



# Survey of Members and Readers

*Published December 2020 by the Museum Education Roundtable*

## Survey Background

In spring of 2020, the Museum Education Roundtable (MER) Board of Directors sought to understand how our members were affected by the pandemic and learn about their concerns related to how the field of museum education shifted in response. MER invited membership and social media followers to complete a survey about their work, interests and concerns, and staffing changes at their institutions.

145 individuals completed the survey between June 15 and July 10, 2020. The survey was sent to 1548 contacts, including current MER members and newsletter subscribers, via eblast on June 15, 2020. 742 (48%) of contacts opened the email, and 144 clicked on the link to the survey. MER also shared the survey on social media; on Twitter the survey reached 1,424 users, with 21 users clicking the link to the survey. On Facebook, the survey reached 1,446 users, with 79 users clicking the link to the survey (5%).<sup>1</sup>

This report highlights results that are most notable/actionable for MER. The appendix includes basic tables for all the data (including demographics) in the order in which they appear in the body of this report. The appendix also includes a blank copy of the survey.

This data is not entirely representative of the museum education field; rather, it is a snapshot of MER's membership, newsletter subscribers, and social media followers captured during the early stages of the pandemic. The survey respondents are largely more established professionals in museum education and most respondents are white women. As of July 15, most respondents had not been laid-off or furloughed. As such, the experiences described in this report are not necessarily reflective of front-of-house staff, emerging professionals, or historically marginalized museum workers. Other professional organizations, such as the American Alliance of Museums, have attempted to capture more general data with broader research and different resources.<sup>2</sup>

MER aims to use the results in this report to guide our work in support of MER's mission, vision, and equity statement; this includes amplifying voices of museum educators whose experiences are not reflected in this membership survey. For information about how to get involved with MER, and how to access MER's platform to share your experience, visit [museumedu.org](https://museumedu.org) or contact us at [membership@museumedu.org](mailto:membership@museumedu.org).

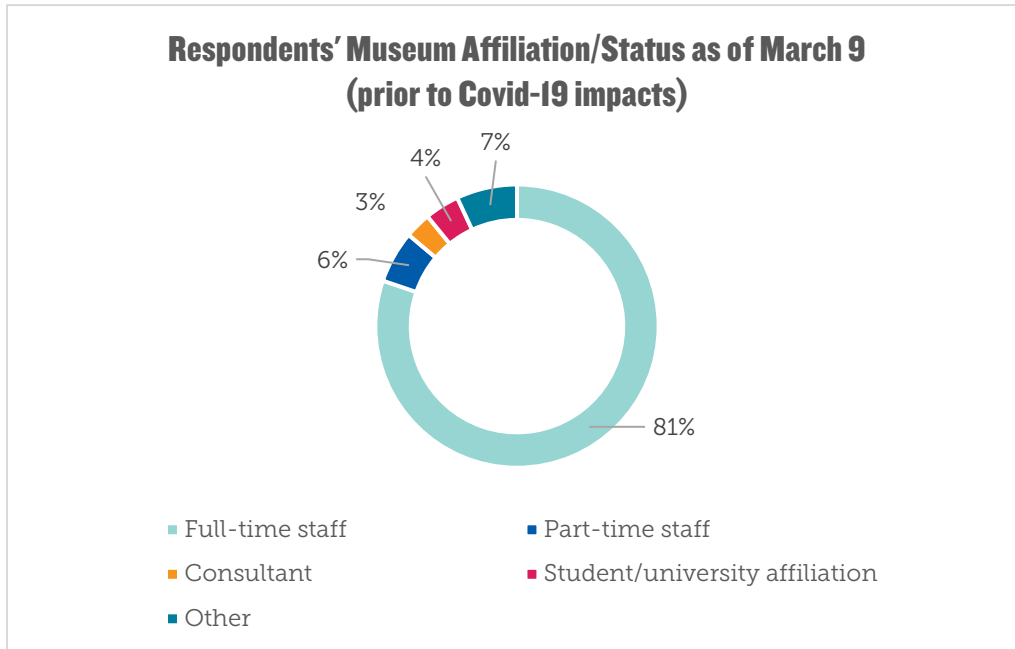
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<sup>1</sup> Our data does not show a breakdown of how respondents accessed the survey (i.e., eblast vs. social media post). Given the absence of this data and that the social media posts' reach may overlap with MER's newsletter subscribers, we cannot provide an accurate response rate for this survey.

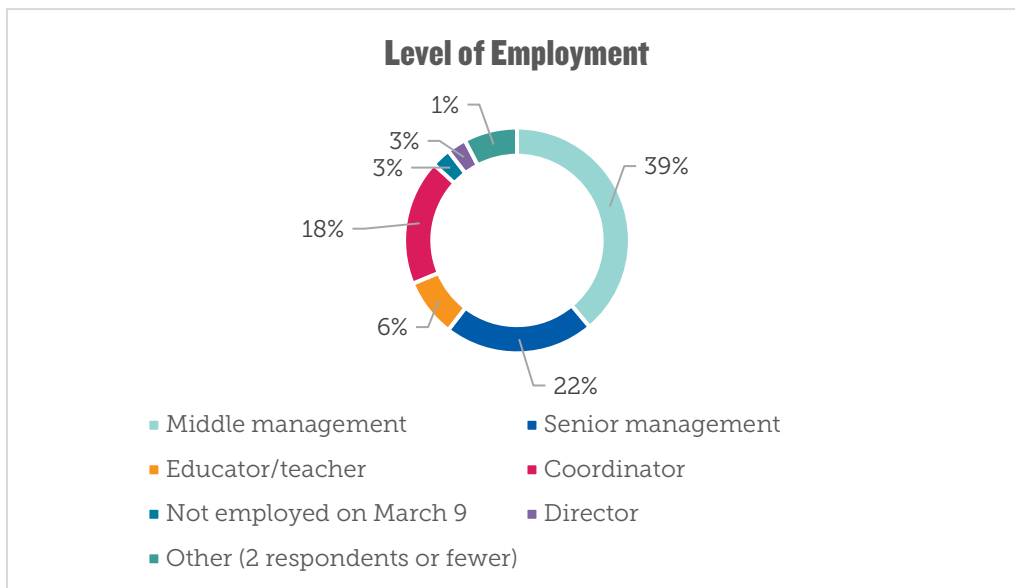
<sup>2</sup> "National Snapshot of COVID-19 Impact on United States Museums." American Alliance of Museums and Wilkening Consulting, 2020. <https://www.aam-us.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/AAMCOVID-19SnapshotSurvey-1.pdf>

## Influence of COVID on Individuals

1. Respondents were asked to describe their involvement with museums as of March 9, 2020, before the major effects of the pandemic hit the museum field. As of March 9, 81% of respondents were employed full-time.

