraq*	13.1 %	12.7 %	9.8 %	11.2 %	13.9 %	15.1 %	10.9 %	7.5 %	11.4 %	11.2 %	19.7 %	18.9 %
2	Iraq Policy Debate*	5.3	7.2	5.7	7.6	3.8	6.3	7.4	9.1	4.6	6.2	5.1	7.0
3	2008 Campaign	4.9	4.5	5.6	4.8	5.6	4.6	4.9	5.1	5.7	5.7	2.4	2.0
4	VA Tech Shootings	3.8	1.9	3.5	1.7	6.1	3.1	1.1	0.6	4.5	2.3	3.6	1.8
5	Immigratio n	3.0	1.7	3.3	1.9	4.5	2.6	3.0	1.6	2.3	1.5	2.3	1.2
6	Iran	3.0	4.2	3.3	4.6	3.3	3.7	3.4	4.6	1.4	3.0	4.0	5.2
7	Fired Attorneys	2.8	3.3	2.9	3.3	2.9	3.4	3.7	4.2	3.4	3.6	0.8	1.8
8	Palestinian Conflict	2.7	1.6	1.3	0.8	1.8	0.9	4.0	2.8	3.0	1.6	3.4	1.9
9	Israeli/Pale stinian Conflict	2.1	1.8	1.5	1.0	1.7	1.4	1.1	2.0	2.1	1.2	3.9	3.7
10	Russia/US relations (added 6/1/07)	2.1	1.0	2.0	1.0	1.3	0.6	4.0	2.1	1.4	0.7	1.7	0.9
16	Iraq Homefront *	1.1	1.5	1.0	1.2	0.2	0.7	1.4	2.1	2.7	2.7	0	0.2
Iraq War Total (sum of the three starred stories)		19.5 %	21.4 %	16.5 %	20.0 %	17.9 %	22.1 %	19.7 %	18.7 %	18.7 %	20.1 %	24.8 %	26.1 %

Note: All other stories were less than 2.1% for all online in the 2nd quarter.

**Online
Geographic Focus**
(Percent of Newshole)

Geographic Focus	All		AOL News		CNN.com		Google News		MSNBC.com		Yahoo News	
	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD
US National	47%	47%	58%	54%	54%	53%	31%	33%	57%	58%	33%	35%
US Interests Abroad	29	31	26	30	26	27	34	32	24	27	38	39
Foreign (Non-US)	23	22	16	15	21	20	34	35	18	15	29	26
No Specific Geographic Focus	<1	<1	0	0	0	0	0	0	<1	<1	<1	<1

**Network TV
Top Stories
(Percent of Newshole)**

2 nd QTR Rank	Story	All		Morning		Evening (ABC, CBS, NBC)		ABC Total		CBS Total		NBC Total		PBS Evening	
		QT R	YT D	QT R	YT D	QT R	YT D	QT R	YT D	QT R	YT D	QT R	YT D	QT R	YT D
1	Events in Iraq*	7.1 %	7.4 %	4.5 %	4.6 %	7.1 %	8.4 %	5.4 %	6.7 %	6.7 %	6.7 %	5.6 %	6.4 %	11.4 %	10.3 %
2	2008 Campaign	6.6	6.7	11.1	11.5	3.7	4.2	6.8	7.4	5.6	6.1	9.2	9.3	4.4	3.4
3	Iraq Policy Debate*	6.4	10.7	5.3	8.9	5.1	7.7	4.3	7.4	4.6	7.3	6.6	10.0	10.7	19.2
4	VA Tech Shootings	5.4	2.7	5.5	2.8	6.3	3.2	5.7	2.9	6.2	3.1	5.8	2.9	3.7	1.8
5	Immigration	3.7	2.0	2.5	1.2	3.2	1.9	3.2	1.8	2.9	1.6	2.5	1.5	6.6	3.3
6	Iran	2.5	2.6	2.3	2.5	1.7	1.8	2.2	2.3	2.3	2.2	1.7	1.8	4.0	4.1
7	Don Imus	2.1	1.0	3.6	1.8	1.7	0.9	2.2	1.1	2.5	1.3	3.1	1.6	0.1	0.1
8	Iraq Home-front*	2.0	3.3	0.8	1.0	3.0	4.4	2.4	3.3	1.2	2.5	2.3	2.5	2.2	5.0
9	TB Traveler	1.7	0.8	2.0	1.0	1.5	0.8	2.6	1.3	1.4	0.7	1.2	0.6	1.3	0.7
10	Global Warming	1.5	1.3	0.3	0.7	1.8	1.6	1.4	1.3	1.1	1.2	0.9	1.0	2.7	1.9
Iraq War Total (sum of the three starred stories)		15.5 %	21.4 %	10.6 %	14.5 %	15.2 %	20.5 %	12.1 %	17.4 %	12.5 %	16.5 %	14.5 %	18.9 %	24.3 %	34.5 %

Note: All other stories were less than 1.5% for all Network TV in the 2nd quarter.

