

## A First Look at How We Changed: 50<sup>th</sup> Reunion Class Survey

By Rick Cech

The Ivies during the turbulent years of 1967 to 1971 were cauldrons of a new generational identity: rejection of the Establishment; departure from careerism; opposition to the Vietnam War, racism, and sexism; and the normalization of sex, drugs and rock 'n roll. Radicals of the 1960s said, "Don't trust anyone over 30." It is hard to know how many of us bought into all that. However, historians suggest that the world pivoted in profound ways during those years and attribute it to who was at places like Yale, and what they did. And a subsequent generation, the Millennials, satirize the apparent abandonment of our ideals with "OK Boomer." All of this pleads several questions: How did we change? Who are we now? And ultimately, what meaning can we take from the answers? Fortunately, a class reunion 50 years later affords a moment to inquire and reflect.

In mid-2020, a broad-based effort, involving many classmates, was initiated to produce the Class of 1971 Reunion Survey. The class response rate was 65%, astonishingly high by the standards of professional survey research. Based on our initial review, we can offer this headline: we moved on from whatever we had been; we studied, hitched up, and bred; we pursued more than one career; we polarized; and we retired South and West. Some of the details are included in the overview that follows. However, some of the juicier and more provocative bits are reserved for a more detailed presentation at our 50<sup>th</sup> Reunion.<sup>1</sup> We hope to see you there!

### We departed

Our class came to New Haven at a turning point in the college's history. Under the watchful aegis of two notable disruptors, Dean of Admissions Inky Clark and Elga Wasserman, Special Assistant to President Brewster, Yale began to admit an increasing number of students who departed from the profile of Yale of yore (white, male, Protestant, New England, upper-crust, prep school, etc.) And we continued to depart.

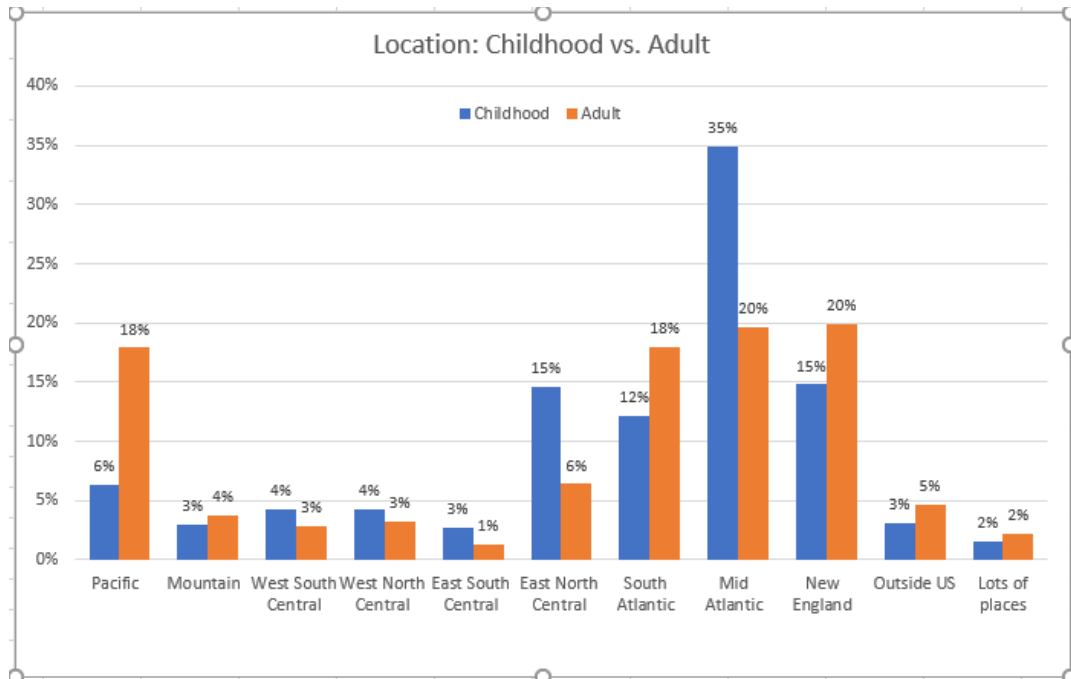
Geographically, YC '71 came from the suburbs, mostly in the Northeast and East Coast states, and ended up in a range of more diverse settings – still heavily suburban (about 40%), but with urban dwellers now coming in a close second (35%). At the same time, our regional center of gravity shifted from the East and Midwest toward the Southeastern and Pacific states. As the following graph shows, some 65% of us grew up in the old North (New England, Mid Atlantic, East North Central) and today only 46% remain there. We left the Northeast Quadrant and moved to the South and West. As adults, fully 60% of us ended up in regions different from those in which we were raised. Some demographers divide the U.S. population into three generic groups: "mobile," "stuck," and "rooted."<sup>2</sup> YC '71 falls decidedly in the "mobile" class. Yet there is some subtle but significant evidence of site tenacity (or "rootedness"). Specifically, if we look at the classmates living in any specific geographical region as adults (NE, SE, PAC,

