

Nixon Ties Truman's Pop

AUG 15 1973

By George Lardner Jr.
Washington Post Staff Writer

President Nixon's popularity has plunged from its high in January to the lowest rating for any President in 20 years, according to the Gallup Poll.

Only 3 in 10 Americans—31 per cent—say they approve of the way Mr. Nixon is handling his job, the Gallup pollsters found in interviews conducted Aug. 3-6.

The rating reflects a slippage of 9 points, in the last four weeks and a drop of 37 per cent since the President's peak in January, after the Vietnam peace settlement.

Still another poll, conducted by Oliver Quayle for the National Broadcasting Co., found that Sen. George McGovern (D-S.D.) might even defeat Mr. Nixon if another election were held "right now."

In a nationwide survey during the last week of July and the first week of August, Quayle asked: "Suppose another election were being held right now and the candidates were again Richard Nixon, the Republican, and George McGovern, the Democrat. As of now, would you be for Nixon or McGovern?"

The results, Quayle reported, were:

Nixon—49 per cent
McGovern—51 per cent.

Mr. Nixon won a landslide victory over McGovern last November with 60.8 per cent of the popular vote to McGovern's 37.8 per cent.

Now, both polls found, one of every four Americans feels that Mr. Nixon should be forced out of the White House. Gallup said 26 per cent feel that "the President should be compelled to leave office." Quayle said that 25 per cent of his sample favored impeachment. An even larger number, 30 per cent, told Quayle's pollsters that they felt the President should resign.

Gallup said Mr. Nixon's popularity rating of 31 per cent was the lowest for any President in 20 years, matching the 31 per cent score for President Truman during his last month in office, in January, 1953.

The new Gallup poll also left Mr. Nixon with less support than President Johnson had during his bleakest days. Johnson's lowest rating was 35 per cent, a score recorded in August, 1968, during election-year tumult over the war in Vietnam.

The Gallup popularity

scores are obtained by responses to the question that has been asked about incumbent presidents since the Roosevelt years: "Do you approve or disapprove of the way Mr. Nixon is handling his job as President?"

Approval ratings of the last five Presidents, Gallup said, show:

	High		Average
	%	%	%
President Nixon	68	31	56
President Johnson	80	35	54
President Kennedy	83	57	70
President Eisenhower	79	49	66
President Truman	87	23	46

Mr. Nixon's popularity has averaged only 49 per cent in Gallup polls this year, in comparison with his 56 per cent average since taking office. His high point of 68 per cent was first recorded in November, 1969, and then again last January.

His recent decline, Gallup said, is reflected in all major population groups, but has been especially pronounced among adults under 30, people in the South, and independents.

The Watergate scandal, concern over high prices and continued bombing in Cambodia were singled out by Gallup as "key factors" in Mr. Nixon's loss of support. Listing inflation as "easily the nation's top problem in the minds of

most Americans," Gallup said many more people blame government for it (46 per cent) than blame labor (25 per cent) or business (19 per cent).

A year ago, Gallup found, 39 per cent said government was mainly responsible for high prices, compared with 29 per cent who blamed labor and 20 per cent who blamed business.

Quayle's poll gave Mr. Nixon a popularity rating of 32 per cent, compared with 55 per cent last October during his successful re-election campaign. Quayle said only 44 per cent now "trust" the President, a drop of 13 per cent since last October. The pollster said nearly three of four Americans (74 per cent) feel that Mr. Nixon ability to govern has been seriously weakened as a result of the "Watergate revelations."

