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Gallup Poll

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Opinion Unchanged On Nixon Pardon

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The passage of time has not substantially changed the opinion of the majority of Americans regarding President Gerald Ford's pardon of former President Richard Nixon, with 55 per cent in the latest survey saying Mr. Ford did the "wrong thing" in granting the pardon. About one third, 35 per cent, believe the President took the right action.

Mr. Ford, on Sept. 8, 1974, granted Mr. Nixon a pardon for criminal charges arising during the Watergate scandal. A specially commissioned survey conducted immediately after Mr. Ford's dramatic move, showed 62 per cent disapproving of the decision and 31 per cent approving.

The President's pardon of Mr. Nixon had a sharp effect on Mr. Ford's popularity rating. The President's approval score dropped 21 percentage points, from 71 per cent in a late August measurement shortly after he took office, to 50 per cent in a late September survey. The pardon was a key factor in the decline.

The President's popularity rating, in fact, has only once in the 22 months since the September 1974 survey risen above the 50 per cent mark, and currently stands at 45 per cent approval.

Although the Nixon pardon in recent weeks has gained new impetus as a political issue, it remains to be seen whether it will become a key issue in the campaign. In a

news conference July 19, Mr. Ford said it would be "up to the American people" to decide whether his pardon of Mr. Nixon would be a campaign issue.

If the Nixon pardon does become a major factor in the political thinking of the electorate, the results reported today indicate that it would likely have an adverse effect on the GOP ticket if Mr. Ford is the presidential candidate.

Following is the question asked in the latest survey:

"As you may know, President Ford granted Richard Nixon a pardon from criminal charges arising out of Watergate. Do you think Ford did the right thing or the wrong thing in granting Nixon a pardon?"

While a majority of survey respondents feel Mr. Ford did the "wrong thing" in pardoning Mr. Nixon, Republicans surveyed back him by a nearly 2-to-1 margin, 57 to 33 per cent. On the other hand, a solid majority of Democrats (67 per cent) and a smaller majority of independent voters (52 per cent) believe Mr. Ford was wrong in his action.

	FORD RIGHT OR WRONG IN GRANTING PARDON?		
	Wrong	Right	No Opinion
NATIONWIDE	55%	35%	10%
Republicans	33	57	10
Democrats	67	25	8
Independents	52	37	11

The results reported today are based on in-person interviews with 1524 adults, 18 and older, in more than 300 scientifically selected localities across the nation during the period June 11-14.

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