

The year was...

1963

For most Americans living today, the year 1963 will forever be associated with the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. Almost everyone of a certain age has indelible memories of that tragic event; and the endless repetition throughout the subsequent years of its images ensures that many who don't actually remember will never forget.

But a great deal more happened in 1963 besides one terrible turning point; after all, the shooting on November 24 was preceded by almost eleven months of history. During that time, Pope John XXIII died. Surgeon Michael E. DeBakey performed the first artificial heart implant into a human being. The Supreme Court ruled that public schools might no longer require the recitation of the Lord's Prayer or Bible verses. Betty Friedan published *The Feminine Mystique*, and the Beatles had their first US hit with "I Wanna Hold Your Hand."

The data for 1963 present, in their aggregation, a rather grim and brooding aspect. Americans, in general, were preoccupied with the Cold War and the very real possibility of nuclear conflict. Black Americans, in particular, sat on the cusp of great change as the murder of Medgar Evers, the bombing deaths of four young girls attending Sunday school in Alabama, and the eruption of riots in Birmingham raised the intensity of the young civil rights movement.

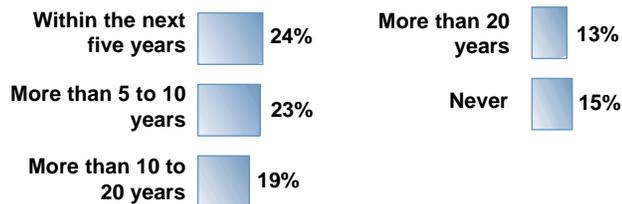
The high point of the latter was, of course, the August 28 March on Washington, where some 250,000 people listened to Martin Luther King, Jr., proclaim his vision for the future. As King gazed out at them from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, one dream was beginning.

On the streets of Dallas three months later, another dream met its end.

—Lisa Ferraro Parmelee

1989

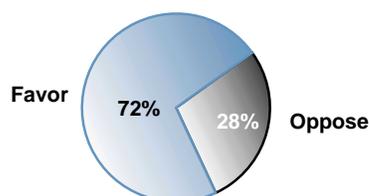
Question: The way it looks to you today, when, would you say, is the Cold War going to end? In the next two years, in two to five years, in 10 years, 10 to 20 years, 50 years, or even later?



Source: Survey by the National Opinion Research Center, December 1963.

Early Days

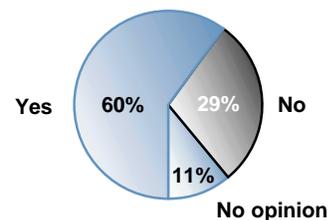
Question: In the past year some American lives have been lost in the fighting in Vietnam. Our government is trying to help the non-communist government there resist a communist takeover. From what you know or have heard, do you favor or oppose the policy our government has followed in Vietnam?



Source: Survey by Louis Harris and Associates, September 1963.

Missile Crisis Fallout

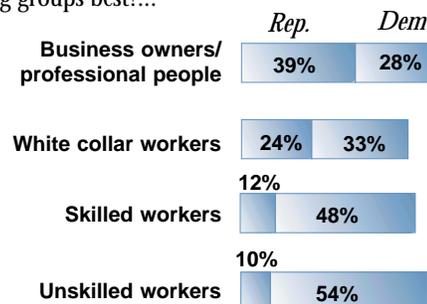
Question: Do you think the Cuba situation is a serious threat to world peace at this time, or not?



Source: Survey by the Gallup Organization, February 7-12, 1963.

Workers' Party

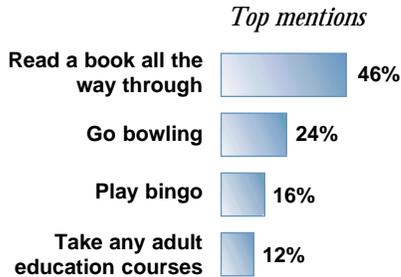
Question: As you feel today, which political party—the Republican or Democratic—do you think serves the interests of the following groups best?...



Source: Survey by the Gallup Organization, April 4-9, 1963.

Literacy, Then Bowling

Question: During the past 12 months did you, yourself, happen to do any of these?



Note: Multiple responses allowed.

Source: Survey by the Gallup Organization, January 11-16, 1963.

Yee-ha!

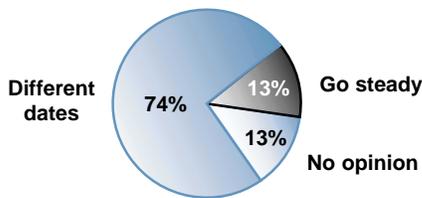
Question: Do you happen to do any of these now?



Source: Survey by the Gallup Organization, January 11-16, 1963.

Take Back Your Ring

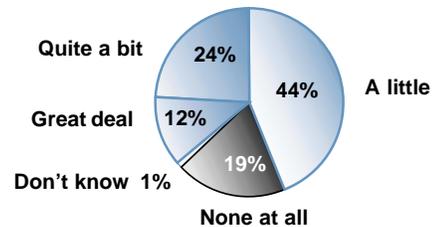
Question: Do you think boys and girls in high school should be allowed to "go steady," or should they date different boys and girls?



Source: Survey by the Gallup Organization, April 4-9, 1963.

Toy Stethoscopes

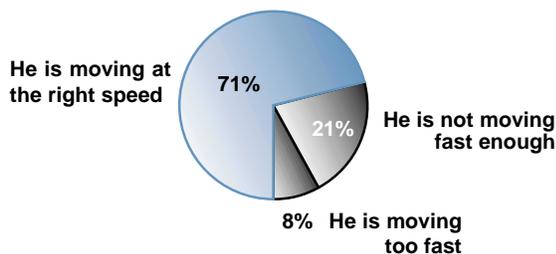
Question: In general, how much influence do you think parents should have in deciding the occupation their children choose—a great deal of influence, quite a bit, a little, or none at all?



Source: Survey by the National Opinion Research Center, December 1963.

Dare to Dream

Question: Some people feel that in working for equal rights for negroes, Reverend Martin Luther King is moving too fast, others think he is not working fast enough. What do you think?

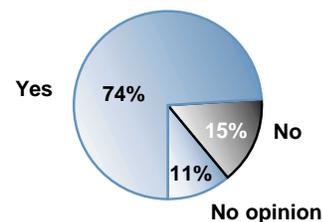


Note: Asked of blacks (11%).

Source: Survey by the National Opinion Research Center, April-July 1963.

If Only...

Question: Just your best guess—do you think Kennedy will be re-elected President in 1964, or not?



Source: Survey by the Gallup Organization, February 7-12, 1963.