

Topline

Covering the Great Recession: How the Media Have Depicted the Economic Crisis during Obama's Presidency

Project for Excellence in Journalism

Amount of Media Coverage Devoted to the U.S. Economy

Percent of Overall Media Newshole – February-August 2009

Sector	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	Overall
All Media	45.6%	46.9%	24.0%	21.8%	18.4%	16.6%	16.2%	26.8%
Newspapers	48.4%	49.3%	30.1%	30.1%	29.1%	24.6%	23.4%	33.2%
Online	40.7%	44.0%	25.0%	23.2%	18.1%	18.4%	19.7%	26.7%
Network Morning TV	40.2%	44.9%	15.2%	13.2%	10.0%	10.8%	8.7%	20.2%
Network Evening TV (ABC, CBS, and NBC)	38.0%	47.8%	26.1%	22.5%	19.0%	17.5%	14.3%	26.4%
PBS NewsHour	50.4%	49.8%	34.3%	30.3%	25.0%	19.2%	20.9%	32.6%
Cable TV	51.5%	50.4%	17.9%	14.8%	10.6%	8.4%	10.1%	23.2%
News Radio (NPR + Syndicated Headlines)	38.8%	41.4%	27.4%	22.4%	20.3%	21.5%	18.6%	27.0%
Talk Radio	46.5%	38.4%	17.4%	15.0%	10.0%	9.9%	4.7%	19.7%