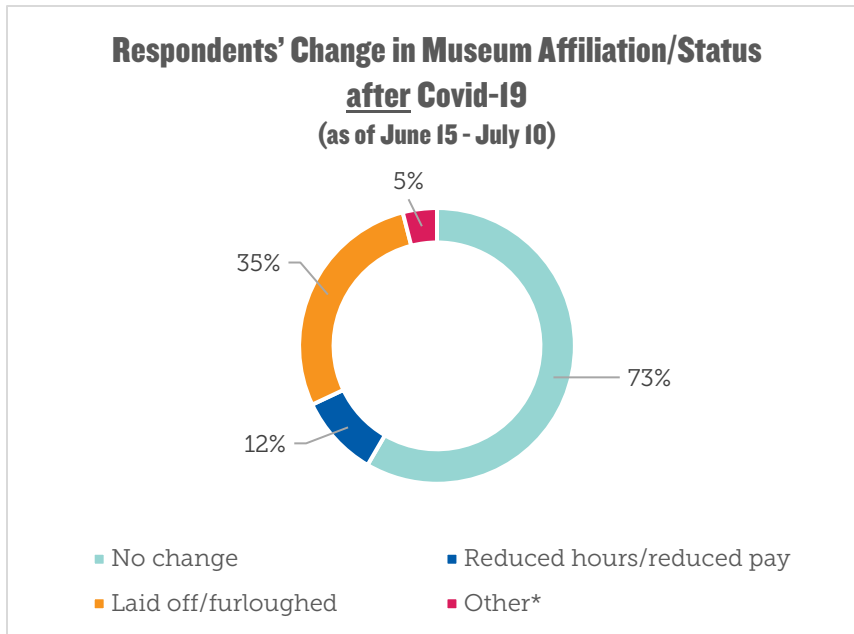


2. Respondents were asked to describe their level of employment. About two-thirds work in management, about a fifth work as coordinators, and several are museum educators or program teachers. "Other" responses include consultants, researchers, and students.



3. After the initial stages of Covid-19, about three-quarters (73%) of respondents experienced **no change in their employment**. However:
- o 12% had reduced hours/reduced pay,
  - o 10% had been laid off or furloughed, and
  - o 5% experienced a unique situation such as being furloughed then rehired.

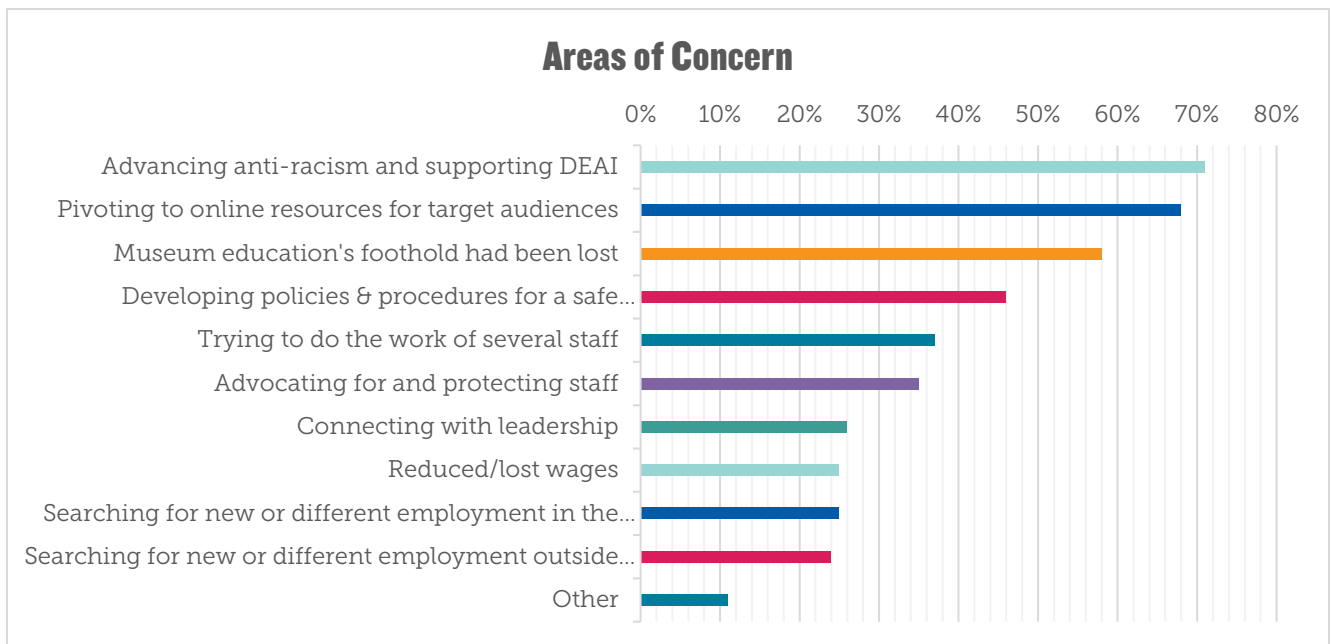
“Other” responses included unique situations like Laid off/furloughed then rehired, expecting lay-offs soon; volunteering and still volunteering.



NOTE: These responses reflect the experiences of respondents to MER's survey and are not necessarily representative of the field. According to [AAM's recent report](#), 53% of museums have furloughed or laid off staff, with 40% reporting Education as the hardest hit department.

4. Respondents were asked what their biggest areas of concern within the context of museum work. (i.e., "What are you struggling with?") Among ten concerns listed, more than 40 percent or more of respondents reported having these concerns:
- o 71 percent - Advancing anti-racism and supporting DEAI
  - o 68 percent - Pivoting to online resources
  - o 58 percent - Feeling the foothold museum education has made has been lost
  - o 46 percent - Developing new policies and procedures for a safe reopening

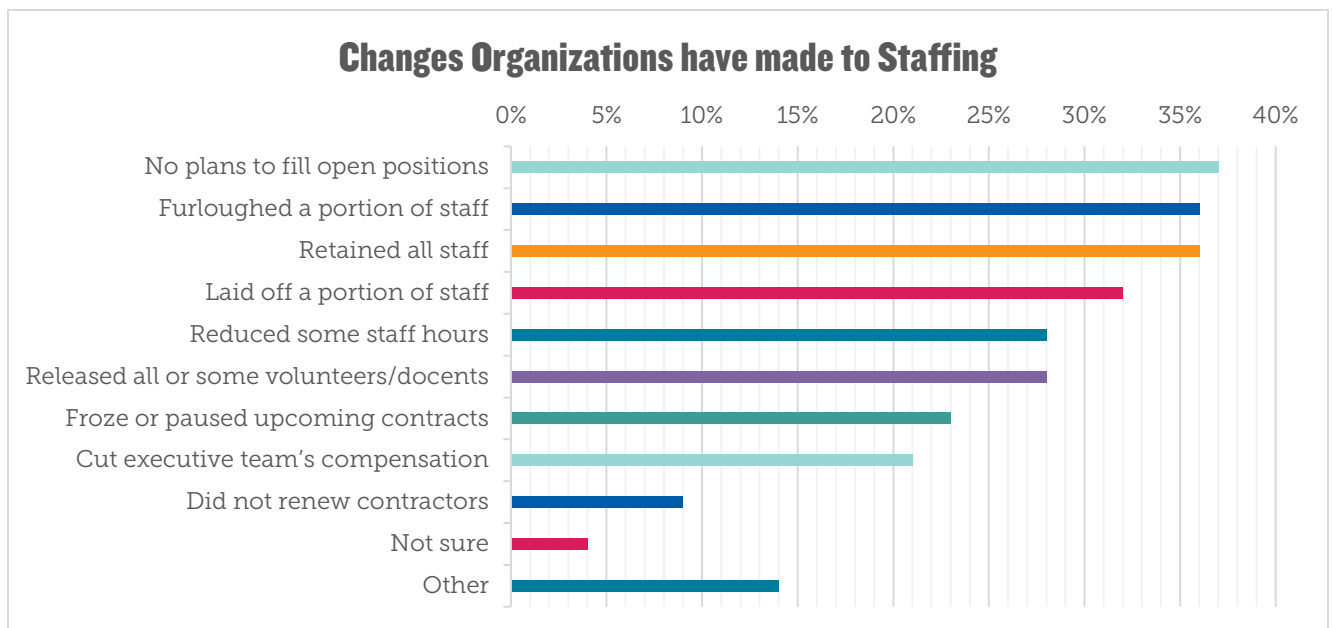
"Other" responses included concerns about school field trips, internships, and concerns for the future of other employees in their museums. Percentages exceed 100% because respondents were asked to select all that apply.