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<sup>1</sup> For those unable to attend the Reunion, the Class of 1971 will subsequently provide a copy or recording of the full presentation to class members.

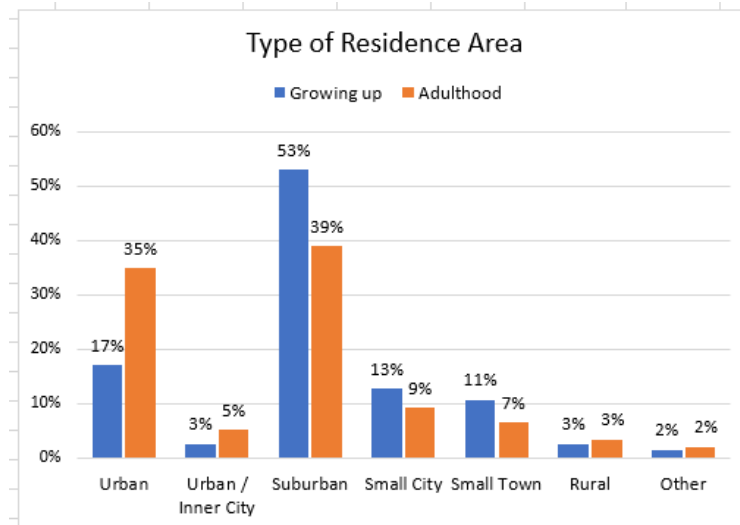
<sup>2</sup> <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-03-05/mobile-vs-stuck-who-lives-in-their-u-s-birth-state?sref=DcBXWgF8>. In the study, mobility was linked to education and other mobility-enabling factors.

etc.), the largest contingent in each region is nearly always comprised of individuals who also grew up in that region (versus any other).



The migratory pattern of YC'71 mirrors that of the US population at large: out of the Northeast and into the South and West. U.S. Census Bureau surveys attribute this pattern to a flight from high taxes and cold weather toward lower taxes and warmer weather and to employment opportunities. Perhaps classmate will add another criterion: retirement.

As the following figure shows, more than half of us grew up in the 'burbs. Though suburbs still hold a plurality of our class, our residence there is dwindling and is replaced by a gain in metropolitan living.



Within the data, one sees some interesting patterns of rootedness and rootlessness. While many of us changed our “dwelling styles” over time, the highest percent of those who settled in any particular demographic area as adults also lived in the same kind of area as children. Men were more site-tenacious than women. However, small towns and small cities in the East experienced a significant outflow of classmates, as original residents showed little site tenacity. Small cities in the West *gained* in-migrants.

As I will discuss at the Reunion, YC’71 “departed” in other ways. One is religious affiliation. Childhood religious affiliation was Protestant (37%), Jewish (23%), Catholic (13%), Christian/Other (1.5%), Non-Denominational (1.5%), None (23%). The comparatively large percentage of Jewish and Catholic class members (36% combined), as compared with earlier eras, was consistent with the transformative objectives of the Admissions Office. Note the large percentage of responses for “None,” which embraces various agnostic or non-observant categories. Perhaps this reflects budding doctrinal skepticism, as we entered college. However, diminishing religious affiliation continued as a trend into adulthood, with some interesting realignments along the way among those who remained devoted.

