



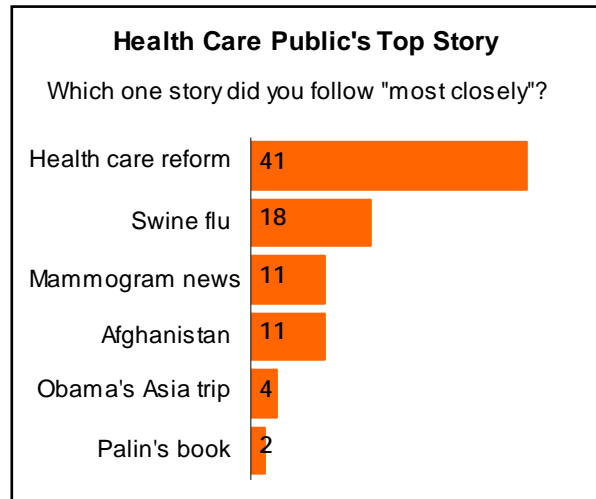
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:
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Surprise, Disagreement Over Mammogram Guidelines **STRONG INTEREST IN HEALTH CARE, LITTLE INTEREST IN PALIN**

The debate over health care reform dominated the public's news interests last week, even as other stories – including the furor over new mammogram guidelines and Sarah Palin's book tour – vied for the news media's attention.

Fully 41% cite the health care debate as their most closely followed story of the week, far more than the percentage citing any other story. Nearly one-in-five (18%) name reports about swine flu as their top story, while somewhat fewer (11% each) cite the new mammogram guidelines and the debate over sending more U.S. forces to Afghanistan. Just 4% say that President Obama's trip to Asia was their top story and even fewer – 2% of the public – cite news about Sarah Palin and her new book.



The health care debate also was the week's top story in terms of news coverage, accounting for 13% of the newshole, according to a separate study by the Project for Excellence in Journalism (PEJ). But while Palin's book tour drew about as much coverage as the controversy over mammogram guidelines (8% vs. 7%), reports about the new guidelines attracted far more interest among the public.

Most Americans (52%) say they have been hearing too much about Palin, while 26% say they have been hearing the right amount and 13% say they have been hearing too little about her. Far more say they are hearing too much about Palin now than in July, after her surprise resignation as Alaska's governor (38%).

The Pew Research Center's latest weekly News Interest Index, conducted Nov. 20-23 among 1,002 adults, finds that 70% of those who followed the news about the changes in mammogram guidelines at least fairly closely say they were surprised by new recommendations made by a federally appointed task force. And by greater than three-to-one (68% to 22%), more say they disagree than agree with the new guidelines.

The survey also finds that the public's view about whether a health care reform bill will pass over the next year are little changed by Senate passage Nov. 21 of a procedural measure that allowed the Senate to begin debate on health care legislation. Overall, 52% say they think a bill will pass over the next year while 37% say it will not. That is little changed from the previous week, when 49% said a bill will pass.

Too Much Palin Coverage?

Nearly one-in-five Republicans (18%) say they paid very close attention to news about Palin and her new book, "Going Rogue," compared with 11% of independents and just 3% of Democrats. Yet small percentages in all three groups say this was the story they followed most closely (5% among Republicans, 1% among Democrats, 2% among independents).

Overall, the proportion saying they are hearing too much about Palin has risen from 38% in July to 52% currently. Virtually all of the increase has come among Democrats and independents. Fully 72% of Democrats say they are hearing too much about Palin, up from 45% in July. Half of independents express this view, up more modestly from 38% four months ago.

<i>Hearing about Palin...</i>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Rep</u>	<u>Dem</u>	<u>Ind</u>
Nov. 20-23	%	%	%	%
Too much	52	29	72	50
Too little	13	15	6	15
Right amount	26	48	11	28
Don't know	<u>9</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>7</u>
	100	100	100	100
July 10-13	<u>Total</u>	<u>Rep</u>	<u>Dem</u>	<u>Ind</u>
Too much	38	27	45	38
Too little	18	22	19	15
Right amount	40	47	31	44
Don't know	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>3</u>
	100	100	100	100

Q3. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

Republicans' views about the amount of coverage of Palin have changed very little from July. As was the case at that time, nearly half of Republicans (48%) say they are hearing the right amount about Palin; 29% say they are hearing too much about the former Alaska governor while 15% say they are hearing too little.