## Influence of COVID on Institutions (as reported by individuals)

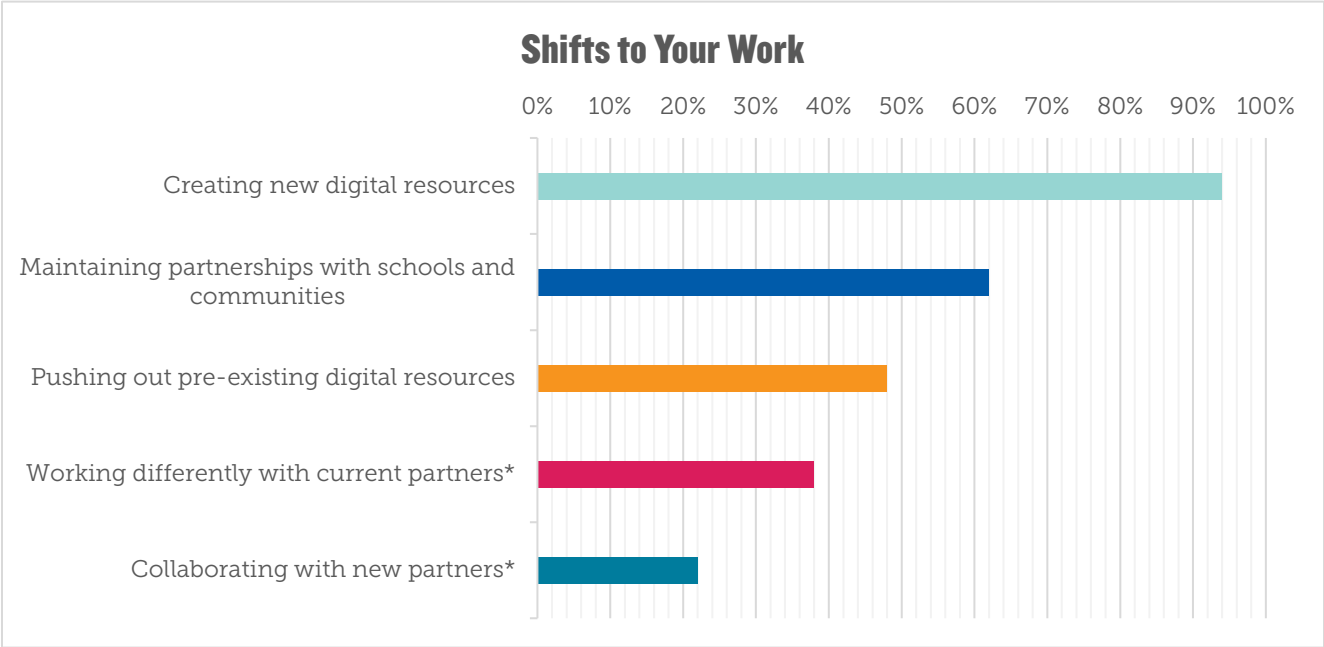
5. After the initial effects of Covid-19, **36 percent** of respondents' institutions **retained all staff**. The most common changes to institutions include:
- 37 percent had no plans to fill open positions
  - 36 percent had furloughed a portion of staff
  - 32 percent had laid off a portion of staff
  - 28 percent had reduced some staff hours
  - 28 percent had released all or some volunteers/docents
  - 23 percent froze or paused contracts
  - 21 percent cut executive team's compensation

Other responses included changes to retirement plan, expecting lay-offs or furloughs soon, no work for part-time employees, or cut pay of some staff; some responses were idiosyncratic. Percentages exceed 100% because respondents were asked to select all that apply.



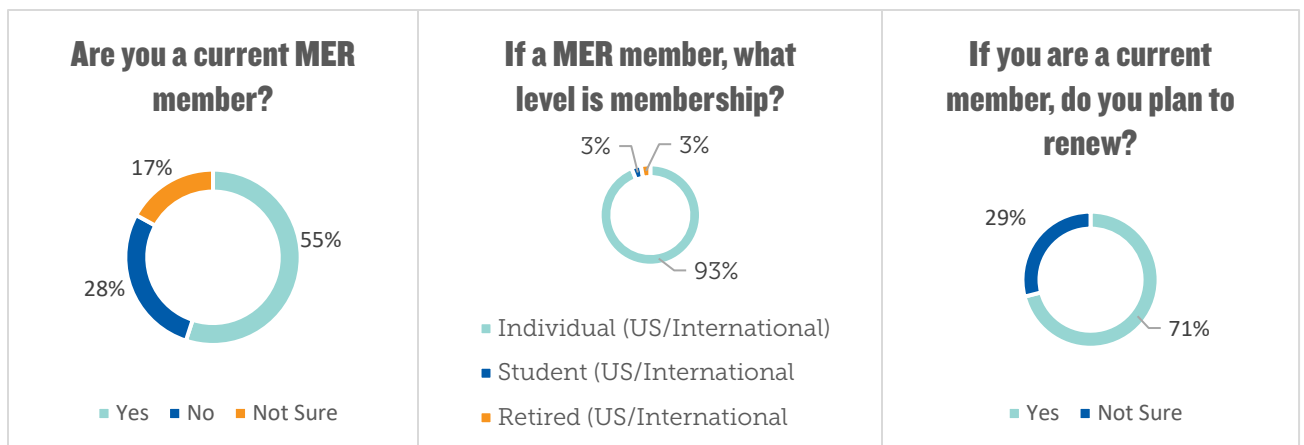
- 6. Nearly all respondents have experienced some shift or **change in their work**, including:
  - o 94 percent are creating new digital resources
  - o 62 percent are working to maintain partnerships with schools/ communities
  - o 48 percent are pushing out pre-existing digital resources
  - o 38 percent are working differently with existing partners
  - o 22 percent are collaborating with new partners

Respondents were asked to write in the way they were working differently with current partners or collaborating with new partners. "Other" responses include changes like schools not being allowed to do field trips and economic inequality. Percentages exceed 100% because respondents were asked to select all that apply.

