

THE HARRIS SURVEY

Most Voters Unsure About Nixon, McG

By Louis Harris

Although President Nixon held a large lead over Senator McGovern in August presidential pairings, a majority of the people likely to vote Nov. 7 are nonetheless critical of Nixon's performance on three important issues:

- His effectiveness in controlling the cost of living and unemployment.
- For allegedly being "too close to big business."
- In fulfilling his 1968 pledge to end U.S. involvement in Vietnam.

Were these three issues to become the basis on which the electorate makes its final decision, the Republican position would be less secure.

But there are four major areas in which a majority of the voters also have deep reservations about McGovern:

- By 64 - 23 percent, almost two out of three likely voters agree with the charge "McGovern has poorly thought-out plans, such as his welfare plan and his saying he would go to Hanoi to beg for the release of the prisoners of war."
- By 56 - 27 percent, a majority also agrees with the statement that "McGovern is too radical in his views and too quick to agree to way-out ideas."
- By 51 - 24 percent, voters also feel that "McGovern is not experienced enough in the handling of foreign affairs."
- And by 50 - 31 percent, voters believe the claim that "McGovern has too many ties to radical and protest groups."

It would appear from Nixon's early lead that the negatives about him at this stage of the campaign do not cut as deeply as those against McGovern. More significant, however, may be the fact that in 1972 voters are in a highly critical mood about both men running for the White House, as indeed they are about the leadership of the country in nearly every other major private and public area. This could make public opinion polls more volatile than otherwise since loyalties are so thinly held.

Despite an otherwise strong showing, the figures on voter criticism of President Nixon caution against overconfidence:

- By 59 - 33 percent, a majority of voters agree with the statement that he "has not done an effective job in controlling rises in the cost of living and unemployment."
- By 57 - 30 percent, a majority also go along with the criticism that Nixon and the Republicans "are too close to big business."
- By 50 - 42 percent, voters did not think in early August that Nixon "has kept his pledge to end U.S. involvement in Vietnam."

In a survey of 1635 likely voters taken earlier this month, the cross-section of the electorate was asked:

"If it came down to a matter of personal trust, whom would you trust more to be President in the White House—Richard Nixon or George McGovern?"

	Total Voters
Nixon	60%
McGovern	27
Not sure	13

These results suggest that on the key dimension of voter confidence, Richard Nixon also has a wide head start over George McGovern.