



THE PEW RESEARCH CENTER
For The People & The Press

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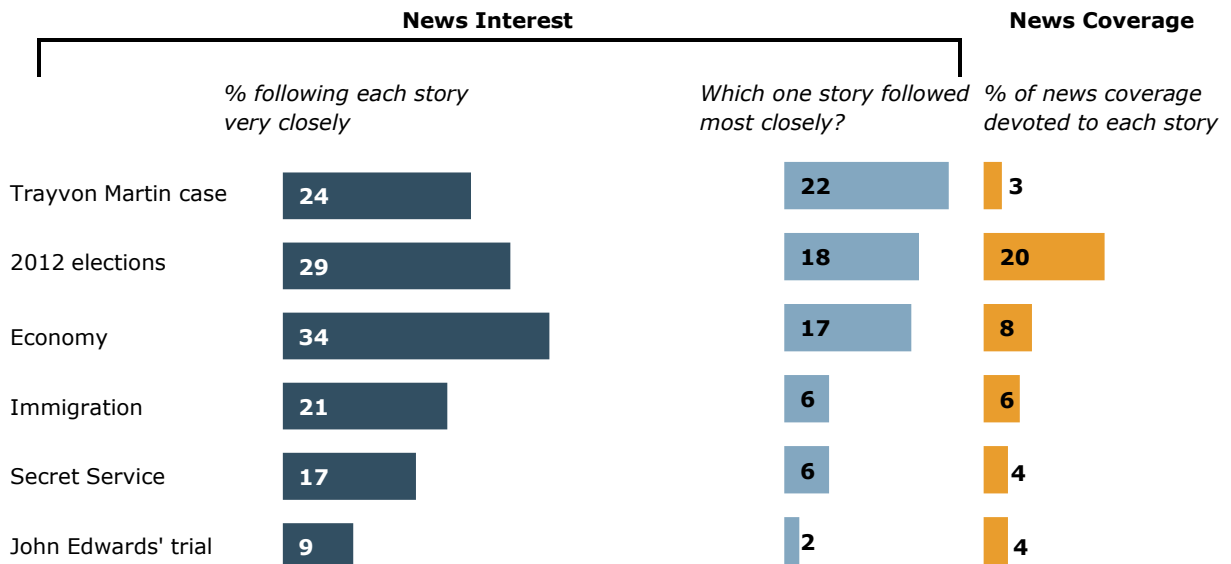
Election Dominates News Coverage

Public's Top Stories: Martin Case, Election, Economy

Developments in the Trayvon Martin murder case and news about the candidates for president topped the public's news interest last week, with about as many saying they followed news about the economy most closely.

Roughly two-in-ten (22%) say their top story was developments in the legal case against George Zimmerman, the community watch volunteer charged with second degree murder in the death of the Florida teenager. About as many (18%) say they followed

This Week's News Interest and News Coverage



News interest shows the percentage of people who say they followed each story very closely and which one story they followed most closely, Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, April 26-29, 2012. News coverage show the percentage of news coverage devoted to each story, Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism, April 23-29, 2012.

election news most closely. Another 17% say their top story was news about the condition of the economy, according to the latest weekly News Interest Index survey, conducted April 26-29 among 1,000 adults by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press.

Looking at a separate measure, the percentage of Americans that say they *very* closely followed news about the economy (34%) or the elections (29%) has changed little in recent weeks. On the other hand, the percentage that says they followed news about the Trayvon Martin case very closely has slipped from 35% in mid-April to 27% two weeks ago to 24% in the latest survey.

The Trayvon Martin story also has received less coverage recently. Last week, developments in the case accounted for 3% of the newshole, according to a separate analysis by the Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism (PEJ). Coverage was greater at the start of the week as Zimmerman was released from jail after posting bail, but fell off as the week unfolded. Two weeks ago, the case accounted for 7% of coverage. One week before that, the week charges were brought against Zimmerman, the Martin shooting accounted for 17% of coverage.

The presidential election topped coverage last week, making up 20% of the newshole, according to PEJ. News about the economy accounted for 8%.

Other stories attracted less public attention. Fewer than one-in-ten (6% each) say their top story was the issue of immigration or developments in the scandal involving Secret Service agents allegedly hiring prostitutes while on assignment in Colombia. Just 2% say their top story was the trial for former Sen. John Edwards on charges of conspiring to illegally send campaign donations to his mistress.

