

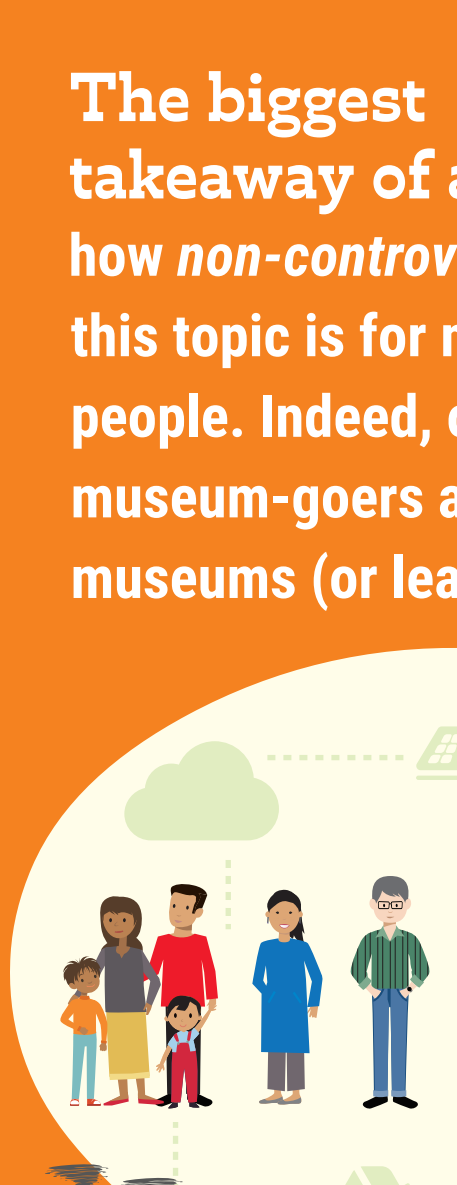
CLIMATE CHANGE IN MUSEUMS, PART 3: THE BIG TAKEAWAYS

A 2022 ANNUAL SURVEY OF MUSEUM-GOERS DATA STORY



The first two *Data Stories* in this series on climate change in museums focused on the overall results from both frequent museum-goers and US adults from the broader population (including casual and non-visitors to museums). Our analysis led us to develop this spectrum of attitudes, to help us understand how supportive the public, and our audiences, is of this content.

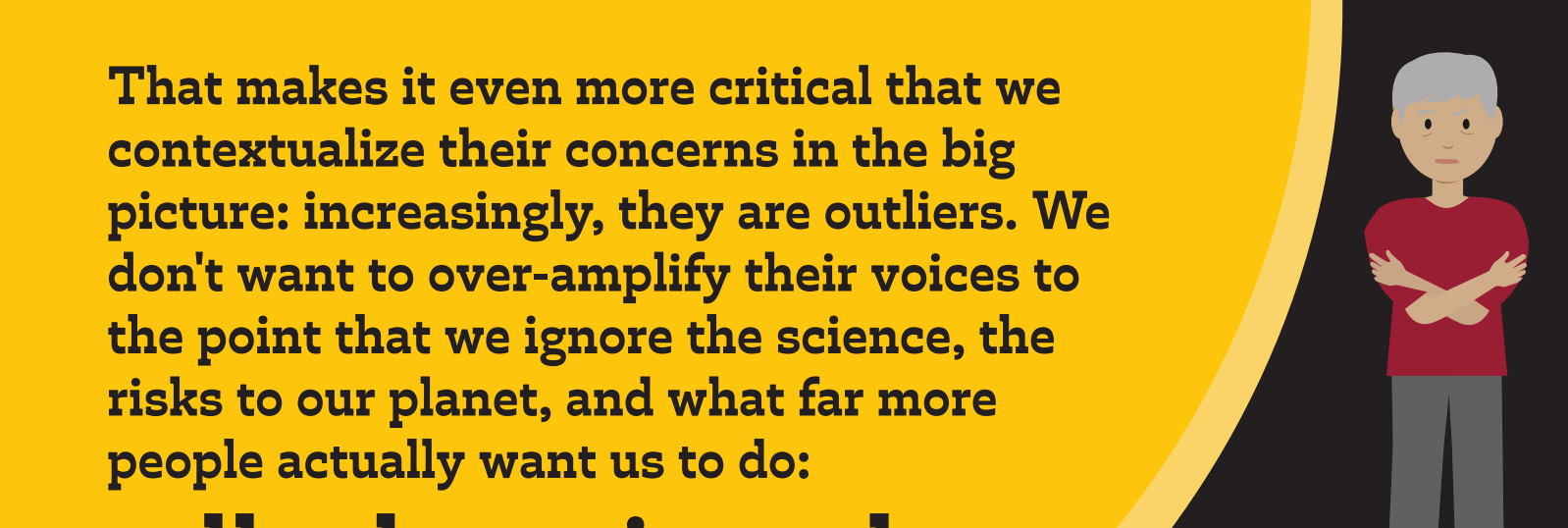
Attitudes about Climate Change Content in Museums (estimates)



