

SUMMER UPDATE

LAST SPRING, we fielded a "Pandemic Panel" to assess how museum-goers were grappling with the COVID-19 pandemic. As summer began to unfold, we reopened the panel to see how they were doing as the country opens up ... and as cases surge.

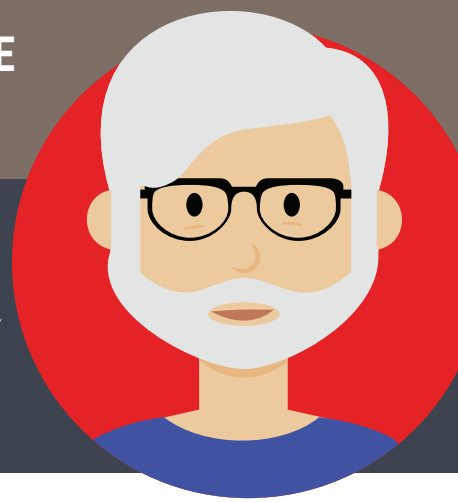
Emotionally, things felt even lower than in the spring.

"resigned" "whipsawed" "exhausted" "no hope"

AND THERE IS A GROWING REALIZATION THAT WE WILL BE DEALING WITH THIS PANDEMIC FOR SOME TIME:



"I thought things would have begun to moderate by this time, but I was wrong. Now I see problems caused by the virus stretching into the future ... we are not in a sprint, but a marathon."



MOST HAVE STRONG CONCERNS ABOUT HOW QUICKLY THINGS HAVE OPENED UP.

"Things opened way too fast."

AND MANY ARE DISMAYED BY WHAT THEY PERCEIVE AS THE CARELESSNESS OF OTHERS.

"It feels like many folks in my community have become careless ... I'm scared. A spike in cases will surely follow."



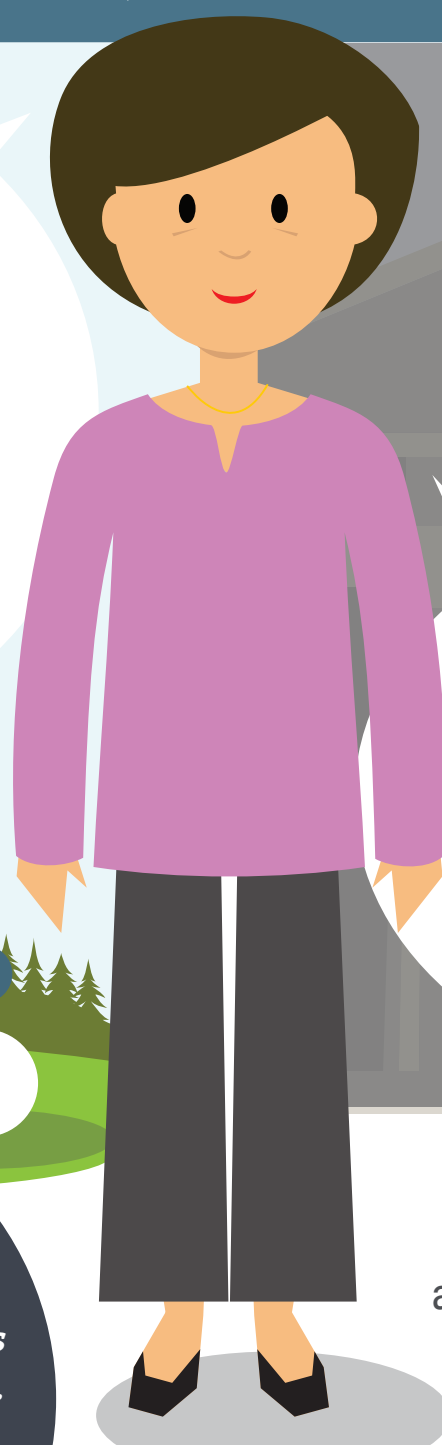
But as we learned this spring, when it comes to this pandemic, there are a spectrum of opinions. There are also those who are frustrated by the slow pace of opening:

"With what we have learned about the virus, I favor keeping the vulnerable self-isolating and getting everything else back to normal ... Now my good humor is fraying, and I am becoming more hostile about any remaining restrictions."



Most of our museum-goers, however, continue to be in that "cautious middle," and limiting their activities as much as reasonable. A small handful have even visited reopened (mostly outdoor) museums, though most were saying "not yet."

"I've been to Lynden Sculpture Garden a couple of times - they opened up for socially distanced walking. So you can walk outside amongst the sculpture ... it was so nice to be out and about ... since it was all outside, I felt totally safe and comfortable ... I have and will return..."



"...but I haven't tried any indoor museums yet, and have no plans to in the near future. I think that it might be several years before I feel comfortable doing a mainly indoor experience - even with masks and hand sanitizer."

"... going outside for nature walks and hiking ... This brings me peace."

What has helped, more than anything, is summer weather and the ability to venture outdoors. This has brought respite and healing, while also reducing cabin fever.

And our museum-goers continue to be resilient, developing and keeping up with good habits, and finding joy in small things:

"I am still reading and cooking more, and keeping up with all the little things that I used to let pile up..."



"I bought Animal Crossing, and that brings me joy too."

Overall, our museum-goers are coping. Yet their concerns for society and the challenges faced during this time of pandemic and social unrest are strong. These concerns, however, are also viewed as opportunities.

"The pandemic shows us our deep interconnectedness, and my concern is that the community remembers and builds on that interconnectedness. In this way, the protests, still ongoing, are a sign of hope and possibility for a better world-- and the hard work that it will take all of us to get there."



To be continued ...

Museums and the Pandemic Data Stories are created by Wilkening Consulting on behalf of the American Alliance of Museums.

- Sources include:
- 2020 Online Panel of Museum-Goers (ongoing)
- 2020 Broader Population Sampling
- 2020 Annual Survey of Museum-Goers

*Data Stories share research about both museum-goers (who visit multiple museums each year) and the broader population (including casual and non-visitors to museums).

The entire series of Museums and the Pandemic Data Stories can be found at wilkeningconsulting.com/data-stories.

