

CLIMATE CHANGE IN MUSEUMS, PART 2: THE SPECTRUM OF CLIMATE CHANGE ATTITUDES

A 2022 ANNUAL SURVEY OF MUSEUM-GOERS DATA STORY

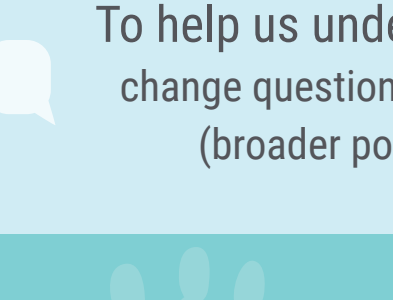


As our climate warms and becomes more extreme, many museums have increasingly been sharing climate change content and striving to be more sustainable in their own operations.

But not all of our audiences agree that climate change is an important issue. As we saw in part 1 of this series on climate change attitudes, there is a small percentage who strongly disagree with climate change content. But there are also others who are more skeptical or ambivalent.



In order for museums to be most effective in sharing content about climate change, and to encourage more sustainable behaviors, it is critical that we understand our audiences' perspectives on the topic ... wherever they fall on a spectrum of attitudes.



To help us understand these individual attitudes, we asked five climate change questions of both frequent museum-goers and a sample of US adults (broader population; includes casual and non-visitors to museums).

Question 1

Indirect assessment

AN EARLY QUESTION IN THE SURVEY ASKED respondents to identify the most important ways they thought museums should share content with visitors (they could pick as many responses as they wanted). We are interested in one of the answer choices:

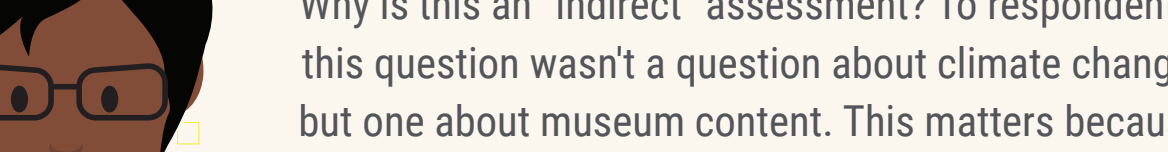
"Motivating visitors to learn more about climate change issues"

This was selected by:

1 IN 4 FREQUENT MUSEUM-GOERS



1 IN 5 US ADULTS



Why is this an "indirect" assessment? To respondents, this question wasn't a question about climate change, but one about museum content. This matters because respondents chose what was important to them ... and they didn't feel judged for skipping over responses that they don't feel as strongly about.

Which means that those who **did** choose climate change, well, we can feel pretty confident they have "green" attitudes.

Question 2

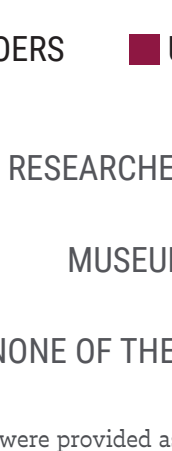
Credibility

RESPONDENTS WERE ASKED what sources of information about climate change they found credible or trustworthy. We offered 10 sources of information and they could choose as many as they wanted.

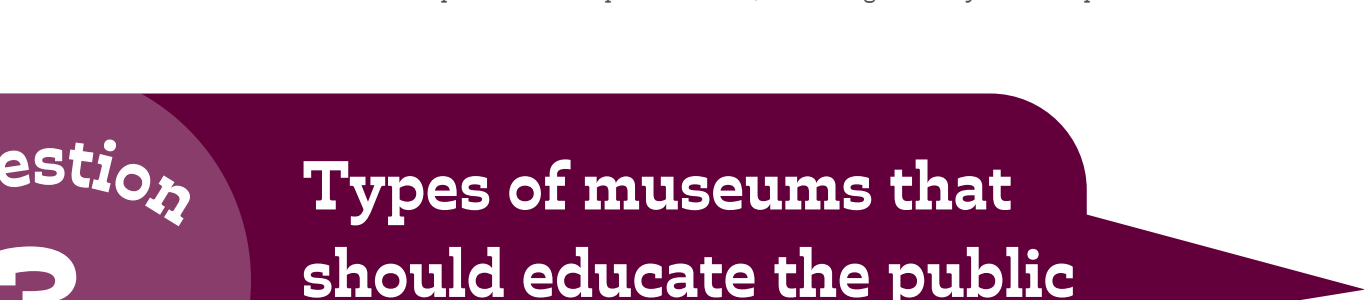
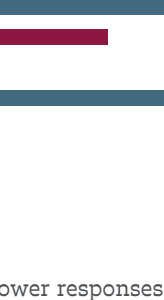


