

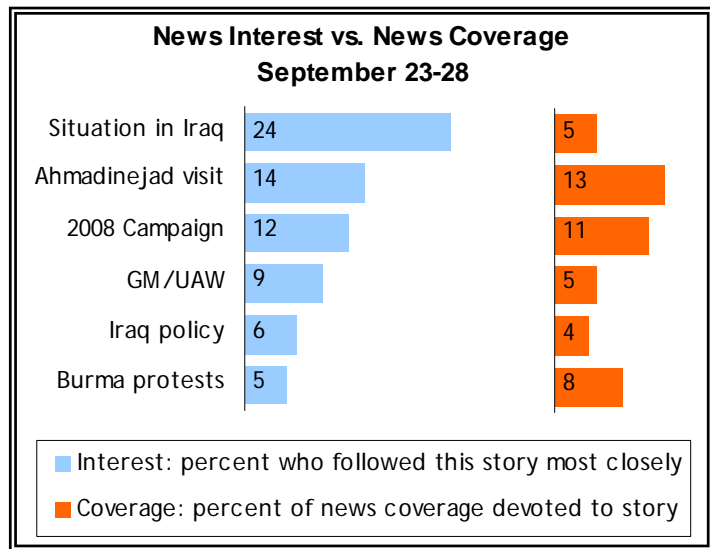


FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:  
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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:  
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**Burma Protests Barely Register with Public**  
**AHMADINEJAD VISIT DRAWS LARGE AUDIENCE**

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad’s visit to the U.S. drew a large news audience last week. Aside from the Iraq war it was the most closely followed news story, with 23% of the public following the story very closely, and 14% listing it as the single news story they followed most closely. Ahmadinejad’s visit, as well as broader issues relating to U.S.-Iranian relations, was the most heavily covered news story of the week. Fully 13% of the national newshole was devoted to this story.



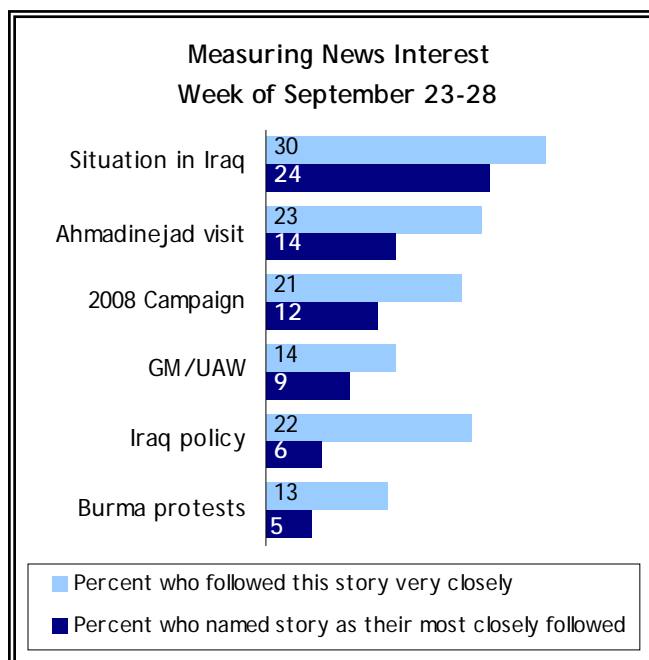
The week’s other major international story, aside from the Iraq war, drew a much smaller news audience. Only 13% of the public paid very close attention to pro-democracy protests by Buddhist monks in Burma, 5% listed this as their most closely followed story. The Burma story received a substantial amount of news coverage: 8% of the national newshole focused on this story making it the third most heavily covered story of the week (and the top story on network TV news).

Democrats paid somewhat more attention than Republicans to the protests. College graduates were much more likely than those without a college degree to be paying at least fairly close attention to the story (54% vs. 32% followed very or fairly closely).

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 the most recent week, data relating to news coverage was collected from September 23-28 and survey data measuring public interest in the top news stories of the week was collected September 28 – October 1 from a nationally representative sample of 1,018 adults.

