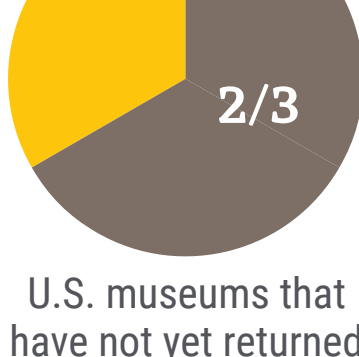


MUSEUM VISITATION:

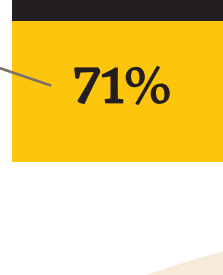
A 2023 ANNUAL SURVEY OF MUSEUM-GOERS DATA STORY

MARCH 2020

IT'S BEEN 3.5 YEARS since the COVID-19 pandemic devastated museum visitation. For some museums, visitation is back to normal. For others, well, not yet, as AAM's spring 2023 "National Snapshot of United States Museums" survey indicates:



U.S. museums that have not yet returned to pre-pandemic attendance

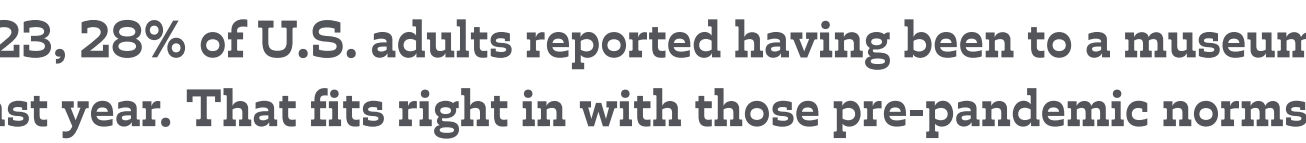


Average of pre-pandemic attendance those museums are experiencing

SEPT 2023

The good news is that incidence of museum-going seems to be back to pre-pandemic norms. Prior to the pandemic, we typically saw somewhere between 25% and 31% of U.S. adults reporting they had been to a museum in the past year.

25%-31%



In 2023, 28% of U.S. adults reported having been to a museum in the past year. That fits right in with those pre-pandemic norms.

