

Dartmouth Class of 1966



Class of 1966 80th Birthday Party Survey

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Thanks to the 90 classmates (from Alderman to Zimmerman) who took the time to provide thoughtful responses to the Class of 1966 80th Birthday Survey distributed in January 2024.

The overall results indicate that, even at 80, classmates continue to look forward to making a positive difference with both beloved family members and those less fortunate.

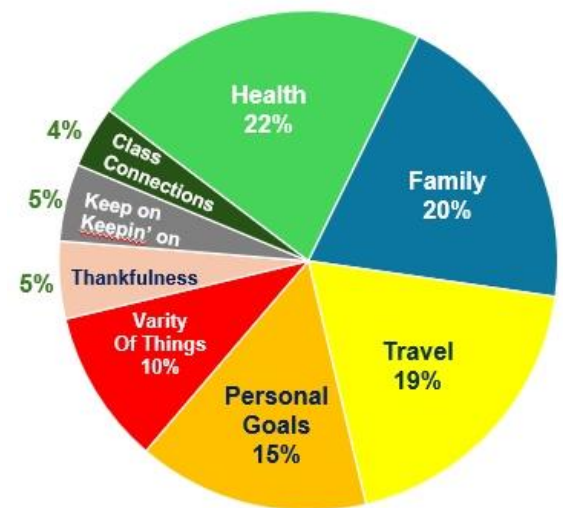
The two key themes that resonate throughout are that classmates are generally **happy** with the lives they are living and the success they have achieved but **apprehensive** that the divisions and extremism in our body politic may cause lasting damage to our nation.

February 2024

Prepared by Larry Geiger & Bob Cohn
Special thanks to Ben Day

What are you most looking forward to doing in your 80th year?

Dropping open-ended comments into defined categories is always a challenge and is quite subjective. But we gave it a try. The responses to this question about what classmates are looking forward to in our 80th year fall into these general categories:



22% - Good Health – keeping it or getting it

- Surviving. Remaining upright. Staying vertical. Improving stamina. Just trying to stay in good shape and enjoy life. Staying alive with a functioning brain.

20% - Spending More Time with Family

- Visiting siblings and grandchildren. Spending time with our grandchildren. Welcoming a new grandchild. Seeing my grandchildren.

19% - Travel – both in general and with bucket list destinations

- Maine. Baja. Kenya. Abroad. Out of Eastern time zone. Sailing voyage. Hiking. Birding. Skiing. With extended family and friends.

15% - Achieving Personal Goals

- Winning a tennis tournament. Passing a figure skating test. Climbing the New Hampshire 48 (again). Finishing a book or a blog. Continuing to practice law. Skiing for free next winter.

10% - Variety of Things – combinations of above

- One example – “Staying healthy. Improving my French horn playing. Watching my family thrive. Maintaining our democracy.”

5% - Thankfulness -- “Enjoying and being thankful for each day.”

5% - Keep on Keepin' On

- Continued happiness and fun. Continuing tennis. Swimming. Walking. Porsche. “I look forward to being happy, healthy and prosperous.”

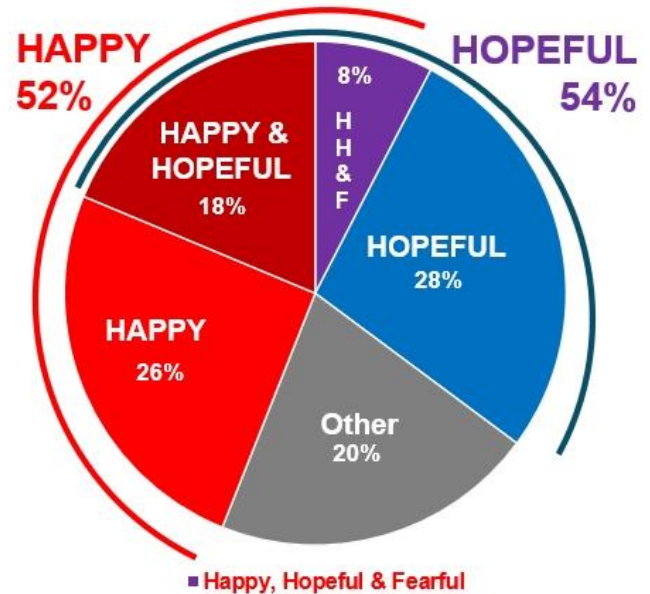
4% - Dartmouth Connections – maintaining and strengthening -- Reunion with classmates. Sharing college experiences. Seeing Washington and catching up with classmates.

