



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:  
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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:  
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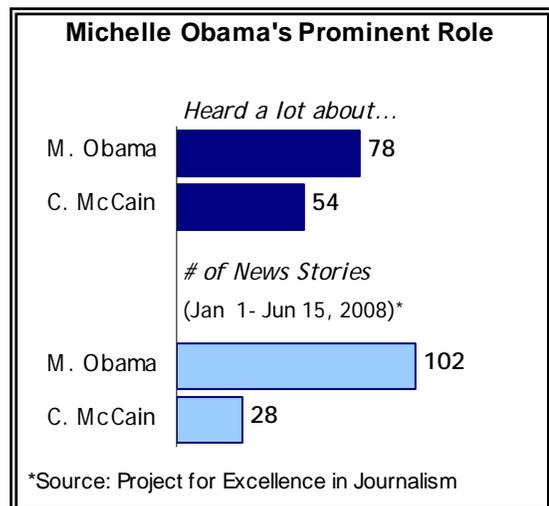
**Coverage of the Candidates' Wives**  
**MORE HEAR NEGATIVE NEWS ABOUT MICHELLE OBAMA THAN CINDY MCCAIN**

With the major party nominations now settled, the images of the candidates' wives are coming into sharper focus. While opinions about Cindy McCain and Michelle Obama are mostly positive, Mrs. Obama has emerged as the more high profile and controversial spouse.

More Americans have heard a lot about Michelle Obama than Cindy McCain, and Mrs. Obama has received much more media coverage than Mrs. McCain. However, somewhat more of those who have heard about Mrs. Obama say the coverage of her has been mostly negative rather than mostly positive (by 26% to 21%); by comparison, 31% of those who have heard about Mrs. McCain say coverage of her has been mostly positive while just 7% say it has been generally negative.

Overall, 78% of Americans have heard at least a little about Michelle Obama. Three-in-ten say they have heard a lot about Mrs. Obama, up from 21% just three weeks ago. By contrast, just 54% have heard at least a little about Cindy McCain, including only 9% who have heard a lot about her.

News coverage of Michelle Obama has far outweighed that of Cindy McCain. According to the Project for Excellence in Journalism's Campaign Coverage Index, from Jan. 1 through June 15 of this year, Obama appeared as a significant newsmaker in



102 stories. Cindy McCain has appeared in just 28 stories over this period<sup>1</sup>. Coverage of Michelle Obama has increased dramatically in recent weeks – nearly half of the stories featuring her have appeared in the national news media since May 14.

In evaluating coverage of Mrs. Obama and Mrs. McCain, roughly half of those who have heard about each say what they have been hearing or reading about them has been a mixture of positive and negative news (49% say that about Michelle Obama vs. 53% for Cindy McCain). But significantly more say what they have been hearing about Mrs. Obama is negative than say that about Mrs. McCain (26% vs. 7%).

Republicans are more likely than Democrats to say they have been hearing mostly negative news about Michelle Obama. Among the Republicans who have heard at least a little about Mrs. Obama, 33% say most of what they have heard or read about her has been negative. Only 10% say most of the news about Obama has been positive. On balance, Democrats who have heard about Mrs. Obama say the news has been mostly positive (30% vs. 21% who say mostly negative).

There is no significant party gap in views of the coverage of Cindy McCain. Very few Republicans, Democrats or independents say most of the news about Mrs. McCain has been negative.

### Overall Opinions of Candidates' Wives

According to a recent People-Press survey, voters' opinions of Michelle Obama and Cindy McCain are largely favorable. However, Mrs. Obama gets slightly higher

<i>News about Michelle Obama has been...*</i>	Total %	Rep %	Dem %	Ind %
Mostly positive	21	10	30	20
Mostly negative	26	33	21	27
Mix of both	49	52	46	50
Don't know/Refused	4	5	3	3
(N=)	100 (814)	100 (218)	100 (291)	100 (277)

<i>News about Cindy McCain has been...*</i>	Total %	Rep %	Dem %	Ind %
Mostly positive	31	38	27	32
Mostly negative	7	6	9	4
Mix of both	53	50	54	55
Don't know/Refused	9	6	10	9
(N=)	100 (608)	100 (173)	100 (198)	100 (214)

\* Based on those who have heard a lot or a little about her.