Views of Mammogram Guidelines

Women tracked news about revised breast cancer screening recommendations much more closely than men last week: 45% of women say they followed reports about new guidelines on when women should get mammograms very closely, compared with 22% of men. Close to two-in-ten (17%) women say this was the story they followed most closely, compared with 5% of men.

About a quarter (26%) of women who followed the news about the new guidelines very or fairly closely say they agree with the recommendations, while 66% say they disagree. A smaller percentage of men say they agree (16%), while 72% say they disagree.

With the debate over broad health care legislation underway in Congress, partisans also express slightly different takes on the guideline changes. About three-quarters of Republicans (77%) who closely followed news about the mammogram controversy say they disagree with the panel recommendations; 15% say they agree. Among Democrats, 60% say they disagree, while close to three-in-ten (29%) agree. Among independents, 71% disagree, while 19% agree.

Equal percentages of women and men who followed this news very or fairly closely say they were surprised by the new guidelines (70% each). Partisans express roughly similar levels of surprise: 76% among Republicans, 70% among Democrats and 67% among independents.

Prospects for Health Care Reform

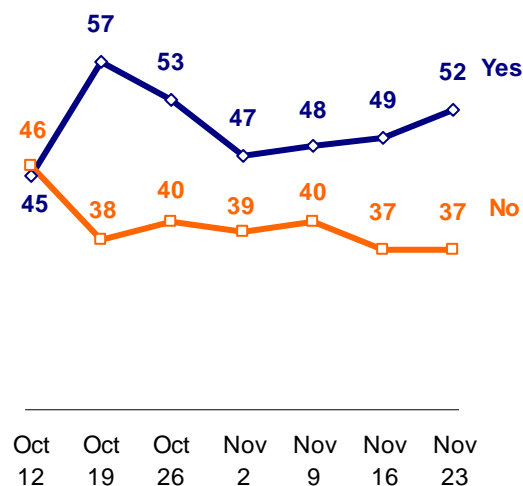
A 52% majority of the public thinks a health care reform bill will pass over the next year; 37% say that they do not expect a bill to pass and 11% aren't sure. Opinion on this question has been largely stable throughout the month of November. And despite the Nov. 21 procedural vote in the Senate, which allowed for debate on a bill to begin, the public did not shift its views on the prospects for reform. Respondents interviewed in the two days immediately following the vote were no more likely than those interviewed prior to the vote to

Most Who Followed Mammogram News Disagree with Recommendations

Mammogram recommendations...	Total %	Men %	Women %
Agree	22	16	26
Disagree	68	72	66
Don't know	10	12	8
	100	100	100

Q6. Based on those who followed news about guidelines for mammograms very or fairly closely. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

Will There Be Health Care Reform?



say they expected a health care reform bill to pass.

As has consistently been the case, Democrats are more likely than Republicans and independents to say they think a health care reform bill will pass over the next year. Two-thirds (66%) of Democrats expect a bill to pass compared with 49% of independents and 40% of Republicans.

