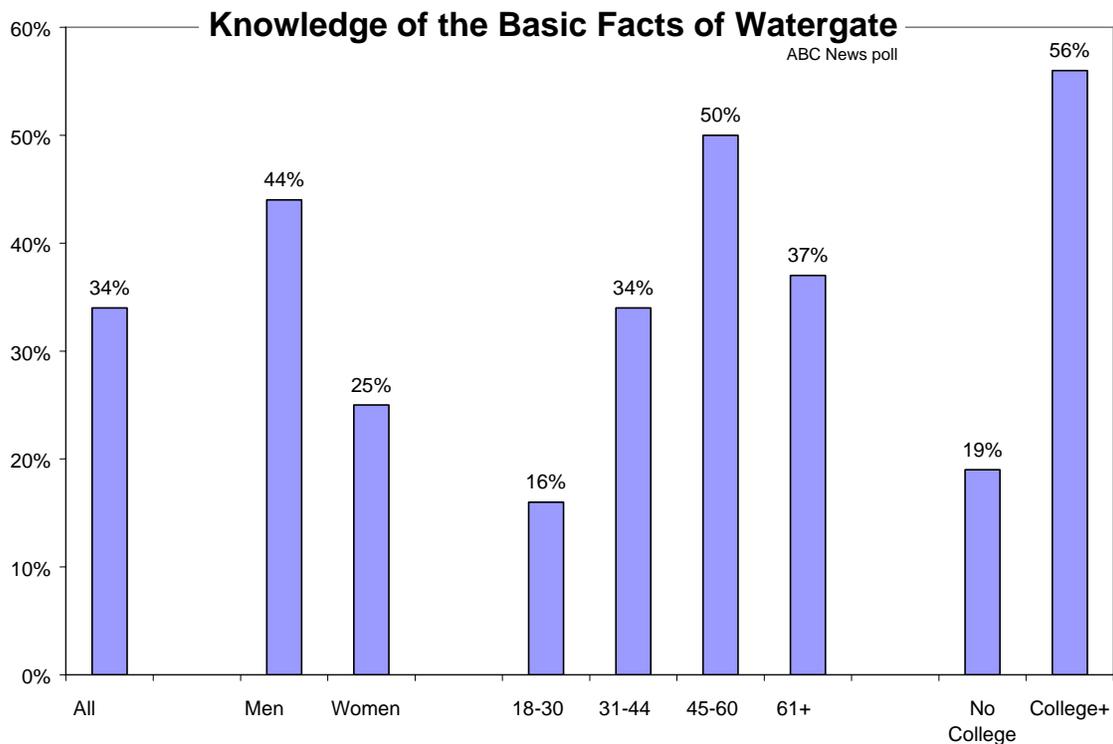


Watergate: The Forgotten Scandal?

Attention history teachers: Thirty years after the Watergate break-in set off a scandal that brought down a U.S. president, two-thirds of Americans say they're unfamiliar with the basic facts of the affair.

Sixty-five percent in an ABC News poll feel they don't know enough about Watergate to tell the basic facts to someone else. That's up 12 points from a poll five years ago.

While age is a factor, familiarity falls short in all age groups. Among 18 to 30-year-olds, born after the break-in, just 16 percent profess basic knowledge of the events. Familiarity rises to 34 percent of people age 31 to 44, and peaks at 50 percent among those age 45 to 60. Memory fades somewhat among those over 60.



Better-educated people are far more likely to say they know Watergate's basic facts: Fifty-six percent of college graduates report familiarity with the scandal (the only demographic group to reach a majority), compared to just 19 percent of people who haven't been to college.

And there's a big gender gap: Forty-four percent of men say they know enough about Watergate to explain it to someone else; just 25 percent of women say the same.