**Network TV
Geographic Focus
(Percent of Newshole)**

Geographic Focus	All		Morning		Evening (ABC, CBS, NBC)		ABC Total		CBS Total		NBC Total		PBS Evening	
	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD
US National	64%	65%	72%	72%	67%	68%	70%	70%	69%	71%	69%	70%	47%	45%
US Interests Abroad	26	28	20	21	25	25	22	23	23	23	22	24	39	44
Foreign (Non-US)	9	7	8	6	8	7	8	6	8	6	9	7	14	11
No Specific Geographic Focus	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	0	0	<1	<1	0	0

**Cable TV
Top Stories**
(Percent of Newshole)

2 nd QTR Rank	Story	All		Daytime		Evening		CNN		Fox News		MSNBC	
		QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD
1	2008 Campaign	12.4%	10.8%	4.6%	6.0%	14.4%	12.1%	8.7%	7.6%	9.6%	9.2%	21.3%	17.7%
2	Iraq Policy Debate*	9.2	12.4	4.6	6.9	10.4	13.8	10.1	12.2	5.0	7.6	13.3	19.4
3	Immigration	7.5	4.9	4.2	2.5	8.3	5.6	9.2	6.5	7.9	5.0	4.6	2.6
4	VA Tech Shootings	7.2	3.6	8.9	4.5	6.7	3.4	8.5	4.3	6.5	3.2	6.1	3.1
5	Don Imus	4.6	2.3	1.5	0.7	5.4	2.7	4.6	2.3	4.0	2.0	5.4	2.7
6	Events in Iraq*	3.8	4.2	2.8	3.2	4.0	4.4	6.4	6.9	2.7	2.9	1.5	2.1
7	Iran	2.7	3.5	1.6	2.5	3.0	3.7	2.5	3.4	4.2	4.1	1.0	2.6
8	Fired Attorneys	2.0	3.1	1.3	1.6	2.2	3.5	2.0	2.8	0.7	1.4	3.7	5.9
9	TB Traveler	1.9	0.9	4.6	2.3	1.2	0.6	2.6	1.3	1.2	0.6	1.7	0.9
10	Ohio Missing Pregnant Woman	1.7	0.8	2.4	1.2	1.5	0.7	1.2	0.6	2.1	1.0	1.7	0.9
19	Iraq Homefront*	0.7	1.5	0.5	1.0	0.7	1.6	1.3	2.2	0.2	0.9	0.3	1.4
Iraq War Total (sum of the three starred stories)		13.7%	18.1%	7.9%	11.1%	15.1%	19.8%	17.8%	21.3%	7.9%	11.4%	15.1%	22.9%

Note: All other stories were less than 1.7% for all Cable TV in the 2^d quarter.

Cable TV
Geographic Focus
(Percent of Newshole)

Geographic Focus	All		Daytime		Evening		CNN		Fox News		MSNBC	
	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD
US National	74%	71%	81%	78%	72%	69%	67%	64%	76%	75%	81%	74%
US Interests Abroad	21	25	13	17	24	27	27	30	19	20	17	25
Foreign (Non-US)	5	4	6	5	4	4	6	5	5	5	2	1
No Specific Geographic Focus	<1	<1	0	0	<1	<1	<1	<1	0	0	<1	<1

