

Many Americans gaze back to the 1950s with a certain nostalgia, a yearning for a lost time they think of as slower, more stable, and somehow simpler than today. The reality could not be farther from the truth. Take 1952, for instance. Beset by the fear of enemies, both without and within, growing in population at a pace hitherto unseen, and already in the thrall of black and white images flickering by on thousands of television screens, the country was hurtling toward a future vastly different from even its most recent past.

Hopes and apprehensions vied for the upper hand throughout 1952. In the same year Jonas Salk first tested the killed-virus vaccine that would soon lift the shadow of polio from the hearts of millions of parents, the world also saw its first nuclear accident take place at Chalk River in Canada. A popular imagination haunted by Senator Joseph McCarthy's specter of communist infiltration in the State Department was also uplifted by President-elect Eisenhower's promise to visit Korea and end the hostilities there. And the television debut

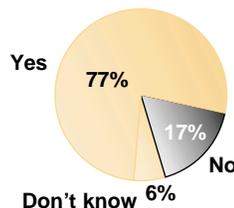
of Amos 'n' Andy, a retrogressive program replete with racial stereotypes, was met by the publication of *Invisible Man*, Ralph Ellison's magnificent exploration of the contemporary African American experience.

In some ways, Americans in 1952 did cling to what they, too, saw as simpler times. In terms of gender roles, for example, women and men seemed almost eager to retreat to the traditional in the years after the former left the defense plants and the latter returned from war. But even that "nesting" tendency would begin to pall before the decade was out. The introduction (though not the marketing) of the birth control pill, the organizing of the first rock 'n' roll concert by deejay Alan Freed, the debut of Kukla, Fran and Ollie, the first television show for children—each marked a new beginning in 1952 that had absolutely nothing to do with holding on to days gone by, and everything to do with where we find ourselves today.

—Lisa Ferraro Parmelee

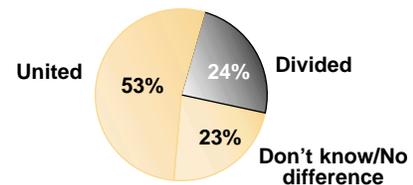
Old Wounds Healing

Question: Do you think we ought to give Japan the same opportunity to sell her goods in this country that we give to other nations?



Source: Survey by the National Opinion Research Center, October 1952.

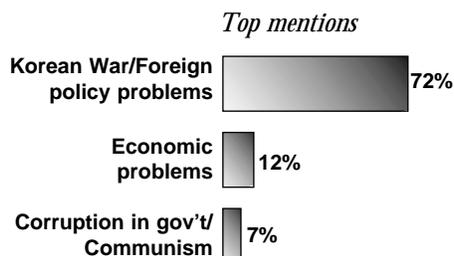
Question: Which do you think would be better for the United States—to have Germany divided as it is now, or to have both parts of Germany united under their own government?



Source: Survey by the National Opinion Research Center, April 1952.

New Wounds Opening Up

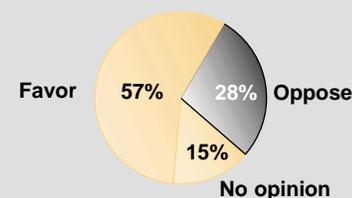
Question: What do you think is the biggest problem Eisenhower should take up first after he goes into office?



Source: Survey by the Gallup Organization, November 14-19, 1952.

Linking America

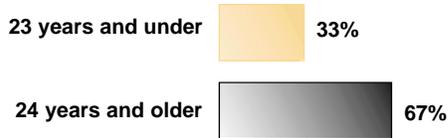
Question: Would you favor or oppose building one or two new super-highways across this state, to be paid for by special toll or charge on every car and truck using them?



Source: Survey by the Gallup Organization, May 11-16, 1952.

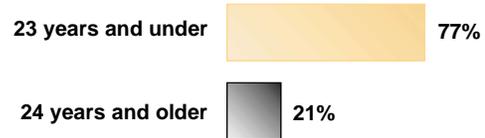
Setting Up House

Question: What do you think is the ideal age for a man to marry?



Source: Survey by the Gallup Organization, March 14-19, 1952.

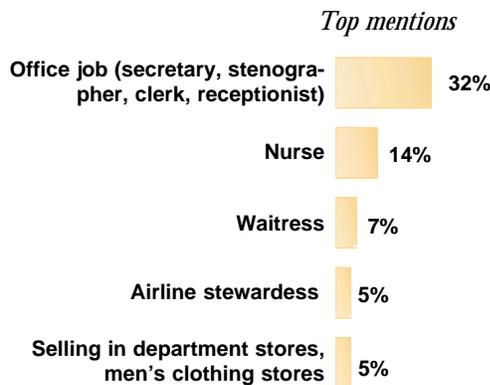
Question: What do you think is the ideal age for a woman to marry?



Source: Survey by the Gallup Organization, March 14-19, 1952.

Career Objective

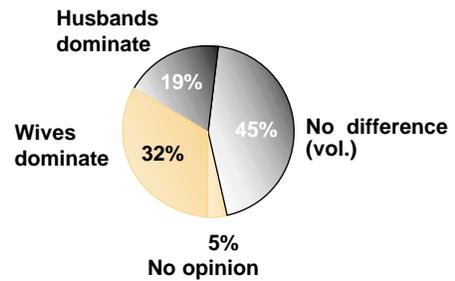
Question: What kind of job or occupation do you think offers a young woman the best chances of finding a husband?



Source: Survey by the Gallup Organization, April 13-18, 1952.

Who's the Boss?

Question: In general, do you think American women dominate (boss) their husbands—or do you think husbands dominate (boss) their wives?

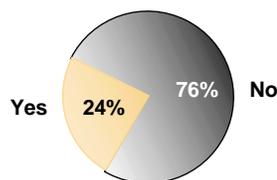


Source: Survey by the Gallup Organization, January 20-25, 1952.

Suits Me Fine

Question: Before you finally decide, do you usually get your husband's opinion of a hat you are planning to buy, or not?

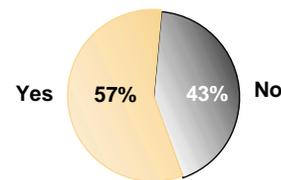
Asked of women



Source: Survey by the Gallup Organization, March 27-April 1, 1952.

Question: Before you finally decide, do you usually get your wife's opinion of a new suit you are planning to buy, or not?

Asked of men



Source: Survey by the Gallup Organization, March 27-April 1, 1952.