



## Terror, the Economy, and Disasters Get the Media’s Attention in the Third Quarter of 2007

The threat of terrorism, a real estate recession, and man-made disasters all emerged as major stories in the American news media in the third quarter of 2007, according to a new study of press coverage.

While the media continued to pay the most attention to the war in Iraq and the presidential campaign, in the third quarter they also trained more scrutiny on three new threats to the nation’s well being—a reconstituted Al Qaeda, the implosion of the sub-prime mortgage market, and crumbling infrastructure, a close look at the third quarter of media coverage by the Project for Excellence in Journalism finds.

Of the three threats, terrorism generated the most attention. It emerged as the quarter’s fourth-biggest story, after the war debate, the presidential campaign, and coverage inside Iraq. Based partly on events (strange devices confiscated at airports) and partly on perception (Homeland Security boss Michael Chertoff’s “gut feeling” about an attack), coverage of U.S. terror concerns nearly tripled from the second to the third quarter.

Coverage of the troubled U.S. economy also came close to tripling from the second quarter to the third. The chief catalysts here were the housing and mortgage crises, and the related “credit crunch.”

And among various disasters that generated substantial coverage in the third quarter, the most prominent was the Aug. 1 collapse of the I-35W Bridge in Minneapolis. The accident that claimed 13 lives was the fifth-biggest story of the summer, and seemed to resurrect nagging doubts about U.S. infrastructure initially raised by Hurricane Katrina.

<b>Top News Stories for the 3rd Quarter</b>			
Percent of Newshole			
		<u>Q3</u>	<u>YTD</u>
1	Iraq Policy Debate*	9.7%	9.6%
2	2008 Presidential Campaign	9.0	8.3
3	Events in Iraq*	5.0	6.2
4	US Domestic Terrorism	2.8	1.8
5	Minn. Bridge Collapse	2.7	0.9
6	U.S. Economic Numbers	2.6	1.5
7	Conflict with Iran	2.1	2.6
8	Larry Craig	2.0	0.7
9	Immigration	1.9	3.0
10	Utah Mine Collapse	1.8	0.6
11	Iraq Homefront*	1.4	2.0
<b>*Iraq Total Coverage</b>		<b>16.1%</b>	<b>17.8%</b>

The war still hovered, but in a new way. The debate over U.S. policy in Iraq—the dominant story early in the year—generated only modest coverage for many weeks of the quarter. But saturation coverage surrounding General David Petraeus’ status report to Congress in September was enough to still make it the No. 1 story in the news outlets covered in PEJ’s index of news media. That pushed the race for president, the No. 1 story

in the previous three months, to No. 2, even though the level of reporting remained the same.

These are some of the findings drawn from the third quarterly report of the Project for Excellence in Journalism’s News Coverage Index (NCI), a content analysis of a broad cross-section of American news media.

One new feature of PEJ’s third quarterly report of the year is the designation of “leading newsmakers,” individuals or events who were the dominant subjects in the highest percentage of stories.

Befitting a three-month period in which much of the news was gloomy, the roster of top five newsmakers included three criminal defendants—Idaho Senator Larry Craig, arrested for allegedly propositioning a police officer in a restroom; Michael Vick, the

<b>Lead Newsmakers for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter</b>			
		<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
		<u>of Stories</u>	<u>of Stories</u>
1	George Bush	513	2.9%
2	Larry Craig	293	1.6
3	Hillary Clinton	220	1.2
4	Michael Vick	162	0.9
5	O.J. Simpson	153	0.9
6	Alberto Gonzales	151	0.8
7	Mahmoud Ahmadinejad	121	0.7
8	Barack Obama	110	0.6
9	David Petraeus	104	0.6
10	Fred Thompson	101	0.6

former Atlanta quarterback charged in connection with a dog fighting ring; and O.J. Simpson, accused of kidnapping and other offenses in a hotel room showdown over sports memorabilia.

Going further down the list, one of the leading newsmakers was a U.S. global adversary—Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

Among other key findings in the third quarterly report of the PEJ’s News Coverage Index:

- There was somewhat less coverage of events on the ground in Iraq in the third quarter. Coverage of the topic filled 5% of the newshole as measured in the Index, down from 7% in both the second quarter and the first. That was still enough to make it the third biggest story of the quarter.
- Combined, the three threads of the Iraq story—the policy debate, events inside Iraq, and the homefront—inched up to 16% in the third quarter from 15% in the second quarter. That is still well behind the first quarter total of 22%.
- Coverage of the 2008 Presidential campaign equaled its level in the second quarter at 9% of the newshole (up from the 7% of the newshole it filled in the first quarter). That highlights just how early the full-blown coverage of the race for the White House had kicked into high gear.
- After a second quarter in which coverage was evenly divided between Democrats and Republicans, the Democrats once again dominated in the period from July through September. Fully 50% of campaign stories focused on Democrats, while 31% were about Republicans. (The rest concerned both

parties or other matters.) Democratic frontrunner Hillary Clinton generated the most attention, (she was lead newsmaker in 16% of the election stories,) with Democrat Barack Obama and Republican Fred Thompson next, but well behind at 8%.

- One big story earlier in the year, immigration, fell back as an issue in the news again in the third quarter. After filling 6% of the overall newshole in the second quarter, coverage of immigration fell to make up only 2%, the same level as in the first three months of the year. Once the immigration reform bill was defeated in late June, many talk show hosts who had joined the crusade against it moved on—with the exception of CNN’s Lou Dobbs. On conservative talk radio, the subject plummeted from 16% of the newshole down to just 4%.
- And the three cable news networks displayed noticeably different news judgment from each other in the third quarter, a trend we have seen throughout the year. MSNBC continued its heavy investment in the 2008 campaign and Iraq policy debate. Those two stories accounted for 37% of all of the outlet’s coverage. (The same two stories accounted for 19% of the Fox News Channel’s airtime and 18% of CNN’s coverage.) For the third straight quarter, Fox devoted less of its newshole to the three Iraq war storylines than either CNN or MSNBC.

The third quarter report of PEJ’s News Coverage Index is based on the Project’s weekly NCI, which examines the news agenda of 48 different outlets from five sectors of the media and allows a snapshot of the media agenda—what topics the media are choosing to highlight and which they are not.

The quarterly report considers 13 weeks of data together, almost 18,000 stories, allowing for deeper analysis across time, including comparisons of different news organizations and, in the case of television, even different programs on the same network.

The Project for Excellence in Journalism, which is non-partisan and non-political, is one of eight projects that make up the Pew Research Center in Washington, D.C., a “fact tank” funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts.

## **The Summer Of Terror Jitters**

On July 10, Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff told The Chicago Tribune he had a “gut feeling” the U.S. was at heightened risk of a terror attack. The remarks quickly reverberated throughout the news media. Nerves were already a little jangled. Only 10 days earlier, on June 29, police in London discovered two un-detonated car bombs in heavily trafficked areas. And one day after that foiled plot, attackers smashed a vehicle into Scotland’s Glasgow Airport.

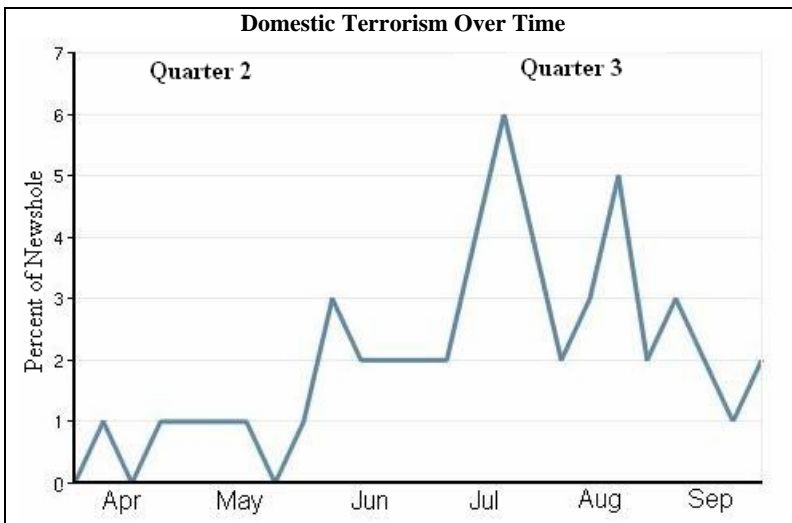
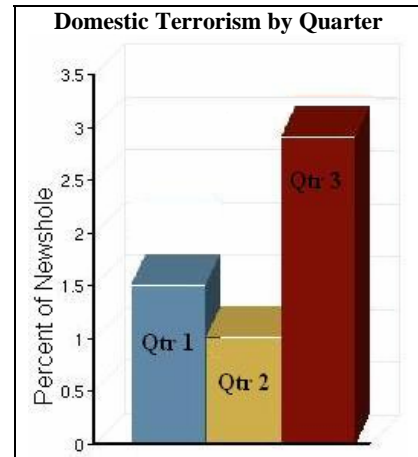
In the days after Chertoff’s gut feeling and the UK episodes, the press also reported on additional terror-related news. First came the release of a new National Intelligence Estimate warning of a reconstituted Al-Qaeda threat. Then the Transportation Security Administration sounded a warning after the confiscation of several strange airport packages—such as a block of cheese and a cell phone charger—raised fears that terrorists might be practicing “dry runs” for another attack. Without the other events, a government report and a TSA warning might not have attracted the same attention.

