



Sonoma Mission 200

Online Survey

Sonoma State Historic Park, Bay Area District

Results Summary

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May 2022



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Introduction

This report broadly summarizes the results of an online survey developed for the Sonoma Mission 200 Project. The survey was available to the general public online from the beginning of March through the end of April 2022. A total of 102 responses were received.

Project Overview

As the Bay Area District begins planning the commemoration of the Sonoma Mission anniversary, the voices and perspectives of the community will be crucial in identifying appropriate, meaningful, and impactful ways to reflect on the past 200 years and to shape the future of interpretation at Sonoma State Historic Park. The Sonoma Mission 200 Project is a multi-phase project that will gather community input, develop a commemoration plan and provide event management. The first phase begins with formal Tribal government consultations, community engagement with staff, volunteers, and stakeholders, and an online public meeting. The second phase includes plan implementation and commemoration activities. The final phase will yield a written update to the Sonoma State Historic Park interpretation and education programming.

The Sonoma Mission 200 project is part of a larger effort within State Parks' Reexamining Our Past Initiative. Among its goals, the initiative seeks to address interpretive programs and exhibits in California's State Park System that fall short of fully contextualizing the state's history. The initiative was started in 2020 when State Parks joined with other California State Agencies to redress discriminatory names within the state park and transportation systems. This followed the national conversation about racist public memorials in 2019, as well as Governor Newsom's formal apology to Native Americans and the creation of the California Truth and Healing Council that same year.

Survey Format

The online survey was created using Google Forms. It was available to anyone. The survey was accessible via links available in emails, the project website, and social media. It could also be accessed through a QR code which was printed and displayed at several locations in Sonoma State Historic Park as well as distributed on flyers at mission events. It contained a total of 10 questions and took approximately five minutes to complete. There were three different types of questions: multiple choice, short answer, and ranking.



Online survey introduction.

The topics addressed by the survey were broadly similar to questions asked during the project's in-person meetings but also included several demographic questions. Overall the survey asked questions meant to gauge current attitudes towards the mission, gain insight about how to improve future interpretation, and collect specific input on the events and activities that will comprise the bicentennial commemoration.

Conclusion

Feedback from the online survey has provided a wealth of information that sheds light on public perception and attitudes toward the mission. It has helped reveal the demographics of the mission's visitors and stakeholders, identifying regionally local residents who have recently visited the mission as the majority of respondents. Survey feedback shed light on how stakeholders describe their visits to the mission and what they value about the mission. Responses have also identified aspects of current interpretation that leave lasting impressions, providing a broad range of answers but also revealing trends and repeated concepts. Suggestions for activities and programs to commemorate the mission's 200th anniversary favor educational opportunities as well as art related activities.