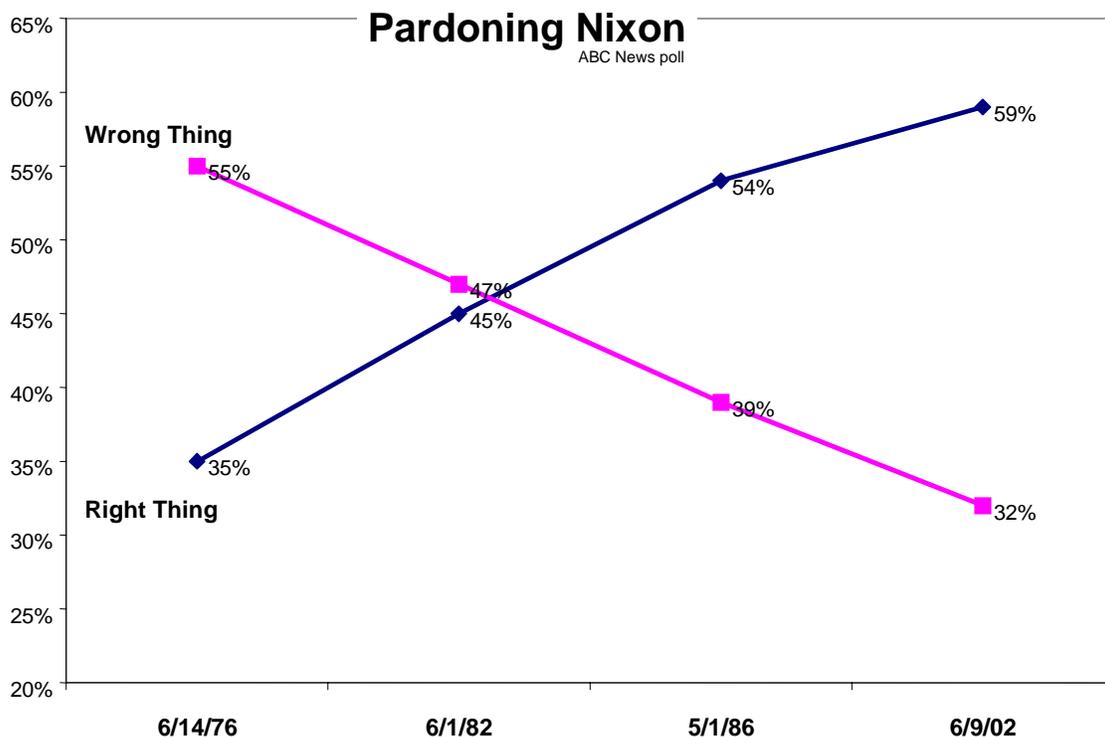
On June 17, 1972, five men were arrested for burglarizing the Democratic National Committee headquarters in the Watergate complex in Washington, D.C. The Watergate break-in was traced directly to the Committee for the Re-election of the President, Nixon's reelection campaign. The ensuing investigation, which uncovered acts of bribery, sabotage, illegal use of campaign funds, abuse of power and attempted obstruction of justice, resulted in the convictions of more than 30 officials and Nixon's resignation.

RESIGNATION – Nearly two-thirds of Americans, 63 percent, think Nixon's actions were serious enough to warrant his resignation, about the same as it was (65 percent) the month he resigned, August 1974. It peaked at 75 percent in a 1982 poll. In this poll, among those who express familiarity with the scandal, it jumps to 77 percent.

Republicans are a bit more forgiving of Nixon, a fellow Republican, but 58 percent still say Watergate warranted his resignation. That jumps to 71 percent of Democrats.

PARDON – At the same time though, most, 59 percent, think Gerald Ford did the right thing in granting Nixon a pardon from criminal charges arising out of Watergate. This number has grown steadily with time. Less than two years after the pardon, just 35 percent supported it; by 1986, it was 54 percent.

Those who know the details of the scandal are even more likely to support Ford's pardon than those who don't – 67 to 55 percent. Seventy percent of conservative Republicans say Ford did the right thing; that falls to 47 percent of liberal Democrats.



METHODOLOGY – This ABC News poll was conducted by telephone June 7-9, 2002, among a random national sample of 1,004 adults. The results have a three-point error margin. Fieldwork by TNS Intersearch of Horsham, PA.

Analysis by Dalia Sussman.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com on the Internet at:
<http://abcnews.go.com/sections/us/PollVault/PollVault.html>

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Full results follow. * = less than 0.5 percent

20. It's been 30 years since the Watergate break-in caused a political scandal in Washington. Do you feel you know enough about Watergate to tell the basic facts to someone else, or not?

	Yes	No	No opin.
6/9/02	34	65	*
6/3/97*	45	53	2

*AP.

21. Do you think President Richard Nixon's actions regarding Watergate were, or were not, serious enough to warrant his resignation?

	Were	Were not	No opin.
6/9/02	63	24	14
8/4/99*	72	23	5
6/1/97	68	26	6
6/8/92	70	21	9
5/1/86	71	24	5
6/3/82	75	19	6
8/74	65	32	3

*8/4/99 and previous: Gallup.

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

	Right thing	Wrong thing	No opin.
6/9/02	59	32	8
5/1/86*	54	39	8
6/1/82	45	47	8
6/14/76*	35	55	10

*Gallup

END