

CONNECTION TO HUMANITY

A 2022 ANNUAL SURVEY OF MUSEUM-GOERS DATA STORY

Sometimes, patterns emerge in data that surprise us. A surprise that illuminates while also challenging us to learn more.

Just such a pattern emerged in the 2022 Annual Survey of Museum-Goers, when we saw that people who said they felt more connected to humanity also tended to have more inclusive attitudes and concerns about climate change.

But let's back up. What were the lines of inquiry that allowed this pattern to emerge?

Over the past several years, especially in qualitative work for client projects, we had noticed a few phrases that popped up from time to time. Phrases like:

What it means to be human

Our shared humanity

Connect as human beings to one another

The human experience

These phrases occurred enough for us to notice, but not enough for us to deliberately dig deeper.

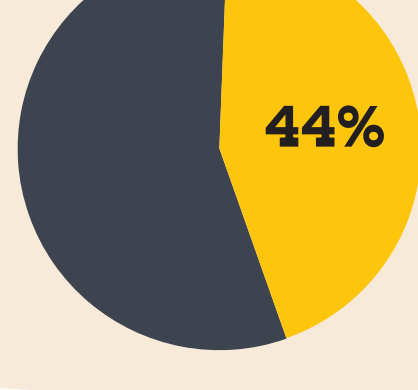
There were two questions in the 2022 Annual Survey, however, that allowed us to explore these responses a bit more.



Question 1

When you visit a museum (of any type), what kinds of health and wellbeing outcomes do you experience or hope to experience? (Choose all that apply.)

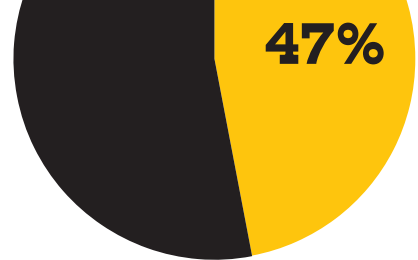
One of the 10 answer choices we provided was "feeling connected with what it means to be human/with humankind." 44% of respondents chose that answer (it was the fifth most popular answer choice).



Question 2

Do museums make you feel more connected to others? If so, who do they help you feel more connected to? (Choose all that apply.)

Here, 47% of respondents chose "humanity in general," putting it in a virtual tie for the most popular answer (along with two other choices of the 9 provided).



Just looking at the overall results, this is interesting. About half of respondents identified with one or both of these answers.

But, as with many things, the real story was buried in the deeper analysis.

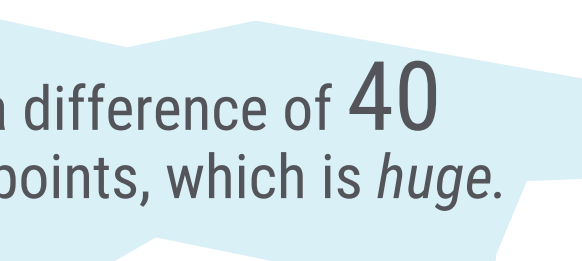
As part of this survey, we had developed a spectrum of attitudes towards climate change in museums.¹

Attitudes about Climate Change Content in Museums (estimates)

ANTI-GREEN		LEANS LESS GREEN	STATUS QUO	LEANS MORE GREEN	GREEN
FREQUENT MUSEUM-GOERS					
10%	6%	32%	25%	28%	
US ADULTS					
11%	9%	35%	24%	20%	

When we ran filters on each of the five segments of the spectrum, however, that's when our eyebrows went up.

The "green" people were 3x more likely to choose the humanity responses than the "anti-green" people: 3 out of 5 versus 1 in 5.



And that is a difference of 40 percentage points, which is huge.

We then took a look at the inclusion spectrum for 2022.²

Inclusive Attitudes Among Frequent Museum-Goers, 2022

ANTI-INCLUSIVE		LEANS LESS INCLUSIVE	STATUS QUO	LEANS MORE INCLUSIVE	INCLUSIVE
14%	7%	17%	4%	59%	

We found the same pattern.

Inclusive people were over 2x more likely to choose the humanity responses than the anti-inclusive people, with a gap of about 30 percentage points.

And the anti-green and anti-inclusive people? They are, for the most part, **the same people.**

When we stop to think through these findings, however, they start to make a lot of sense. If there is a segment of the population that doesn't feel that connected to broader humanity, including the billions of people who look or think differently than them, is it any wonder they don't care about inequities, discrimination, and more severe weather that will disproportionately affect people of color around the globe?

This isn't to imply this segment of people are socially isolated. They may well have strong social networks within their ingroup of people who look and think like them.



But it does beg the question if a connection to humanity is, for many, a prerequisite for caring about all human beings.



And if so, what is the role of museums in cultivating a stronger connection to humanity in our visitors? Would that help develop a more caring, compassionate society?

We felt these were important questions. What we had noticed in written-in comments had moved from merely interesting to a critical line of inquiry, worthy of follow-up.

And so we are following up. We're hoping to learn a lot more in 2023, as "connection to humanity" is one of the primary themes of the Annual Survey this year. You can expect to hear more on this topic when we begin releasing results this fall.

Annual Survey of Museum-Goers Data Stories are created by Wilkening Consulting on behalf of the American Alliance of Museums. Sources include:
* 2022 Annual Survey of Museum-Goers, n = 90,747, 186 museums participating
* 2022 Broader Population Sampling, n = 1,017
* 2017 - 2021 Annual Surveys of Museum-Goers
¹See *Climate Change in Museums, Part 2: The Spectrum of Climate Change Attitudes* Data Story, released October 25, 2022
²See *The Spectrum of Inclusive Attitudes: Methodology* Data Story, released December 2, 2021
*Data Stories share research about both frequent museum-goers (typically visit multiple museums each year) and the broader population (including casual and non-visitors to museums). See the Purpose and Methodology (Update) Data Story from September 13, 2022 for more information on methodology.
More Data Stories can be found at wilkeningconsulting.com/data-stories.

