

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER NEWS INTEREST INDEX**  
**JANUARY 12-15, 2012**  
**FINAL TOPLINE**  
**N=1,008**

**ASK ALL:**

PEW.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>	<b>(VOL.) DK/Ref</b>
a. Reports about the condition of the					
U.S. economy					
January 12-15, 2012	33	32	14	20	1
January 5-8, 2012	39	31	15	15	*
December 15-18, 2011	36	32	14	16	1
December 8-11, 2011	41	29	13	16	1
December 1-4, 2011	40	33	13	13	1
November 17-20, 2011	35	33	16	15	1
November 10-13, 2011	39	31	15	14	*
November 3-6, 2011	37	31	15	17	1
October 27-30, 2011	38	33	14	15	1
October 20-23, 2011	38	32	14	16	1
October 13-16, 2011	39	32	14	14	*
October 6-9, 2011	43	28	14	14	1
September 29-October 2, 2011	46	26	14	14	*
September 22-25, 2011	44	33	11	11	*
September 8-11, 2011	40	30	15	14	1
September 1-4, 2011	44	30	11	15	*
August 25-28, 2011	44	28	14	13	1
August 18-21, 2011	44	29	12	14	1
August 4-7, 2011	46	30	11	13	1
July 28-31, 2011	43	30	13	13	*
July 21-24, 2011	41	32	13	13	1
July 14-17, 2011	41	30	14	14	1
July 7-10, 2011	36	30	15	18	1
June 30-July 3, 2011	38	32	13	16	1
June 23-26, 2011	37	29	15	19	*
June 16-19, 2011	39	33	14	13	*
June 9-12, 2011	39	30	15	16	1
June 2-5, 2011	35	34	17	14	*
May 19-22, 2011	33	34	17	16	*
May 12-15, 2011	32	32	17	18	2
May 5-8, 2011	40	35	15	9	1
April 21-25, 2011	41	33	12	14	*
April 14-17, 2011	44	30	14	12	1
April 7-10, 2011	46	30	14	10	*
March 31-April 3, 2011	42	31	16	11	0
March 24-27, 2011	36	32	17	15	*
March 17-20, 2011	38	32	17	13	*
March 10-13, 2011	40	30	16	13	*
March 3-6, 2011	37	31	17	13	1
February 24-27, 2011	49	29	11	10	*
February 17-20, 2011	35	33	14	17	*
February 10-13, 2011	36	34	13	16	*
February 3-6, 2011	35	37	14	14	*
January 20-23, 2011	37	33	14	15	1
January 13-16, 2011	37	29	15	18	1
January 6-9, 2011	39	37	11	12	1

[SEE TRENDS FOR PREVIOUS YEARS](#)

