

# Ted Kennedy Still Holds His Appeal



**George Gallup**

Princeton, N.J.

ONE of the most interesting phenomena on the American political scene today is the strong and persistent appeal of Senator Edward Kennedy despite:

(1) His frequent assertion that he will not actively seek the Democratic presidential nomination in 1972; and

(2) Lingering doubts among significant numbers of voters concerning the events surrounding Kennedy's car accident at Chappaquiddick, which occurred two years ago.

Senator Kennedy's appeal with voters dropped dramatically following the Chappaquiddick incident, which took the life of Mary Jo Kopechne, a Washington secretary. Prior to the mishap, Gallup surveys showed the Massachusetts Senator to be far and away the leading contender for the 1972 Democratic presidential nomination.

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KENNEDY, however, has gained political strength in recent weeks and in the latest Gallup survey of nomination choices has taken over first place, winning 29 per cent of the vote of Democratic voters to 21 per cent for Muskie.

Moreover, in trial heat races against President Nixon, based on all voters, Kennedy stands toe-to-toe with the President, capturing 41 per cent of the vote, only one point less than the President. In a similar "trial heat" election, Muskie polls 41 per cent to Nixon's 39 per cent.

Kennedy's appeal is especially strong among young persons (particularly

among the recently enfranchized 18 to 20 group), among blacks, Roman Catholics and manual laborers.

Even though Kennedy has regained some support, half the Democrats interviewed in the latest survey (and six in ten Republicans) still believe the Senator's chances of someday becoming President has been hurt by the fatal accident at Chappaquiddick, with some suggesting that Kennedy's political opponents may seek to capitalize on the incident.

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THE SURVEY further suggests that even with Kennedy's resurgence of strength, there are still many Americans who feel uneasy about what happened at Chappaquiddick.

About one in four offers the opinion that drunken driving was responsible for the death of Miss Kopechne, even though Kennedy refuted this charge on a nationally televised speech the week following the incident.

Despite Kennedy's political resurgence with the public, he fails to win favor with the Nation's Democratic County chairmen. In a Gallup survey of this key group of party "pros," Kennedy runs a weak third for the Democratic nomination, slightly behind Humphrey and trailing far behind Muskie.

The views of these county chairmen traditionally dominate the party convention and may therefore play an important part in a future Kennedy presidential bid.

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