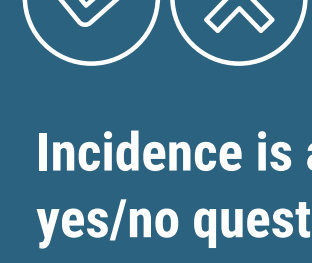


MUSEUM VISITATION: DEMOGRAPHICS OF U.S. MUSEUM-GOERS

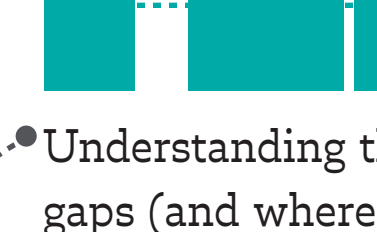
A 2024 ANNUAL SURVEY OF MUSEUM-GOERS DATA STORY UPDATE

When we look at visitation gaps among the broader population, there are two big things to consider: **incidence and frequency.**

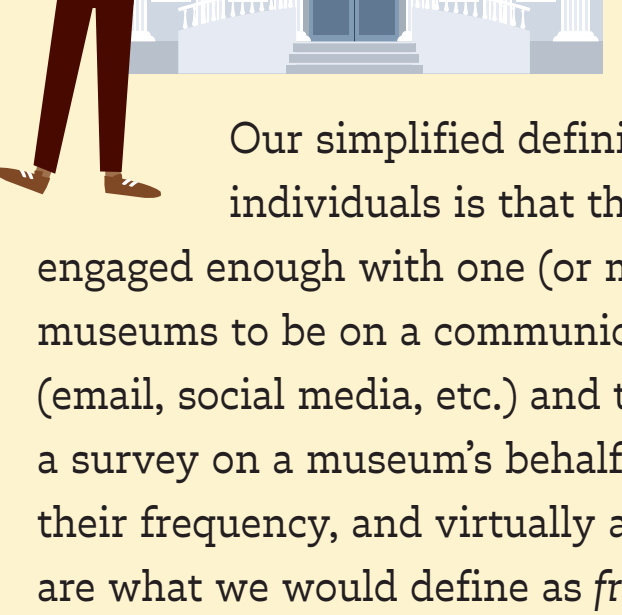


Incidence is a binary yes/no question: has someone been to a museum (of any type) in the past year? We measure incidence by doing broader population sampling among US adults.

Frequency is different, and looks at how often someone has been to museums in a defined time period.

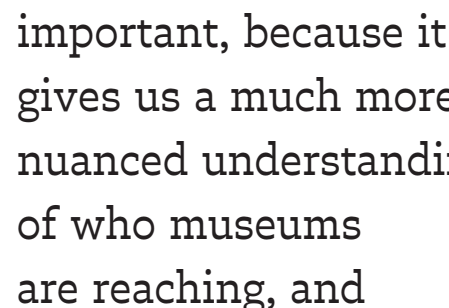


When we field the Annual Survey of Museum-Goers, the respondents are overwhelmingly frequent museum-goers.



Our simplified definition of these individuals is that they are engaged enough with one (or more) museums to be on a communications list (email, social media, etc.) and then complete a survey on a museum's behalf. We do assess their frequency, and virtually all respondents are what we would define as frequent museum-goers.

When we plot out certain demographic characteristics, we find that who visits museums frequently (and the gaps we discover) can be very different than who visits museums at all (the incidence). That is, the **demographic profile of frequent museum-goers is a bit different than the profile of all museum-goers**, especially casual and sporadic visitors.



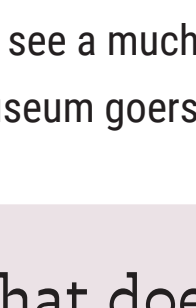
Understanding these gaps (and where gaps don't exist) is important, because it gives us a much more nuanced understanding of who museums are reaching, and how deeply.



There are three demographic factors that we want to examine more completely.