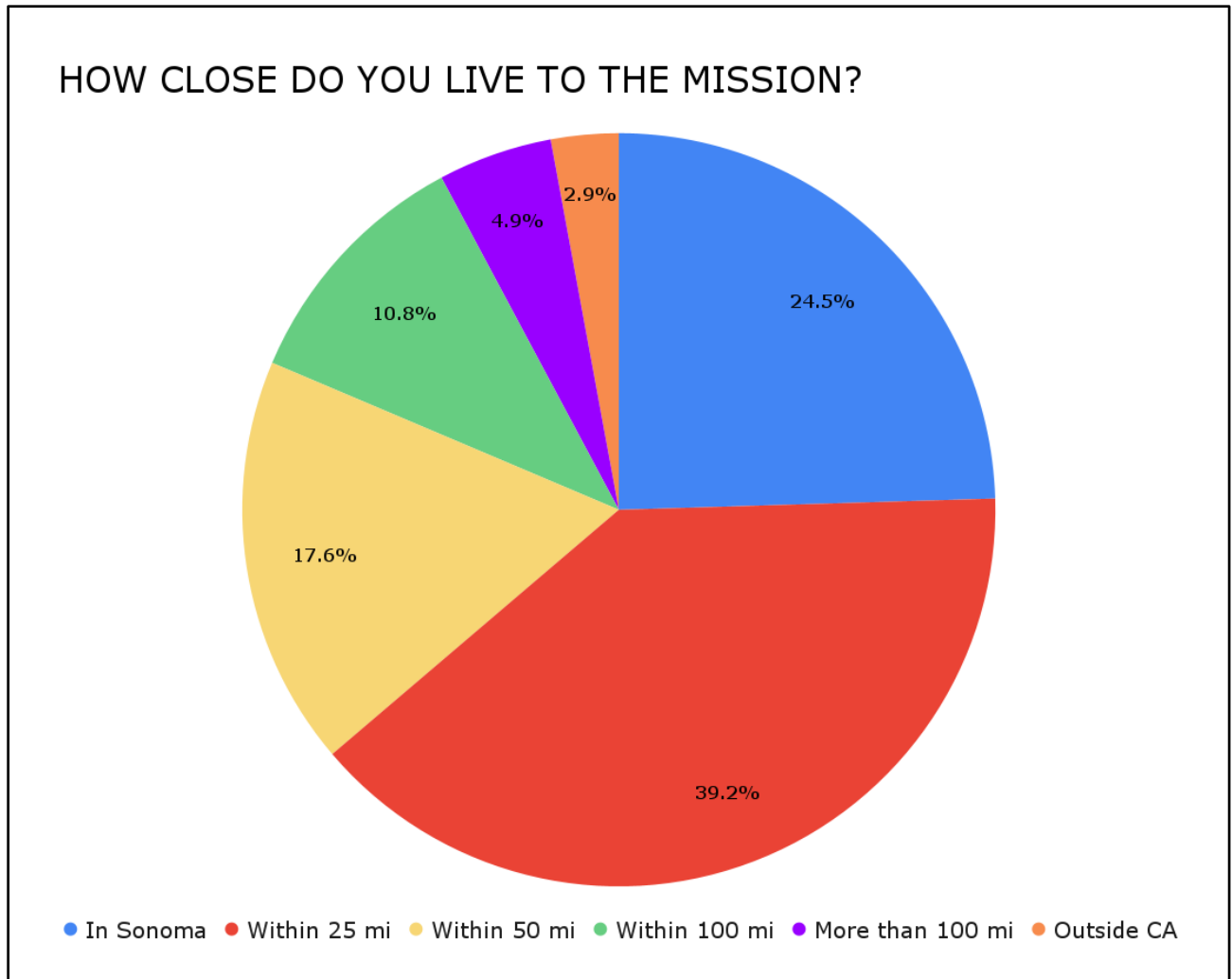
Overall the survey responses have provided an overview of how the mission impacts and influences the stakeholder community and offers context in which to craft solutions, make improvements, and find new ways of engaging. The input collected in the online survey will play an important role in shaping and guiding the development of the Sonoma Mission 200 plan as well as have lasting impacts by influencing the content and recommendations in the project's final planning and summary document.

Results by Question

The online survey contained a total of 10 questions. Five of these questions were multiple choice, four were short answer, and one involved ranking answers on a scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. A summary of results based on each question is provided below.

Question 1: How close do you live to the mission?