How Do You Feel About Turning 80? Why Do You Feel That Way?

Here are a range of representative specific quoted responses to why classmates feel the way they do about turning 80.

“HOPEFUL” – 28%

- Because right now I'm in good health and hope to stay this way for as long as possible.
- The last few years have caused many calm, rational souls to re-engage in civic discourse.
- Politics may begin to recover from Trump.
- The glass is always half full for me.
- Hope changes in Washington and hope for success for grandchildren, nieces and nephews.
- I am hopeful that the divisions in our country will begin to subside, and we can experience an improved sense of common respect, community and decency.
- I've accomplished most of what I wished to accomplish but I have high hopes for my children and grandchildren.
- With both my wife and I experiencing medical issues (my wife's is progressive) I am hopeful that we will be able to continue to be as active as we have been.
- Mostly I'm an incurable optimist.



“HAPPY” – 26%

- My wife and I remain in good health and active socially and professionally.....we are thankful to be age 80.
- Achieving the status of wise elder.
- The average American male lives to be about 73. This is proof we're all above average!
- Our country has lost its way in both purpose and principles —we are becoming increasingly short sighted, tribal and uncivil —but I am so glad to have lived a wonderful life that I continue to enjoy.
- I'm healthy, retired, living in a great community. All is well. Retired at just the right time (age 75).
- Good health (other than knees). Wonderful living conditions. Wonderful spouse.

“HAPPY & HOPEFUL” – 18%

- Looking forward to continuing to be a part of the lives of our children, grandchildren and friends.
- I have been fortunate. I value being alive and appreciate my family. I expect and hope that I will be able to continue to do so for the foreseeable future.
- Our generation is living longer than any before in history.
- I am an optimist despite the current conditions in our country and around the world.
- I have a great wife and family. There is more good than bad in the world, and I believe that will continue to be the case in the future.
- Every day is a gift and new opportunity to learn and serve others.

“HAPPY, HOPEFUL & FEARFUL” - 8%

- Happy with my interests, friends, family and health. Fearful for our country’s democracy and the upcoming presidential election.
- I am deeply concerned about climate change, AI and the deep divisions occurring in our society and the challenges they pose to my children and grandchildren.
- My family and I are healthy and close. Proud of my two daughters working to address social issues. Social dysfunction and acceptance of inequality seem insurmountable.
- Glad I'm still humming along, hopeful I'll stay healthy, fearful (my wife) and/or I might not be around in another ten years.

OTHER RESPONSES – 20%

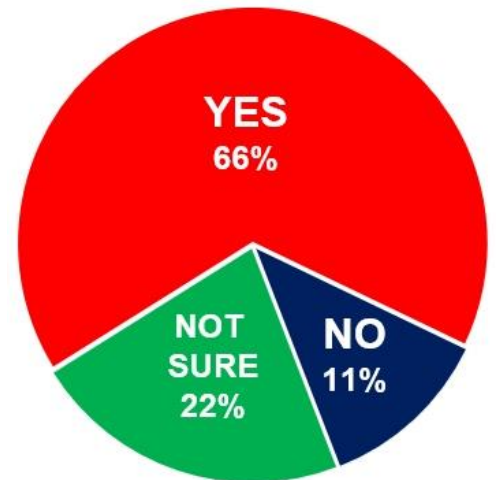
- Bittersweet - It has been a nice story so far. I know that I am in one of the later chapters of the book.
- Depressed - My 80-year-old body can't keep up with a 40-year-old mentality.
- Grateful -- I wasn't sure I would survive Vietnam. Every year since is a gift.
- Sad - Glad to have got this far, hopeful of years more.
- Survived – Body beginning to give signs of age.
- Thankful -- So many of my friends and relatives have either died or are dying.
- Unsettled -- After effects of late-life divorce, ending of career motivation, madness of humanity, concerns for the Earth.