### How and what we learned

In 1958 (one year for which we have information), 61 percent of the Yale undergraduate class attended prep schools, versus 39% public. The mix almost exactly reversed for YC ’71, as the following table shows:

	Class of 1958	Class of '71 All	Male	Female
<b>Public</b>	39%	69%	66%	81%
<b>Private</b>	61%	26%	28%	15%
<b>Parochial/Religious</b>	-	5%	5%	3%
<b>Other</b>	-	1%	1%	1%

Men were twice as likely to attend prep school as women (by a factor of double digits), and also much more likely to attend a religious school. Most classmates went to a co-ed elementary school (65% for men, 80% for women), but this left a significant percentage attending single-sex institutions (33% of men and 17% of women).

More than 15% of our class came from families with at least one prior generation of Yale attendees (and 6% had two or more legacy generations). At the other end, more than 80% of entrants were first generation Yalies (more so for women, who were nearly 90% first generation).

As the next table shows, our undergraduate studies were focused heavily on Arts & Humanities (45%), in particular for women (61%). Conversely, women were less likely to major in science, technology or economics.

	M	F	Gender not stated	Total	%
<b>Arts &amp; Humanities</b>	41.8%	60.9%	60.0%	307	45.1%
<b>Social Science</b>	24.1%	18.0%	17.7%	155	22.8%
<b>Science/Technical</b>	17.2%	7.0%	6.9%	103	15.1%
<b>Economics/Ad Sci</b>	7.5%	4.7%	9.2%	47	8.7%
<b>Interdisciplinary</b>	8.6%	9.4%	4.6%	59	6.9%

**Religion**

0.9%

0.0%

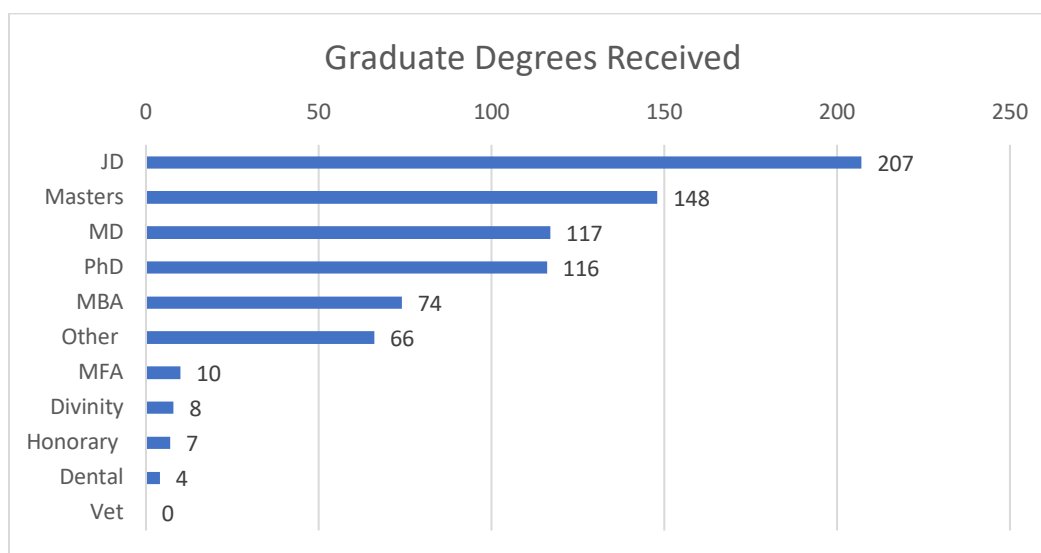
0.0%

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0.7%

In retrospect, some of our academic decision-making may have been undertaken without adequate deliberation, as nearly half of respondents indicated that – looking back – they might have wished to pursue a different course of study, given a fresh opportunity. The overall experience seems to have been adequate, nonetheless, as 80% of us say we would apply to Yale again. (On the other hand, another 14% said “maybe” and 6% said “no” or “probably not,” so the result was not universal – but more about this at the reunion, along with further reflections on undergraduate social life, extracurriculars, and acquired life values.)