Indeed, while there were no terrorist attacks against the United States in the third quarter of 2007, U.S. domestic terrorism became a much bigger part of the news menu than before. The subject filled 3% of the newshole in PEJ’s news index and registered as the fourth-biggest overall story. That represented about a three-fold increase over the second quarter, when the subject accounted for only 1% of the newshole.

And that number for the domestic terrorism category does not include the attempted terror attacks on UK soil. Were the UK attacks and other terror-related stories such as a Bin Laden video included, terrorism would have accounted for 6% of the total newshole studied, and would have ranked as the No. 3 topic in the news, close behind the Iraq policy debate and the race for president.

Coverage of domestic terrorism in the third quarter was also remarkably balanced among different media. It generated roughly the same attention in all five sectors studied, ranging from a low of 2% in online and network TV to a high of 4% on cable.

The bomb plot in Britain in June deserves some mention on its own. The London saga took an unusual turn when it was learned that a number of suspects were doctors, or, as ABC’s “Good Morning America” put it, “professional healers who were apparently determined to kill.” That strange twist was enough to make the so-called “doctors’ plot” the biggest story, at 14%, for the week of July 1-6. That represented the highest weekly level of coverage of any terrorism-related issue in 2007.



Years have passed since the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks when the anthrax scares and changes in the color-coded threat status seemed like a daily staple of the news menu. Coverage of terror-related issues now seems to follow an uneven trajectory, with long periods when the subject becomes virtually invisible.

The major outbreak of coverage that began in July, was, in fact, preceded by a sustained period of minimal media attention. Terrorism, or the threat of it, was not a top-10 story in nine of the 12 weeks leading up to the discovery of the UK car bomb plot. And only once in that three-month period—with the foiling of a plan to attack New Jersey’s Fort Dix in early May—was the topic one of the top five stories in the news in any week as measured by PEJ.

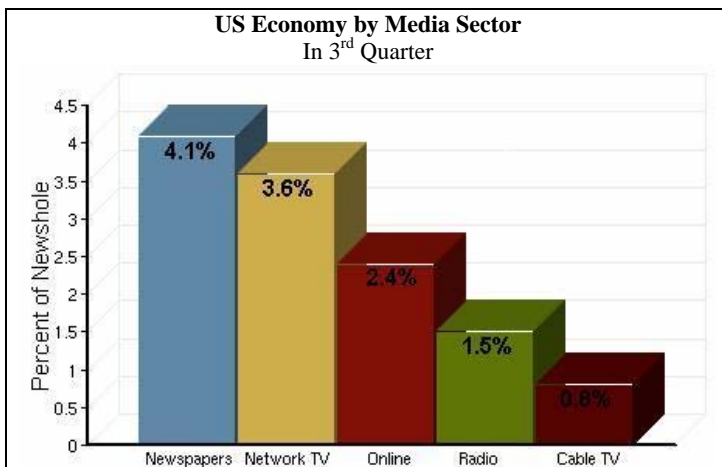
But this summer’s London plot followed by Chertoff’s intestinal instinct showed how close to the surface the subject is in the American psyche, or at least in the media’s gauging of it. The sense that leaders are worried, or some formal sign that something might happen, are enough to trigger significant terror jitters in the press and turn the topic into a major part of the news agenda.

## The Economy Emerges As A Big Story

If the economy falls into recession or becomes the dominant issue in the presidential primaries of 2008, how much did the news media offer an early warning sign of what was happening?

In the third quarter, the U.S. economy emerged as a top-10 story for the first time in 2007. All told, a variety of story lines combined to make the economy the No. 6 story overall as measured in PEJ’s News Coverage Index, filling 3% of the newshole.

While a substantial increase, if the economy worsens, critics may look back and wonder if the press should have done more, and whether being the sixth-biggest story of the third quarter was enough.



What the media picked up on in the story, the key narrative threads, were Wall Street’s wild ride, a real estate recession, and the sub-prime mortgage scandal and its associated credit crunch.

Of these, the biggest coverage catalyst in the story was the housing/sub-prime mortgage crisis. That topic accounted for 52% of the overall economic coverage in

the quarter. The only other economic category that generated substantial coverage was interest rates, which made up 17% of the economic news. Unemployment rates and job issues came next, making up 4% of the economic stories. (Stories that were strictly about stock market vacillations without tying them to the broader economy were not included in the U.S. economy category.)

Although housing issues dominated, the attention varied among media sectors. The real estate issue generated the most coverage in newspapers (61% of all economic coverage) and network TV (60%). At the other end, the subject only accounted for 33% of the economic coverage online.

In a clear indication that the crunch in home sales is a community-based story, housing issues accounted for 89% of the economic coverage in the smallest newspapers sampled in this report. That subject was also big, however, on a major national platform, accounting for 65% of the economic coverage on the three nightly network newscasts and PBS’s “NewsHour.” (The level of coverage on those four outlets ranged between 63% and 67%). On the three major cable news networks, CNN, at 57%, produced the most housing-related economic coverage.

The story of the economy and the housing sector began kicking into high gear in the last week of July. The July 27 Today show opened with co-host Meredith Vieira doing a story from the floor of a New York Stock Exchange that had been rattled the day before by a 311 point drop. Blaming the stock slide partly on “the housing slump,” Viera said “We don’t want people to panic ... But what are investors supposed to make of the news?”

A few minutes later, Today offered a kind of tongue-in-cheek example of the “troubled housing market.” A man desperate to sell his 4,000-square foot Florida condo decided to throw in \$20,000 of clothes he had designed, some of which had been worn by celebrities. The cost of the condo (and clothes)? A cool \$3.5 million.

The biggest single week for economic coverage was Aug. 12-17. The story, at 7%, was the second-biggest of the week, close behind the presidential campaign (8%). That week saw a one-day Dow plunge of 167 points and a Federal Reserve Board cut of the loan discount rate from 6.25% to 5.75%. It was also the week when analysts and the media



began speculating about whether Countrywide Financial Corp., the nation’s biggest mortgage lender, might be headed for trouble as a result of the collapse of the sub-prime lending market.

“Top lender could go bankrupt” read the headline on an LA Times story picked up in the Aug. 16 Bakersfield Californian. One industry observer was quoted as saying that if Countrywide failed, “It would be a huge shock to the U.S. housing system and the mortgage system as perceived around the world—and make an already bad situation terrible.”

Clearly, journalists began sounding some alarm bells about the economy in the third quarter, transforming the subject into a top-10 story. But given the potential impact of an economic slowdown on virtually every sector of society, it remains to be seen whether the story merited even more media attention than it received.

### Disasters Get Big Play

The summer also became a time for disasters in the news. The third quarter included two man-made disasters that ranked among the leading news events—the Aug. 1 collapse of the I-35W Bridge in Minneapolis and the Aug. 6 cave-in at the Crandall Canyon coal mine in Huntington, Utah.

The stunning evening rush-hour collapse of a key commuter artery in Minnesota, complete with images of cars tossed around like toys and tales of dramatic rescue, also seemed to touch a deeper chord. While the ultimate casualty count, 13 dead, did not compare to the carnage wrought by Hurricane Katrina, the event did seem, at least in the media’s coverage, to reinforce a loss of self-confidence in American know-how, and invincibility and doubts about an aging infrastructure.

A Washington Post column headlined “The Can’t Do Nation,” lamented that the U.S. “seems to have become the superpower that can’t tie its own shoelaces ... Its bridges shouldn’t fall down.”

Top Stories in Any Week for 2007		
	Percent of Newshole	Week of
1	VA Tech Massacre	50.7% April 15
2	Iraq Policy Debate*	36.5 Sep 9
3	Iraq Policy Debate	34.0 Jan 7
4	Don Imus	25.6 April 8
5	Minneapolis Bridge Collapse*	24.9 Jul 29
6	Iraq Policy Debate*	20.2 Jul 8
7	Larry Craig*	18.3 Aug 26
8	Fired US Attorneys	18.2 March 18
9	Iraq Policy Debate*	16.6 Sep 2
10	Presidential Campaign*	15.9 Aug 5
11	Fired US Attorneys	15.7 March 11
12	New Democratic Congress	15.2 Dec 31, '06
13	Presidential Campaign	14.9 June 3
14	Iraq Policy Debate	14.7 Jan 28
15	UK Terror Plot*	14.5 Jul 1

*\*Stories from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter*

Cable covered the collapse and subsequent rescue efforts non-stop. From Aug. 1 through Aug. 3, the story accounted for 69% of all the cable airtime examined. Overall, the tragedy accounted for 25% of all the coverage during the week of July 29-Aug. 3, making it the fifth-biggest weekly story of the first three quarters of 2007. It was the fifth-biggest story at 3% of the newshole for the entire quarter.

The Utah mine collapse, while not generating the intensity of coverage that the bridge drama did, ended up as the tenth-biggest story overall in the quarter, at 2% of the newshole. With miners trapped 1,500 feet below the ground, the rescue operations and dimming hopes for the six trapped men became a big part of the story narrative. The incident was the second-biggest story during the week of Aug. 5-10, when it filled 13% of the newshole and was the lead story on all three evening newscasts on the night the accident occurred.

