

The Year Was... 1965

History books have always been marked largely by the portentous, the dramatic, and the tragic—by the things people tend to remember because they cannot forget.

But, as those of us who like to time-travel know, it is not necessarily the dramatic that provides an understanding of the texture of times past. It is the mundane, the commonplace—the concerns about day-to-day living, the things we see as sources of satisfaction, and as problems, in our society, our material needs and desires, the rules we choose and the tools we use to regulate our daily lives—that come together to form the context in which we find ourselves at any given time.

Big things were happening in 1965. The civil rights movement reached a climax with the arrest in Selma, Alabama of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the shooting death of Malcolm X, six days of race riots in the Watts section of Los Angeles, and the passage of the Voting Rights Act. US Marines were landed in the Dominican Republic to intervene in a civil war there. And the public was increasingly worried about the turn things were taking in Vietnam.

But atop this broadly painted background the smaller brushstrokes of the ordinary continued to be applied; and it is these details that enliven the landscape of 1965.

—Lisa Ferraro Parmelee

Living in America

Satisfied to Have It

Question: ...For each [good thing said about life here in America] ...tell me if you feel personally satisfied that you have it....

Percent responding they have it

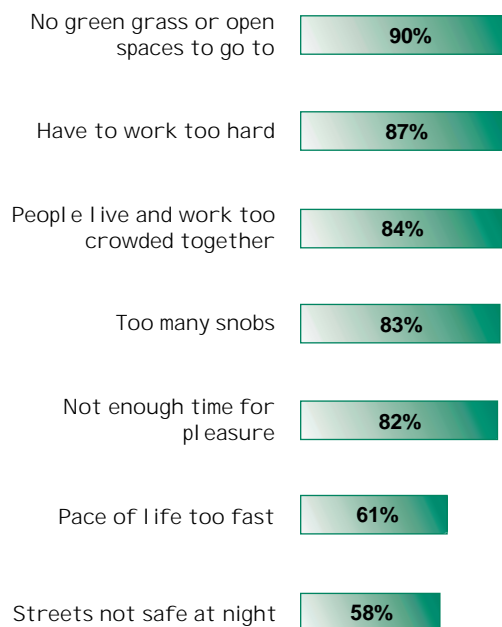


Source: Survey by Louis Harris and Associates, October 1965.

Not a Problem

Question: ...For each [criticism made about life in America] ...tell me if it is a problem you personally feel you have or not....

Percent responding NOT a problem

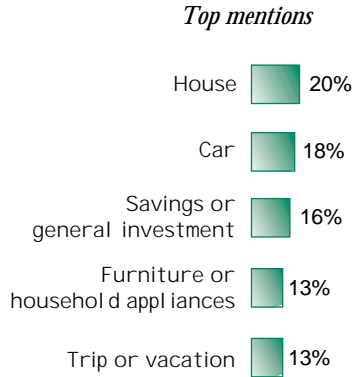


Source: Survey by Louis Harris and Associates, October 1965.

American Dreams

Fundamentals and Frills

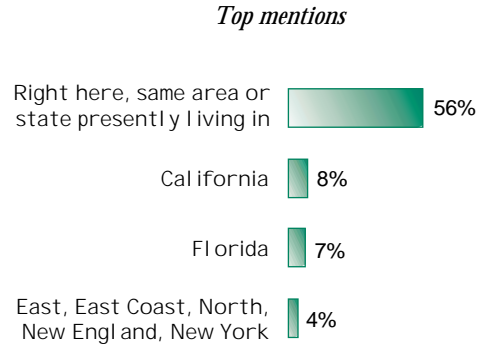
Question: Suppose you were given \$5,000 and had to spend it on something other than debts, what would you buy with it?



Source: Survey by the Gallup Organization, February 1965.

No Place Like Home

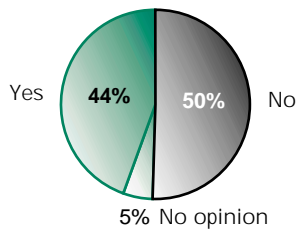
Question: Suppose you had the opportunity, the time and the money, where would you most like to live?



Source: Survey by the Gallup Organization, February 1965.

Loosen Up

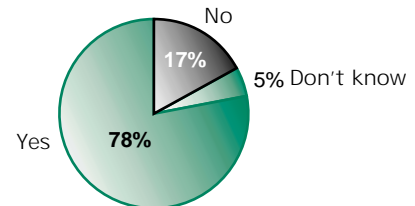
Question: In some schools in the United States the way students dress is carefully supervised. Boys are required to wear coats and ties and girls are required to wear blouses and pleated skirts. Would you like to have the public schools in your community follow this practice, or not?



Source: Survey by the Gallup Organization, April 23-28, 1965.

But Not Too Loose

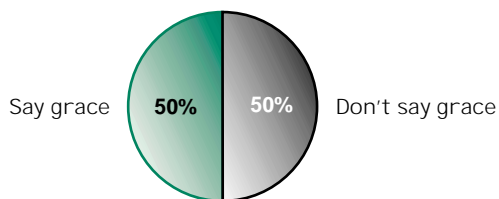
Question: As you know, many boys today wear their hair very long. Do you think schools should require boys to keep their hair cut short?



Source: Survey by the Gallup Organization, September 16-21, 1965.

Our Daily Bread

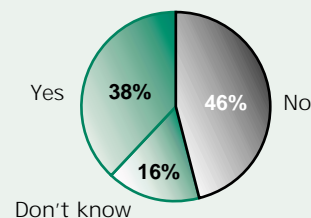
Question: Do you say grace before most meals in your home or don't you usually say grace before meals?



Source: Survey by Louis Harris and Associates, August 1965.

Never Caught On

Question: Would you like to see the US change to the metric system?



Note: Asked of respondents who said they know what the metric system is.
Source: Survey by the Gallup Organization, August 27-September 1, 1965.