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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:
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Fewer See Press Coverage of President as Fair
LITTLE SIGN OF OBAMA FATIGUE

No one has gotten more media coverage and attention in recent months than Barack Obama, but only about a third of Americans (34%) say they are hearing too much about the nation's new president. More than half (54%) say they are hearing the right amount about Obama as he works to put his agenda in place and grapple with a global economic crisis.

Fewer Hearing "Too Much" About Obama

	<i>-2008 Campaign-</i>		
	Aug 2008*	Oct 2008	Mar 2009
<i>How much have you been hearing about Barack Obama?</i>	%	%	%
Too much	48	41	34
Too little	10	10	8
Right amount	41	47	54
Don't know	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>4</u>
	100	100	100

* Surveys conducted in August and October, 2008 asked about candidate Obama.

This is in contrast to perceptions about candidate Obama in early August 2008, when 48% said they were hearing too much about the presumptive Democratic nominee and 41% said they were hearing the right amount.

Not surprisingly, the current impressions differ significantly by party. In the latest weekly News Interest Index survey, conducted March 27-30 by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, nearly six-in-ten Republicans (59%) say they have been hearing too much about Obama. Only 16% of Democrats and 33% of independents agree. About a third of Republicans (32%) say Obama has gotten the right amount of coverage, compared with 76% of Democrats and 50% of independents.

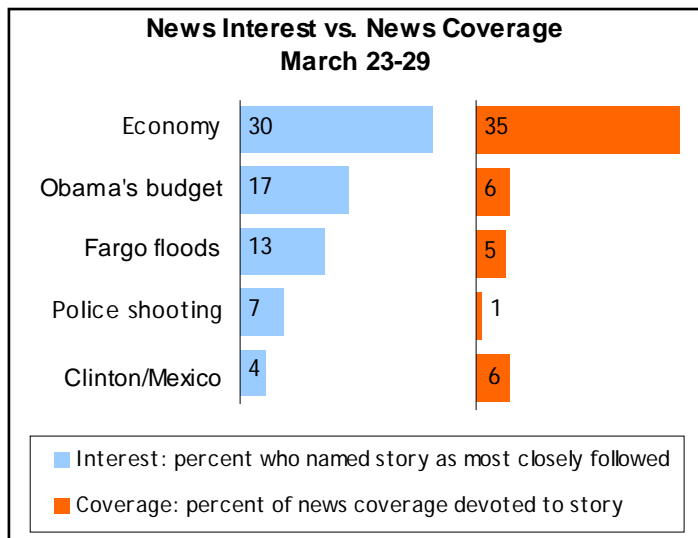
Wide Partisan Differences on Obama Coverage

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Rep</u>	<u>Dem</u>	<u>Ind</u>
<i>How much have you been hearing about Barack Obama?</i>	%	%	%	%
Too much	34	59	16	33
Too little	8	7	5	13
Right amount	54	32	76	50
Don't know	<u>4</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>
	100	100	100	100
<i>Has press coverage of Barack Obama been...</i>	%	%	%	%
Too critical	18	5	29	19
Not critical enough	24	52	4	25
Fair	52	35	63	52
Don't know	<u>6</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>
	100	100	100	100

At the same time, the proportion of Americans that say the press has been fair in its coverage of Obama has dipped since shortly after his Jan. 20 inauguration from 64% to 52%. The share saying the press has not been critical enough has risen from 18% in January to 24% currently, while the share saying the press has been too critical has risen from 12% to 18%.

More than half of Republicans (52%) say the press has not been critical enough of Obama, compared with 25% of independents and just 4% of Democrats. More than six-in-ten Democrats (63%) and 52% of independents say the press has been fair in coverage of the president; 35% of Republicans agree.

The economy, meanwhile, continues to dominate both public interest and news coverage. Three-in-ten say they followed reports about the economy more closely than any other story last week. Another 17% say they followed reports on Obama’s budget proposal most closely and 8% say they followed administration plans to expand federal regulation of financial institutions most closely. Stories about the economy – including Obama’s budget proposal – filled up 41% of the media newshole, according to the Pew Research Center’s Project for Excellence in Journalism.



