

I am & We are



accepting, active, adventurous, art-centric,
bookish, buoyant, busy, calm, caring,
community-minded, complicated, conscientious,
considerate, contemplative, content, cool,
creative, curious, dependable, **determined**,
earnest, effervescent, emotional, enthusiastic,
fair, focused, forward-looking, free, friendly,
fun, generous, genuine, growing, happy,
hard-working, a helper, involved, joyful, **kind**,
literate, a loner, loving, **loyal**, nice, no nonsense,
optimistic, organized, passionate, persevering,
a planner, playful, a reader, reliable,
a researcher, resilient, self-sufficient,
smart, spiritual, steady, stubborn,
supercalifragilisticexpialidocious, **thoughtful**,
tired, unsinkable, well-intentioned, workaholic



40th Reunion

Welcome Back MHC1983! ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆

In honor of our 40 years as Mount Holyoke Alumnae, we are pleased to share results of the reunion survey. There were 102 people who completed the survey. We had 545 graduates in our class. About 130 do not receive emails from the college, but it is possible that they learned about and took the survey through social media. It is still safe to say we had a 20%+ response rate, which is very high as surveys go. MHC Alumnae tend to be a very engaged group.

Classmates were asked to describe themselves in one word. Our varied and interesting selves are summarized on the front cover. The words in yellow are those that rose to top by being repeated 4-5 times amongst our class. Survey takers were also asked to list their “passion” in one word or short phrase and those most meaningful interests are listed on the back cover. Undoubtedly, we are a passionate group with many unique angles.

This survey was a mix of fun (what do we say and do that is like our parents, what was our favorite elfing gift) and very serious (what are our global and national concerns and are we optimistic or pessimistic about the future). We are all very worried about many, many things, and we tried to record those, but also focus on positive actions taken and reasons for “glass half full.” We’re sure these conversations will continue when we are together.

In the words of one of our classmates: *“I feel so lucky to be part of a college and alumnae group that continues to gather after 40 years and genuinely enjoy being with people I met when I was 18—or have continued to meet at reunions. Thank you.”*

Until 2028 (surely many mini-reunions will occur before then) – enjoy this time capsule!

Alecia Oberg McClure, Mindy Setzler Kolodziej, and Pamela Smith

May 19, 2023

Changes In the Last 5 Years...

8.8% changed relationship status

26.5% moved—but 71.4% of those did NOT downsize

38.4% made a career change

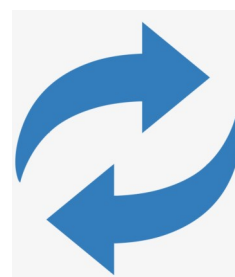
mainly retired/scaled back from main profession and shifted to other ways to use our skills (freelance, self-employed, non-profit, volunteering)

“I retired and am now working a bouquet of part time jobs for fun.”

“I am taking on only work that interests me.”

“I’ve added a career—hoping it will be my ‘retirement career’ - teaching Pilates.

67% of us do NOT consider ourselves to be retired



MHC 1983 Dashboard

About Us ...

Introvert: **28.4%**

Extrovert: **20.6%**

Depends on Circumstances: **51%**



16.7% Multi-Linguist

Languages: French, Spanish, German, Italian, Hebrew, Urdu, Farsi, Pig Latin



83.2% Exercise Regularly

Walking (sometimes with friends and/or dogs) is by far the most popular form of exercise. Out of 81 people who gave examples of how they exercise, 72 indicated walking. There were 19 more mentions of hiking or jogging. Next was weight training (some are lucky enough to have personal trainers), followed by cycling (including stationary bike/Peloton). Classmates exercise by gardening, dancing, rowing, skating, horseback riding, kayaking, and SUP. Not surprisingly, pickleball is on the rise. We have at least 6 pickleball players—tournament in 2029?



37.6% Meditative Practice

Yoga was 56.8% of responses, others: meditation, journaling, painting, needlepoint, walking in nature



79.9% Plugged in All the Time!

Phone (95%), Smartwatch (18.9%), Fitbit or Similar (26.3%) - Could choose more than one

About Family ...

