

# Why Collections Matter: Impacts of heritage collections on people's lives

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SURVEY

In 2018–19, ICCROM circulated a brief open survey offered in 22 different languages asking the following question:

*Imagine a world without cultural heritage collections:  
no more libraries, archives, museums, treasured artefacts  
in temples, cultural centres & communities.*

*How big a difference do you think this would make in your life?*

The survey collected ~2,400 responses from 103 countries, with respondents reporting ages 9 to 88 and a wide range of occupations.

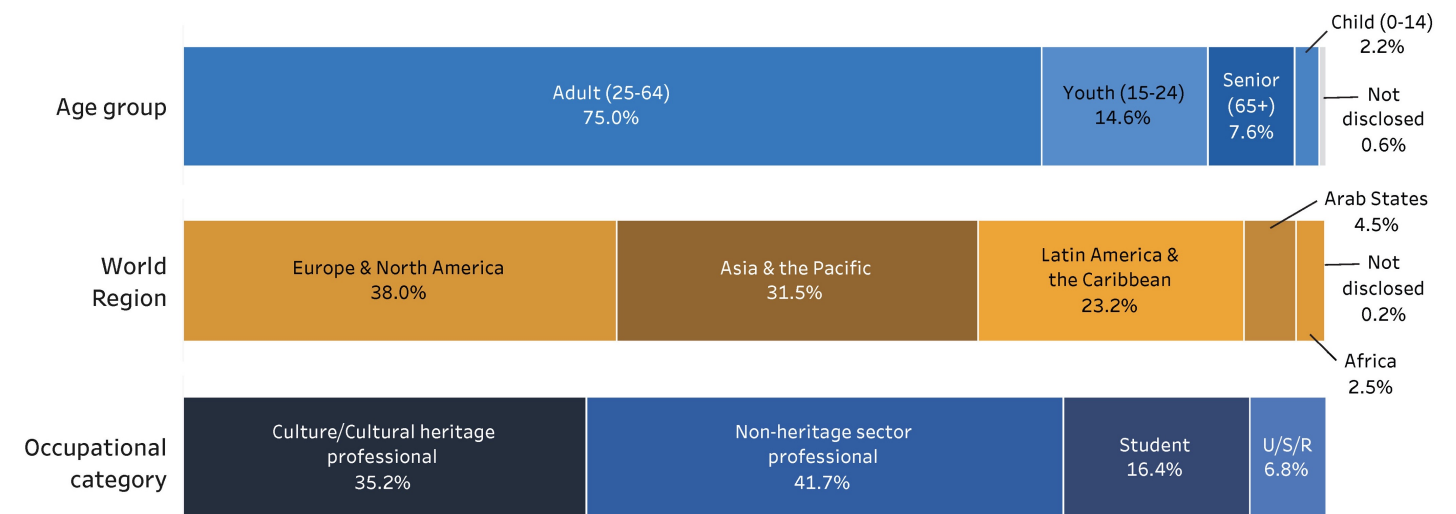


Fig. 1. Demographic composition of survey sample.

ANALYTICAL  
METHODOLOGY

Two complementary methods of qualitative data analysis—**inductive coding** and **asymmetrical correspondence analysis**—were used in tandem to analyze the qualitative survey responses, assisted by the software NVivo and XLSTAT. Coding involves systematically labeling coherent portions of textual documents with various “codes,” or thematic categories, to ease mining of key insights and increase analytical validity. Correspondence analysis is a statistical method that explores associations between categorical variables (here, the coded themes and respondents’ demographic attributes) based on relative frequencies.

## RESULTS

### Quantitative analysis & coding

Across all age groups, world regions, and livelihoods, respondents overwhelmingly reported that **losing the world's heritage collections would significantly impact their lives**. Average responses for all groups fell under *Huge* (Seniors and Culture/CH professionals) or *Very large* (remaining groups). Moreover, coding the qualitative responses yielded **8 thematic categories of impacts** that collections have on respondents’ lives (see Fig. 3).