Takeaway 1

The public wants us to talk about climate change ... and be more sustainable ourselves

The biggest takeaway of all was how *non-controversial* this topic is for most people. Indeed, only a small percentage of frequent museum-goers and US adults are against climate content in museums (or lean that way):



Now, to be clear, this doesn't mean there won't be pushback. That anti-green segment feels incredibly strongly that climate change is *not* an issue for museums, and humans are not responsible for climate change (nor can we do anything about it). This segment of the population tends to be vocal, emotional, and even angry when presented with climate change content.

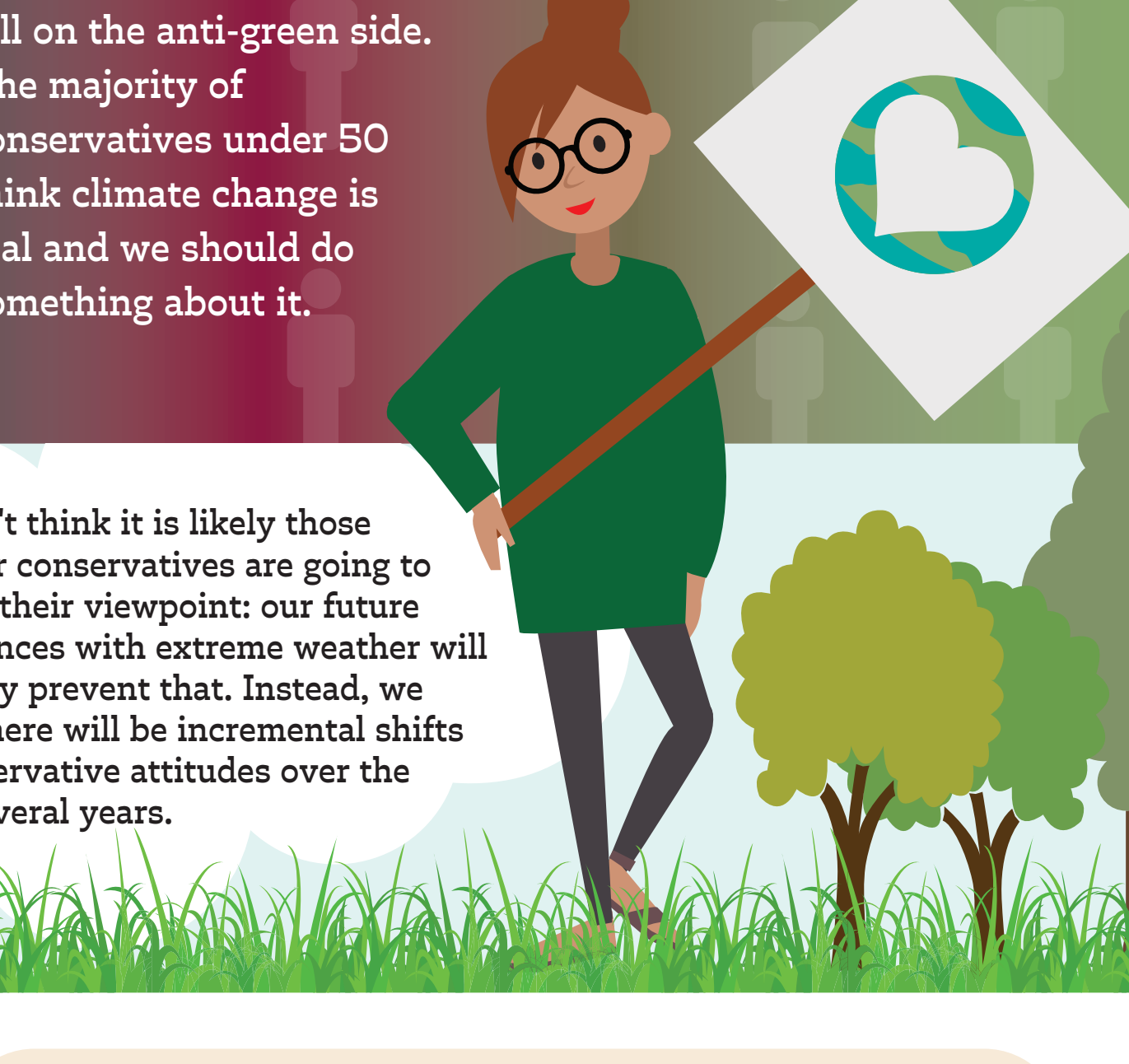
That makes it even more critical that we contextualize their concerns in the big picture: increasingly, they are outliers. We don't want to over-amplify their voices to the point that we ignore the science, the risks to our planet, and what far more people actually want us to do:

