## **MUSEUM VISITATION RATES: A DEMOGRAPHIC DATA STORY**

It's easy to make lots of assumptions about who does, and doesn't, visit museums. After all, we are looking at who we see at our museums, who are our members, as well as who responds to surveys. But some of those assumptions, such that museum-goers are primarily older, well-educated, and/or white, don't turn out to be totally true when we look at casual museum visitors.



NOTE: in this Data Story, we are











The reality is that people who visit museums come from lots of different demographic backgrounds. And more casual visitors to museums are more diverse across different demographic criteria than more frequent museum visitors.

Let's pick this apart.

primarily examining casual visitors to museums. These are individuals who have been to at least one museum in the past two years, but is not an assessment of frequency. (We typically use one year for this metric, but increased it to two years in 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The patterns we see here, however, have been consistent over the past several years.)





1 in 3 American adults have been to a museum in the past two years.



## **AGE**



museums than younger adults.

THE ASSUMPTION: Older adults are more likely to visit



have been to a museum in the last two years than older adults. And parents/guardians of children 10 and younger are the most likely to have visited.

THE REALITY: Young adults are significantly more likely to



30%

Parents/ guardians with children 10 and younger

46%

Parents/ guardians with children 11 and

34%

no children

19%

Adults 40 - 59,

**24**%

Adults 60

or older



## THE ASSUMPTION: Museum-goers overwhelmingly have

college degrees.

**EDUCATION** 



THE REALITY: College graduates are only somewhat more

likely to have been to a museum in the past two years than

those with "some" post-secondary education. The bigger gap



is with those with a high school diploma or less. 100%

21%

High school diploma or less



white people.

37%

College degree



THE ASSUMPTION: Museums disproportionately serve

**32%** 

Some college



white audiences, white people are only somewhat more likely to have been to a museum in the past two years than people of color.

**THE REALITY:** While museums definitely skew towards



31% 25%

PERCENT OF EACH POPULATION SEGMENT WHO VISITED A MUSEUM

THE FINAL DATA POINT we want to share is around the political identity of

Turns out, conservatives and liberals are about equally likely to have visited a

museum in the past two years; about a third each. The bigger gap is with

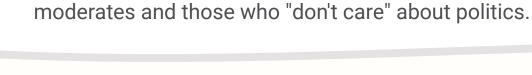
White households

**POLITICAL IDENTITY** 

Households of

people of color

museum-goers. We want to answer a question many of us have wondered about: does political identity affect museum-going?



35% **32**% 26% **22**% Moderates Liberals "Don't care" Conservatives

PERCENT OF EACH POPULATION SEGMENT WHO VISITED A MUSEUM

our observations are more likely to be about frequent museum-goers, rather than an assessment of who goes to museums in the first place (as a yes/no).

more museums, more often, and are more likely to be members. That is also largely true for museum-goers with college degrees and for white people. Understanding these differences between frequency gaps and visitation gaps is thus crucial for museums seeking demographic parity among visitors.

Annual Survey of Museum-Goers Data Stories are created by Wilkening Consulting on behalf of the American Alliance of Museums. Sources include:

Why do we have assumptions that are different from these realities? It's because

The older adults who do visit museums, for example, may be fewer in

number, but they make up for it in higher visitation rates. They visit

• Two May 2021 Broader Population Samples, combined n = 4,809 US adults

More Data Stories can be found at wilkeningconsulting.com/data-stories