

Nixon Rating Hovers at 32%

By Louis Harris

Despite receiving substantial credit for his handling of the recent Middle East crisis, President Nixon's standing with the American people on the job he is doing in the White House continues to hover around 32 per cent positive, matching his all-time low for the third month in a row.

Here is the trend of public assessment of President Nixon over the past year, the latest taken in a special telephone poll of 1,007 households nationwide Oct. 26-29 (President Nixon held his most recent press conference on the evening of Oct. 26):

"How would you rate the job President Nixon is doing as President—excellent, pretty good, only fair, or poor?"

	Good— Excellent (Positive)	Only Fair— Poor (Negative)	Not Sure
October, 1973.....	32%	64%	4%
September	32	65	3
August	32	65	3
July	42	54	4
June	48	49	3
May	47	49	4
April	50	49	1
March	59	39	2
February	60	39	1
January	53	45	2
December, 1972	59	39	2
October	59	40	1

At the time of his re-election and again in February, after he secured a peace agreement in Vietnam, Mr. Nixon soared close to his high-water mark during his tenure in the White House. But as the Watergate disclosures began breaking in the spring and throughout the summer his standing declined steadily until it apparently bottomed out at the current 32 per cent positive.

This over-all measure, however, only begins to tell the story of President Nixon's current troubles in the White House. This latest survey asked the public to rate the President on 21 specific dimensions. The cross section was asked:

"Now let me ask you some specifics on the job President Nixon is doing. How would you rate President Nixon on (READ LIST)—excellent, pretty good, only fair, or poor?"

	Good— Excellent (Positive)	Only Fair— Poor (Negative)	Not Sure
Working for peace in the world	58%	37%	5%
Handling relations with Russia	55	37	8
Agreeing with Russians on Middle East cease-fire	53	32	15
Handling relations with China	51	39	10
Handling Middle East crisis	49	37	14
Naming Rep. Ford to be new Vice President	47	34	19
His TV speeches and press conferences	30	65	5
Protecting rights and privacy of individuals	25	63	12
His handling tapes over to Judge Sirica	23	65	12
Handling crime and law and order	21	71	8
Handling of taxes and spending	20	72	8
Inspiring confidence personally	19	70	11
Handling energy shortage	18	68	14
Keeping economy healthy	18	78	4
Handling request for Watergate tapes	17	74	9
His firing of Archibald Cox	17	66	17
Handling the Watergate case	14	77	9
Handling relations with Congress	14	77	9
Handling corruption in government	12	79	9
His Phase 4 economic control program	11	74	15
Keeping down the cost of living	11	86	3

On matters of peace and world affairs, Mr. Nixon still receives positive marks. However, even in these relatively strong areas, he is showing some signs of slippage. For example, his 77-21 per cent positive standing on "working for peace in the world" recorded last February on the wave of returning prisoners-of-war has now dropped to 37-37 per cent positive. His naming of Rep. Gerald Ford as vice president-designate is also received positively by a 47-34 margin.

Another area of Nixon slippage is worth noting: his 65-30 per cent negative-rating on his "T.V. speeches and press conferences" includes public reaction to his recent press conference in which he took television news to task for what he viewed as irresponsible reporting. This latest result is down considerably from the President's 50-45 per cent positive rating on T.V. appearances last February.

The President's troubles obviously are centered in Watergate and the economy. But the impact of the departure of former Vice President Agnew is reflected in the 79-12 per cent who give him negative marks on "handling corruption in government." This is sharply up from his 55-32 per cent negative standing on last February. Similarly, the number who give him good marks on "handling crime and law and order" has dropped from 38 to 21 per cent over the same period.