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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:
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More Women Than Men Track Royal Visit
OBAMA’S TRIP CLOSELY FOLLOWED

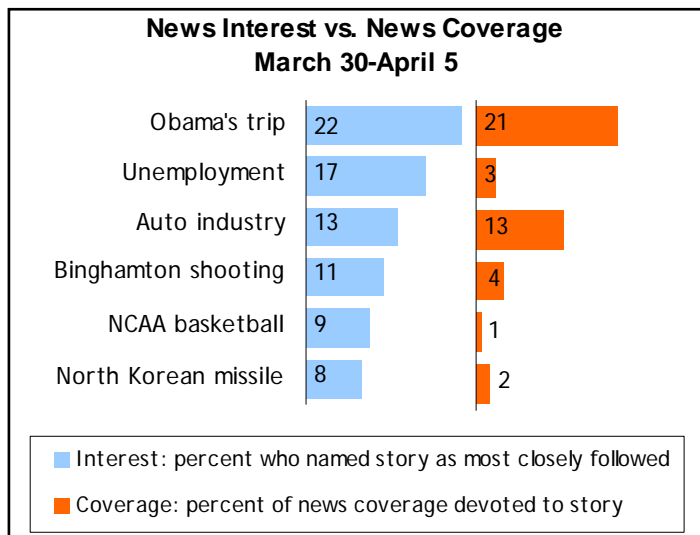
Americans tracked President Obama’s first European trip more closely than other major news stories last week and much more closely than George W. Bush’s first year international summit travels in 2001.

A quarter say they followed Obama’s trip and meetings with foreign leaders very closely, while 35% say they followed the trip fairly closely. In July 2001, just 6% followed Bush’s trip to the G-8 Summit in Italy very closely, while another 21% followed it fairly closely.

More than one-in-five (22%) cited Obama’s trip when asked which of six top stories they followed most closely last week. Still, the latest weekly News Interest Index survey, conducted April 3-6 by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, shows that economic troubles at home were not far behind: 17% say they followed reports about rising unemployment most closely and 13% say they followed reports about financial problems in the U.S. auto industry most closely.

Far More Follow Obama’s First Trip than followed Bush’s

	2001 G-8 Bush trip	2009 G-20 Obama trip
	%	%
Very closely	6	25
Fairly closely	21	35
Not too closely	31	21
Not at all closely	40	19
Don’t know	2	*
	100	100



Democrats were much more likely than Republicans to say they followed news about Obama's trip more closely than any other story (30% vs. 14%). By comparison, slightly more Republicans (11%) than Democrats (6%) say they most closely followed news about North Korea's plans to test a long range missile.

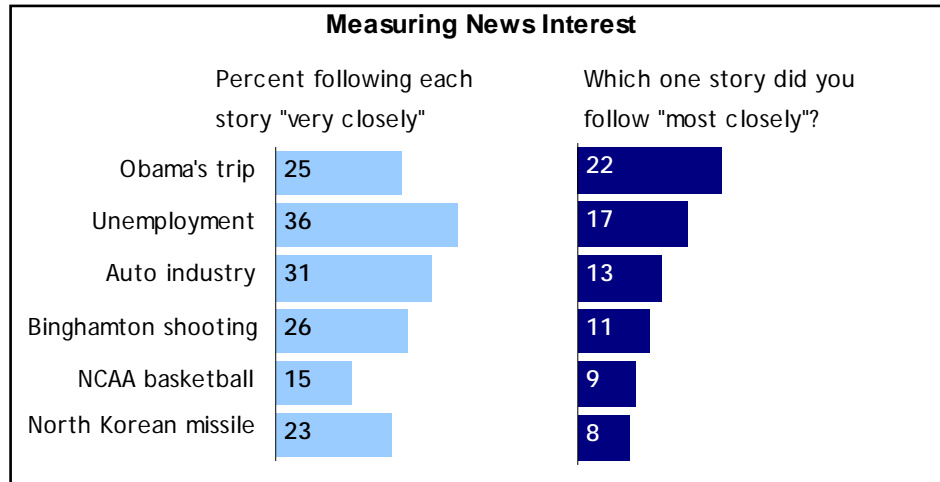
	<u>Total</u>	<u>Rep</u>	<u>Dem</u>	<u>Ind</u>
<i>Story followed most closely:</i>	%	%	%	%
Obama's Europe trip	22	14	30	19
Rising unemployment	17	18	17	15
Auto industry's financial problems	13	15	10	15
Binghamton, NY shooting	11	11	9	12
NCAA basketball tournament	9	10	13	6
North Korea's long range missile	8	11	6	8
Other/Don't know	<u>20</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>25</u>
	100	100	100	100

Meanwhile, most people say they heard at least a little about Barack and Michelle Obama's meeting with the Queen of England. More than four-in-ten (43%) say they heard a lot about the Buckingham Palace get-together, while another 38% say they had heard a little about the visit. Nearly half of women (49%) say they had heard a lot about the meeting with Queen Elizabeth, compared with 36% of men.