### Republicans Tuning Out the Campaign

Interest in the 2008 presidential campaign remained steady last week: 21% of the public followed campaign news very closely and 12% listed this as their most closely followed story. As has been the case throughout most of the year, Democrats paid closer attention to the campaign than did Republicans. This past week, the gap was particularly large with 30% of Democrats and 13% of Republicans paying very close attention to campaign news.



The agreement between General Motors and the United Auto Workers union that ended a two-day strike by UAW workers drew a modest amount of interest (14% followed the story very closely and 9% listed it as their most closely followed story). In the Midwest, which has been hardest hit by the decline of the American auto industry, the story was more dominant. Fully 16% of Midwesterners listed the GM-UAW deal as the story they followed most closely last week.

The amount of coverage devoted to the Iraq war and particularly the policy debate has fluctuated significantly in recent months, while public interest in the story has remained fairly consistent. Coverage peaked during the week of September 9 when General David Petraeus delivered his status report on the war. That week 36% of the national news was devoted to the policy debate. The following week coverage of the debate dropped off to 5% of the overall newshole, and this past week it dropped even further to 4%. Last week 22% of the public followed the Iraq policy debate very closely and 6% listed this as their top story.

Consistently, the public has expressed greater interest in the situation in Iraq than in the policy debate. This past week was no exception: 30% followed events in Iraq very closely and 24% listed this as their most closely followed story.

## 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](http://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:

Andrew Kohut, Director  
Scott Keeter, Director of Survey Research  
Carroll Doherty and Michael Dimock, Associate Directors  
Carolyn Funk, Richard Wike and Kim Parker, Senior Researchers  
April Clark, Juliana Menasce Horowitz, Robert Suls, Shawn Neidorf and Allison Pond, Research Associates  
James Albright, Executive Assistant

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE & THE PRESS**  
**SEPTEMBER 28 – OCTOBER 1, 2007 NEWS INTEREST INDEX OMNIBUS SURVEY**  
**FINAL TOPLINE**  
**N=1,018**

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 and events in Iraq					
September 21-24, 2007	30	41	18	11	*=100
September 14-17, 2007	32	38	17	13	*=100
September 7-10, 2007	31	36	18	15	0=100
August 30 – September 2, 2007	32	34	20	14	*=100
August 24-27, 2007	31	34	18	16	1=100
August 17-20, 2007	34	36	18	12	*=100
August 10-13, 2007	33	34	18	15	*=100
August 3-6, 2007	36	37	14	13	*=100
July 27-30, 2007	29	40	19	12	*=100
July 20-23, 2007	28	36	19	16	1=100
July 13-16, 2007	28	34	21	16	1=100
July 6-9, 2007	25	41	17	16	1=100
June 29-July 2, 2007	36	34	18	12	*=100
June 22-25, 2007	32	35	19	13	1=100
June 15-18, 2007	30	36	18	15	1=100
June 8-11, 2007	30	37	20	13	*=100
June 1-4, 2007	32	38	15	14	1=100
May 24-27, 2007	30	36	20	13	1=100
May 18-21, 2007	33	36	18	12	1=100
May 11-14, 2007	36	34	15	14	1=100
May 4-7, 2007	30	34	18	17	1=100
April 27-30, 2007	38	37	15	10	*=100
April 20-23, 2007	27	35	21	16	1=100
April 12-16, 2007	28	35	22	15	*=100
April 5-9, 2007	34	33	20	13	*=100
March 30-April 2, 2007	33	39	16	11	1=100
March 23-March 26, 2007 <sup>1</sup>	34	37	16	13	*=100
March 16-19, 2007	31	38	18	12	1=100
March 9-12, 2007	34	34	17	15	*=100
March 2-5, 2007	34	37	16	13	*=100
February 23-26, 2007	37	37	16	9	1=100
February 16-19, 2007	36	36	15	13	*=100
February 9-12, 2007	30	36	19	14	1=100
February 2-5, 2007	37	34	18	11	*=100
January 26-29, 2007	38	38	17	7	*=100
January 19-22, 2007	36	38	15	11	*=100
January 12-15, 2007	37	34	18	10	1=100
January, 2007	38	36	17	8	1=100
January 5-8, 2007	46	40	8	5	1=100
December, 2006	40	32	16	12	0=100
	42	39	12	7	*=100

<sup>1</sup> From May, 2003 to March 23-26, 2007, the story was listed as “News about the current situation in Iraq.”