**Radio
Top Stories**
(Percent of Newshole)

2 nd Q T R R a n k	Story	All		Talk						News Headline s		NPR's Morning Edition	
				Overall Talk		Conservati ve Talk		Liberal Talk					
		QT R	YT D	QT R	YT D	QT R	YT D	QT R	YT D	QT R	YT D	QT R	YT D
1	2008 Campaign	10.0%	9.7%	12.9%	13.3%	13.0%	14.4%	12.7%	11.1%	2.1%	2.0%	6.7%	4.8%
2	Immigrati on	9.5	5.4	12.0	6.6	15.7	8.7	4.6	2.3	2.4	1.4	6.6	4.3
3	Iraq Policy Debate*	7.7	12.4	8.6	14.0	7.4	13.8	11.2	14.3	6.1	8.9	6.2	10.5
4	VA Tech Shootings	4.2	2.1	4.3	2.2	3.7	1.9	5.5	2.8	4.5	2.3	3.7	1.8
5	Don Imus	3.7	1.8	5.4	2.7	4.6	2.4	6.9	3.5	1.5	0.7	0.4	0.2
6	Events in Iraq*	2.9	3.1	0.7	0.9	0.7	0.5	0.7	1.7	6.1	5.8	6.7	6.9
7	Fired Attorneys	2.6	3.5	2.0	3.2	<0.1	1.5	5.9	6.6	2.3	2.8	4.2	4.6
8	Iran	2.1	2.3	2.1	2.4	1.7	2.2	2.9	2.8	2.2	2.2	1.9	2.0
9	Global Warming	2.0	2.6	1.6	2.9	2.4	4.2	0	0.2	0.7	0.8	3.7	2.9
10	Domestic Terrorism	1.6	1.6	1.3	1.3	1.2	1.3	1.3	1.4	1.4	1.5	2.3	2.2
15	Iraq Homefron t*	0.9	1.2	0.8	1.1	0.2	0.7	2.1	1.9	1.0	2.0	0.8	1.2
	Iraq War Total (sum of the three starred stories)	11.5%	16.7%	10.1%	16.0%	8.3%	15.0%	14.0%	17.9%	13.2%	16.7%	13.7%	18.6%

Note: All other stories were less than 1.6% for all Radio in the 2nd quarter.

Radio
Geographic Focus
(Percent of Newshole)

Geographic Focus	All		Talk						News Headlines		NPR's Morning Edition	
			Overall Talk		Conservative Talk		Liberal Talk					
	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD
US National	76%	74%	85%	81%	82%	81%	89%	83%	73%	75%	55%	56%
US Interests Abroad	17	20	13	17	14	17	11	17	20	19	24	28
Foreign (Non-US)	8	6	2	2	3	2	<1	1	8	6	21	16
No Specific Geographic Focus	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	0	0	<1	<1	0	0

Media Sector Summary

Top Stories

(Percent of Newshole)

2 nd QTR Rank	Story	All		Newspapers		Online		Network TV		Cable TV		Radio		Cable and Radio Talk	
		QT R	YT D	QT R	YT D	QT R	YT D	QT R	YT D	QT R	YT D	QT R	YT D	QT R	YT D
1	2008 Campaign	8.5 %	8.0 %	7.7 %	7.4 %	4.9 %	4.5 %	6.6 %	6.7 %	12.4 %	10.8 %	10.0 %	9.7 %	15.9 %	14.1 %
2	Events in Iraq*	6.7	6.7	7.1	6.8	13.1	12.7	7.1	7.4	3.8	4.2	2.9	3.1	2.0	2.1
3	Iraq Policy Debate*	6.6	9.5	4.5	5.9	5.3	7.2	6.4	10.7	9.2	12.4	7.7	12.4	10.3	15.3
4	Immigration	5.7	3.6	5.1	3.8	3.0	1.7	3.7	2.0	7.5	4.9	9.5	5.4	11.5	7.4
5	VA Tech Shootings	4.9	2.5	3.4	1.7	3.8	1.9	5.4	2.7	7.2	3.6	4.2	2.1	4.9	2.5
6	Don Imus	2.4	1.2	0.7	0.4	1.0	0.5	2.1	1.0	4.6	2.3	3.7	1.8	6.0	3.0
7	Iran	2.1	2.8	1.0	1.7	3.0	4.2	2.5	2.6	2.7	3.5	2.1	2.3	2.5	3.2
8	Fired Attorneys	1.9	2.8	1.6	2.1	2.8	3.3	1.2	2.5	2.0	3.1	2.6	3.5	2.6	4.0
9	Iraq Homefront*	1.5	2.3	2.5	3.2	1.1	1.5	2.0	3.3	0.7	1.5	0.9	1.2	0.6	1.3
10	Palestinian Conflict	1.4	0.8	1.5	0.8	2.7	1.6	1.3	0.7	0.7	0.4	1.0	0.6	0.5	0.3
11	Global Warming	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.4	0.7	1.0	1.5	1.3	0.6	0.6	2.0	2.6	1.0	1.6
12	TB Traveler	1.1	0.6	0.3	0.2	0.9	0.5	1.7	0.8	1.9	1.0	0.6	0.3	0.5	0.2
13	Domestic Terrorism	1.1	1.3	1.0	1.3	1.5	1.6	0.8	1.3	0.9	1.0	1.6	1.6	0.8	1.0
14	US Economic Numbers	1.0	0.9	1.7	1.4	1.1	1.2	0.6	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.4	0.7	0.2	0.2
15	Afghan.	0.9	1.0	1.1	1.0	1.7	1.9	1.2	1.2	0.2	0.7	0.4	0.5	0.2	0.4
	Iraq War Total (sum of the three starred stories)	14.8 %	18.5 %	14.1 %	15.9 %	19.5 %	21.4 %	15.5 %	21.4 %	13.7 %	18.1 %	11.5 %	16.7 %	12.9 %	18.7 %