	<i>Cindy McCain</i>		<i>Michelle Obama</i>		<u>N</u>
	<u>Fav</u> %	<u>Unfav</u> %	<u>Fav</u> %	<u>Unfav</u> %	
All Voters	42	16	44	22	1242
Republicans	54	6	24	39	352
Democrats	37	26	65	11	444
Independents	40	15	39	22	415

Based on Registered Voters.  
Source: "McCain's Negatives Mostly Political, Obama's More Personal." Pew Research Center for the People & the Press. May 29, 2008

<sup>1</sup> As defined in the Campaign Coverage Index, significant newsmaker means that at least 25 percent of the story is about that figure.

negative ratings than does Mrs. McCain: 22% of voters had an unfavorable view of Obama last month while 16% had an unfavorable view of McCain. [See “[McCain’s Negatives Mostly Political, Obama’s More Personal](#)” released May 29, 2008 by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press.]

Michelle Obama’s unfavorable ratings are particularly high among Republicans. Nearly four-in-ten GOP voters (39%) have an unfavorable opinion of Obama. Democrats do not react nearly so negatively to Cindy McCain. Among Democratic voters, 26% have an unfavorable opinion of John McCain’s wife. The good news for Michelle Obama is that Democrats are more enthusiastic about her than Republicans are about Cindy McCain. 65% of registered Democrats have a favorable view of Mrs. Obama. Fewer Republicans (54%) have a favorable opinion of Mrs. McCain.

## About the News Interest Index

The *News Interest Index* is a weekly survey conducted by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press aimed at gauging the public's interest in and reaction to major news events.

This project has been undertaken in conjunction with the Project for Excellence in Journalism's *News Coverage Index*, an ongoing content analysis of the news. The News Coverage Index catalogues the news from top news organizations across five major sectors of the media: newspapers, network television, cable television, radio and the internet. Each week (from Sunday through Friday) PEJ will compile this data to identify the top stories for the week. The News Interest Index survey will collect data from Friday through Monday to gauge public interest in the most covered stories of the week.

Results for the weekly surveys are based on telephone interviews among a nationwide sample of approximately 1,000 adults, 18 years of age or older, conducted under the direction of ORC (Opinion Research Corporation). For results based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling is plus or minus 3.5 percentage points.

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls, and that results based on subgroups will have larger margins of error.

For more information about the Project for Excellence in Journalism's News Coverage Index, go to [www.journalism.org](http://www.journalism.org).

## About the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press

The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press is an independent opinion research group that studies attitudes toward the press, politics and public policy issues. We are sponsored by The Pew Charitable Trusts and are one of eight projects that make up the Pew Research Center, a nonpartisan "fact tank" that provides information on the issues, attitudes and trends shaping America and the world.

The Center's purpose is to serve as a forum for ideas on the media and public policy through public opinion research. In this role it serves as an important information resource for political leaders, journalists, scholars, and public interest organizations. All of our current survey results are made available free of charge.

All of the Center's research and reports are collaborative products based on the input and analysis of the entire Center staff consisting of:

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**PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE & THE PRESS  
 JUNE 13-16, 2008 NEWS INTEREST INDEX OMNIBUS SURVEY  
 TOPLINE  
 N=1,006**

**QUESTIONS 1 THROUGH 10 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE**

Still thinking about the presidential campaign...

Q.11 How much if anything have you heard about each of the following? Have you heard a lot, a little or nothing at all? **[READ ITEMS; ROTATE ITEMS, BUT ALWAYS KEEP A-B TOGETHER AND C-D TOGETHER AS BLOCKS]**

**Q.11A & Q.11B HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE**

		<u>A lot</u>	<u>A little</u>	<u>Nothing at all</u>	<u>DK/ Refused</u>
c.	Cindy McCain, John McCain's wife May 22-25, 2008	9 8	45 46	46 46	*=100 *=100
d.	Michelle Obama, Barack Obama's wife May 22-25, 2008	30 21	48 55	22 24	*=100 *=100

**IF RESPONDENT HAS HEARD "A LOT" OR "A LITTLE" ABOUT CINDY McCAIN/ MICHELLE OBAMA [Q.11c OR Q.11d =1, 2)], ASK:**

Q.12 Would you say the news you've been hearing or reading about **[INSERT ITEM, ROTATE]** has been mostly positive, mostly negative or a mix of both?

	<u>Mostly positive</u>	<u>Mostly negative</u>	<u>Mix of both</u>	<u>DK Refused</u>	<u>(N)</u>
a. Cindy McCain	31	7	53	9=100	(608)
b. Michelle Obama	21	26	49	4=100	(814)