talk about it and inspire action.



Takeaway 2

It's political ... except it isn't
For most people, climate change is a crisis that shouldn't be political. Overwhelmingly, the individuals who consider it a political topic are those who fall in the "anti-green" segment.

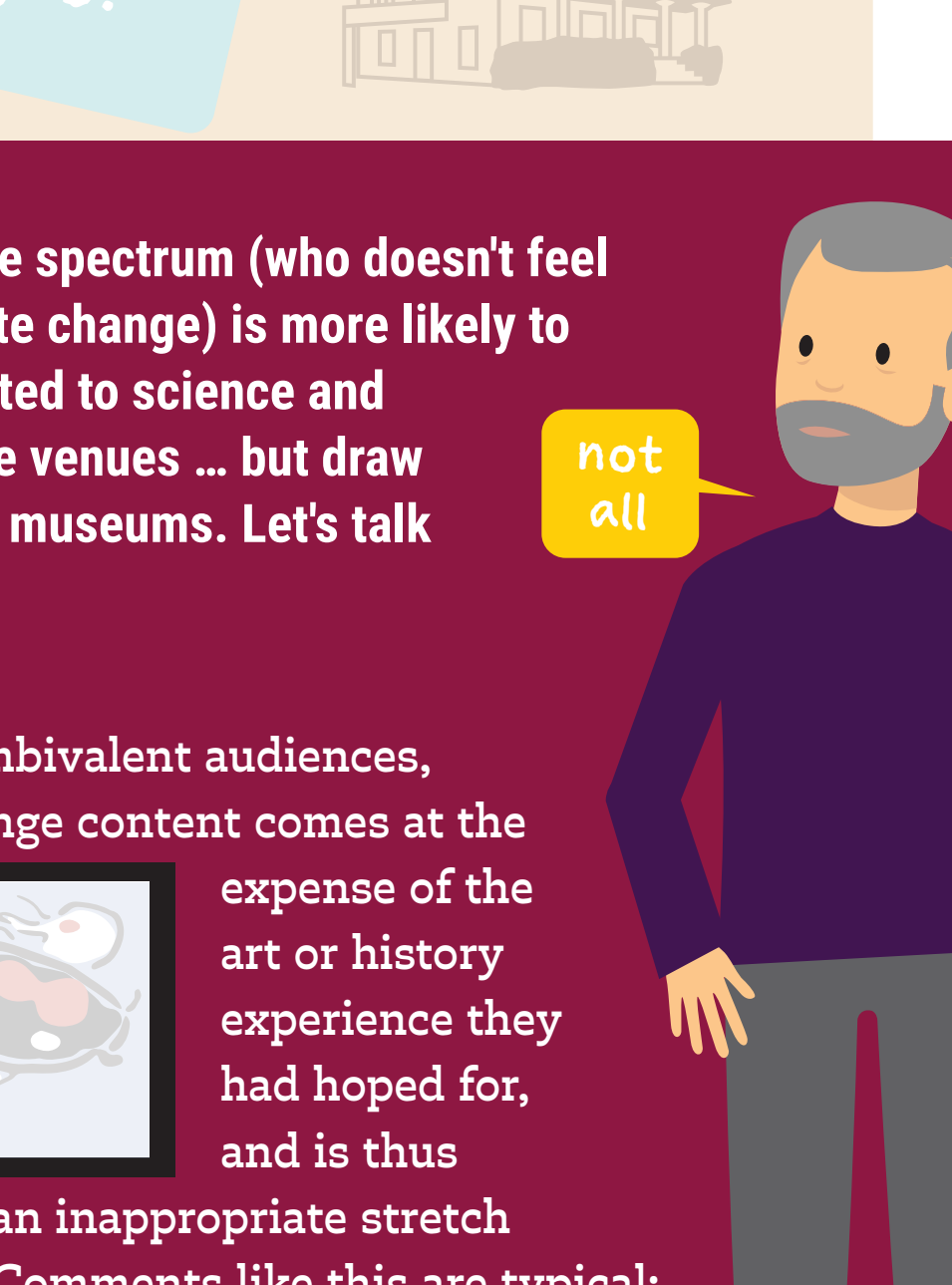


But there are two twists in this story, and they are both about conservatives:

1 In our broader population sampling, more conservatives fell on the green side of the spectrum than the anti-green side.

2 Why? Turns out, it is older conservatives who fall on the anti-green side. The majority of conservatives under 50 think climate change is real and we should do something about it.

We don't think it is likely those younger conservatives are going to change their viewpoint: our future experiences with extreme weather will probably prevent that. Instead, we think there will be incremental shifts in conservative attitudes over the next several years.



