



THE PEW RESEARCH CENTER
For The People & The Press

NEWS Release

1615 L Street, N.W., Suite 700
Washington, D.C. 20036
Tel (202) 419-4350
Fax (202) 419-4399

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
Tuesday, April 17, 2012

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:
Andrew Kohut, Director
Michael Remez, Senior Writer

Racial Differences in Interest Remain Wide Murder Charge in Trayvon Martin's Death Top Story

The Trayvon Martin killing continued to top the public's news interest last week as prosecutors in Florida filed a second-degree murder charge against George Zimmerman, the neighborhood watch volunteer who shot the African American 17-year-old.

About a third of the public (32%) says they followed news about the charges against Zimmerman more closely than any other news last week, according to the

latest weekly News Interest Index survey, conducted April 12-15, 2012, among 1,002 adults by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press. The controversy over the shooting has been the most closely followed story for four straight weeks.

With the presidential contest shifting toward the fight between Mitt Romney and Barack Obama, news about the 2012 campaign topped coverage last week, making up 22% of the newshole. Still, as prosecutors launched the legal case against Zimmerman, coverage of

News Interest vs. News Coverage

	News Interest	News Coverage
Zimmerman charged*	32	17
2012 elections	19	22
Economy	16	6
N. Korean rocket failure	7	5
Syria	3	4
Justice Dept. sues Apple	1	3

News interest shows the percentage of people who say they followed this story most closely, Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, April 12-15, 2012. News coverage shows the percentage of news coverage devoted to each story, Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism, April 9-15, 2012.

* PEJ coverage number is for all stories related to Trayvon Martin's death, including the arrest of George Zimmerman.

developments in the Trayvon Martin case was up sharply from one week earlier. Last week, the Trayvon Martin story accounted for 17% of coverage, up from 7% one week earlier, according to the Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism (PEJ).

Though the deadly encounter between Martin and Zimmerman occurred on Feb. 26, the controversy did not become a major national story for several more weeks. As has been case since mid-March, African Americans are paying much closer attention to this story than whites are. Almost seven-in-ten non-Hispanic blacks (69%) say this was their top story, while 63% say they

followed this news *very* closely. About a quarter (27%) of non-Hispanic whites say this was their top story, while 30% say they followed the Zimmerman news very closely.

For whites, about as many followed the Zimmerman story most closely (27%) as followed news about the 2012 campaign that closely (22%). The murder charge against Zimmerman was clearly the top story for Democrats and independents. Among Republicans, about as many say their top story was the elections (30%) as say it was the developments in Florida (23%).

Overall, 19% of the public says the 2012 campaign was their top story, as Rick Santorum dropped out of the GOP race and partisans fought over a Democratic consultant's comments about Ann Romney. Republicans (30%) are twice as likely as Democrats or independents (15%) to say campaign news was the story they followed most closely. About a third of the public (32%) followed election stories *very* closely, including 43% of Republicans, 36% of Democrats and 23% of independents.

The economy was the top story for 16% of the public, and 39% followed news on this topic very closely. The economy made up 6% of the newshole.

Continuing Racial, Partisan Differences In Attentiveness to Martin Case

<i>News story followed most closely...</i>	Total	White	Black	Rep	Dem	Ind
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Zimmerman charged	32	27	69	23	41	31
2012 election	19	22	7	30	15	15
Economy	16	17	12	18	11	19
North Korean rocket	7	8	5	4	9	7
Syria	3	3	0	2	3	4
Justice Dept. sues Apple	1	2	1	1	1	2
Other/Don't know	<u>22</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>24</u>
	100	100	100	100	100	100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Apr. 12-15, 2012. Whites and blacks are non-Hispanic. There are too few Hispanic respondents to reliably report their answers. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

Other topics were of less interest to the public. Just 22% very closely followed news about North Korea's failed attempt to launch a rocket carrying a satellite; this was the top story for 7% of the public and comprised 5% of coverage.

International efforts to stop political violence in Syria, which led to a tense cease-fire between government troops and rebels, was followed very closely by 14% and was the top story for 3% of Americans. This story made up 4% of the newshole.

Few people closely followed news about the U.S. Justice Department suing Apple and several book publishers for allegedly fixing the price of electronic books. Just 7% of the public followed this story very closely. It was the top story for 1%. According to PEJ, the lawsuit accounted for 3% of coverage.

