While the seriousness of the COVID-19 pandemic was beginning to sink in, we wanted to assess how concerned (or not) the public was about the survival of museums. Because there was so much discussion and concern about restaurants and local businesses, we ran this question three times, helping us gauge how museums compare.

For local restaurants and businesses, concerns have stayed pretty consistent. But concerns for museums have increased, from a third to 44% … that is, Americans are 1.3x more likely to be concerned now than a few months ago.

A different question we asked of the broader population gives us some insights. Primarily, there is growing concern that some museums may never reopen … an eventuality a number of museums have already faced and more are facing.

So, what's driving the shift?

To be honest, however, we don't really know why this concern has grown for museums specifically. Maybe it is greater awareness that museums are struggling just as much as local businesses.

But as our society embarks on a significant social reckoning about what we truly value in our lives and society, understanding where museums fall, and how we can do better, is vital.

We'll keep tracking these numbers in the coming months and use this data, along with other inputs, to start framing the 2021 Annual Survey of Museum-Goers so that we will ask the right questions to provide critical research our field will need to move forward into a rather different future than we might have envisioned only a few short months ago.