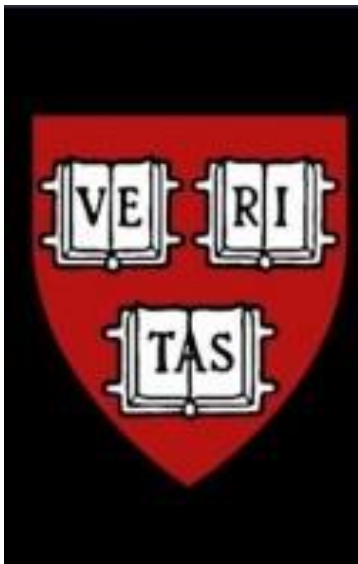
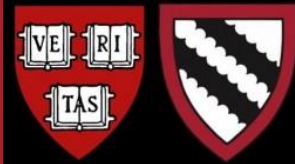


# Harvard-Radcliffe Class of 1981





Harvard-Radcliffe Class of 1981

# In Your Own Words

**45th Reunion Survey Highlights**



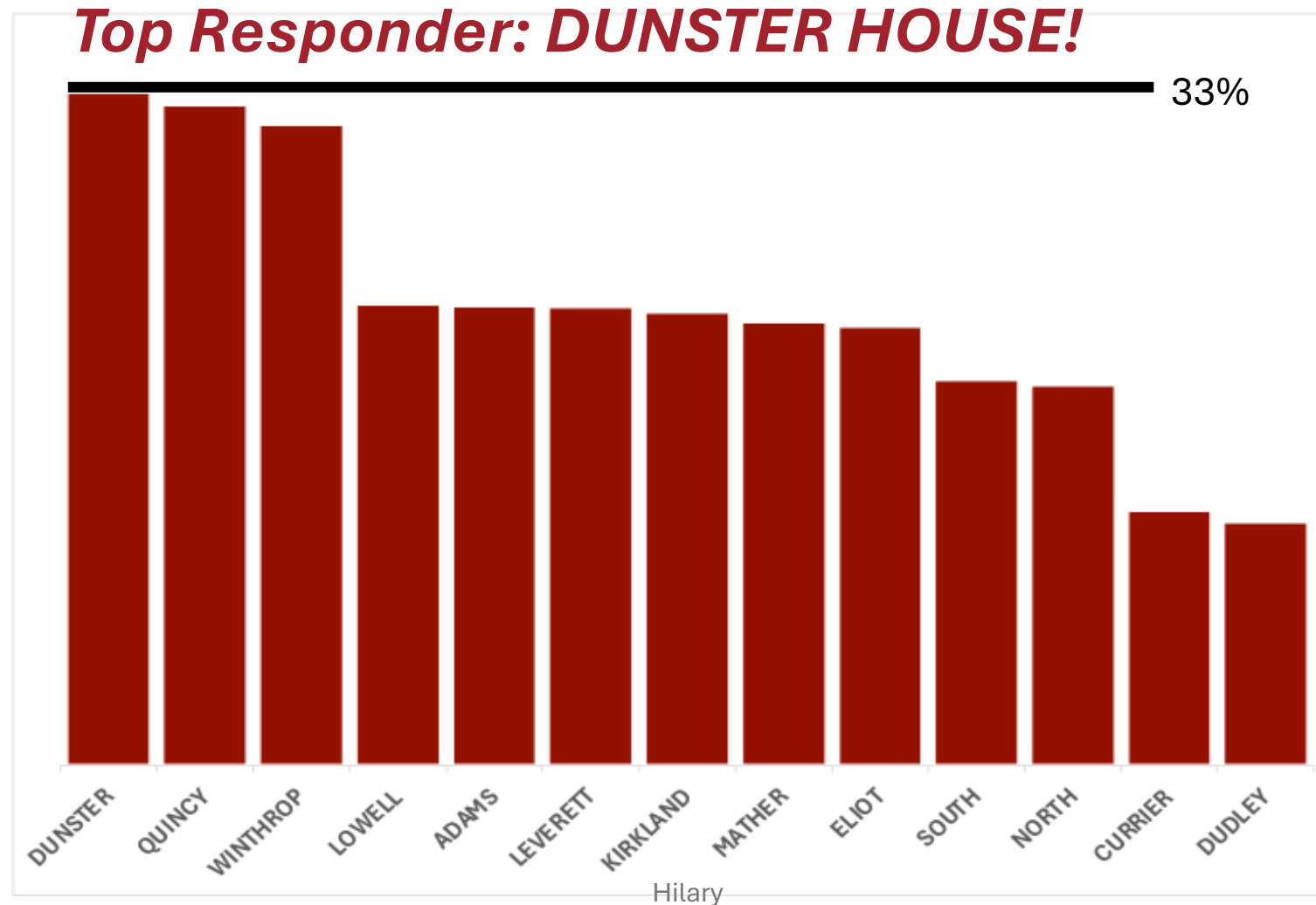
# Presenters: your survey committee

- **Hilary Gonzalez Morrison, Chair**
- **Archie Todd Morrison III**
- **Russell Baris**
- **James Whiting**
- **Barbara Koh**
- **Andrew Sellon**

# About our survey

- Our emphasis was on comparing Then vs. Now
- Anonymity allowed free (and extremely frank) expression of classmates' views! 🤨
- Some quotes have been edited in the interest of space/civility
- Total responses: 342 or about 20%!
- And the house that delivered the highest number of responses was... [GUESS!]

# What was your house affiliation?



# How much bearing did your concentration have on your career?

Bearing	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
A Lot	138	42%
Mattered	38	11%
Some	66	20%
A Little	36	11%
None / Nearly None	54	16%
Total Respondents:	332	

# How much bearing did your concentration have on your career?

Bearing	Nat Sci	%	Soc Sci	%	Hum	%
A Lot	40	56%	67	33%	31	53%
Mattered	6	8%	28	14%	4	7%
Some	10	14%	46	23%	10	17%
A Little	6	8%	25	12%	5	8%
None / Nearly None	9	13%	36	18%	9	15%
Total Respondents:	71	21%	202	61%	59	18%

**At Least Some**

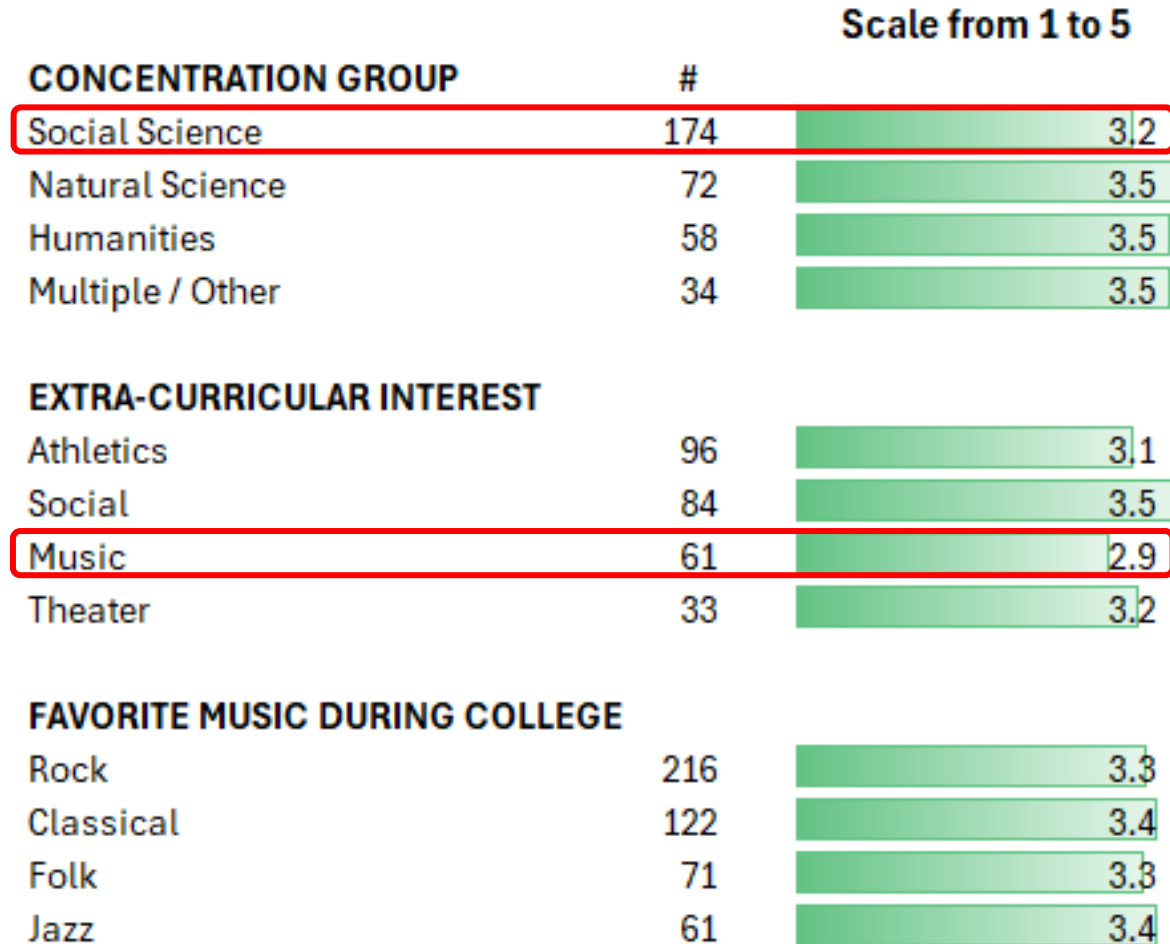
**78%**

**70%**

**77%**

# How much bearing did your concentration have on your career?

## Breakdown by college interests



Didn't bear directly but taught me to think/write/speak clearly/logically/coherently, and that was very important.