About two-in-ten (21%) say they very closely followed developments in the immigration debate, which last week included a Supreme Court hearing on Arizona's immigration law, and 17% very closely followed developments in the Secret Service scandal. Just 9% say they very closely followed news about Edwards' trial.

The immigration debate accounted for 6% of coverage, while developments in the Secret Service scandal accounted for 4%. Edwards' trial accounted for 4% of the newshole.

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 23-29, and survey data measuring public interest in the top news stories of the week were collected April 26-29, 2012, from a nationally representative sample of 1,000 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 26-29, 2012, among a national sample of 1,000 adults 18 years of age or older living in the continental United States (600 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 400 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 195 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	1,000	3.6 percentage points

Sample sizes and sampling errors for 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
APRIL 26-29, 2012 NEWS INTEREST INDEX
FINAL TOPLINE
N=1,000**

PEW.1, PEJ.1 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE

ASK ALL:

PEW.2 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 26-29, 2012	34	32	17	16	1
April 19-22, 2012	35	35	13	14	2
April 12-15, 2012	39	28	16	17	1
April 5-8, 2012	37	31	16	16	1
March 29-April 1, 2012	34	33	15	18	1
March 22-25, 2012	36	29	16	18	1
March 15-18, 2012	40	35	11	14	1
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

PEW.2 CONTINUED...

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

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

b. The issue of immigration

April 26-29, 2012	21	24	26	27	1
May 12-15, 2011	18	22	27	32	1
September 2-6, 2010	30	31	19	20	1
August 12-15, 2010	27	31	19	21	1

TRENDS FOR COMPARISON:

July 29-August 1, 2010: <i>A court ruling that stops most of Arizona's immigration law from going into effect</i>	40	32	17	10	1
July 8-11, 2010: <i>The U.S. Justice Department challenging the legality of Arizona's recent immigration law</i>	30	27	19	23	1
July 1-5, 2010: <i>The issue of immigration</i>	34	30	20	14	1
May 7-10, 2010: <i>A new Arizona law that gives police more authority to question people they suspect might be illegal immigrants</i>	38	27	13	21	1
April 30-May 3, 2010	36	31	13	20	*
October 12-15, 2007: <i>The issue of immigration</i>	23	29	19	29	*
June 29-July 2, 2007: <i>The debate in Congress over new immigration policy</i>	26	30	21	23	*
June 22-25, 2007	24	28	22	26	*
June 15-18, 2007	22	32	21	25	*
June 8-11, 2007	24	29	20	26	1
May 24-27, 2007	27	31	22	19	1
April 12-16, 2007: <i>The issue of immigration</i>	21	29	24	26	*
August, 2006	34	40	16	9	1
June, 2006	36	41	15	7	1
May, 2006	44	33	13	9	1
April, 2006	39	34	16	10	1
December, 1994: <i>Passage of Proposition 187, the California law that bars education, health and welfare benefits from illegal immigrants and their children</i>	26	32	22	20	*

c. Secret Service agents allegedly hiring prostitutes while on assignment in Colombia

April 26-29, 2012	17	24	25	33	1
April 19-22, 2012	23	28	23	24	1

PEW.2 CONTINUED...

	<u>Very closely</u>	<u>Fairly closely</u>	<u>Not too closely</u>	<u>Not at all closely</u>	(VOL.) DK/Ref
d. Developments in the case against George Zimmerman in the shooting death of Trayvon Martin					
April 26-29, 2012	24	28	22	25	1
April 20-22, 2012	27	29	21	21	1
April 12-15, 2012: <i>George Zimmerman being charged with second-degree murder in the death of Trayvon Martin</i>	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	*
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
e. The trial of John Edwards on charges of conspiring to send illegal campaign donations to his mistress					
April 26-29, 2012	9	14	27	49	1
TREND FOR COMPARISON:					
August 15-18, 2008: <i>John Edwards' admission that he had an affair</i>	13	26	30	30	1

PEW.2 CONTINUED...

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

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

ASK ALL:

PEW.3 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 26-29

2012

- | | |
|----|---|
| 22 | Developments in the case against George Zimmerman in the shooting death of Trayvon Martin |
| 18 | News about candidates for the 2012 presidential elections |
| 17 | Reports about the condition of the U.S. economy |
| 6 | The issue of immigration |
| 6 | Secret Service agents allegedly hiring prostitutes while on assignment in Colombia |
| 2 | The trial of John Edwards on charges of conspiring to send illegal campaign donations to his mistress |
| 8 | Some other story (VOL.) |
| 21 | Don't know/Refused (VOL.) |