64.7%

Have a Pet
(about the same as 5 years ago)

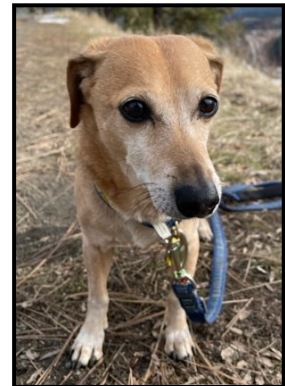
Dogs 40.2%

Cats 35.3%

Unique:

llama, goats, dove, snake, "shaggy, hairy sheepdog hubby"

Several mentioned timing — "not currently, but will surely get another when retirement travel bug wears off"



Willie

72.3% Have Children

9.4% Have Grandchildren

76.3% Have an Empty Nest

(up from 50% 5 years ago)

58.4%

Caring/
Cared for
Parents

(up from 50% 5 years ago)

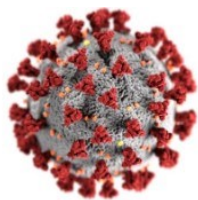


Marie Riley

About Others ... **79.4%** Volunteer

Whether on boards, fundraising or other ways, we give our time and tremendous talent to so many different organizations and causes! These include (in no particular order/not limited to): food banks/soup kitchens, Meals on Wheels, community gardens, libraries, theaters/ballet, symphonies (Juneau, AK), art/other museums (Honolulu, HI, Metropolitan, Frank Lloyd Wright), women's shelters/unhoused population, churches, Rotary Clubs, Planned Parenthood, Junior League, Girl Scouts, secondary schools, skating/sports clubs, land conservation, animal protection/rescue, girls' education, immigrant/refugee tutoring/support, adaptive rowing, school board/PTA, Everytown for Gun Safety, foster care, political parties, voting rights, HOA, Posse Foundation, and of course, Mount Holyoke College.

Finding Calm in the Storm—COVID-19



50% of us got Covid, which is the exact same percentage reported by the American population in general. 7% of us got Covid more than once.

The coronavirus pandemic lasted 3 out of 5 years since our last reunion, so deserves front and center coverage in this survey and report. Sadly, we lost parents, friends, and people we admired in this global tragedy. ***How did our lives change during this period and did any positives come out of this time?***

New Ways of Doing Things:

Zooming with family and friends: 83%

Working from home: 53%

New Hobby: 18% New Pet: 10%

Children returned home. Gathered with neighbors outside. Binge watched shows. More cocktails. Learned to cook/cooked more. Online shopping. Increased social media time. Better communication with family and friends who do not live nearby. Local/international web conferences (that might not have traveled to anyway). Making lots of prayer blankets. Puzzles. Reading. Walking. Anxiety. One classmate became a goat farmer. Another had a job in a cemetery and for most of 2020 transcribed all the stones and created a map. General awareness: *"Discovery of things in my town that I had never seen or noticed in 25 years."*

Looking back, is there something else you would have done during the shutdown?

Organize the photos!!!

Clean out the garage, more decluttering

Exercise more

Read more books—and scroll less

Avoid bags of chocolate chips, box of wine on kitchen counter

Appreciate family togetherness

Volunteer at a vaccination clinic

"I would have made a plan for how to structure my days/time. I was so shocked, I froze, then drifted. If I had understood how long it would be, and how I needed routine/structure, I would have been more intentional."

Positive Outcomes:

"I know what is important to me more clearly than ever."

Reflection, time to stop and reassess my priorities.

Knowing I needed to *"freakin' find some balance"* in my life. A sense of slowing down and new appreciation for mindfulness. Realizing that I truly love my partner.

Empty nest was full again. More family and kid time, closeness. *"Our kids are really good friends now."*

Precious time with our cancer stricken dog. Getting outside for nature walks, noticing birds. No commute provided quality time with my spouse. Becoming friends with our neighbors (outdoor movies, picnics). Better self-care regimen—regular exercise, giving up alcohol, telehealth appointments. Getting things done around the house and yard. Time to write my book. Outdoor dining. Grandbabies. Yoga and Pilates via Zoom.

Normalizing virtual meetings. Gratitude for life and privilege. *"I learned to enjoy being home in my own company."* Realizing how much friendships can endure. A happier cat.



Honoring those we lost:

The many healthcare workers who supported us. My mother. My mother-in-law and father-in-law. My uncle. My brother-in-law. My Aunt Elizabeth Allen (age 103). Francesca, mother of a dear friend. My high school friend, John Khoshaba. My friend's husband, Gavin. David Harpman, who was a grandfather figure to my kids. A family friend named Dan Chegwiddden. Pete Coras. Tal and Amina Badrawi. Essam Abu Awad, designer educator from Jordan and colleague on Int'l Council of Design board. Jean Grossholtz, MHC Professor Emeritus, Political Science/Women's Studies and Peace Activist—what a generous and interesting woman she was!