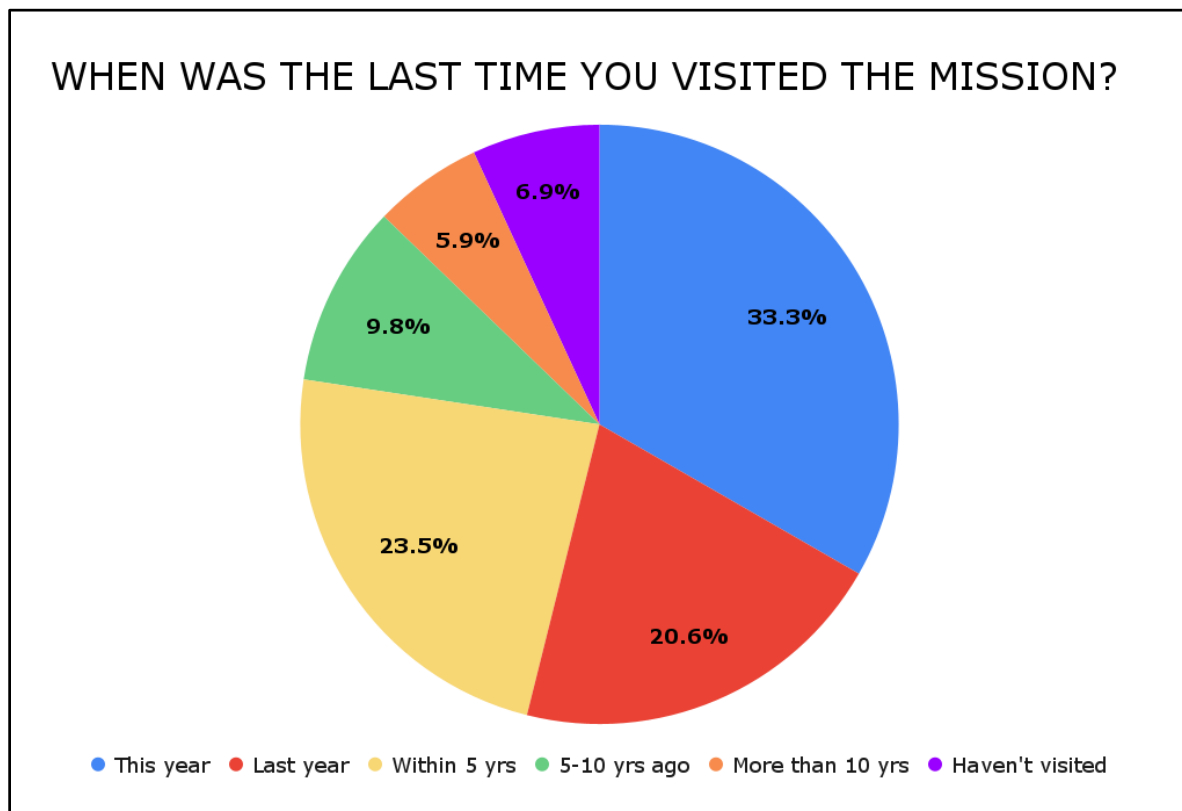
The results to this question showed that interest and engagement surrounding the mission was highest amongst regionally local residents with a combined total of approximately 81% of all respondents living within 50 miles of the mission. Only 2.9% of respondents lived outside of California and there were no responses from individuals living outside of the United States.



A majority of respondents live in relatively close proximity to the mission.

Question 2: When was the last time you visited the mission?

Slightly more than half of the respondents had visited the mission either within the year or last year. It is helpful to know that many of the responses, because of recent visitation, reflect the current status and of existing interpretation, programming, and the physical condition of the facilities. However, not visiting the mission recently does not discount the answers of those individuals. The physical space and the exhibits have not changed or been updated in many years. For example, the painted exhibits on the walls of the bell room date back to 1964. Therefore, the memories and experiences during visits that occurred more than five or even 10 years ago would not have been much different in terms of the interpretive offerings. In addition, those responses are just as important since they help gauge the lasting impact of interactions, highlighting both good and bad aspects of the experience of visiting the mission. Likewise, the responses from those who have not yet had the chance to visit the mission reveal the attitudes towards the mission that exist from its reputation, word of mouth, or information available online. It helps build understanding for why people have not visited the mission yet, revealing opportunities for addressing these reasons.

