

Museum Facts: At A Glance

Museums Are Economic Engines



Museums support more than

726,000

American jobs.

Every direct job at a museum supports an additional job in the economy. This is a higher rate than many other industries.*



Museums contribute

\$50 billion

to the US economy each year.

Museums and other nonprofit cultural organizations return more than \$5 in tax revenues for every \$1 they receive in funding from all levels of government.*



The economic activity of museums generates more than \$12 billion in tax revenue, one-third of it going to state and local governments. Each job created by the museum sector results in

\$16,495

in additional revenue.*



**MUSEUMS ADVOCACY DAY
2025**

**NOTE: These statistics depict the museum field pre-pandemic.*



Museums Are Trusted

The American public regards museums as highly trustworthy—ranking second only to friends and family, and significantly more trustworthy than researchers and scientists, NGOs generally, various news organizations, the government, corporations and business, and social media.



People Love Museums

More people visited an art museum, science center, historic house or site, zoo, or aquarium in 2018 than attended a professional sporting event.



Museums Are for Everyone

Museums are committed to ensuring that people of all backgrounds have access to high-quality museum experiences. In 2012, 37% of museums were free at all times or had suggested admission fees only; nearly all the rest offered discounts or free admission days.



Museums Partner with Schools

Museums help teach the state and local curriculum, tailoring their programs in math, science, art, literacy, language arts, history, civics and government, economics and financial literacy, geography, and social studies.

Museums and the COVID-19 Pandemic:

Two-thirds
of museums continue to
experience reduced
attendance.

Museums experiencing reduced attendance average **71%** of their pre-pandemic attendance.

30% of museums are experiencing decreases in net operating performance compared to pre-pandemic levels.

26% of responding museums have not recovered to their pre-pandemic staffing levels.

60% Of museums recruiting for job openings, 60% report trouble filling open positions, primarily among front-line roles.

Museum Facts: Details



Museums and the COVID-19 Pandemic

- The pandemic has inflicted profound damage on US museums, the vast majority of which are 501(c)(3) nonprofit charitable organizations. While the museum field is making strides in its recovery efforts, it will take years to fully rebound to pre-pandemic levels of staffing, revenue, and attendance.¹
- Survey data shows two-thirds of museums continue to experience reduced attendance; these institutions average 71% of their pre-pandemic attendance.²
- Financial recovery from the damage of the pandemic has been inconsistent, with 30% of museums seeing decreases in net operating performance, 39% experiencing increases, and 31% seeing no change compared to 2019.³
- 26% of responding museums have not recovered to their pre-pandemic staffing levels. Of museums recruiting for job openings, 60% report trouble filling open positions, primarily among front-line roles. Many museums are changing staff compensation packages and working conditions, including half of respondents who have shrunk the gap between their institution's highest and lowest salaries and 50% implementing new initiatives to enhance staff wellness.⁴



Museums Are Economic Engines (Pre-pandemic data)

- Museums support over 726,000 American jobs.⁵
- Museums contribute \$50 billion to the U.S. economy each year.⁶
- Seventy-six percent of all U.S. leisure travelers participate in cultural or heritage activities such as visiting museums. These travelers spend 60 percent more money on average than other leisure travelers.⁷
- The economic activity of museums generates over \$12 billion in tax revenue, one-third of it going to state and local governments. Each job created by the museum sector results in \$16,495 in additional tax revenue.⁸
- Every direct job at a museum supports an additional job in the economy. This is a higher rate than many other industries.⁹
- Museums and other nonprofit cultural organizations return more than \$5 in tax revenue for every \$1 they receive in funding from all levels of government.¹⁰



Museums Are Community Anchors

- In determining America's Best Cities, *Bloomberg Business Week* placed the greatest weight on "leisure amenities [including density of museums], followed by educational metrics and economic metrics...then crime and air quality."¹¹
- *Money Magazine's* annual 'Best Places to Live' survey incorporates the concentration of accredited museums.¹²



Museums Serve the Whole Public

- More people visit art museums, science centers, historic houses or sites, zoos, or aquariums than attend professional sporting events.¹³
- Museum websites serve a diverse online community, including millions of teachers, parents, and students (including those students who are home-schooled).
- Museum volunteers contribute a million hours of service every week.¹⁴
- Support for museums is robust regardless of political persuasion. 96% of Americans would approve of lawmakers who acted to support museums. The number is consistently high for respondents who consider themselves politically liberal (97%), moderate (95%), or conservative (93%).¹⁵
- Many museums offer programs tailored to veterans and military families. In 2019 over 2,000 museums in all 50 states participated in the 10th year of the Blue Star Museums program, offering free summer admission to all active-duty and reserve personnel and their families.¹⁶ In the past five years more than 4 million active duty members and their families have participated in the Blue Star Museums program, which is, on average, more than 800,000 visitors per year, and many other museums offer military discounts or free admission throughout the year. While impacted by the pandemic, the program returned for summer 2021.
- Museums also provide many social services, including programs for children on the autism spectrum, English as a Second Language classes, and programs for adults with Alzheimer's or other cognitive impairments.¹⁷
- Museums are committed to ensuring that people of all backgrounds have access to high quality experiences in their institutions. In 2012, 37% of museums were free at all times or had suggested admission fees only; nearly all the rest offered discounts or free admission days.¹⁸
- Since 2014, more than 1,200 museums located in all 50 US states, the District of Columbia, and the US Virgin Islands have facilitated more than 8 million museum visits for low-income Americans through the Museums for All program.¹⁹
- About 26% of museums are located in rural areas²⁰; other museums reach these communities with traveling vans, portable exhibits, and robust online resources.



Museums Partner with Schools

- Museums spend over \$2 billion each year on education activities; the typical museum devotes three-quarters of its education budget to K-12 students.²¹
- Museums receive approximately 55 million visits each year from students in school groups.²²
- Museums help teach the state and local curricula, tailoring their programs in math, science, art, literacy, language arts, history, civics and government, economics and financial literacy, geography, and social studies.²³
- Children who visited a museum during kindergarten had higher achievement scores in reading, mathematics, and science in third grade than children who did not. Children who are most at risk for deficits and delays in achievement also see this benefit.²⁴



Museums Are Trusted

- The American public regards museums as highly trustworthy—ranking second only to friends and family, and significantly more trustworthy than researchers and scientists, NGOs generally, various news organizations, the government, corporations and business, and social media.²⁵
- Museums preserve and protect more than a billion objects.²⁶
- The American public considers museums a more reliable source of historical information than books, teachers, or even personal accounts by relatives.²⁷



Museums and Public Opinion

- 97% of Americans believe that museums are educational assets for their communities.
- 89% believe that museums contribute important economic benefits to their community.
- 96% would think positively of their elected officials for taking legislative action to support museums.
- 96% want to maintain or increase federal funding for museums.²⁸
- Three-quarters of the public think museums are an important part of our civil society, and that museums have a role in supporting civic knowledge and participation.²⁹



Museums Save Species

- In 2022, accredited zoos and aquariums (museums with living collections) spent over \$252 million on field conservation projects in 119 countries.³⁰
- Museums are involved with conservation breeding, habitat preservation, public education, field conservation, and supportive research to ensure survival for many of the planet's threatened or endangered species. Museums also conduct or facilitate research to advance the scientific knowledge of the animals in human care and to enhance the conservation of wild populations.



Museums Improve Public Health

- Living in a community with cultural resources confers a five year advantage in cognitive age: museums and similar cultural organizations provide the biggest boost to cognitive health.³¹

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