

43% Favor Resignation By Nixon

By Louis Harris

President Nixon has lost so much credibility over his handling of the Watergate tapes that the number of Americans who think he should resign has risen sharply to 43 per cent of the entire adult public. This call for resignation is up from 36 per cent in October, 31 per cent in September, 28 per cent in August, and only 14 per cent last May. Forty-seven per cent still feel President Nixon should not resign, although this is down from 75 per cent in May.

Consistent with this trend, the number of people who think the President should resign "if it is proven that he knew about the Watergate cover-up" has now reached 59 per cent, up from 55 per cent in October, and 44 per cent in August.

Between Nov. 12 and 15, a cross-section of 1,459 adults in 200 places across the country, interviewed in person, were asked:

In view of what has happened in the Watergate affair, do you think President Nixon should resign or not?

	Should Resign	Should Not	Not Sure
Nov., 1973	43%	47%	10%
Oct.	36	50	14
Sept.	31	56	13
Aug.	28	63	9
July	22	66	12
June	22	62	16
May	14	75	11

A similar upward trend has taken place in response to another question asked periodically in the Harris Survey:

If it is proven that President Nixon knew about the cover-up of White House involvement in Watergate, do you think he should resign or not?

	Should Resign	Should Not	Not Sure
Nov., 1973	59%	33%	8%
Oct.	55	33	12
Sept.	50	39	11
Aug.	44	49	7

The cross-section was asked:

President Nixon said in his latest address to the nation that he would not consider resigning as President. Do you tend to agree or disagree with the President on his stand?

Agree with President	51%
Disagree with him	42
Not sure	7

The cross-section was also asked:

Do you believe President Nixon or not when he says that two of the nine conversations Judge Sirica wanted to be given to him were never recorded in the first place?

Believe Nixon	23%
Do not believe him	55
Not sure	22

In addition, people were asked:

Now I'd like to read you some statements that have been made about the Watergate tapes. For each, tell me if you tend to agree or disagree.

	Agree	Disagree	Not sure
PRO-NIXON STATEMENT			
If the tapes show that Nixon was not involved in the Watergate cover-up, then the country should join behind him in a show of national unity.			
Nov.	70%	21%	9%
Oct.	64	23	13

People should give President Nixon the benefit of the doubt in the missing two tapes.			
Nov.	46%	43%	11%
Oct.	x	x	x

President Nixon has agreed to hand over the tapes and deserves a lot of credit for giving up his fight over the principle of executive privilege.			
Nov.	42%	49%	9%
Oct.	56	31	13

	Agree	Disagree	Not sure
ANTI-NIXON STATEMENT:			
If the tapes show he was involved in Watergate, then President Nixon should resign or be impeached.			
Nov.	65%	25%	10%
Oct.	63	23	14

The two missing tapes were ordered destroyed because they would have proven Nixon knew about the Watergate cover-up.			
Nov.	47%	27%	26%
Oct.	x	x	x

Nixon would not have handed over the tapes unless he had altered or fixed them to eliminate all evidence damaging to himself.			
Nov.	45%	34%	21%
Oct.	32	41	27
x—Not asked in October.			

Although by 46 to 43 per cent, most people say the President should be given "the benefit of the doubt" over the tapes issue, it is also equally apparent that most people have drawn a judgment that the White House has indeed tampered with the tapes and simply is not telling the truth about them.