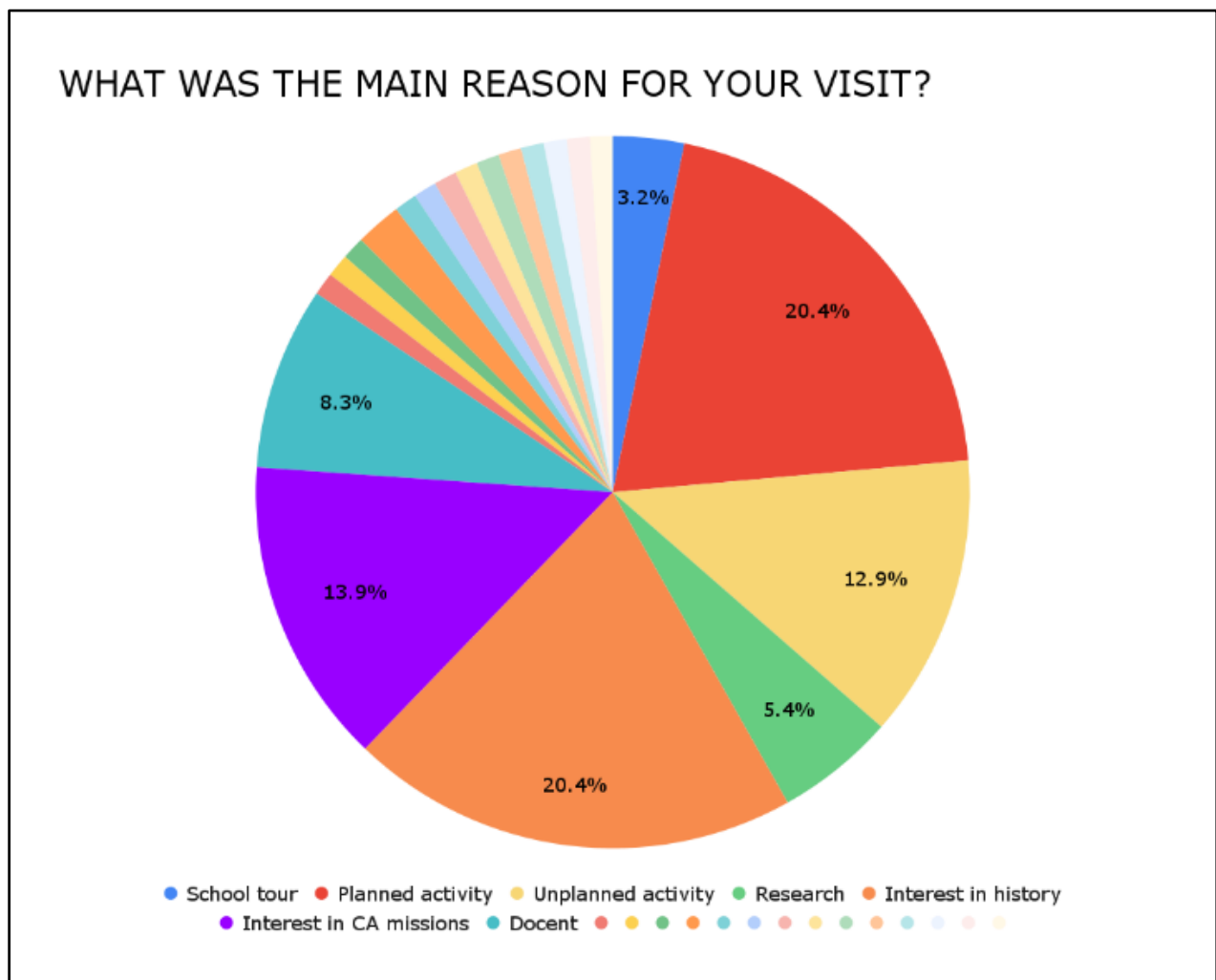


A majority of respondents have visited the mission within the last five years.

Question 3: What was the main reason for your visit?

Respondents were given six choices and allowed to check as many as applied. They were also given the option to add in their own answer. The choices were:

- School tour (virtual or in-person)
- Planned activity with friends or family
- Unplanned activity while visiting the area
- Academic research
- General interest in history
- Specific interest in California missions



Reasons for visiting the mission varied but most visits were planned.

The two most popular responses were "General interest in history" and "Planned activity with friends or family" with 19.6% each. People visiting for school tours or academic research were the least common reasons given by respondents. At

least 10 respondents added that being a docent or attending docent meetings was the reason for their visit. Other added reasons included attending a lecture, blessing of the olives, the ringing of the mission bell, and the Camino de Sonoma pilgrimage. Aside from the 12.4% of respondents whose visit to the mission was unplanned, all other reasons for visiting were intentional and purposeful. Understanding the reasons why people visit can help identify areas in which to concentrate efforts for expanding audiences and assist in meeting and exceeding visitor expectations.

Question 4: What do you remember most from your last visit to the mission? Was it an object, a story, a person, a concept, a place, an activity...?

Participants were not presented with choices for this question and instead could respond with a short written answer. Because this was an open-ended question, the answers and responses are greatly varied. However, there are some trends that can be seen and several concepts that are repeated, with two of them dominating most of the responses. The topic most often repeated in responses involved lasting impressions of the physical space and structures including the mission architecture, the courtyard, and the chapel. The treatment of Native Americans and the lack of information about that aspect of the mission's history was the other concept that was referenced multiple times.

Question 5: During my last visit to the mission I felt...

Participants were asked to describe how they felt during their last visit to the mission. They were presented with five different descriptors: interested, welcome, impressed, satisfied, and connected. For each of these sentiments participants could choose to strongly agree, agree, somewhat agree, remain neutral, somewhat disagree, disagree, or strongly disagree. The results for each descriptor are briefly discussed in more detail below.

Interested

Overall respondents feel interested when visiting the mission. A combined total of 83% somewhat agree, agree, or strongly agree while only 12% somewhat disagree, disagree, or strongly disagree.