Note: All other stories were below 0.9% of the overall newshole for the 2nd quarter.

Media Sector Summary

Geographic Focus

(Percent of Newshole)

Geographic Focus	All		Newspapers		Online		Network TV		Cable TV		Radio		Cable and Radio Talk	
	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD
US National	65%	64%	64%	64%	47%	47%	64%	65%	74%	71%	76%	74%	79%	75%
US Interests Abroad	23	25	21	22	29	31	26	28	21	25	17	20	18	23
Foreign (Non-US)	12	10	14	12	23	22	9	7	5	4	8	6	2	2
Local*	<1	1	1	3	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
No Specific Geographic Focus	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	0	<1	<1

Note: For newspapers, we do not include a local newspaper story in our study unless that story also falls into the realm of one of the Top Stories we are tracking at the time.

Methodology

As a special report for PEJ's weekly News Coverage Index (NCI), the Quarterly Report is based on the aggregated data collected from April 1, 2007 – June 29, 2007 (the 2nd quarter of 2007).

Examining the news agenda of 48 different outlets in five media sectors, including newspapers, online, network TV, cable TV, and radio, the NCI is designed to provide news consumers, journalists and researchers with hard data about what stories and topics the media are covering, the trajectories of major stories and differences among news platforms. Following a rotation system, 35 outlets each weekday were selected as well as 7 newspapers each Sunday.

For its News Index PEJ monitors 48 different news outlets each week (35 per week-day) from five different media sectors

Newspapers (Thirteen in all, Sun-Fri)

NY Times every day

Code 2 out of these 4 every day

Wash Post

LA Times

USA Today
Wall Street Journal

Code 2 out of these 4 every day

The Boston Globe
Star Tribune
Austin American-Statesman
Albuquerque Journal

Code 2 out of these 4 every day

The Sun Chronicle
Star Beacon
The Chattanooga Times Free Press
The Bakersfield Californian

Web sites (Five in all, Mon-Fri)

CNN.com
Yahoo News
MSNBC.com
Google News
AOL News

Network TV (Seven in all, Mon-Fri)

Morning shows

ABC – Good Morning America
CBS – Early Show
NBC - Today

Evening news

ABC – World News Tonight
CBS – CBS Evening News
NBC – NBC Nightly News
PBS – Newshour with Jim Lehrer

Cable TV (Fifteen in all, Mon-Fri)

Daytime (1–1:30 pm) – code 2 out of 3 every day

CNN
Fox News
MSNBC

Nighttime CNN – code 3 out of the 4 every day

Lou Dobbs Tonight
Situation Room (7 pm)

Paula Zahn Now
Anderson Cooper 360

Nighttime Fox News – code 3 out of the 4 every day
Special Report w/ Brit Hume
Fox Report w/ Shepard Smith
O'Reilly Factor
Hannity & Colmes

Nighttime MSNBC – code 2 out of the 4 every day
Tucker (6 pm)
Hardball (7 pm)
Countdown w/ Keith Olbermann
Scarborough Country

Radio (Eight in all, Mon-Fri)

Headlines every day
ABC Radio headlines at 9am and 5pm
CBS Radio headlines at 9am and 5pm
NPR Morning Edition every day

Talk Radio
Rush Limbaugh every day

1 out of 2 additional conservatives each day
Sean Hannity
Michael Savage

1 out of 2 liberals each day
Ed Schultz
Randi Rhodes

From that content, PEJ analyzes all stories with a national or international focus that appearing as follows:

- On the front page of newspapers
- In the entirety of commercial network evening newscasts.
- The first 30 minutes of network morning news, the PBS evening news, and all cable programs
- The top 5 stories on each website at the time of capture

The resulting universe of stories was coded by a team, which is made up of 8 trained coders, a coding administrator, and a senior research methodologist. The complete methodology for the weekly NCI has further details on the coding system and coder reliability.

