

# The Gallup Report

# Kennedy Support Declining

By George Gallup

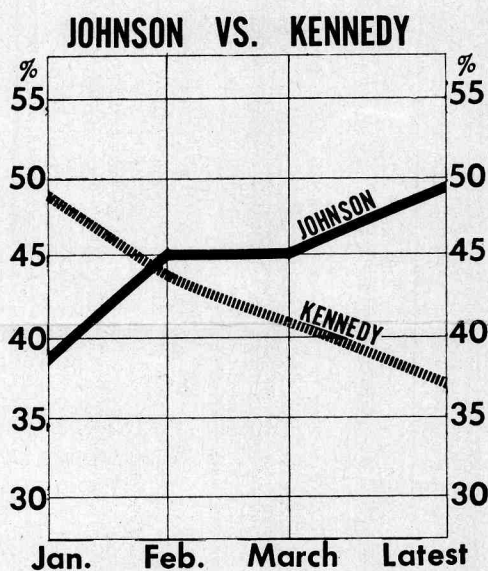
PRINCETON, N. J., May 9 — This year, unlike 1966, is not proving to be a big political year for Sen. Robert Kennedy — at least so far. Since January the ranks of Kennedy supporters have steadily declined.

This is apparent on the basis of two measurements:

1. Senator Kennedy was preferred in January by a 7-to-5 margin over President Johnson for the 1968 nomination. Now the exact reverse is true and Johnson holds a 7-to-5 lead.

2. The "highly favorable" rating given Senator Kennedy on a special attitude scale in December has declined 6 points in the latest repeat measurement.

FILE COPY



Kennedy's losses in popularity are due not to heightened opposition from Republicans and Independents, but come largely from his own party members.

Last year was a big year for Kennedy. In March, 1966, President Johnson demonstrated far greater political appeal than Robert Kennedy. But Kennedy's political fortunes soared during the ensuing months as the President's popularity continued to decline.

### What's Behind Kennedy's Decline?

What has happened to bring about Kennedy's changing fortunes in 1967? These factors among others may be cited:

1. Kennedy's decline in recent weeks has occurred during a period in which the President's popularity has shown some improvement. Johnson's current approval rating of 48 per cent is his highest mark in 5 months.

2. The controversy over publication of the book, *Death of a President*, between the Kennedys and the author and publishers of the book hurt rather than helped the Kennedy image, as a February Gallup Poll indicated.

3. The continuing dialogue between the President and Senator Kennedy

over Vietnam and foreign policy questions in general has led some persons to feel that Kennedy is overstepping his bounds and making statements that are the President's prerogative.

### Question Put to National Sample

This question was put to representative samples of the American public during the last several months:

"Suppose the choice for President in the Democratic convention in 1968 narrows down to Sen. Robert Kennedy of New York and President Lyndon Johnson. Which ONE would you prefer to have the convention select?"

The latest results and trend since the beginning of the year:

	LBJ (%)	RFK (%)	Undecided (%)
January	39	48	13
February	45	44	11
March	45	41	14
Latest	49	37	14

### Enthusiasm Ratings

A special 10-point scaling device called the Stapel Scalometer clearly shows waning enthusiasm for Senator

Kennedy. Last August, 42 per cent of all persons gave Kennedy a "highly favorable" rating (based on the top two positions on the scale). Today's figure is 12 points less than in August. Generally the scalometer findings have paralleled the trend of the Kennedy-Johnson "convention showdown" tests.

The following table shows the "highly favorable" ratings for both Kennedy and President Johnson, with the trend back to 1964:

	RFK	LBJ
1964 (August)	41%	55%
1966 (August)	42	42
1966 (December)	36	32
Latest	30	34

The "highly unfavorable" ratings (based on the lowest two positions on the scale) indicate a similar trend:

	RFK	LBJ
1964 (August)	8%	3%
1966 (August)	11	9
1966 (December)	11	15
Latest	13	8