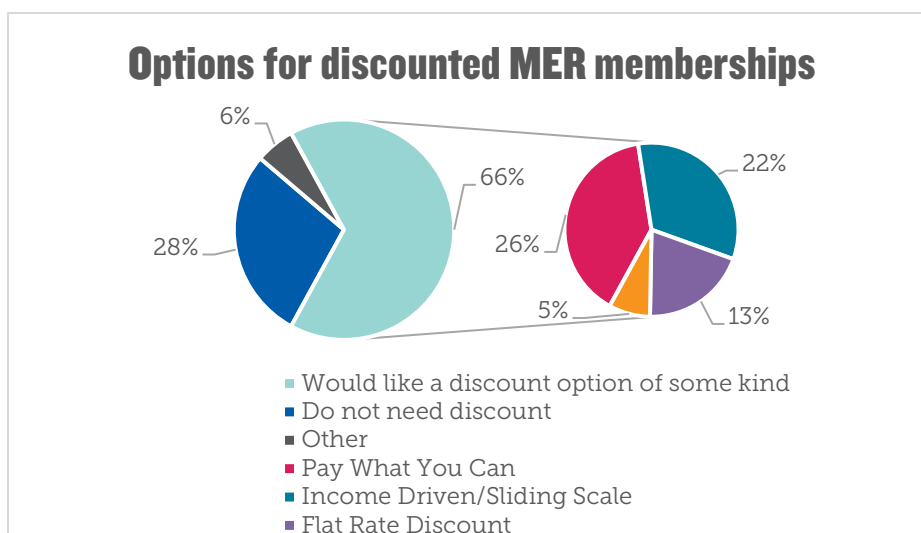


## MER Membership

7. Just over half of respondents (55 percent) indicated they are a **current member** of MER. The others indicated they are not (28 percent) or are not sure (17 percent).
- o The vast majority (93 percent) have individual memberships.<sup>3</sup>
  - o Of current members, 71 percent plan to renew; the rest (29%) indicated they are "not sure."



8. Two-thirds of respondents (66%) indicated they would like a **discounted membership**. From the list of possible discounts, respondents selected:
- o 39 percent – Pay what you can
  - o 32 percent – Income driven/sliding scale
  - o 19 percent – flat rate discount
  - o 8 percent – buy one/get one free
- "Other" responses include: "I would be willing to pay more so others can have a discount.", "I'm going back to the classroom, not sure I'll renew.", "The Retired Membership is manageable."

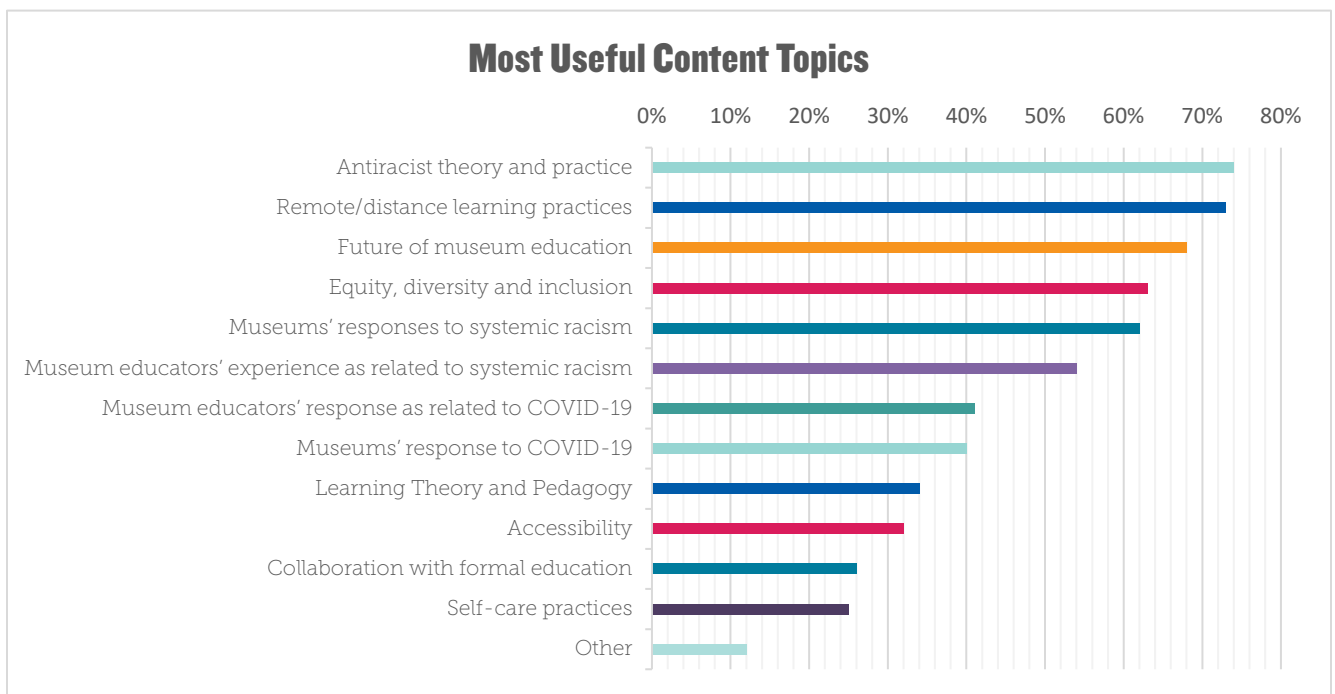


<sup>3</sup> This represents about a quarter of MER's overall membership (as of July 2020).

9. MER asked what content topics would be most useful for respondents. Among twelve response options, 40 percent or more of respondents indicated the most **useful topics** MER could provide content about or amplify others' work on are:

- Antiracist theory and practice (74%)
- Remote/distance learning practices (73%)
- Future of museum education (68%)
- Equity, diversity and inclusion (63%)
- Museums' responses to systemic racism (62%)
- Museum educators' experience as related to systemic racism (54%)
- Museum educators' response as related to COVID19 (41%)
- Museums' responses to COVID19 (40%)

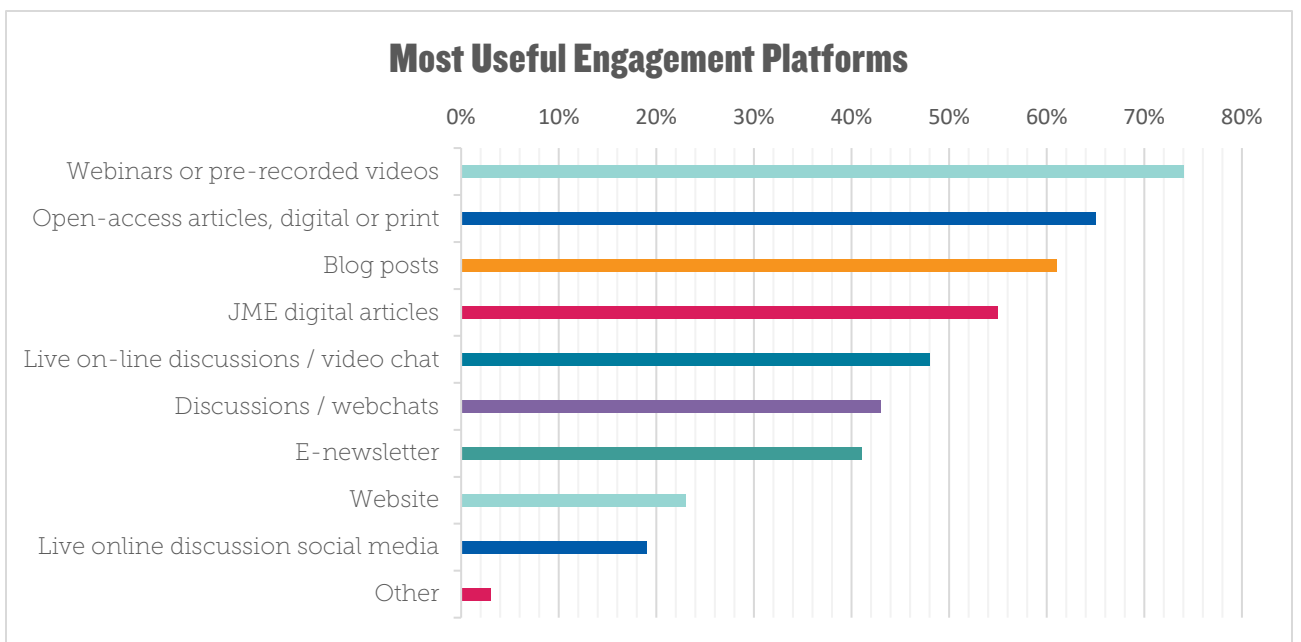
"Other" responses include transferring skills outside museums, economic equity, new job advice, actual museum education best practices. Percentages exceed 100% because respondents were asked to select all that apply.