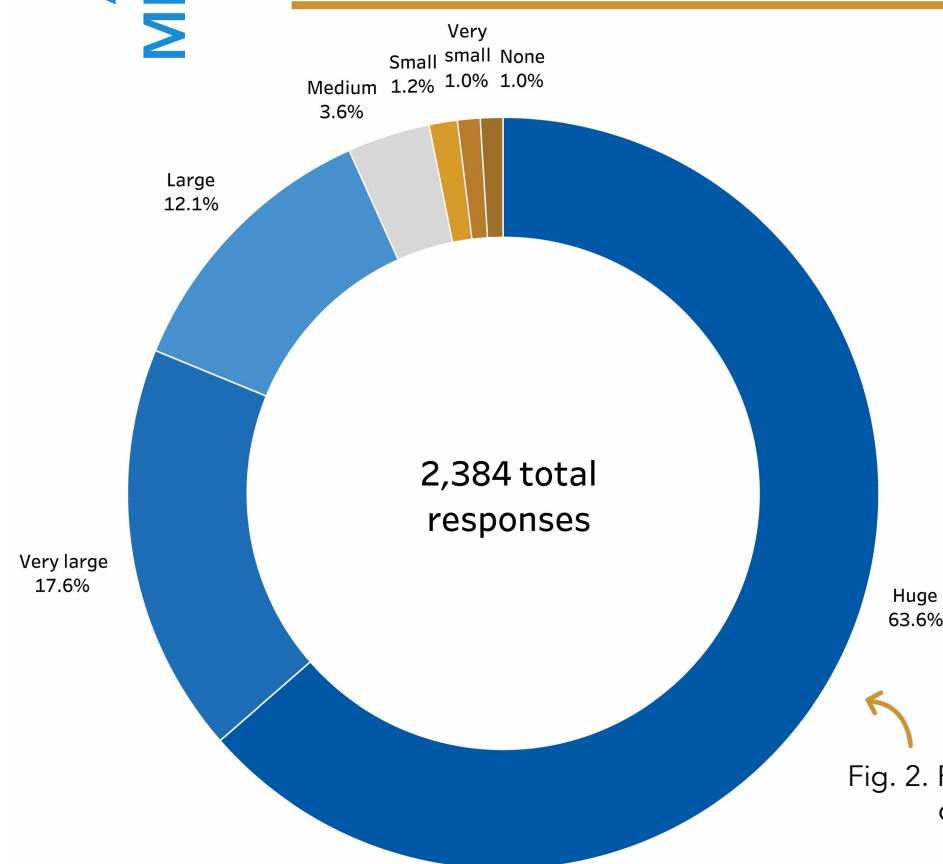


Fig. 2. Reported degrees of impact of the loss of collections.