The Obama trip also proved to be the story that got the most media coverage last week. A separate content analysis by the Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism found that news about the trip – which continued this week with stops in Turkey and Iraq – took up 21% of the newshole. Meanwhile, the domestic economic crisis made up 19% of news coverage, including 3% for the latest unemployment news. Separately, coverage of the troubles facing the U.S. auto industry accounted for 13% of coverage, according to PEJ.

In addition to asking which of the top stories people followed most closely, the survey also evaluates interest in those news stories by asking if respondents have been following them very closely, fairly closely, not too closely, or not at all closely. More than a third (36%) say they followed reports about rising unemployment very closely. In early March, following the release of a dismal federal jobs report, 42% said they were following the news very closely. Last week unemployment stories accounted for 3% of the newshole measured by PEJ.

The troubles facing the U.S. auto industry attracted similar interest, with 31% saying they followed those stories very closely. Interest in the auto industry's problems was comparable in late February (33% very closely), when General Motors and Chrysler were seeking billions in federal loans to avoid bankruptcy.



On this scale, Obama's trip measured similar levels of interest as the horrific shootings at an immigration services center in Binghamton, N.Y., last Friday. A quarter say they followed news of the trip very closely, compared with 26% for the New York killings that occurred the day the survey went into the field. The incident took place late in the week and took up 4% of the newshole.

North Korea's testing of a long range missile was followed very closely by 23% of the public. That is similar to the share of the public that followed North Korea's steps toward halting its nuclear weapons program last June (19% very closely). Only 8% say the missile test was the story they followed most closely last week. Also occurring late in the week, the missile test made up 2% of the newshole.

Some 15% say they followed news about the NCAA basketball tournament very closely. Just under one-in-ten (9%) say this was the story they followed most closely. The numbers are similar to those for last year's tournament, when 13% said they followed the tournament very closely. Not surprisingly, men were considerably more likely to say they were following the tournament very closely (21%) than women (10%).

Tobacco Tax Hike Widely Heard about

News about the largest ever increase in federal taxes on cigarettes and other tobacco products registered widely with the public. Fully 38% say they heard a lot about the tax hike taking effect. Another 42% heard a little about this, while 20% heard nothing at all.

	What the Public's Been Hearing About...			
	A lot	A little	Nothing at all	DK
<i>How much have you heard about...</i>	%	%	%	%
The Obamas meeting Queen Elizabeth	43	38	19	*=100
Largest ever increase in tobacco taxes	38	42	20	*=100
Recall of pistachio nuts	33	47	20	*=100
End of the TV drama ER	18	33	49	*=100

The new federal tobacco tax was not as widely heard about as a 1998 dispute between the tobacco companies and the government over the advertising and sale of tobacco products. In June 1998, 72% reported hearing a lot about that debate.

A third say they heard a lot about the recent recall of pistachio nuts because of potential salmonella contamination, while another 47% say they heard a little about this. Like many other health and safety stories, a greater share of women (40%) than men (25%) heard a lot about the pistachio recall.

Few Americans (18%) heard a lot about the final episode of the long running NBC television drama, ER. One-in-three (33%) reported hearing a little about this, but close to half (49%) heard nothing at all about the ER finale. While the show's last episode did not register widely with the public, about twice as many women (23%) as men (12%) said they had heard a lot about the hospital drama's finale.

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 30-April 5, 2009 and survey data measuring public interest in the top news stories of the week were collected April 3-6, 2009 from a nationally representative sample of 1,007 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
APRIL 3-6, 2009 NEWS INTEREST INDEX OMNIBUS SURVEY
TOPLINE
N=1007

Q.1 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. Reports about the rising unemployment rate	36	37	16	11	*=100
March 6-9, 2009	42	33	13	11	1=100
February 6-9, 2009	44	36	11	9	*=100
January 9-12, 2009	45	34	14	7	*=100
December 5-8, 2008	40	33	17	10	*=100
November 7-10, 2008	39	32	17	12	*=100
June 6-9, 2008	25	31	23	21	*=100
b. Financial problems in the U.S. auto industry	31	35	16	18	*=100
TRENDS FOR COMPARISON:¹					
February 20-23, 2009: U.S. automakers seeking billions in federal loans to avoid bankruptcy	33	34	22	11	*=100
December 19-22, 2008: Bush administration plan for emergency loans to U.S. automakers	37	33	16	13	1=100
December 12-15, 2008: Debate over a government bailout for U.S. auto industry	40	33	18	9	*=100
December 5-8, 2008: Debate in Congress over a bailout for U.S. auto industry	34	38	17	11	*=100
November 21-24, 2008	41	26	17	15	1=100
November 14-17, 2008: Problems facing U.S. automakers	30	35	20	15	*=100
October 31-November 3, 2008: 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: General Motors job cuts	22	30	26	21	1=100
June, 1998: Chrysler/Daimler Benz merger	12	22	27	38	1=100
January, 1992: General Motors job cuts	35	38	18	9	*=100