Not surprisingly, we actively pursued post-graduate education. Ninety percent of the class received some sort of graduate degree (a towering 99.2% for women). With respect to degree type, the results were as follows:



The totals in the foregoing table reflect the fact that multiple degrees were earned by many individuals: although most of us earned a single post-graduate degree (75%), others have two degrees (23%), or even three (3%). Note: Household pets may lament the fact that, as noted at the 45<sup>th</sup> reunion, none of us is a veterinarian, and this deficiency apparently was not cured in the intervening 5 years.

It may seem long ago now, but Vietnam-era military involvement was a factor in many YC '71 lives. Most of us (nearly 90%) were not drafted: high lottery number (41%); 4F deferment (22%); female (19%); non-US draft eligible (2.9%). Some were drafted and served (1.2%); or served as conscientious objectors (0.3%). Some volunteered: Active duty (4%); Reserves (2%); Military Professional (0.6%).

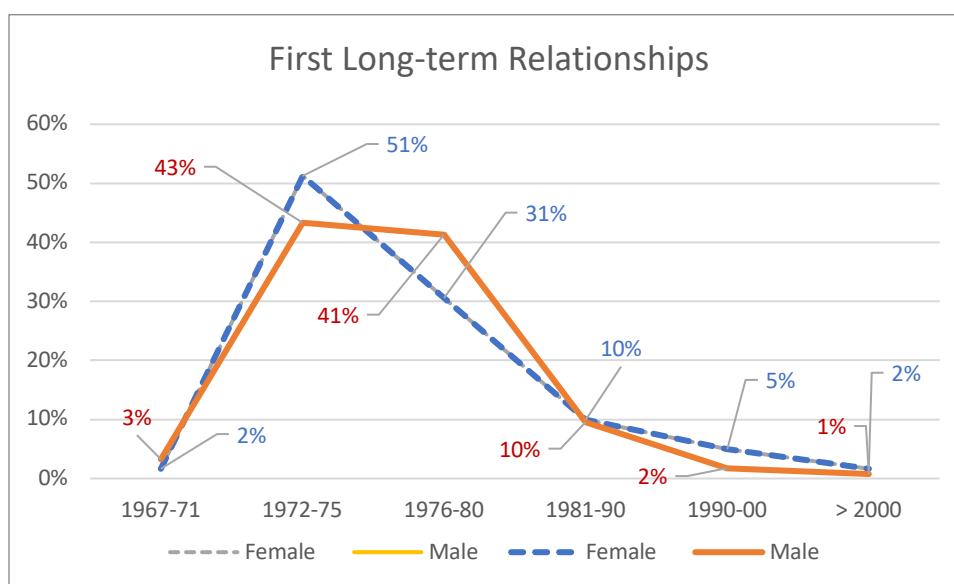
Of those who served, 7 of us (13%) went to Vietnam. Thank you for your service.

**Hitching up**

We followed many individual paths in forming long-term relationships, with a distinctly different pattern for men and women.

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- A quarter of male YC '71 classmates began their first long-term relationship while at Yale, and slightly more than a quarter did so in the period between 1971 and 1975. After that, the rate for males fell off sharply, and continued declining consistently through 2000.
- For women, the pattern shifted earlier. Many women (more than 50%) entered into their first long-term relationship as undergraduates in New Haven. A sharp decline followed.
- Of women who entered their first long-term relationship as undergraduates, 92% had partners who were Yale students, versus 35% for males. One can imagine that this reflects statistical availability ratios as much as free choice metrics, but this may do little to assuage bruised or startled male egos on reading this statement.



As of the survey date (June, 2020), 83 percent of us were married or in domestic partnerships, and another 12% were widowed or divorced (/not remarried). About 5 percent said they have never been married (3.9% men, 8.7% women).