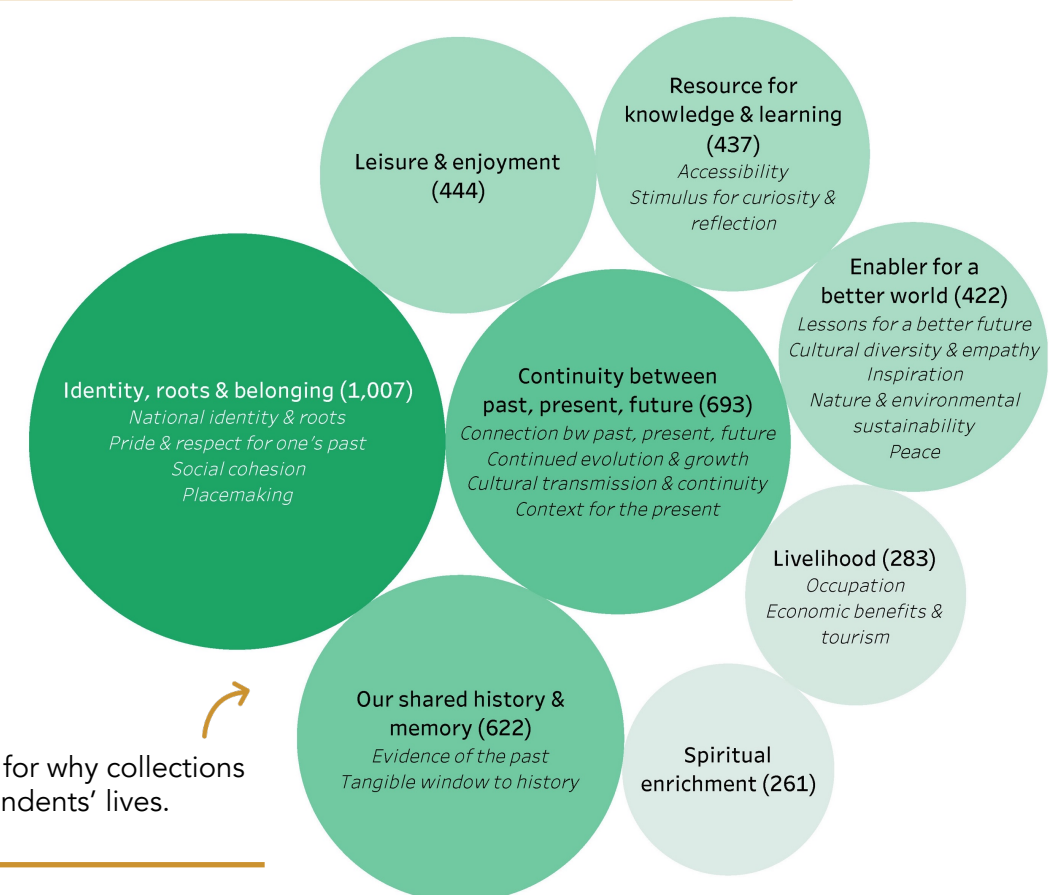


Fig. 3. Main themes for why collections impact respondents' lives.

### Correspondence analysis

Row and column categories for each graph are significantly associated ( $p < 0.0001$ ), implying **significant differences between row profiles**. The greatest inertia is seen for world regions (0.073), and the least for age groups (0.015). Some findings:

- Children have the most differentiated profile of all data points
- Europe & N. America correlate negatively to all other regions
- Culture/CH professionals correlate negatively to the remaining occupational categories