Mount Holyoke Connections & Memories



26.5% of respondents have a MHC relative.

Every possibility back to grandmother and great-aunt... mother (most at 33.3%), aunt, sister/sister-in-law, daughter, niece, no granddaughters (yet).

85% of us took a road trip during college.

And, remember, we had no GPS. We used maps.

We went to many other colleges throughout the Northeast, including a particular Ivy League in Han(g)over, NH—36% of people who took a road trip went to Dartmouth. Whether it was worth it is debatable. We also enjoyed the beach (Cape Cod, Block Island, Newport, Jersey Shore, Pensacola) and the big city (Boston, NYC, DC). We visited LL Bean in the wee hours. Furthest: Scotland and Wales while studying abroad.

78.2% of us caffeinated ourselves in college.

Preferred drink:

Coffee—41.6%

TAB—25.7%

Tea—21.8%



78.6% of us listen to music frequently. And of those,

35.1% prefer “oldies.”

Favorite genres (pick top 2): rock (52%), pop (40%), classical (37.9%), folk (21.1%)

We had no Spotify or iTunes. Vinyl records are making a comeback—who still has theirs?



The Infamous Lanz Flannel Nightgown

20% still have one

49% no longer have one

31% never had one

And, note, in this current photo of a Lanz nightgown, the buttons are in the front. The company must have noticed how we wore them!



57% of us have “Mini Reunions” in between the big 5 year reunions. How?

Since Covid, Zoom, Zoom, Zoom! Gathering at friends’ homes and vacation homes. Special occasions: weddings, christenings, funerals. Mountain Day ice cream. Going on vacation. “When the spirit moves us.” “There is much laughter, coffee, wine, and dancing.”

Top Extra-Curriculars:

Ice Cream Eating: 63.3%

Walking Around or Canoeing on Upper Lake: 51%

Soap Opera Watching: 30.6%

Sports: 27.6% Music: 26.5%

Religious Life: 17.3%



Remember these wedding couples?



There were so many other write-ins: Class/dorm leadership (HP, SA, SGA), radio station (WMHC), Jr. Show, Peddler’s Fair, Friends of the Elderly, Lesbian Alliance, 5-College bus trips, leading protests, dancing at dorm parties, Peace Through Disarmament Committee—and drinking.

Elfing!



We hadn't yet met Dobby.



Or this Elf.



And "Elf on the Shelf" wasn't a thing.

But we loved elfing, both giving and receiving—even if we don't all remember what we gave or got. The clues/ treasure hunts and notes were appreciated. Aside from lots of M&Ms, and the essential MHC mug or beer stein (sometimes filled with M&Ms and still used to this day—sometimes as a pencil holder):

"A Renoir print that still hangs in my daughter's room."

"A pile of leaves to jump in."

"Flowers from the Greenhouse." "A houseplant." "I picked wildflowers and gave them to my elfee."

"A silk Vera scarf that I still wear. I gave a roach clip."

"Not the gifts as much as the notes they attached to the gifts, and the care they clearly took."

"Elf type pointy slippers hand knitted by my elf, an exchange student from Europe. It was such a personal and time consuming gift to make. I deeply appreciated it as it made me feel welcome and closer to an older student. I wore those babies out."

Food!

Some of our strongest memories from college are tied to food. Eating and friendships are strongly linked as we hung out around the table in our dorms and lunch centers. And M&C's, of course. Were they really served at 10pm? Eating sweets late at night is surely not something we do today! Especially a "fluffer nutter!"

54.5% of people who responded to "favorite food at MHC" listed a specific sweet/ baked item. Including: Princess Bar, brownies at Skinner Green picnics, cinnamon sugar butter (on toast or bagel), pecan/apple pie, and Deacon Porter's Hat. Was it the taste (think not, it is considered "an acquired taste") or the tradition (think so)?

We enjoyed ice cream at Willits for a special treat and happily traveled off campus for Atkins Farm Cider Donuts, carrot cake from Chanticleer Bakery, and the giant, warm chocolate chip cookie dessert from Fitzwilly's.

We seemed to enjoy and remember lunch the most: cheese cutlet, tuna melt, French Dip sandwich, Seafood Newburgh. Many liked the big salad bar, American goulash, and lasagna. And a cheese omelet for breakfast.

"Brunch! I didn't have to waitress it, so I could enjoy camaraderie of dormmates."