[Sociology]: As I studied deviant group behavior, it helped me understand the unique dynamics inherent in my industry.

Very little. I should have majored in History and Literature.

# What else was important to you?

Activity	Respondents	%
<b>Sports</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>25%</b>
Varsity/JV/Freshman	62	9%
Club	8	1%
Intramural	37	6%
Recreation/General	60	9%
<b>Friends</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>18%</b>
Generally	102	16%
Conversations	7	1%
Significant Other	7	1%
<b>Music</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>11%</b>
Generally	33	5%
Playing/Singing	37	6%

Activity	Respondents	%
Groups/Organizations	67	10%
Restaurants/Nightlife	39	6%
Theater (on/back stage)	37	6%
Newspapers/Journals	28	4%
House Life	25	4%
Volunteering/PBH	24	4%
Working	21	3%
Political Activity	21	3%
Expanding Horizons	16	2%
Reading/Writing/Research	12	2%
WHRB	10	2%
Partying/Drinking/Drugs	5	1%

I enjoyed picking some corner of the Widener stacks at random and reading books from that section.

Lampoon / Girlfriend (not in that order)

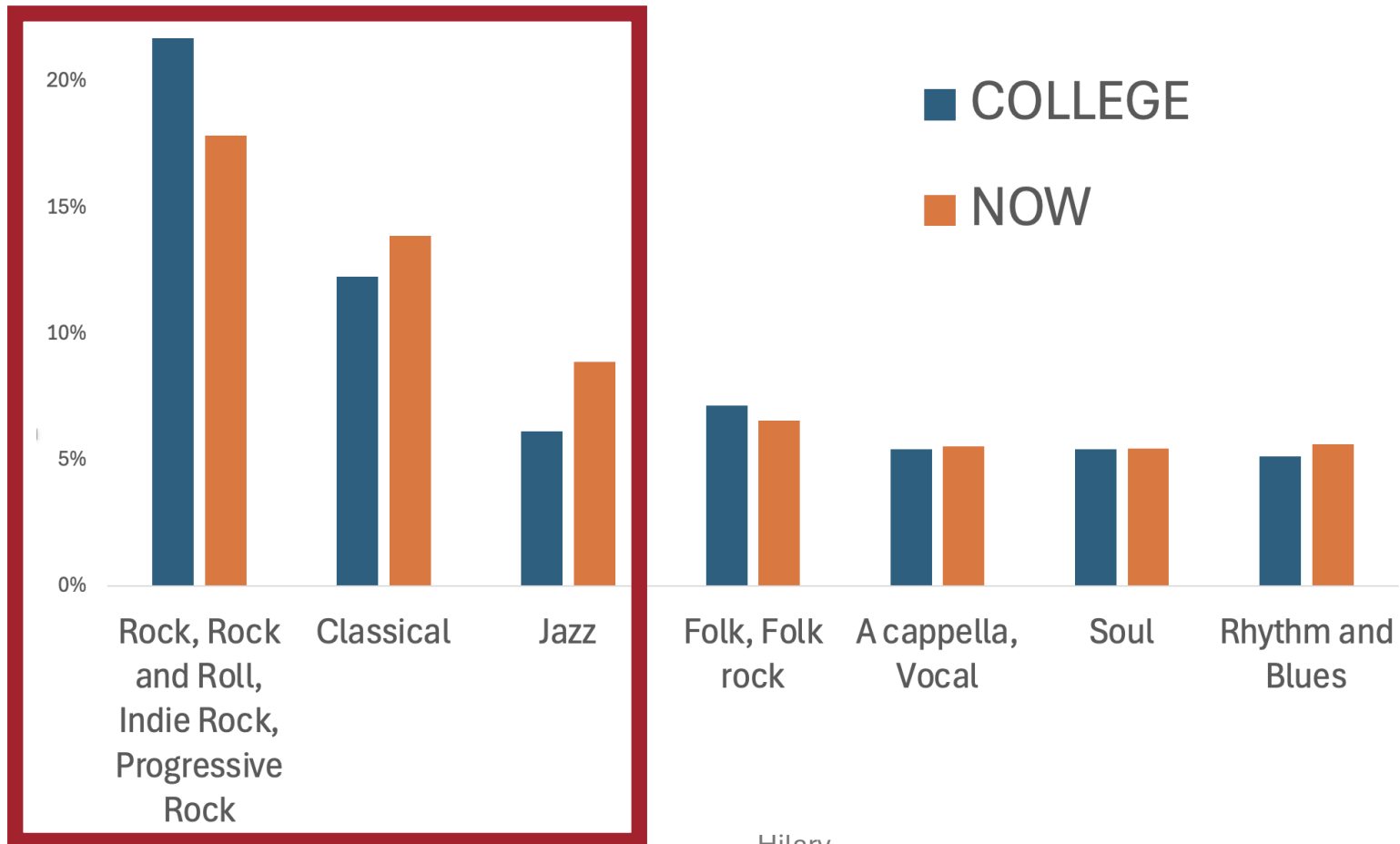
Misspent Youth (my real concentration)

Spontaneous serious, philosophical, political, or completely nonsensical conversations and arguments that stretched late into the night.

Eating/hanging/playing Missile Command with friends ... dropping a Canadian flag over a separatist premier ...

Friendships that have lasted for life.

# What were your favorite types of music in college? What about now?



# What is your favorite house memory?

## Top Answers:

- **Amazing dining hall conversations**
- **Just hanging with roomies and new friends**
- **Social hours at the Masters' Houses**
- **The parties! (Dance/Toga/Beach)**
- **The Adams House clothing optional pool**

“YMCA” being performed by our house proctors

First real spring day: everyone sat out in the courtyard

1AM false fire drills that revealed some interesting couples

Seeing the pride on my family's faces as I received my diploma

Listening to Yo Yo Ma practicing next door

I would give anything for another lazy afternoon sitting in the dining hall just talking with my friends.

# What do you miss most about Harvard?

## Top Answers:

- **The friends I made there**
- **The intellectual stimulation of always being surrounded by smart, interesting people**
- **The libraries and museums**
- **Late night conversations on deep topics**
- **My youth**

The sense that anything was possible

The sense that everyone belonged

Civilized debate about any subject

# What's a moment from your Harvard days that still makes you laugh, cringe, or smile??

- **The Blizzard of '78!**
- **Parties/Alcohol/Antics**
- **Freshman discoveries**
- **Lasting friendships**
- **Serious moments**
- **Only @Harvard**
- **Cringe? Too many to list....**

Locking myself out of the WHRB studio where I left an album playing on air, only to have it reach the end so listeners heard the needle repeatedly bouncing for 10 minutes. When I got back in, I announced it was “a test of the emergency broadcast system.”

“Sometimes we laugh when we really want to cry”—The observation from my adviser a few days before my thesis was due, when I could only meet her questions and suggestions with sleep-deprived fits of giggling.

I cringe when I remember omitting numbers in the sequence of pages in English papers to make it look like they were longer than they actually were. 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, etc.

The undefeated Harvard Rugby Football club—and the fact that in our pregame huddle, we said a poem.

When a gas cylinder corroded, the lab filled to waist-level with NO<sub>x</sub>, a brown corrosive gas. Stepping into the emergency shower caused my pants to dissolve, leaving me in just seams.

A classmate invited 3 of us to a Red Sox game. Carl Yastrzemski was on the verge of 3,000 hits. Outside Fenway, our friend said he'd lost his ticket and sent us in ahead while he retraced his steps. Only recently, I've realized he'd really had only 3 tickets & was determined that his friends witness Yaz's milestone. It was a gift of kindness & honor we'll never forget.



