



**NASAA** NATIONAL ASSEMBLY of  
STATE ARTS AGENCIES  
Knowledge ▲ Representation ▲ Community

## Untapped Opportunity Older Americans & the Arts

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A SPECIAL EDITION OF  
**CULTURE**  
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# Today's Topics

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**About the Study**

Our goal is to inform and inspire approaches to cultural engagement across the spectrum of age that promote lifelong connection, learning, and creativity.

# Research Design

**28.3K**

**RESPONDENTS  
OVER 55 YEARS OLD**

**55-64: 43%**

**65-74: 38%**

**75-84: 16%**

**85+: 2%**

## Key design considerations:

1. Reflection of the views of all Americans
2. Ensuring enough voices at every age
3. Data-driven age bands

\*Benchmarked against the U.S. Census Bureau's  
February 2020 Current Population Survey.

# A National Portrait

Figures throughout the report are rounded to the nearest tenth of a percent. Charts depicting single select questions may not equal 100% due to rounding. For more details on weighting and methodology, please visit [www.culturetrack.com](http://www.culturetrack.com)



## ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME

55+ | \$72,800  
18-54\*\* | \$69,000

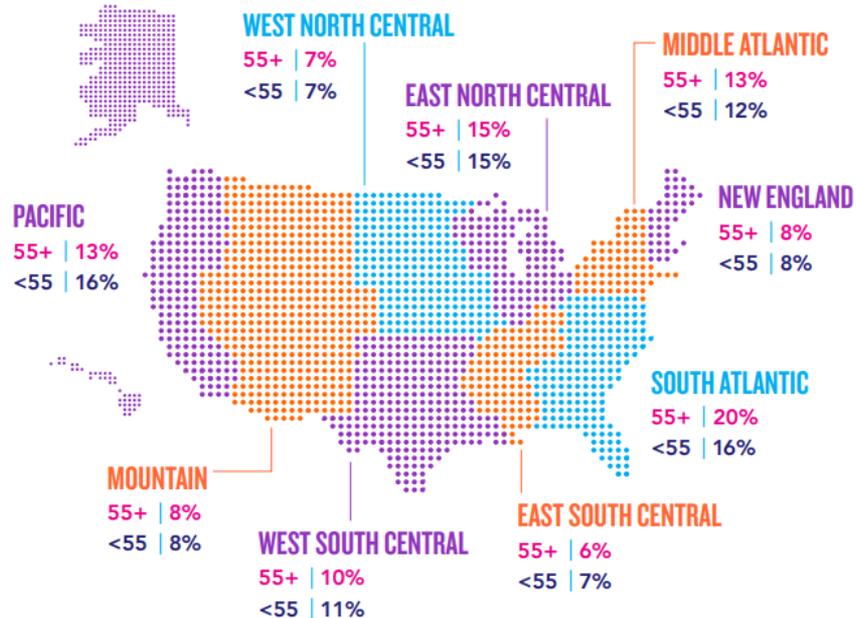
## HIGHEST EDUCATION

Graduate Degree	19%	13%
Bachelor's Degree	18%	21%
Some College / Associate's Degree	28%	27%
HS Diploma or Equivalent	29%	27%
Less than HS Diploma	6%	11%

## RESIDENCE

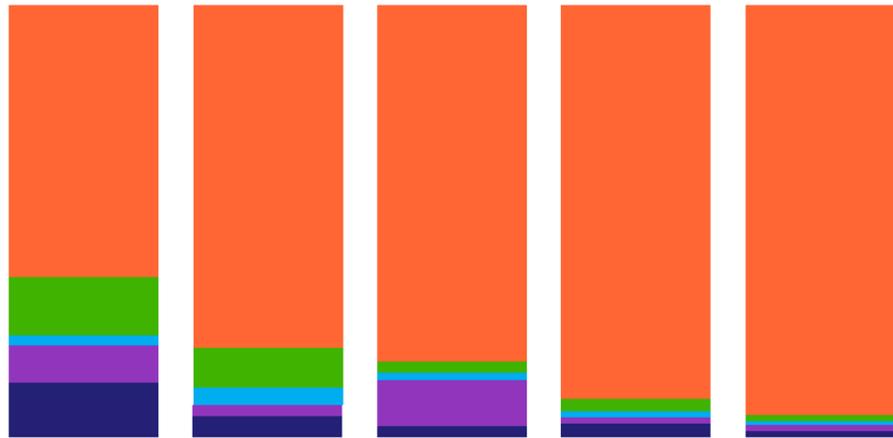
Urban	26%	32%
Suburban	58%	51%
Rural	15%	16%

