

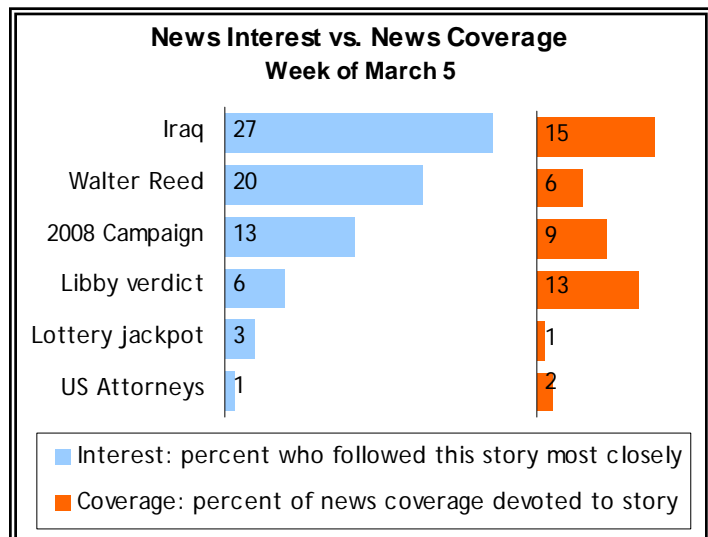


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Public Tunes In to Walter Reed Story
 Little Interest in Libby Verdict

News about problems with the medical care of wounded Iraq war veterans drew the public’s attention last week. More than three-in-ten Americans (31%) paid very close attention to news about conditions at Walter Reed Army Medical Center and more general reports about how soldiers returning from Iraq are being cared for. And 20% said this was the story they followed most closely, making it the second most closely followed news story of the week. The situation in Iraq continued to be the dominant news story both in terms of interest and coverage. Even the announcement of a verdict in the Scooter Libby trial failed to generate much public interest, in spite of the news media’s intense focus on the story.

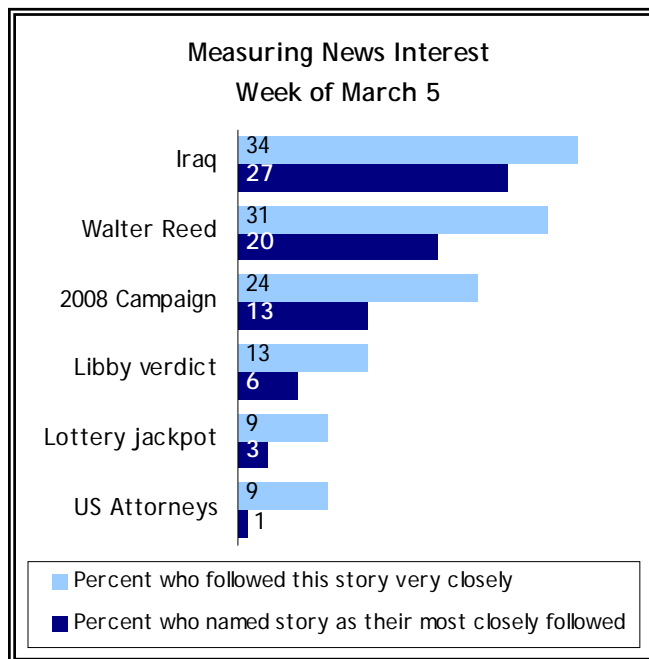


In another measure of the public’s interest in the Walter Reed story, nearly one-quarter (24%) say this story received *too little* coverage from the news media, only 4% say it has received too much coverage. Actual news coverage of the story was substantial last week. Six percent of the news on all sectors was devoted to this topic. When the Walter Reed story first broke, public interest was much more limited. The week of Feb. 19, 19% of the public followed the story very closely and 5% named it as their most closely followed news story. That same week news about conditions at Walter Reed filled 3% of the newshole.

Only 13% of the public followed the Libby verdict very closely and 7% named it as the story they followed most closely last week. Interest was up only moderately from January and February, when the trial was ongoing. In terms of news coverage, the Libby story made up 13%

of the overall newshole for the week putting it ahead of the presidential campaign and the Walter Reed story. It was the top story on cable television with 18% of cable news devoted to the verdict.

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 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.



In other top stories, the public continued to pay fairly close attention to news about the 2008 presidential campaign. Nearly one-quarter of the public followed this story very closely, and 13% said it was their top story of the week. Nine percent of news coverage for the week was devoted to the campaign. News about the recent Mega Millions lottery jackpot was followed very closely by 9% of the public, 3% listed this as the story they followed most closely (1% of the week’s news was devoted to this story).