Perceptions Change Post-Election

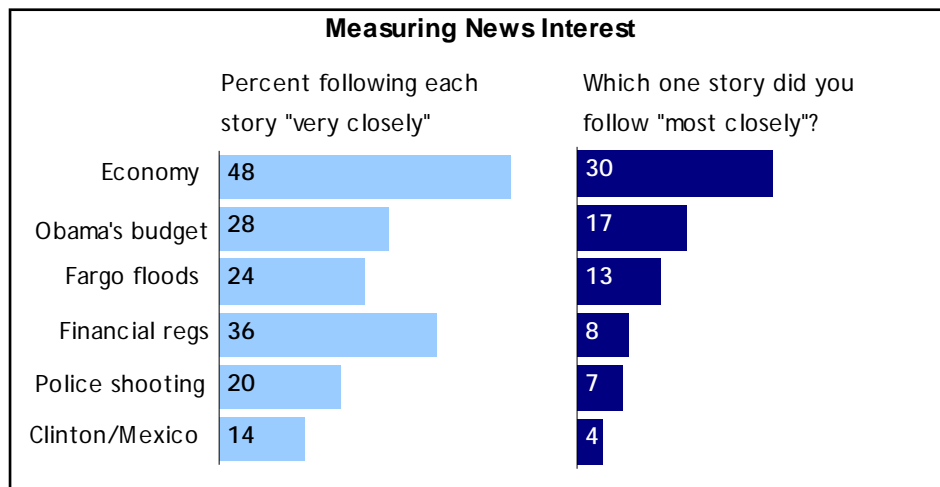
With Obama’s historic campaign dominating media coverage in the run up to the Nov. 4 election, many at times seemed to think the Democratic candidate was overexposed. In early August, about two-thirds of Republicans (67%) said they were hearing too much about Obama, compared with 51% of independents and 34% of Democrats.

By late October, 41% said they were hearing too much about Obama, while a similar share (46%) said they were hearing too much about Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin, the Republican vice presidential candidate. In both cases, partisans were sharply divided, with a majority of Democrats (58%) saying they had heard too much about Palin, and even greater percentage of Republicans (66%) saying they had heard too much about Obama. At that time, a smaller proportion of the public (31%) said they were hearing too much about GOP presidential nominee John McCain.

Currently, there is little evidence of “Obama fatigue,” despite his many appearances on news and entertainment programs – including the Tonight Show with Jay Leno – and intensive press coverage of the new president. Since he took office, Obama has repeatedly been the top newsmaker each week as measured by PEJ – based on the number of stories counted in which he plays a prominent role. The last week in which Obama was not the top newsmaker was in mid-December, during the transition, when Ill. Gov. Rod Blagojevich, a Democrat, was arrested on corruption charges that included allegations he sought to sell Obama’s then vacant senate seat.

Closely Watching Economic News

The public continues to track news about the U.S. economy closely as American automakers struggle, stock markets prove volatile, real estate values drop further, and jobs disappear. Nearly half (48%) say they followed economic news last week very closely. Three-in-ten say they followed news about the economy more closely than any other story last week. According to PEJ, news about the economic crisis took up 35% of the newshole.



More than a quarter (28%) say they followed Obama’s budget proposal very closely, while 17% say that was the story they followed most closely last week. Budget coverage filled about 6% of the newshole.

The menacing floods in Fargo, N.D., attracted the very close attention of 24% of the public, while 13% say that was the story they followed most closely. Stories about the flooding that forced the evacuation of thousands made up 5% of the newshole.

About a third (36%) say they very closely followed news about the Obama administration’s plans to expand financial regulation of financial institutions in response to the economic crisis; 8% say that was the story they followed most closely.

Two-in-ten say they very closely followed news about a horrific shooting incident in Oakland, Cal., that left four police officers dead; 7% say that was the story they followed most closely. According to PEJ, coverage of that story made up about 1% of the newshole.

A smaller share (14%) say they very closely followed news about Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's recent trip to Mexico to discuss drug violence near the border. For 4%, this was the story they followed most closely last week. Stories about the Mexican drug war made up about 6% of the newshole measured by PEJ.

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 March 23-29, 2009 and survey data measuring public interest in the top news stories of the week were collected March 27-30, 2009 from a nationally representative sample of 1,001 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. 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:

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PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE & THE PRESS
MARCH 27-30, 2009 NEWS INTEREST INDEX OMNIBUS SURVEY
TOPLINE
N=1001

Q.1 All things considered... these days have you been hearing too much, too little, or the right amount about Barack Obama?

		Oct 24-27, <u>2008</u> ¹	Aug 1-4, <u>2008</u>
34	Too much	41	48
8	Too little	10	10
54	Right amount	47	41
<u>4</u>	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>
100		100	100

Q.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>	<u>DK/ Refused</u>
a. Floods in and around Fargo, North Dakota	24	33	19	24	*=100
TREND FOR COMPARISON:	39	36	14	11	*=100
June 20-23, 2008: Floods in the Midwest	34	34	18	14	*=100
June 13-16, 2008					
August 24-27, 2007: Floods in the Midwest and the plain states	27	35	20	18	*=100
July 6-9, 2007: Floods in Texas and the plains states	21	29	24	26	*=100
January, 2006: <i>Floods in California</i>	20	31	28	20	1=100
April, 2001: <i>Floods in the Midwest</i>	20	34	24	22	*=100
January, 1997: <i>Floods in the Pacific Northwest</i>	34	37	14	14	1=100
March, 1995: <i>Floods in California</i>	37	40	18	5	*=100
August, 1993: <i>Floods in the Midwest</i>	65	27	6	2	*=100
June, 1990: <i>Flooding in Texas and other Southwestern states</i>	34	39	17	10	*=100
b. The debate over Barack Obama's budget proposal	28	34	18	19	1=100
TREND FOR COMPARISON:²					
Feb 27-March 2, 2009: Obama's budget proposal to increase spending, raise taxes on the wealthy	47	34	9	10	*=100
February, 2002: <i>Debate in Congress over G.W. Bush's budget and tax cut plan</i>	17	31	28	23	1=100
April, 2001	24	38	20	18	*=100
February, 2001: <i>G.W. Bush's tax cut plan</i>	31	35	19	14	1=100

¹ For Aug. 1-4 and Oct. 24-27, 2008, the question was preceded by "Thinking about the presidential campaign. Also, the question then was asked about both Obama and John McCain, in random order.