# What brings you the most contentment in your personal life these days?

Spending time with and being happy about:	319
Significant Other	59
Children/Grandchildren	90
Family	79
Friends (and other humans)	77
Pets (and Livestock)	14

Recreation	261
Physical (sports, hiking, biking, birding)	72
Intellectual (puzzles, reading/writing, learning/research)	55
Cultural (museums, music)	44
Travel	29
Cooking/Dining	18
Gardening	12
Hobbies/Projects/Domiciles	14
Getting out into Nature	17

# What brings you the most contentment in your personal life these days?

Category	127
Work (meaningful, well done)	35
Teaching/Mentoring/Helping Others	28
Volunteering/(Positive) Politics/Religious Practice	29
Kicking Back and Just Watching/Enjoying/Being	35

Seeing what good people my children have become as adults.

Reading, music, fighting fascists.

Being with the one I love.

Laughter. 😂

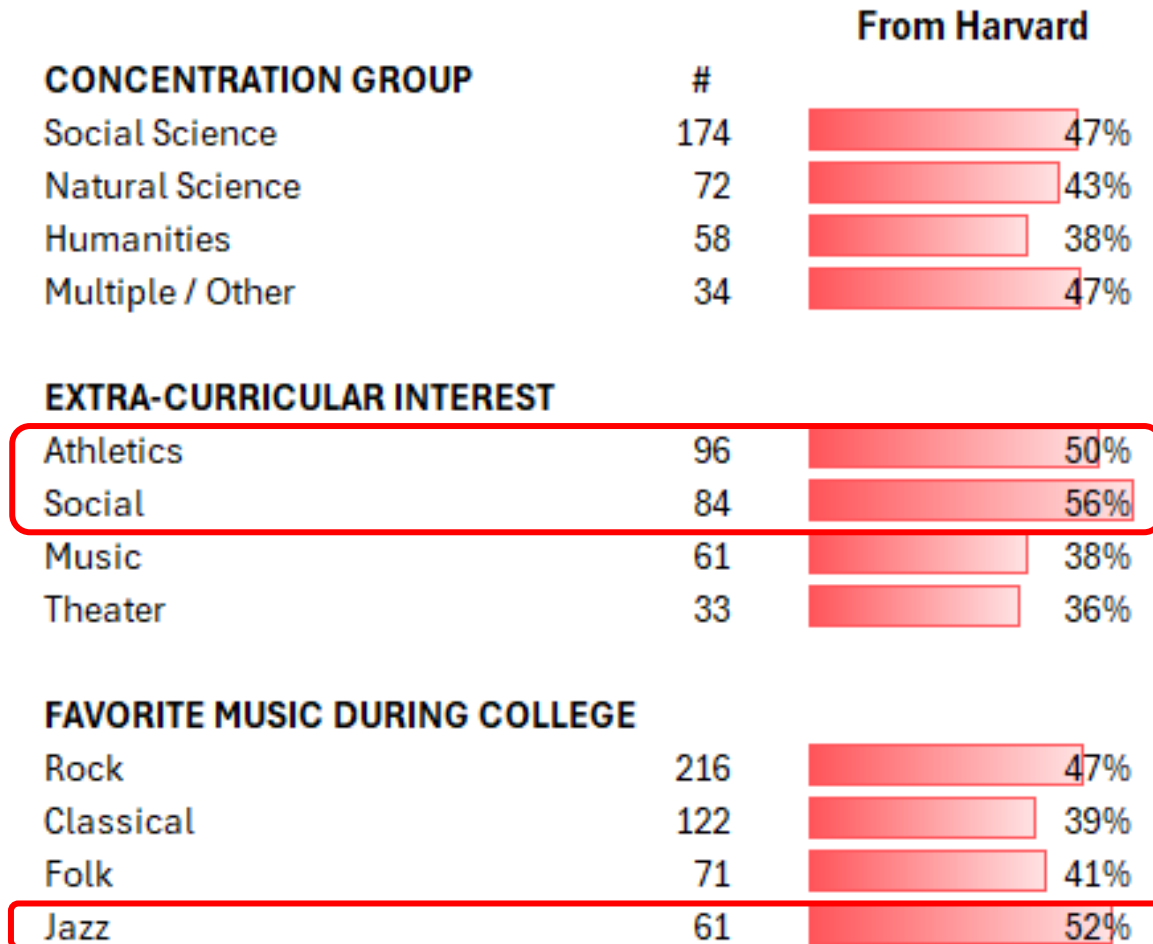
Love. ❤️

A good night's sleep. 😴

# Who are your closest or most important group of friends?

When/Where/How Met		
HR81 (Roommates, shared activities)	165	33%
Shared Activity/Organization/Neighbors (since HR81)	82	16%
High School (or earlier, grade and middle school)	59	12%
Family (especially spouse)/Through Family	50	10%
Work/Service/Colleagues/Students	51	10%
Grad School	26	5%
Through Children	19	4%
Everywhere and Anywhere	43	2%
HR81 (Reunions and Otherwise)	4	1%
Pets	1	<1%
	500	81%

# Who are your closest or most important group of friends?



A divergent group of people, largely questionable, it would seem, for their judgement to hold me dear.

I have four women who are around the same age. We call ourselves "The Board" and have regular "Meetings".

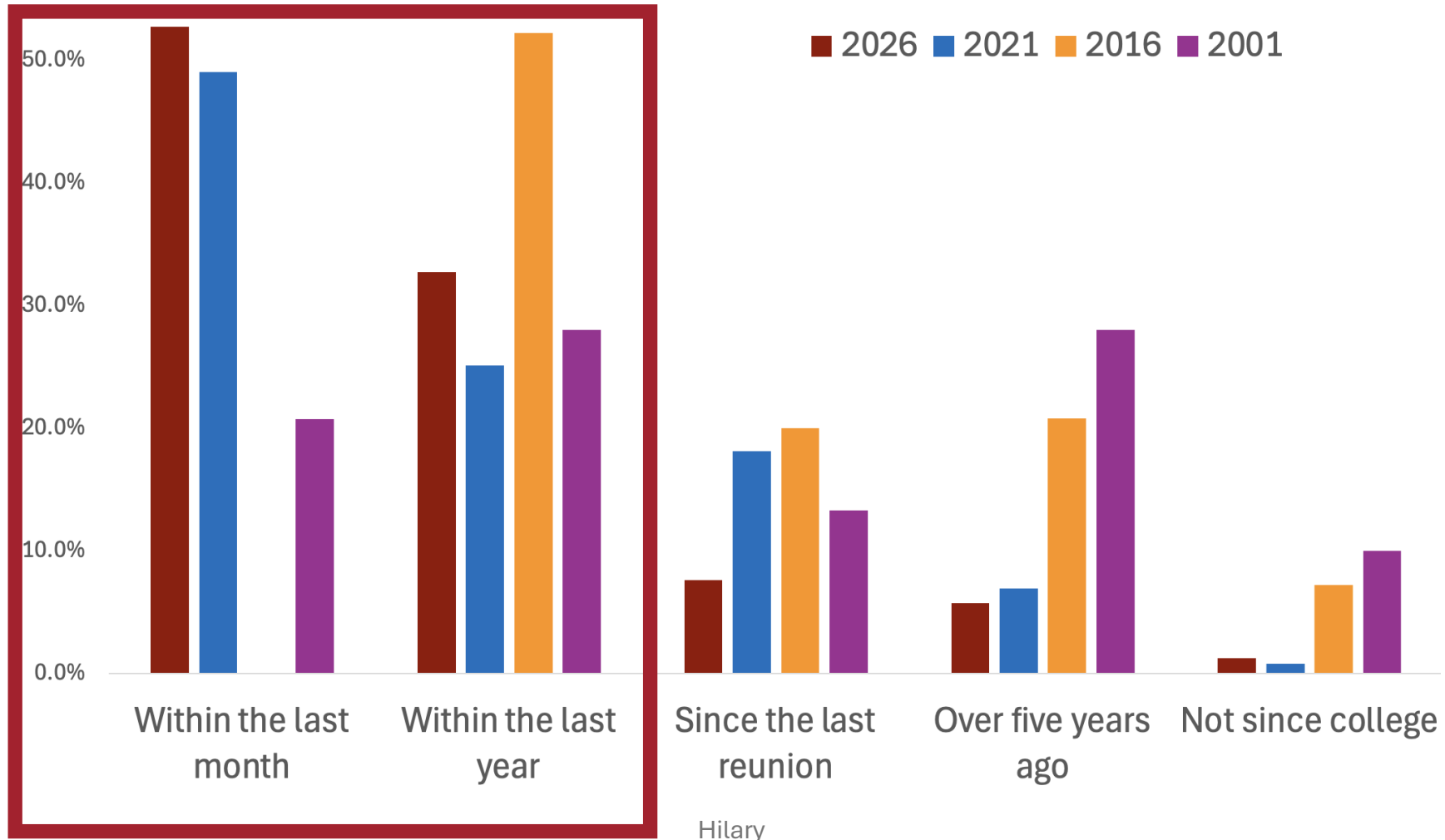
I don't have a coherent group of friends. Instead, I seem to have accumulated a tiny handful of friends from each phase of my life. It has been a pleasure, over the years, to bring some of these disparate friends together.