## PEW.1 CONTINUED...

	<u>Very closely</u>	<u>Fairly closely</u>	<u>Not too closely</u>	<u>Not at all closely</u>	<b>(VOL.) DK/Ref</b>
b. Efforts to deal with the debt crisis in Europe					
January 12-15, 2012	12	23	23	42	1
December 8-11, 2011	14	22	27	37	1
December 1-4, 2011	14	24	25	36	1
<b>TRENDS FOR COMPARISON:</b>					
November 10-13, 2011: <i>Efforts to deal with the debt crisis in Greece and Italy</i>	15	23	23	38	1
November 3-6, 2011: <i>Efforts to deal with the debt crisis in Greece and other European countries</i>	18	26	21	34	1
October 27-30, 2011	12	27	24	36	*
September 29-October 2, 2011: <i>The debt crisis in Greece and other European countries</i>	15	21	24	39	1
September 15-18, 2011	16	23	24	37	1
August 18-21, 2011: <i>The debate among European leaders on how to address the region's debt crisis</i>	12	21	22	44	1
August 11-14, 2011: <i>Riots in London and other parts of Britain</i>	17	28	21	32	1
June 30-July 3, 2011: <i>The financial crisis and violent protests in Greece</i>	14	22	23	39	1
June 16-19, 2011	10	20	25	45	1
May 13-16, 2010: <i>A trillion-dollar bailout package for European governments facing debt problems</i>	21	26	24	28	2
May 7-10, 2010: <i>The financial crisis in Greece and violent protests there</i>	19	23	26	31	*
April 30-May 3, 2010: <i>The financial crisis in Greece</i>	6	15	28	51	1
October, 1998: <i>Financial instability around the world</i>	32	40	19	9	*
September, 1998: <i>Economic and political instability in Russia</i>	18	30	28	24	*
Late August, 1998: <i>Economic problems in Russia</i>	8	22	29	41	*
January, 1998: <i>The deepening financial crisis in many Asian countries</i>	15	25	27	33	*
March, 1995: <i>The financial and political instability in Mexico</i>	12	28	30	29	1
c. Mounting tensions between the U.S. and Iran					
January 12-15, 2012	24	30	18	27	*
<b>TRENDS FOR COMPARISON:</b>					
January 5-8, 2012: <i>Tensions between the U.S. and Iran over shipping in the Persian gulf</i>	23	26	19	32	*
June 10-13, 2010: <i>New U.N. sanctions against Iran because of its nuclear program</i>	19	28	25	27	1
October 2-5, 2009: <i>Talks between the United States and Iran over Iran's nuclear program</i>	30	32	18	20	*
May 21-24, 2009: <i>Iran testing a missile hat could reach Israel</i>	20	29	25	26	*
July 11-14, 2008: <i>The Iranian government firing test missiles capable of striking Israel</i>	25	29	22	23	1
January 11-14, 2008: <i>Encounter between U.S. and Iranian ships</i>	25	26	21	27	1

## PEW.1 CONTINUED...

	<u>Very closely</u>	<u>Fairly closely</u>	<u>Not too closely</u>	<u>Not at all closely</u>	<b>(VOL.) DK/Ref</b>
December 7-10, 2007: <i>Intelligence report on Iran's nuclear weapons program</i>	25	31	20	23	1
October 26-29, 2007: <i>Mounting tensions between the United States and Iran</i>	26	34	21	18	1
September 28 – October 1, 2007: <i>Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's recent tip to New York City where he spoke at Columbia University and the United Nations</i>	23	31	20	25	1
June 1-4, 2007: <i>Recent talks between the United States and Iran</i>	19	27	27	26	1
February 23-26, 2007: <i>Mounting tensions between the United States and Iran</i>	29	37	18	15	1
February 16-19, 2007: <i>Iran supplying weapons to insurgents in Iraq</i>	28	32	20	19	1
February 2-5, 2007	33	38	18	10	1
September, 2006: <i>Iran's nuclear research program</i>	23	34	19	23	1
August, 2006: <i>Iran's nuclear research program</i>	24	34	20	20	3
June, 2006: <i>Iran's nuclear research program</i>	21	32	22	22	3
April, 2006: <i>Iran's nuclear research program</i>	26	30	23	20	1
March, 2006: <i>Iran's nuclear research program</i>	24	31	22	22	1
d. Political violence in Syria					
January 12-15, 2012	12	17	26	45	1
<b>TRENDS FOR COMPARISON:</b>					
August 4-7, 2011: <i>Political violence following uprisings in Syria</i>	10	19	26	44	1
May 5-8, 2011	14	27	30	28	1
June 2-5, 2011: <i>Anti-government protests and violence in some Middle Eastern countries</i>	18	25	25	32	*
April 28-May 1, 2011	18	29	25	27	1
February 3-6, 2011: <i>Anti-government protests in Egypt and other Middle Eastern countries</i>	32	35	16	18	*
January 27-30, 2011	17	26	21	35	*
e. The U.S. Supreme Court decision on hiring practices for churches and other religious groups					
January 12-15, 2012	8	12	21	58	1
<b>TRENDS FOR COMPARISON:</b>					
June 23-26, 2011: <i>The Supreme Court dismissing a sex discrimination lawsuit against Wal-Mart</i>	24	22	17	36	1
March 3-6, 2011: <i>A Supreme Court ruling protecting free speech rights of protestors at military funerals</i>	24	22	17	36	1
October 7-10, 2010: <i>A case before the Supreme Court involving a fundamentalist pastor's anti-gay protests at military funerals</i>	18	22	22	37	1