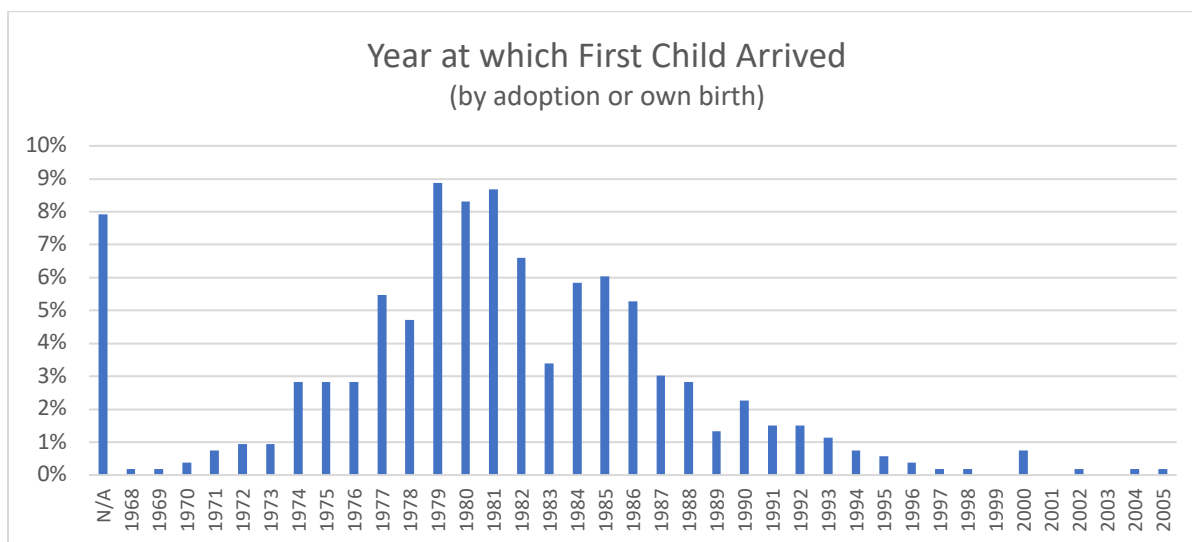
### Then we bred

Respondents raised 1,289 children altogether, which averages just under two children apiece, a tad shy of replacement level. While nearly 12% raised no children, the average number among those who did was 2.4 youngsters. (Note: These figures include biological and adopted children, as well as step-children.)

By far the most frequent number of children per classmate was two (23.3%), but the maximum number was seven (for men, that is – no women in the class raised more than 4 children).

Some of us began families at an early age – even while at Yale – but the pace of family development picked up significantly in the mid- and late-1970s. The peak age for having first children occurred in the

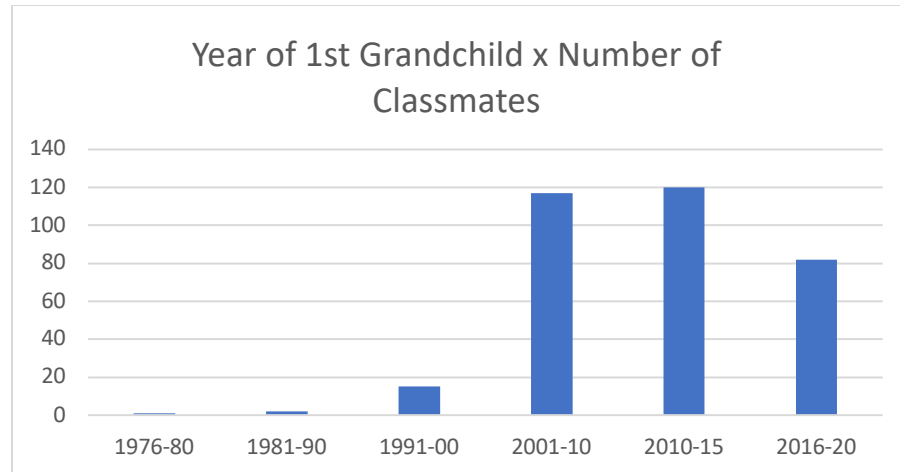
1979-1981 period (at about age 30-31 for both sexes, though slightly later for women). This number declined regularly over the 1980s and 1990s (although 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> children would have been appearing during this period, of course). Also, eight first children came in 2000 or later, and most of these were biological children rather than adopted offspring or step-children. (Note: For all first children after 1997, the classmate parent was male.)



Our children are generally no longer minors, of course. They are parents, professionals, and, yes, Yale graduates. Regarding education, 74% report at least one child with a graduate degree. Also, 46% have children who have graduated from college, (74% plus 46% = 120%, but these figures may include (1) second children, or (2) some double counting of children who went on to both college and graduate school.)

