CIVICS, CIVIL SOCIETY, AND MUSEUMS, PART 1: INTRODUCTION A 2023 ANNUAL SURVEY OF MUSEUM-GOERS DATA STORY

"The materials of a culture, combined with video and audio of their customs, make them so much more real and urgent. Without seeing those things in

person, I wouldn't take them into consideration as seriously when I take civic action like voting or protesting." Over the past few years, we have



have different values and attitudes around things like: **Inclusion** Climate change and conservation action

examining how different people

tackled some tricky topics,



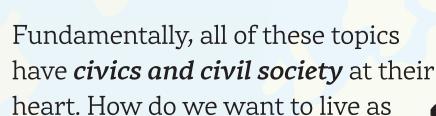
Trust

Public health



Fundamentally, all of these topics

Patriotism and democracy



human beings in our communities? In our country? And on this planet?

The choices we make, the ways we connect with others (or not), and who is empowered to effect change--on virtually any topic--reflects our individual and

collective capacity to engage

both civically and civilly with

other humans.



explore the nuance in follow-up Data Stories. So, what was the mixture of questions we used in the 2023 survey? We started off with Indirect Questions. Question 1: Respondents were asked to identify the most important

include eight or so different topics, including mushrooms. Respondents don't know we are specifically interested in the mushroom response, and they make their choices (for

this reason, we typically put

What do we mean

by "indirect" or

"direct" questions?

An **indirect** question is

typically broad, but has

answer choices that tell us

specific things. If we wanted

who feels strongly about

to know who was really

mushrooms, we might ask

"what types of exhibitions

would interest you?" and

interested in, say,

indirect questions near the beginning of the survey, so we don't tip our hand). And now we know who probably has a decent interest in mushrooms, because they selected it! A **direct** question is one that the respondent can tell what we are interested in learning (so we tend to put these in the back half of the survey). For example, "would you be interested in an exhibition on mushrooms?" In this case, we would likely record some false positives, with some respondents who are merely OK with the topic indicating sure, they'd be interested. But what it really tells us is who *isn't* interested, because they said "nope." Using a mixture of indirect and direct questions helps us get a more accurate read on what people think, because we can use the indirect to find those with the strongest interest, the direct to find those with little/no interest,

and also identify those who

may be more ambivalent.

to see who connected museums and community ... and who just skipped over those answers entirely. As you can see, the community-related answers did not have particularly high responses. What kind of impact do you think museums have had in your life? (Choose

Question 2: Later, we used a question about impact

those that are most important to you.)

Then, we asked a Non-Museum Question. Question 3:

directly involved with civics and civil society. Which of the following do you think are important things people should do to be a good member of society? (Choose all that apply.) Vote in local, state, and/or national elections 86% Learn more about our shared history, including the histories of those whose 77% stories have been omitted in the past Conserve natural resources and make choices to reduce the effects of **75**% ciimate change Participate in community activities, such as volunteering, attending community **75**% events or meetings of others, even when we disagree Be inclusive of others, including LGBTQ+ people, etc. Advocate politically by contacting government leaders and/or participating in **47**% activist organizations

... regardless if they think museums should be

disagree, encouraging more connection and **51%** a shared sense of humanity Promote civility and understanding towards those with whom we disagree, as a way of **46**% reducing partisanship

Help people humanize those with whom they

Encourage people to come together to solve societal issues/find common ground 40%

recommendations to civic leaders)

Correct inaccurate perceptions people have of those with whom they disagree politically 36%

I don't think museums should be doing any of 17%

Museums should be community leaders, taking civic action themselves on issues (especially those related to their mission)

Museums should help people think critically

and helping others take action

and build skills to empower civic 40%

participation

should not, be places of civic participation?

(which could include making

Promote a cohesive democracy **29**%

these things

Help people develop the tools to take civic action themselves 23%

But because we used a mixture of

Museums can illustrate the ways that people participate in civic action, but in a strictly 25% non-partisan way Museums should stay out of civic participation/action entirely 21% Are you feeling lost in

help us understand and triangulate (uhm, pentangulate?) individual responses in a way to understand how these values

And our next Data Story

And all of these topics, and what it means for us individually and the heart of what museums do. The good news: most museum-goers seem to agree that the experiences in museums support our civic and civil society. But it is also clear that others disagree,

which means we need to understand more

about differing individual attitudes towards

the ideas and ideals of civics, civil society,

and museums.

In the 2023 Annual Survey of

five questions that examined,

Museum-Goers, there were

either indirectly or directly,

museum-goers. In this Data

Story, we'll share those

overall results, and then

attitudes about civics and

civil society among

"Promoting cohesive democracy and civility in our communities" 18% of frequent museum-goers selected

interested in one of the

answer choices:

While these low percentages might seem disappointing, they actually aren't terribly unusual for indirect lines of inquiry. But they do help us identify those who are most enthusiastic about these ideas.

Seek out, listen, and respect the viewpoints 74% women, people of color, religious minorities, 72%

> Show patriotism by reciting the pledge, honoring the flag, celebrating 38%

Participate in protests and demonstrations 33%

Independence Day, etc.

of the ideas we shared about civil society.

To bring museums directly

into the mix we asked two

Direct Questions.

None of these 1%

Here, we see pretty strong enthusiasm for many

choices they liked. But as no" responses.

tool we developed and what we learned.

WilkeningConsulting

2023 Broader Population Sampling, n = 2,002
2017 - 2022 Annual Surveys of Museum-Goers

More Data Stories can be found at wilkeningconsulting.com/data-stories.

ways they thought museums should share content with visitors (they could pick as many as they wanted). We're

Increased tolerance for differing viewpoints 25% Greater understanding about issues that are affecting people in my community Greater connection to my community 24% Greater self-awareness about my role in my community and/or in the world 22% Feeling that I can make a difference in my community (civic empowerment) 11%

More knowledgeable about history, science, art, nature, etc.

Feeling of connection to humanity/what it means to be human

More curiosity about the world **69**%

None of these 1%

We wanted to take museums out of the equation for this question, so we could look at civics and civil society values in isolation. This allows us to better understand individual values people generally have

you can see, roughly 1 in 5 respondents gave what could be considered "hard What role should museums play in building a civil society you want to be a part of? (Choose all that apply.) Support conservation of our natural world, including reducing the effects of 60% climate change

the numbers now? We were too!

feelings fall somewhere in between? And what's the nuance and context we need to understand this more thoroughly?

is going to explore the Annual Survey of Museum-Goers Data Stories are created by Wilkening Consulting on behalf of the American Alliance of Museums. Sources include:

• 2023 Annual Survey of Museum-Goers, n = 107,187; 228 museums participating

who simply don't think it is our job, and a lot who feel somewhere in between. What we need, however, is a tool that will

museums taking an active role, others

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Stay tuned!

For these questions, most

respondents found answer

Which of the following best describes how you think museums should, or

affect people's experiences in and expectations of museums. Who is enthusiastic? Who isn't? Whose

*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 12, 2023 for more information on methodology.

question types, we can see that there are people who feel more strongly about