## PEW.1 CONTINUED...

	<u>Very closely</u>	<u>Fairly closely</u>	<u>Not too closely</u>	<u>Not at all closely</u>	<b>(VOL.) DK/Ref</b>
January 22-25, 2010: <i>The Supreme Court overturning campaign finance limits on corporations and unions paying for ads about political candidates</i>	18	21	25	34	1
December, 2003: <i>The Supreme Court decision upholding campaign finance reform legislation</i>	8	17	28	45	2
September, 2003: <i>The removal of a monument of the Ten Commandments from an Alabama courthouse</i>	32	29	19	19	1
July, 2002: <i>The federal court ruling that the words "One nation, under God" cannot appear in the Pledge of Allegiance</i>	52	27	10	10	1
July, 2002: <i>The Supreme Court ruling allowing vouchers to be used at private and religious schools</i>	19	24	22	33	2
July, 2002: <i>The Supreme Court ruling that bans the death penalty for the mentally retarded</i>	16	23	25	34	2
May, 1992: <i>The Supreme Court's deliberations about the legality of restrictions on abortion in Pennsylvania</i>	28	34	24	13	1
July, 1990: <i>The Supreme Court decision that found laws against flag burning unconstitutional and the attempt in Congress to amend the Constitution</i>	24	39	25	11	1
July, 1989: <i>The Supreme Court decision on the burning of the U.S. flag</i>	51	32	12	4	1
May, 1989: <i>The Supreme Court's hearing of arguments in a Missouri abortion case</i>	25	29	21	24	1
f. News about candidates for the 2012 presidential elections					
January 12-15, 2012	29	29	18	23	1
January 5-8, 2012	29	30	16	25	*
December 15-18, 2011	26	24	20	29	1
December 8-11, 2011	27	27	18	28	*
December 1-4, 2011	25	28	20	26	1
November 17-20, 2011	24	31	21	23	1
November 3-6, 2011	22	31	20	26	1
October 27-30, 2011	21	26	21	30	1
October 20-23, 2011	21	28	22	28	1
October 13-16, 2011	26	29	22	23	1
October 6-9, 2011	25	25	23	27	1
September 29-October 2, 2011	27	26	21	25	*
September 22-25, 2011	25	26	23	25	1
September 15-18, 2011	24	28	21	27	1
September 8-11, 2011	22	26	21	31	*
September 1-4, 2011	22	23	22	32	1
August 25-28, 2011	22	22	22	33	1
August 18-21, 2011	27	26	19	28	1
August 11-14, 2011	19	24	20	36	1
August 4-7, 2011	18	21	22	37	1
July 28-31, 2011	17	27	21	35	1
July 21-24, 2011	17	22	28	32	*
July 14-17, 2011	18	26	27	28	1
July 7-10, 2011	16	23	27	33	1
June 30-July 3, 2011	21	28	24	25	2
June 23-26, 2011	19	26	24	31	*

**PEW.1 CONTINUED...**

	Very <u>closely</u>	Fairly <u>closely</u>	Not too <u>closely</u>	Not at all <u>closely</u>	(VOL.) DK/Ref
June 16-19, 2011	23	29	23	25	*
June 9-12, 2011	18	30	22	30	1
June 2-5, 2011	21	31	22	26	*
May 26-29, 2011	20	27	24	28	*
May 19-22, 2011	15	27	24	32	1
May 12-15, 2011	15	22	26	35	1
May 5-8, 2011	16	24	27	32	1
April 21-25, 2011	18	26	23	32	1
April 14-17, 2011	20	23	29	27	1
March 24-27, 2011	13	19	26	41	1
March 10-13, 2011	15	21	26	38	0
February 10-13, 2011	16	19	24	40	*
February 3-6, 2011	15	20	23	42	*