Takeaway 3

Climate change content belongs in art and history museums, too
For the majority of museum-goers, climate change is considered an appropriate topic for museums of all types, including art and history museums (including history sites).

But that middle part of the spectrum (who doesn't feel that strongly about climate change) is more likely to think that museums devoted to science and nature are the appropriate venues ... but draw the line at art and history museums. Let's talk about this concern.

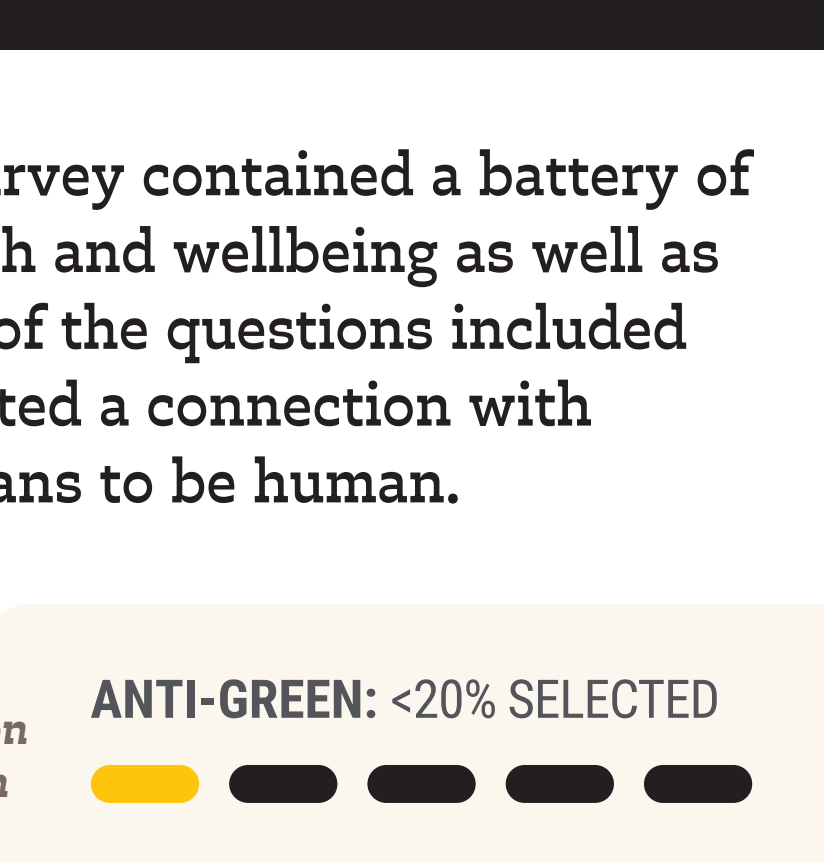
For more ambivalent audiences, climate change content comes at the expense of the art or history experience they had hoped for, and is thus considered an inappropriate of mission. Comments like this are typical:



Does this mean art and history museums shouldn't talk about climate change?
Not at all!

