

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:
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Economic News Dominates Coverage and Interest

PUBLIC HEARING POSITIVE NEWS ABOUT OBAMA TRANSITION

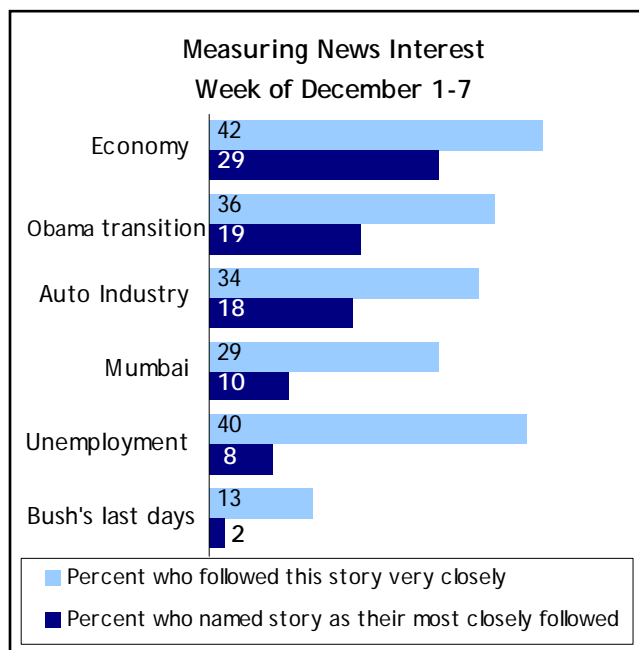
As President-elect Barack Obama prepares to take office and announces choices for key cabinet posts, a majority of Americans (56%) says news stories about the incoming administration are mostly positive. Very few (3%) say what they are hearing or reading about the new Obama administration is mostly negative, while four-in-ten (38%) say the coverage is a mix of both positive and negative news.

Mostly Good News About Obama Administration

<i>Stories about the Obama administration are...</i>	<u>Total</u> %	<u>Rep</u> %	<u>Dem</u> %	<u>Ind</u> %
Mostly positive	56	46	67	55
Mostly negative	3	5	1	2
Mix of positive and negative	38	46	31	37
Don't know	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>6</u>
	100	100	100	100

Two-thirds (67%) of Democrats say news stories about Obama are mostly positive, compared with fewer than half of Republicans (46%) and 55% of independents. Republicans are divided, with 46% saying the stories have been a mix of positive and negative. The survey was completed before the arrest of Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich on corruption charges that include allegations he sought to use the selection of Obama's successor in the Senate for his personal advantage.

Many Americans continued to track the transition last week – 36% say they followed transition developments very closely – but with the debate in Congress over a multi-billion dollar plan to help the Detroit automakers stave off bankruptcy, official news that the



nation was in recession, and reports that more than 500,000 jobs were lost in November, the public focused even more closely on economic news.

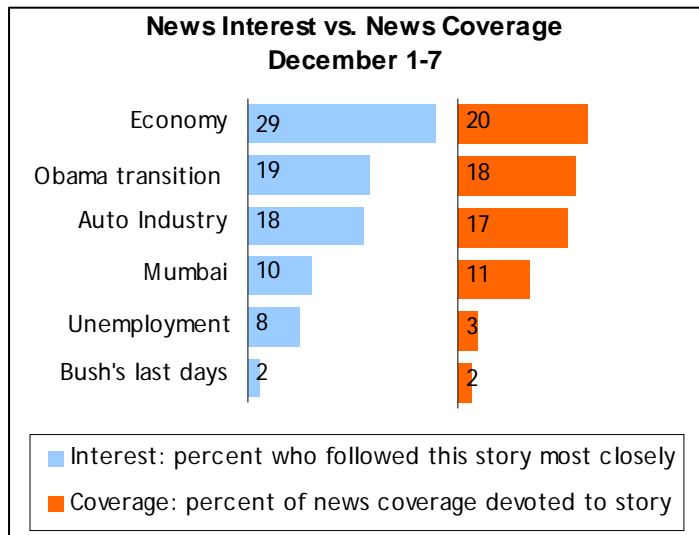
Four-in-ten (42%) followed economic news very closely; another 38% followed developments fairly closely. Reports about unemployment attracted the very close attention of 40%. In addition, 34% paid very close attention to the debate in Congress over government help for domestic automakers.