[SEE TRENDS FOR PREVIOUS YEARS](#)

**ASK ALL:**

PEW.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.]**

Jan 12-15

2012

31	News about candidates for the 2012 presidential elections
20	Reports about the condition of the U.S. economy
11	Mounting tensions between the U.S. and Iran
3	Efforts to deal with the debt crisis in Europe
3	Political violence in Syria
1	The U.S. Supreme Court decision on hiring practices for churches and other religious groups
9	Some other story (VOL.)
21	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

**ASK ALL:**

PEW.3 Thinking about Republican candidates for president in 2012... Regardless of whom you might prefer, which Republican candidate have you heard the most about in the news recently? **[OPEN END. RECORD FIRST MENTION ONLY.] [PLEASE BE CERTAIN TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN "JOHN MCCAIN" AND "HERMAN CAIN".]**

Jan 12-15

2012

51	Mitt Romney	39	5	18	12	7	13	27	22	7	9
6	Newt Gingrich	11	13	*	1	1	1	5	2	12	1
4	Ron Paul	6	1	1	2	3	1	1	1	2	*
2	Rick Perry	3	3	12	31	22	3	*	*	*	*
1	Rick Santorum	9	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
1	Herman Cain	*	43	23	*	1	*	*	*	*	*
*	Michele Bachmann	3	*	1	7	23	23	5	1	1	*
*	Jon Huntsman	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
*	Gary Johnson	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
2	Other										
32	None/DK/Ref.	26	32	39	37	35	44	45	41	50	53

**ASK ALL:**

PEW.4 Do you think news organizations are giving too much coverage, too little coverage or the right amount of coverage to news about candidates for the 2012 presidential elections?

	<u>Too much coverage</u>	<u>Too little coverage</u>	<u>Right amount of coverage</u>	<u>(VOL.) DK/Ref</u>
January 12-15, 2012	36	16	36	11
January 5-8, 2012	37	16	39	8
September 8-11, 2011: <i>Possible candidates for the 2012 presidential elections</i>	25	20	44	12
June 30-July 3, 2011	29	16	41	14
April 21-25, 2011	22	31	39	8
February 10-13, 2011	20	29	40	12
<b>TREND FOR COMPARISON:</b>				
<b>2008 Election</b>				
June 20-23, 2008: <i>News about Candidates for the 2008 presidential election</i>	44	10	44	2
April 25-28, 2008	51	7	38	4
January 25-28, 2008	36	9	52	3
January 18-21, 2008	33	11	51	5
January 11-14, 2008: <i>The campaign</i>	40	11	44	5
January 4-7, 2008	40	11	43	6
December 14-17, 2007: <i>News about Candidates for the 2008 presidential election</i>	32	16	48	4
November 16-19, 2007	32	13	51	4
July 20-23, 2007	32	18	43	7
June 1-4, 2007	33	12	47	8
<b>2004 Election</b>				
February, 2004: <i>The 2004 presidential campaign</i>	28	8	61	3
October, 2003	23	17	51	9
April, 2003: <i>The race for the Democratic presidential nomination</i>	15	38	38	9
<b>2000 Election</b>				
June, 2000: <i>The 2000 presidential campaign</i>	19	16	60	5
March, 2000	25	10	61	4
February, 2000	22	10	63	5
September, 1999	28	14	49	9
July, 1999	18	13	59	10
<b>1996 Election</b>				
March, 1996: <i>The 1996 presidential campaign</i>	29	10	58	3
October, 1995	18	18	60	4
<b>1992 Election</b>				
September, 1992: <i>The 1992 presidential campaign</i>	22	11	62	5
February, 1992	19	15	62	4
October, 1991	12	22	58	8
<b>1988 Election</b>				
May, 1988: <i>The 1988 presidential campaign</i>	24	7	62	7
November, 1987	21	16	58	5

