



**THE PEW RESEARCH CENTER**  
For The People & The Press

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**  
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## Young People Track Web Protests Over Online Piracy Bills Cruise Ship Accident, Election Top Public's Interest

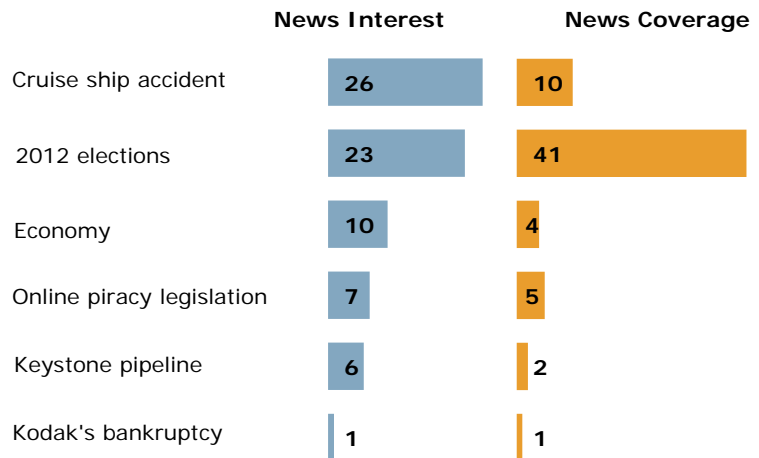
The deadly crash of a cruise ship off of the coast of Italy and the latest developments in the 2012 presidential campaign topped the public's news interests last week.

About a quarter (26%) say they followed news about the cruise ship accident more closely than any other news. A comparable percentage (23%) say they followed news about candidates for the 2012 presidential election most closely, according to the latest weekly News

Interest Index survey, conducted Jan. 19-22 among 1,002 adults by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press.

But the protest by popular websites against proposed online piracy legislation was a top story for young people. Nearly a quarter (23%) of those younger than 30 say they followed news about the online piracy fight most closely. That is about the same as the percentage following the 2012 elections most closely (21%). Among the public as a whole, just 7% say they followed news about the web protests – which included sites such as Wikipedia going dark for the day – more closely than any other story.

### News Interest vs. News Coverage



News interest shows the percentage of people who say they followed this story most closely, Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, Jan. 19-22, 2012. News coverage shows the percentage of news coverage devoted to each story, Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism, Jan. 16-22, 2012.

News about the election and the battle for the Republican nomination received much more media attention than any other story. Election news accounted for 41% of coverage, far more than the crash of the Costa Concordia cruise ship. The accident made up 10% of coverage, according to an analysis by the Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism (PEJ).

### Young People Followed Websites' Protests of Anti-Piracy Bill

	Total	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+
<i>Story followed most closely...</i>	%	%	%	%	%
Cruise ship accident	26	16	31	28	27
2012 elections	23	21	20	24	28
U.S. economy	10	10	10	11	9
<b>Websites protesting online piracy legislation</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
Keystone pipeline decision	6	5	5	10	7
Eastman Kodak bankruptcy	1	2	1	2	1
Other	8	5	8	10	9
Don't know	<u>18</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>19</u>
	100	100	100	100	100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Jan. 19-22, 2012. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

The protests by popular websites and the debate in Congress over anti-piracy legislation accounted for 5% of the newshole, about the same amount of coverage given to economic news last week (4%).

### The Week's News

While Americans are about equally likely to say the 2012 elections or the cruise ship disaster was their top story last week, comparable numbers also say they followed each story very closely. Three-in-ten (30%) say this about the cruise accident and 28% say this about news about the presidential candidates. Partisans are about equally likely to say they followed election news very closely. Overall interest in election news is about the same as it has been since the start of the year.

Overall, 16% say they tracked news about the website protests very closely. About a quarter of those 18 to 29 (23%) followed this news very closely; 51% say they followed this news at least fairly closely. Among those 65 and older, just 28% say they followed this news very or fairly closely. Democrats (20%) and independents (19%) are more likely than Republicans (11%) to say they followed the online protests very closely.

One-in-ten (10%) say they followed news about the nation's economy most closely last week. About a third (35%) say they followed this news very closely, a level of interest that has fluctuated little in recent weeks. Economic news made up 4% of coverage, separating

out about 1% of coverage devoted to the bankruptcy filing of the Eastman Kodak company.

Fewer than one-in-ten (6%) say their top story was the Obama administration's decision to reject current plans for the Keystone XL oil pipeline that was to run from Canada to Texas; 22% say they followed this news very closely. News about the administration's decision made up 2% of coverage.

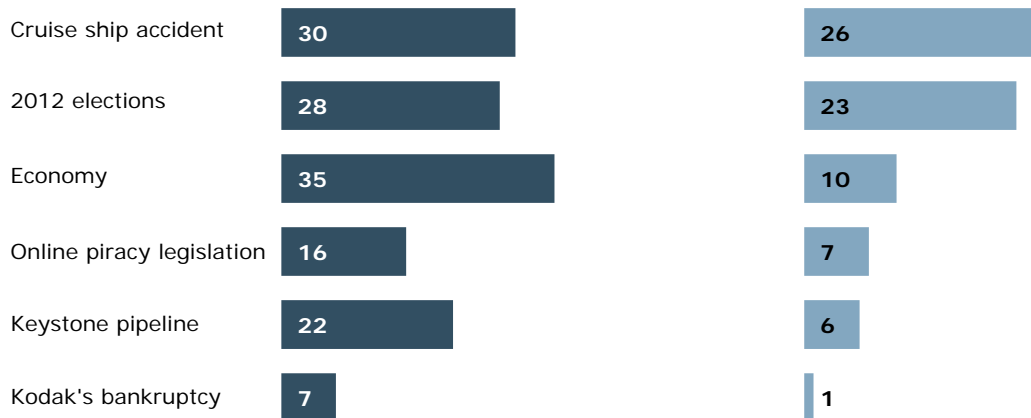
Just 1% say their top story was the bankruptcy filing last week by Kodak, the once-dominant photo film maker; 7% say they followed this news very closely. About a third of those 65 and older (32%) say they followed this news at least fairly closely, compared with 13% of those under 30. News about the bankruptcy filing accounted for 1% of coverage.

