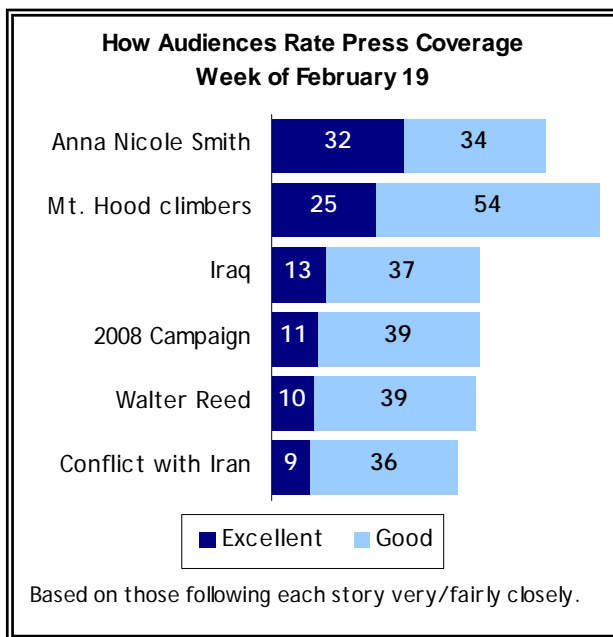


FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:
Andrew Kohut, Director
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Anna Nicole Audience Praises Press Coverage

Anna Nicole Smith's death and the bizarre aftermath continue to fascinate a significant segment of the American public and the mainstream media. During the second full week of coverage of the story, interest remained steady and coverage actually increased – as portions of the legal proceedings concerning her body were carried live by the major cable networks. The public has voiced concern that the story was being over-covered (61% said Smith's death received too much coverage). Nonetheless, the more than one-third of the public who are now following the story closely give the news media high marks for its coverage. This is consistent with other major tabloid stories of the past, where the core audiences for those stories have generally approved of the press coverage.



In fact, the press gets higher ratings for its coverage from the Smith audience than it does from the audiences of any of the top hard news stories of the week. Among the 35% of Americans who followed the Smith story closely, fully two-thirds rate the press coverage as excellent (32%) or good (34%). Only 13% say the press has done a poor job in covering the story. Another human interest story receives high ratings from its primary audience as well. Those who closely followed the rescue of three climbers stranded on Oregon's Mt. Hood also approve of the media's coverage of that story. Fully 25% say the media did an excellent job and another 54% say they did a good job.

The press receives lower ratings for its coverage of Iraq from those who were following that story closely – 13% rate the coverage excellent, 37% say it's been good. Reports about sub-

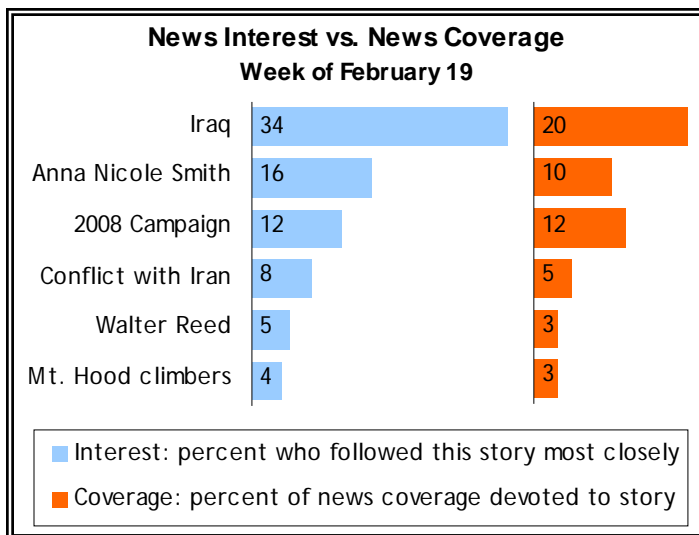
par conditions at Walter Reed Army Medical Center receive similar ratings from those following the story closely – 10% excellent, 39% good. The public also gives the press higher grades for its Smith coverage than for its reporting on the 2008 presidential campaign and on the mounting tensions between Iran and the U.S. Roughly half of those following each story give the press excellent or good ratings for its coverage.

High press ratings for tabloid stories are not unusual. The press received similarly high marks for its coverage of the O.J. Simpson murder case and, more recently, the murder of Laci Peterson.

These findings are based on the most recent installment of the weekly *News Interest Index*, a new initiative by 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 agenda. 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.

