

# Americans Divided on Watergate

By George Gallup

PRINCETON, N.J. — Despite the revelations of recent months regarding the Watergate scandal, the American people remain closely divided on the issue of whether Watergate is a "serious matter" or "just politics—the kind of thing both parties engage in."

In the latest survey, 48 per cent say Watergate is a "serious matter," revealing corruption in the Nixon administration," while only slightly fewer, 43 per cent, dismiss it as "just politics." These findings nearly match those recorded in late August, 1973, the last time such a poll was taken, when 48 per cent also said Watergate is a serious matter and 46 per cent viewed it as just a matter of politics.

Here is the question asked:

*Which of these two statements comes closer to your point of view about Watergate? (1) It's a very serious matter because it reveals corruption in the Nixon administration. (2) It's just politics—the kind of thing that both parties engage in.*

The issue remains a highly partisan one from a political standpoint. Republicans in the survey are 2-to-1 on the other side. Independents are fairly evenly divided.

Findings differ little from region to region, although southerners are slightly less inclined to view Watergate in a serious light than are persons living in other parts of the nation.

The following table shows the key findings:

	Serious Matter	Just Politics	No Opinion
National	48%	43%	9%
Republicans	33	59	8
Democrats	57	33	10
Independents	49	45	6
East	49	42	9
Midwest	51	43	6
South	44	43	13
West	50	45	5
Men	48	46	6
Women	49	40	11
Under 30 years	55	40	5
30-49 years	45	49	6
50 and over	47	39	14
College	54	43	3
High school	48	46	6
Grade school	42	36	22

When the question was first asked in April, 1973, a majority, 53 per cent, said Watergate was "just politics," while only 3 in 10 (31 per cent) said it was a serious matter. By June, however, many more people had become concerned over Watergate, with 47 per cent labeling it a "serious matter," compared to a nearly equal proportion (46 per cent) who said it was "just politics."

Since that time, the proportions holding these views have changed little.

The following table shows the trend:

	Serious Matter	Just Politics	No Opinion
June, 1974	48%	43%	9%
Late Aug., 1973	48	46	6
Early August	53	39	8
July	48	45	7
Late June	48	45	7
Early June	47	46	7
April	31	53	16

Recently published Gallup findings show a majority of 53 per cent holding the opinion that the mass media—newspapers, television and radio—are providing "too much" coverage of Watergate.

The proportion believing Watergate coverage is excessive has increased from one year ago. Then, 44 per cent said the media were providing too much coverage, 12 per cent said too little, and 36 per cent believed it to be "about right."

Views on news coverage depend to a considerable extent on how people view Watergate. Those who believe Watergate is "just politics" and not a serious matter are far more inclined to say the media is devoting too much time and space to the matter than are those who view it as serious.

Even among those who regard Watergate as a serious matter, however, as many as one-third feel that there is presently too much coverage.

These Gallup Poll findings are based on a nation-wide survey of 1,509 persons 18 and older, interviewed in more than 300 scientifically selected localities during the period June 21-24.

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