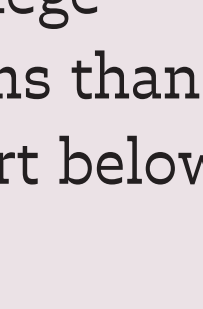
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT



FREQUENT MUSEUM-GOERS

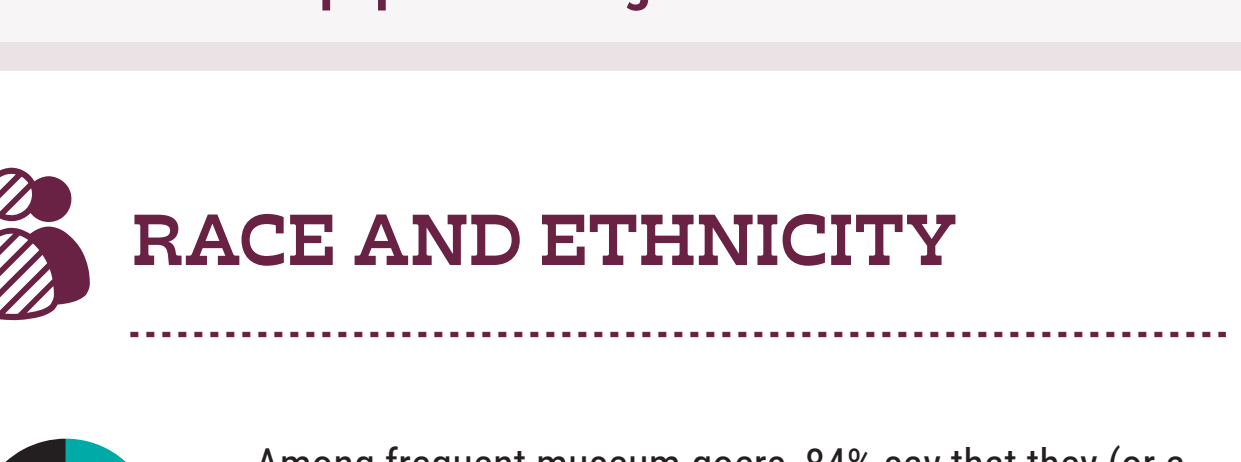
Among frequent museum-goers, 83% of respondents have a college degree; that's 2.3x the rate of college degrees among US adults (36%).

But when we look at incidence among the broader population, we see a much smaller gap. Among all casual and sporadic museum goers, 51% have a college degree, and 49% do not.

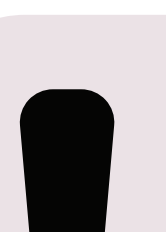


BROADER POPULATION

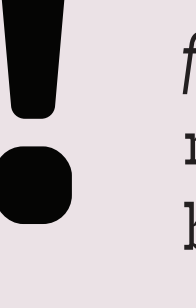
That does suggest that people with college degrees are more likely to visit museums than those without college degrees. The chart below shows this to be true.



Percent of each population segment who visited a museum

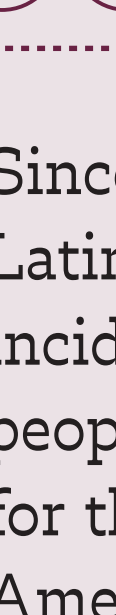


RACE AND ETHNICITY

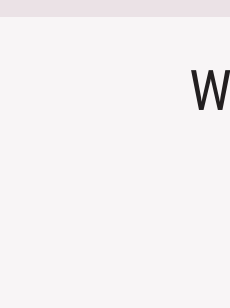


FREQUENT MUSEUM-GOERS

Among frequent museum-goers, 84% say that they (or a member of their household) identify as white. In contrast, 59% of people living in the United States identify as white (not Hispanic or Latine).

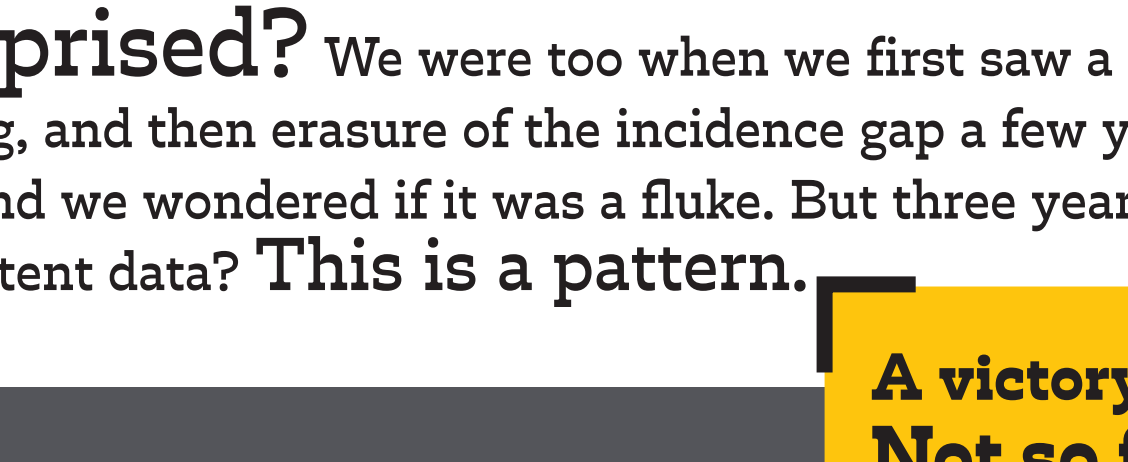


Again, it would be easy to make a big assumption here. But the accurate conclusion from this is that yes, frequent museum-goers are significantly more likely to identify as white than the broader population.