Even as the chances for a happy ending faded, the tragedy had some staying power, remaining a top-five story the following week (at 7%) and the ninth-biggest story (at 3%) the week of Aug. 19-24. As with the bridge collapse, the mine cave-in got the most coverage on cable, where it filled 4% of the total airtime for the quarter.

The bridge collapse had a shorter shelf-life than the mine cave-in. By the second week of the bridge story (Aug. 5-10), it had dropped off dramatically to only 6% of the newshole and the week after that, it failed to make the top-10 story list.

Combined, the two major tragedies—the bridge collapse and mine cave in—filled about 5% of the newshole for the quarter, meaning that together, they generated nearly as much coverage as the third-biggest story of the quarter, events inside Iraq, at 5%.

## **The Craig Scandal**

It was the last week in August when the media first learned of Idaho Republican Senator Larry Craig's June arrest for allegedly propositioning a police officer in the Minneapolis airport. In the weeks that followed, Craig agreed to resign from the Senate, changed his mind, and tried to rescind his guilty plea.

By the time September ended, the scandal had become the eighth-biggest story of the quarter, filling 2% of the overall newshole in PEJ's news index. (Steady coverage of the Craig saga continued well into October, the beginning of the fourth quarter.) Craig's contention that he was innocent, as well as his deliberations over whether to serve out his second term, provided two major weeks of news coverage.

On the political scandal spectrum for the first nine months of the year, Craig's saga fit somewhere between the problems that beset former Attorney General Alberto Gonzales and the case of Louisiana's Republican Senator, David Vitter, whose phone number was found in the "D.C. Madam's" records.

From January through September, the Gonzales-related scandals took up slightly more than 2% of the overall newshole and registered as the sixth-biggest story of the year. Over the same nine-month period, Craig's arrest accounts for about 1% of the newshole, which put it well ahead of the D.C. escort scandal involving Vitter, which registered only at about one-tenth of 1%.



But for intensity, at its peak the Craig scandal was a major newsmaker. The first week the news broke, Aug. 26-31, the Craig story was easily the top subject, filling 18% of the overall newshole. The Senator’s predicament that week generated twice the coverage of Attorney General Alberto Gonzales’ Aug. 27 resignation. (And that 18% matches the highest level of weekly coverage generated by U.S. attorneys scandal—with Gonzales as the key player—which broke back in March 2007.)

The sex scandal, involving allegations of homosexuality and a conservative Republican Senator, generated the most coverage in the two media sectors—cable news and radio—that include the ideological talk shows. In the first two weeks of the story, it accounted for almost one quarter of all the airtime on cable (23%) and radio (22%).

For the entire quarter, the Craig story was the third-biggest topic (5%) on talk radio and on prime time cable (4%), behind only the campaign and the Iraq policy debate.

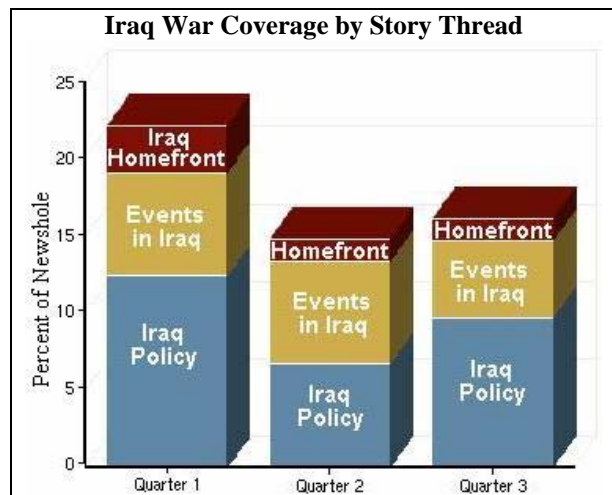
Following the rule evident so far in talk radio—that it is better to attack the enemy than defend the ally—liberal radio talkers devoted almost twice as much time (8%) to the subject than the conservative hosts (4%). Similarly, MSNBC’s prime-time lineup made Craig’s travails the third biggest story, (at 7%) while it was the eighth-biggest story (at 3%) among Fox’s hosts. CNN was somewhere in the middle (sixth-biggest story at 4%).

### **Iraq War Coverage: Petraeus Keeps The Numbers Steady**

On the surface, the amount of coverage devoted to all three major threads of the Iraq war—the Beltway-based policy debate, events inside Iraq, and the war’s impact on the homefront—remained virtually unchanged between the second and third quarters of 2007. The war in total accounted for 15% of the newshole in the second quarter and 16% in the third quarter. (That is a significant drop from the 22% of the newshole that the war, in all its aspects, filled in the first three months of the year.)

But these overall numbers alone are deceptive. The smallest of the three story threads, the war on the homefront, dropped from 2% to 1% from the second to third quarter. The middle thread, events inside Iraq, dropped by more than 25%, from 7% to 5% in the same period.

That leaves the biggest component of the story so far this year, the debate over U.S. war strategy. Media attention to that element of the Iraq war jumped to 10% in the third quarter, up from 7% in the second. In doing so, it moved past the presidential race (9%), the biggest story from April through June.



But a closer look reveals that coverage of the policy debate over the war was an up and down matter. To a large extent, the jump in coverage of the subject is the result of two weeks of intensive coverage surrounding General David Petraeus’s much-anticipated Sept. 10 status report to Congress. For more than half of the quarter, by the standards it has set earlier in the year, the Iraq debate was a relatively minor story.

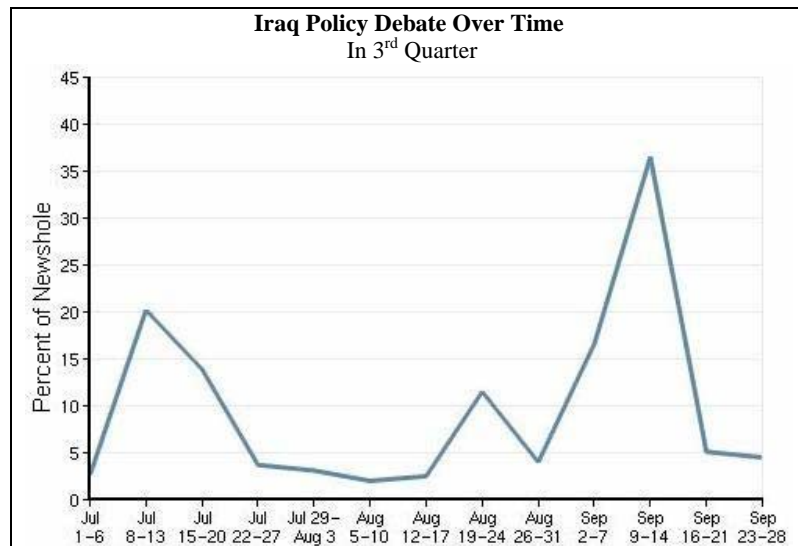
The lull in coverage had begun after President Bush scored a major victory on May 24 by winning Congressional funding for the war without any troop withdrawal deadlines attached. With the battle for control over war conduct temporarily resolved, coverage dropped off markedly until mid-July. There was a brief spike that culminated in the July 17 “slumber party,” when Democrats forced an all-night debate on the war in the Senate. But media attention dipped again for several weeks.

As anticipation grew for General Petraeus to report to lawmakers, so did the coverage, again. By the time the General came to Capitol Hill to brief Congress on the status of the surge, he was operating from a position of relative strength. A New York Times/CBS poll at the time indicated that 68% of the public most trusted military commanders to resolve the war compared to 21% who said Congress and 5% who cited the Bush administration.

For months, the “Petraeus Report,” had been thought of as a potentially decisive moment for either rallying or further eroding public opinion about the war. But it proved to be anti-climactic. In terms of shaking up the status quo, Petraeus’ appearance, in effect, changed little. The Washington Post quoted former Clinton chief of staff Leon Panetta saying: “The headline for the last week is that the war is pretty much going to be on a stay-the-course path ...”

Perhaps, but that didn’t stop the press. Coverage of the Iraq policy debate filled an impressive 36% of the newshole from Sept. 9-14, making it the second biggest single-week story in the first nine months of 2007, behind only the Virginia Tech campus massacre.

The week before (from Sept. 2-7), coverage of the policy debate in the buildup to Petraeus’ report was also the leading story at 17% of the newshole. That flurry of attention around the general’s visit to Congress was a major reason why the policy debate over the Iraq war regained its status as the leading overall story of the quarter.