Friends I met while raising our children.

HR1981 people I didn't know in college.

My closest friends in college are still my closest friends, almost 50 years later.

# When did you last see a college friend or roommate?



# How have your relationships with extended family changed?

## Major Trends:

- Relationships have remained the same or grown even stronger over time
- Losing parents leads to greater sibling closeness OR
- Losing parents leads to distance and conflict
- Addition of in-laws, grandchildren, family by choice are generally seen as positives
- Video conferencing is great!

Impacted by politics and right-wing radicalization. Still close with two brothers but estranged from another.

They have become closer. I really enjoy my family.

I care for my Mom. She used to care for me.

# What values are most important to you?

- **Integrity, honesty, truth**
- **Kindness, compassion, empathy**
- **Justice, fairness, civic values**
- **Connection**
- **Wide open door**
- **Ethical/religious guidelines**

I am far easier than I used to be on minor imperfections, but tougher on basic ethical values of honesty and work.

The secular values of *The Lord of the Rings*: Fidelity to principles/just causes, and loyalty to friends.

Balance: not too high, not too low. The world seems so hopeless now I can't bear to list external values.

# What has been your most life-changing event since graduating?

## Top Answers:

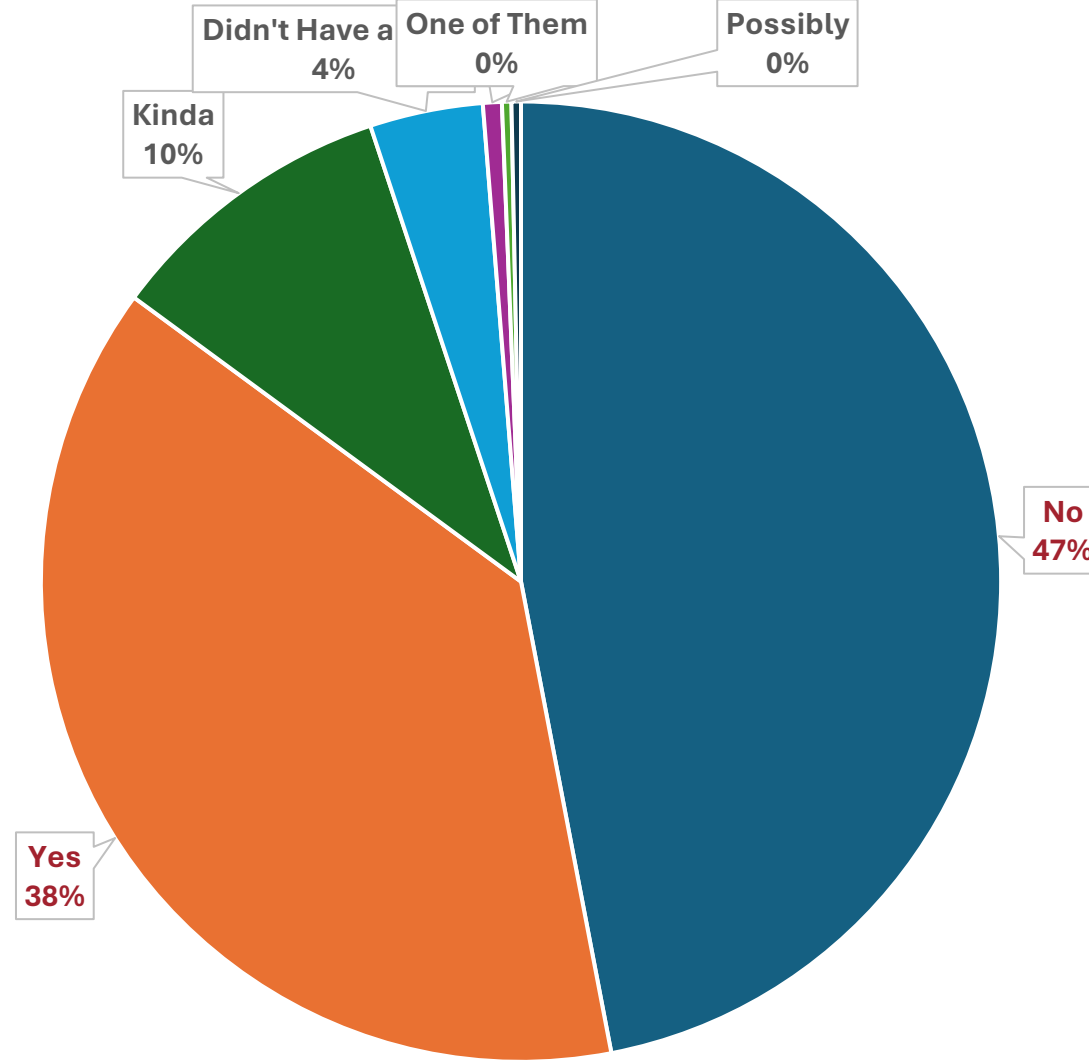
- **Parenthood**
- **Marriage**
- **Divorce**
- **Battling serious illness**
- **Losing loved ones**
- **Becoming a caregiver**

Reaching an age where reflection has become as important as ambition.

Years of therapy!

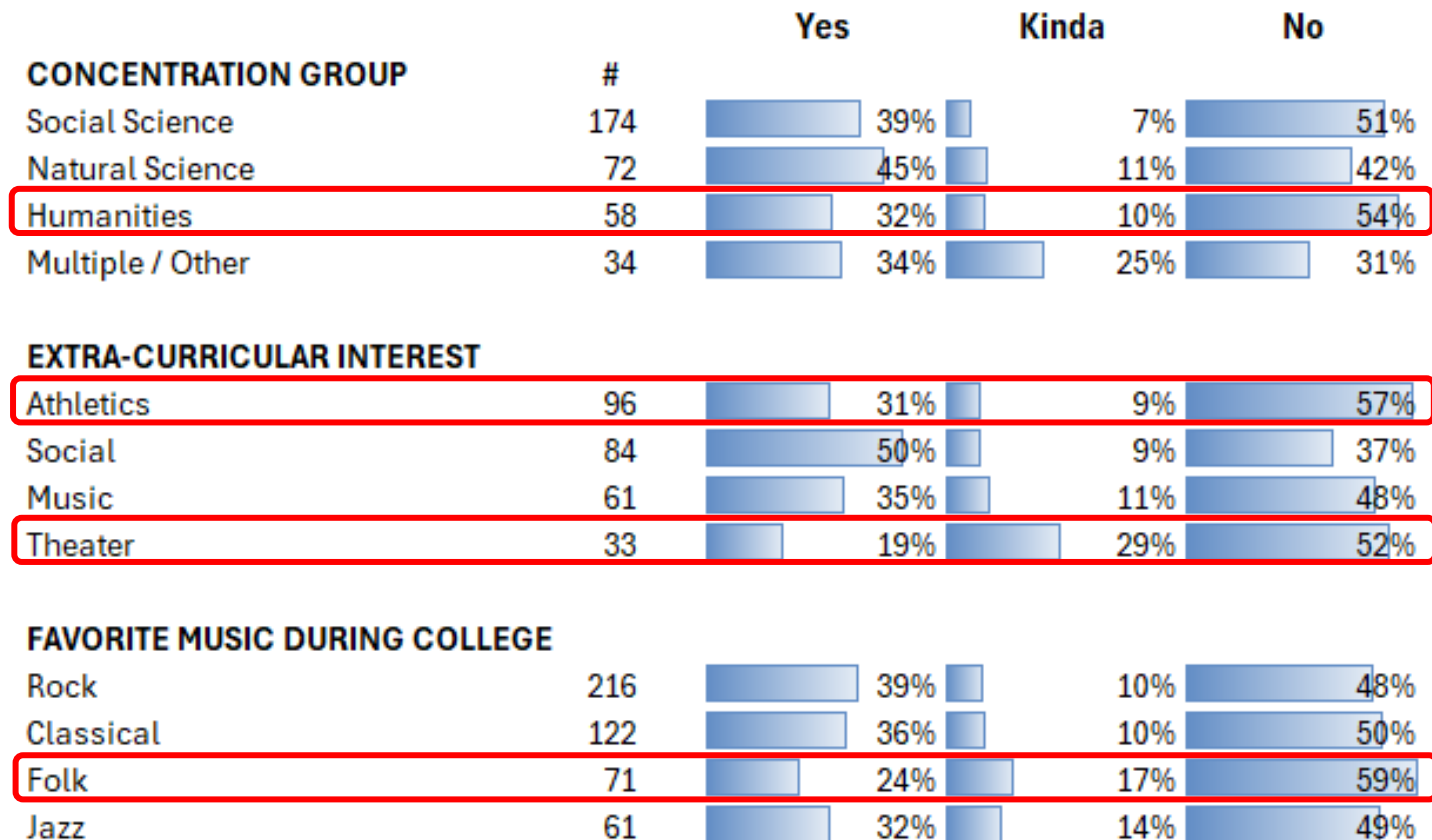
Coming into sudden wealth.