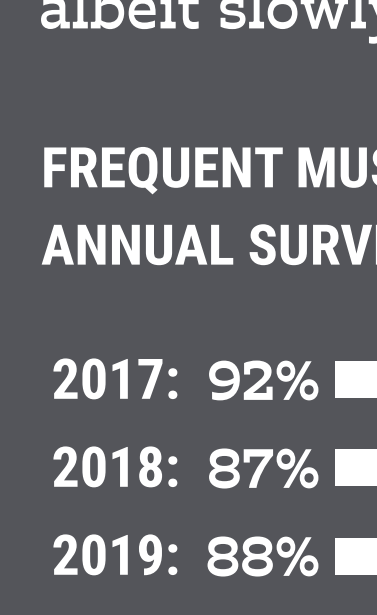
Incidence tells a very different story.

Since 2023, African American and Hispanic or Latine incidence has held steady, while incidence has increased slightly among white people and Asian or Asian Americans. In fact, for the third year in a row, Asian or Asian Americans have been the most likely racial or ethnic group to have visited a museum.



Percent of each population segment who visited a museum

Responses by other racial and ethnic groups were too small to be stable

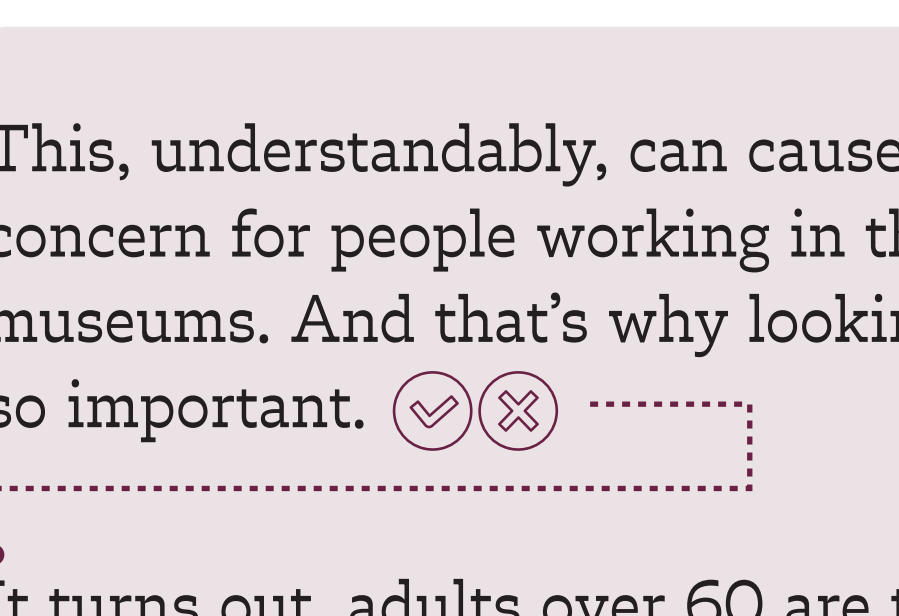


Additionally, and this has been true for the past several years, white people are the most likely to say they "never" visit museums, while people of color are more likely to say they visit museums at least occasionally.

Surprised? We were too when we first saw a closing, and then erasure of the incidence gap a few years ago, and we wondered if it was a fluke. But three years of consistent data? **This is a pattern.**

The frequency gap we see by race and ethnicity is incredibly persistent, but we have some good news here as well. Since 2017, it has been decreasing, albeit slowly.