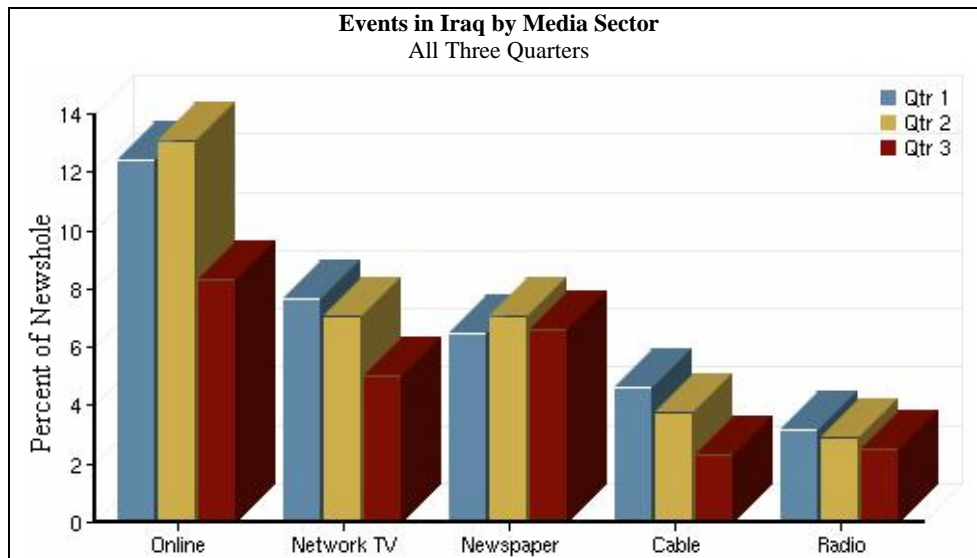
Looking at the numbers week by week, they show a bumpy ride. In seven of the 13 weeks in the quarter, the Iraq debate had shrunk to a middle spot in the news agenda, below 5% of the newshole as measured in PEJ's Index. But in five largely isolated weeks, it spiked to 12% or more and finished as the top story of that week. That was enough to edge out the race for president as the top story.

In reality, the war debate has become an issue that is well known, even well followed, but can no longer be said to dominate the news agenda as it did earlier in the year. Many weeks, it is just another issue, one often dwarfed by breaking news events and usually by domestic politics.

It also mattered what media one consumed. For the quarter, coverage of the policy debate was smallest on the front pages of newspapers (7%) and greatest in both the cable and radio sectors (12%). There were also considerable differences in the amount of attention devoted by liberal radio talk hosts (17%) and their conservative counterparts (9%); a large coverage differential between MSNBC (18%) and the Fox News Channel (8%); and a gaping chasm between PBS's "NewsHour" (23%), and the three commercial broadcast networks, NBC's "Nightly News" (6%), "The CBS Evening News" (7%) and ABC's "World News Tonight" (8%).

### Events in Iraq and the war at home

If coverage of the war debate, despite its up and down nature, was up in the quarter, coverage of the war from Iraq itself has followed a steadier trajectory, with a falloff overall.



In the end, coverage from Iraq slipped to 5% of the newshole in PEJ's Index, down from 7% in both of the first two quarters of the year. It also fell from being the No. 2 story overall in the second quarter to No. 3 in the third.

But unlike the policy debate, the week-to-week trajectory for third quarter coverage of the situation in Iraq was fairly constant. In 12 of the 13 weeks in this report, the story never fell below 3% of the overall coverage nor exceeded 6%. (In seven of those weeks, it registered the same, at 5% of the newshole.)

Only once, in the period from Sept. 16-21, did events inside Iraq crack double digits, when they filled 10% of the newshole and became the second-biggest story of the week. In that case, the incident fueling the coverage did not directly involve the U.S. military in Iraq, but introduced something of a new dimension to the narrative. It was the controversy over charges that the private security firm, Blackwater USA, had killed 17 Iraqis in an unprovoked Sept. 16 attack in Baghdad.

From the second to third quarter, coverage of events in Iraq remained stable in the newspaper and radio sectors. But it fell off measurably in network TV (7% to 5%), cable (4% to 2%) and even in the online sector (from 13% to 8%), though it was still the No. 1 story online from July through September.

Coverage of the homefront has consistently been the smallest component of the Iraq story in 2007. At 1% of the newshole, it continued its steady slide in the third quarter, down from 2% in the second quarter and 3% in the first quarter. Coverage of the homefront had one major burst of sustained coverage all year, when it finished as a top-five story in four consecutive weeks, from Feb. 25-March 23. That can be largely attributed to the Washington Post's powerful two-day (Feb. 18 and 19) investigative series on substandard conditions at Walter Reed Army Hospital. Beyond that, this element of the story remains small—overall the No. 7 story of the year.

## **The 2008 Campaign: Steady Coverage with Clinton as Top Newsmaker**

For at least a few days this summer, even Hillary Clinton's neckline became a campaign issue.

On July 20, the same day the Washington Post published a story about Clinton's "tentative dip into new neckline territory," a segment on "senatorial cleavage" was part of the MSNBC Hardball lineup. One guest, feminist author Naomi Wolf, dismissed the topic as "kind of a complete waste of time." That was hardly the last word. Three nights later, at the Democrats CNN/YouTube debate, Clinton was asked to respond to the media's focus on the issue of her not being "satisfactorily feminine."

If nothing else, the neckline episode seemed to reflect the media's continuing fascination with almost everything about the former First Lady. A well-known if polarizing figure with a long history in the public spotlight and a chance to become the nation's first female president, Clinton has provided the media with a number of storylines—some substantive, some bordering on the trivial. But from the very outset of a campaign that has attracted unprecedented early media attention; she has been the candidate in the brightest spotlight.

Although one might not count Clinton's décolletage among them, the third quarter included a number of significant events in the race for the White House. There were debates everywhere from the Citadel to the University of New Hampshire, the official entry of former Republican Senator/actor Fred Thompson, and a surprisingly strong finish in an Iowa straw poll that helped trigger media speculation that former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee might be a more formidable GOP candidate than originally thought.

Yet the campaign was already such a major story in the media, all this only sustained the level of coverage rather than swelling it further.

After jumping up from 7% of the newshole in the first quarter to 9% in the second quarter, campaign coverage remained steady in the third quarter (still 9%).

The fact that presidential race coverage in the summer months did not exceed the spring output should probably be viewed further evidence of just how quickly the "media primary" got fully underway in this early-starting election cycle. With such key Democratic contenders as Clinton and Barack Obama entering the fray in January, the election has either been the first or second-biggest story in each of the first three quarters of the year. There's been virtually no break or letup in the coverage that began 22 months before the next President would be chosen by the voters.

Indeed, in 23 of the 39 weeks of the first three quarters of 2007, the campaign has been either the biggest or second biggest story covered.

In four of the five media sectors—newspapers, online, network TV and cable—the level of presidential coverage remained virtually unchanged from the second to third quarter. Only in the radio sector—driven by increased attention on NPR and in talk radio—did the coverage rise noticeably, from 10% in the second quarter to 12% in the July-September period.

### **Clinton leads the press parade**

As the fascination with her neckline suggests, the Clinton candidacy continued to attract the most media coverage. In the third quarter, the former First Lady was the lead newsmaker in 16% of all the campaign stories, nearly doubling the totals of her closest competitors in the battle for press attention, Barack Obama and Fred Thompson, who came in at 8%.

Clinton was the leading newsmaker in every sector except newspapers, where she dominated 9% of the front page stories compared with Thompson's 12%. Reflecting talk

radio's endless fascination with her, she was the lead newsmaker in that platform more than four times as often as her nearest rival, besting Obama by a 31% to 7% margin in the programs studied.

Clinton's third quarter coverage level closely tracks with what PEJ found in its new "Invisible Primary" study of campaign coverage from January through May of 2007. In those months, the Democratic frontrunner was the most covered candidate and leading newsmaker in 17% of the stories.

But the pecking order of press coverage below her changed fairly dramatically in the July-September period when compared with the first five months of the year.

<b>Lead Newsmakers of the 2008 Presidential Campaign</b>		
Percent of Stories		
	<u>July - Sep</u>	<u>Jan - May</u>
<b><u>Democratic Candidates</u></b>		
Hillary Clinton	16%	17%
Barack Obama	8	14
John Edwards	3	4
<b><u>Republican Candidates</u></b>		
Fred Thompson	8	3
John McCain	5	7
Rudy Giuliani	4	9
Mitt Romney	3	5

One change was a drop off in the third quarter in coverage of Clinton's closest Democratic pursuer, who in the fourth quarter has seen a surge in some public opinion polls. While still finishing second in the race for exposure, Obama—who had nearly kept pace with Clinton through the first part of the year—tumbled from 14% in the first five months of 2007 to 8% in the third quarter.

There may be several reasons for the falloff in Obama coverage including the idea that some of the sheer novelty of the young, charismatic African-American's candidacy had worn off. Another could be that for much of the summer, Obama seemed unable to make any headway in catching Clinton in the polls.

The Democratic hopeful who usually runs third in those polls, former Senator John Edwards, dropped slightly from 4% to 3%.