News Interest

% following each story very closely

Which one story did you follow most closely?



PEW RESEARCH CENTER Apr. 12-15, 2012.

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 April 9-15, and survey data

measuring public interest in the top news stories of the week were collected April 12-15, 2012, 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.) 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 April 12-15, 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 198 who had no landline telephone). The survey was conducted 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	3.6 percentage points
Non-Hispanic whites	708	4.3 percentage points
Non-Hispanic blacks	122	10.3 percentage points
Republicans	247	7.3 percentage points
Democrats	347	6.1 percentage points
Independents	310	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.

© Pew Research Center, 2012

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER
APRIL 12-15, 2012 NEWS INTEREST INDEX
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>	(VOL.) DK/Ref
a. Reports about the condition of the U.S. economy					
April 12-15, 2012	39	28	16	17	1
April 5-8, 2012	37	31	16	16	1
March 29-April 1, 2012	34	33	15	18	1
March 22-25, 2012	36	29	16	18	1
March 15-18, 2012	40	35	11	14	1
March 8-11, 2012	37	32	14	17	*
March 1-4, 2012	41	27	15	17	1
February 23-26, 2012	37	33	14	15	1
February 16-20, 2012	33	32	16	17	1
February 9-12, 2012	42	30	14	13	1
February 2-5, 2012	38	32	16	13	1
January 26-29, 2012	35	31	16	19	*
January 19-22, 2012	35	30	16	19	1
January 12-15, 2012	33	32	14	20	1
January 5-8, 2012	39	31	15	15	*
December 15-18, 2011	36	32	14	16	1
December 8-11, 2011	41	29	13	16	1
December 1-4, 2011	40	33	13	13	1
November 17-20, 2011	35	33	16	15	1
November 10-13, 2011	39	31	15	14	*
November 3-6, 2011	37	31	15	17	1
October 27-30, 2011	38	33	14	15	1
October 20-23, 2011	38	32	14	16	1
October 13-16, 2011	39	32	14	14	*
October 6-9, 2011	43	28	14	14	1
September 29-October 2, 2011	46	26	14	14	*
September 22-25, 2011	44	33	11	11	*
September 8-11, 2011	40	30	15	14	1
September 1-4, 2011	44	30	11	15	*
August 25-28, 2011	44	28	14	13	1
August 18-21, 2011	44	29	12	14	1
August 4-7, 2011	46	30	11	13	1
July 28-31, 2011	43	30	13	13	*
July 21-24, 2011	41	32	13	13	1
July 14-17, 2011	41	30	14	14	1
July 7-10, 2011	36	30	15	18	1
June 30-July 3, 2011	38	32	13	16	1
June 23-26, 2011	37	29	15	19	*
June 16-19, 2011	39	33	14	13	*
June 9-12, 2011	39	30	15	16	1
June 2-5, 2011	35	34	17	14	*
May 19-22, 2011	33	34	17	16	*
May 12-15, 2011	32	32	17	18	2
May 5-8, 2011	40	35	15	9	1
April 21-25, 2011	41	33	12	14	*
April 14-17, 2011	44	30	14	12	1
April 7-10, 2011	46	30	14	10	*

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
March 31-April 3, 2011	42	31	16	11	0
March 24-27, 2011	36	32	17	15	*
March 17-20, 2011	38	32	17	13	*
March 10-13, 2011	40	30	16	13	*
March 3-6, 2011	37	31	17	13	1
February 24-27, 2011	49	29	11	10	*
February 17-20, 2011	35	33	14	17	*
February 10-13, 2011	36	34	13	16	*
February 3-6, 2011	35	37	14	14	*
January 20-23, 2011	37	33	14	15	1
January 13-16, 2011	37	29	15	18	1
January 6-9, 2011	39	37	11	12	1

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

b. International efforts to stop political violence
in Syria

April 12-15, 2012	14	23	25	37	1
April 5-8, 2012	15	21	27	37	1

TRENDS FOR COMPARISON:

March 15-28, 2012: <i>Political violence in Syria</i>	16	26	27	30	1
March 8-11, 2012	17	23	23	37	1
February 23-26, 2012	18	24	21	35	1
February 9-12, 2012	17	23	23	36	*
January 12-15, 2012	12	17	26	45	1
August 4-7, 2011: <i>Political violence following uprisings in Syria</i>	10	19	26	44	1
May 5-8, 2011	14	27	30	28	1
June 2-5, 2011: <i>Anti-government protests and violence in some Middle Eastern countries</i>	18	25	25	32	*
April 28-May 1, 2011	18	29	25	27	1
February 3-6, 2011: <i>Anti-government protests in Egypt and other Middle Eastern countries</i>	32	35	16	18	*
January 27-30, 2011	17	26	21	35	*

c. North Korea's failed launch of a rocket
carrying a satellite¹

April 12-15, 2012	22	27	21	29	1
-------------------	----	----	----	----	---

TRENDS FOR COMPARISON:

March 1-4, 2012: <i>North Korea taking steps to halt its nuclear program</i>	17	22	24	36	1
January 5-8, 2012: <i>The situation in North Korea following the death of its leader Kim Jong-il</i>	17	29	24	30	*
December 2-5, 2010: <i>Tensions between North Korea and South Korea</i>	35	30	19	16	1
May 27-30, 2010	19	24	24	32	1
June 19-22, 2009: <i>New military threats from North Korea</i>	27	31	21	21	*
May 29-June 1, 2009: <i>Reports about North Korea testing nuclear weapons and missiles</i>	34	36	17	13	*
April 3-6, 2009: <i>North Korea's plans to test a long range missile</i>	23	31	19	27	*

¹ Wording for Thursday, April 12, 2012, was: "North Korea's controversial plan to launch a rocket carrying a satellite" for PEW1.c and PEW2.

PEW.1 CONTINUED...

	<u>Very closely</u>	<u>Fairly closely</u>	<u>Not too closely</u>	<u>Not at all closely</u>	(VOL.) <u>DK/Ref</u>
June 27-30, 2008: <i>North Korea takes steps to halt its nuclear weapons program</i>	19	30	26	24	1
February 16-19, 2007: <i>Recent negotiations to shut down North Korea's nuclear weapons program</i>	15	31	22	31	1
Late October, 2006: <i>North Korea's announcement that it recently tested a nuclear weapon</i>	45	33	13	8	1
February, 2005: <i>North Korea's nuclear weapons program</i>	22	34	22	22	*
September, 2003	19	32	27	21	1
May, 2003	27	40	22	11	*
March, 2003	34	34	19	12	1
February, 2003	33	34	18	13	2
January, 2003	33	34	18	14	1
Late October, 2002: <i>North Korea's admission that it has been secretly developing nuclear weapons</i>	25	31	23	20	1
June, 1994: <i>Reports about North Korea's building of nuclear weapons and refusal to allow U.N. inspections</i>	27	33	26	14	*
d. The U.S. Justice Department suing Apple and five book publishers for alleged price fixing of e-books					
April 12-15, 2012	7	13	23	55	1
TRENDS FOR COMPARISON:					
September 1-4, 2011: <i>The Justice Department moving to block the merger of AT&T and T-Mobile</i>	8	16	24	50	1
June 2000: <i>A federal judge's ruling that the computer company Microsoft should be broken into two separate businesses because it engaged in unfair business practices</i>	28	37	17	17	1
May 2000: <i>The government's recommendation that the computer software company Microsoft should be broken up into two separate companies because it engaged in unfair business practices</i>	16	33	26	25	*
April 2000: <i>The court ruling that the computer software company Microsoft was guilty of unfair business practices</i>	13	33	24	29	1
December 1999: <i>The antitrust trial against the computer software company Microsoft</i>	11	31	29	28	1
November 1998	12	20	31	36	1
March 1998: <i>Bill Gates' testimony before Congress and the debate over the growing power of Microsoft</i>	8	19	31	41	1
e. George Zimmerman being charged with second-degree murder in the death of Trayvon Martin					
April 12-15, 2012	35	31	16	17	1
April 5-8, 2012: <i>Controversy over the shooting death of Trayvon Martin, an African American teen in Florida</i>	34	30	18	18	*
March 29-April 1, 2012	30	35	15	20	*

