

PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE & THE PRESS
FEBRUARY 20-23, 2009 NEWS INTEREST INDEX OMNIBUS SURVEY
TOPLINE
N=1,004

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. Decisions in Washington about how to distribute the remaining funds from the bailout of financial institutions approved last fall	25	33	22	20	*=100
October 3-6, 2008: Washington debates plan to stabilize markets¹	62	26	7	5	*=100
September 26-29, 2008	60	22	10	8	*=100
TREND FOR COMPARISON:²					
September 19-22, 2008: Wall Street turmoil	49	28	14	9	*=100
March 20-24, 2008: Bear Stearns buyout	21	26	21	32	*=100
August, 1989: Savings and loan bailout	26	30	20	23	1=100
b. U.S. automakers seeking billions of dollars in federal loans to avoid bankruptcy	33	34	22	11	*=100
December 19-22, 2008: Bush administration plan for emergency loans to U.S. automakers³	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
TRENDS FOR COMPARISON:⁴					
November 14-17, 2008: Problems facing 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

¹ September 26-29, 2008 and October 3-6, 2008 asked about “The debate in Washington over a plan to use government funds to stabilize financial markets.”

² September 19-22, 2008 asked about “Turmoil among major financial institutions on Wall Street.” March 20-24, 2008 asked about “The buyout of Wall Street investment bank Bear Stearns.” August, 1989 asked about: “Passage in Congress of a bill to bailout ailing savings and loan institutions.”

³ 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.”

⁴ 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>
January, 1992: <i>General Motors job cuts</i>	35	38	18	9	*=100
c. The Obama administration's plan to help homeowners facing foreclosure which could cost as much as \$275 billion dollars	31	36	19	13	1=100
September 12-15, 2008: Government takeover of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac⁵	28	35	19	17	1=100
d. The \$780 billion economic stimulus legislation approved by Congress and signed into law by President Obama	41	37	14	8	*=100
February 13-16, 2009⁶	50	32	13	5	*=100
February 6-9, 2009	41	33	15	11	*=100
January 30-February 2, 2009	36	29	22	13	*=100
TREND FOR COMPARISON:⁷					
January 16-19, 2009: Debate in Washington over the nation's economic problems	35	33	17	15	*=100
February 8-11, 2008: Bush and Congress agreeing on an economic stimulus plan	22	33	23	21	1=100
January 25-28, 2008	24	36	19	21	*=100
e. Recent major drops in the U.S. stock market	31	32	20	17	*=100
November 21-24, 2008	50	23	15	12	*=100
October 17-20, 2008⁸	54	31	9	6	*=100
October 10-13, 2008	59	26	9	6	*=100
July 3-7, 2008	22	29	23	26	*=100
March 14-17, 2008	25	31	23	21	*=100
January 25-28, 2008	29	28	19	23	1=100
August 17-20, 2007	21	24	22	33	*=100
July 27-30, 2007	15	26	21	37	1=100
March 2-5, 2007	21	28	25	26	*=100
Early September, 2002	27	30	20	22	1=100
Late July, 2002	33	33	15	18	1=100
March, 2001	27	27	18	27	1=100
Mid-October, 2000	20	26	23	31	1=100
April, 2000	18	28	23	31	*=100
Early April, 2000	19	29	20	32	*=100
March, 2000	23	29	21	26	1=100
March, 1999	18	29	22	31	*=100
January, 1999	24	28	19	28	1=100
Early September, 1998	32	31	20	17	*=100

⁵ September 12-15, 2008 asked about "The federal government taking control of the mortgage companies Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac."

⁶ February 13-16, 2009 asked about "Congress passing Barack Obama's economic stimulus plan." January 30-February 2, 2009 and February 6-9, 2009 asked about "The debate in Congress over Barack Obama's economic stimulus plan."

⁷ January 16-19, 2009 asked about "The debate in Washington over what the government should do about the nation's economic problems." January 25-28, 2008 and February 8-11, 2008 asked about "President Bush and Congress agreeing on an economic stimulus plan."