A number of YC '71 children have attended Yale. This includes children of 20% of the men who have raised children, and 25% of women (21% overall), thus creating a new legacy generation. There was little difference in the prevalence of legacy offspring relative to whether or not the parent was him- or herself a legacy (this provided only a 3% edge).

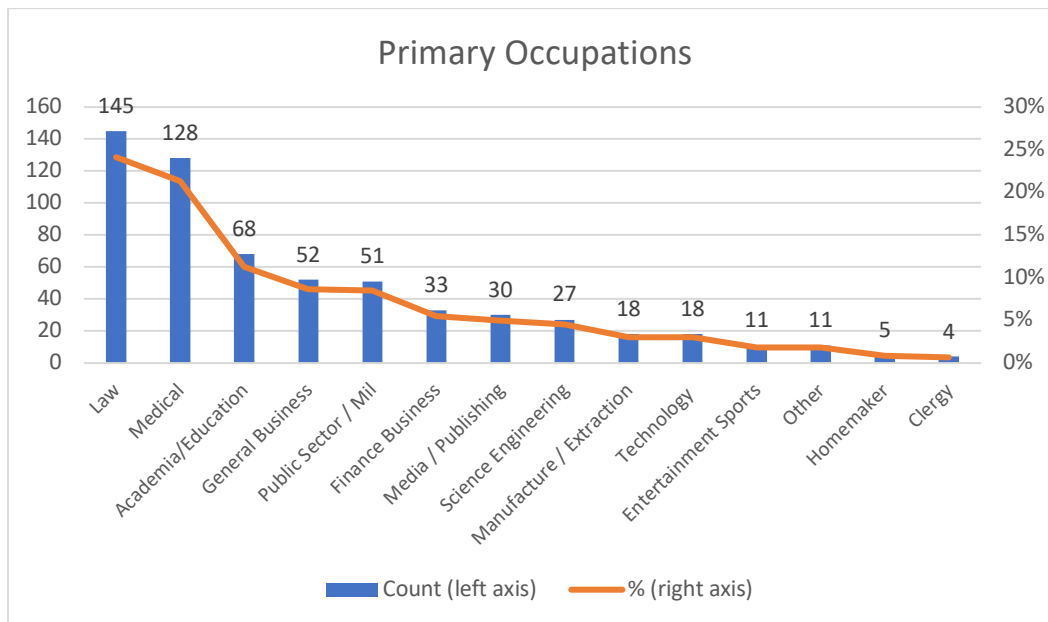
We also have grandchildren. This dimension of our lives reflects significant diversity. As the following graph shows, grandchildren began arriving in substantial numbers after 2000; first born arrivals peaked between 2000-2015. By a rough calculation, our children were about 31 when they began their own families, which is about the same age we were. The survey did not collect precise data on this point, but it's a fair guesstimate.



Our number of grandchildren varies greatly, from a low of zero (for about half of the class) to a high of 18. Twelve classmates reported 10 or more grandchildren (average overall was 1.7).

### **We pursued more than one career**

Nearly all of us “engaged in a paid, full-time occupation for an extended period” after graduation (97+%). Quite a few did not indicate a particular occupation in the survey (12%),<sup>3</sup> but those who did averaged almost exactly two professions each. The most common number of occupations was three (33%), followed by one (30%) and two (25%). Law and Medicine were the most common professions among those with a single profession. General Business and Academics/Education were most common for those with three occupations.



<sup>3</sup> For purposes of this specific question, “homemaker” was listed as a choice, so it should not be assumed that the 12% listing no occupation fell into that category.

Most classmate spouses worked outside the home (82% overall), but here we see a gender difference: 13% of male YC '71 class member spouses were homemakers; versus 2.4% of the spouses of women classmates.

Our class is at or near the end of career. As of the survey date (June, 2020), 57% of us were retired, versus 43% still working. This is more than one might expect, perhaps, although it should be noted that all of us were still a bit too young to run for President in the most recent election cycle. More women are retired than men (the ratio of retired to working women was more than 2:1). The same > 2:1 retirement ratio applies to female spouses of YC '71 classmates; but male spouses of female classmates, by comparison, half are still working.