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## News Interest

*% following each story very closely*

*Which one story did you follow most closely?*



PEW RESEARCH CENTER Jan. 19-22, 2012.

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These findings are based on the most recent installment of the weekly News Interest Index, an ongoing project of the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press. The index, building on the Center's longstanding research into public attentiveness to major news stories, examines news interest as it relates to the news media's coverage. The weekly survey is conducted in conjunction with The Project for Excellence in Journalism's News Coverage Index, which monitors the news reported by major newspaper, television, radio and online news outlets on an ongoing basis. In the most recent week, data relating to news coverage were collected Jan. 16-22, and survey data

measuring public interest in the top news stories of the week were collected Jan. 19-22 from a nationally representative sample of 1,002 adults.

## About the News Interest Index

The *News Interest Index* is a weekly survey conducted by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press aimed at gauging the public's interest in and reaction to major news events. This project has been undertaken in conjunction with the Project for Excellence in Journalism's *News Coverage Index*, an ongoing content analysis of the news. The News Coverage Index catalogues the news from top news organizations across five major sectors of the media: newspapers, network television, cable television, radio and the internet. Each week (from Monday through Sunday) PEJ compiles this data to identify the top stories for the week. (For more information about the Project for Excellence in Journalism's News Coverage Index, go to [www.journalism.org](http://www.journalism.org).) The News Interest Index survey collects data from Thursday through Sunday to gauge public interest in the most covered stories of the week.

Results for this survey are based on telephone interviews conducted January 19-22, 2012 among a national sample of 1,002 adults 18 years of age or older living in the continental United States (601 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 401 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 211 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.

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 is also 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 within the landline sample. 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	1,002	4.0 percentage points
18-29	162	9.5 percentage points
30-49	254	7.5 percentage points
50-64	292	7.0 percentage points
65+	264	7.5 percentage points
Republicans	245	8.0 percentage points
Democrats	329	6.5 percentage points
Independents	351	6.5 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.  
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**PEW RESEARCH CENTER NEWS INTEREST INDEX**  
**JANUARY 19-22, 2012**  
**FINAL TOPLINE**  
**N=1,002**

**ASK ALL:**

PEW.1 As I read a list of some stories covered by news organizations this past week, please tell me if you happened to follow each news story very closely, fairly closely, not too closely, or not at all closely. First, **[INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE;] [IF NECESSARY "Did you follow [ITEM] very closely, fairly closely, not too closely or not at all closely?"]**

	<u>Very closely</u>	<u>Fairly closely</u>	<u>Not too closely</u>	<u>Not at all closely</u>	<b>(VOL.) DK/Ref</b>
a. Reports about the condition of the U.S. economy					
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

## PEW.1 CONTINUED...

	Very <u>closely</u>	Fairly <u>closely</u>	Not too <u>closely</u>	Not at all <u>closely</u>	(VOL.) DK/Ref
January 6-9, 2011	39	37	11	12	1
<b><u>SEE TRENDS FOR PREVIOUS YEARS:</u></b> <a href="http://www.people-press.org/files/2011/11/NII-Economy-Trends.pdf">http://www.people-press.org/files/2011/11/NII-Economy-Trends.pdf</a>					
b. A cruise ship accident off the coast of Italy January 19-22, 2012	30	36	16	18	1
<b>TRENDS FOR COMPARISON:</b>					
November 11-14, 2010: <i>A cruise ship stranded off the coast of Mexico without power for several days</i>	15	30	26	28	1
January 16-19, 2009: <i>News about a US Airways flight crashing into the Hudson River</i>	44	34	14	8	*
c. The Obama administration's decision to reject current plans for the proposed Keystone oil pipeline January 19-22, 2012	22	21	20	35	1
<b>TRENDS FOR COMPARISON:</b>					
October 17-20, 2010: <i>The end of a five month ban on deep-water oil and gas exploration</i>	19	21	25	33	1
April 1-5, 2010: <i>President Obama's proposal to allow offshore oil and gas drilling</i>	20	24	21	33	1
d. Popular websites protesting legislation aimed at online piracy January 19-22, 2012	16	22	19	43	1
e. The Eastman Kodak company declaring bankruptcy January 19-22, 2012	7	16	22	54	1
f. News about candidates for the 2012 presidential elections					
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

## PEW.1 CONTINUED...

	<u>Very closely</u>	<u>Fairly closely</u>	<u>Not too closely</u>	<u>Not at all closely</u>	<b>(VOL.) DK/Ref</b>
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>

**ASK ALL:**

PEW.2 Which ONE of the stories I just mentioned have you followed most closely, or is there another story you've been following MORE closely? **[DO NOT READ LIST. ACCEPT ONLY ONE RESPONSE.]**

Jan 19-22

2012

26	A cruise ship accident off the coast of Italy
23	News about candidates for the 2012 presidential elections
10	Reports about the condition of the U.S. economy
7	Popular websites protesting legislation aimed at online piracy
	The Obama administration's decision to reject current plans for the proposed
6	Keystone oil pipeline
1	The Eastman Kodak company declaring bankruptcy
8	Some other story <b>(VOL.)</b>
18	Don't know/Refused <b>(VOL.)</b>