"The time they had fresh local asparagus with Hollandaise—our whole table became vegetarian that day."

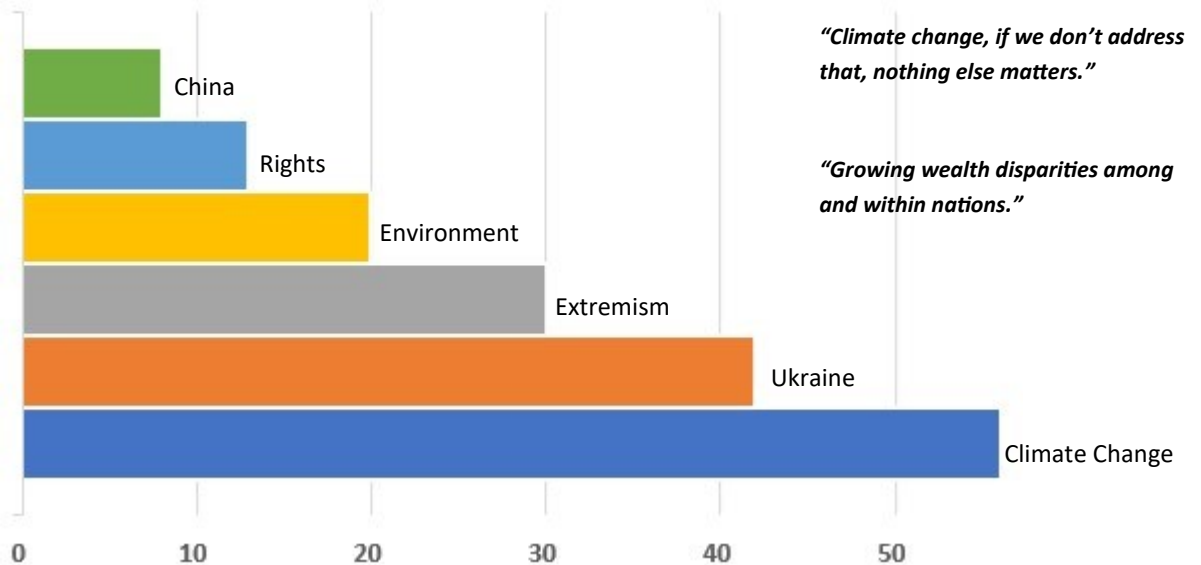
"I learned to make a cheese omelet while working in the kitchens. My kids love them."



We are worried.

Global Concerns

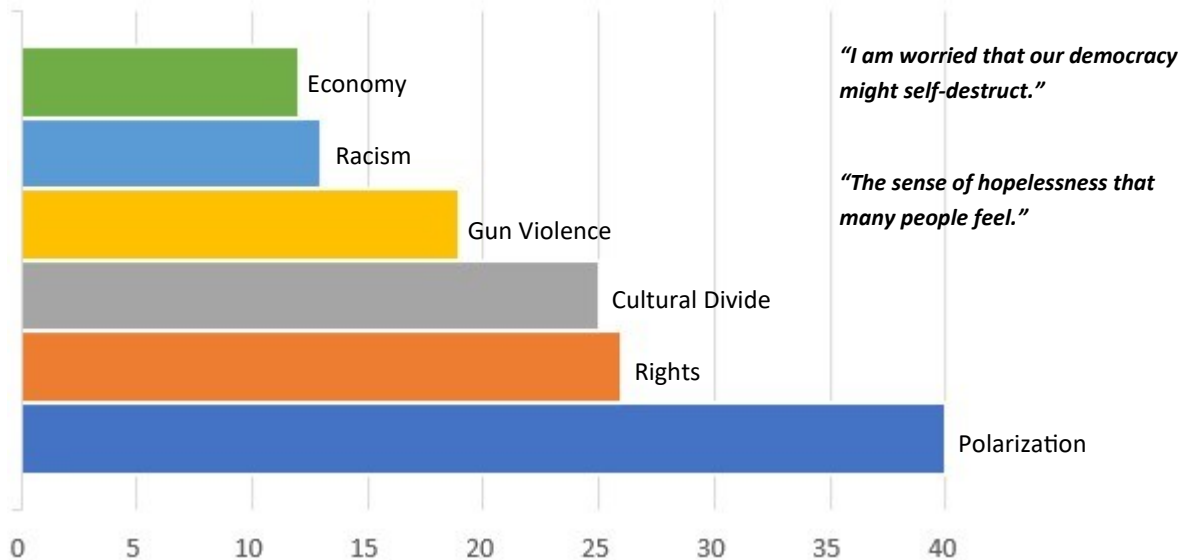
Based on number of mentions



Global warming/climate change most often mentioned, followed by war in Ukraine (includes Putin, escalation, nuclear). Extremism category contains authoritarianism, fascism, right wing extremism, erosion of democracy, xenophobia. Environment includes clean water, ocean pollution, habitats, natural resources, sustainable energy, next pandemic. Rights is mostly women's and girl's rights (including to education), but also general human rights and refugees. China references growing global influence and spying.