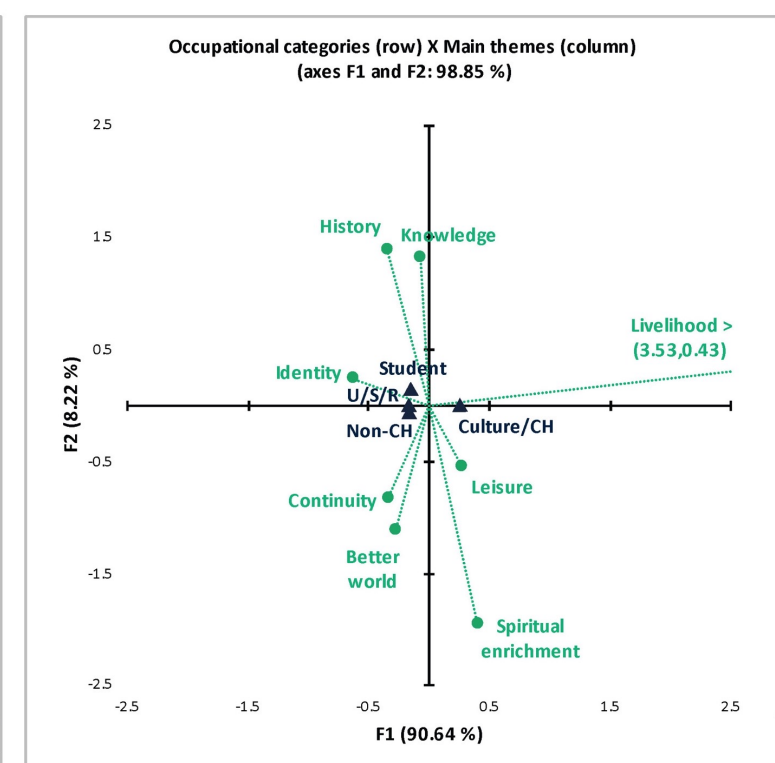
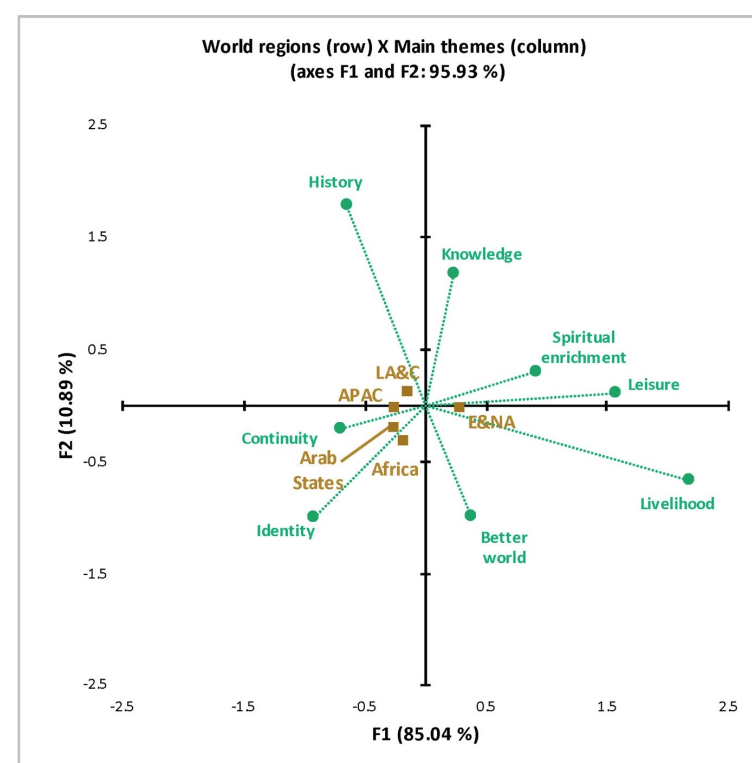
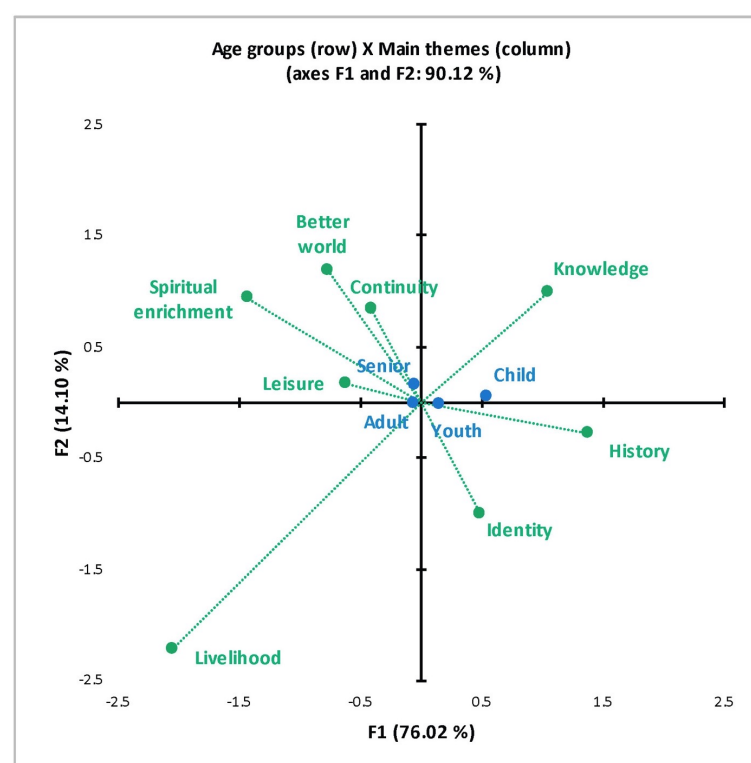


Fig. 4. Results of asymmetrical correspondence analyses of contingency tables cross-tabulating main themes and demographic attributes.

TO END...

This exploratory research casts light on **the breadth of positive contributions that collections offer to people's lives** across all ages, world regions, and walks of life. Moreover, it stresses that **heritage values are multivocal** and variable across identity lines, which implores recognition in any discussion of heritage benefits.

*"Culture and art bring us together and are what makes us human. For the sake of posterity alone, culture should be preserved and celebrated." (Youth, Kenya, Non-heritage professional)*