Welcome

Respondents overall feel welcome when visiting the mission. Thirty-six percent of respondents agree with this statement while 30% strongly agree. Although more people overall feel welcome, those that do not feel welcome feel strongly about it, represented by 10% of people choosing "strongly disagree" as their answer versus 5% choosing "disagree" and 2% choosing "somewhat disagree."

Impressed

The responses regarding how impressed people were during their last visit shows some polarizing results. Although the overall results show that more people were generally impressed, the number of people who chose "strongly agree" and "strongly disagree" were essentially the same, with only one fewer vote for "strongly disagree." The majority of respondents chose "agree" (28%) but overall these results show that those who are not impressed feel very strongly about their experience.

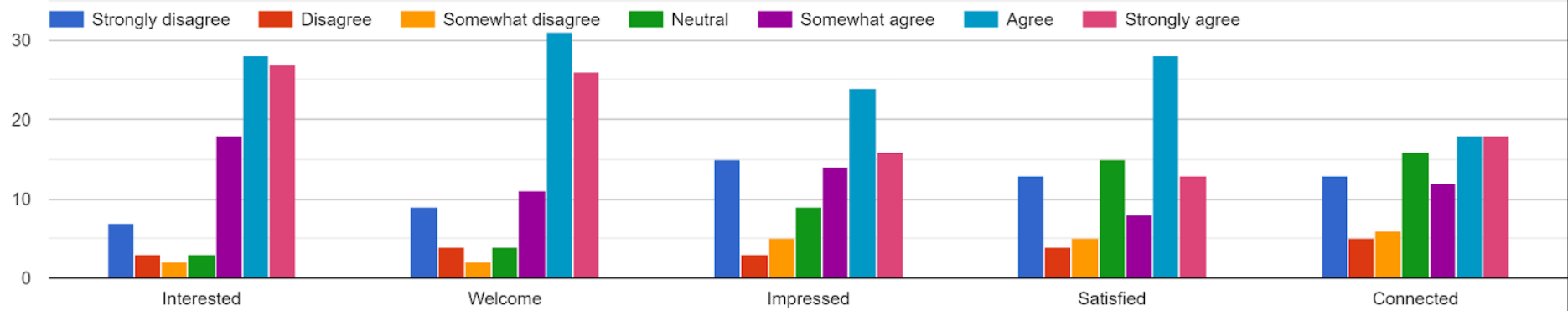
Satisfied

The results of this question indicate that most people are solidly satisfied with their visit to the mission, with 33% of respondents choosing "agree." However, similar to the responses about feeling impressed, the number of respondents who choose "strongly disagree" and "strongly agree" are exactly the same. Many people chose to remain neutral on this question as "neutral" was chosen by 17% of respondents.

Connected

This question produced the most varied responses. Overall most people felt connected with a total of 54% somewhat agreeing, agreeing, or strongly agreeing. Eighteen percent of respondents remained neutral while a total of 28% of respondents somewhat disagreed, disagreed, or strongly disagreed. Again, amongst those who disagreed, feelings of strong disagreement were most common.

During my last visit to the mission I felt...



Results showing how people felt during their last visit to the mission.

Question 6: Why is the Sonoma Mission meaningful to you?

Participants were given the following nine choices as answers and instructed to choose all that applied. Additional answers could also be added. The choices are listed in order from most selected to least selected and include the selection percentage.

- It represents a significant chapter in the California story—83%
- It is a central part of local history—73%
- It is a physical piece of California mission history—72%
- It is an important part of Native American history—70%
- It teaches critical lessons about colonialism—51%
- It is an important educational resource for schools and students—43%
- It is important to tourism—27%
- It is an important symbol of Catholicism—15%
- It is not meaningful—3%