National Concerns

Based on number of mentions



Political division/polarization is biggest concern and includes growing influence of far right, white nationalism/supremacy and T****. Rights is predominantly reproductive rights, but includes LGBTQ+ and trans people. Classmates wrote eloquently about the loss of civil discourse and more intolerance/prejudice, disinformation, hate speech, science denial, book banning, all contributing to cultural divide. Gun violence—enough said. Racism includes unacceptance of systemic racism, police brutality and voter suppression. Economy contains inflation, cost of education.

But we take action.

Just as you would expect from Uncommon Women.

"I am concerned about the problems we are leaving for our children to handle. This includes the increasingly uncivil political/cultural violence and rhetoric, and propaganda/disinformation that is accelerating our deep divide into two "realities." As a country that is a key player in the global economy, and as a very large country with diverse viewpoints, we need to do better. We need to join more in the middle. We are stronger when we can talk together thoughtfully about shared realities, in order to come up with the best, fairest, most sustainable solutions."

MHC83 Classmate commenting on National Concerns question



The breadth of issues we care about can be overwhelming. At Mount Holyoke, many of us found our voice and now we use it.

Nearly 1/3 of respondents said the main action we can take is to VOTE. To ensure that everyone gets to vote, one of our classmates is a founding donor and on the Steering Committee of voterempowerment.org. Another formats a monthly newsletter for movement.vote.

The Things We DO Matter:

- We write representatives.
- We march.
- We donate.
- We *"get up each morning and try to help people."*
- We participate in local politics.
- We reduce our carbon footprint and *"try to live lightly on the earth."*
- We are *"mindful of what we eat, use, throw away."*
- We recycle and compost and have solar panels.
- We volunteer to aid refugees locally and globally.
- We coach and mentor women and minorities through an active pro bono practice.
- We *"try to have intelligent conversations with people and raise awareness."*
- We drive fuel efficient/hybrid cars (and EVs).
- We *"educate ourselves thoughtfully"* and read up on issues.
- We listen more.

12% of respondents currently have an Electric Vehicle.

78% of respondents say they might get (51%) or will get (27%) an EV in the next 5 years.



Unique Approaches:

I contribute to the education of a farmer's child.

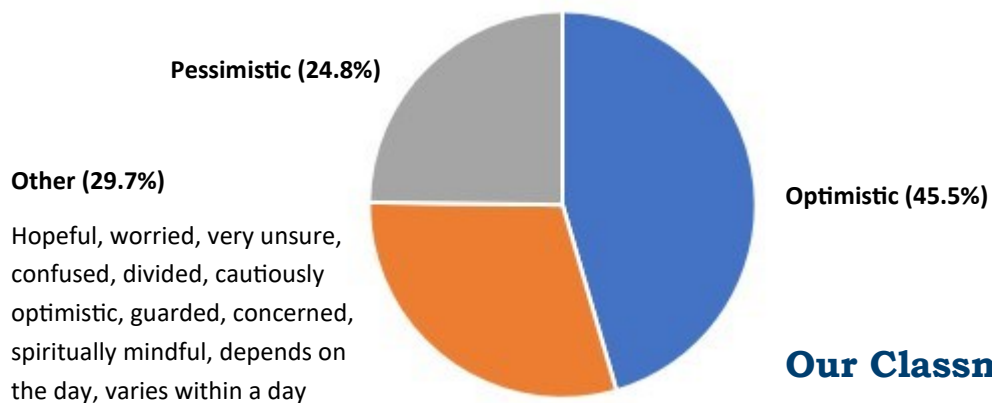
I lead a study on the impacts of climate change on water resources in New Mexico.

I help increase the number of Monarch butterflies using my own garden as an experiment site for the Field Museum of Natural History.

I am volunteering in a Syrian refugee camp in Jordan.

Our Outlook on Life

“The world feels very fragile at the moment.”