## RESPONDENTS BY REGION\*



# A National Portrait, Diving Deeper

## RACE AND ETHNICITY BREAKDOWN



18-54

55-64

65-74

75-84

85+

● Asian / Pacific Islander

● Black / African American

● Native American

● Hispanic / Latinx

● White / Caucasian

## RACE AND ETHNICITY\*

Asian or Pacific Islander	2%	7%
Black / African American	10%	12%
Hispanic / Latinx	10%	20%
Native American	<1%	<1%
White / Caucasian	75%	55%
2+ Races	1%	5%
Other	1%	1%

## AGE\*\*

55+ | 38%

18-54 | 62%

## GENDER IDENTITY

Female	56%	56%
Male	44%	43%
Non-Binary	<1%	2%
Self-Describe	1%	1%

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**Priorities &  
Context**

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## Quick Poll Question

Compared to life before the pandemic, which emotions do you expect older adults feel more strongly than younger adults? (Select all that you think apply.)

- Disconnected
- Sad or Depressed
- Bored
- Worried or Afraid
- Angry
- Hopeful

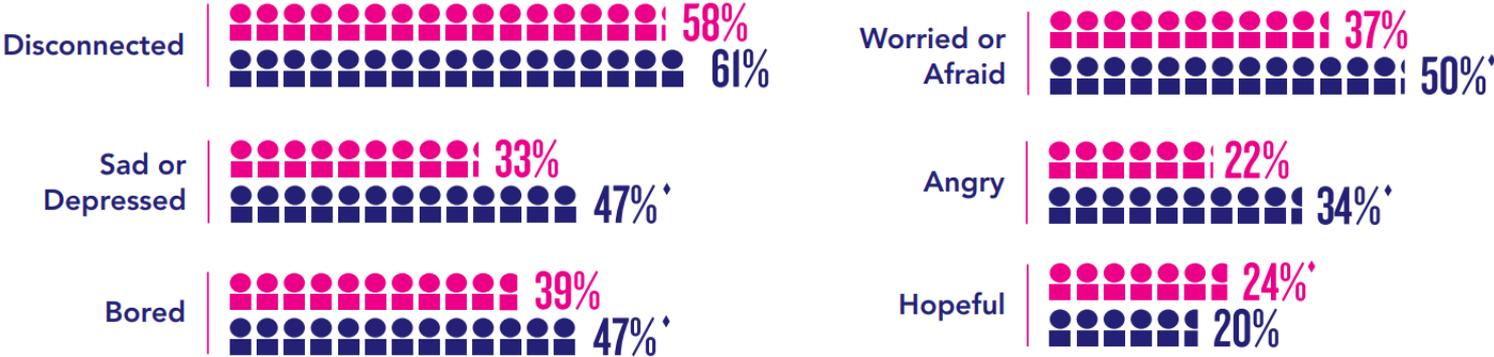
# Resilience Among the 55+ Population

Q

Compared to your life before the pandemic, how are you feeling these days? Please select one answer for each feeling.

■ 55+  
■ <55

Age and experience provide vital perspective for navigating unprecedented times. While the pandemic has left everyone feeling less connected, older adults are more likely to have a positive attitude than younger generations, with some even feeling more hopeful.



◆ Data is statistically significant.  
 Respondents answered according to a five-point scale ranging from "A lot less" to "A lot more." Top two or bottom two responses are combined.

# Needs in our Daily Lives

A desire for more fun in their lives is consistent for young and old, but other priorities shift with age: older adults particularly want more opportunities to connect with others and to find humor.

**Q** | What kinds of things do you want more of in your life right now? Please select up to FIVE.

## TOP 5 (55 +)



## TOP 5 (<55)



Respondents could select from 14 options. Responses shown are the top 5 for each group. 2% of all respondents selected "None of these."