Americans in households with less than \$30,000 in annual income were more likely to have followed unemployment figures very closely than those in households earning \$75,000 or more (56% vs. 44%, respectively). Higher income Americans, meanwhile, were more likely to have paid very close attention to the auto industry bailout than lower income Americans (44% vs. 30%).

Not surprisingly, eight-in-ten say they are hearing mostly bad news about the economy these days, while 19% say they are hearing a mix of both good and bad news. The perception that news about the economy is mostly bad is shared across the demographic spectrum.

Coverage and Interest in Sync

The public’s news interests and the media coverage was very much in sync last week. When asked to name the news story they followed *most* closely, three-in-ten (29%) list economic conditions, making it the public’s top story. Economic developments also were the most heavily covered news of the week, accounting for 20% of the newshole, according to an analysis by the Pew Research Center’s Project for Excellence in Journalism.



Close to one-in-five (19%) say they followed transition developments most closely, making it the second most followed story. News about Obama’s plans and appointments filled 18% of the newshole, according to PEJ. Among the transition stories were Obama’s selections of Hillary Clinton as his Secretary of State, Bill Richardson as his Secretary of Commerce and Robert Gates to remain as Secretary of Defense.

News about the Big Three automakers was the public’s third most closely followed story with 18% citing the debate in Congress over an auto bailout as their most closely followed story. The media devoted 17% of coverage to this story. In news from abroad, 10% cite the coordinated terror attacks in Mumbai, India, as their most closely followed story last week. News about the aftermath of the terrorist siege filled 11% of the newshole last week.

Obama Tops All Newsmakers

Barack Obama continued to be far and away the most visible newsmaker last week. When asked to name one or two people they had heard the most about in the news lately, an overwhelming majority (89%) named Obama. The next most visible person in the public’s mind, Hillary Clinton, was named by 19%; another 12% cited President George W. Bush. According to the PEJ, Obama was the lead newsmaker in 6% of all stories for the week of Dec. 1-7, far exceeding coverage of Bush and O.J. Simpson, the next biggest newsmakers.

Simpson returned to the news last week when he was sentenced in a Nevada court to a minimum of nine years in prison for armed robbery (9% cited Simpson as the most heard about person in the news lately). Other prominent newsmakers included former GOP running mates Sarah Palin (8%) and John McCain (7%).

Top Newsmakers	
<i>Heard the most about in the news lately...</i>	<i>%</i>
Barack Obama	89
Hillary Clinton	19
George W. Bush	12
O.J. Simpson	9
Sarah Palin	8
John McCain	7
Britney Spears	3
Auto executives	3
Plaxico Burrell	2
Henry Paulson	1
Robert Gates	1
Oprah Winfrey	1
Bill Richardson	1
Other	14
No answer	6

Note: Figures add to more than 100% because respondents were encouraged to give up to two names.

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 from December 1-7 and survey data measuring public interest in the top news stories of the week were collected December 5-8 from a nationally representative sample of 1,004 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 Sunday through Friday) PEJ compiles this data to identify the top stories for the week. The News Interest Index survey collects 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 seven 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
Kim Parker, Senior Researcher
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**PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE & THE PRESS
DECEMBER 5-8, 2008 NEWS INTEREST INDEX OMNIBUS SURVEY
TOPLINE
N=1,004**

Q.1 Can you tell me the name of the person you've heard the most about in the news lately? **[PROBE IF NECESSARY: Just the name that comes to mind FIRST when you think about who's been in the news lately] [IF ANSWER GIVEN ASK: Who else comes to mind?] [OPEN END. RECORD UP TO TWO MENTIONS. RECORD FIRST MENTION ON FIRST SCREEN AND SECOND MENTION ON SECOND SCREEN]**

NOTE: Total exceeds 100% because of multiple responses.

89	Barack Obama
19	Hillary Clinton
12	George W. Bush
9	O.J. Simpson
8	Sarah Palin
7	John McCain
3	Britney Spears
3	Auto Company CEOs
2	Plaxico Burress
1	Henry Paulson
1	Robert Gates
1	Oprah Winfrey
1	Bill Richardson
14	Other answer given
6	Don't know/No answer

On another topic...

Q.2 Are you hearing mostly good news about the economy these days, mostly bad news about the economy or a mix of both good and bad news?