Iraq Still Dominates Interest and Coverage

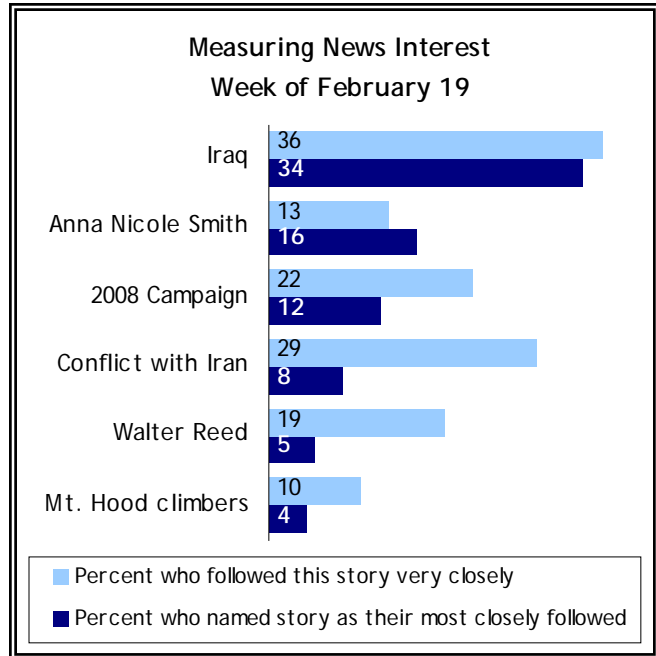
Overall, Iraq was the dominant news story this past week, both in terms of interest and coverage. Fully 36% of Americans followed news about Iraq very closely, and 34% said it was the story they followed most closely. One-fifth of the news coverage across five major media sectors was devoted to the Iraq policy debate and events on the ground. By comparison, 13% of the public followed the Smith story very closely and 16% said it was their top story. Coverage of Smith’s death and the aftermath made up 10% of the overall newshole and more than one quarter (26%) of cable news coverage – making it the top story by far for that sector.



As has been the case for the past two weeks, women, particularly younger women, are much more interested in the Smith story than are men. While nearly one-quarter of women ages 18-49 list Smith’s death as their top story of the week, only 13% of all men say the same. Men

remain much more focused on Iraq. Not only are women more likely to follow the Smith story, they like the coverage better as well. Fully 70% of women who are tuned into the Smith story give the press high marks for its coverage. Men who are following the story are slightly less enthused about the coverage – 58% give the press an excellent or good rating.

Other major stories of the week included the 2008 presidential campaign, mounting tensions between the U.S. and Iran, the exposé on conditions at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, and the rescue of the Mt. Hood climbers. Public interest in the campaign edged up slightly from the previous week as did coverage – 22% followed campaign news very closely and 12% said this was their top story of the week. Campaign news made up 12% of the newshole with a good deal of the coverage devoted to feuding between the Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama camps.



Nearly three-in-ten Americans (29%) followed news about Iran very closely, as the focus shifted back to the nation’s nuclear program, and 9% said this was their top story of the week. Coverage of this story accounted for 5% of the newshole. The public was somewhat less interested in the Walter Reed story – 19% followed it very closely and 5% said it was their top story. Three percent of the week’s news coverage was devoted to this story. One-in-ten Americans paid very close attention to the Mt. Hood story and 4% said it was the story they followed most closely last week. Media coverage was substantial early in the week, but fell off once the climbers had been rescued. Over the entire week, 3% of the newshole was devoted to this story.

Republicans More Critical of War News Coverage

With regard to Iraq, Republicans and Independents are now much more critical of press coverage of the war than they were back in 2003. In July of 2003, 64% of those who were following the situation in Iraq gave the press high marks for its coverage. At that time, Republicans, Democrats and Independents were largely in agreement about the press’s performance – 66% of

	---July 2003---			---Feb 2007---		
	Rep	Dem	Indep	Rep	Dem	Indep
<i>Job press has done covering Iraq:</i>	%	%	%	%	%	%
Excellent/Good	66	61	63	40	62	47
Only fair/poor	32	38	35	60	37	52
Don't know	2	1	2	*	1	1
	100	100	100	100	100	100

Based on those who followed the story very/fairly closely

Republicans, 61% of Democrats and 63% of Independents gave the press an excellent or good rating. Today, there is a clear partisan pattern to the evaluations. Among Democrats who are following news about Iraq closely, 62% say the media has done an excellent or good job covering the story. This compares to only 40% of Republicans and 47% of Independents who are closely following news about Iraq.

