

What Will Make People Feel Safe Attending a Cultural Entity Again? (DATA)

Some factors are within an organization's control.

We'd originally planned to publish data on **intent to visit cultural organizations** (<https://www.colleendilen.com/2020/03/30/data-update-how-covid-19-is-impacting-intentions-to-visit-cultural-entities-march-30-2020/>) cut by household income today, but – as seems common practice in the age of COVID-19 – we thought it best to pivot. We'll still publish that information in the coming weeks to inform future access programming opportunities, but fresh data came in that we thought would be more immediately helpful.

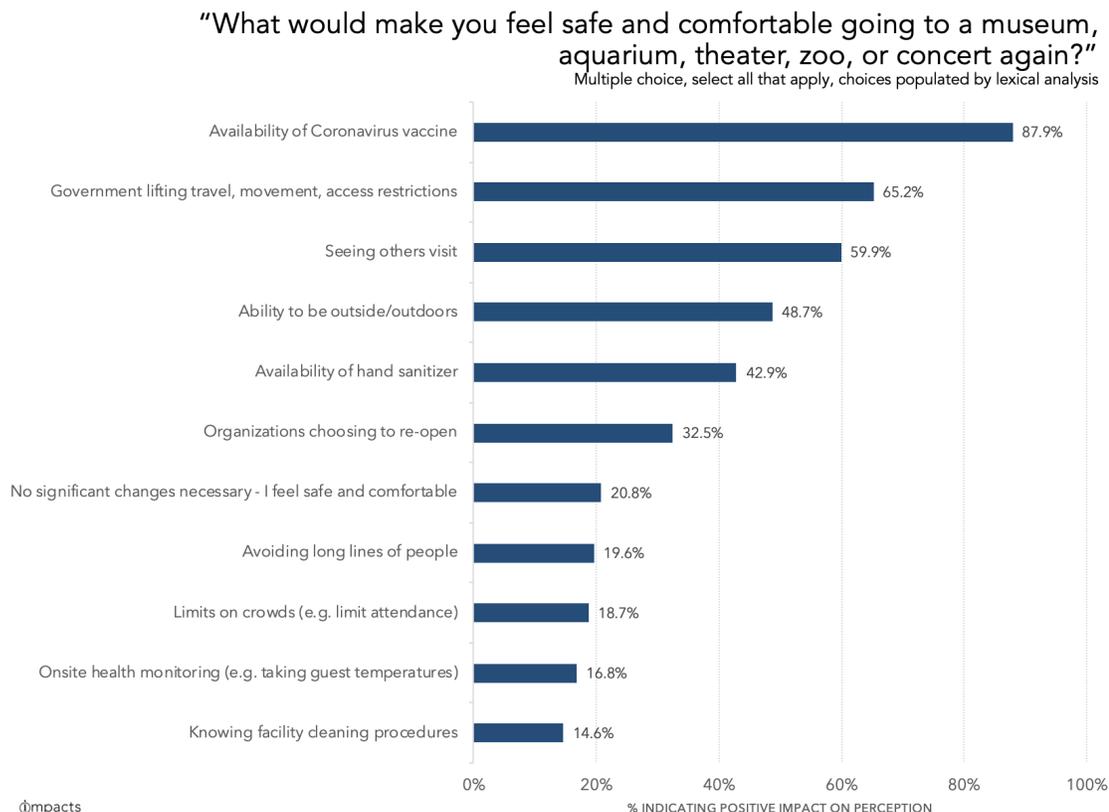
It's straightforward and informative, and we wanted to get it to you quickly.

Research shows that demand for cultural organizations is being redistributed toward some types of entities and away from others. (<https://www.colleendilen.com/2020/03/25/how-is-covid-19-impacting-likelihood-to-attend-different-cultural-entities-data/>) For instance, likelihood to revisit entities that involve minimal movement in smaller spaces – such as symphonies – has decreased, as has the near-term likelihood to visit touch-based entities such as science centers. On the other hand, the likelihood to revisit larger and (particularly outdoor) spaces – such as gardens and zoos – has increased.

But what if yours is an indoor performing arts organization or touch-based museum? ...Or what if it's not and you simply want visitors to feel as safe and comfortable as possible upon reopening?

What will it take to make people feel safe and comfortable visiting cultural organizations again?