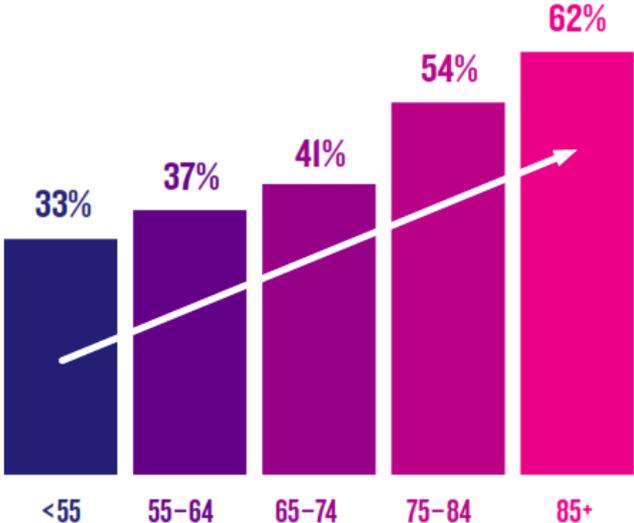
# Needs for Connection Scale Up with Age

Social connection is the second highest priority for what older adults want out of their lives, and this desire intensifies with age.

Q

What kinds of things do you want more of in your life right now? Please select up to FIVE.

## A: SOCIAL CONNECTION



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**A Lifetime  
with Culture**

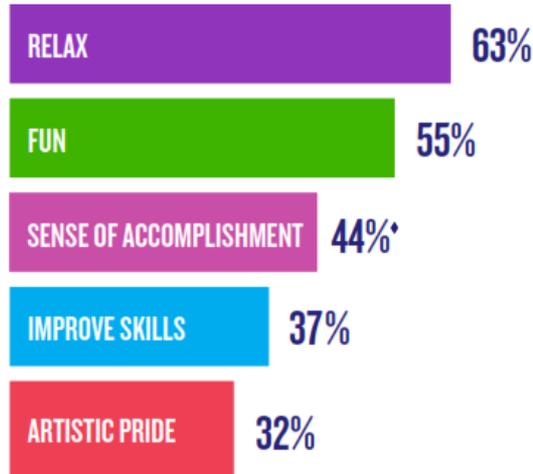
# Driven to Create

Motivation for pursuing creative outlets changes with age, with relaxation and sense of accomplishment taking greater priority for older adults.

Q

Would you share some of the reasons you've done those creative activities over the past year? Please select up to FIVE.

## TOP 5 (55+)



## TOP 5 (<55)



\*Data is statistically significant.

Respondents could select from 14 responses, top 5 for each group shown. 1% of all respondents selected "None of these."

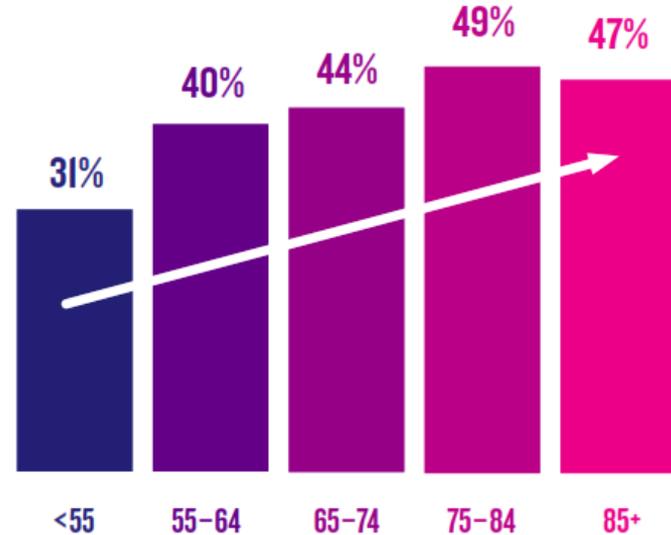
# Seeking Achievement

**Creative activities that validate their skills and capabilities are increasingly important to adults as they get older.**

**Q**

Would you share some of the reasons you've done those creative activities over the past year? Please select up to FIVE.