# Are you still in the career field you imagined for yourself while at Harvard?

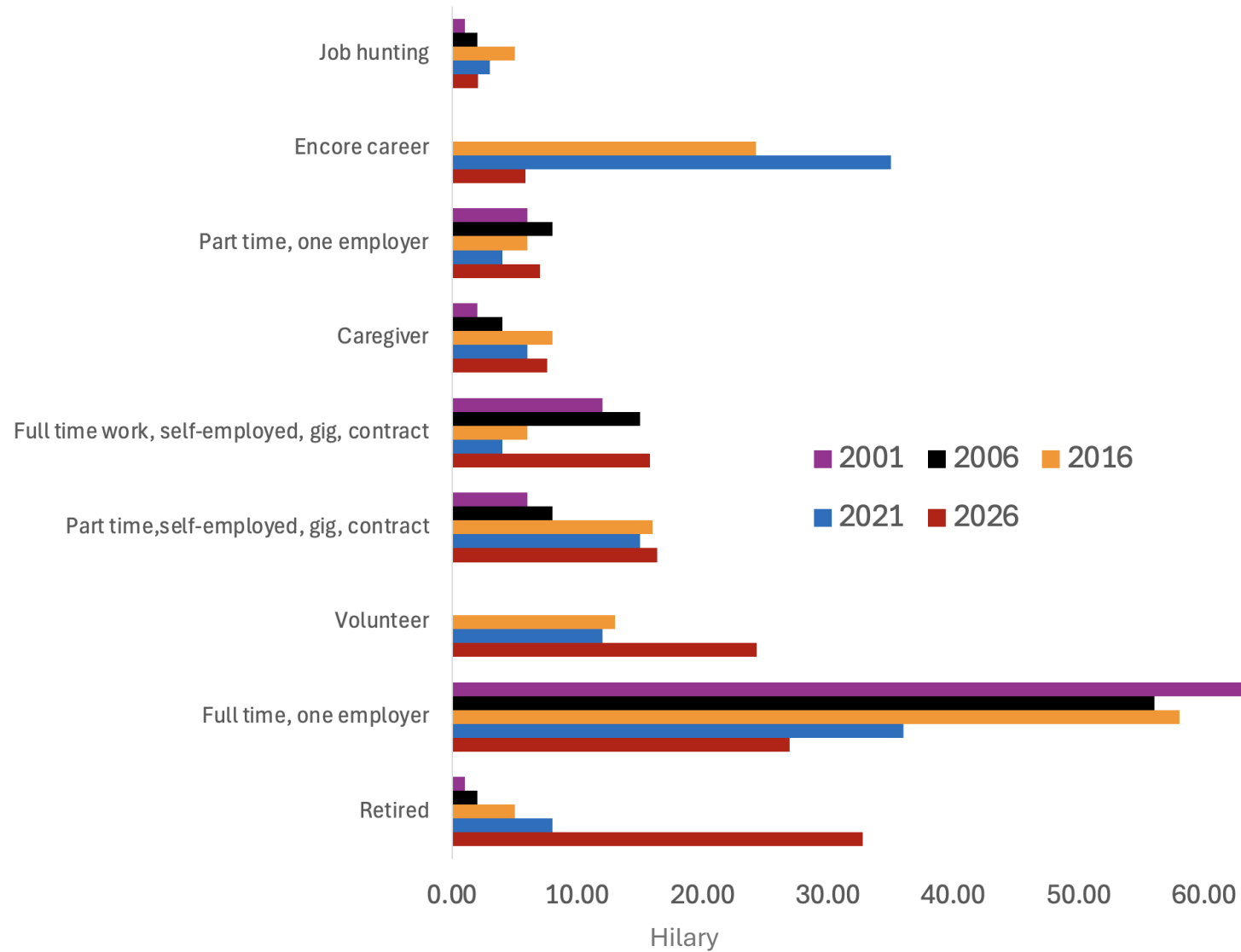


# Are you still in the career field you imagined for yourself while at Harvard?

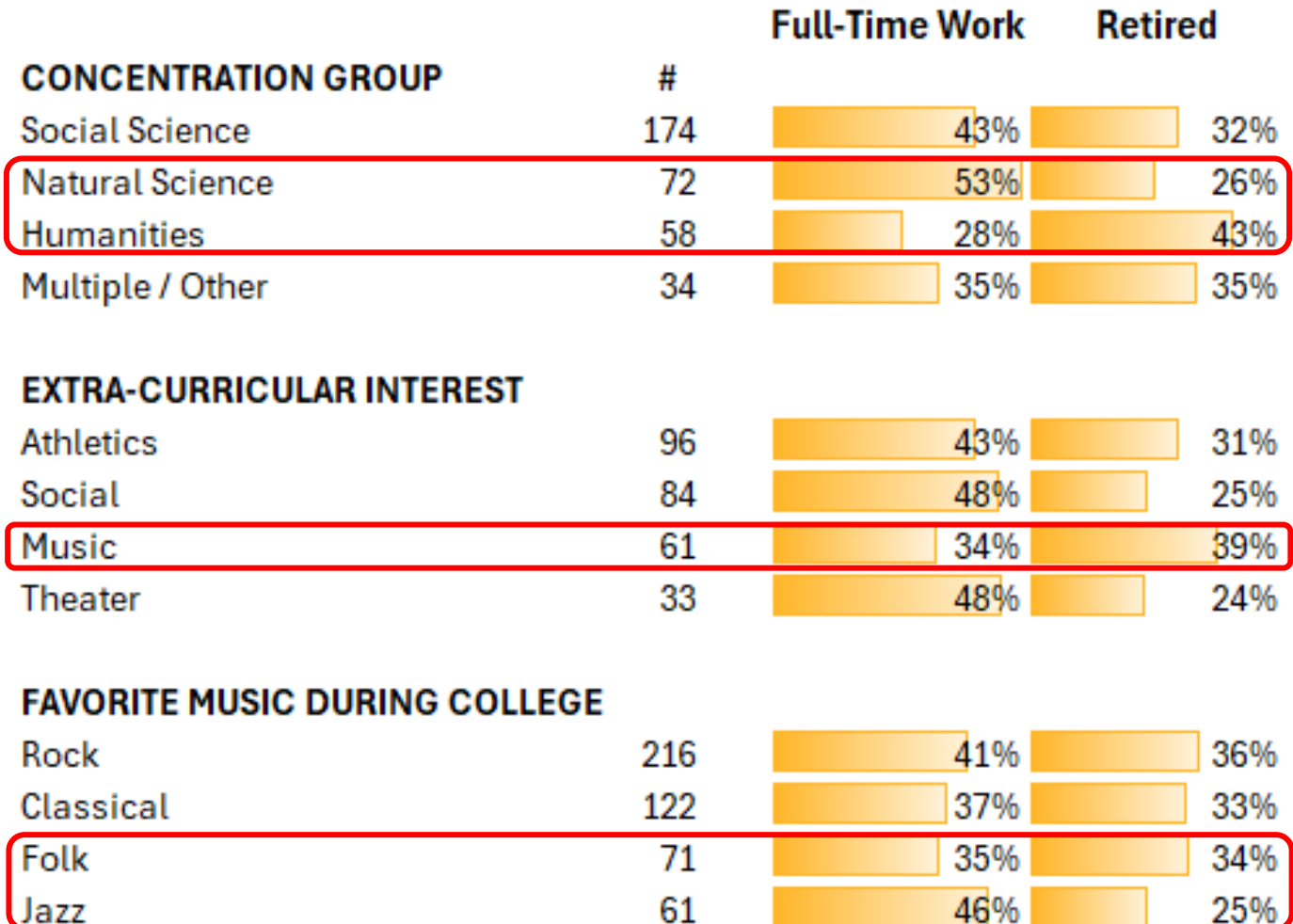
## Breakdown by college interests



# How do you spend your day?



# How do you spend your day?

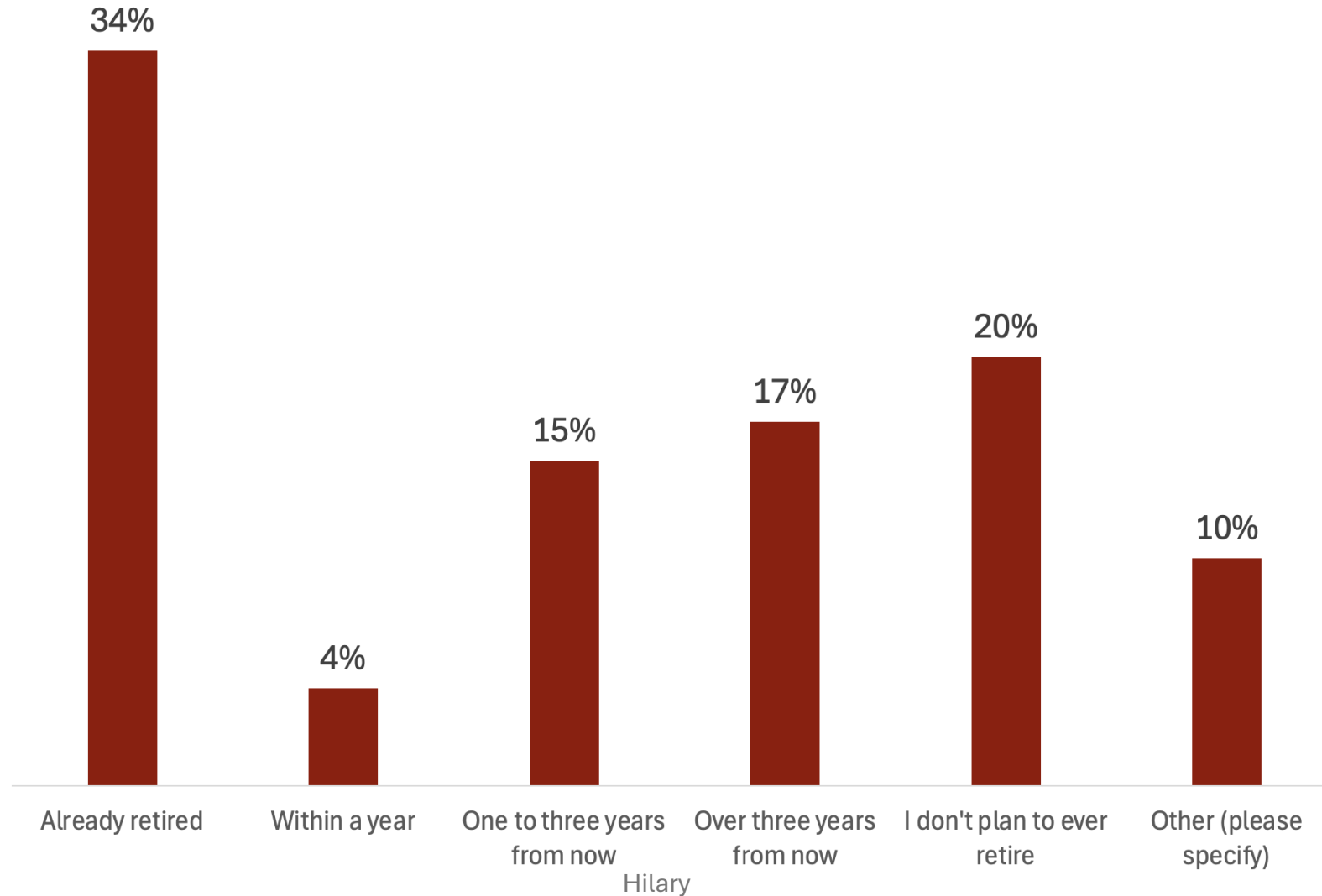