Our Classmates Wrote Eloquently on this Topic

Two themes that stood out: a strong belief in younger generations, optimism for self/family while also feeling pessimistic for nation/globe/humanity. We want to feel optimistic because it feels better... It “*makes us happier,*” is a “*more hopeful way to live,*” and is “*the way to move forward.*” And, “*if you don’t have hope, you have nothing! If you don’t work toward change you are part of the problem.*”

“It is possible to hold optimism in one hand and pessimism in the other. This allows us to be hopeful, while still also being realistic.”

“By nature, I am optimistic, but my lived experiences have caused me to question my faith in others and the institutions I once took for granted.”

“Because I teach college and am so impressed by the younger generation. They are much more enlightened and outward focused than I was at that age.” “I believe in Gen Y and Gen Z.”

“As an MD, I see the recent pandemic as a shocking wake up call for the human race.”

“There is a lot of bad going on, but I believe in human innovation and kindness.”

“Our climate is a disaster and people seem to be ignoring the crisis or they think it will somehow magically be resolved.”

“I think optimism is our only choice. We can’t change things for the better if we don’t believe it is possible for things to improve.”

“I will always have hope and trust in the goodwill of people. But, the deterioration of our legal system is deeply concerning. I have seen too many guardrails ignored or broken; I realize how much I took for granted and that democracy requires vigilance. Democracy is not a part-time gig, we have to work for it everyday.”

“Many children around the world – including America – do not have access to equal, basic education. They have lost hope in the future, and are not learning how to work together to solve difficulties. The result is devastating, dangerous polarization on many levels, in many communities.”

“Most younger people are more accepting of different people and are concerned about climate change.”

Women's Colleges Today

This is a sticky one. There are classmates who are not supportive of where the college is headed regarding trans people and have withdrawn financial support. One comment: "I don't consider MHC a women's college." There is not room to list every submission, but here's a range:

"My answer is regarding relevancy in today's world, not if I think they should continue (yes) or if I believe they are important (yes). It's complex... I wonder how long women's colleges will remain viable both as gender identify continues to evolve, and as it becomes harder for small colleges to survive financially. I certainly hope they remain relevant."

"The world has changed, but so have the women MHC appeals to."

"I would say "less" (relevant), but look at the decisions of the Supreme Court!" "It's better for some students, but not for everyone."

"Why? Why not? Can't women just have our own stuff, for us, by us?"

"We are half the sky. Extremists including cultish organizations are stripping away our rights." "Women should have gotten further by now."

"Women need to continue to speak up, and a women's college gives us the opportunity to hone our voices."

"The trend toward gender fluidity makes it even harder to be heard as a woman. I hope MHC remains a place women can feel heard and stay strong." "Women can succeed in a co-ed environment."

"Beyond the political scene, women from all cultures learning from each other may promote peace."

"I think it has always been true that women are the voice of reason and if more were in positions of power, the world would be a better place."

"Women need to be integrated into the real world, not sheltered from it."

"I wish I could say less relevant, but the prevalence of threats to women and women's rights makes me feel that women's education is more relevant than ever."

"I think it's a dinosaur that should have been done away with years ago."

"Four years of education with men on the sideline can only be a good thing. Though I'd also like to see men educated differently!"

"We need as many thoughtful and well-educated people, especially women, engaged in the world around us. Women still bring important and unique perspectives to conversations, decision-making, and problem solving."



Relevance of a
Woman's College vs.
1983:

