

The Year Was... 1979

The failure of the one-term presidency of James Earl Carter was sealed in 1979.

Carter, whose job approval rating in January was a fairly respectable 50%, saw that number beaten down to spectacularly low levels throughout the course of the year by a trio of seemingly intractable problems.

First, there was the economy. The rate of inflation went up every year Carter was in office, reaching over 11.3% in 1979. Unemployment stood at 6% by December and was continuing to climb.

Then there was the energy crisis. Skyrocketing gas and heating oil prices and long lines at service stations further strained both the pocketbooks and the patience of the Ameri-

can public. Adding fuel to the fire, so to speak, was the July meltdown of the core reactor at the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant in Pennsylvania—a near-catastrophe that dealt a symbolic blow to hopes of developing viable alternative energy sources.

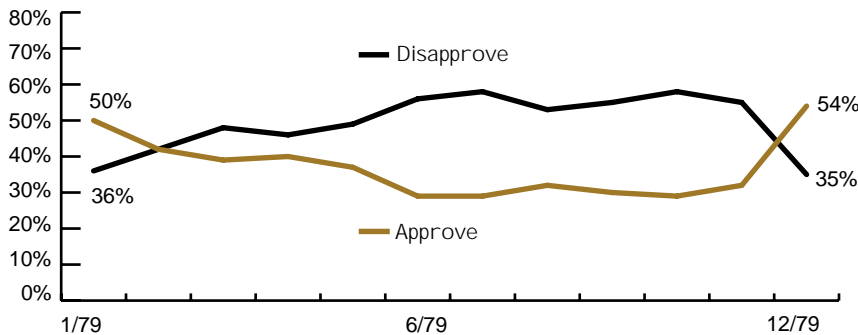
And finally, on November 4, staff members at the United States Embassy in Tehran were taken hostage by Iranian militants. The year ended with Carter's approval ratings back to what they had been in January; the American people rallied around their President, as they often do in the face of foreign aggression.

But they also indicated quite clearly that they would not tolerate the situation for long.

—Lisa Ferraro Parmelee

Crucial Year in a Failed Presidency

Question: Do you approve or disapprove of the way Carter is handling his job as president?



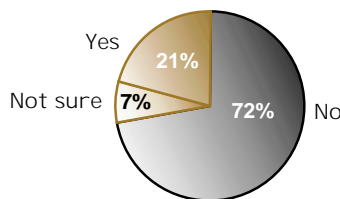
| Approval ratings | | | |
|------------------|-----|-----------|-----|
| 1979 | | | |
| January | 50% | July | 29% |
| February | 42 | August | 32 |
| March | 39 | September | 30 |
| April | 40 | October | 29 |
| May | 37 | November | 32 |
| June | 29 | December | 54 |

Note: First asking of each month shown.

Source: Surveys by the Gallup Organization, latest that of December 7-10, 1979.

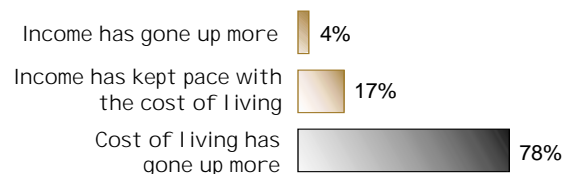
Money Woes

Question: Just over the last year, has your income kept up with inflation, or not?



Source: Survey by Cambridge Reports/Research International, July 1979.

Question: ...How do you feel about your own personal circumstances over the past couple of years? Would you say your income has gone up more than the cost of living, or that the cost of living has gone up more than your income, or that your income has about kept pace with the cost of living?

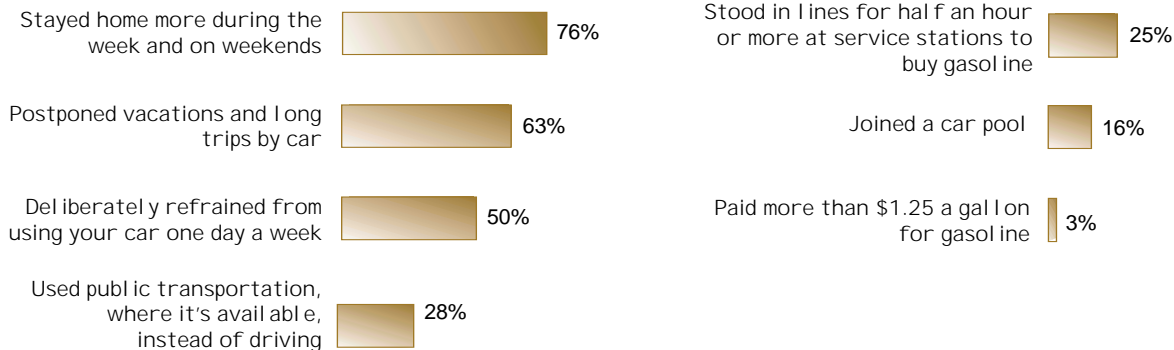


Source: Survey by the Roper Organization, April 28-May 5, 1979.

Running Out of Gas

Question: In the last month or so, because of the gasoline situation, have you...?

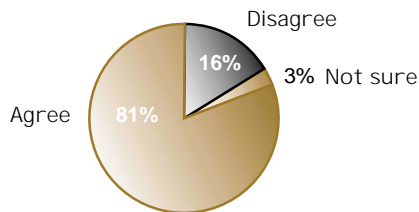
Those responding have



Source: Survey by ABC News/Louis Harris and Associates, July 17-21, 1979.

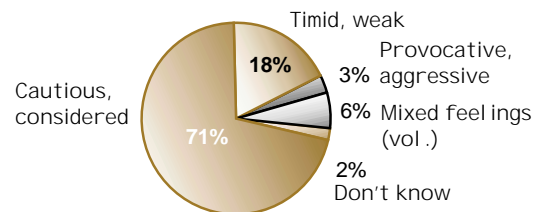
Handling Hostage Crisis Well

Question: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement about President Carter: he has been firm and steady during the hostage crisis in Iran, handling a difficult situation well?



Source: Survey by ABC News/Louis Harris and Associates, December 14-16, 1979.

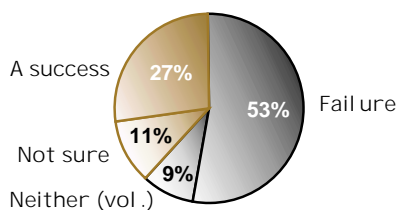
Question: Do you think President Carter's response to what Iran is doing to the United States has been too timid and weak, or properly cautious and considered, or unnecessarily provocative and aggressive?



Source: Survey by the Roper Organization, December 1-8, 1979.

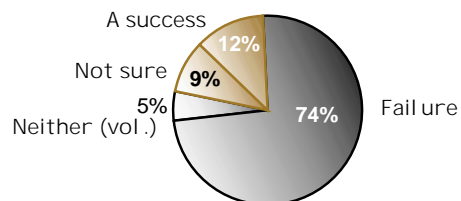
But Patience is Limited

Question: If, in... three weeks..., the hostages are still held by Iran and it does not appear that any real progress has been made in getting their release, would you then say President Carter's policy on the Iran crisis has been a success or a failure?



Source: Survey by ABC News/Louis Harris and Associates, December 27-30, 1979.

Question: If, in... three months..., the hostages are still held by Iran and it does not appear that any real progress has been made in getting their release, would you then say President Carter's policy on the Iran crisis has been a success or a failure?



Source: Survey by ABC News/Louis Harris and Associates, December 27-30, 1979.