Hell if I know. My day comprises managing email, reading news, tidying, inventorizing, walking to grocery-shop, puttering...

Coach, Bible teacher, friend

Making music and art

# When do you plan to retire?

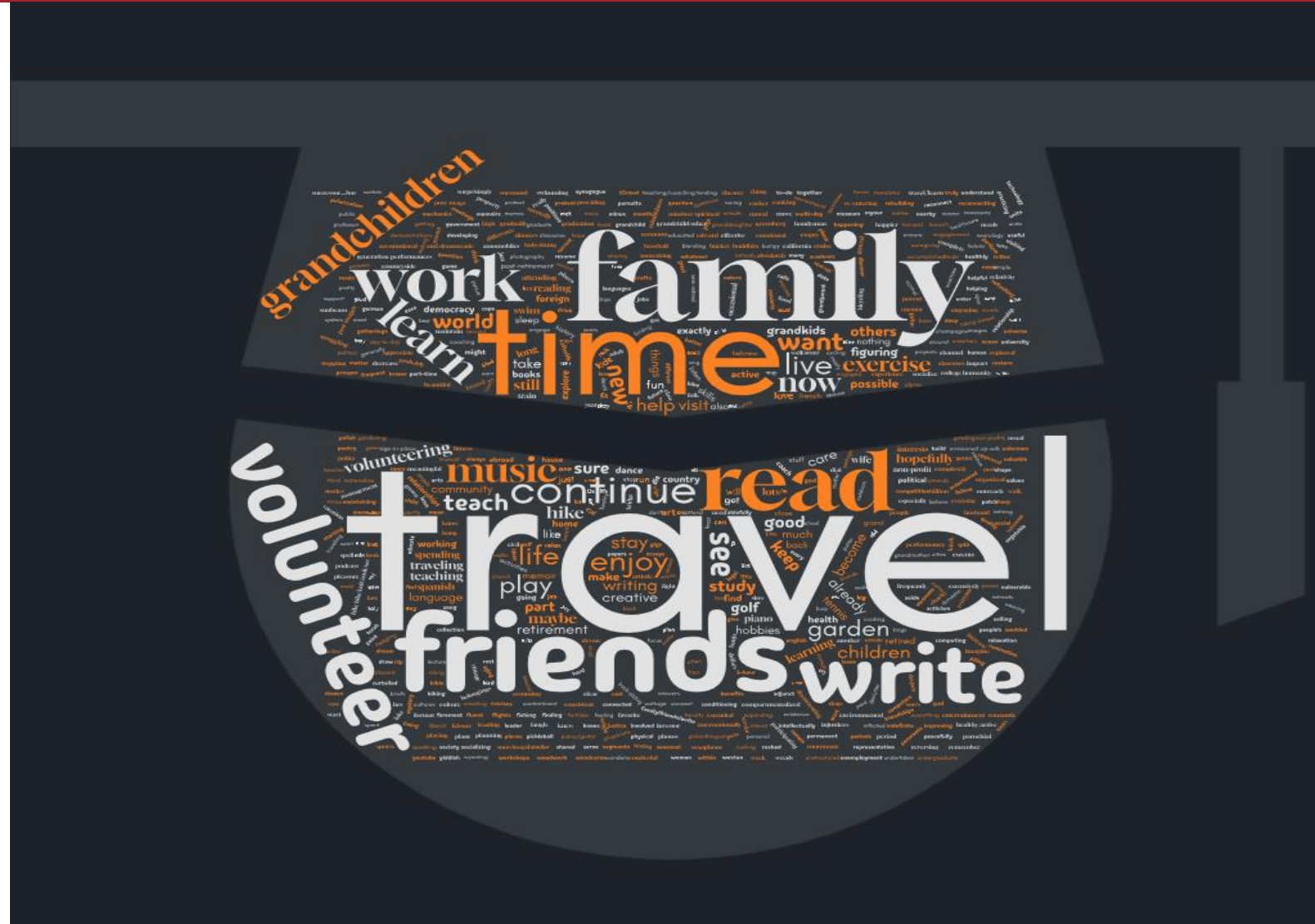


Failed first retirement, may try again. 😊

You rest, You RUST. I won't stop, just slow down.

I come out of retirement to give Reiki, Reflexology and/or Shiatsu treatments.