More Relevant: 38.8%

Less Relevant: 10.2%

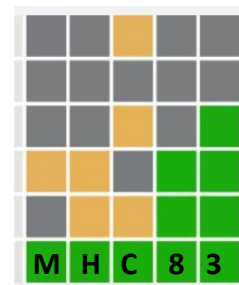
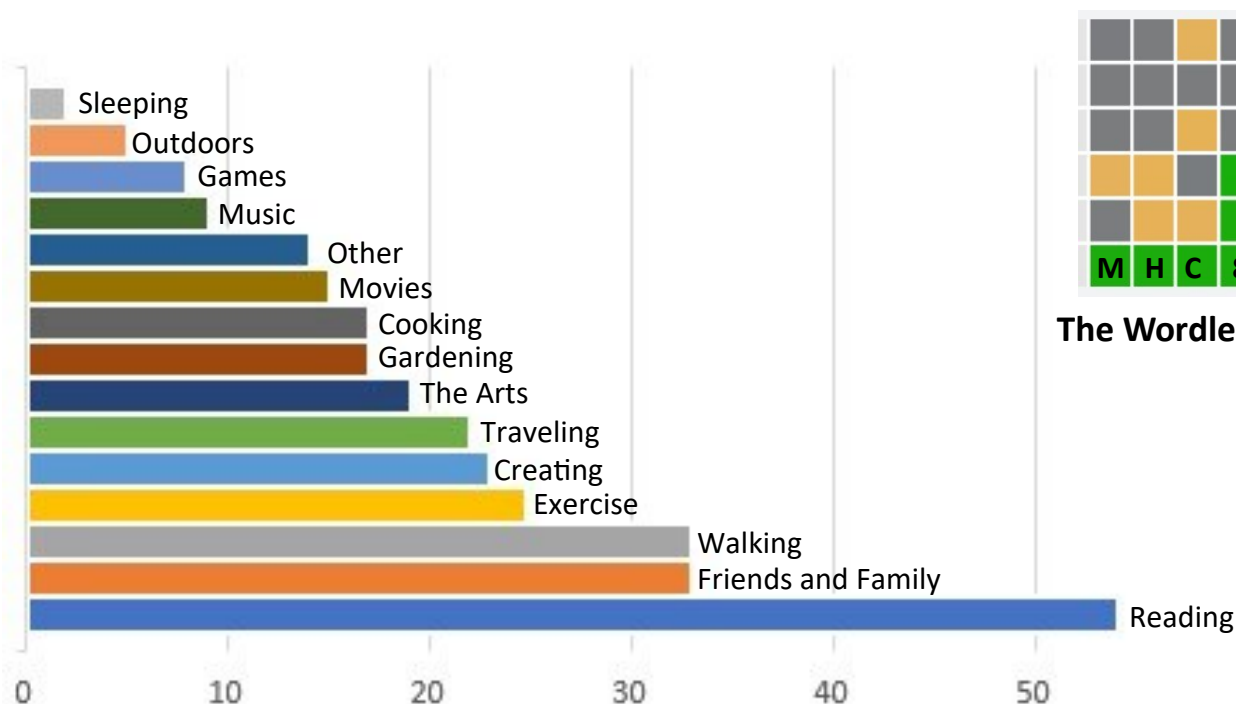
Same as when we
graduated: 51%



3 Ways...

How We Spend Our Free Time

A few classmates: “What free time?!”



The Wordle Craze!

Classmates were asked to list three favorite pastimes.

Walking (11% of responses) includes hiking, walking our dogs, beach walking. Exercise (8%) includes “general exercise” and many more specific activities—biking, skating, rowing, kayaking, golfing, swimming, scuba, skiing, x-country, tennis, pickleball, horseback riding, flamenco dancing! Outdoors (2%): camping, boating, fishing. (*“be in/on/near water”*)

Cooking (6%) includes baking and eating out. Movies (5%) includes binge watching series, foreign dramas, old movies, documentaries, British cop shows, and cooking shows. Games (3%) includes board games, puzzles, mahjong, Wordle (certainly more play, just not listed in Top 3 activities).

Music (3%) means making music (singing, piano, banjo, guitar, ukelele), while The Arts (6%) includes cultural events, art shows/fairs, live music concerts, museums, theater, lectures.

Creating (8%) also means crafts and designing, and includes mostly knitting, but also painting (watercolor), quilting, beading, broom making, wool felting, and writing (blogs).

Other (5%): volunteering, shopping, podcasts, genealogy, surfing internet/social media.

We are readers.

By far the biggest response to the “free time” question was reading (18% of 296 activities listed). This includes audiobooks and reading the local paper. See insert for our book recommendations.

Top 6 Book Genres (Pick 2)

Historical Fiction—54%, Realistic Fiction—40%,
Mystery—38%, Narrative Non-Fiction—28%,
Memoir—23%, Cookbook—16%



Biggest Impact Event (other than Covid) since our Last Reunion

This one tugged at our heartstrings. We have many common challenges and painful experiences. Thank you to all of you for sharing them – and the happy moments too. Here is a sampling based on 93 responses to this question on the survey. Hopefully our MHC friendships support us as we go through life.

Realizing that I'm now in the next "big chapter" of life.

Difficult Times

We lost mothers, fathers, and one of us a son. We cared for them while they died, handled estates, and cleaned out their (sometimes our childhood) homes. If they are still here, parents are seriously aging (declining health, dementia a double whammy) and in need of greater care.