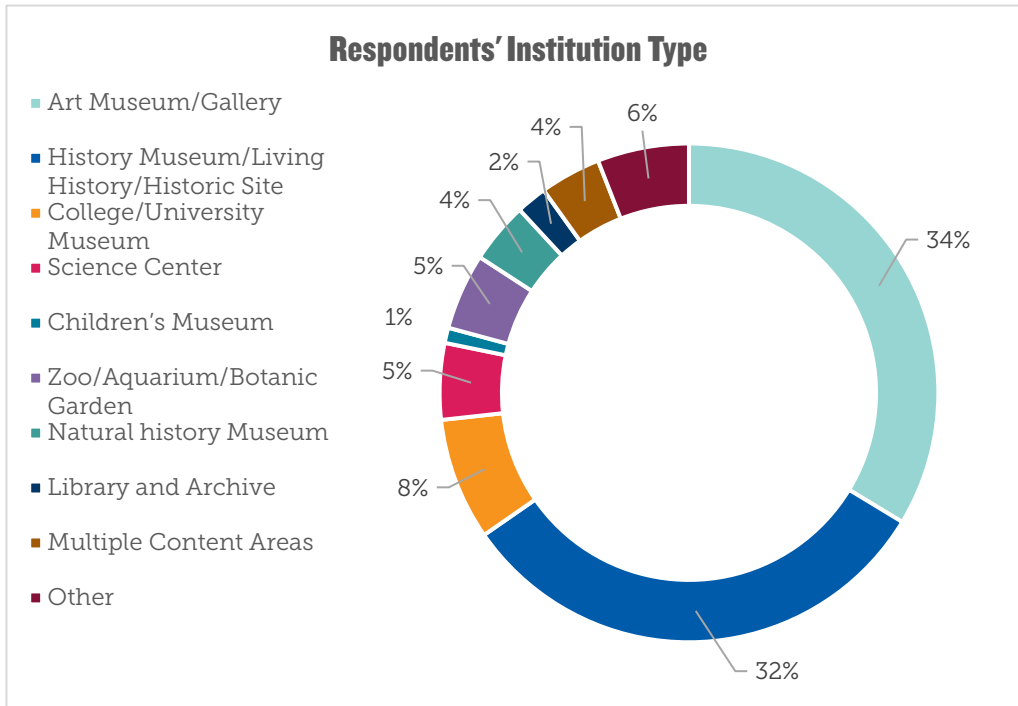
10. Among nine response options, 40 percent or more of respondents indicated the most useful platforms for engaging with those topics are:
- o Webinars or pre-recorded videos (74%)
  - o Open-access articles, digital or print (65%)
  - o Blog posts (61%)
  - o JME digital articles (55%)
  - o Live on-line discussions/video chats (48%)
  - o Discussions / webchats (43%)
  - o E-newsletter (41%)

“Other” responses were idiosyncratic. Percentages exceed 100% because respondents were asked to select all that apply.