### Our politics became more polar

While our political stances run the gamut, the median position tends leftward: currently, we describe ourselves as liberal or very liberal (452 [71%]), centrist (114 [18%]), and conservative or very conservative (73 [11%]). But orientation is not the full story. Those who identified as liberal have tended to be more politically active than other groups:

Political Activity x Political Orientation		
Orientation	Very Active Voters <sup>4</sup>	# Political Activity Types <sup>5</sup>
Conservative / Very Conservative	79%	1.67
Centrist / Not Political	88%	1.42
Liberal / Very Liberal	89%	2.57

In terms of specific activities, a larger percent of conservatives have held a political office than centrists or liberals. In other categories, liberals have been particularly active (2.8x more so than conservatives in terms of serving as political or campaign workers, for example).

	Conservative / Very Conservative		Centrist		Liberal / Very Liberal		Non-Political
Held Office	11	15%	10	9%	27	6%	0.0%
Caucus	7	10%	10	9%	68	16%	0.0%
Political Advisor	5	7%	7	7%	39	9%	0.0%
Political Worker	12	16%	26	24%	201	46%	0.0%

Our political sentiments have not been static. There are many ways to look at political evolution over our adult lives. For this overview, space limitations are such that two observations will have to suffice. First, when we entered Yale we were not greatly more liberal than our parents – just somewhat so, by about 20%). What *did* change was that we were far less *conservative*. Nearly 40% of us reported our

<sup>4</sup> Those who answered “yes” to all questions on voting activity – presidential years, off-years, referenda.

<sup>5</sup> This is an average of the number of political activity types engaged in – drawn from those listed in the survey (e.g., held office, worked on campaign, made donations, etc.).



parents' political views as being "Conservative/Republican," whereas on entering Yale we only identified ourselves as 17% conservative. A majority of losses in the Conservative column appear to have shifted one category left, to Centrist, which was almost twice the size for us as it was for our parents (16% to 31%).

The second point involves a weakening of the middle – a common theme in US life today that we see traced out in our own experience.

	Entering Yale	Current	Change	Move to Extreme	Move to Center
Very Conservative	6	17	11	11	
Conservative	94	56	-38		
Centrist	182	111	-71		-32
Liberal	251	328	77		
Very Liberal	62	124	62	62	
Not Political	33	3		73	-32

If we compare our reported political views when entering Yale to those we now hold, it is clear that more extreme viewpoints – either very liberal or very conservative – have become more common, whereas centrist/traditional views have declined. The transition would look a good deal more complicated if we added in our political views as of graduation, since conservative positions had dropped sharply then – only to regain significant ground later. But there is something to be learned from looking at just the beginning and end points of a process, to clearly understand the overarching parameters of the full journey.