Specific Topics within Economic Coverage – All Media

Percent of Overall Economic Newshole – February-August 2009

Topic	Feb.	March	April	May	June	July	August	Overall
Energy	0.6%	0.7%	3.3%	0.9%	3.7%	1.1%	1.4%	1.4%
Effect of Economic Crisis on Health Care (added 4/6)	n/a	n/a	0.6%	1.6%	1.1%	1.9%	1.0%	0.7%
Gas/Oil Prices - Changing Habits	0.0%	0.0%	<0.1%	0.3%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	<0.1%
Gas/Oil Prices - Other Businesses Impacted	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.2%	0.0%	<0.1%
Gas/Oil Prices - Increase in Public Transport	0.0%	<0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	<0.1%
Gas/Oil Prices - Impact on Airlines	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	<0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	<0.1%
Gas/Oil prices - Accounts of Prices	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%	1.2%	0.4%	0.2%	0.2%
Gas/Oil Prices - Effect on Financial Crisis	0.2%	<0.1%	0.2%	0.5%	0.3%	0.6%	<0.1%	0.2%
Gas/Oil Prices - Other	0.1%	<0.1%	0.1%	0.3%	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%
Taxes/Tax day	<0.1%	<0.1%	1.7%	5.8%	0.3%	0.7%	2.3%	1.1%
Fannie Mae/Freddie Mac – Kellermann Death	n/a	n/a	1.9%	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%
Fannie Mae/Freddie Mac Troubles - Other	<0.1%	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%
US Airline Financial Troubles	0.1%	0.2%	<0.1%	<0.1%	0.6%	0.4%	0.1%	0.2%
US Airline Mergers	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	<0.1%	0.1%	<0.1%
US Airline Equipment Troubles	<0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.7%	0.8%	<0.1%	0.2%
US Airline Regulations/Policies	<0.1%	0.0%	0.3%	0.1%	0.2%	0.4%	0.5%	0.1%
US Airline Trends	0.0%	0.0%	<0.1%	0.2%	0.0%	0.1%	<0.1%	<0.1%
US Airline Delays	0.0%	0.0%	<0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%	<0.1%
US Airline - Other	0.0%	<0.1%	0.2%	0.6%	0.4%	0.3%	1.9%	0.3%
US Auto industry - Financial Troubles/Plant Closings	4.8%	7.0%	12.8%	18.9%	23.7%	5.4%	1.4%	9.5%
US Auto Industry - Foreign Competition	0.1%	<0.1%	0.1%	0.3%	0.1%	<0.1%	0.3%	0.1%
US Auto Industry - Labor Issues/Layoffs	<0.1%	<0.1%	0.1%	0.5%	0.5%	0.3%	0.2%	0.2%
US Auto Industry - Effect of Gas Prices	<0.1%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%
US Auto Industry - Cash for Clunkers	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	3.2%	12.6%	1.3%
US Auto Industry – Other	0.5%	0.3%	0.8%	1.4%	1.8%	1.4%	1.9%	0.9%
Madoff Banking Scandal	0.8%	4.2%	1.2%	0.6%	5.5%	2.3%	0.7%	2.3%
Housing	8.1%	5.3%	5.3%	5.3%	2.8%	7.4%	6.2%	6.0%
Unemployment/Jobs	4.8%	5.8%	6.2%	5.1%	5.7%	9.4%	10.9%	6.2%
Interest rates	0.1%	<0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.8%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%
Retail sales	0.9%	0.3%	0.7%	0.7%	0.7%	0.6%	1.4%	0.7%
Food Prices/Industry	<0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	0.5%	0.0%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%
Economic Crisis Impact on a Specific Business/Industry (Non-Banking)	3.6%	4.1%	6.1%	4.8%	3.3%	4.5%	5.7%	4.3%
Economic Crisis Effect on State/Local Governments	6.0%	3.4%	3.1%	5.8%	6.0%	11.6%	5.7%	5.4%
US Crisis Effect on Foreign Countries	2.4%	5.1%	1.9%	1.9%	1.3%	1.8%	2.3%	2.7%
Stimulus Plan	36.2%	6.1%	3.1%	6.1%	6.6%	14.5%	4.7%	13.6%
Recession Fears/Effects	1.4%	2.2%	4.5%	4.1%	2.7%	4.8%	7.6%	3.2%
Economic Crisis Effect on Avg. Americans	3.4%	4.8%	5.8%	4.9%	6.0%	4.9%	4.7%	4.7%
Stock Market Reactions	1.4%	5.2%	1.6%	1.8%	1.2%	1.9%	1.8%	2.5%
\$410 Billion Bill to Run Fed.	n/a	2.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.8%
Jon Stewart v. CNBC	n/a	0.4%	<0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%
Social Security/Medicare	n/a	n/a	n/a	1.4%	0.0%	0.4%	0.3%	0.2%
Idea of a Fed. Oversight Agency	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	7.6%	0.7%	0.3%	0.8%
Bailout of the Banking Industry	15.9%	14.9%	20.5%	18.7%	10.7%	12.1%	6.6%	15.0%
Budget and Deficit	6.8%	5.8%	4.0%	3.6%	2.2%	0.9%	5.1%	4.6%
AIJ/Corporate Bonuses	n/a	16.7%	0.5%	0.2%	0.0%	0.3%	1.9%	4.7%
Ben Bernanke Reappointed	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	3.5%	0.3%
Economy in Crisis - Other	1.6%	3.1%	3.5%	1.7%	1.5%	3.6%	3.2%	2.6%
Effect of Economic Crisis on Education (added 4/15)	n/a	n/a	0.5%	0.6%	0.7%	0.6%	2.7%	0.5%
G-20 Summit - Economy Related Stories (added 3/30)	n/a	1.0%	8.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.3%

Dateline of Economic Coverage – All Media

Percent of Stories in the Economy-Focused Sample – February 1 - July 3, 2009

Dateline	# of Stories	% of Stories
New York City	722	43.6%
Washington, D.C.*	533	32.2%
Atlanta	42	2.5%
Los Angeles	37	2.2%
Detroit	31	1.9%
Other U.S.	240	14.5%
Overseas	50	3.0%
Other	1	0.1%
Total	1656	100%
* Includes Virginia Suburbs (McLean, Arlington, and Dulles)		

Triggers of Economic Coverage – All Media

Percent of Stories in the Economy-Focused Sample – February 1 - July 3, 2009

Triggers Grouped	# of Stories	% of Stories
Government	816	49.3%
Business	340	20.5%
Outside Observer	71	4.3%
Unelected Political Figures	4	0.2%
Press	373	22.5%
Other	52	3.1%
Total	1656	100%