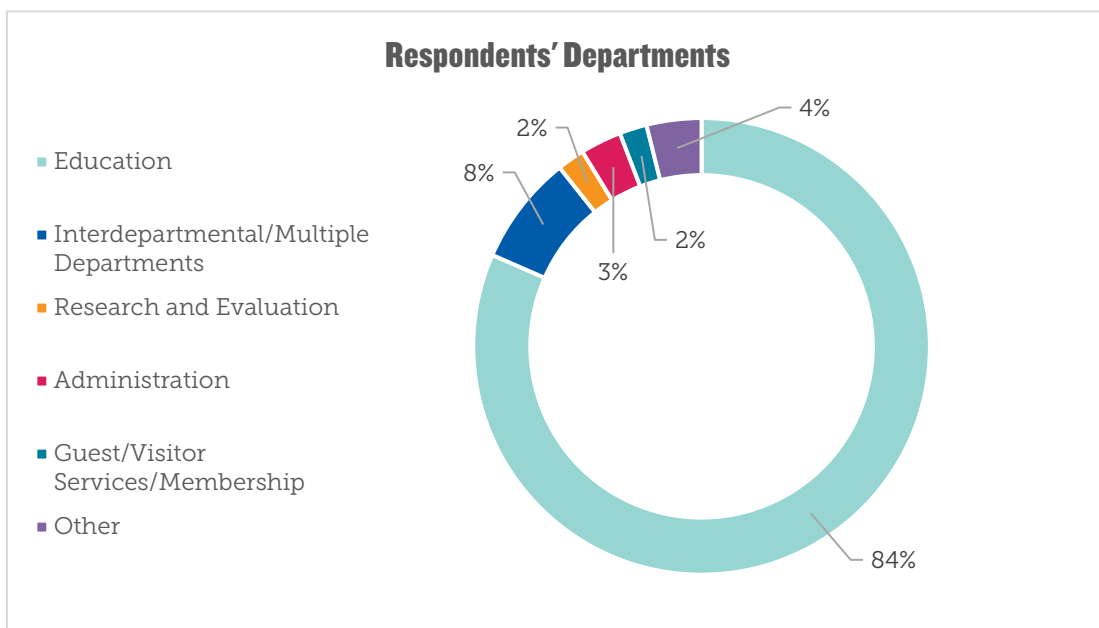


## Background Questions

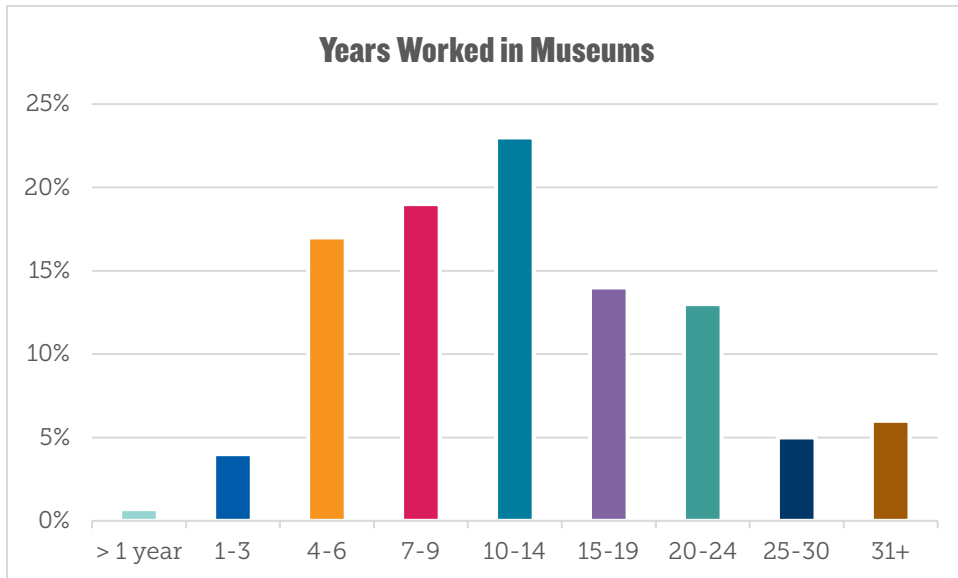
11. Respondents were asked how they would characterize their institutions. About two-thirds work for either an Art Museum/Gallery or History Museum/Living History/Historic Site. "Other" responses include independent consultants, culture-specific museums, etc.



12. Respondents were asked in which department they work. The majority (84%) work in education.

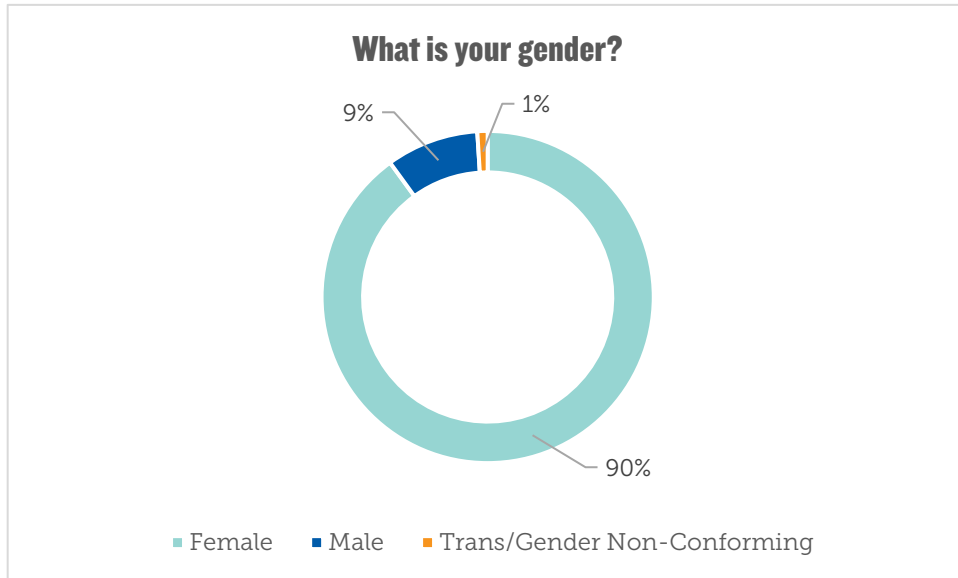


13. Respondents were asked for how long they have worked or volunteered in the museum field. The responses are distributed in a curve across age ranges.

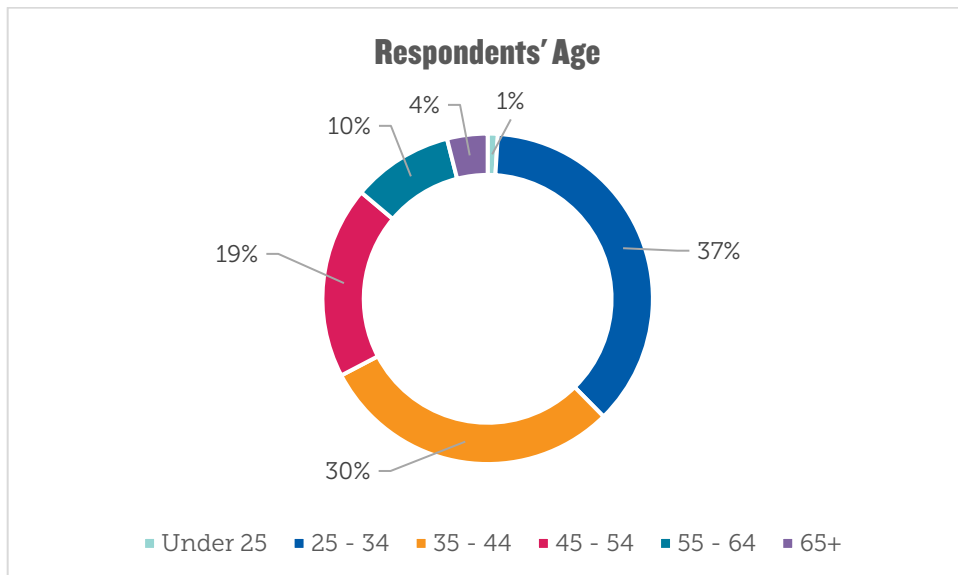


## Demographics

14. Respondents were asked about their gender and were asked to write in their response. The vast majority (90%) identify as female and/or women.<sup>4</sup>

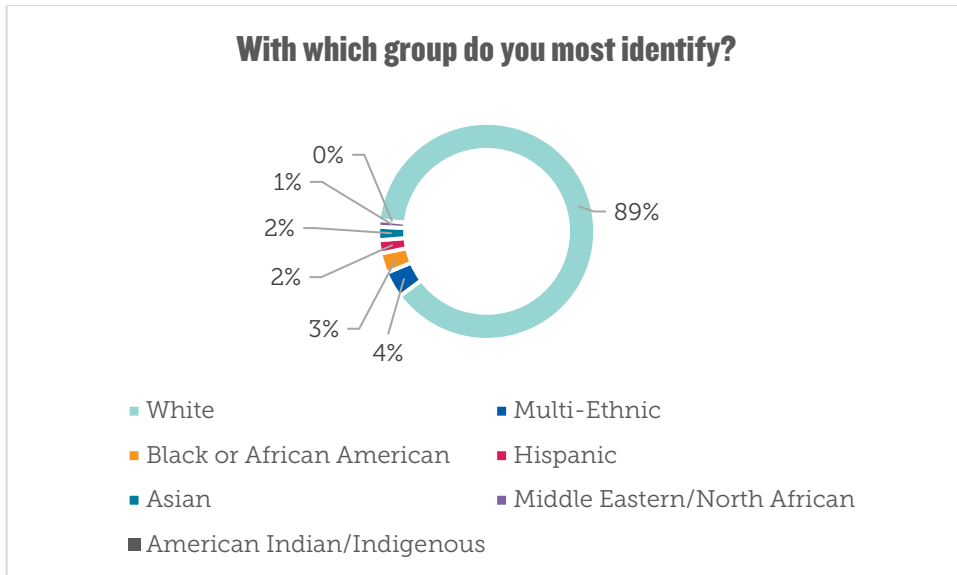


15. Respondents were asked to share their age. A little over one-third are ages 25-34, and just under one-third are ages 35-44.