**ASK ALL:**

PEW.5 How would you describe the presidential election campaign so far – is it **[READ ITEM a. FIRST, THEN RANDOMIZE ITEMS b. THRU e.]**

a.	<u>Interesting</u>	<u>Dull</u>	(VOL.) <u>Neither</u>	(VOL.) <u>DK/Ref</u>
January 12-15, 2012	36	55	3	5
October 20-23, 2011	35	51	4	10
October 10-13, 2008	71	25	3	1
September 12-15, 2008	68	26	5	1
April 18-21, 2008	59	35	5	1
February 15-18, 2008	70	25	4	1
October 12-15, 2007	37	55	5	3
April, 2007	34	52	6	8
Mid-October, 2004 (RV)	66	28	5	1
Early September, 2004 (RV)	50	42	6	2
June, 2004	33	57	4	6
June, 2000	28	65	4	3
July, 1996	21	73	3	3

  

b.	<u>Too negative</u>	<u>Not too negative</u>	(VOL.) <u>Neither</u>	(VOL.) <u>DK/Ref</u>
January 12-15, 2012	50	41	1	7
October 20-23, 2011	44	41	4	11
October 10-13, 2008	55	41	3	1
September 12-15, 2008	43	51	4	2
April 18-21, 2008	50	44	4	2
February 15-18, 2008	28	66	3	3
Mid-October, 2004 (RV)	57	38	3	2
Early September, 2004 (RV)	62	32	1	5
June, 2004	45	46	2	7
Mid-March, 2004	47	47	2	4

  

c.	<u>Informative</u>	<u>Not informative</u>	(VOL.) <u>Neither</u>	(VOL.) <u>DK/Ref</u>
January 12-15, 2012	48	45	2	6
October 20-23, 2011	40	49	2	9
October 10-13, 2008	63	34	2	1
September 12-15, 2008	54	41	3	2
February 15-18, 2008	65	31	2	2
Mid-October, 2004 (RV)	73	22	3	2
Early September, 2004 (RV)	63	33	1	3
June, 2004	48	46	2	4
Mid-March, 2004	53	42	2	3

  

d.	<u>Too long</u>	<u>Not too long</u>	(VOL.) <u>Neither</u>	(VOL.) <u>DK/Ref</u>
January 12-15, 2012	57	35	2	6
October 20-23, 2011	50	39	2	9
October 10-13, 2008	57	39	3	1
April 18-21, 2008	65	29	5	1
February 15-18, 2008	57	40	*	3
October 12-15, 2007	66	28	3	3
April, 2007	59	32	3	6
Mid-October, 2004 (RV)	51	43	3	2
Early September, 2004 (RV)	53	42	2	3
June, 2004	52	42	2	4
Mid-March, 2004	52	44	1	3

**PEW.5 CONTINUED...**

e.	<u>Important</u>	<u>Unimportant</u>	<u>(VOL.) Neither</u>	<u>(VOL.) DK/Ref</u>
January 12-15, 2012	74	23	1	2
February 15-18, 2008	90	10	*	*
Mid-October, 2008 (RV)	96	3	1	*
Early September, 2004 (RV)	90	9	*	1
June, 2004	79	18	1	2
Mid-March, 2004	81	17	1	1

**ASK ALL:**

PEW.6 How much, if anything, have you heard about Mitt Romney's record as head of the private equity firm Bain Capital? Have you heard a lot, a little or nothing at all?

Jan 12-15

2012

21	A lot
40	A little
38	Nothing at all
1	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

**ASK IF HEARD A LOT OR A LITTLE (PEW.6=1,2):**

PEW.7 Do you think this is an important issue for people to know about, or not?

<b>BASED ON TOTAL:</b>		<b>BASED ON HEARD A LOT/LITTLE:</b>		
Jan 12-15		Jan 12-15		
<u>2012</u>		<u>2012</u>		
43		70		Important
16		25		Not important
3		5		Don't know/Refused (VOL.)
39		--		Heard nothing/DK/Ref
<b>N</b>	<b>1,008</b>	<b>677</b>		