

TV Didn't Benefit Nixon, Poll Finds

By Mervin D. Field

Richard Nixon was able to get the attention of a large majority of the California public during his recent television interview appearances, but his explanations did not gain any new supporters. Overall, the California Poll finds the public less sympathetic to Nixon now than they were before the interview.

In a statewide cross-section survey it was found that about three out of four adults had either seen the Nixon-Frost TV interviews or heard or saw something about it in subsequent press accounts.

During the TV interviews Nixon stoutly maintained that he was not guilty of an actual criminal act for his part in the Watergate affair and that if he was guilty of anything it was using poor judgment.

A sizable majority of the public disagrees with Nixon. Almost six in ten people (58 per cent) say that Nixon was guilty of an actual criminal act and only 32 per cent say that he was guilty only of using poor judgment.

Almost half the public (46 per cent) say that there has been no change in their impression of the former President. However, while 12 per cent say they are more favorable to Nixon now, more than twice as many (26 per cent) say they are less favorable.

The public is evenly divided on whether Nixon has paid penalty enough for his part in Watergate.

About twice as many people say they have little or no sympathy for Nixon today as say they feel sorry for him.

An overwhelming majority of the people disapproves of the notion of Nixon taking an active part in politics again or being appointed to a position such as ambassador to China.

In short, Nixon's television interviews appear to have done little to regain him the sympathy or support of Californians. They may have served mainly to revive and reinforce old bad feelings toward him by his former political opponents, and they did not gain him much support among members of his own party.

	STATE WIDE	DEMO CRATS	REPUB LICANS	OTHERS
Nixon guilty of criminal act in connection with Watergate?				
Yes, guilty of criminal act	58%	68%	34%	66%
Guilty only of poor judgement	36	24	60	29
Undecided/no opinion	6	8	6	5
Nixon penalized enough?				
Yes, penalized enough	45%	35%	67%	39%
Not penalized enough	45	55	24	53
Undecided/no opinion	10	10	9	8
Sympathy for Nixon				
Feel very sorry for him	14%	8%	27%	9%
Feel somewhat sorry for him	13	11	15	14
Neutral about him	16	12	25	11
Not too much sympathy for him	19	23	15	17
No sympathy for him	37	44	16	48
Undecided/no opinion	1	2	2	1
Nixon as Mainland China Ambassador?				
Disapprove	73%	84%	55%	74%
Approve	16	9	30	15
Undecided/no opinion	11	7	15	11
Nixon running for office				
Disapprove	79%	86%	69%	79%
Approve	9	3	16	9
Neutral/no opinion	12	11	15	12
Watched Television Interviews				
Watched all	12%	10%	21%	8%
Watched some	47	51	42	45
Did not watch but read or heard something about	27	24	27	34
Did not watch and did not see or hear anything about	14	15	10	13
Impression More/Less Favorable Than Before Interviews				
More favorable now	12%	9%	20%	10%
Less favorable now	26	32	15	29
No change	46	43	52	46
No opinion	2	1	3	2