## **A: SENSE OF ACCOMPLISHMENT**



# For All Ages

When it comes to cultural experiences, age doesn't dictate engagement: older and younger adults choose to participate in the same kinds of arts and culture activities.

Q

Have you done any of the following activities in-person in the past few years (before or during the pandemic)?

■ 55+  
■ <55

#1



Fairs and Festivals

53% vs. 51%

#2



Parks, Zoo, Aquarium,  
or Botanical Garden

49% vs. 58%\*

#3



Musical Performance

45%\* vs. 40%

#4



Historic Site  
or Tour

35%\* vs. 30%

#5



Theater

32% vs. 31%

#6



Museums

30% vs. 35%\*

◆ Data is statistically significant.  
Respondents could select any from 16 options.  
In-person arts and culture activities shown are ranked by 55+ population preference. 4% of all respondents selected "None of these."

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**Expanding Digital  
Horizons**

# Activating the Digital Realm

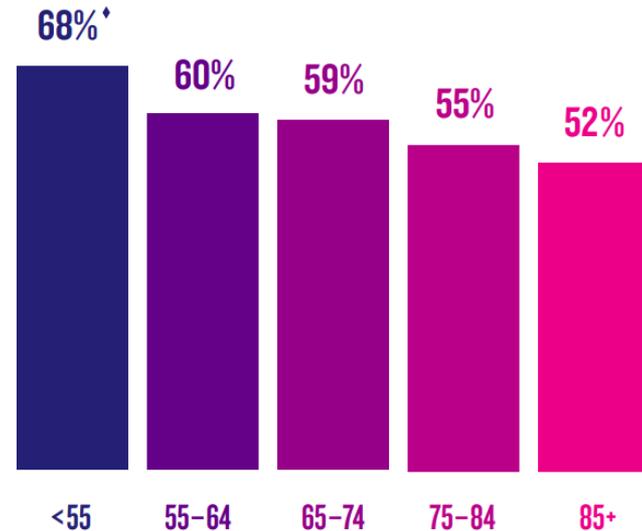
Although engagement declines gradually as respondents age, more than half of older adults had participated in digital cultural activities one year into the pandemic, a higher proportion than may have been presumed.

♦ Data is statistically significant.

Q

Have you done any online arts or culture activities or events over the past year? Please select ALL that apply.

## A: DIGITAL PARTICIPATION



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## Quick Poll Question

What benefits do you think older adults have been most getting from online engagement with arts & culture? (Pick your top THREE)

- Distraction from the crisis
- Fun
- Connection with others
- Broadened their perspective
- Learned something new
- Improved their skills
- A sense of accomplishment
- Feeling like part of a community
- Relaxation

# Online Benefits

Older adults gained more overall from digital arts activities than younger respondents, citing social and emotional benefits like learning and relaxation that align with what they need and want more of in their lives.

What (if anything) did you get out of doing those online arts or culture activities?

Please select up to FIVE.

## TOP 5 (55 +)



## TOP 5 (<55)



<sup>♦</sup>Data is statistically significant.

Respondents could select from 14 responses, top 5 for each group shown. 2% of all respondents selected "None of these."

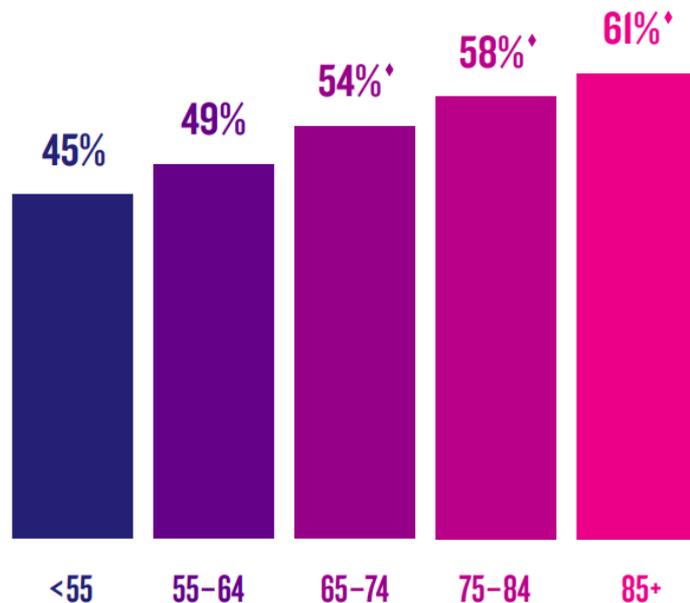
# Lifelong Learners

Encountering new ideas and experiences was the leading benefit older adults gained through digital arts offerings, and the educational value of these activities increases with age.