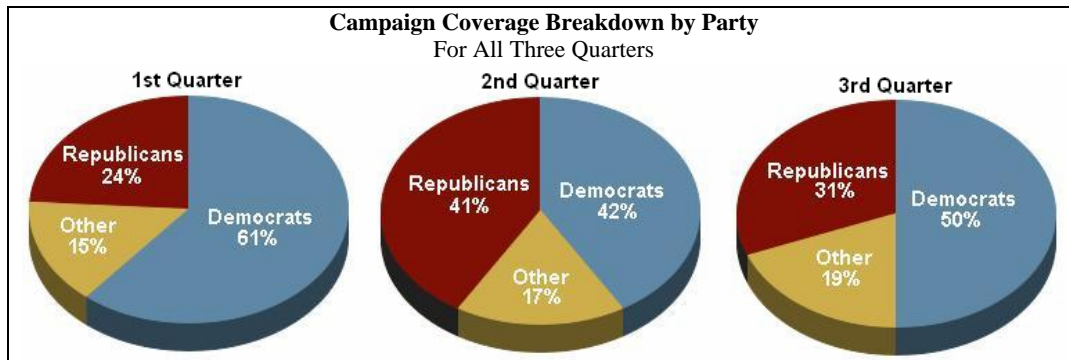
On the Republican side, Thompson, who wasn't an announced candidate until September, moved up to 8% from 3%. Senator John McCain dropped from 7% in the first five months of 2007 to 5% in the third quarter. Former New York mayor Rudy Giuliani fell to 4% from 9% and former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney dropped to 3% from 5%.

No other candidate was the lead newsmaker in more than 1% of the campaign stories in the third quarter.

### **Democrats get more attention than Republicans**

Although the trend was briefly interrupted in the second quarter, the media's propensity to pay considerably more attention to the Democrats than Republicans re-emerged in the third quarter.

In the first three months of the year, the Democratic candidates received more than twice the coverage of Republicans (61% to 24%). That evened out in the second quarter, when Democrats registered at 42% compared to 41% for the GOP, although much of that Republican coverage occurred in May when the GOP staged two debates compared to none for the Democrats.



From July through September, Democrats again regained the upper hand, dominating 50% of the election coverage compared to only 31% for the Republicans.

### **Top Newsmakers: Politicians and Criminal Defendants Lead The Way**

What do Idaho Senator Larry Craig, former Atlanta Falcons quarterback Michael Vick, and O.J. Simpson have in common?

Aside from having run afoul of the law, they were also among the media's five leading newsmakers in the third quarter.

In order to be deemed a lead newsmaker in a story, at least 50% of that story has to be about that individual or subject. Thus, while a lead newsmaker may not necessarily be a person who is covered most frequently in the media, he or she can be the overwhelmingly dominant figure in a story or event that has received a certain level of coverage.

Thus, the top-newsmaker list for the third quarter features a roster of controversial characters including the two former athletes charged with crimes, a scandal-ridden senator, a controversial public official who ultimately resigned, and one sworn enemy of the United States of America.

Four of the quarter's 10 leading newsmakers were prominent politicians. As the leading newsmaker in 2.9% of the stories, George Bush was No.1, followed by Hillary Clinton (No. 3 at 1.2%), Barack Obama (No. 8 at .6%), and Fred Thompson (No. 10 at .6%). General Petraeus, whose September visit to Capitol Hill caused a near media frenzy, was No. 9 at .6%.

The rest of the leading newsmaker list was made up of some fairly notorious public figures. The second-leading newsmaker was Craig (1.6% of the stories), whose June arrest in the Minneapolis bathroom did not become public knowledge until late August. While his subsequent effort to withdraw his guilty plea failed, Craig defied the expectations and wishes of many of his Republican colleagues by apparently deciding to serve out his term.

	<b>Lead Newsmaker by Media Sector for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter</b>					
	Number of Stories					
	<u>Overall</u>	<u>Newspaper</u>	<u>Online</u>	<u>Network TV</u>	<u>Cable</u>	<u>Radio</u>
George Bush	513	48	44	120	194	107
Larry Craig	293	8	24	62	133	66
Hillary Clinton	220	13	14	47	81	65
Michael Vick	162	5	13	44	70	30
O.J. Simpson	153	3	8	35	90	17
Alberto Gonzales	151	16	18	34	50	33
Mahmoud Ahmadinejad	121	4	8	33	43	33
Barack Obama	110	8	11	31	45	15
David Petraeus	104	19	8	25	36	16
Fred Thompson	101	16	6	26	43	10

In each of the five major media sectors except newspapers, where he finished well down the list, Craig was the second-leading newsmaker behind Bush. He was a particular favorite among liberal radio talk hosts who made him the leading newsmaker (6%) of the quarter.

Vick’s July 17 indictment for his involvement with a dog fighting operation was not one of the biggest stories of the third quarter. It never reached higher than 4% in any given week and for the three-month period, it registered at 1% of the newshole, far out of the top-10 list. But he finished as the fourth leading newsmaker (.9%) of the quarter. And on daytime cable, he even edged out Bush as the leading newsmaker on that platform.

Following right after Vick was another former football star who, for the second time in his life, was facing a serious criminal charge. O.J. Simpson’s Las Vegas arrest for kidnapping and assault with a deadly weapon brought back memories of the wall-to-wall cable coverage of his 1995 murder trial. At 13% of the newshole, the Simpson arrest was the leading story for the week of Sept. 16-21, but with the trial off in the future, the saga accounted for only 1% of all the coverage in the quarter. (The only sector in which Simpson was a top-10 story was cable, where he finished eighth at 3%.)

Still, Simpson was the fifth-leading newsmaker at .9%, proving once again his appeal as cable’s favorite celebrity defendant. He was the third-leading newsmaker on cable (1.6%), finishing third on CNN (1.2%), seventh on MSNBC (1.7%) and second on the Fox News Channel (at 1.8%).

The seventh-leading newsmaker of the quarter (at .7%) was Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. The Iranian leader’s late September visit to New York—a trip highlighted by a Columbia University appearance that included an insult-laden



introduction by school President Lee Bollinger—helped make U.S.-Iranian tensions the biggest story of the week of Sept. 23-28. On the Today show, Matt Lauer wondered whether the visit was “free speech at work or a dangerous platform for a hate monger.” (By comparison, an even more reviled enemy of the U.S., Osama bin Laden, was the 11th leading newsmaker of the quarter.)

Rounding out the top 10 newsmakers in the third quarter was a controversial national figure, Attorney General Alberto Gonzales, whose name seemed to rarely appear in media accounts without the prefix “embattled.” Gonzales’s resignation on Aug. 27 became the second-biggest story of that week (at 9%), although it was overshadowed by the news of Larry Craig’s arrest (18%). But it was enough to make him the sixth leading newsmaker for the quarter at .8%.

Gonzales was the key player in a long-running saga that began to emerge as a big story in the media back in March when the firings of U.S. attorneys triggered an investigation into the Attorney General’s office. As was the case with Vick, Gonzales’ resignation this summer was not one of the top 10 stories in the July-September period. But for that quarter, he was the third-leading newsmaker at 4.8% among the liberal radio hosts (behind Bush and Craig), and the second-leading newsmaker (at 1.6%) on the PBS “NewsHour.”

## **Immigration Retreats To The Shadows**

On June 28, after roughly six weeks of intense debate, the immigration reform bill backed by the President and mostly Democratic Senators died an ignominious death on Capitol Hill. The next night on his CNN show, Lou Dobbs, one of the bill’s fiercest opponents, read congratulatory emails from viewers crediting him for defeating an “amnesty bill.”

That week, the last one in the second quarter of 2007, the immigration debate was the leading story at 12% of the newshole. Then, with the crusade over and legislative battle won, coverage plummeted.

The subject plunged to 2% of the newshole and ninth place on the top-story roster in July through September. That was down from 6% of the newshole and the fourth-leading overall story in the period from April through June. In the third quarter, immigration fell behind domestic terrorism, the Minnesota bridge collapse, the economy, tensions between the U.S. and Iran, and the Larry Craig scandal in the roster of big stories.

Coverage was down in every media sector from the second to third quarter: to 2% from 5% in newspapers, to 4% from 7% in cable, to 2% from 9% in radio, to 1% from 3% online, and to 1% from 4% in network TV.

On conservative talk radio, a subject that had been the No. 1 topic in the second quarter (at 16% of the airtime) fell all the way to 4% in the third quarter, as hosts picked

up the slack with the Iraq debate, the presidential race and Senator Larry Craig’s arrest. On prime-time cable, the venue for hashing over the day’s hottest topics, it fell to 4% from 8%. And that’s despite the efforts of Dobbs who continued to hammer away at the issue.

According to the News Coverage Index, Dobbs alone was responsible for about one-third of all the immigration stories in the third quarter. That’s the main reason why CNN’s prime time cable coverage in the third quarter (7% and third-biggest story) continued to far outstrip MSNBC’s nighttime coverage (less than 1%) and Fox’s (4% and fourth biggest story).

Indeed, remove Dobbs from the equation and coverage of immigration on cable is halved—from 4% to 2%—in the period from July through September. Without Dobbs, it also falls to just 1% of the overall newshole for the third quarter.

Although immigration has been a sensitive political issue that worked its way into the presidential campaign (Hillary Clinton’s initial inability to deliver a clear position on a proposal to give drivers’ licenses to illegal immigrants was seen as a significant gaffe), media coverage has been uneven. The subject really caught fire when the fate of the legislation hung in the balance, but leveled off dramatically at other times. Despite that second quarter spike in coverage, the 2% of the newshole filled by the topic in the third quarter marked a return to the level of coverage (also 2%) that immigration attracted back in the first quarter.

## News Judgments By Outlet

In the third quarter, some patterns among different media sectors and outlets continued to reveal themselves. One such pattern is the basic similarity in the news judgment on the three nightly commercial broadcast network newscasts.