News about the firing of eight federal prosecutors by the Justice Department hardly registered with the public last week – 9% followed this story very closely and 1% said it was the story they followed most closely. Two percent of news coverage was devoted to this story. Newspapers focused more heavily on the story than did other sectors (6%). Press conferences by Attorney General Alberto Gonzales and President Bush – as well as mounting pressure on Gonzales to resign – occurred too late to be measured in this week’s New Coverage and New Interest indices.

Mixed Messages on Libby

For the vast majority of the public, the Libby trial and verdict was of little consequence. Only one-third of the public followed this story very or fairly closely. That small but select group of Americans overwhelmingly viewed the Libby verdict as being important to the country, and most found the case interesting and easy to follow. However, the two-thirds of the public that was not tuned in to the story viewed it as boring and not particularly easy to follow. Only half of this group says the Libby case was important for the country.

<i>Libby story was...</i>	<u>Total</u> %	<i>Followed Verdict...</i>	
		<u>Very/fairly</u> <u>Closely</u> %	<u>Not too/</u> <u>Not at all</u> <u>Closely</u> %
Important for country	59	80	49
Not important	30	18	36
Don't know	11	2	15
	100	100	100
Interesting	37	76	18
Boring	51	22	65
Don't know	12	2	17
	100	100	100
Hard to follow	34	29	36
Easy to follow	49	70	39
Don't know	17	1	25
	100	100	100

Men, college graduates and those age 50 and older are among the most likely to have closely followed the Libby verdict. Democrats were slightly more likely than Republicans to pay close attention to this story. Nevertheless, even among Democrats, fully 38% paid no attention at all to this story. Whether they were following the trial or not, the vast majority of Democrats believe the case was important for the country: 71% of Democrats say it was important compared to only 49% of Republicans.

Too Little Walter Reed Coverage

No one story stood out last week as being over-covered by the news media. When asked which if any of the week's top stories had received too much coverage, roughly half of the public had no complaints. Equal percentages of the public (16%) say the 2008 campaign and the Libby verdict were over-covered. Nearly as many (13%) say the same about the lottery jackpot drawing. Nine percent point to Iraq, while very few name the Walter Reed story or the firing of eight U.S. Attorneys.

	<i>Which stories...</i>	
	<u>Received</u> <u>too much</u> <u>coverage</u> %	<u>Received</u> <u>too little</u> <u>coverage</u> %
2008 Campaign	16	7
Libby verdict	16	8
Lottery jackpot	13	3
Iraq	9	13
Walter Reed	4	24
U.S. Attorneys	3	16
None/Don't know	49	43

Figures show the percent choosing each story as one that received too much or too little press coverage. Figures add to more than 100% because respondents could choose more than one story as being over-under-covered.

The Walter Reed story was the most under-covered story in the eyes of the public. Fully 24%

say it received too little coverage. Democrats were slightly more interested than Republicans in hearing more about this story, but even among Republicans 21% say the story deserved more coverage. Sixteen percent of the public believes the U.S. attorney firings should have received more coverage, and 13% say the same about the war in Iraq. Fewer than 10% say they wanted to hear more about the Libby verdict, the 2008 campaign or the lottery jackpot.

The Walter Reed Audience

Democrats were somewhat more likely than Republicans to follow the Walter Reed story very closely (36% vs. 28%, respectively). Even so, among both Democrats and Republicans roughly two-thirds were paying at least fairly close attention to the story. Independents lagged behind slightly – 59% were paying close attention. While the large gender gap in interest in the Iraq war persists, the Walter Reed story drew in almost as many women as men (28% vs. 34%, respectively, paid very close attention to this story). In fact, the Walter Reed story was tied with Iraq among women as the most closely followed story of the week. Men, on the other hand, were much more likely to name Iraq than Walter Reed as the story they followed most closely.

