MUSEUM VISITATION: DEMOGRAPHICS OF U.S. MUSEUM-GOERS A 2025 ANNUAL SURVEY OF MUSEUM-GOERS DATA STORY UPDATE

WHEN WE LOOK AT VISITATION GAPS among the broader

incidence and frequency.

population, there are two big things to consider:





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.

(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. In contrast, our broader population sampling of U.S. adults helps us

understand more casual and sporadic visitors to museums, who

engage with museums less often. Casual visitors typically visit at

least one museum a year, while sporadic museum-goers may visit

When we examine the Understanding these gaps demographic characteristics (and where gaps don't exist) is important, because it across these different gives us a much more frequencies, however, we find nuanced understanding of that there are significant differences. That is, the who museums are reaching, demographic profile of frequent and how deeply. museum-goers is a bit different

than the profile of all museum-goers, especially casual and sporadic visitors. THERE ARE THREE DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS THAT WE WANT TO EXAMINE MORE COMPLETELY.

museums every couple/few years.

US adults (36%). But when we look at incidence among the broader

population, we see a much smaller gap. Among all

33% Some college/technical school/associate degree

casual and sporadic museum goers, 47% have a

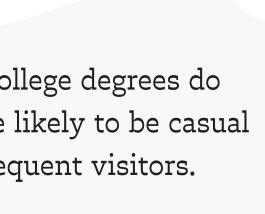
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMEN

Among frequent museum-goers, 83% of

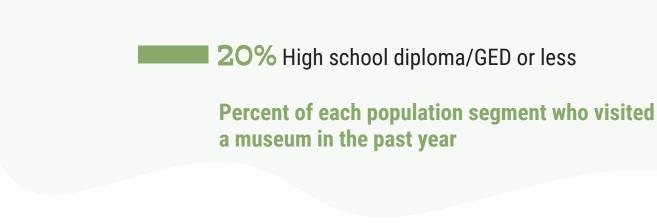
2.3x the rate of college degrees among

respondents have a college degree; that's

It turns out a lot people without college degrees do go to museums, they are just more likely to be casual or sporadic visitors rather than frequent visitors.



college degree, and 53% do not.



RACE AND ETHNICITY

Among frequent museum-goers, 84% say

that they (or a member of their household)

47% College degree

identify as white. In contrast, 57% of people living in the United States identify as white (not Hispanic or Latine).

Again, it would be easy to make a big assumption

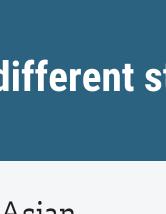
here. But the accurate conclusion from this is that

yes, frequent museum-goers are significantly more

population.

likely to identify as white than the broader

Incidence tells a very different story. For the fourth year in a row, Asian or Asian



incidence has held steady. 2025 was the first year that a stable sample of Native American/American Indian or Alaska Natives was collected, with about a third indicating at least one visit. 27% African American or Black 42% Asian or Asian American 33% Hispanic or Latine

35% White (not Hispanic or Latine)

a museum in the past year

Additionally, and this has been true for the

likely to say they "never" visit museums,

pattern has emerged.

2017: 92%

2021: 87%

while people of color are more likely to say

past several years, white people are the most

35% Native American/American Indian or Alaska Native

Percent of each population segment who visited

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

American have been the most likely racial or ethnic

group to have visited a museum. Additionally, since

2023, African American and Hispanic or Latine

they visit museums at least occasionally. Surprised? We were too when we first saw a closing, and then erasure of the incidence gap several years ago, and we wondered if it was a fluke. But after years of consistent data, we are now confident a new

The frequency gap we see by race and ethnicity

persistent, but we have some good news here as well.

FREQUENT MUSEUM-GOERS FROM THE ANNUAL SURVEY OF

Since 2017, it has been decreasing, albeit slowly.

MUSEUM-GOERS: % WHITE RESPONDENTS SINCE 2017

among frequent museum-goers is incredibly

2025: 84% From 2017 to 2023, the white (not Hispanic or Latine) population of the U.S. decreased from 62% to 57%. 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

you understand where your gaps are (or are not).

AGE AND LIFE STAGE

museums. Your museum may still be facing an incidence

gap, and only research specific to your museum can help

Some museum types deliberately focus on

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

families with minor children (children's

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).

without children.

But it is a different story for art museums,

It is incredibly common for the majority of

their frequent museum-goers to be over the

history organizations, and botanical gardens.

33% Young adults (under 40, no children) 44% Parents/guardians of minor children ■ **27%** 40 - 59, no minor children **26%** 60 or older Percent of each population segment who

visited a museum in the past year

We actually underserve them.

ADMISSIONS don't have significant concerns

U.S. demographic data from the U.S. Census Bureau. *Data Stories share research about both frequent museum-goers (typically visit multiple museums each year) and the broader population (including casual, sporadic, and non-visitors to museums). See the Purpose and Methodology (Update) Data Story from September 11, 2025 for more information on methodology. More Data Stories can be found at wilkeningconsulting.com/data-stories. American

 2025 Annual Survey of Museum-Goers, n = 98,904; 202 museums participating • 2025 Broader Population Sampling, n = 2,079 · 2017 - 2024 Annual Surveys of Museum-Goers

Jessica Strube.

lead author

about the long-term pipeline of future visitors to museums of any type. Annual Survey of Museum-Goers Data Stories are created by Wilkening Consulting on behalf of the American Alliance of Museums. Sources include:

Alliance of

Data Story release date: September 18, 2025 © 2025 Wilkening Consulting, LLC

WilkeningConsulting

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