**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>
<b>November 30-December 3, 2006</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>*=100</b>
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
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
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 <sup>2</sup>	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 <sup>3</sup>	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 <sup>4</sup>	48	29	15	6	2=100

<sup>2</sup> From March 20-24, 2003 to April 11-16, 2003, the story was listed as “News about the war in Iraq.”

<sup>3</sup> From Early 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.”

<sup>4</sup> In Early September, 2002, the story was listed as “Debate over the possibility that the U.S. will invade Iraq.”

**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>
b. The debate in Washington over U.S. policy in Iraq	22	32	22	24	*=100
<b>September 21-24, 2007</b>	25	28	20	27	*=100
<b>September 14-17, 2007<sup>5</sup></b>	25	27	20	27	1=100
<b>September 7-10, 2007</b>	25	27	22	26	*=100
<b>August 30-September 2, 2007</b>	22	27	20	31	*=100
<b>August 24-27, 2007</b>	25	30	19	25	1=100
<b>August 3-6, 2007</b>	21	33	20	26	*=100
<b>July 27-30, 2007</b>	24	28	20	27	1=100
<b>July 20-23, 2007</b>	23	24	24	28	1=100
<b>July 13-16, 2007</b>	20	30	20	30	*=100
<b>July 6-9, 2007</b>	27	26	23	24	*=100
<b>June 1-4, 2007</b>	20	27	24	27	2=100
<b>May 24-27, 2007</b>	30	32	20	18	*=100
<b>May 18-21, 2007</b>	24	32	19	24	1=100
<b>May 11-14, 2007</b>	25	26	19	29	1=100
<b>May 4-7, 2007</b>	30	31	19	20	*=100
<b>April 27-30, 2007</b>	18	31	21	29	1=100
<b>April 20-23, 2007</b>	22	29	24	25	*=100
<b>April 12-16, 2007</b>	25	29	22	23	1=100
<b>April 5-9, 2007</b>	31	28	20	21	*=100
<b>March 30-April 2, 2007</b>	26	29	21	23	1=100
<b>TREND FOR COMPARISON:</b>					
<b>January 12-15, 2007: President Bush's proposal to increase the number of U.S. troops in Iraq</b>	40	33	13	13	1=100
c. Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's recent trip to New York City where he spoke at Columbia University and the United Nations	23	31	20	25	1=100
<b>TREND FOR COMPARISON:</b>					
<b>June 1-4, 2007: Recent talks between the United States and Iran</b>	19	27	27	26	1=100
<b>February 23-26, 2007: Mounting tensions between the United States and Iran</b>	29	37	18	15	1=100
<b>February 16-19, 2007: Reports that Iran may be supplying weapons to insurgents in Iraq</b>	28	32	20	19	1=100
<b>February 2-5, 2007: Mounting tensions between the United States and Iran</b>	33	38	18	10	1=100
d. An agreement between General Motors and the United Auto Workers union that ended a two-day strike over wages and job security	14	28	28	30	*=100
e. Pro-democracy protests by Buddhist monks in Burma	13	27	20	39	1=100
f. News about candidates for the 2008 presidential election	21	34	25	20	*=100

<sup>5</sup> September 14-17, 2007 asked about "General David Petraeus's report to Congress about how things are going in Iraq."