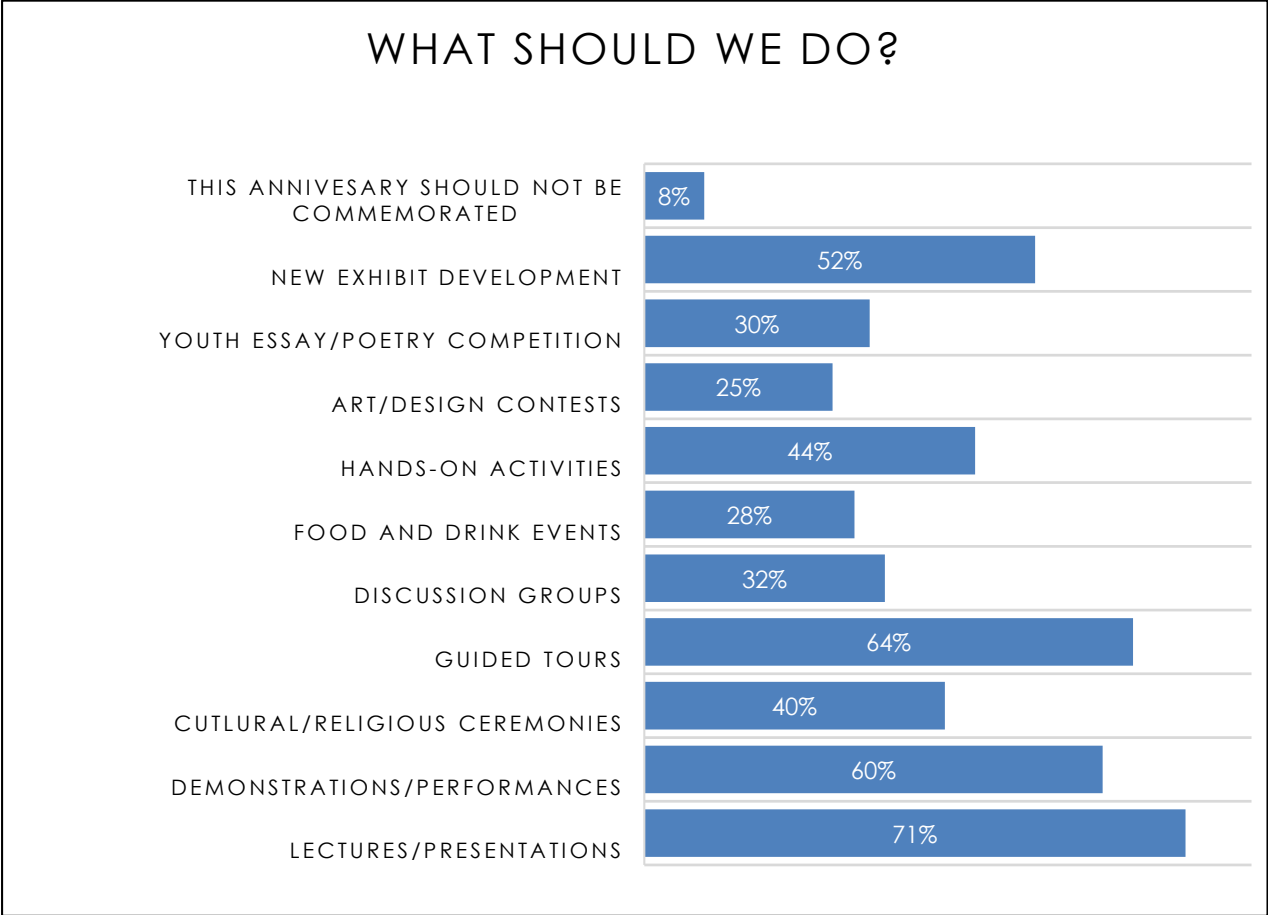
An additional 12 answers were submitted that revealed personal connections and memories that explained why the mission is important. These answers ranged from being married at the mission to it being inspiring as a religious symbol to its ability to make history real for visiting students.

Question 7: What do you think is the most difficult part of the mission's history?

This open ended question produced a variety of answers, however like Question #4, it also revealed some repeated concepts. In this case, the overwhelmingly dominant answer involved the treatment of native people at the mission. The terms genocide, enslavement, truth, treatment, and subjugation were repeated again and again by respondents. The treatment of Native Americans at the Sonoma Mission was cited by nearly all respondents as the most difficult part of the mission's history. Despite variations in feeling connected or satisfied or differences in why the mission is meaningful, respondents almost unanimously agreed on identifying the mission's most difficult aspect.