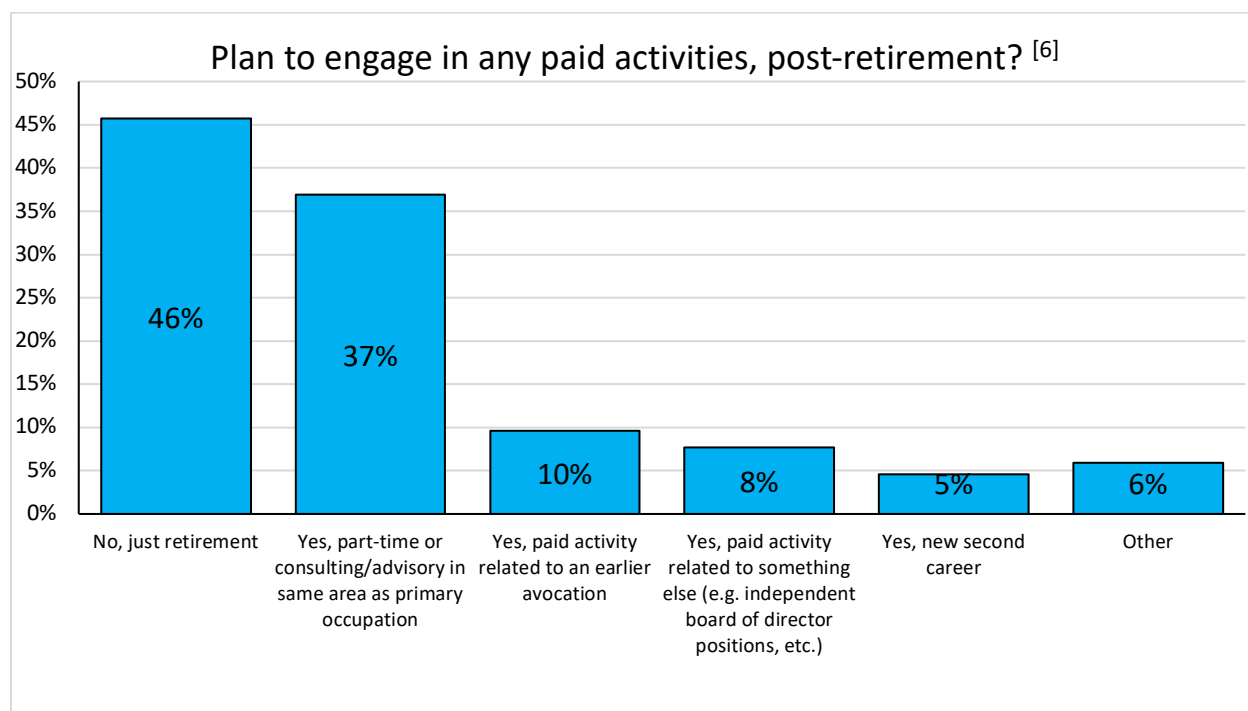
But wait a moment, there were supposed to be only two points here. A third point cannot be ignored entirely, however, around the fact that we became (and have remained) significantly more liberal overall, with Yale marking a significant transition period in this alignment. But that review can wait until later, especially as it is unlikely to come as a newsflash to many.

### Retirement life: moving on

To date, we have not drastically modified our living arrangements in deference to impending maturity. More than 70 percent of retirees still live in their same residence, at least for part of the year. Ten percent of retirees have relocated to a warmer climate, and 2% to a colder one (skiers?). Fifteen percent have moved into smaller residences. And while a number mentioned they have moved to be closer to relatives, all are still living in separate residences. Finally, a number of people living overseas prior to retirement have returned to the U.S.

Most of us believe we are reasonably well prepared for retirement in financial terms. A large 85% of respondents answered "yes" or "pretty sure." Another 7% were not so sure, and 8% did not reply (or answered "NOYDB").

Nearly half of us have plans for some continuing paid activity in retirement. What is interesting are the 46% who have gone Cold Turkey. At the Reunion we can learn about how they are spending their time.



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Survey comments on our evolving living arrangements cast light not just on retirement planning, but also on the flavor of our diverse lives – and in certain cases excite more than a small degree of envy:<sup>7</sup>

- *Moved to lake house*
- *Half-time in Georgia, half-time in Quebec City (I'll leave it up to you to guess how my year is divided between the two places)*
- *Starting to remodel/rehab home for 'aging in place'*
- *Summer home in France*
- *Moved to a coastal New England Town*
- *Living with new partner on Cape Cod*
- *Even though I'm old, have young children and am still head of household*
- *Moved to support my elderly parents and create a grandchild trap*
- *Part of the year in Italy*
- *Moved into city*

### More to be revealed at the Reunion

Suffice it to say, the Yale College Class of 1971 was pretty talented, fully educated, accomplished, and privileged. However, for all of the knowledge we acquired, were we wiser? For all of our ideals forged

<sup>6</sup> Some respondents answered “yes” in more than one category, so aggregate percentages exceed 100 percent.

<sup>7</sup> NOTE: Add paragraph on people believing they are generally prepared for retirement financially?

at Yale, did we fulfill them? For all of our privilege, did we give back? More survey findings to be presented at the Reunion can shed light on these and other questions. Time and space limitations in this book prevent an exhaustive summary of the survey findings. Yet to come are insights about how the Yale experience and the last 50 years post-Yale have varied among classmates. One size did not fit all, and how the size varied is a rich narrative. Then there are findings about sex and sexual identity, personal and family income, net worth, and life lessons. Suffice it to say, some of the deepest insight are to be gained from one-to-one conversations. Join us at the Reunion to get more of the story.

September, 2020