



January 6th Committee Fails to Change Public Opinion — Except Slightly in Trump’s Favor

Two months of House January 6th Committee hearings haven’t changed Americans’ minds about either the events of that day or former President Donald Trump — except to make more of them think he’s not responsible for the Capitol protest — [a new Monmouth University poll](#) finds.

The New Jersey school surveyed 808 American adults by telephone from July 28 to August 1. It had previously asked Americans the same questions June 23-27, two weeks into the hearings. The results of the two polls are, in most respects, almost identical, with most changes in opinion falling well within the poll’s 3.5-percentage-point margin of error.



AP Images

In June, for example, 65 percent of Americans said the January 6 incident was a “riot,” 50 percent called it an “insurrection,” and 34 percent classified it as a “legitimate protest.” Five weeks and numerous hearings later, those numbers had changed to 64 percent, 52 percent, and 35 percent, respectively — which is to say not at all. Not surprisingly, Democrats favored “insurrection” and “riot,” while Republicans preferred “legitimate protest” and, to a lesser extent, “riot.”

Is Trump directly responsible for what happened on January 6? A majority of Americans says he either did nothing wrong at all (32 percent) or, at most, encouraged those involved in the riot (26 percent). Most significant, however, is the fact that the portion of the public that believes Trump is directly responsible for the Capitol incursion has dropped from 42 percent in June to 38 percent in late July, a difference that falls outside the poll’s margin of error and therefore signifies a genuine, if small, opinion shift.

Meanwhile, the percentage of Americans who believe President Joe Biden is only in office because of voter fraud hasn’t budged since June; it’s still 29 percent, though of course that view is far more prevalent among Republicans (61 percent) than it is among Democrats (two percent).

“The sensational revelations during the hearings do not seem to have moved the public opinion needle on Trump’s culpability for either the riot or his spurious election fraud claims,” said a clearly disappointed Patrick Murray, director of the Monmouth University Polling Institute. “This continues to give political cover to Republican leaders who avoid addressing the damage done to our democratic processes that day.”

Americans aren’t too keen on putting Trump in the dock over January 6. Forty-one percent said they’d favor charging the former president with crimes related to his involvement in the events of that day; among Democrats, that number was 73 percent. But 34 percent of Americans — including 66 percent of Republicans — are opposed to charging Trump, and another 25 percent are unsure. Americans are



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on August 12, 2022

fairly evenly divided on whether charging Trump would help (31 percent), hurt (35 percent), or have no effect on (30 percent) the stability of our political system.

Indeed, congressional Democrats have very little to show for all the time, effort, and taxpayer dollars they have put into convincing the public that Trump is a threat to “our democracy.” Four in 10 Americans, including 83 percent of Republicans, have a favorable view of Trump, while half, including 86 percent of Democrats, have an unfavorable opinion. “All these numbers,” notes Monmouth, “are virtually unchanged from November 2020.”

Similar fractions of Americans told pollsters they would or would not vote for Trump if he ran again in 2024. Forty percent say they would either definitely (23 percent) or probably (17 percent) cast their ballot for him, while 48 percent would either definitely (48 percent) or probably (8 percent) not vote for him.

“As we have seen from the success of Trump-endorsed candidates in recent primaries, he continues to hold sway over a large portion of the Republican base. That doesn’t necessarily make him a shoe-in [sic] for the nomination in 2024, but he remains a formidable presence,” said Murray.

Most people’s minds, it seems, were already made up before the hearings began. While 61 percent of Americans claim they’ve been paying some attention to the hearings, only eight percent say the hearings have changed their mind.

“When we released our June poll, I said the committee was preaching to the choir,” Murray said. “These current results suggest they haven’t recruited any new singers since then.”



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