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 Sunday through Friday) PEJ will compile this data to identify the top stories for the week. The News Interest Index survey will collect data from Friday through Monday to gauge public interest in the most covered stories of the week.

Results for the weekly surveys are based on telephone interviews among a nationwide sample of approximately 1,000 adults, 18 years of age or older, conducted under the direction of ORC (Opinion Research Corporation). For results based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling is plus or minus 3.5 percentage points.

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, and that results based on subgroups will have larger margins of error.

For more information about the Project for Excellence in Journalism's News Coverage Index, go to www.journalism.org.

About the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press

The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press is an independent opinion research group that studies attitudes toward the press, politics and public policy issues. We are sponsored by The Pew Charitable Trusts and are one of six projects that make up the Pew Research Center, a nonpartisan "fact tank" that provides information on the issues, attitudes and trends shaping America and the world.

The Center's purpose is to serve as a forum for ideas on the media and public policy through public opinion research. In this role it serves as an important information resource for political leaders, journalists, scholars, and public interest organizations. All of our current survey results are made available free of charge.

All of the Center's research and reports are collaborative products based on the input and analysis of the entire Center staff consisting of:

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Scott Keeter, Director of Survey Research
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Carolyn Funk, Richard Wike and Kim Parker, Senior Researchers
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PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE & THE PRESS
FEBRUARY 23-26, 2007 NEWS INTEREST INDEX OMNIBUS SURVEY
FINAL TOPLINE
N=1,010

Q.1 As I read a list of some stories covered by news organizations this past week, 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 ITEMS, ALWAYS INCLUDING a. AND b. AS A BLOCK IN ORDER] [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>	<u>DK/ Refused</u>
a. News about the current situation in Iraq	36	36	15	13	*=100
Feb. 16-19, 2007	30	36	19	14	1=100
Feb 9-12, 2007	37	34	18	11	*=100
Feb 2-5, 2007	38	38	17	7	*=100
Jan 26-29, 2007	36	38	15	11	*=100
Jan 19-22, 2007	37	34	18	10	1=100
Jan 12-15, 2007	38	36	17	8	1=100
January, 2007	46	40	8	5	1=100
Jan 5-8, 2007	40	32	16	12	0=100
December, 2006	42	39	12	7	*=100
Nov 30 – Dec 3, 2006	40	36	13	11	*=100
Mid-November, 2006	44	38	12	6	*=100
September, 2006	33	43	14	8	2=100
August, 2006	41	39	12	7	1=100
June, 2006	37	43	13	6	1=100
May, 2006	42	35	15	7	1=100
April, 2006	43	36	13	7	1=100
March, 2006	43	38	12	6	1=100
February, 2006	39	42	12	6	1=100
January, 2006	40	40	12	7	1=100
December, 2005	45	38	11	5	1=100
Early November, 2005	41	40	13	6	*=100
Early October, 2005	43	36	15	6	*=100
Early September, 2005	32	40	20	7	1=100
July, 2005	43	37	13	6	1=100
June, 2005	41	39	12	7	1=100
Mid-May, 2005	42	42	11	5	*=100
Mid-March, 2005	40	39	14	5	2=100
February, 2005	38	45	13	4	*=100
January, 2005	48	37	11	4	*=100
December, 2004	34	44	15	6	1=100
Mid-October, 2004	42	38	11	8	1=100
Early September, 2004	47	37	9	6	1=100
August, 2004	39	42	12	6	1=100
July, 2004	43	40	11	6	*=100
June, 2004	39	42	12	6	1=100
April, 2004	54	33	8	5	*=100
Mid-March, 2004	47	36	12	4	1=100
Early February, 2004	47	38	10	4	1=100
Mid-January, 2004	48	39	9	4	*=100
December, 2003	44	38	11	6	1=100
November, 2003	52	33	9	5	1=100

Q.1 CONTINUED...