² Feb. 27 to March 2, 2009, asked about "Barack Obama's budget proposal for next year that raises taxes on wealthy Americans and increases spending on health care, education and other programs." April, 2001 and February, 2002 asked about "The debate in Congress over George W. Bush's budget and tax cut plan." February, 2001 asked about "George W. Bush's tax-cut plan."

Q.2 CONTINUED...

	<u>Very closely</u>	<u>Fairly closely</u>	<u>Not too closely</u>	<u>Not at all closely</u>	<u>DK/ Refused</u>
c. Reports about the condition of the U.S. economy	48	32	10	10	*=100
March 20-23, 2009	52	34	8	6	*=100
March 13-16, 2009	48	33	9	10	*=100
February 27-March 2, 2009	56	30	8	6	*=100
February 13-16, 2009	55	29	10	6	*=100
January 30-February 2, 2009	52	31	12	5	*=100
January 23-26, 2009	57	30	8	5	0=100
January 16-19, 2009	43	35	13	9	*=100
January 2-4, 2009	42	36	15	7	*=100
December 12-15, 2008	51	33	9	7	*=100
December 5-8, 2008	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
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

Q.2 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	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
d. A shooting in Oakland, California in which four police officers were killed	20	24	21	34	1=100
e. The Obama administration's plans to expand federal regulations over financial institutions	36	29	19	16	*=100

Q.2 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. Hillary Clinton's recent trip to Mexico to discuss drug violence near the border	14	24	23	39	*=100
TRENDS FOR COMPARISON:					
Feb 27-March 2: <i>News about growing drug-related violence in Mexico</i>	18	28	23	31	*=100
Jan. 23-26, 2009: <i>Hillary Clinton becoming secretary of state</i>	24	30	24	22	*=100

Q.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.]**

- 30 Reports about the condition of the U.S. economy
- 17 The debate over Barack Obama's budget proposal
- 13 Floods in and around Fargo, North Dakota
- The Obama administration's plans to expand federal regulations over the financial institutions
- 8 A shooting in Oakland, California in which four police officers were killed
- 7 Hillary Clinton's recent trip to Mexico to discuss drug violence near the border
- 4 Some other story (**SPECIFY**)
- 9 Don't know/Refused
- 12
- 100

Q.4 Do you think the press has been too critical, not critical enough or fair in the way it has covered Barack Obama?

		Jan 23-26, <u>2009³</u>	Jan 2-4, <u>2009</u>
18	Too critical	12	11
24	Not critical enough	18	23
52	Fair	64	61
<u>6</u>	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	<u>6</u>	<u>5</u>
100		100	100

³ For Jan. 23-26, 2009, question wording was: "Do you think the press has been too critical, not critical enough or fair in the way it has covered Barack Obama during his first few days in office?" For Jan. 2-4, 2009, question was asked about George W. Bush and Barack Obama. Question wording was: "Do you think the press has been too critical, not critical enough or fair in the way it has covered [INSERT ITEM; ROTATE]?"

On another topic...

Q.5 All in all, do you think the government is on the right track or the wrong track in the way it is handling economic problems facing the nation?

		Feb 20-23, <u>2009</u>	Jan 16-19, <u>2009</u>
50	Right track	47	31
39	Wrong track	34	48
<u>11</u>	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	<u>19</u>	<u>21</u>
100		100	100

Q.6 How much if anything, have you heard about each of the following? Have you heard a lot, a little or nothing at all? **[READ AND RANDOMIZE]**

		<u>A lot</u>	<u>A little</u>	<u>Nothing at all</u>	<u>DK/Refused</u>
a.	Medical research indicating that eating too much red meat may increase the chances of premature death	20	44	36	*=100
	TREND FOR COMPARISON:				
	Nov. 9-12, 2007: <i>Study suggesting that being overweight does NOT increase the risk of dying of certain diseases</i>	16	36	47	1=100
b.	Medical research indicating that prostate cancer testing may not help to save men's lives	13	32	54	1=100
c.	Michelle Obama starting a vegetable garden on the White House grounds	19	41	40	*=100
	TREND FOR COMPARISON:				
	June 20-23, 2008: <i>Michelle Obama's appearance on the daytime TV show The View</i>	29	31	40	*=100
	Feb. 22-25, 2008: <i>Michelle Obama saying this is first time in her adult life she has been really proud of her country</i>	35	25	39	1=100