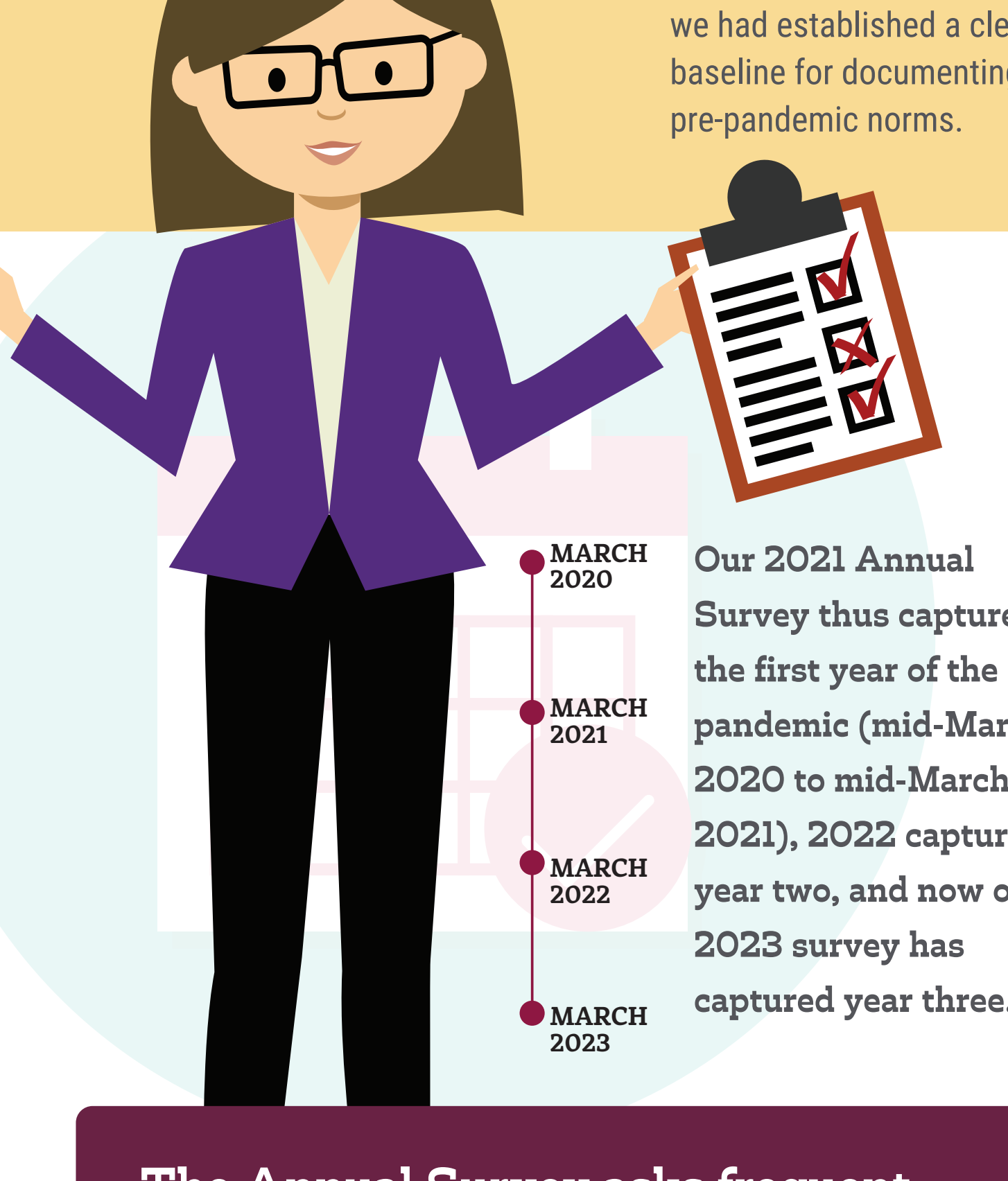
28%



So if incidence isn't the primary issue, what's responsible for ongoing attendance challenges? When we examine results from the Annual Survey of Museum-Goers over the past few years, shifts in **frequency** of attendance appear to be the culprit. Let's take a look.



First, let's time-travel back to winter of 2020. That year's Annual Survey was in the field, and we began pulling the data for analysis in the middle of March ... pretty much the exact moment everything began shutting down and the pandemic began. That was bizarrely fortuitous in terms of data collection, because it meant we had established a clean baseline for documenting pre-pandemic norms.



MARCH 2020

Our 2021 Annual Survey thus captured the first year of the pandemic (mid-March 2020 to mid-March 2021), 2022 captured year two, and now our 2023 survey has captured year three.

MARCH 2021

MARCH 2022

MARCH 2023

The Annual Survey asks frequent museum-goers two questions about museum visitation.

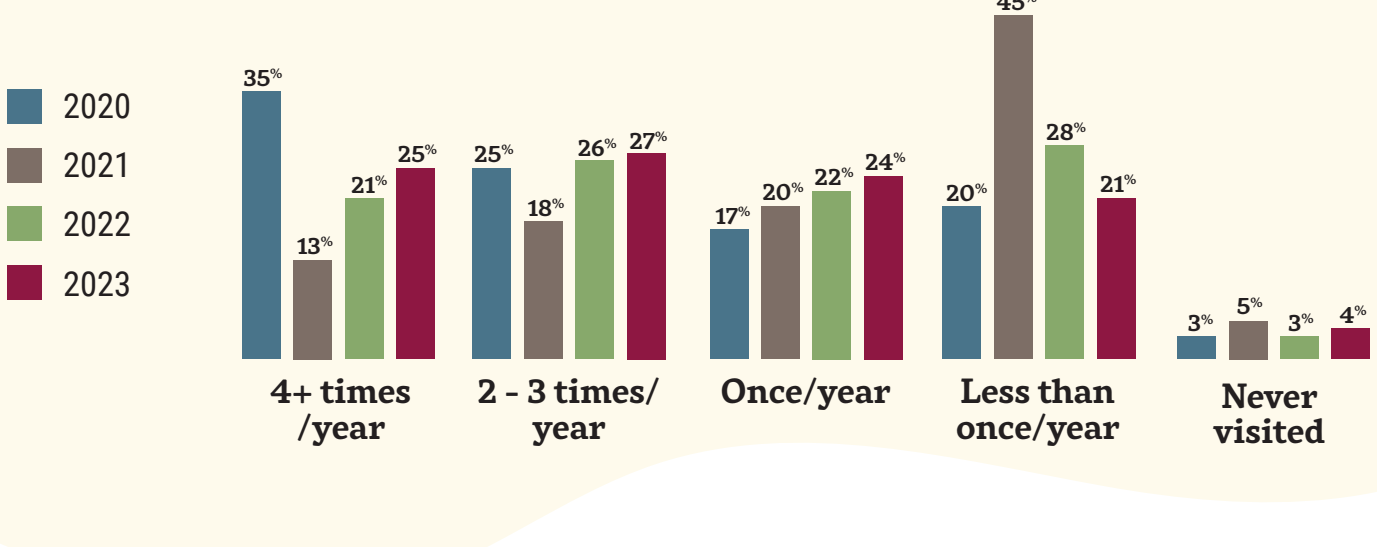
1 Self-reported repeat visitation rates at "their" museum

The first question of the Annual Survey asks respondents to report their previous year *in person* visitation of the museum that invited them to take the survey.