What the Public Has Been Hearing About

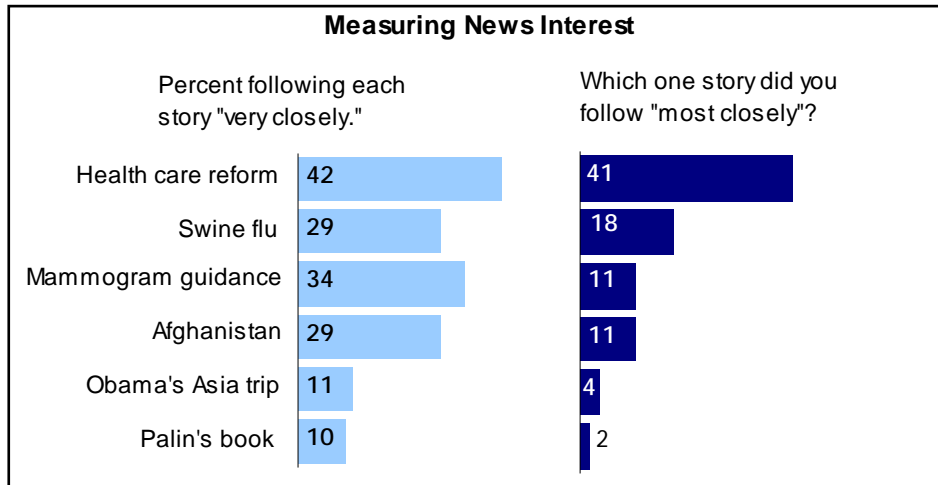
About a third of the public (35%) heard a lot about controversy surrounding Attorney General Eric Holder’s decision to try the 9/11 terror suspects in a federal court in New York; 38% heard a little about this while 27% heard nothing at all. The story registered more widely with Republicans (42% a lot) than with Democrats (29% a lot).

What the Public Has Been Hearing About			
	A <u>lot</u> %	A <u>little</u> %	Nothing/ <u>Don't know</u> %
Controversy over Attorney General Eric Holder's decision to try the 9/11 terror suspects in New York	35	38	27
Oprah Winfrey announcing that she will end her daytime talk show in 2011	33	45	22
A computer failure that disrupted air travel across the country	16	40	44
Q7a-c. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.			

About the same percentage of the public heard a lot about Oprah Winfrey announcing that she will end her daytime talk show in 2011: 33% heard a lot about this, 45% a little and 22% nothing at all. Women were somewhat more likely than men to have heard a lot about this (38% compared with 28%).

A computer failure that disrupted air travel across the country did not make much of an impression on the public. Just 16% heard a lot about this story while 40% heard a little. A plurality (44%) heard nothing at all about the air travel glitch.

The Week's Top Stories



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 November 16-22, 2009 and survey data measuring public interest in the top news stories of the week were collected November 20-23, 2009 from a nationally representative sample of 1,002 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 landline 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 4 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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Jacob Poushter, Research Assistant

PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE & THE PRESS
November 20-23, 2009 NEWS INTEREST INDEX OMNIBUS SURVEY
FINAL TOPLINE
N=1002

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. President Obama’s trip to Asia					
November 20-23, 2009	11	19	29	41	*
November 13-16, 2009	8	19	28	44	1
TREND FOR COMPARISON:					
August 14-17, 2009: <i>President Obama’s trip to Mexico</i>	9	20	26	44	*
July 10-13, 2009: <i>President Obama’s trip to Russia and the G-8 Summit in Italy</i>	14	30	24	30	1
April 17-20, 2009: <i>Trip to Mexico and Latin America</i>	17	26	25	32	*
April 9-13, 2009: <i>Visit to Turkey and Iraq</i>	23	29	22	26	*
April 3-6, 2009: <i>Trip to Europe and meetings with foreign leaders</i>	25	35	21	19	*
b. Debate over health care reform					
November 20-23, 2009	42	29	14	15	*
November 13-16, 2009	38	26	17	17	1
November 6-9, 2009	35	28	15	22	1
October 30-November 2, 2009	32	26	19	23	*
October 23-26, 2009	40	27	16	17	1
October 16-19, 2009	36	28	15	21	*
October 9-12, 2009	37	29	14	19	1
October 2-5, 2009	39	29	16	16	*
September 25-28, 2009	45	31	12	12	0
September 18-21, 2009	44	26	19	11	*
September 11-14, 2009	44	27	14	15	*
September 3-6, 2009	40	26	16	17	0
August 28-31, 2009	40	28	17	14	1
August 21-24, 2009	49	24	12	15	1
August 14-17, 2009	39	31	15	15	1
TREND FOR COMPARISON:¹					
August 7-10, 2009: <i>Debate in Washington over health care reform</i>	40	27	17	15	1
July 31-August 3, 2009	47	26	14	13	1
July 24-27, 2009	44	28	15	13	*
July 17-20, 2009	33	31	13	21	2