Both polls dealt with what Americans now think the President knew of the Watergate scandal. Quayle said 44 per cent feel he "knew about it before" the break-in at Democratic headquarters, 34 per cent feel he "knew about it right after," 17 per cent think he only "became aware recently," and 5 per cent were listed as unsure.

ularity Low, Poll Shows

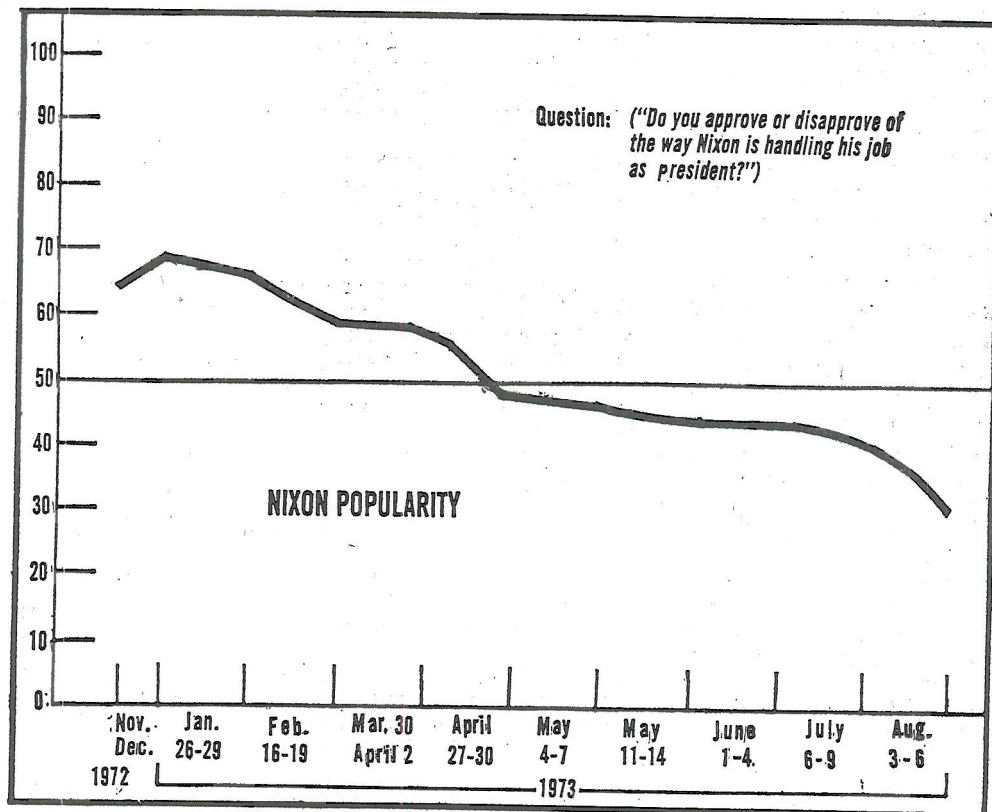
Gallup reported these opinions—based on a choice of four statements — about the extent of the President's involvement:

	Jun 1-4 %	Jun 22-25 %	Jul 6-9 %	Aug 3-6 %
Nixon planned the Watergate bugging from the beginning	8	8	9	9
Nixon did not plan the bugging but knew about it before it took place	28	27	30	28
Nixon found out about the bugging after it occurred but tried to cover it up	31	36	34	36
Nixon had no knowledge of the bugging and spoke up as soon as he learned about it	19	17	15	15
No opinion — not heard or read about Watergate	14	12	12	12

Quayle also found that 63 per cent said yes when asked whether Mr. Nixon "should bear the major blame for Watergate" no matter when he knew about it—since it was "still his aides and advisers who committed the Watergate crimes."

Gallup based his findings on interviews of 1,435 adults, age 18 and older, in more than 300 localities. Quayle's poll involved a sample of 1,255 persons in 300 locations.

Both surveys indicated a high degree of disapproval with the President's refusal to release tapes of his con-



By Kenneth Burgess—The Washington Post

Graph dramatizes President's decline in popularity since last year.

versations with White House aides about the Watergate scandal.

Quayle said 70 per cent of his respondents felt the Sen-

ate Watergate committee was "more in the right" in seeking the tapes. Gallup said 67 per cent of his respondents disapproved of Mr.

Nixon's refusal to give the tapes to either the Senate committee or to Watergate Special Prosecutor Archibald Cox.