Q

What (if anything) did you get out of doing those online arts or culture activities? Please select ALL that apply.

## A: LEARNED SOMETHING NEW



<sup>♦</sup> Data is statistically significant.

# Influences on Digital Engagement

These three areas can help arts organizations energize digital engagement and expand digital participation among older adults.

Five-point scale. Percent selecting a top-two-box indicating they feel this is "important" or "very important."

Q

Thinking about the kinds of online arts or culture activities that you've done, how important are the following qualities?



## FREE ACCESS

**70%** of older adults believe it's important that digital activities are free (no cost to access online).

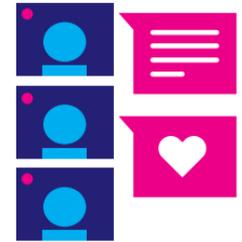
67% for younger adults.



## GLOBAL ACCESS

**68%** of older adults believe it's important that digital activities give access to organizations or artists located in other places.

59% for younger adults.



## SOCIAL ACCESS

**44%** of older adults believe it's important that online activities include a social component to connect with other participants.

45% for younger adults.

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**Calls for Change**

# What Matters Most?

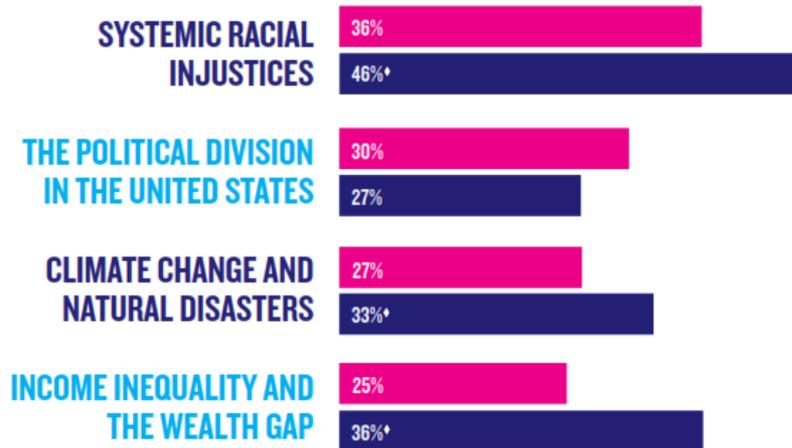
Q

Which of the following social issues (if any) do you think arts or culture organizations should address?

55+  
<55

Three-quarters of all adults believe arts organizations have a responsibility to confront social issues, with systemic racism being the top priority for all ages. Older adults also saw a greater role for arts and culture to play in bridging political divisions in the U.S.

**76%** of all respondents identified at least one social issue they believe arts organizations should address



\* Data is statistically significant. Respondents could select from 9 responses, only the top 4 responses from the 55+ population are shown in order.

33% of older adults respondents said "None of these."

