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The Kaiser Family Foundation/Harvard School of Public Health's *Health News Index* is designed to help the news media and people in the health field gain a better understanding of which health news stories Americans are following and what they understand about issues covered in the news. Every two months since 1996, Kaiser/Harvard has issued a new index report. This report is based on a survey of 1,208 adults. The survey asked respondents about major health issues covered in the news between June 21, 2002 and July 17, 2002. For comparison purposes, respondents were also asked about other leading issues in the news during the same period.

Health News Stories Followed by the Public

Among health news stories, over half of the public (55%) closely followed discussions in Congress

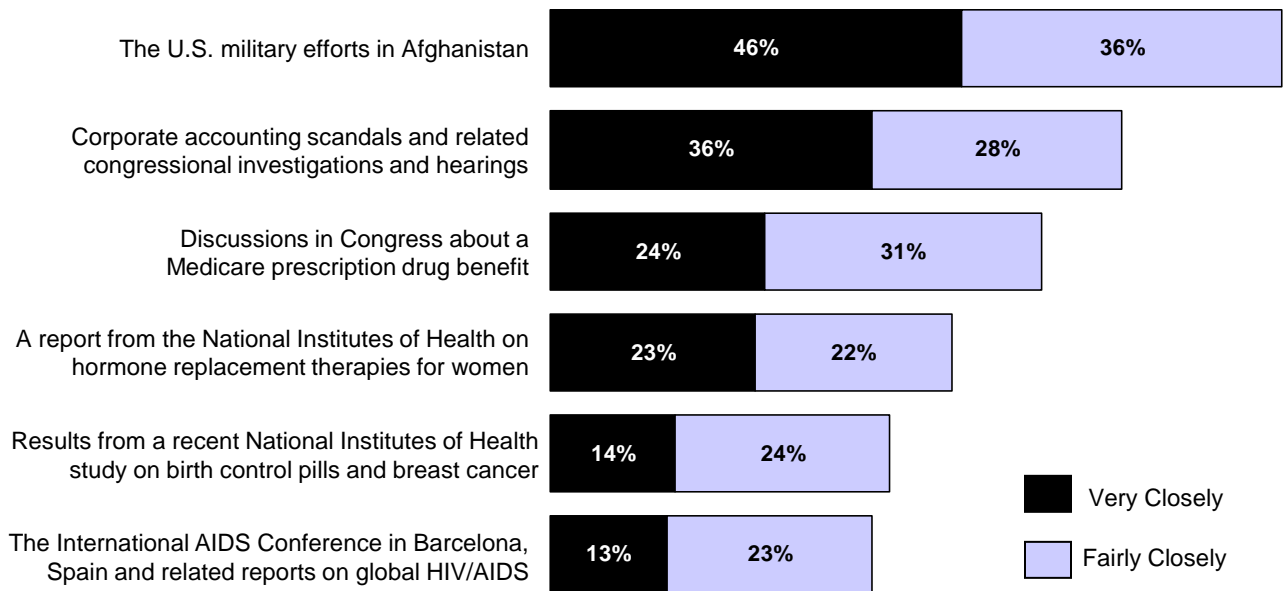
about a Medicare prescription drug benefit. A smaller share (45%) said they closely followed news of a report from the National Institutes of Health about hormone replacement therapies for women.

By comparison, eighty-two percent of the public continued to closely follow stories about the U.S. military efforts in Afghanistan (83% in May/June 2002). Almost two-thirds (64%) reported closely following stories about corporate accounting scandals and related congressional investigations and hearings.

Among other health issues in the news, four in ten adults (38%) said they closely followed the results from a recent National Institutes of Health study on birth control pills and breast cancer. Thirty-six percent reported closely following the International AIDS Conference in Barcelona, Spain and related reports on global HIV/AIDS.

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HEALTH NEWS INDEX**

How closely Americans followed leading stories in the news from June 21, 2002 to July 17, 2002

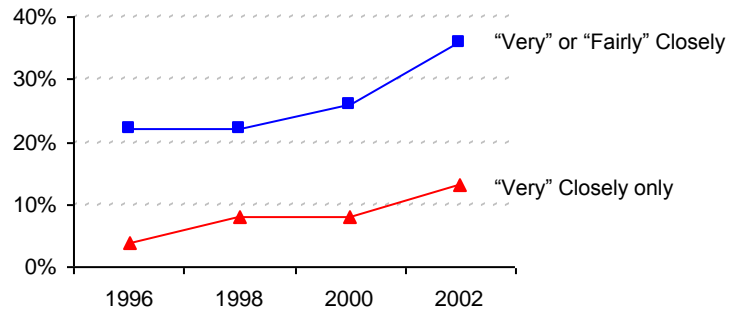


WHAT THE PUBLIC UNDERSTANDS ABOUT HEALTH STORIES IN THE NEWS

Attention to International AIDS Conferences

Historically, relatively small percentages of the public report paying attention to news stories about the International AIDS conferences. However, attention to news about these events has risen steadily from one in five (22%) reporting that they followed news emanating from the biennial conference in 1996 closely, to over one-third (36%) reporting following closely in 2002.

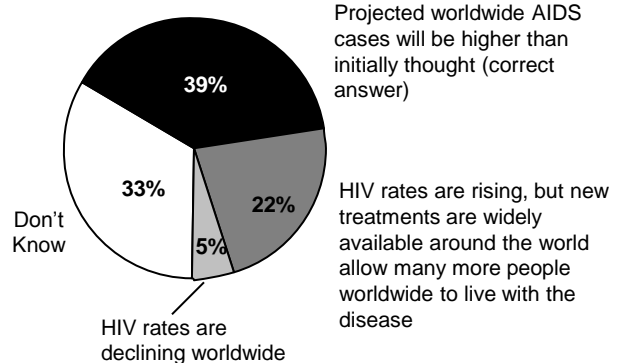
Trends in Attention to Biennial International AIDS Conferences 1996-2002



Content of Reports Released at 2002 International AIDS Conference

Four in ten adults (39%) knew that the reports on global AIDS released at the International AIDS Conference in Barcelona projected the number of worldwide AIDS cases in the next 20 years will be higher than researchers initially thought. More than one in four (27%) incorrectly identified the findings of the reports on global AIDS released in conjunction with this year's International AIDS Conference in Barcelona, while one-third (33%) said they did not know the content of the reports.

Thinking about what you have heard or seen in the news, which of the following statements best summarizes the latest reports on global HIV/AIDS from the International AIDS conference in Barcelona?



Hormone Replacement Therapy

Nearly half of adults (45%) said they closely followed news about a report from the National Institutes of Health on hormone replacement therapy (HRT) for women. One-third (35%) knew the report was about the halting of a study of HRT because women taking the drugs experienced an increased risk of breast cancer and heart disease. One in ten (10%) thought the report found that HRT provides more benefits than initially thought; a similar share (12%) thought the report found an increased risk of death for women taking HRT; and four in ten (43%) said they did not know what the report found. More women (57%) than men (32%) reported following the story closely. Similarly, more women (41%) than men (29%) gave the correct answer to the knowledge question about this story.

The public's attention and understanding of the National Institutes of Health report on hormone replacement therapy