# What do you want to do post-retirement?

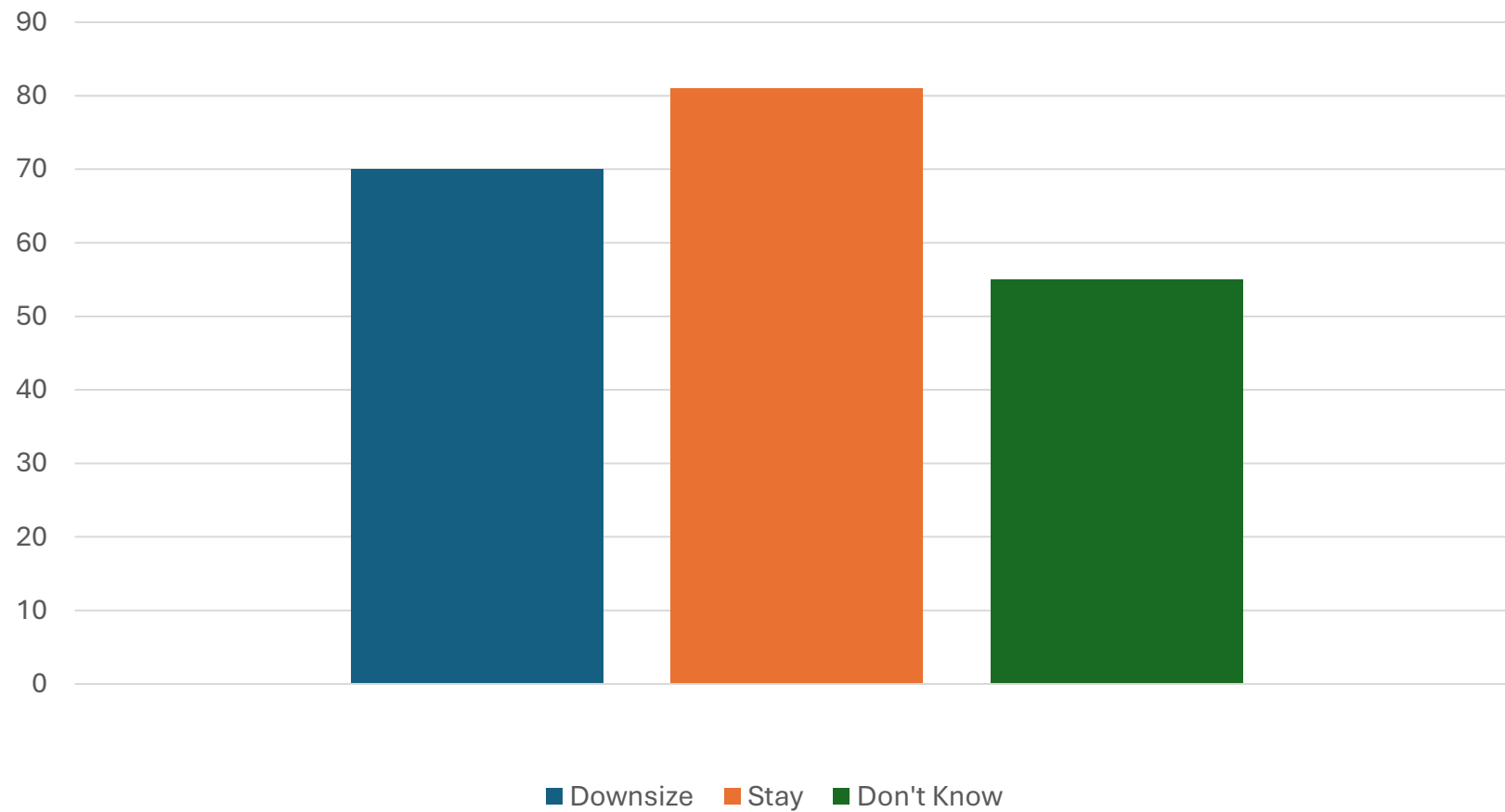


Learn what I didn't learn at Harvard!

Relocate somewhere more sane.

I'd like to retire from my retirement.

# What is your long-term residential plan?



Jim

Downsize and move to somewhere warmer. Another country?

Less snow! Lower taxes! But still close to family.

“God laughs at plans.”

# What changes in the world over the past 45 years have affected you most?

- **The double-edged sword of technological progress—internet, cell phones, and more**
- **Social progress—and backlash**
- **Trump and the rise of the extreme right**
- **Fractures: socioeconomic, political, cultural**
- **Higher-ed battles over ideology, content, control**

Social media wants to eat my brain. I'm tempted to let it. But then I walk outside in nature and think, "This is better."

I was living in Berlin and working as a nuclear engineer when Chernobyl occurred, and it definitely changed my approach to my field and started me on a career change. But it is the changes in the past 15 months in our country that have affected me most deeply in ways I wouldn't have expected at my age.

The realization that we're really at the mercy of the oligarchy, many of whom were educated at our alma mater and its peer institutions.

The two countries where I expected to feel the most safe—USA and Israel—are not safe and I am ashamed of the policies and practices of both. It is very disconcerting—at this age—to feel like I don't have a country anymore.

I am glad I'll leave academia before AI utterly destroys it. Our students are already reading much less than they used to and using AI and Google instead of doing research....

I detest the loss of human connection resulting from gazing into little glass screens.

# What has been most satisfying to you in your professional career?

- Teaching and mentoring, inspiring the next generation
- Advancing medical treatment in the US and abroad
- Lawyerly accomplishments – helping and protecting people
- Advancing technology – helping people, new understanding
- Improving international relations
- Improving the world, increasing sustainability
- Adding to the sum of human knowledge
- A job well done
- Making a difference
- Retiring!

The "aha" lightbulb moments when a student suddenly understands something.

Tangible signs that my research has added to scientific knowledge.

Relationships with people that carry on.

The moments when I could really bring the fun: it was a real high when the cards were flying and people were winning and tipping me like crazy.

Writing software that allowed paraplegic kids to play Nintendo.

Discovering and enabling others to discover new phenomena in the world that we just were not expecting and then had to try and explain.

Feeling as if by my professional choices I have made the world incrementally better.

# What is one belief you had as an undergraduate that you still believe in now?

## Top Themes:

- Integrity matters.
- Hard work pays off.
- Kindness is key.

# And what is one belief that you've let go of?

- **Arc of the moral universe bends toward justice**
- **Intelligence and knowledge reign supreme**
- **I'm right**
- **That we live in a meritocracy**
- **Goodness prevails**
- **Death penalty: now oppose**

Religion is the opium of the masses, per Marx, learned in Sociology 101.

I still believe we must keep fighting for truth and justice. We must keep getting into good trouble.

Still believe in: Veritas. Let go: the idea that homo sapiens have any intrinsic interest in veritas when it isn't to their own advantage.

That other people should necessarily be interested in what I'm interested in.

I've let go of thinking I needed to be some kind of genius imposing my ideas on others. Lately I've been interested in how light-handed I can be in interactions, following the flow.

I no longer believe that Donna Summer is the greatest singer who ever lived.



# What's on your bucket list these days?

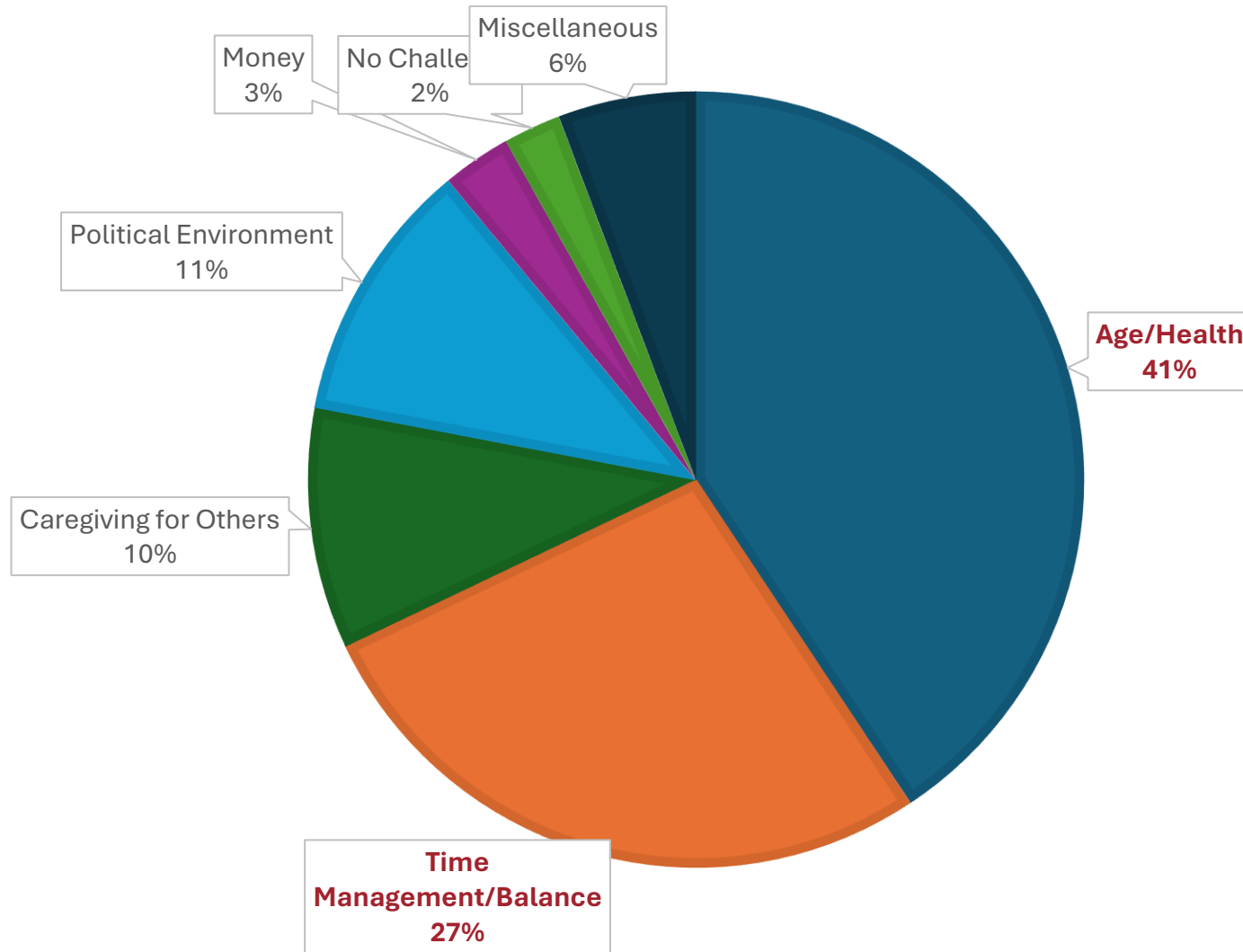
- **Travel**
- **Writing**
- **(Re)Learning/Mastery**
- **More family time**
- **None of the above**