The good news is that science wins! No other source came close to actual scientists and researchers.

And museums? We come in a strong second.



The other piece of good news is that very few respondents said "none of these."



Note: 8 other sources of information were provided as response choices; all had significantly lower responses than museums

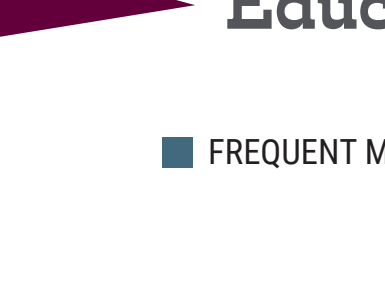
Question 3

Types of museums that should educate the public on climate change

Question 4

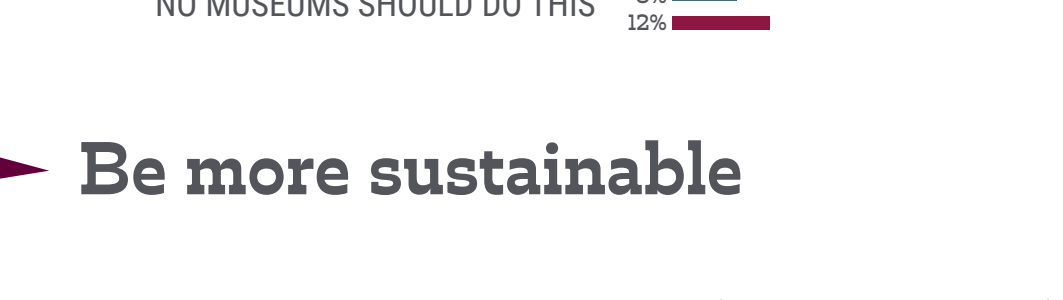
Types of museums that should reduce their carbon footprint/be more sustainable

THESE TWO QUESTIONS ASKED RESPONDENTS if there were distinctions they made by the type of museum doing the work, and we explored the results in more detail in the first Climate Change Data Story.¹

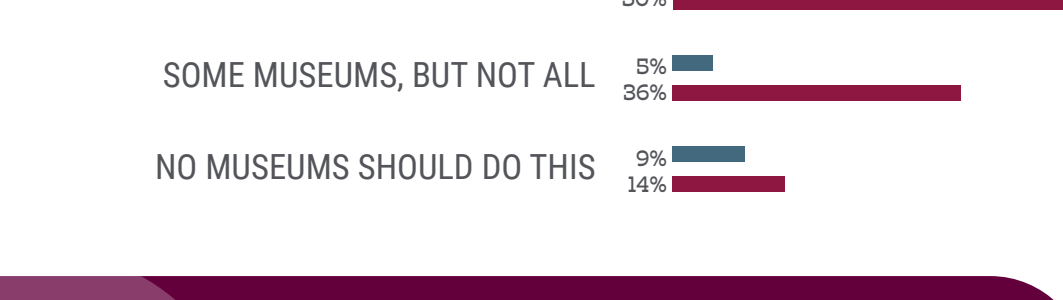


For our spectrum, we are primarily interested in those who said "no museums" to either/both these questions, and who said "all museums" to either/both questions.