Instead, climate change content can and should be explored, but it is imperative that art and history museums make an explicit tie to their mission; doing so will help bring along more ambivalent audiences.

And don't forget: the majority of frequent museum-goers *do* think art and history museums should talk about climate change, while nearly 9 out of 10 museum-goers think museums of all types should work to reduce their carbon footprint/operate more sustainably.



To be clear: art and history museums are not off the hook. Indeed, they have unique, and vital, contributions to make.

"Art and artists can offer unique perspectives and insights on this subject that can perhaps open hearts and minds in alternate ways that purely scientific research, data, and media sometimes cannot ... art/artists (and the museums that show the work) can contribute in vital ways to help to solve climate change issues by engaging the human soul. Art can help engage and connect us to a deeper understanding of what is at stake".

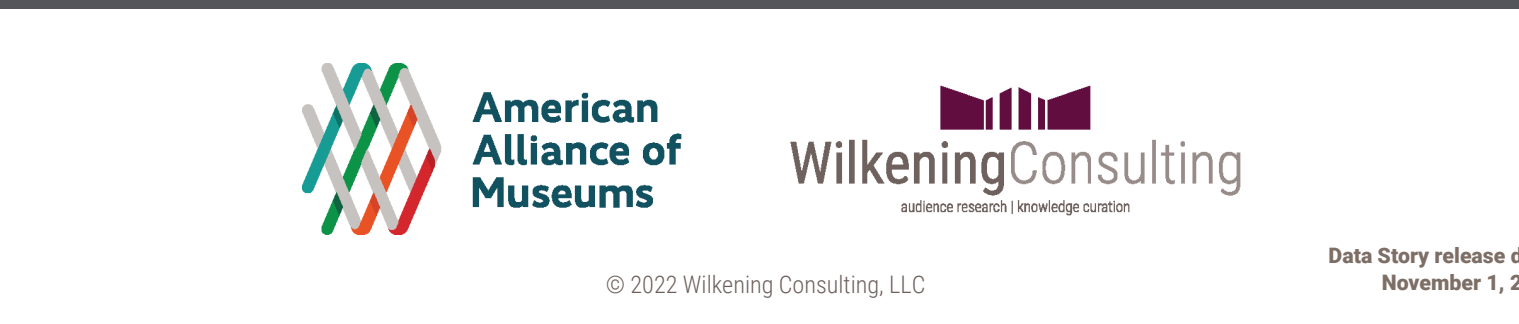
"It will do us no good to save the things from the past if we destroy our planet today. And I think that many areas of study that museums expose us to have ties to climate in the past as well as in the present, and that can inform our future ways of dealing with climate change."

Takeaway 4

A connection to humanity/humankind matters
When we ran filters to compare the different segments of the climate change spectrum, there was a new surprise awaiting us:

Individuals from the anti-green side of the spectrum were far less likely to feel connected to humanity/ humankind than those on the green side.

The 2022 Annual Survey contained a battery of questions about health and wellbeing as well as climate change. Two of the questions included responses that indicated a connection with humanity/what it means to be human.



And, interestingly, we found the same pattern with our spectrum on inclusive attitudes. Few anti-inclusive people felt a connection to humanity, while a solid majority of inclusive people did.

"Humanity is important to me. Climate change has the potential to destroy our planet and our communities. Protecting humanity should be all our concern and therefore extremely important to all of us."

This begs the question: does an individual feeling a connection with humanity, including all of humankind that looks and/or thinks differently than them, drive prosocial outcomes around climate change attitudes, inclusive attitudes, and perhaps other issues (such as public health)?

We want to know more about this, so we've made "connection to humanity" a primary theme of the 2023 Annual Survey of Museum-Goers.

Coming up: we'll wrap up this series on climate change by delving into the analysis of open-ended responses to our climate change questions. If we want to be effective in our climate change work, we need to understand *why* climate change content matters ... or doesn't ... to our audiences. These comments address just that.

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
 *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.