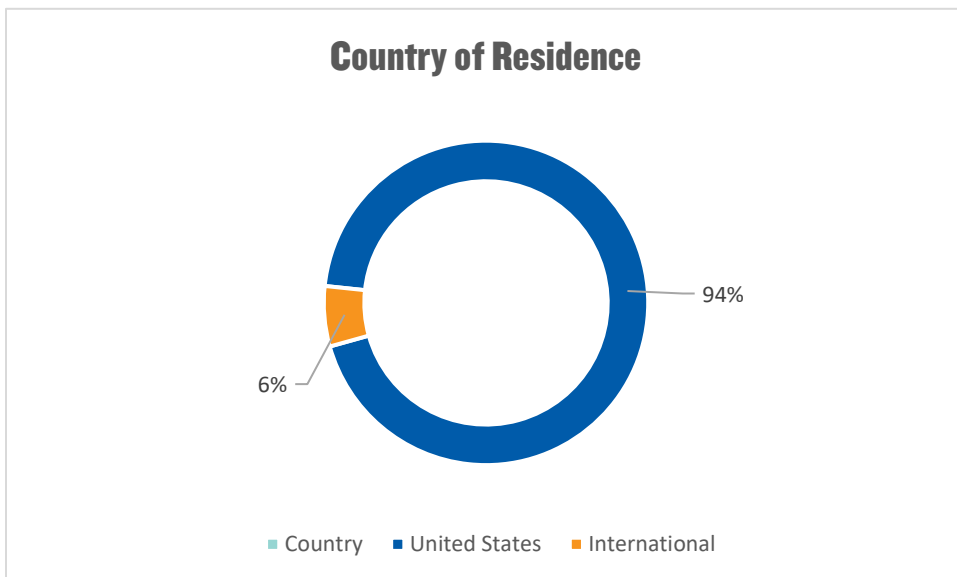


<sup>4</sup> MER asked, "What is your gender?" and asked respondents to write-in a response in a short-answer text box. During analysis, MER grouped similar responses (i.e., "female," "F," "cis woman,") for ease of reporting.

16. Respondents were asked to share with which group they most identify. The majority of respondents (89%) are white.



17. Respondents were asked in which country and state (if in the U.S.) they reside. The majority live in the U.S., and many of these live in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic. Six percent live outside the U.S., in Canada, New Zealand, Thailand, Hungary, Australia, Puerto Rico, and Japan.



## Appendix

1. Respondents' Museum Affiliation/Status as of March 9 (prior to Covid-19)		
N=145	Count	Percent
Full-time staff	117	81%
Part-time staff	9	6%
Consultant	4	3%
Student/university affiliation	5	4%
Other	10	7%

2. Level of Employment		
N=144	Count	Percent
Middle management	52	39%
Senior management	50	22%
Educator/teacher	50	6%
Coordinator	45	18%
Not employed on March 9	40	3%
Director	40	3%
Other (2 respondents or fewer)	33	1%

3. Respondents' Change in Museum Affiliation/Status AFTER Covid19 (as of June 15 to July 10)		
N=145	Count	Percent
No change	106	73%
Reduced hours/reduced pay	17	12%
Laid off/furloughed	15	35%
Other*	7	5%

4. Areas of concern		
N=145	Count	Percent
Advancing anti-racism and supporting DEAI	103	71%
Pivoting to online resources for target audiences	98	68%
Feeling that the foothold museum education made had been lost	84	58%
Developing new policies and procedures for a safe reopening	67	46%
Trying to do the work of several staff.	54	37%
Advocating for and protecting staff	51	35%
Connecting with leadership	38	26%
Reduced/lost wages	37	25%
Searching for new or different employment in the museum field	36	25%
Searching for new or different employment outside the museum field	35	24%
Other	16	11%

5. Changes organizations have made to staffing		
N=141	Count	Percent
No plans to fill open positions	52	37%
Furloughed a portion of staff	50	36%
Retained all staff	50	36%
Laid off a portion of staff	45	32%
Reduced some staff hours	40	28%
Released all or some volunteers/docents	40	28%
Froze or paused upcoming contracts	33	23%
Cut executive team's compensation	30	21%
Did not renew contractors	13	9%
Not sure	6	4%
Other*	20	14%

6. Shifts to your work		
N=138	Count	Percent
Creating new digital resources	130	94%
Maintaining partnerships with schools and communities	86	62%
Pushing out pre-existing digital resources	67	48%
Working differently with current partners*	53	38%
Collaborating with new partners*	30	22%
Additional detail*	40	--

7. Are You a Current MER Member?		
N = 145	Count	Percent
Yes	80	55%
No	40	28%
Not Sure	25	17%

8. If a MER Member, What Level is Membership?		
N = 91	Count	Percent
Individual (US/International)	85	93%
Student (US/International)	3	3%
Retired (US/International)	3	3%

9. If You Are a Current Member, Do You Plan to Renew		
N = 105	Count	Percent
Yes	75	71%
No	0	0
Not Sure	30	29%



10. What Kind of Discount?			
N = 138			
	Count	Percent	Notes
Do Not Need Discount	39	28%	
Discount option of some kind	93	66%	
Pay What You Can	36	39%	
Income Driven/Sliding Scale	30	32%	
Flat Rate Discount	18	19%	
Buy One/Give One	7	8%	
Other	8	6%	Includes: "I would be willing to pay more so others can have a discount.", "I'm going back to the classroom, not sure I'll renew.", "The Retired Membership is manageable.", "I don't know how to join.", "Not sure"

11. Most useful topics MER can provide content about/amplify others' work on		
N=142	Count	Percent
Antiracist theory and practice	105	74%
Remote/distance learning practices	104	73%
Future of museum education	97	68%
Equity, diversity and inclusion	90	63%
Museums' responses to systemic racism	89	62%
Museum educators' experience as related to systemic racism	77	54%
Museum educators' response as related to COVID19	59	41%
Museums' response to COVID19	57	40%
Learning Theory and Pedagogy	48	34%
Accessibility	46	32%
Collaboration with formal education	37	26%
Self-care practices	36	25%
Other	17	12%

12. Useful engagement platforms		
N=143	Count	Percent
Webinars or pre-recorded videos	106	74%
Open-access articles, digital or print	93	65%
Blog posts	87	61%
JME digital articles	78	55%
Live on-line discussions / video chat	68	48%
Discussions / webchats	62	43%
E-newsletter	58	41%
Website	33	23%
Live online discussion social media	27	19%
Other	4	3%

13. How Would you Characterize Your Institution?		
N = 143		
Institution	Count	Percent
Art Museum/Gallery	48	33.6
History Museum/Living History/Historic Site	45	31.5
College/University Museum	11	7.7
Science Center	7	4.9
Children's Museum	2	1.4
Zoo/Aquarium/Botanic Garden	7	4.9
Natural history Museum	5	3.5
Library and Archive	3	2.1
Multiple Content Areas	6	4.2
Other responses*	9	6.3
Total	143	100

14. In Which Department do you work?			
N = 145			Notes
Department	Count	Percent	
Education	121	83.5	Added in "Programs"
Interdepartmental/Multiple Departments	11	7.7	Added 8 additional responses that were multi-departmental
Research and Evaluation	2	1.4	
Administration	3	2.1	Added "Executive Director"
Guest/Visitor Services/Membership	2	1.4	
Other*	6	3.9	
Total	145	100	
*Other includes unique responses such as:			
Volunteer			
University			
Library			
Community Engagement			