Educate the public



Be more sustainable

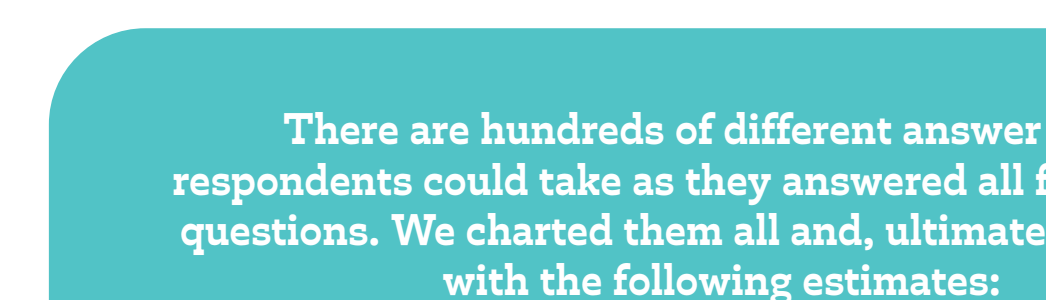


Question 5

Direct assessment

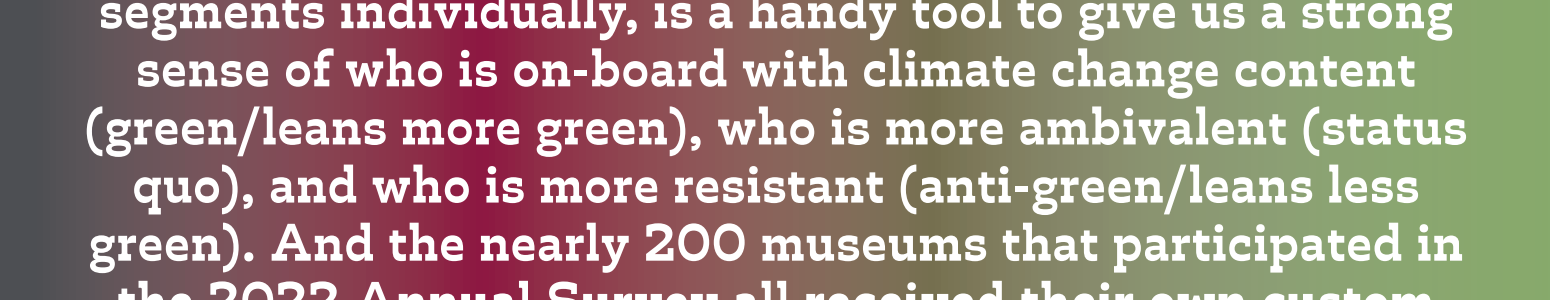
FINALLY, WE ASKED STRAIGHT OUT: is it important for museums to be on the forefront of educating the public about climate change?

Our goal with this question was to clearly identify those who said no, this wasn't important to them. This question does that effectively.



There are hundreds of different answer paths respondents could take as they answered all five of these questions. We charted them all and, ultimately, came up with the following estimates:

Attitudes about Climate Change Content in Museums (estimates)

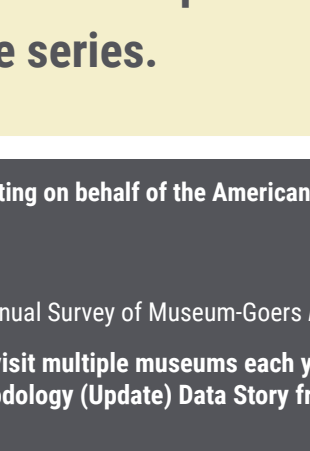


SMALL VICTORIES! Far more people in both samples fall on the "green" side of the spectrum rather than the "anti-green" side.

This spectrum, especially when we examine the five segments individually, is a handy tool to give us a strong sense of who is on-board with climate change content (green/leans more green), who is more ambivalent (status quo), and who is more resistant (anti-green/leans less green). And the nearly 200 museums that participated in the 2022 Annual Survey all received their own custom spectrum of attitudes so that they could better understand where their visitors fall on this critical topic.



And while frequent museum-goers are slightly more concerned about climate change than less frequent visitors, far more people in both samples fall on the "green" side of the spectrum than the "anti-green" side.



Beneath this spectrum there's still a lot of nuance that is important for us to understand. Individual values and experiences shape people's attitudes on climate change. We'll be exploring more of that in upcoming Data Stories in this climate change series.

