

WXPost

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The Harris Survey

Most Give Nixon Benefit of Doubt

Despite the obvious crisis now facing President Nixon over the Watergate affair, in which pluralities of the public feel he ought to resign "if it is proven that he knew about the bugging before it happened" or "if it is proven that he ordered the cover-up," Mr. Nixon's overall rating among the people on the job he is doing as President is no worse than 49 to 48 per cent negative. This represents virtually no change since an early May reading.

People would like to believe that somehow, in some way, President Nixon will not fall victim to the Watergate affair. And yet, increasingly, public doubts and suspicions about his integrity continue to mount.

Most damaging is the level of personal confidence people are now prepared to give the President. Periodically the Harris survey has asked cross-sections:

How would you rate President Nixon on inspiring confidence personally in the White House — excellent, pretty good, only fair, or poor?

	Positive	Negative	Not sure
June, 1973	24%	65%	11%
May	32	57	11
April	33	53	14
March	38	50	12
February	48	41	11
January	38	52	10
December, 1972	44	48	8
October	51	41	8

Thus far, the answers forthcoming from President Nixon on Watergate simply have not washed with the American people. The public is doubtful that the appointment of Archibald Cox as a special prosecutor on Watergate will reveal "the whole truth." The people are largely unimpressed with Mr. Nixon's explanation that he was worried about CIA-FBI involvement in the case, and therefore wanted at least a partial cover-up of the full story.

The cross-section was asked these projective questions to draw out the full scope of public opinion on Watergate and its implications:

Let me ask you about some statements that have been made about the Watergate affair. For each, tell me if you agree or disagree (read statements).

PRO-NIXON

Dirty campaign tactics exist among most Republicans and Democrats, and the Nixon campaign people were not worse than the Demo-

crats, except that they got caught.

	Asree	Dis-agree	Not sure
June	64%	23%	13%
May	73	16	11

President Nixon still has most of his second term in the White House to go, so it is best to give him the benefit of the doubt in the Watergate bugging and cover-up.

	Asree	Dis-agree	Not sure
June	54%	34%	12%
May	59	32	9

The President was right in saying it is more important for him to spend his time working for the country than to be trying to find out what happened in the Watergate affair.

	Asree	Dis-agree	Not sure
June	52%	36%	12%
May	63	29	8

President Nixon is a man of high integrity.

	Asree	Dis-agree	Not sure
June	43%	36%	21%
May	63	24	13

With the appointment of Archibald Cox as a special prosecutor on Watergate, all the truth about the affair will finally come out.

	Asree	Dis-agree	Not sure
June	28%	33%	39%

President Nixon was right to warn his aides to protect possible involvement of the CIA and FBI in the Watergate affair.

	Asree	Dis-agree	Not sure
June	25%	40%	35%

ANTI-NIXON

It is hard to believe that, with his closest assistants involved in the Watergate affair, President Nixon did not know about the planning and later cover-up of the affair.

	Asree	Dis-agree	Not sure
June	63%	23%	14%
May	54	35	11

President Nixon has lost so much credibility, it will be hard for him to be accepted as President again.

	Asree	Dis-agree	Not sure
June	60%	25%	15%
May	54	35	11

President Nixon does not inspire confidence as a President should.

	Asree	Dis-agree	Not sure
June	53%	33%	14%
May	43	44	13

President Nixon tried to get the CIA and FBI involved in political spying here at home to help him politically and that was wrong:

	Asree	Dis-agree	Not sure
June	40%	28%	32%

President Nixon is just using the claim the CIA was involved in Watergate to cover up the fact his own top political aides were caught in a political spy operation.

	Asree	Dis-agree	Not sure
June	38%	24%	38%