	<u>Very Closely</u>	<u>Fairly Closely</u>	<u>Not too closely</u>	<u>Not at all closely</u>	<u>DK/ Refused</u>
September, 2003	50	33	10	6	1=100
Mid-August, 2003	45	39	10	5	1=100
Early July, 2003	37	41	13	8	1=100
June, 2003	46	35	13	6	*=100
May, 2003	63	29	6	2	*=100
April 11-16, 2003 ¹	47	40	10	2	1=100
April 2-7, 2003	54	34	9	2	1=100
March 20-24, 2003	57	33	7	2	1=100
March 13-16, 2003 ²	62	27	6	4	1=100
February, 2003	62	25	8	4	1=100
January, 2003	55	29	10	4	2=100
December, 2002	51	32	10	6	1=100
Late October, 2002	53	33	8	5	1=100
Early October, 2002	60	28	6	5	1=100
Early September, 2002 ³	48	29	15	6	2=100
b. Conditions at Walter Reed Army Medical Center where many soldiers are treated after returning from Iraq	19	24	24	32	1=100
c. The death of Anna Nicole Smith	13	22	33	31	1=100
Feb. 16-19, 2007	14	25	29	31	1=100
Feb 9-12, 2007	11	27	31	30	1=100
d. News about candidates for the 2008 presidential election	22	33	24	21	*=100
Feb 16-19, 2007	18	32	22	27	1=100
Feb 9-12, 2007	24	30	24	21	1=100
Feb 2-5, 2007	24	36	22	18	*=100
Jan 26-29, 2007	24	33	23	20	*=100
Jan 19-22, 2007⁴	24	27	22	26	1=100
2004 Presidential Election⁵					
November, 2004 (RVs)	52	36	8	4	*=100
Mid-October, 2004	46	30	12	11	1=100
Early September, 2004	40	34	14	11	1=100
August, 2004	32	38	16	14	*=100
July, 2004	29	37	18	15	1=100
June, 2004	28	34	19	18	1=100
April, 2004	31	33	19	16	1=100
Mid-March, 2004	35	34	18	13	*=100
Late February, 2004	24	40	23	12	1=100
Early February, 2004	29	37	20	13	1=100
Mid-January, 2004	16	30	27	26	1=100
Early January, 2004	14	32	30	23	1=100
December, 2003	16	26	27	30	1=100

¹ From March 20 to April 16, 2003 the story was listed as “News about the war in Iraq.”

² From October, 2002 to March 13-16, 2003 the story was listed as “Debate over the possibility that the U.S. will take military action in Iraq.”

³ In Early September, 2002 the story was listed as “Debate over the possibility that the U.S. will invade Iraq.”

⁴ January 19-22, 2007 asked about: “Recent announcements by prominent Democrats about plans to run for president in 2008.”

⁵ In previous election years, the question wording of stories varies because of factors such as timing within the election cycle (primaries or general election) and the nature of the race (incumbent candidate or open field of candidates).

Q.1 CONTINUED...	<u>Very Closely</u>	<u>Fairly Closely</u>	<u>Not too closely</u>	<u>Not at all closely</u>	<u>DK/ Refused</u>
November, 2003	11	26	34	28	1=100
October, 2003	12	27	28	32	1=100
September, 2003	17	25	30	27	1=100
Mid-August, 2003	12	27	27	33	1=100
May, 2003	8	19	31	41	1=100
January, 2003	14	28	29	28	1=100
2000 Presidential Election					
Early November, 2000 (RVs)	39	44	12	5	*=100
Mid-October, 2000 (RVs)	40	37	15	8	8=100
Early October, 2000 (RVs)	42	36	15	6	1=100
September, 2000	22	42	21	15	*=100
July, 2000	21	38	20	20	1=100
June, 2000	23	32	23	21	1=100
May, 2000	18	33	26	23	*=100
April, 2000	18	39	22	20	1=100
March, 2000	26	41	19	13	1=100
February, 2000	26	36	21	17	*=100
January, 2000	19	34	28	18	1=100
December, 1999	16	36	24	23	1=100
October, 1999	17	32	28	22	1=100
September, 1999	15	31	33	20	1=100
July, 1999	15	38	24	22	1=100
June, 1999	11	25	29	34	1=100
1996 Presidential Election					
November, 1996 (RVs)	34	45	15	6	*=100
October, 1996	31	39	18	12	*=100
Early September, 1996	24	36	23	17	*=100
July, 1996	22	40	23	14	1=100
April, 1996	23	35	25	17	*=100
March, 1996	26	41	20	13	*=100
January, 1996	10	34	31	24	1=100
September, 1995	12	36	30	22	*=100
August, 1995	13	34	28	25	*=100
June, 1995	11	31	31	26	1=100
1992 Presidential Election					
October, 1992 (RVs)	55	36	7	2	0=100
September, 1992 (RVs)	47	36	11	6	*=100
August, 1992 (RVs)	36	51	11	2	0=100
July, 1992	20	45	26	9	*=100
May, 1992	32	44	16	8	*=100
March, 1992	35	40	16	9	*=100
January, 1992	11	25	36	27	1=100
December, 1991	10	28	32	30	*=100
October, 1991	12	26	31	29	2=100
1988 Presidential Election					
October, 1988 (RVs)	43	44	11	2	*=100
August, 1988 (RVs)	39	45	13	3	*=100
May, 1988	22	46	23	6	3=100
November, 1987	15	28	35	21	1=100
September, 1987	14	34	37	14	1=100
e. The rescue of three climbers on Oregon's Mt. Hood	10	25	34	31	*=100