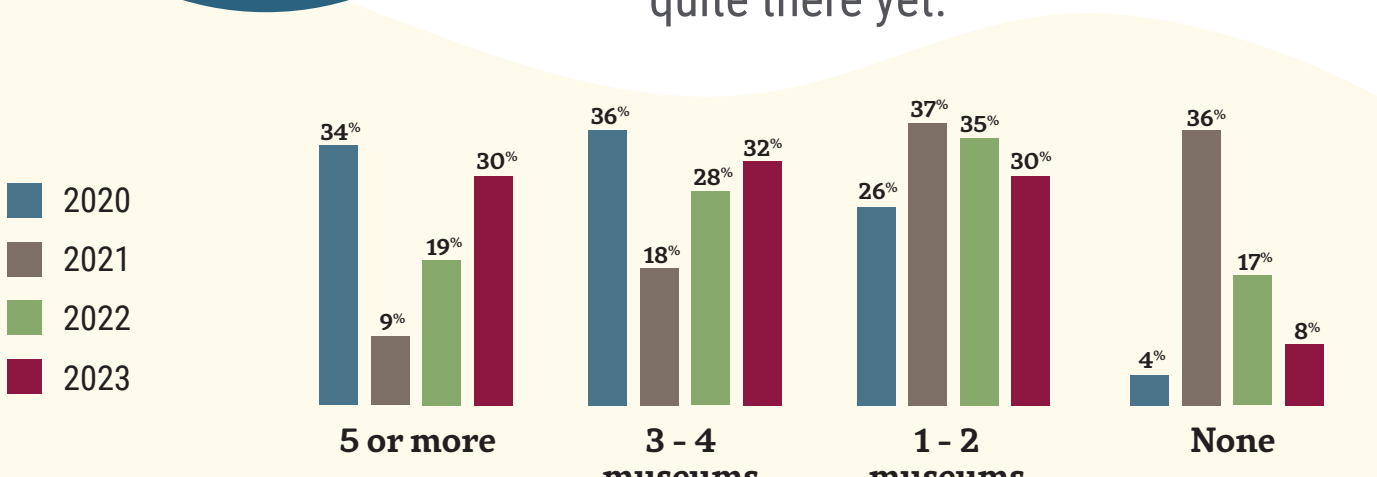
When we aggregate responses by year, we can clearly see the devastating drop in attendance from pre-pandemic highs (March 2020) to pandemic lows (March 2021).

2022 saw some substantial recovery, but that slowed in 2023 ... and there is still a significant gap in frequency from pre-pandemic norms. Repeat visitation simply isn't where it was four years ago.



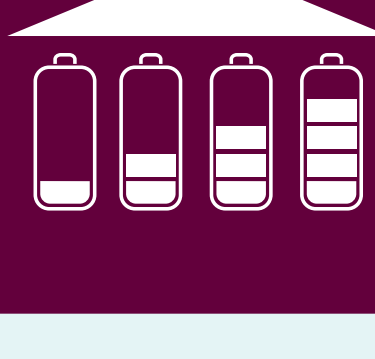
2 How many different museums they visit

We also track how many *different* museums a respondent reports visiting in the course of the previous year. Once again, we find that visitation at museums in general plummeted from 2020 to 2021. There was substantial recovery in 2022, and this continued in 2023, putting this *breadth* of museum-going close to pre-pandemic norms ... though we are not quite there yet.



Additionally, we are estimating that 4% of pre-pandemic frequent visitors are still sidelining themselves, and have not yet returned to museums at all.

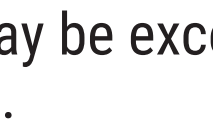
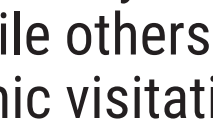
While the results to this question are generally more promising, as we do seem to be approaching pre-pandemic norms, the reduction in frequency of visitation from our most avid visitors can really add up. Thus, it's not that surprising that many museums have not yet reached 100% visitation recovery.



The good news overall is that yes, people are returning to museums, and things are getting better for most museums. But the return continues to be bumpy, with some people remaining "COVID cautious" and others returning in full force.



Individual museums also vary widely, with some still reporting low levels of visitation, while others may be exceeding pre-pandemic visitation.



As we head into 2024, new external forces are arising that may also affect leisure time and museum visitation. Inflation and severe weather are factors for many, which may help some museums attract more local visitors ... or reduce visitation from other potential visitors. The 2023 Annual Survey checks in on these trends, and we'll be sharing those results later in the fall.

Annual Survey of Museum-Goers Data Stories are created by Wilkening Consulting on behalf of the American Alliance of Museums. Sources include:
 • 2023 Annual Survey of Museum-Goers, n = 107,187; 228 museums participating
 • 2023 Broader Population Sampling, n = 2,002
 • 2017 - 2022 Annual Surveys of Museum-Goers
 • 2023 National Snapshot of United States Museums (American Alliance of Museums)

*Data Stories share research about both frequent museum-goers (typically visit multiple museums each year) and the broader population (including casual and non-visitors to museums). See the Purpose and Methodology (Update) Data Story from September 12, 2023 for more information on methodology.

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