15. How Long Have You Been Working/Volunteering in the Museum Field?		
N = 144		
Years	Count	Percent
10 to 14	33	22.9
7 to 9	27	18.8
4 to 6	24	16.7
15 to 19	20	13.9
20 to 24	19	13.2
31+	8	5.6
25 to 30	7	4.9
1 to 3	5	3.5
Less than 1 year	1	0.7
Total	144	100.2

16. What is your Gender? (Write-in response)		
N = 137		
Female	124	90%
Male	12	9%
Trans/Gender Non-Conforming	1	1%

17. What is Your Age?		
N = 144		
Age Range	Count	Percent
25 - 34	53	37%
35 - 44	43	30%
45 - 54	28	19%
55 - 64	14	10%
65+	5	4%
Under 25	1	1%

18. With Which Groups Do You Most Identify?		
N = 144		
	Count	Percent
White	128	89%
Multi-Ethnic	5	4%
Black or African American	4	3%
Hispanic	3	2%
Asian	3	2%
Middle Eastern/North African	1	1%
American Indian/Indigenous	0	0

19. States/ Countries Grouped by Number of Participants

Number of respondents	16	15	11	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Locale	NY	MA	VA	TX	MD	OH	MO	IN	AZ	FL	MN
					CA	IL		TN	WA	DL	NH
								CO	MI	DC	NJ
								PA		NC	WI
										NM	NV
										GA	IA
										ND	CT
										AL	KS
										New Zealand	LA
											Thailand
											Hungary
											Australia
											Canada
											Ontario
											Puerto Rico
											Japan

# MER Membership Survey

Thank you for sharing your feedback with the Museum Education Roundtable. Your responses to this survey will be kept anonymous. We will share our analysis with you and interested parties in the field. Our primary goal is to gather information that will help guide our service to MER members and to the broader museum education field.

\* Required

1. Please choose the description that best represents your involvement with museums as of March 9. \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- Part-time museum employee
- Full-time museum employee
- Museum docent/volunteer
- Museum trustee/board member
- Retired museum professional
- Consultant to museums
- Museum academic
- Graduate student
- Undergraduate student
- Retired
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

2. If employed (as of March 9), at what level?

*Mark only one oval.*

- Museum director
- Senior management
- Middle Management
- Coordinator
- Program teacher
- I was not employed on March 9
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Please choose the description that best represents your involvement with museums today. \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- No change in involvement
- Laid off
- Furloughed
- Reduced hours
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

4. In what ways, if any, has your organization made changes to staffing (including employees, contractors, volunteers, etc.)? Check all that apply.

*Check all that apply.*

- I'm not sure
- Retained all staff
- Laid off a portion of staff
- Furloughed a portion of staff
- Reduced some staff hours
- Cut executive teams' compensation
- Froze/paused current and/or upcoming contracts
- Did not/no plans to fill open positions
- Did not renew contractors
- Released all or some volunteers/docents

Other:  \_\_\_\_\_

5. In what ways, if any, have you had to shift or refocus your work/ your department's work to support and collaborate with your community? Check all that apply.

*Check all that apply.*

- Creating new digital resources
- Pushing out pre-existing digital resources
- Collaborating with new partners (describe in "other" box below)
- Working differently with current partners (describe in "other" box below)
- Maintaining partnerships with schools and communities through correspondence, social media, video chat, etc.

Other:  \_\_\_\_\_



6. What are your biggest areas of concern right now within the context of museum work (what are you struggling with)? Check all that apply.

*Check all that apply.*

- Reduced/lost wages
  - Connecting with leadership within your organization
  - Trying to do the work of several staff positions
  - Advocating for and protecting your staff
  - Feeling that the foothold museum education has worked hard to gain in museums is disappearing
  - Developing new policies and procedures in preparation for safe opening
  - Pivoting to online resources for target audiences
  - Advancing antiracism and supporting diversity, equity, access, and inclusion (DEAI) initiatives
  - Searching for new or different employment in the museum field
  - Searching for new or different employment outside the museum field
  - Nothing
- Other:  \_\_\_\_\_

7. MER is interested in supporting our members and readers during this difficult time. What topics would you find most useful? Check all that apply.

*Check all that apply.*

- Accessibility
  - Antiracist Theory and Practice
  - Collaboration with formal educational institutions
  - Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
  - Future of Museum Education
  - Learning Theory and Pedagogy
  - Museum educators' experiences as related to systemic racism
  - Museums' responses to systemic racism, especially anti-Black violence
  - Museums' responses to Covid-19
  - Museum educators' experiences as related to Covid-19
  - Remote/distance learning practices
  - Self-care practices
- Other:  \_\_\_\_\_

8. Which engagement platforms are most useful and accessible to you during this time? Check all that apply.

*Check all that apply.*

- Journal of Museum Education articles (digital)
- Open-access articles, such as free/reduced cost access to JME (digital and/or print)
- Discussions/web chats
- Blog posts
- Website page
- E-newsletter
- Webinars or pre-recorded videos
- Live online discussions – video chat
- Live online discussions – social media

Other:  \_\_\_\_\_

9. Is there anything else you would like to share with MER?

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### Background Questions

10. Are you a current MER member? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

11. If you are currently a MER member, what level is your membership?

*Mark only one oval.*

- Individual (US/International)
- Student (US/International)
- Retired (US/International)

12. If you are currently a MER member, do you plan to renew your MER membership this year?

*Mark only one oval.*

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

13. MER is considering offering discounted memberships to support the field during this time. What type of discount would make the JME most accessible to you?

*Mark only one oval.*

- Income-driven/sliding scale
- Flat rate discount (percent/dollar amount off purchase)
- Pay what you can
- Buy one/give one
- I do not need a discounted membership for MER membership to be financially accessible for me
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

14. What is your gender?

\_\_\_\_\_

15. What is your age?

*Mark only one oval.*

Under 25

25-34

35-44

45-54

55-64

65+

16. With which groups do you most identify?

*Mark only one oval.*

Asian

American Indian/Indigenous

Black or African-American

Hispanic

Middle Eastern/North African

Multi-ethnic

White

17. In which US State do you live? If you live outside the US, please specify your country:

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18. How long have you been working/volunteering in the museum field?

*Mark only one oval.*

- Less than 1 year
- 1-3 years
- 4-6 years
- 7-9 years
- 10-14 years
- 15-19 years
- 20-24 years
- 25-30 years
- 31+ years

19. In which department do you work?

*Mark only one oval.*

- Education
- Curatorial
- Marketing/PR
- Development
- Administration (finances, HR, etc.)
- Guest/Visitor Services/Membership
- Operations / IT / Security/Facilities
- Interdepartmental
- Research & Evaluation
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

20. How would you categorize your institution?

*Mark only one oval.*

- Art museum / gallery
- History museum
- University museum
- College/university
- Living history / historic site
- Science center
- Children's museum
- Zoo / aquarium
- Natural history museum
- Library
- Botanic garden
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

21. If you would like to subscribe to our e-newsletter, please share your email address:

\_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you so much!**

- MER Board of Directors

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