Restoration of a compassionate, multiracial, functioning democracy! Everything else I can live without.

Trump gone, followed in quick succession by Stephen Miller, J. D. Vance, and Pete Hegseth. Also, some travel and learning to play trumpet.

Living healthily till I'm at least 90 and then dying in my sleep with a smile on my face.

# What is the biggest challenge you face these days?

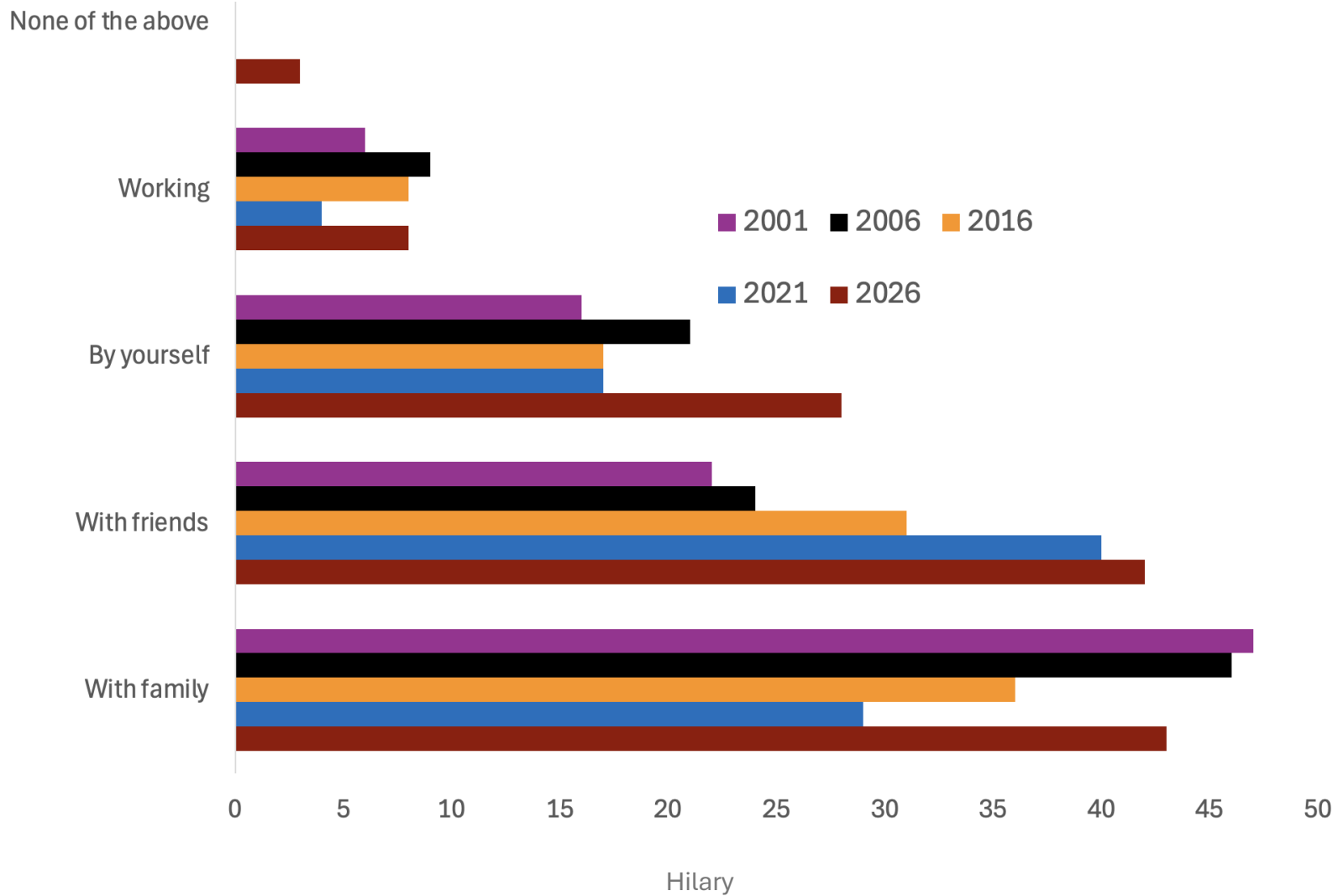


Learning to age gracefully.

Loneliness.

Keeping up friendships even though I prefer solitude.

# How would you spend an extra three hours a day?



I'd say 45 minutes of each of those options sounds about right.

Reading. 

Disconnected from the Internet!

**What is the most important thing you have learned about life in the past 45 years?**

**We were all over the map on this one, so you just get a bunch of our quotes!**

That phrase that my mother told me as a kid is true - "When you are fighting a just battle against great odds life is exciting!!"

I've got a lot more to learn, and I'm excited about that.

I need more bookshelves.

Comparison is the thief of joy.

Listen.

Be kind.

# What's the one thing you wish you could tell your college self now?

## Top Answers:

- **Relax. Breathe. You can do this.**
- **You're good just as you are.**
- **Believe in yourself.**
- **Fortune favors the bold.**
- **Be more open-minded.**
- **Listen more.**

Ask for what you want. Including that date.

You're not the smartest person in the room.

Ask more questions.

Actually, the world is not your oyster.

Go to law school.

Don't go to law school.

# What would your college self be most surprised to learn about you today?

- **Shifts—career, location, personal**
- **Relationships—mostly happy ones**
- **Relaxed & comfortable in our own skin**
- **That we're still here!**

That I ended up in Minneapolis living a rather ordinary life, without the glory and fame I had envisioned.

The degree of contempt I have for my college self.

You will give up on wearing all colors but black. You will move down South and stay down South.

That not believing in God has made me kinder and more empathetic and just as spiritual. That I was in a closet and came out of it. That the love of my life was a cat....

That I am the President of a local garden club. My mother made me help in the garden as a child, so I hated it. The peace and satisfaction that come with working in dirt was not imaginable in my college years.

That I married my first love when I was 60!

# What else would you like to tell your classmates?

## Top Themes:

- **I wish I'd gotten to know more of you!**
- **Be kind. Be brave.**
- **Remember how lucky we are.**
- **You are amazing people!**
- **Thank you.**

I hope you live the rest of your life with joy.

You've all gotten nicer as you've gotten less competitive.

My classmates are the best gift that Harvard gave me.

I have a guest room on the main floor.

Remember the meaning of Veritas.

I'm glad we're still on this ride together.

# And Now... Our Three Random Drawing Winners!

(Winners: Please see Hilary afterwards)

Hilary



# Final thoughts

We did ask you all one more question. We asked what you wanted on your tombstone or urn. How you'd like to be remembered. We received such a great mix of funny and poignant and sincere responses it didn't seem possible to do them all justice in a couple of slides. But Jim got creative and made a closing sequence for us that will let people's responses scroll by. Here's to Harvard's Class of 1981!