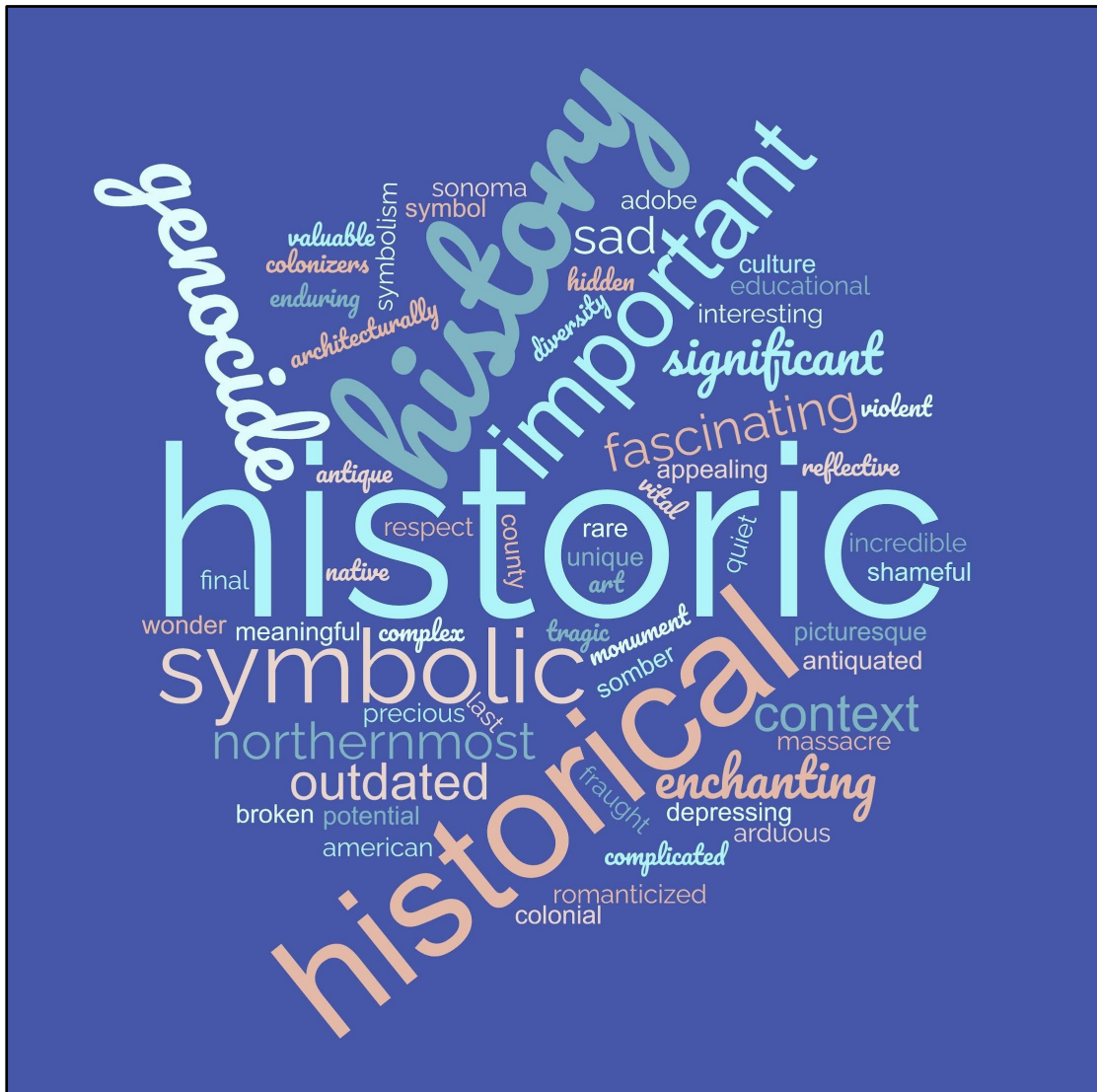
Question 8: What types of events, activities, programs, and initiatives would you like to see mark the mission’s bicentennial?

Respondents were presented with ten ideas and were encouraged to add their own ideas to the list. The results are shown in the chart below. Lectures and presentations were most highly favored being chosen by 71.3% of respondents. The next two most popular choices were guided tours (64.4%) and demonstrations and performances (60.4%).



Question 9: What one word would you use to describe the Sonoma Mission?

Responses to this question were used to generate a word cloud graphic that illustrates repetition of words by sizing them based on how often they were entered, the larger they appear, the more they are repeated. As the graphic illustrates, the word “historic” was the most common response. Also popular were “historical”, “history”, “important”, “symbolic”, and “genocide.”



Question 10: Is there anything else you would like to share?

This question prompted a range of answers that included appreciation for the Sonoma Mission 200 project and the opportunity to share input as well as many ideas, both broad and specific, that relate to future interpretation, staff and docent training, collaboration with tribal groups, suggestions for structural maintenance and improvements, and a repeated call for equity and inclusion in the telling of the mission's history.