

THE HARRIS SURVEY

Muskie Lead Over Nixon Widening

By Louis Harris

In the latest Harris Survey, Sen. Edmund Muskie of Maine has widened his lead over President Nixon to a 47 to 39 percent margin, with Gov. George Wallace on an independent line receiving 11 percent. Back in February, Sen. Muskie led the President by a margin of 44 to 39 percent.

Here is the trend of the presidential trial heats between Nixon and Muskie over the past two years. As before, this latest cross section of 1619 likely voters, including 18-20 year olds, across the nation was asked:

"Suppose the 1972 election for President were being held today and you had to choose right now — would you vote for Richard Nixon the Republican, Sen. Edmund Muskie for the Democrats, or George Wallace the Independent?" and "if not sure, would you lean toward Nixon, Muskie or Wallace the Independent?"

	Nixon	Muskie	Wallace	Not Sure
April, 1971	39%	47%	11%	3%
February	39	44	12	5
January	40	43	11	6
November, 1970	40	46	10	4
September	43	43	10	4
May	42	38	12	8
April	47	36	10	7
February	49	35	11	5
November, 1969	49	35	11	5
October	51	35	9	5
May	51	33	11	5

These results show a steady upward trend for Muskie and a downward trend for Nixon. Contrary to some reports by political pundits, the Maine Democrat's popularity does not appear to be waning at all.

Confirming the basic set of this survey are the results of another pairing between Muskie and Nixon with Wallace out of the race:

	Nixon	Muskie	Not Sure
April, 1971	44%	50%	6%
February	42	48	10
January	46	49	5

Muskie continues to hold onto the six-point lead he had in February when the 1972 election is cast as a two-way contest. The significance of these results is it now is clear that it is something of a myth to assume that the bulk of Wallace's vote would normally go to Nixon. Wallace voters are essentially against the "in" establishment, and this includes the occupant of the White House, regardless of party.

A measure of where Nixon stands politically today can be obtained in another test when pitted against his 1968 opponent, Sen. Hubert Humphrey:

	1971 Test	1968 Results
Nixon	42%	43%
Humphrey	41	43
Wallace	13	14
Not Sure	4	

Against Humphrey, Nixon is precisely where he was back in 1968. Today, such a repeat contest with George Wallace as a third-party candidate would produce the identical result. This represents a comeback for Humphrey, but still places him well back of Muskie.

Nor should the 8-point Muskie lead over the President be taken to mean Nixon is incapable of opening up a sizable lead over other potential Democratic contenders. Against Sen. George McGovern, the only announced Democratic aspirant here's how Nixon rates:

	April	Feb.
Nixon	46%	45%
McGovern	36	34
Wallace	13	12
Not Sure	5	9

McGovern gained two points since February, still trails Nixon by 10 points.

Most significant about Muskie's vote getting pattern is his continuing ability to carry the college-educated by a margin of 51 to 42 percent and persons with incomes of \$15,000 and over by 47 to 46 percent.

Muskie also is ahead among the 18-20 year old voters by 48 to 35 percent and he holds a commanding 51 to 39 percent edge among who are Catholic.

Significant as well is the result in the South, taken by Nixon with 41 percent of the vote, but with Muskie closely behind with 36 percent and Wallace at 21 percent. These results indicate that the South may be changing to a more moderate stance since 1968, with Wallace's support limited to the four Deep South states and with Muskie being capable of giving Nixon a tough run in the near South and Border states.

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