¹ February 20-23, 2009 asked about: “U.S. automakers seeking billions of dollars in federal loans to avoid bankruptcy.” December 19-22, 2008 asked about “The Bush administration’s plan to provide billions in emergency loans to U.S. automakers.” December 12-15, 2008 asked about “The debate over a government bailout for the U.S. auto industry.” November 21-24, 2008 and December 5-8, 2008 asked about “The debate in Congress over a government bailout for the U.S. auto industry.” 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.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>
c. Barack Obama's trip to Europe and meetings with foreign leaders	25	35	21	19	*=100
TRENDS FOR COMPARISON:²					
July, 2001: <i>G.W. Bush's trip to Europe to attend G-8 Summit</i>	6	21	31	40	2=100
d. A shooter killing several people at an immigration services center in Binghamton, New York	26	32	19	23	*=100
TREND FOR COMPARISON:³					
March 13-16, 2009: Alabama shooting spree	18	33	24	25	*=100
February 8-11, 2008: Missouri city council meeting	13	28	25	33	1=100
December 14-17, 2007: Colorado religious centers	17	31	24	27	1=100
December 7-10, 2007: Omaha mall	30	36	18	15	1=100
e. The NCAA basketball tournament	15	12	15	58	*=100
March 28-31, 2008	13	14	13	59	1=100
March, 1998	20	13	19	47	1=100
April, 1990	24	16	14	46	*=100
f. North Korea's plans to test a long range missile	23	31	19	27	*=100
TREND FOR COMPARISON:⁴					
June 27-30, 2008: North Korea takes steps to halt its nuclear weapons program	19	30	26	24	1=100
February 16-19, 2007: Nuclear weapons negotiations	15	31	22	31	1=100
Late October, 2006: <i>Nuclear weapons test</i>	45	33	13	8	1=100
February, 2005: <i>Nuclear weapons program</i>	22	34	22	22	*=100
September, 2003	19	32	27	21	1=100
May, 2003	27	40	22	11	*=100
March, 2003	34	34	19	12	1=100
February, 2003	33	34	18	13	2=100
January, 2003	33	34	18	14	1=100
Late October, 2002: <i>Admits to secret weapons program</i>	25	31	23	20	1=100
June, 1994: Refuses U.N. inspections	27	33	26	14	*=100

² July, 2001 asked about: "George W. Bush's trip to Europe to attend the G-8 Summit in Genoa, Italy." This question was not asked as part of a list.

³ March 13-16, 2009 asked about "A shooting spree in Alabama that resulted in the death of 11 people." February 8-11, 2008 asked about "A shooting at a city council meeting in Missouri where six people were killed." December 14-17, 2007 asked about "Shootings at two religious centers in Colorado." December 7-10, 2007, asked about "A shooting at a shopping mall in Omaha, Nebraska where eight people were killed."

⁴ June 27-30, 2008 asked about: "North Korea taking steps to halt its nuclear weapons program." February 16-19, 2007 asked about: "Recent negotiations to shut down North Korea's nuclear weapons program." October, 2006 asked about: "North Korea's announcement that it recently tested a nuclear weapon." January, 2003 to February, 2005 asked about: "North Korea's nuclear weapons program." Late October, 2002 asked about: "North Korea's admission that it has been secretly developing nuclear weapons." June, 1994 asked about: "Reports about North Korea's building of nuclear weapons and refusal to allow UN inspections."

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.]

- 22 Barack Obama's trip to Europe and meetings with foreign leaders
- 17 Reports about the rising unemployment rate
- 13 Financial problems for the U.S. auto industry
- 11 A shooter killing several people at an immigration services center in Binghamton, New York
- 9 The NCAA basketball tournament
- 8 North Korea's plans to test a long range missile
- 8 Some other story (SPECIFY)
- 12 Don't know/Refused
- 100

Q.3 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. The recall of pistachio nuts due to potential salmonella contamination	33	47	20	*=100
TREND FOR COMPARISON:				
<i>July 3-7, 2008: An outbreak of salmonella possibly linked to fresh tomatoes</i>	66	28	6	*=100
b. The end of the TV drama ER	18	33	49	*=100
c. Barack and Michelle Obama meeting with the Queen of England	43	38	19	*=100
d. The largest ever increase in U.S. taxes on tobacco and cigarettes	38	42	20	*=100
TREND FOR COMPARISON:⁵				
<i>June, 1998: The dispute between the tobacco industry and the federal and state governments regarding the advertising and sale of tobacco products</i>	72	23	5	*=100
	<u>Heard A lot</u>	<u>Heard something</u>	<u>Never heard of</u>	<u>DK/ Refused</u>
<i>June, 1990: Proposed further restrictions on cigarette Advertising</i>	32	44	23	1=100

⁵ The June, 2008, trend for comparison was not asked as part of a list. For June, 1990 the question stem was worded "As I read a list of names, places or events tell me if you have heard a lot about it, something about it or never heard of?"