Triggers Ungrouped	# of Stories	% of Stories
White House West Wing	300	18.1%
Congress	149	9.0%
Fed Gov. Agency	228	13.8%
State/Local Government	98	5.9%
Other U.S. Government (Includes Court Decisions)	41	2.5%
Business	247	14.9%
Stock Market Report	77	4.6%
Trade Group or Association	10	0.6%
Other Business Trigger	6	0.4%
Expert Statement	16	1.0%
Interest Group	10	0.6%
Labor/Union	11	0.7%
Citizen(s) Unorganized	24	1.4%
Other Observer	10	0.6%
Political Party/Figure	3	0.2%
Unelected Politician	1	0.1%
Press Enterprise/Investigative	275	16.6%
Reporter or Host Analysis or Opinion	29	1.8%
interview (Requested by Press)	53	3.2%
Other Press Trigger	16	1.0%
Public Opinion Poll	20	1.2%
Foreign Government	15	0.9%
Other	17	1.0%
Total	1656	100%

Triggers of Economic Coverage by Media Sector

Percent of Stories in the Economy-Focused Sample – February 1 - July 3, 2009

Triggers Grouped	All Media	News- papers	Online	Network Morning TV	Network Evening	PBS	Cable TV	News Radio
Government	49.3%	43.6%	47.3%	49.7%	41.3%	50.0%	56.1%	50.6%
Business	20.5%	12.4%	26.6%	21.0%	24.0%	18.0%	16.6%	30.0%
Outside Observer	4.3%	4.1%	6.8%	2.1%	3.4%	4.0%	3.2%	6.4%
Unelected Political Figures	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	.8%	0.0%
Press	22.5%	36.8%	15.2%	25.2%	29.3%	26.0%	19.0%	11.2%
Other	3.1%	3.1%	4.2%	2.1%	1.9%	2.0%	4.3%	1.7%
# of Stories	1656	291	237	143	208	50	494	233

Sources in Economic Coverage by Media Sector

Percent of Stories in the Economy-Focused Sample that Include Each Type of Source
February 1 - July 3, 2009

Source	All Media	News-papers	Online	Network Morning TV	Network Evening	PBS	Cable TV	News Radio
President Obama	21.8%	18.2%	20.3%	20.3%	24.0%	28.0%	27.1%	14.2%
White House West Wing Other	11.2%	13.1%	15.6%	8.4%	5.8%	16.0%	13.0%	6.0%
Congress - Democrat	12.8%	17.9%	13.1%	9.1%	6.3%	10.0%	16.6%	6.9%
Congress - Republican	10.7%	13.1%	10.5%	7.7%	6.7%	12.0%	14.0%	6.4%
Congress Overall	1.9%	2.7%	0.4%	2.1%	1.4%	4.0%	2.0%	2.1%
Federal Government Agency	24.6%	24.4%	37.1%	18.2%	20.2%	44.0%	20.0%	25.8%
State/Local Government	12.1%	28.9%	8.4%	7.0%	11.1%	12.0%	7.3%	9.0%
Democratic Party/Unelected Democrat	1.6%	1.0%	2.1%	0.0%	1.0%	2.0%	2.8%	0.4%
Republican Party/Unelected Republican	3.0%	1.0%	3.8%	2.1%	2.4%	4.0%	5.3%	0.9%
3rd party	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Business	38.7%	57.0%	52.3%	30.1%	46.2%	30.0%	22.1%	37.8%
Labor/Union	2.2%	5.5%	3.0%	1.4%	0.5%	2.0%	1.4%	0.9%
Academic or Independent Expert	23.9%	38.5%	32.1%	23.8%	31.7%	24.0%	12.8%	14.2%
Citizens/Workers	18.7%	28.5%	17.3%	22.4%	40.4%	14.0%	7.7%	10.3%
interest Group (Non-Business)	5.9%	14.1%	10.5%	1.4%	2.9%	2.0%	2.6%	3.9%
Other Media	9.2%	4.1%	11.8%	7.7%	7.2%	8.0%	14.0%	6.0%
Unnamed Sources Only	0.8%	1.0%	1.3%	2.1%	0.5%	0.0%	0.4%	0.4%
# of Stories	1656	291	237	143	208	50	494	233