The data below surveys 3,497 adults in the United States. First, we collected people's answers to this question using a process called lexical analysis that allows us to broadly categorize responses from people using their own words – the technologies that enable this process help to minimize the risks of unintentional biases that occur when facilitators translate or summarize a respondent's statements. These categorized responses are thereafter used to populate the response range of a multiple-choice question. In other words, we did not internally brainstorm these options and present them in a survey based on our best guess of what people would say. The options came from survey respondents.



(<https://www.colleendilen.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Feel-safe-and-comfortable.png>)

This data set is delightfully straightforward, and yet it is full of hints to inform messaging and operations to make people feel safe upon reopening. Here are some items worthy of particular note:

A) People will feel most comfortable when there is a vaccine available.

That this factor is the leader may come as no surprise. That said, it's worth noting that the top thing that would make people feel most comfortable visiting cultural organizations again is not in a cultural organization's control. The good news is that **the world is rushing to develop a vaccine** (<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/19/us/politics/coronavirus-vaccine-competition.html>) and this barrier to feeling safe and comfortable may not be a condition forever.

B) The removal of government restrictions will make people feel more comfortable visiting.

Right now, we're social distancing and staying home. Travel is restricted. There's limited opportunity to leave our homes to go about leisure activities. 62.5% of people will feel safer visiting simply when government restrictions are lifted, and 48.7% when there's more ability to go outdoors again. It may be helpful to accept that most cultural entities themselves can do little to control this factor right now.

C) Your own decision to reopen will make people feel safer, too.

A noteworthy 32.5% of people said that they would feel comfortable visiting again by the very action of the cultural entity reopening. **People trust cultural organizations.**

(<https://www.colleendilen.com/2019/07/10/people-trust-museums-even-if-they-dont-visit-them-data/>) Many organizations announced closures in the spirit of flattening the curve and keeping communities safe. People may trust that organizations will not reopen unless they are ready to do so and have decided themselves that they are a safe place to spend time.

D) Seeing others visit will make people feel more comfortable.

It's a strange time to use the phrase "comfort in numbers," but with nearly 60% of people reporting that simply seeing other people visit will make them feel safer, that may be what's happening. *Excitedly, cultivating this perception may be in an organization's control to an extent.* Sharing stories about what onsite visitors are doing when you reopen and creating "instagrammable moments" to cultivate word of mouth endorsement are ways that entities can help achieve this.

E) Have hand sanitizer ready and available.

Hand sanitizer is a big deal. When asked, 42.9% of people say they will feel safe and comfortable visiting again based upon hand sanitizer being knowingly available. This is good news, as this is a straightforward action item and entities can plan to stock up on these products to help people feel safer upon reopening.

F) One-in-five people already feel safe and comfortable visiting.

That's right. Regardless of government restrictions or COVID-related changes to messaging or operations, 20% of people already feel safe and comfortable visiting cultural institutions.

G) Knowing your full cleaning procedures matters least.

Maybe it's because people have been so inundated with emails about the cleaning procedures of seemingly every company under the sun. Maybe it's simply – again – that people trust cultural entities and already believe that cleaning procedures are top-notch. I am noting this because if you have your audiences' limited attention regarding a safety message, make it one that they actually care about. (For starters, why you've decided to reopen, potential measures to limiting crowds, and how you have a ready abundance of hand sanitizer available.)

Some of the things that will make people feel comfortable visiting cultural organizations upon reopening are out of an individual organization's control. Our Board of Directors cannot dictate how many people will be infected with COVID-19, and most cultural CEOs can do precious little to speed up the creation and availability of a safe vaccine. But we know that **people are likely to visit some cultural entities when they are next allowed to do so**

(<https://www.colleendilen.com/2020/03/25/how-is-covid-19-impacting-likelihood-to-attend-different-cultural-entities-data/>) and that intentions to visit within three months are only slightly depressed compared to this time last year.

(<https://www.colleendilen.com/2020/03/30/data-update-how-covid-19-is-impacting-intentions-to-visit-cultural-entities-march-30-2020/>)

At some point – hopefully soon- our nation will turn its focus from surviving, back to safely thriving. That's where cultural entities shine.

And when they do, we'll be ready.

*Here are the COVID-19 data insights for cultural entities that we've published thus far. (<https://www.colleendilen.com/category/covid-19-updates/>) Don't want to miss an update? **Subscribe here** (<https://colleendilen.us16.list-manage.com/subscribe/post?u=7394c160d5afdd0f3db9d6b7e&id=3e51cf438a>) to get the most recent data and analysis in your inbox.*

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