From July through September, the lineup of the top four stories—the Iraq war policy debate, followed by events inside Iraq, the presidential campaign and the U.S economy—was the same on ABC, NBC, and CBS—with just one exception. CBS had the events on the ground in Iraq narrowly ahead of the policy debate.

PBS’s nightly NewsHour also had the same list of top four stories, with one notable distinction. The program devoted much more time to its No. 1 story, the policy debate. It filled 23% of the newshole on the first half hour of the NewsHour. Of the three commercial broadcast networks, by comparison, the highest total for the Iraq debate was 8% on ABC.

<b>Big Stories by TV Network for the 3rd Quarter</b>				
	Percent of Newshole			
	<u>ABC</u>	<u>NBC</u>	<u>CBS</u>	<u>PBS</u>
Iraq Policy Debate*	8.1%	7.9%	6.9%	22.5%
2008 Presidential Campaign	9.6	8.8	5.6	5.0
Events in Iraq*	3.9	3.4	4.9	8.1
US Economic Numbers	3.4	3.3	2.9	4.8
Minn. Bridge Collapse	3.0	2.7	3.1	3.3
Utah Mine Collapse	1.9	2.8	2.2	1.8
US Domestic Terrorism	2.7	1.5	1.5	3.0
Iraq Homefront*	1.7	1.9	1.8	2.1
Larry Craig	1.3	2.8	1.5	0.2
London Bomb/Glasgow	1.3	1.5	1.6	1.6
<b>*Iraq Total Coverage</b>	<b>13.7%</b>	<b>13.2%</b>	<b>13.6%</b>	<b>32.7%</b>

When all three threads of the Iraq war are combined—policy debate, events on the ground and homefront, PBS filled almost twice as much of its airtime (33%) with war-related coverage than the next closest commercial network, CBS (at 17%). (It’s worth noting that the hour-long PBS broadcast has an extra 30 minutes to devote to news each evening.)

<b>Big Stories by Cable Network for the 3rd Quarter</b>			
Percent of Newshole			
	<u>CNN</u>	<u>Fox News</u>	<u>MSNBC</u>
Iraq Policy Debate*	11.0%	8.1%	18.4%
2008 Presidential Campaign	7.2	11.1	19.0
Minn. Bridge Collapse	4.4	4.0	4.0
Utah Mine Collapse	6.4	2.4	1.5
Immigration	5.6	3.0	1.5
Larry Craig	3.7	2.3	5.1
US Domestic Terrorism	2.9	4.5	3.1
OJ Simpson	2.3	3.9	2.3
Conflict with Iran	2.6	3.8	1.9
Events in Iraq*	4.4	1.4	0.6
Iraq Homefront*	1.3	1.0	0.3
<b>*Iraq Total Coverage</b>	<b>16.7%</b>	<b>10.5%</b>	<b>19.3%</b>

When it comes to cable news, there tends to be considerably more variation in story selection.

In the third quarter of 2007, the third-biggest story on CNN was the ultimately unsuccessful effort to save the six men trapped in a Utah mine cave-in. The saga filled 6% of the cable network’s airtime for the three months. On the Fox News Channel, the mine disaster was a less newsworthy event

and finished as the eighth-biggest story of the quarter, at 2% of the newshole. On MSNBC, the tragedy got even less attention, finishing out of the top-10 story list at 2%.

There was general agreement among the three cable nets about the top two stories of the quarter—the presidential race and the Iraq policy debate. (Although CNN was the only one to devote more coverage to the war debate rather than the campaign). But on other stories, the cable rivals made some very different coverage choices.

The oldest of the three cable news operations and the one with the broadest global reach, CNN devoted the most coverage to events inside Iraq (4%), its fifth-biggest story of the year. It was also the only one of the three cable competitors to include the recalls of pet food and Chinese products among its top 10 stories, at 2%. Given Lou Dobbs’ constant attention to the subject, immigration, the fourth-biggest story at 6%, is a bigger subject on CNN than either of its two competitors.

The Fox News Channel, which according to one’s viewpoint either tilts to the right or is a refreshing antidote to predominant liberal bias, devoted more coverage than its rivals to two threats to U.S. national security. Domestic terrorism issues were No. 3 at 5% and the simmering tensions between Iran and the U.S. were the sixth biggest story at 4%. It also devoted more airtime than CNN and MSNBC to the two big celebrity crime cases. O.J.’s run-in with the law was the fifth biggest at 4% while Michael Vick’s dogfighting bust, at 2%, was the tenth-biggest story.

For the third quarter in a row, the Fox News Channel also devoted less time to the Iraq war than CNN and MSNBC. When the three war threads—the Iraq policy debate, events inside Iraq, and the war’s impact on the homefront—are combined, 11% of Fox’s airtime was devoted to the war in the third quarter. That compares with 17% at CNN and 19% at MSNBC.

MSNBC, which promotes itself as a source for political news—“the place for politics” is one of its slogans—and has more implicitly acknowledged efforts to develop a more liberal prime-time lineup (they were interested in giving Rosie O’Donnell a show), showed that its marketing is also backed up by its story selection. It easily devoted the most airtime to the campaign (19%), compared to 11% at Fox and 7% at CNN. MSNBC also provided more coverage to Larry Craig (No. 3 story at 5%), the Valerie Plame outing case that resulted in the conviction of Scooter Libby (No. 6 at 3%), the resignation of Attorney General Alberto Gonzales (No. 8 at 2%) and the resignation of Karl Rove (No. 10 at 2%) than either of its competitors.

Moreover, MSNBC front-loaded heavily on its two top stories. Combined, the presidential campaign (19%) and the Iraq policy debate (18%) filled 37% of the network’s overall newshole in the quarter. At CNN, it took the top six stories combined to fill 37% of the newshole and on Fox, it took the top seven stories to reach that level.

The trend was even more pronounced on prime time, where the top issues of the day are dissected and discussed. At night on MSNBC, the Iraq debate and the race for the White House accounted for 45% of all coverage. On Fox, those two subjects accounted for about half as much coverage, 22%. On CNN, the war debate and campaign accounted for one-fifth of all of that network’s coverage, at 20.

In the world of radio news and information, the type of platform made a difference. While NPR’s “Morning Edition” and the ABC and CBS radio headlines both made the Iraq policy debate the top story, talk radio devoted the most time to the presidential campaign. (The 2008 race was only the 11<sup>th</sup> biggest topic on the headline services.) Meanwhile, talk radio’s third-hottest subject, the Larry Craig scandal, was No. 7 in the headlines and not even among “Morning Edition’s” top 20 stories of the quarter.

## **General Topics: Winners and Losers**

Aside from individual stories, be they running themes like the war or a breaking news event like a mine disaster, there is another way to look at the news agenda of the media. That is broader topic categories. The war in Iraq, for example, is part of the larger coverage category of U.S. foreign affairs. Generally speaking, the race for the White House falls under the umbrella topic of elections/politics. Such broader groupings also can tell us how much coverage there was a given topic, science, or health where they may not be a few major stories but hundreds of smaller disconnected ones.

We also see some shifts in the media agenda in the third quarter in these broader groupings.

In some areas, there was little change. The top three categories—U.S. foreign affairs, foreign events not involving the U.S., and politics—accounted for about 41% of all the coverage in the third quarter as compared with 39% in the second quarter.

But some categories varied noticeably from their second quarter totals. Due largely to the Minnesota bridge tragedy and the Utah mine accident, for instance, coverage of disasters more than doubled, to 7% of all story topics up from 3% in the second quarter. The real estate crisis and its aftershocks helped increase the amount of coverage of the broader topic of the economy to 4%, up from 2%.

And on the flip side, crime fell from 10% in the second quarter to 6%.

Some of the softer more feature-oriented categories showed little movement between the spring and summer months. Lifestyle coverage remained about the same in the second and third quarters at about 3%. That was also true for health and medicine at 4% and celebrity and entertainment at 2%. Some of the lower ranked categories encompassing subjects that might be expected to generate more attention also remained static. Education registered at 1% in both the second the third quarter as did science and technology, transportation and religion.

<b>Broad Story Topics</b>		
Percent of Newshole		
	<u>3<sup>rd</sup> Qtr</u>	<u>2<sup>nd</sup> Qtr</u>
US Foreign Affairs	18%	17%
Foreign (non-U.S.)	12	12
Elections/politics	10	10
Government	7	6
Disasters/Accidents	7	3
Crime	6	10
Economics	4	2
Health/medicine	4	4
Lifestyle	3	3
Business	3	3
Miscellaneous	3	3
Additional Domestic Affairs	3	2
Domestic Terrorism	2	2
Media	2	4
Sports	2	1

Finally, if one is looking for self-referential coverage in the news industry, there is always talk radio. In the third quarter, the broader topic of the media themselves finished in 14<sup>th</sup> place at 2% of the newshole. (That's a drop from eighth place and 4% in the second quarter.) But on talk radio, the media were the second hottest general topic of the quarter, at 16%. Only elections/politics at 22%, got chewed over more on the talk radio microphones, where many hosts do enjoy the sound of their own names.

