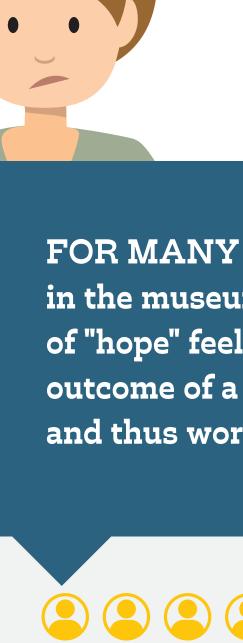
**HOPE FOR THE FUTURE AND MUSEUMS, PART 2:** 

**ENTHUSIASM AND RESISTANCE** 





museum's purpose, but I do feel hopeless often."



FOR MANY OF US who work in the museum field, the idea of "hope" feels like a positive outcome of a museum visit, and thus worthy of cultivation.

agreed that the was important.

Fortunately, most But how museum-goers agree! As we saw in our introductory Data Story When we analyzed on hope, four out of five results more fully,

**Frequent Museum-Goers X**Resistant <sup>18%</sup> 43% **P**Ambivalent 42% • Enthusiastic

important? we found that while cultivation of hope 40% of frequent museum-goers are very enthusiastic about the cultivation of hope in museums, a similar number are actually more ambivalent. Additionally, a small, but vocal, minority of museum-goers disagreed with the idea entirely. **U.S. Adults** 

In this Data Story, we will explore more about these differing attitudes and delve into open-ended responses to understand the "why" behind the results.

The Enthusiastic

"Since the pandemic and political

chaos that floods the tv and social

media, we have a society filled with

anxiety. A place of solitude and

hope for the future on any subject

If there was a common theme

respondents, it was that hope

is needed more than ever in

among enthusiastic

For the most part, these

they are significantly more likely to be curious, empathetic

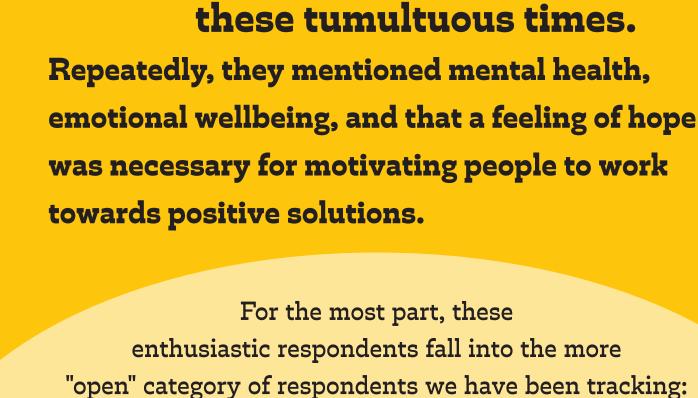
individuals who want to be challenged, support climate action,

and have inclusive attitudes. Additionally, people of color were

much more likely to be enthusiastic about hope in museums: half

fell in this segment versus 38% of white people.

is welcomed." "Very important, for the future generations. I personally feel like I don't have much fuel left."



There was a cautionary note from some enthusiastic respondents, however: warnings against false hope. They wanted the cultivation of hope to be realistic and backed up with proactive changes ... not a "sentimental" hope that assumes

others will take responsibility

"To me, it's an odd word choice.

Hope is always important, I guess,

to be inspired and awed."

Respondents in this segment

idea of museums cultivating

hope, but for many, the idea

It simply had not occurred to them and they had to

was a surprise.

take a moment to consider it. After that

consideration, they indicated either a limited

Generally, for most in this segment, hope is a perfectly fine

outcome of a museum experience. But it isn't the primary goal

and they are also perfectly fine if it doesn't happen.

For some, however, it was simply perplexing.

museums ... but not in a way that

indicated they opposed the idea.

"strange." A few also said that they didn't

feel this was the job or responsibility of

They used words like "odd," "vague," or

degree of support or outright ambivalence.

were generally open to the

for solutions.

The Ambivalent (and sometimes perplexed)

38%



"I do not put this burden on the museum."

"I don't want the museum to

manipulate my emotions in any way."

For those who were resistant

resistance was often framed

to the idea of museums

cultivating hope, that

That is, they felt "hope" was coded language for

"woke" ideologies (with "woke" being used as a

pejorative term) or that museums were trying to

These knee-jerk, emotional responses sometimes yielded

strong language. Additionally, these "resistant" respondents

were over 2x more likely than "ambivalent" respondents, and

they fear that the hopes

museums might cultivate in

"resistant" individuals do not

share. This suggests there is a

fundamental trust issue at the

to emerge from museum

openness to

as well, museums can be

fantastic places to help

solutions and feel

people imagine creative

experience with a feeling of

hope for the future. And

given their overall

imaginative experiences

heart of their resistance.

visitors would be hopes that these

Overall, however, most

museum-goers do want

through lenses of politics and

manipulation.

tell them how to feel.

The Resistant

"YOU'RE A MUSEUM! It's not your

job. NO MORE WOKE!"

4.5x more likely than "enthusiastic" respondents, to hold anti-inclusive attitudes. They were also significantly less likely to hold community-oriented attitudes or think that museums should connect people to humanity. This indicates that more "resistant" respondents are lumping together a collection of values, including hope, that they consider inappropriate for museums ... likely because

empowered to make a difference in their communities.1 Additionally, follow-up questions in the 2024 Annual Survey indicate that,

regardless of how individuals

feel about hope in museum

settings, there are common

values that most of us share

when we think about the

future. We'll explore those

shared values in our final Data

Story on hope.

important than 'very important.'The world is a mess. I believe art and all

us all." Annual Survey of Museum-Goers Data Stories are created by Wilkening Consulting on behalf of the American Alliance of Museums. Sources include: 2024 Annual Survey of Museum-Goers, n = 90,178; 202 museums participating • 2024 Broader Population Sampling, n = 2,154 • 2017 - 2023 Annual Surveys of Museum-Goers <sup>1</sup>For three Data Stories on wellbeing, go to: <u>https://wilkeningconsulting.com/?s=imagination&post\_types=post</u> \*Data Stories share research about both frequent museum-goers (typically visit multiple museums each year) and the broader population (including casual, sporadic, and non-visitors to museums). More Data Stories can be found at wilkeningconsulting.com/data-stories.

Susie Wilkening,

lead author

**American** 

museums can give us [hope] and will save

"I am choosing

'other' [for this

question] because I

think it is even MORE

**Wilkening** Consulting

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"I don't really see this as a