Do you think things are better for you and your family than you expected they would be when we graduated from Dartmouth? Why do you feel this way?

These quotes, presented in no particular order, are representative of the reasons why classmates responded to whether things were better for them and their families than expected:

YES, BETTER – 66%

- Financially, socially, physically, and from a family perspective, we have achieved more than either of us could ever have considered at age 22.
- From a personal standpoint my family & I have been extremely fortunate in virtually every way I can think of. We have much to be thankful for.
- My imagination at graduation was incapable of grasping how my life would unfold.
- We have outlived nearly all relatives and lived a very satisfying life which has allowed travel across the globe including river cruises on virtually all of European and Asian navigable rivers.
- Lucky to have more fulfillment, fabulous family, good friends.
- I am not sure I had any expectations and things have turned out well.
- I realize that I was able to experience a more fulfilling and successful career than I thought might be possible, while at the same time enjoying a happy and loving family life.
- Never imagined that we would not only be debt free but would have accumulated a significant net worth that will be passed to our children and grandchildren.
- Married the right partner who influenced my choice of careers, modes of investment and types of local service. All life affirming and rewarding.
- Given the Vietnam war things were very uncertain.
- I married a woman who is smarter, more fun, and the best wife, mother, and grandmother than I ever imagined.
- Pure blind luck in choosing the right career and the right wife.
- I had no confidence in 1966 that I'd even be alive in 2024.
- I feel very fortunate to enjoy a good marriage, good health, and wonderful children, grandchildren, and friends. What more could I ask for?
- When your parents were high school dropouts, and your father worked most of his life in a textile mill, being a college history professor is surely a large measure of social improvement. Dartmouth prepared me for upward mobility.



NOT SURE – 22%

- Hitting a lot of challenges in recent years but able to bounce back — so far.
- Personally, my family and I are fine. Nationally and internationally, I have grave concerns.
- In 1966 I had few expectations for what life would be like for me when I turned 80.
- Family is doing OK, but increasingly it feels like we are in a bubble of privilege in a world in decline unique in history.
- My sons are "people of color". Good: There is much less prejudice and more opportunity for them now than 60 years ago. Bad: The 34 trillion \$ U.S. debt (and projected to grow immensely!) terrifies me regarding their financial future.

NO, NOT BETTER – 11%

- About as expected.
- I had no expectations one way or the other.
- Had some major bumps along the way.
- Human madness, Earth in jeopardy, family split-up.
- We're fine but the risk to democracy, from Trump and the Republicans, is far greater than I would have imagined.

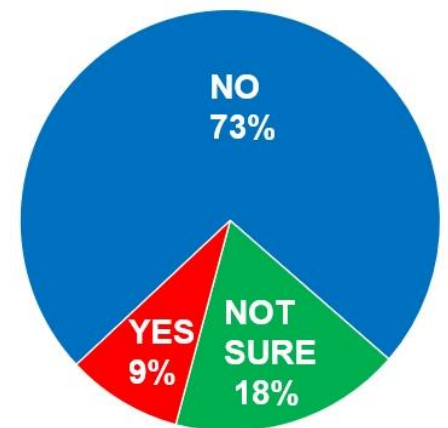
Do you think things are better for the country than you expected they would be when you turned 80?

Why do you feel this way?