1	Hearing mostly good news about the economy
80	Hearing mostly bad news about the economy [OR]
19	A mix of good and bad
*	Don't know/Refused (VOL. DO NOT READ)
100	

Q.3 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; ROTATE ITEMS IN BLOCKS A-C FIRST, FOLLOWED BY D-F] [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. The debate in Congress over a government bailout for the U.S. auto industry	34	38	17	11	*=100
November 21-24, 2008	41	26	17	15	1=100

Q.3 CONTINUED...

	<u>Very Closely</u>	<u>Fairly Closely</u>	<u>Not too Closely</u>	<u>Not at all Closely</u>	<u>DK/ Refused</u>
TREND FOR COMPARISON:¹					
November 14-17, 2008: Problems facing automakers	30	35	20	15	*=100
October 31-November 3: Possible merger of GM and Chrysler	16	28	24	31	1=100
May 18-21, 2007: DaimlerChrysler sells Chrysler	8	20	25	46	1=100
September 28-October 1, 2007: Agreement between GM and UAW ending strike	14	28	28	30	*=100
December, 2005: <i>General Motors job cuts</i>	22	30	26	21	1=100
June, 1998: <i>Chrysler/Daimler Benz merger</i>	12	22	27	38	1=100
January, 1992: <i>General Motors job cuts</i>	35	38	18	9	*=100
b. Reports about the condition of the U.S. economy	42	38	13	7	*=100
November 21-24, 2008	59	24	9	8	*=100
November 14-17, 2008	56	29	9	6	*=100
November 7-10, 2008	54	31	8	7	*=100
October 31-November 3, 2008	63	27	6	4	*=100
October 24-27, 2008	52	35	7	5	1=100
October 17-20, 2008	62	29	6	3	*=100
October 10-13, 2008	65	25	7	3	*=100
October 3-6, 2008	69	23	5	3	*=100
September 26-29, 2008	70	22	5	3	*=100
September 19-22, 2008	56	27	12	5	*=100
September 5-8, 2008	44	33	16	7	*=100
August 29-31, 2008	41	34	13	11	1=100
August 15-18, 2008	39	36	15	10	*=100
August 8-11, 2008	39	35	16	10	*=100
August 1-4, 2008	47	34	11	8	0=100
July 25-28, 2008	46	32	10	12	*=100
July 18-21, 2008	45	33	13	9	*=100
July 11-14, 2008	44	33	12	10	1=100
June 27-30, 2008	49	31	12	7	1=100
June 13-16, 2008	42	33	14	11	*=100
May 9-12, 2008	45	31	13	11	*=100
May 2-5, 2008	43	31	15	10	1=100
April 18-21, 2008	41	35	13	10	1=100
April 4-7, 2008	39	37	12	12	*=100
March 28-31, 2008	42	36	14	8	*=100
March 20-24, 2008	45	33	13	9	*=100
February 29-March 3, 2008	38	35	15	11	1=100
February 15-18, 2008	37	36	11	16	8=100
February 1-4, 2008	40	37	14	8	1=100
January 18-21, 2008	42	31	16	11	*=100
January 11-14, 2008	36	32	15	16	1=100

¹ November 14-17, 2008 asked about: "News about problems facing U.S. automakers." October 31-November 3, 2008 asked about: "The possible merger of automakers General Motors and Chrysler." May 18-21, 2007 asked about: "DaimlerChrysler's decision to sell Chrysler to a private equity firm." January, 1992 and December, 2005 asked about: "The major job cuts announced by General Motors." June, 1998 asked about: "The merger of the Chrysler Corporation and Daimler Benz." September 28-October 1, 2007 asked about "An agreement between General Motors and the United Auto Workers union that ended a two-day strike over wages and job security."

