

President's Popularity Rises

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President Nixon's "operation candor" has boosted his popularity across the nation, especially in the South.

In the latest nationwide survey, 31 per cent approve of his handling of the presidency. In the previous survey, conducted in early November, the comparable per-

centage was only 27. In both surveys, substantial majorities expressed disapproval.

In the South alone, the approval figure has increased 7 points between surveys -- from 34 per cent in November to 41 per cent today.

The current findings reflect the president's decision to "go public" on the Watergate issue, highlighted by his speeches and appearances in the South where he

consistently met enthusiastic audiences.

Mr. Nixon's popularity rating declined steadily between January, when 68 per cent approved of his performance in office, and October, when it reached a low point of 27 per cent. His rating remained at this level in a subsequent survey in November before increasing to its current level. The follow-

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ing verbatim comments reveal the nature of the debate among the public regarding Nixon's performance in office:

"The U.S. is not involved in any wars, there's no draft, no race riots, no beef shortage, no threat being exchanged between us and Russia. We can't let Watergate drown out the good he's done." (Male, age 24, architect.)

"I dislike his lack of candor. He seems to do the right thing only after circumstances force him to do so. The American image overseas has been sorely damaged." (Male, age 55, executive management — federal government.)

"He is doing a good job considering the overwhelming lack of support from the House and Senate. I admire his ability to continue to function in all aspects of office, and his ability to hold his composure, despite the constant tearing down process by the media and Democrats." (Male, age 26, banker.)

"It seems he is involved in crisis after crisis, and his excuses and explanations

are very seldom, if ever, verified. I was a staunch supporter of our president but now feel that I have joined the ranks of the 'unbelievers.'" (Male, age 59, appliance salesman.)

Following is the question asked to determine the popularity of the president:

"Do you approve or disapprove of the way Nixon is handling his job as president?"

Here are the national findings, with the trend since mid-August:

Nationwide

	Ap-	Disap-	No
	prove	prove	Opin-
	%	%	ion
Nov. 30-Dec. 3	31	59	10
Nov. 2-5	27	63	10
Oct. 19-22	27	60	13
Oct. 6-8	30	57	13
Sept. 21-24	32	59	9
Sept. 7-10	35	55	10
Aug. 17-19	38	54	8

While Mr. Nixon's rating has increased 7 points in the South between the two latest surveys, outside the South the change has been only marginal — from 24 per cent to 27 per cent approval.

The following tables show the comparison for the South and outside the South:

South

	Dec.	Nov.
	%	%
Approve	41	34
Disapprove	47	55
No Opinion	12	11

Outside South

	Dec.	Nov.
	%	%
Approve	27	24
Disapprove	63	66
No Opinion	10	10

The findings reported today are based on a national survey of 1550 adults, 18 and older, interviewed in person in more than 300 scientifically selected localities during the period November 30 - December 3.

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