# Topline

## PEJ News Coverage Index

July 1- September 30, 2007

### All Media - Top Stories

(Percent of Newshole)

3 <sup>rd</sup> QTR Rank	Story	All Media			
		1 <sup>st</sup> QTR	2 <sup>nd</sup> Qtr	3 <sup>rd</sup> Qtr	YTD
1	Iraq Policy Debate*	12.4	6.6	9.7%	9.6%
2	2008 Campaign	7.4	8.5	9.0	8.3
3	Events in Iraq*	6.8	6.7	5.0	6.2
4	Domestic Terrorism	1.5	1.1	2.8	1.8
5	Minn. Bridge Collapse	n/a	n/a	2.7	0.9
6	US Economic Numbers	0.9	1.0	2.6	1.5
7	Iran	3.4	2.1	2.1	2.6
8	Larry Craig	n/a	n/a	2.0	0.7
9	Immigration	1.5	5.7	1.9	3.0
10	Utah Mine Collapse	n/a	n/a	1.8	0.6
11	Iraq Homefront*	3.0	1.5	1.4	2.0
12	London Bomb/Glasgow Attack	n/a	0.4	1.2	0.5
13	Health Care	0.4	0.3	1.2	0.6
14	O.J. Simpson	<0.1	<0.1	1.1	0.4
15	Pakistan	n/a	n/a	1.1	0.4
Iraq War Total (sum of the three starred stories)		22.2%	14.8%	16.1%	17.8%

*Note: All other stories were at or less than 1.1% for the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter.*

*Newshole is defined as the time or space available in an outlet for news content.*

### All Media - Geographic Focus

(Percent of Newshole)

Geographic Focus	All			
	1 <sup>st</sup> QTR	2 <sup>nd</sup> QTR	3 <sup>rd</sup> Qtr	YTD
US National	63%	65%	64%	64%
US Interests Abroad	27	23	23	24
Foreign (Non-US)	8	12	12	11
Local*	1	<1	1	1
No Specific Geographic Focus	<1	<1	<1	<1

*Note: For newspapers, we do not include a local newspaper story in our study unless that story also falls into the realm of one of the Top Stories we are tracking at the time.*

### Newspapers - Top Stories

(Percent of Newshole)

3 <sup>rd</sup> QTR Rank	Story	All		Top Tier		Second Tier		Third Tier	
		QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD
1	2008 Campaign	8.5%	7.8%	7.9%	7.4%	11.8%	11.2%	8.4%	4.5%
2	Iraq Policy Debate*	7.3	6.4	6.4	5.7	8.4	6.7	13.8	12.3
3	Events in Iraq*	6.6	6.8	7.1	6.9	6.8	7.2	2.0	4.1
4	US Economic Numbers	4.1	2.3	4.0	2.3	4.5	2.5	5.1	2.6
5	Domestic Terrorism	3.0	1.9	3.0	2.0	3.6	1.5	2.0	1.3
6	Healthcare	2.3	1.4	2.1	1.4	3.2	1.5	2.4	1.2
7	Iraq Homefront*	2.0	2.8	1.4	2.0	4.1	5.3	4.0	5.4
8	Minn. Bridge Collapse	1.8	0.6	0.9	0.3	7.2	2.3	1.0	0.3
9	Immigration	1.7	3.1	1.6	2.8	2.3	4.0	2.1	3.8
10	Iran	1.6	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.4	1.6	0.9	1.4
Iraq War Total (sum of the three starred stories)		15.9%	16.0%	14.9%	14.6%	19.3%	19.2%	19.8%	21.8%

*Note: All other stories were less than 1.6% for all newspapers in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter.*

**Newspapers - Geographic Focus**  
(Percent of Newshole)

Geographic Focus	All		Top Tier		Second Tier		Third Tier	
	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD
US National	61%	63%	61%	62%	60%	63	64%	68%
US Interests Abroad	21	22	20	21	24	23	22	21
Foreign (Non-US)	14	13	17	15	6	5	0	2
Local*	4	3	2	1	9	9	12	9
No Specific Geographic Focus	<1	<1	<1	<1	1	<1	2	0

*Note: For newspapers, we do not include a local newspaper story in our study unless that story also falls into the realm of one of the Top Stories we are tracking at the time.*

**Online - Top Stories**  
(Percent of Newshole)

3 <sup>rd</sup> QTR Ran k	Story	All		AOL News		CNN.com		Google News		MSNBC.com		Yahoo News	
		QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD
1	Events in Iraq*	8.3%	11.3%	3.4%	8.7%	8.5%	13.0%	4.9%	6.6%	10.8%	11.0%	13.1%	17.0%
2	Iraq Policy Debate*	7.7	7.3	5.3	6.8	6.7	6.5	9.0	9.1	10.4	7.6	5.9	6.7
3	2008 Campaign	5.4	4.8	3.3	4.3	3.3	4.2	10.4	7.0	8.0	6.5	0.8	1.6
4	Pakistan	2.7	0.9	0.1	<0.1	2.5	0.8	3.6	1.2	1.6	0.5	5.8	1.9
5	Afghanistan	2.6	2.2	0.8	1.7	2.5	2.2	3.8	2.4	2.0	1.6	4.1	3.1
6	Economic Numbers	2.4	1.6	1.0	0.6	2.5	1.4	0.2	0.2	2.6	2.0	5.5	3.4
7	Iran	2.1	3.5	1.2	3.5	0.9	2.8	2.3	3.8	0.7	2.2	5.6	5.3
8	Minn. Bridge Collpase	2.1	0.7	2.7	0.9	3.8	1.2	1.6	0.5	1.1	0.4	1.5	0.5
9	Domestic Terrorism	2.0	1.7	2.0	2.3	0.5	0.8	1.2	1.4	4.4	2.6	1.2	1.3
10	London Bomb/ Glasgow	2.0	0.7	1.1	0.4	2.8	0.9	1.0	0.5	3.0	1.1	1.6	0.7
25	Iraq Homefront*	0.8	1.2	0.7	1.1	0	0.5	0.8	1.6	1.8	2.4	0.3	0.2
Iraq War Total (sum of the three starred stories)		16.8%	19.8%	9.4%	16.6%	15.2%	20.0%	14.7%	17.3%	23.0%	21.0%	19.3%	23.9%

*Note: All other stories were less than 2.0% for all online in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter.*

**Online - Geographic Focus**  
(Percent of Newshole)

Geographic Focus	All		AOL News		CNN.com		Google News		MSNBC.com		Yahoo News	
	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD
US National	47%	47%	67%	59%	49%	51%	37%	34%	48%	55%	35%	35%
US Interests Abroad	25	29	16	26	19	25	26	30	32	29	28	36
Foreign (Non-US)	28	24	16	15	32	24	37	36	20	16	37	29
No Specific Geographic Focus	<1	<1	<1	<1	0	0	0	0	0	<1	0	<1

**Network TV - Top Stories**  
(Percent of Newshole)

3 <sup>rd</sup> QTR Rank	Story	All		Morning		Evening (ABC, CBS, NBC)		ABC Total		CBS Total		NBC Total		PBS Evening	
		QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD
1	Iraq Policy Debate*	11.0 %	10.8 %	8.6 %	8.8 %	6.8 %	7.4 %	8.1 %	7.6 %	6.9 %	7.2 %	7.9 %	9.3 %	22.5 %	20.3 %
2	2008 Campaign	7.3	6.9	11.3	11.4	5.0	4.4	9.6	8.1	5.6	6.0	8.8	9.1	5.0	3.9
3	Events in Iraq*	5.0	6.6	2.0	3.7	6.0	7.6	3.9	5.8	4.9	6.1	3.4	5.4	8.1	9.6
4	Economic Numbers	3.6	1.5	2.5	1.1	3.8	1.7	3.4	1.6	2.9	1.4	3.3	1.3	4.8	2.0
5	Minn. Bridge Collapse	3.0	1.0	3.1	1.0	2.8	0.9	3.0	1.0	3.1	1.0	2.7	0.9	3.3	1.1
6	Utah Mine Collapse	2.2	0.7	2.8	1.0	1.8	0.6	1.9	0.6	2.2	0.7	2.8	0.9	1.8	0.6
7	Domestic terrorism	2.1	1.5	1.5	0.9	2.2	1.6	2.7	1.3	1.5	1.3	1.5	1.2	3.0	2.4
8	Iraq Home-front*	1.9	2.8	0.6	0.9	2.9	3.9	1.7	2.8	1.8	2.3	1.9	2.3	2.1	4.1
9	Larry Craig	1.5	0.5	2.7	0.9	1.1	0.4	1.3	0.4	1.5	0.5	2.8	0.9	0.2	0.1
10	London Bomb/Glasgow	1.5	0.7	1.6	0.7	1.3	0.6	1.3	0.6	1.6	0.7	1.5	0.6	1.6	0.7
Iraq War Total (sum of the three starred stories)		17.9 %	20.2 %	11.2 %	13.4 %	15.7 %	18.9 %	13.7 %	16.2 %	13.6 %	15.6 %	13.2 %	17.0 %	32.7 %	34.0 %

Note: All other stories were less than 1.5% for all Network TV in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter.