Being laid off after 35 years with the same organization. Being scammed. Hurricane Ian.

January 6th. 2020 election. Anxiety of life with previous President. Overturning of Roe v. Wade.

Our daughter going to a rehab facility for alcoholism.

The suicide of a friend. The death of a friend.

Husband had a brain bleed (but also full recovery, so happy).

Celebratory Times

Marrying—again or for the first time (and built in grandchildren).

Becoming a grandmother.

Destination wedding of youngest child.

Daughter and son-in-law moved to town and bought a house nearby.

Being called, installed, and becoming a settled minister.

Becoming a public art walking tour guide and docent at contemporary art museum.

Developing employment programs for the marginalized in society.

Retirement (our own or spouse's, hopefully this is in the right category).

Having the youngest bird fledge the nest! (this could also be in the sad category...kids moving far away).

Autistic/Bipolar/OCD daughter improving enough to live independently.

Moving to Hawaii. Spending half the year in Hawaii.

The current uprising in Iran: Women, Life, Freedom

My daughter attending and graduating from Mount Holyoke in 2022.



Do we sound like our parents?

Classmates delighted in this question. “Dang, I need to call my kids and apologize right now!” In addition to certain mannerisms that echo our parents, pet names for our kids (like “doll”), and remarking on landmarks that aren’t there anymore, these dozen sayings are ingrained in us.

When your daughter is born, you will understand everything!

If you wait for the “right” time, it will never happen.

Oh, isn’t this fun!

Work when you work, play when you play.

Stand up straight!

Oh, for crying out loud!

Nobody ever said life was fair.

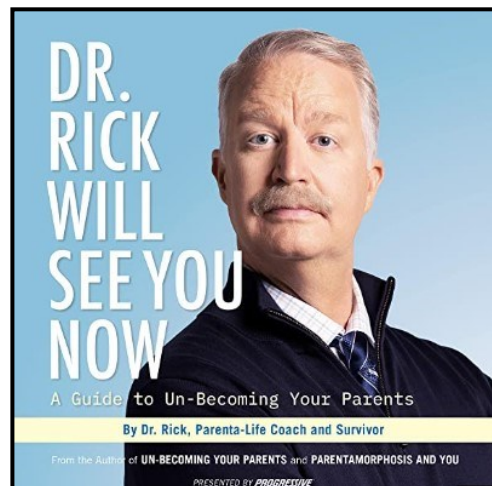
You’ll see it differently when you’re older/my age.

Drive carefully. Call me when you get there.

What kind of music is this?

This too shall pass.

“Keep the tools and the fishing rods.” (Dad before he passed)



Some last wise words for 2023

“What I learned during the pandemic is a greater acceptance of myself and my life.”

“Travel while you still can! My best friend is older than I am, and now is too frail to travel, and she misses it terribly.”

“Reunions are like a pilgrimage for me. It’s a chance to reconnect with my 22-year old self and the sense that all is possible.”

“If college friendships have gone cold due to life’s craziness, take a chance and reach out to old friends! It can bring joy to reconnect. I share this based on firsthand experience. It’s worth the effort and risk!

“Life is full of challenges, but I find that I’m getting better at living it well and with kindness over time.”

“Cherish friendships. Even after several years, you can pick up where you left off with true friends.”

“If you are partnered, make it count. You never know when the life of someone you love might be taken suddenly, leaving you to reframe everything.”

“Don’t wait for the opportunity to do something you want to do. Get out there and do it, even if it’s alone.”

“People find their courage, voice, and purpose here (at MHC).”

What We're Passionate About!

artistic expression, artists' rights, books, building more just communities, caring for animals, cinema, color, connecting with others authentically, cooking, cycling, defending the underdog, developing programs, ebbing, education, experiencing new places, family, finding joy, food, friendship, gardening, genealogy, girls' education, God, grandchildren, healthy body and mind, helping others, helping widowed people smile again, helping young people explore their passions, hiking, home, ice cream, improvement, improving our election system, interior design, justice, knitting (prayer shawls), knowledge, learning new things, leveling the playing field, life, literature, Mount Holyoke history, moving well & helping others do the same, my children, my family, nature, ocean proximity, organizing family events, people's stories, reading, recovery, reuse & recycle, rowing, sailing, science, seeing improvement, singing, staying engaged, still figuring it out, the natural world, thoughtfulness, traveling the world, viewing and sharing art, visual arts, wildlife, women's equity, working for equality and dignity for everyone, working for social justice, writing

MHIC1983