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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PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE & THE PRESS
MARCH 9-12, 2007 NEWS INTEREST INDEX OMNIBUS SURVEY
FINAL TOPLINE
N=1,017

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] [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	34	37	16	13	*=100
March 2-5, 2007	37	37	16	9	1=100
Feb 23-26, 2007	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. The verdict in the trial of former vice presidential aide Lewis "Scooter" Libby					
Feb. 2-5, 2007⁴	8	20	29	42	1=100
Jan 26-29, 2007	6	15	24	54	1=100
November, 2005 ⁵	24	29	23	23	1=100
July, 2005 ⁶	23	25	26	25	1=100
October, 2003	16	32	24	27	1=100
c. Conditions at Walter Reed Army Medical Center where many soldiers are treated after returning from Iraq					
Feb 23-26, 2007	19	24	24	32	1=100
d. News about candidates for the 2008 presidential election					
March 2-5, 2007	19	31	26	23	1=100
Feb 23-26, 2007	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, 2007⁷	24	27	22	26	1=100
2004 Presidential Election⁸					
November, 2004 (RVs)	52	36	8	4	*=100

¹ From March 20-24, 2003 to April 11-16, 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 From January 26-29, 2007 to February 2-5, 2007, the story was listed as, "The trial of former vice presidential aide Lewis "Scooter" Libby who is accused of perjury and obstruction of justice."
⁵ In November 2005 the story was listed as, "The indictment of Vice President Cheney's Chief of Staff Lewis "Scooter" Libby."
⁶ In July 2005 the story was listed as "Reports that White House adviser Karl Rove may have leaked classified information about a CIA gent." In October 2003, the story was listed as Reports that a White House official may have leaked classified information about a CIA agent."
⁷ January 19-22, 2007, asked about: "Recent announcements by prominent Democrats about plans to run for president in 2008."
⁸ 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...

	Very <u>Closely</u>	Fairly <u>Closely</u>	Not too <u>Closely</u>	Not at all <u>Closely</u>	DK/ <u>Refused</u>
Mid-October, 2004	46	30	12	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
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

Q.1 CONTINUED...

	Very <u>Closely</u>	Fairly <u>Closely</u>	Not too <u>Closely</u>	Not at all <u>Closely</u>	DK/ <u>Refused</u>
December, 1991	10	28	32	30	*=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 firing of eight federal prosecutors by the Justice Department	9	17	22	52	*=100
f. The record \$390 million lottery jackpot drawing	9	14	27	49	1=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.**)

- 27 News about the current situation in Iraq
- Conditions at Walter Reed Army Medical Center where many soldiers are treated after returning from Iraq
- 20 from Iraq
- 13 News about candidates for the 2008 presidential election
- 6 The verdict in the trial of former vice presidential aide Lewis "Scooter" Libby
- 3 The record \$390 million lottery jackpot drawing
- 1 The firing of eight federal prosecutors by the Justice Department
- 11 Some other story (**SPECIFY**)
- 19 Don't know/Refused
- 100

ROTATE Q.3 AND Q.4

IF DON'T KNOW/REFUSED IN Q.2, SKIP Q.3/4 [N=827]:

Q.3 Of all the stories I just mentioned, which of them, if any, received TOO MUCH coverage? [**DO NOT READ; DISPLAY PRE-CODES; ACCEPT UP TO THREE RESPONSES BUT DO NOT PROBE FOR MORE THAN ONE**]

- 16 News about candidates for the 2008 presidential election
- 16 The verdict in the trial of former vice presidential aide Lewis "Scooter" Libby
- 13 The record \$390 million lottery jackpot drawing
- 9 News about the current situation in Iraq
- Conditions at Walter Reed Army Medical Center where many soldiers are treated after returning from Iraq
- 4 from Iraq
- 3 The firing of eight federal prosecutors by the Justice Department
- 33 No/None of these
- 16 Don't know/Refused

Q.4 Of all the stories I just mentioned, which of them, if any received too little coverage? **[DO NOT READ; DISPLAY PRE-CODES; ACCEPT UP TO THREE RESPONSES BUT DO NOT PROBE FOR MORE THAN ONE]**

24	Conditions at Walter Reed Army Medical Center where many soldiers are treated after returning from Iraq
16	The firing of eight federal prosecutors by the Justice Department
13	News about the current situation in Iraq
8	The verdict in the trial of former vice presidential aide Lewis "Scooter" Libby
7	News about candidates for the 2008 presidential election
3	The record \$390 million lottery jackpot drawing
27	No/None of these
16	Don't know/Refused

ASK ALL:

Now a few questions about the recent trial involving former vice presidential aide Lewis Libby...

ROTATE QUESTIONS 5 THROUGH 7

Q.5 Did you find this story hard to follow or easy to follow?

34	Hard to follow
49	Easy to follow
<u>17</u>	Don't know/Refused
100	

Q.6 Do you think this story was important for the country or not important for the country?

59	Important for the country
30	Not important for the country
<u>11</u>	Don't know/Refused
100	

Q.7 Was this story interesting to you or was it boring?

37	Interesting
51	Boring
<u>12</u>	Don't know/Refused
100	