This report aggregates the NCI from April 1, 2007- June 29, 2007. The resulting universe totals 18,010 news stories, 459 hours of broadcast content (148 hours from network TV, 224 hours from cable, 87 hours from radio), 2.16 million words in newspapers, and 1.10 million words from news websites.

The following is some additional methodology information that applies specifically to the quarterly report.

Intercoder Reliability Testing

In order to continue to assure that our coding is performed with a high level of reliability, we have performed multiple tests of intercoder agreement with all of our coders.

During the 2nd quarter of 2007 we have had 8 professional coders work on the Weekly News Index project. All were included in our intercoder testing.

Housekeeping Variables

We first conducted a test of the “housekeeping” variables of the index in April. For this test, we selected a random sample of 151 stories from each of the 5 media sectors we cover. Each story was coded by two different coders. This represented more than 10% of the number of stories we code in a given week.

Of those stories, 32 were print stories (newspaper and online) and 119 were broadcast stories (television and radio).

For our housekeeping variables, we achieved the following levels of agreement:

Print (32 cases)

Story Date: 100%

Source: 100%

Story word count (+- 20 words): 90%

Placement: 94%

Broadcast (119 cases)

Story Date: 100%

Source: 100%

Broadcast start time: 100%

Headline: 100%

Story start time (+- 6 seconds): 91%

Placement: 93%

Story end time (+- 6 seconds): 92%

Main Variables

Having demonstrated that we had a high level of agreement for all of our housekeeping variables, we then had the coders participate in an additional test to determine the level of agreement for the main variables of the index.

We randomly selected 116 stories from both print and broadcast mediums, which represent about 8% of the stories we code in a typical week.

The level of agreement for each of our key variables was as follows:

Format: 89%
Big Story: 91%
Sub-storyline: 87%
Geographic Focus: 91%
Topic: 85%

We will continue to conduct further tests of intercoder agreement in the coming months in order to assure continued quality in our coding processes.

Lexis-Nexis Search for Candidate Mentions

Note: The following methodology applies only to PEJ's search for candidate names and not to the majority of data included in this report and the weekly News Coverage Index reports. For a detailed methodology about how the weekly News Index data is compiled, go [here](#).

The Lexis-Nexis database search was conducted for each of the three leading candidates, from both the Republican and Democratic fields; and also for Fred Thompson and Mayor Bloomberg.

The newspapers included in this search were:

New York Times
Washington Post
Los Angeles Times
USA Today
Boston Globe
Star Tribune (MN)
Chattanooga Times Free Press
Albuquerque Journal
Austin American-Statesmen

We also searched news transcripts from the three major network television stations. The transcripts for the network television stations include a number of programs that are not included in PEJ's weekly sample. Also, Lexis has transcripts for the entire programs so

some segments that do not appear in the weekly index coding would be included in this Lexis search.

The television programs included in the search were:

ABC

World News Tonight
This Week
20/20
Good Morning America

CBS

60 Minutes
CBS Evening News
The Early Show
Face the Nation

NBC

Meet the Press
NBC Nightly News
Today

PBS

NewsHour with Jim Lehrer

For both newspapers and the television transcripts, searches were conducted using the last names of the candidates that appeared in either the headline or lead paragraphs of the story. The reason for searching for the names in the headline or lead paragraphs was to determine the number of stories that focused on the candidates. Another option would have been to search for mentions anywhere in the article or transcript which would have yielded more results, but would have also included many stories where the candidates were not central to the story.

The exceptions for using the candidate's last name were Hillary Clinton; John Edwards Fred Thompson, and Mayor Bloomberg. Because of former President Bill Clinton, a search of the name "Clinton" would yield many articles about him and not the current Senator from New York. In addition, many articles refer to the candidate as "Hillary Clinton" while others refer to her as "Hillary Rodham Clinton". Therefore, we searched for both options in order to get the proper total number of stories. In locating stories on "John Edwards" and "Fred Thompson", full names of the candidates were used due in part that Edwards and Thompson are both widely used last names in the US. For Mayor Bloomberg, "Mayor Bloomberg" was used as a search term to avoid including stories on Bloomberg industries or individuals with the same last name. Many articles refer to Michael Bloomberg as "Mayor Bloomberg."