# Perceptions of Systemic Racism

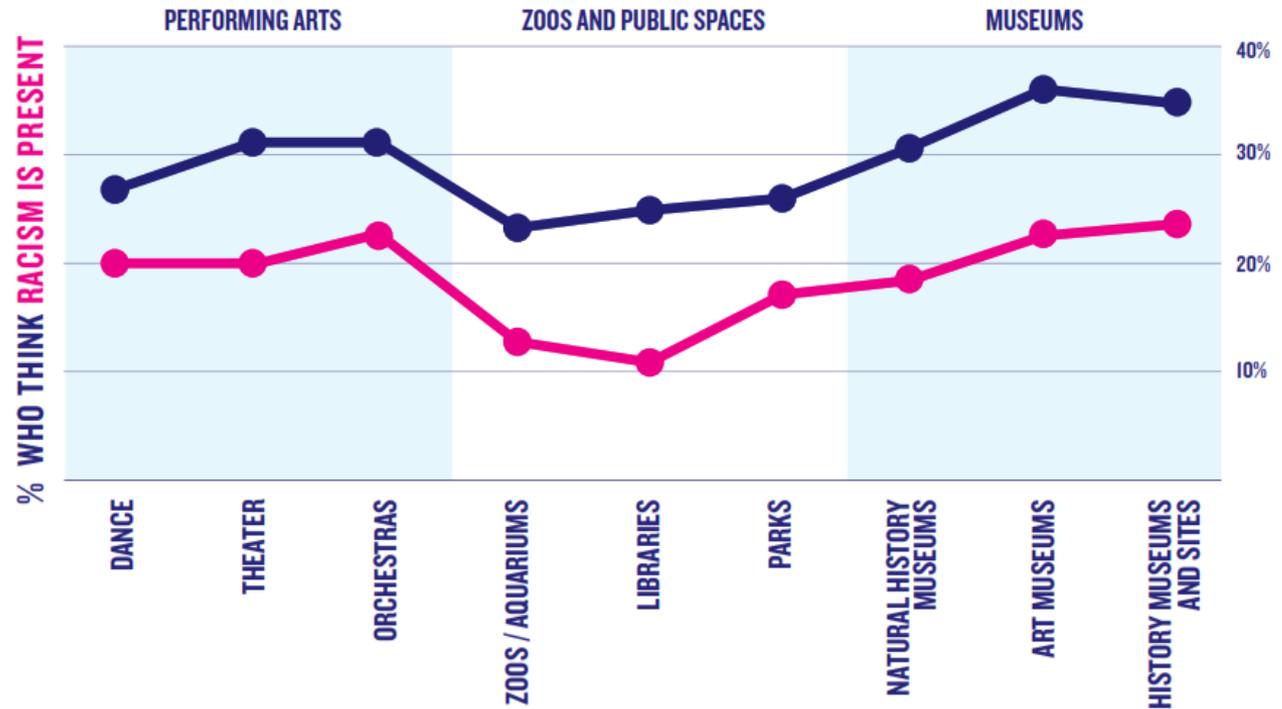
Q

Based on what you've seen or heard, do you think systemic racism is present in each of the types of organizations below?

55+  
<55

Older and younger adults agree that arts organizations should address racial injustices. However, older adults—who are more predominantly white than younger adults—are less likely to perceive structural racism within arts organizations.

15 different types of organizations were included in our survey; recipients were randomly given four organizations to respond to. Five-point scale, top two responses are combined.



# Values in Action

**Older and younger adults largely agree on the values and qualities they want to see arts organizations uphold, emphasizing welcome, accessibility, and inclusivity.**

*Respondents could select from 18 responses. Only responses that are statistically significant between the two groups are shown. Values are listed in descending order of 55+ preferences.*

Q

What qualities or values are most important to you in an arts or culture organization? Please select up to FIVE.

55+  
<55



# Co-Creating Change

**Older and younger adults believe arts organizations have work to do to better serve and relate to diverse audiences. Partnering with communities to design new programs is an essential step in building greater relevance and impact.**

Q

How much do you personally agree or disagree with the following statements?

■ 55+  
■ <55

53%

**I hope arts and culture organizations change after the pandemic to be more relevant to more people.**

53% for younger adults.

63%

**Arts or culture organizations should involve their communities and collaborate with them to create programs.**

61% for younger adults.

Five-point scale. Percent selecting a top-two-box indicating they "agree" or "strongly agree."



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**Insights into  
Action**

The true impact of cultural research lies in the conversations it sparks, the priorities it shifts, and the experiments it inspires in cultural practice, philanthropy, and policy.

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## Actionable Takeaways

1. Doubling down on supports for social connection
2. Fostering opportunities to deepen skills & feel accomplishment
3. Continuing to Connect Online (accessibility)
4. Supporting Lifetime Learning
5. Considering Options to Address Social Issues

THANK YOU

I'd love to hear from you:  
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