⁸ October 17-20, 2008 asked about "Recent major ups and downs in the U.S. stock market." March 2-5, 2007 asked about "The recent drop in the U.S. stock market." In Early November, 1997, the story was listed as "Thinking about last Monday when the stock market dropped, how closely did you follow what was happening?" From February, 1996 to Mid-November, 1997, the story was listed as "Recent major ups and downs in the stock market." For all other dates, the story was listed as "Recent major ups and downs in the U.S. stock market."

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-August, 1998	17	23	21	39	*=100
January, 1998	21	25	23	31	*=100
Early November, 1997	16	29	22	33	*=100
Mid-November, 1997	25	36	18	20	1=100
September, 1997	14	22	23	40	1=100
April, 1997	17	21	22	40	*=100
February, 1996	12	20	25	42	1=100
f. The Obama administration's decision to send 17,000 additional U.S. troops to Afghanistan	27	29	24	19	1=100
TREND FOR COMPARISON:⁹					
January 30-February 2, 2009	26	34	24	16	*=100
January 2-4, 2009	22	33	23	21	1=100
October 24-27, 2008	28	32	22	17	1=100
October 10-13, 2008	19	34	29	18	*=100
September 12-15, 2008	21	34	25	19	1=100
August 29-31, 2008	18	27	32	23	*=100
July 18-21, 2008	27	33	24	16	*=100
July 11-14, 2008	19	28	29	23	1=100
July 3-7, 2008	19	28	32	21	*=100
June 20-23, 2008	20	30	30	20	*=100
Late July, 2002	41	38	13	7	1=100
June, 2002	38	32	20	9	1=100
April, 2002	39	39	13	8	1=100
Early April, 2002	45	37	12	5	1=100
February, 2002	47	39	8	5	1=100
January, 2002	51	35	9	4	1=100
December, 2001	44	38	12	5	1=100
Mid-November, 2001	49	36	11	3	1=100
Early November, 2001	45	36	12	6	1=100
Mid-October, 2001	51	35	10	3	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.]

35	The \$780 billion economic stimulus legislation approved by Congress and signed into law by President Obama
11	Recent major drops in the U.S. stock market
10	The Obama administration's plan to help homeowners facing foreclosure which could cost as much as \$275 billion dollars
8	U.S. automakers seeking billions of dollars in federal loans to avoid bankruptcy
6	Decisions in Washington about how to distribute the remaining funds from the bailout of financial institutions approved last fall
6	The Obama administration's decision to send 17,000 additional U.S. troops to Afghanistan
8	Some other story (VOL.)
<u>16</u>	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)
100	

⁹ Early-October, 2001 to Late July, 2002 and October 24-27, 2008 through January 30-February 2, 2009 asked about "The U.S. military effort in Afghanistan." From June 20-23, 2008 to October 10-13, 2008 the story was listed as "The military effort in Afghanistan against Taliban fighters."

Q.3 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?

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

Q.4 What is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the term WALL STREET [OPEN END. RECORD FIRST MENTION. PROBE ONCE ONLY IF RESPONDENT SAYS 'DON'T KNOW']?

		<i>CBS</i> <u>March 1998</u>	
42	Descriptive [NET]	37	Stock market/exchange/stocks
19	Stocks/stock market	28	Money
13	Money	5	Journal
5	Finance/Financial capital	4	Big business/business
1	Investment	3	Finance/Financial capital
1	Journal/Wall Street Journal	2	Greed
1	Big business/business	1	Crash
1	401K/retirement funds	1	Economy
1	Economy/economics	1	New York
		1	Rich people
13	Financial crisis [NET]	*	Everything
	Mess/mismanagement by	*	Nothing
2	business or government		
2	Declining/losing money (other synonyms)	6	Other
2	Failed/failure	<u>11</u>	DK/Refused (VOL.)
2	Bailout	100	
1	Crash		
1	Trouble		
1	Disaster		
1	Broke		
1	Fear/frightening/scary/worry		
10	Greed/Excess [NET]		
9	Greed		
1	Rich people/fat cats/big wigs		
9	Thieves/Corrupt [NET]		
5	Crooks/thieves (other synonyms)		
4	Corrupt/corruption		
19	Other (VOL.)		
<u>7</u>	DK/Refused (VOL.)		
100			