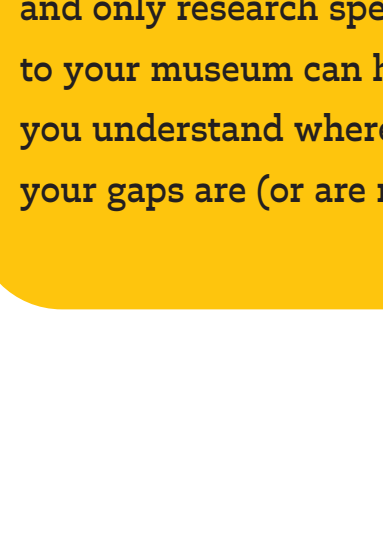
FREQUENT MUSEUM-GOERS FROM THE ANNUAL SURVEY OF MUSEUM-GOERS



From 2017 to 2022, the white (not Hispanic or Latine) population of the U.S. decreased from 62% to 58%.

A victory lap? Not so fast!

Incidence gaps do still persist by museum type and for specific museums. By museum types, historic sites in particular have persistently high incidence and frequency gaps, with audiences still, overall, skewing disproportionately white.

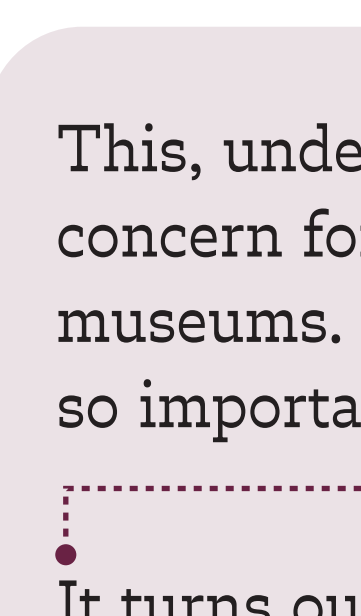


Additionally, this still varies widely for individual museums. Your museum may still be facing an incidence gap, and only research specific to your museum can help you understand where your gaps are (or are not).



AGE AND LIFE STAGE

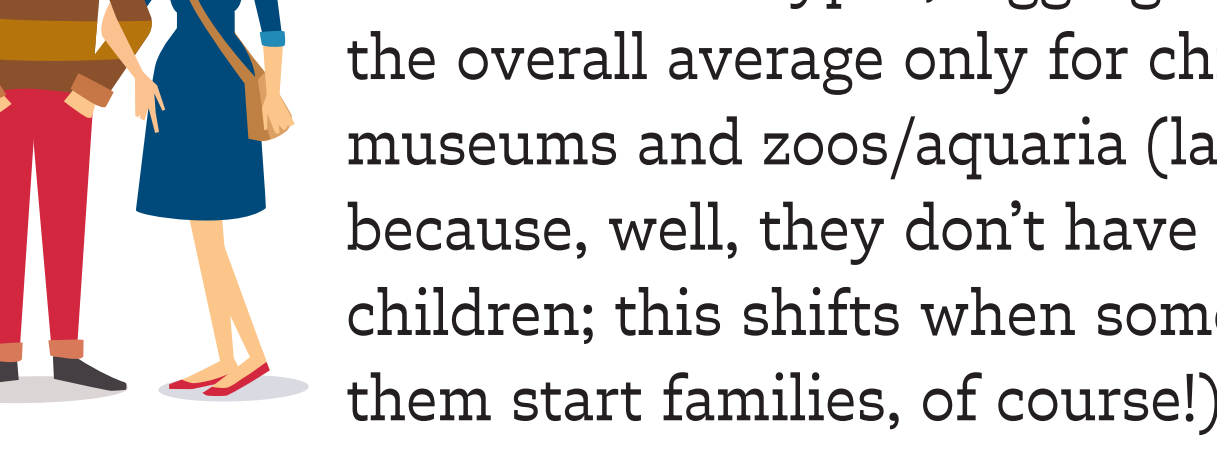
Some museum types deliberately focus on families with minor children (children's museums and, to a lesser extent, zoos, aquaria, and science centers), and these museums don't tend to see frequency gaps (or incidence gaps) by age that are of significant concern ... though they often see frequency gaps with young adults without children.



But it is a different story for art museums, history organizations, and botanical gardens. It is incredibly common for the majority of their frequent museum-goers to be over the age of 60.

This, understandably, can cause a great deal of concern for people working in these types of museums. And that's why looking at incidence is so important.

It turns out, adults over 60 are the **least** likely segment of the population to visit museums (a pattern we have seen pretty consistently over the past several years). We actually underserve them.



Percent of each population segment who visited a museum



Additionally, those casual and sporadic young adult visitors visit most museum types, lagging behind the overall average only for children's museums and zoos/aquaria (largely because, well, they don't have children; this shifts when some of them start families, of course!).

But overall, at this time, we don't have significant concerns about the long-term pipeline of future visitors to museums of any type.