These quotes, presented in no particular order, are representative of the various reasons why classmates responded to whether the country is better off now than they expected it would be:

NO, NOT BETTER – 73%

- World and national strife!
- Terrible divisiveness accentuated by a hedonistic, immoral former President who tried to overthrow our government.
- For starters consider the environmental mess facing the entire world and the miserable political situation in the U S.
- Too much shouting, not enough listening. Politics are too divisive. Compromise is not failure...it's net progress.
- The loss of faith in God (whom I met after Dartmouth), rationality, and the American Way combined with wokeness and the Covid caused physical separation that is tearing us apart.
- I never could have imagined that half of American didn't believe in science, could support a fascist, and that there was a good chance that he could be elected.
- It appears that a large portion of the country is confused about American ideals.
- The divisiveness and extremism - both on the left and on the right - are very harmful to the fabric of our society. And our society in general has become more coarse, with less respect at most levels for authority and order.
- The last 3 years of the current administration have been an unprecedented disaster in the US and abroad.
- Trump.



NOT SURE – 16%

- When I graduated, there was the fear of the Cold War and the threat of mutual destruction. That fear has subsided, but now I have the fear that our country is threatened from within.
- Because “things” are both a lot better and a lot worse at the same time. As Yogi or some other philosopher might have said, I can see the future clearly now , only I don’t know what it looks like 😊.

- I am very unhappy and disturbed at the discord and divisions that have developed over the past couple of decades in today's American society.
- 2024 will be a crucial test for us all. Politically and financially.
- The Donald Trump cult is very scary.
- Better is a relative term. Memory is a never-ending stream of revisionist history.

YES, BETTER – 9%

- I did not expect Trumpism, but I have confidence in America staying a vibrant democracy where someone like me growing up in abject poverty could achieve the things I have described here as making me feel lucky.
- Not politically, but socially. There has been progress on many fronts in terms of mitigating racism and gender bias. Not enough, but a lot.
- Our economy is strong and our country is not at war.
- A lot of opportunity out there for those who choose to take it.
- The upcoming election will show us the strength of this country.

Any thoughts or advice to others upon reaching this milestone?

The responses to this question seemed to fall into these general categories and these quotes are representative of the specific advice given:



Stay Healthy

- Be nice to others and, most importantly, try to follow a regular exercise regimen.
- One's health, both mental and physical, is the most important thing in life. Do all you can to be healthy. Take seriously your fitness and regular exercise.
- As my doctor says, "Motion is lotion" and "Use it or lose it".
- Stay healthy. Walk an hour a day. Pay attention to your health.
- Avoid junk food and get plenty of exercise outdoors. Slow down and enjoy nature.
- Count on spending more time on health maintenance than you were planning on.
- Your priorities must be your and your family's health and well-being.

Enjoy Life

- Enjoy every day to the fullest. Take every day as a gift. Tomorrow is promised to no one.
- Look forward. Enjoy every day. Enjoy the moment.
- Enjoy every minute we have left. Enjoy your remaining years.
- Our favorite saying is "if not now, when." Live every minute of every day.
- Stay positive and look to the bright side. Maintain your close friendships.
- 80 is the new 65. Stay active and involved with your family, friends and communities. Be happy and enjoy the years ahead.

Keep Giving Back

- Continue, even at our age, to do whatever each of us can to make a positive contribution to the world.
- Keep trying to make things better in any way you're able.
- We are lucky people. Look for ways to give back.
- Always think about how to help others and then do it.
- Look for the best in people and things, keep prodding yourself to be more aware and share unstintingly all the good things in life as you are able.
- Read the good stuff; there's no time for the rest. And keep in mind what we've all likely learned by now: Cling close to family and friends; cultivate our gardens, however we

define them; and, if we can summon up the energy, find ways, however incremental, to make life somewhat better for others.

- The privileged must find a way to help lift and support the underprivileged but then get them to help themselves. Don't shrink back from getting involved. AND put down that cellphone.

Be Thankful

- Appreciate your life. Anticipate your death.
- Appreciate life as much as possible and have as much involvement with your family and close friends as possible.
- As we stumble and fall be thankful for all who are there to catch us.
- Be thankful. Recognize, appreciate and be grateful for what you have.
- I am thankful for the life I have had and hopeful for more good years ahead for my country, the whole world community and myself.
- Enjoy and be thankful for what you have - particularly family and friends. They matter far more than material wealth.