Q.1 CONTINUED...

	<u>Very Closely</u>	<u>Fairly Closely</u>	<u>Not too closely</u>	<u>Not at all closely</u>	<u>DK/Refused</u>
f. Mounting tensions between the United States and Iran	29	37	18	15	1=100
Feb. 16-16, 2007⁶	28	32	20	19	1=100
Feb 2-5, 2007	33	38	18	10	1=100
TREND FOR COMPARISON:					
August, 1988 ⁷	22	38	29	11	*=100

Q.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.]

34	News about the current situation in Iraq
5	Conditions at Walter Reed Army Medical Center where many soldiers are treated after returning from Iraq
16	The death of Anna Nicole Smith
12	News about candidates for the 2008 presidential election
4	The rescue of three climbers on Oregon's Mt. Hood
8	Mounting tensions between the United States and Iran
7	Some other story (SPECIFY)
<u>14</u>	Don't know/Refused
100	

NOTE: ASK Q.3 ITEMS ONLY IF CORRESPONDING ITEM IN Q.1 WAS FOLLOWED VERY OR FAIRLY CLOSELY (Q1=1,2)]

Q.3 In general, how would you rate the job the press has done in covering [INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE], excellent, good, only fair, or poor?

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Only fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>DK/Refused</u>	<u>(N)</u>
a. News about the current situation in Iraq	13	37	27	23	*=100	(750)
Feb. 2-5, 2007	12	32	28	27	1=100	
July, 2003	22	42	25	9	2=100	
March 20 – April 7, 2003 ⁸	38	40	13	6	3=100	
b. Conditions at Walter Reed Army Medical Center where many soldiers are treated after returning from Iraq	10	39	29	21	1=100	(479)
c. The death of Anna Nicole Smith	32	34	20	13	1=100	(343)
d. News about candidates for the 2008 presidential campaign	11	39	36	14	*=100	(572)
Feb. 2-5, 2007	11	45	32	11	1=100	
e. The rescue of three climbers on Oregon's Mt. Hood	25	54	17	3	1=100	(388)

⁶ For February 16-19, 2007 the story was listed as "Reports that Iran may be supplying weapons to insurgents in Iraq."

⁷ In August, 1988 the story was listed as "The cease fire in the war between Iran and Iraq."

⁸ For March 20-April 7, 2003, the story was listed "...covering the war in Iraq."

Q.3 CONTINUED...

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Only fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>DK/Refused</u>	<u>(N)</u>
f. Mounting tensions between the United States and Iran	9	36	35	20	*=100	(697)
Feb. 2-5, 2007	8	34	35	22	1=100	

ASK ALL: Now I'd like to ask you about where you get your news...

Q.4 Do you regularly get news about national and international issues from **[INSERT ITEM]**, or not? How about...**[READ AND RANDOMIZE]**

	<u>Yes, regularly</u>	<u>No, not regularly</u>	<u>DK/Refused</u>
a. Newspapers	51	49	*=100
b. Network television news, such as ABC, CBS or NBC	68	32	*=100
c. Cable news channels such as CNN or the Fox News Channel	60	40	*=100
d. Radio	40	61	*=100
e. The Internet	38	62	*=100

Q.5 Which would you say is your MAIN source for news about national and international issues? **[DO NOT READ LIST. ACCEPT ONLY ONE RESPONSE]**

- 35 Network television news, such as ABC, CBS or NBC
- 25 Cable news channels such as CNN or the Fox News Channel
- 14 The internet
- 11 Newspapers
- 10 Radio
- 3 Other (**SPECIFY**)
- 2 Don't know/Refused
- 100