Q.3 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 2-5, 2007	27	37	16	19	1=100
October 19-22, 2007	25	34	20	21	*=100
August 10-13, 2007	28	36	18	18	*=100
Mid-November, 2006	31	40	17	11	1=100
December, 2005	35	35	18	11	1=100
Early November, 2005	35	39	17	9	*=100
Mid-May, 2005	30	39	19	11	1=100
January, 2005	35	41	17	7	*=100
Mid-October, 2004	30	43	16	10	1=100
Early September, 2004	39	34	15	11	1=100
Mid-January, 2004	37	41	15	7	*=100
December, 2003	35	38	14	11	2=100
November, 2003	40	34	15	10	1=100
October, 2003	32	39	16	12	1=100
September, 2003	39	30	18	12	1=100
March, 2003	40	35	16	8	1=100
February, 2003	42	33	15	10	*=100
January, 2003	40	35	13	11	1=100
December, 2002	38	34	17	10	1=100
February, 2002	35	40	15	9	1=100
January, 2002	30	44	16	9	1=100
December, 2001	37	40	13	8	2=100
Mid-November, 2001	41	36	15	7	1=100
June, 2001	24	41	18	16	1=100
May, 2001	34	36	15	15	0=100
April, 2001	36	34	16	13	1=100
February, 2001	30	39	18	12	1=100
January, 2001	32	38	17	11	2=100
June, 1995	26	41	22	11	*=100
March, 1995	27	45	19	9	*=100
February, 1995	23	41	22	13	1=100
December, 1994	28	43	20	9	*=100
October, 1994	27	40	20	12	1=100
June, 1994	25	42	23	10	*=100
May, 1994	33	40	16	10	1=100
January, 1994	34	39	16	10	1=100
Early January, 1994	36	44	13	7	*=100
December, 1993	35	41	15	8	1=100
October, 1993	33	38	20	9	*=100
September, 1993	37	40	14	8	1=100
Early September, 1993	39	39	14	9	*=100
August, 1993	41	36	14	9	*=100
May, 1993	37	38	18	6	1=100
February, 1993	49	36	10	5	*=100
January, 1993	42	39	12	7	*=100
September, 1992	43	37	13	6	1=100
May, 1992	39	39	15	6	1=100
March, 1992	47	38	11	4	*=100
February, 1992	47	37	10	6	*=100
January, 1992	44	40	11	5	*=100
October, 1991	36	38	16	9	1=100

Q.3 CONTINUED...

	Very <u>Closely</u>	Fairly <u>Closely</u>	Not too <u>Closely</u>	Not at all <u>Closely</u>	DK/ <u>Refused</u>
c. The terrorist attacks in Mumbai, India	29	37	20	14	*=100
TREND FOR COMPARISON:²					
July 6-9, 2007: Investigation into London car bombings	34	30	19	16	1=100
June 29-July 2, 2007: London car bomb	34	31	16	18	1=100
August, 2006: <i>British officials stop terror plot</i>	54	26	9	9	2=100
July, 2005: The terrorist bombings in London, England	48	37	11	4	*=100
March, 2004: The terrorist bombings in Madrid, Spain	34	35	18	12	1=100
d. Barack Obama's appointments and plans for his administration	36	38	15	11	*=100
November 21-24, 2008³	49	24	15	12	*=100
November 14-17, 2008	32	37	16	15	*=100
November 7-10, 2008	39	30	17	14	*=100
TREND FOR COMPARISON:⁴					
January, 2001: <i>G.W. Bush's appointments</i>	26	32	24	17	1=100
January, 1993: <i>Clinton's appointments</i>	24	42	22	11	1=100
e. Reports about President Bush's last days in the White House	13	25	26	35	1=100
f. Reports about the rising unemployment rate	40	33	17	10	*=100
November 7-10, 2008	39	32	17	12	*=100
June 6-9, 2008	25	31	23	21	*=100

Q.4 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.]**

- 29 Reports about the conditions of the U.S. economy
 - 19 Barack Obama's appointments and plans for his administration
 - 18 The debate in Congress over a government bailout for the U.S. auto industry
 - 10 The terrorist attacks in Mumbai, India
 - 8 Reports about the rising unemployment rate
 - 2 Reports about President Bush's last days in the White House
 - 5 Some other story (**VOL. SPECIFY**)
 - 2 Don't know/Refused (**VOL.**)
- 100

² July 6-9, 2007 asked about: "The investigation into who was responsible for car bombs that were discovered in London and a car bomb that went off at an airport in Scotland." June 29-July 2, 2007 asked about: "British police finding and defusing a car bomb in London." August, 2006 asked about: "British officials stopping a terrorist plot to blow up planes flying to the U.S."

³ For November 7-10, 2008 through November 21-24, 2008 the item was listed as: "Plans for the new Obama administration."

⁴ January, 2001 asked about: "George W. Bush's cabinet choices and other high level appointments." January 1, 1993 asked about "Bill Clinton's cabinet choices and other high level appointments."

On a different subject...

Q.5 In your opinion are news stories about the new Obama administration **[READ]**

56	Mostly positive
3	Mostly negative [OR]
38	A mix of positive and negative
<u>3</u>	Don't know/Refused (VOL. DO NOT READ)
100	