¹ June 12-15, 2009 through August 7-10, 2009 asked about: “Debate in Washington over health care reform.” May 15-18, 2009 asked about: “Debate over Barack Obama’s health care plans.” March 6-9, 2009 asked about: “Barack Obama proposing a \$630 billion fund for overhauling the U.S. health care system.” September, 1993 through September, 1994 asked about: “The Clinton Administration’s health care reform proposals.” May, 1993 through August, 1993 asked about: “Reports about the White House task force on health care reform headed by Hillary Clinton.”

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>
July 10-13, 2009	24	29	20	27	*
June 26-29, 2009	29	26	20	25	1
June 19-22, 2009	28	28	20	23	*
June 12-15, 2009	29	26	18	26	*
May 15-18, 2009	25	30	20	24	*
March 6-9, 2009: <i>Obama proposing a \$630 billion fund for overhauling health care</i>	41	32	13	14	*
September, 1994: <i>The Clinton administration's health care reform proposals</i>	32	41	18	9	*
June, 1994	34	40	19	7	*
May, 1994	37	37	16	9	1
January, 1994	38	38	15	9	*
Early January, 1994	40	40	14	6	*
December, 1993	45	35	12	7	1
October, 1993	44	32	17	6	1
September, 1993	49	34	11	6	*
August, 1993: <i>Reports about the White House task force on health care reform headed by Hillary Clinton</i>	27	32	25	15	1
June, 1993	28	38	19	15	*
May, 1993	30	30	25	14	1

c. The debate over whether to send more troops to Afghanistan

November 20-23, 2009	29	31	17	22	1
November 13-16, 2009	29	28	20	22	1
November 6-9, 2009 ²	22	35	24	18	*
October 30-November 2, 2009	24	32	21	22	*
October 23-26, 2009	32	29	21	18	*
October 16-19, 2009	25	31	20	24	*
October 9-12, 2009	31	31	21	17	0
September 25-28, 2009	27	40	17	16	*
September 18-21, 2009	26	33	25	16	*
September 11-14, 2009	25	35	22	18	1
September 3-6, 2009	23	33	23	21	0
August 7-10, 2009	24	32	23	21	1
March 20-23, 2009	24	32	22	22	*
February 20-23, 2009	27	29	24	19	1
January 30-February 2, 2009	26	34	24	16	*
January 2-4, 2009	22	33	23	21	1
October 24-27, 2008	28	32	22	17	1
October 10-13, 2008	19	34	29	18	*
September 12-15, 2008	21	34	25	19	1
August 29-31, 2008	18	27	32	23	*
July 18-21, 2008	27	33	24	16	*
July 11-14, 2008	19	28	29	23	1
July 3-7, 2008	19	28	32	21	*

² From October 9-12, 2009 through November 6-9, 2009 question asked about "The U.S. military effort in Afghanistan." September 25-28, 2009 asked about "The debate over whether to send more troops to Afghanistan." February 20-23, 2009 asked about "The Obama administration's decision to send 17,000 additional U.S. troops to Afghanistan." From June 20-23, 2008 to October 10-13, 2008 the story was listed as "The military effort in Afghanistan against Taliban fighters." All other dates asked about "The U.S. military effort in Afghanistan."