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
March 22-25, 2012	35	24	15	26	1
TRENDS FOR COMPARISON:					
July 31-August 3, 2009: <i>Reports about the arrest of Harvard professor Henry Louis Gates and President Obama's response to the incident</i>	25	26	22	25	2
July 24-27, 2009: <i>The arrest of Henry Louis Gates, a black Harvard professor, at his home after a dispute with a police officer</i>	30	31	17	21	1
April 25-28, 2008: <i>The acquittal of three New York City police officers in the shooting of an unarmed man on his wedding day</i>	13	24	24	38	1
September 21-24, 2007: <i>Demonstrations in Jena, Louisiana, about six black teenagers involved in a schoolyard fight</i>	18	27	25	30	*
April 2001: <i>Rioting in Cincinnati after an unarmed black man was shot by police</i>	24	32	23	20	1
July 2000: <i>The video showing Philadelphia police kicking and beating a carjacking suspect</i>	22	32	22	23	1
March 2000: <i>The acquittal of four New York policemen who shot and killed Amadou Diallo, an African immigrant</i>	28	35	20	17	0
February 1999: <i>The Texas murder trial of a man accused of dragging a black man behind a pickup truck</i>	24	41	20	14	1
May 1993: <i>The Rodney King trial and verdict in Los Angeles</i>	47	34	13	6	*
May 1992: <i>The verdict in the Rodney King case and the riots and disturbances that followed</i>	70	22	5	2	1
March 1991: <i>The videotaped beating by Los Angeles police of a suspect they apprehended in an auto chase</i>	46	30	13	10	1
f. News about candidates for the 2012 presidential elections					
April 12-15, 2012	32	28	16	23	1
April 5-8, 2012	31	27	18	23	*
March 29-April 1, 2012	23	29	21	27	*
March 22-25, 2012	28	28	18	25	1
March 15-18, 2012	28	31	17	24	*
March 8-11, 2012	28	27	21	23	*
March 1-4, 2012	31	24	20	24	1
February 23-26, 2012	28	29	18	24	1
February 16-20, 2012	25	29	19	25	2
February 9-12, 2012	35	25	18	20	1
February 2-5, 2012	30	27	20	21	1
January 26-29, 2012	28	30	21	21	1
January 19-22, 2012	28	30	17	24	*
January 12-15, 2012	29	29	18	23	1
January 5-8, 2012	29	30	16	25	*
December 15-18, 2011	26	24	20	29	1
December 8-11, 2011	27	27	18	28	*
December 1-4, 2011	25	28	20	26	1
November 17-20, 2011	24	31	21	23	1
November 3-6, 2011	22	31	20	26	1

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
October 27-30, 2011	21	26	21	30	1
October 20-23, 2011	21	28	22	28	1
October 13-16, 2011	26	29	22	23	1
October 6-9, 2011	25	25	23	27	1
September 29-October 2, 2011	27	26	21	25	*
September 22-25, 2011	25	26	23	25	1
September 15-18, 2011	24	28	21	27	1
September 8-11, 2011	22	26	21	31	*
September 1-4, 2011	22	23	22	32	1
August 25-28, 2011	22	22	22	33	1
August 18-21, 2011	27	26	19	28	1
August 11-14, 2011	19	24	20	36	1
August 4-7, 2011	18	21	22	37	1
July 28-31, 2011	17	27	21	35	1
July 21-24, 2011	17	22	28	32	*
July 14-17, 2011	18	26	27	28	1
July 7-10, 2011	16	23	27	33	1
June 30-July 3, 2011	21	28	24	25	2
June 23-26, 2011	19	26	24	31	*
June 16-19, 2011	23	29	23	25	*
June 9-12, 2011	18	30	22	30	1
June 2-5, 2011	21	31	22	26	*
May 26-29, 2011	20	27	24	28	*
May 19-22, 2011	15	27	24	32	1
May 12-15, 2011	15	22	26	35	1
May 5-8, 2011	16	24	27	32	1
April 21-25, 2011	18	26	23	32	1
April 14-17, 2011	20	23	29	27	1
March 24-27, 2011	13	19	26	41	1
March 10-13, 2011	15	21	26	38	0
February 10-13, 2011	16	19	24	40	*
February 3-6, 2011	15	20	23	42	*

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

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.]**

Apr 12-15

2012

32	George Zimmerman being charged with second-degree murder in the death of Trayvon Martin
19	News about candidates for the 2012 presidential elections
16	Reports about the condition of the U.S. economy
7	North Korea's failed launch of a rocket carrying a satellite
3	International efforts to stop political violence in Syria
1	The U.S. Justice Department suing Apple and five book publishers for alleged price fixing of e-books
8	Some other story (VOL.)
14	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

**PEW.3, PEW.7-PEW.10 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE
NO PEW.4-PEW.6**