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>
September 21-24, 2007	24	31	22	23	*=100
September 14-17, 2007	22	31	24	23	*=100
September 7-10, 2007	18	34	26	22	*=100
August 30-September 2, 2007	19	35	21	25	*=100
August 24-27, 2007	22	28	24	26	*=100
August 17-20, 2007	19	27	24	30	*=100
August 10-13, 2007	23	32	21	24	*=100
August 3-6, 2007	19	31	25	25	*=100
July 27-30, 2007	19	32	22	26	1=100
July 20-23, 2007	16	26	30	27	1=100
July 13-16, 2007	17	29	27	27	*=100
July 6-9, 2007	24	29	24	22	1=100
June 29-July 2, 2007	20	32	25	23	*=100
June 22-25, 2007	18	31	21	30	*=100
June 15-18, 2007	17	32	26	25	*=100
June 8-11, 2007	19	30	24	26	1=100
June 1-4, 2007	16	27	32	24	1=100
May 24-27, 2007	22	33	23	22	*=100
May 18-21, 2007	18	31	24	27	*=100
May 11-14, 2007	18	30	23	28	1=100
May 4-7, 2007	23	34	21	21	1=100
April 27-30, 2007	14	30	29	26	1=100
April 20-23, 2007	18	28	27	27	*=100
April 12-16, 2007	18	28	27	27	*=100
April 5-9, 2007	25	30	26	19	*=100
March 30-April 2, 2007	20	29	27	23	1=100
March 23-26, 2007	20	32	22	26	*=100
March 16-19, 2007	15	28	29	27	1=100
March 9-12, 2007	24	30	23	23	*=100
March 2-5, 2007	19	31	26	23	1=100
February 23-26, 2007	22	33	24	21	*=100
February 16-19, 2007	18	32	22	27	1=100
February 9-12, 2007	24	30	24	21	1=100
February 2-5, 2007	24	36	22	18	*=100
January 26-29, 2007	24	33	23	20	*=100
January 19-22, 2007 <sup>6</sup>	24	27	22	26	1=100
<b>2004 Presidential Election</b>					
November, 2004 (RVs)	52	36	8	4	*=100
Mid-October, 2004	46	30	12	11	1=100
August, 2004	32	38	16	14	*=100
July, 2004	29	37	18	15	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 <sup>7</sup>	29	37	20	13	1=100

<sup>6</sup> January 19-22, 2007 asked about "Recent announcements by prominent Democrats about plans to run for president in 2008."

<sup>7</sup> From May 2003 to Early February 2004 and in March 1992, the story was listed as "The race for the Democratic nomination." In January 2003, the story was listed as "Recent announcements by prominent Democrats about plans to run for president in 2004." In September 2000, Early September and July 1996, and May 1992, the question asked about "the presidential election campaign." In January, March and April 1996, the story was listed as "News about the Republican presidential candidates." In August 1992, the story was listed as "News about the presidential election." In July 1992, the story was listed as "News about the presidential campaign." In January 1992, the story was listed as "News about the Democratic candidates for the presidential



**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>
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
<b>2000 Presidential Election</b>					
Early November, 2000 (RVs)	39	44	12	5	*=100
Mid-October, 2000 (RVs)	40	37	15	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
<b>1996 Presidential Election</b>					
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
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
<b>1992 Presidential Election</b>					
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
<b>1988 Presidential Election</b>					
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

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nomination." In 1988, the story was introduced as being from "this past year" and was listed as "News about the presidential campaign in 1988."

**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>
September, 1987	14	34	37	14	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] ? IF "IRAQ" UNSPECIFIED, PROBE: "Do you mean events IN Iraq or the debate over Iraq POLICY?"]**

- 24 News about the current situation and events in Iraq
- Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's recent trip to New York City where he spoke at
- 14 Columbia University and the United Nations
- 12 News about candidates for the 2008 presidential election
- An agreement between General Motors and the United Auto Workers union that ended a two-day
- 9 strike over wages and job security
- 6 The debate in Washington over U.S. policy in Iraq
- 5 Pro-democracy protests by Buddhist monks in Burma
- 10 Some other story (**SPECIFY**)
- 20 Don't know/Refused
- 100