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>
June 20-23, 2008	20	30	30	20	*
Late July, 2002	41	38	13	7	1
June, 2002	38	32	20	9	1
April, 2002	39	39	13	8	1
Early April, 2002	45	37	12	5	1
February, 2002	47	39	8	5	1
January, 2002	51	35	9	4	1
December, 2001	44	38	12	5	1
Mid-November, 2001	49	36	11	3	1
Early November, 2001	45	36	12	6	1
Mid-October, 2001	51	35	10	3	1
d. Reports about swine flu and the vaccine					
November 20-23, 2009	29	33	21	17	*
November 13-16, 2009	34	31	21	15	*
November 6-9, 2009	32	35	24	10	*
October 30-November 2, 2009	33	33	22	12	*
October 23-26, 2009	43	30	17	9	*
October 16-19, 2009	32	35	18	14	0
October 9-12, 2009	38	35	16	11	*
September 18-21, 2009 ³	34	31	25	9	*
September 11-14, 2009	30	36	21	12	*
September 3-6, 2009	26	32	25	17	0
August 28-31, 2009	26	33	22	18	*
May 21-24, 2009	30	39	21	11	*
May 8-11, 2009	34	36	19	11	*
May 1-4, 2009	43	37	15	4	1
April 25-27, 2009	25	30	19	26	*
e. News about Sarah Palin and the release of her book					
November 20-23, 2009	10	20	23	46	1
TREND FOR COMPARISON:					
July 10-13, 2009: <i>Sarah Palin's resignation as governor of Alaska</i>	14	28	28	30	*
November 14-17, 2008: <i>News about Sarah Palin and her political future</i>	16	23	31	30	*
f. New guidelines recommending when women should get mammograms					
November 20-23, 2009	34	25	18	22	*

³ From August 28-31, 2009 through September 18-21, 2009 question was worded "Reports about swine flu and the availability of a vaccine." May 21-24, 2009 and May 8-11, 2009 asked about: "Reports about swine flu in the U.S. and elsewhere." For May 1-4, 2009 the story was listed as: "The outbreak of swine flu in different parts of the world." For April 25-27, 2009 the story was listed as: "Reports of swine flu in Mexico and the U.S."

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.]**

- 41 Debate over health care reform
- 18 Reports about swine flu and the vaccine
- 11 New guidelines recommending when women should get mammograms
- 11 The debate over whether to send more troops to Afghanistan
- 4 President Obama's trip to Asia
- 2 News about Sarah Palin and the release of her book
- 7 Some other story (VOL. SPECIFY)
- 7 Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

Q.3 All things considered....these days have you been hearing too much, too little, or the right amount about Sarah Palin?

Nov 20-23 <u>2009</u>		July 10-13 <u>2009</u>	Oct 24-27 <u>2008⁴</u>
52	Too much	38	46
13	Too little	18	18
26	Right amount	40	33
9	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	4	3

Q.4 Thinking now about the issue of health care, from what you've seen and heard, do you think a health care reform bill will pass over the next year or not?

	<u>Yes, will</u>	<u>No, will not</u>	<u>DK/ Refused</u>
November 20-23, 2009	52	37	11
November 13-16, 2009	49	37	14
November 6-9, 2009	48	40	11
October 30-November 2, 2009	47	39	14
October 23-26, 2009	53	40	7
October 16-19, 2009	57	38	5
October 9-12, 2009	45	46	9

⁴ For October 24-27, 2008 this item was asked as part of a list of candidates.

ASK IF FOLLOWING MAMMOGRAPHY NEWS CLOSELY (Q.1f=1,2) [N=664]

Thinking now about new guidelines for when women should get mammograms...

Q.5 In general, were you surprised or not surprised by new mammogram recommendations made by a federally appointed task force?

70 Surprised
 29 Not surprised
 1 Don't know/refused (VOL.)

ASK IF FOLLOWING MAMMOGRAPHY NEWS CLOSELY (Q.1f=1,2) [N=664]

Q.6 In general, do you agree or disagree with the recommendations of the task force?

22 Agree
 68 Disagree
 10 Don't know/refused (VOL.)

Q.7 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. Oprah Winfrey announcing that she will end her daytime talk show in 2011	33	45	21	1
TREND FOR COMPARISON				
November 9-12, 2007: Possible abuse of students at Oprah Winfrey's school for disadvantaged girls in South Africa	23	50	27	*
September 14-17, 2007: Oprah Winfrey's decision to Support Barack Obama for president	16	46	38	*
October 4-8, 2000: Al Gore and George W. Bush's separate appearances on the Oprah Winfrey show	20	39	40	1
b. A computer failure that disrupted air travel across the country	16	40	44	*
c. Controversy over Attorney General Eric Holder's decision to try the 9/11 terror suspects in a federal court in New York	35	38	26	1