**Network TV - Geographic Focus**  
(Percent of Newshole)

Geographic Focus	All		Morning		Evening (ABC, CBS, NBC)		ABC Total		CBS Total		NBC Total		PBS Evening	
	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD
US National	66%	65%	72%	72%	71%	69%	70%	70%	71%	71%	70%	70%	47%	46%
US Interests Abroad	24	27	19	21	21	24	20	22	19	22	20	22	39	43
Foreign (Non-US)	10	8	9	7	9	8	9	7	9	7	10	8	14	12
No Specific Geographic Focus	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	0	<1	0	0



**Cable TV - Top Stories**  
(Percent of Newshole)

3 <sup>rd</sup> QTR Rank	Story	All		Daytime		Evening		CNN		Fox News		MSNBC	
		QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD
1	Iraq Policy Debate*	11.9%	12.3%	7.2%	7.0%	13.2%	13.6%	11.0%	11.8%	8.1%	7.8%	18.4%	19.1%
2	2008 Campaign	11.7	11.1	6.1	6.0	13.2	12.5	7.2	7.5	11.1	9.8	19.0	18.1
3	Minn. Bridge Collapse	4.1	1.4	5.2	1.8	3.8	1.3	4.4	1.4	4.0	1.3	4.0	1.3
4	Utah Mine Collapse	3.7	1.2	2.7	0.9	3.9	1.3	6.4	2.1	2.4	0.8	1.5	0.5
5	Immigration	3.6	4.5	1.9	2.3	4.0	5.1	5.6	6.2	3.0	4.3	1.5	2.2
6	Larry Craig	3.6	1.2	1.1	0.4	4.2	1.4	3.7	1.2	2.3	0.8	5.1	1.7
7	Domestic Terrorism	3.5	1.8	3.0	1.5	3.7	1.9	2.9	1.5	4.5	2.5	3.1	1.4
8	O.J. Simpson	2.9	1.0	3.9	1.3	2.6	0.9	2.3	0.8	3.9	1.3	2.3	0.8
9	Iran	2.8	3.3	2.7	2.6	2.9	3.4	2.6	3.2	3.8	4.0	1.9	2.3
10	Events in Iraq*	2.3	3.6	1.5	2.6	2.5	3.8	4.4	6.1	1.4	2.4	0.6	1.6
19	Iraq Homefront*	0.9	1.3	0.5	0.8	1.0	1.4	1.3	1.9	1.0	0.9	0.3	1.0
Iraq War Total (sum of the three starred stories)		15.1%	17.2%	9.2%	10.4%	16.7%	18.8%	16.7%	19.8%	10.5%	11.1%	19.3%	21.7%

Note: All other stories were less than 2.3% for all Cable TV in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter.

**Cable TV - Geographic Focus**  
(Percent of Newshole)

Geographic Focus	All		Daytime		Evening		CNN		Fox News		MSNBC	
	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD
US National	72%	71%	80%	79%	70%	69%	66%	65%	76%	76%	75%	74%
US Interests Abroad	23	24	15	16	25	26	27	29	19	20	23	24
Foreign (Non-US)	5	4	6	5	5	4	7	6	5	5	2	1
No Specific Geographic Focus	<1	<1	0	0	<1	<1	<1	<1	0	0	0	<1

### Radio - Top Stories

(Percent of Newshole)

3 <sup>rd</sup> QTR Rank	Story	All		Talk						News Headlines		NPR's Morning Edition	
				Overall Talk		Conservative Talk		Liberal Talk					
		QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD
1	2008 Campaign	11.7 %	10.4 %	14.2 %	13.6 %	15.4 %	14.8 %	11.6 %	11.3 %	1.7 %	1.9 %	10.7 %	6.8 %
2	Iraq Policy Debate*	11.6	12.2	12.0	13.3	9.3	12.3	17.4	15.3	7.6	8.5	12.8	11.2
3	Larry Craig	3.4	1.2	4.9	1.7	3.6	1.2	7.5	2.6	1.9	0.6	0.6	0.2
4	Iran	3.0	2.5	3.6	2.8	3.6	2.7	3.6	3.1	1.0	1.8	2.5	2.2
5	Domestic Terrorism	2.6	1.9	2.8	1.8	1.7	1.5	4.9	2.6	2.6	1.9	2.0	2.1
6	Events in Iraq*	2.5	2.9	1.1	1.0	0.6	0.5	1.9	1.8	3.3	4.9	5.7	6.5
7	Immigration	2.4	4.4	2.9	5.3	4.2	7.2	0.2	1.6	0.7	1.1	2.1	3.5
8	Global Warming	1.9	2.4	2.2	2.6	3.0	3.7	0.8	0.4	0.4	0.7	1.8	2.5
9	Minn. Bridge Collpase	1.8	0.6	1.8	0.6	1.9	0.7	1.6	0.6	2.6	0.9	1.4	0.5
10	Economic Numbers	1.5	1.0	1.1	0.5	1.6	0.7	0.1	0.1	3.9	2.4	1.5	1.4
15	Iraq Homefront *	1.0	1.1	0.1	0.8	0.1	0.5	0.3	1.4	0.9	1.6	3.0	1.8
Iraq War Total (sum of the three starred stories)		15.1 %	16.2 %	13.2 %	15.1 %	10.0 %	13.3 %	19.6 %	18.5 %	11.8 %	15.0 %	21.5 %	19.5 %

Note: All other stories were less than 1.5% for all Radio in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter.

### Radio - Geographic Focus

(Percent of Newshole)

Geographic Focus	All		Talk						News Headlines		NPR's Morning Edition	
			Overall Talk		Conservative Talk		Liberal Talk					
	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD
US National	73%	74%	80%	81%	80%	81%	78%	81%	77%	76%	56%	56%
US Interests Abroad	20	20	19	18	18	17	22	18	16	18	25	27
Foreign (Non-US)	7	6	1	1	2	2	0	<1	8	6	19	17
No Specific Geographic Focus	0	<1	0	<1	0	<1	0	0	0	<1	0	0

### Media Sector Summary - Top Stories

(Percent of Newshole)

3rd QTR Rank	Story	All		Newspapers		Online		Network TV		Cable TV		Radio	
		QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD
1	Iraq Policy Debate*	9.7%	9.6%	7.3%	6.4%	7.7%	7.3%	11.0%	10.8%	11.9%	12.3%	11.6%	12.2%
2	2008 Campaign	9.0	8.3	8.5	7.8	5.4	4.8	7.3	6.9	11.7	11.1	11.7	10.4
3	Events in Iraq*	5.0	6.2	6.6	6.8	8.3	11.3	5.0	6.6	2.3	3.6	2.5	2.9
4	Domestic Terrorism	2.8	1.8	3.0	1.9	2.0	1.7	2.1	1.5	3.5	1.8	2.6	1.9
5	Minn. Bridge Collapse	2.7	0.9	1.8	0.6	2.1	0.7	3.0	1.0	4.1	1.4	1.8	0.6
6	US Economic Numbers	2.6	1.5	4.1	2.3	2.4	1.6	3.6	1.5	0.8	0.7	1.5	1.0
7	Iran	2.1	2.6	1.6	1.7	2.1	3.5	1.4	2.2	2.8	3.3	3.0	2.5
8	Larry Craig	2.0	0.7	0.5	0.2	1.8	0.6	1.5	0.5	3.6	1.2	3.4	1.2
9	Immigration	1.9	3.0	1.7	3.1	0.6	1.4	0.5	1.5	3.6	4.5	2.4	4.4
10	Utah Mine Collapse	1.8	0.6	0.3	0.1	1.9	0.6	2.2	0.7	3.7	1.2	0.6	0.2
11	Iraq Homefront*	1.4	2.0	2.0	2.8	0.8	1.2	1.9	2.8	0.9	1.3	1.0	1.1
12	London Bomb/Glasgow Attack	1.2	0.5	1.0	0.3	2.0	0.7	1.5	0.7	1.0	0.7	0.5	0.3
13	Health Care	1.2	0.6	2.3	1.4	0.6	0.2	0.7	0.4	0.7	0.3	1.0	0.4
14	O.J. Simpson	1.1	0.4	0.1	0.1	0.6	0.2	1.2	0.4	2.9	1.0	0.4	0.1
15	Pakistan	1.1	0.4	1.0	0.3	2.7	0.9	1.2	0.4	0.3	0.1	0.6	0.2
Iraq War Total (sum of the three starred stories)		16.1%	17.8%	15.9%	16.0%	16.8%	19.8%	17.9%	20.2%	15.1%	17.2%	15.1%	16.2%

Note: All other stories were at or below 1.1% of the overall newshole for the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter.

### Media Sector Summary - Geographic Focus

(Percent of Newshole)

Geographic Focus	All		Newspapers		Online		Network TV		Cable TV		Radio	
	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD	QTR	YTD
US National	64%	64%	61%	63%	47%	47%	66%	65	72%	71%	73%	74
US Interests Abroad	23	24	21	22	25	29	24	27	23	24	20	20
Foreign (Non-US)	12	11	14	13	28	24	10	8	5	4	7	6
Local*	1	1	4	3	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
No Specific Geographic Focus	<1	<1	<1	<1	0	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	0	<1

Note: For newspapers, we do not include a local newspaper story in our study unless that story also falls into the realm of one of the Top Stories we are tracking at the time.