

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
2023**

**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:

Early in the pandemic, survey data confirmed

1 out of 3

of museum directors felt their museum may shutter permanently without immediate support...

...a threatened loss of

12,000 museums

as well as

124,000 jobs.

During the pandemic, Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and Shuttered Venue Operator Grants (SVOG) provided critical lifelines.

Still, a recent survey shows:

attendance remains down

38% on average from pre-pandemic levels.

17% of directors still feel there is some risk of closing permanently without additional relief.

60% report experiencing pandemic-related financial losses since March 2020, with the average being a little over \$791,000.

Data from the Fourth National Snapshot of COVID-19 Impact on US Museums, conducted by AAM and Wilkening Consulting.

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.¹
- Early in the pandemic, essentially all museums were closed to the public. 33 percent of directors felt their museums were at some risk of permanent closure without immediate support—a threatened loss of 12,000 museums and 124,000 jobs.²
- While PPP and SVOG provided critical lifelines, a [2022 survey](#) shows attendance remains down 38 percent on average from pre-pandemic levels and 17 percent of directors still feel there is some risk of closing permanently without additional relief.³
- 60 percent of museums report experiencing pandemic-related financial losses since March 2020, with the average being a little over \$791,000. 60 percent of responding museums have budgets of \$1 million or less.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 visited an art museum, science center, historic house or site, zoo, or aquarium in 2018 than attended a professional sporting event.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
- In 2014, IMLS launched Museums for All, a national access initiative. Today, more than 1000 participating museums in 50 states, DC, and the US Virgin Islands offer deeply discounted admission to visitors who receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. The program has reached over 5.8 million visitors.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



Museums Save Species

- In 2021, accredited zoos and aquariums (museums with living collections) spent \$209 million on field conservation projects in 117 countries.²⁹
- 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.³⁰

References

1. [Fourth National Snapshot of COVID-19 Impact on US Museums](#), AAM and Wilkening Consulting
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. [Museums as Economic Engines](#), AAM and Oxford Economics, 2017
6. Ibid.
7. [The 2013 Cultural and Heritage Traveler Report](#), Mandala Research
8. [Museums as Economic Engines](#), AAM and Oxford Economics, 2017
9. Ibid.
10. [Arts and Economic Prosperity 5](#), 2017, Americans for the Arts
11. [America's 50 Best Cities](#), Bloomberg, 2012
12. [How Money Chose the Best Place to live in 2021](#)
13. Broader population sampling conducted on behalf of AAM by [Wilkening Consulting](#), 2018
14. [Museum Financial Information 2009](#), AAM
15. [Museums and Public Opinion](#), AAM, 2018
16. [National Endowment for the Arts, Blue Star Museums](#)
17. [Museums on Call](#), AAM, 2013
18. [Annual Condition of Museums and the Economy](#), AAM, 2013



19. [Museums for All: An Initiative of the Institute of Museum and Library Services](#)
20. [Museum Data Files](#), IMLS, 2014
21. [Museum Financial Information](#), 2009, AAM
22. Ibid.
23. [Building the Future of Education: Museums and the Learning Ecosystem](#), AAM, 2013
24. [The Effect of Informal Learning Environments on Academic Achievement during Elementary School, presented to the American Educational Research Association](#), Swan, 2014
25. [Museums and Trust 2021](#), AAM
26. [Heritage Health Index](#), 2004
27. [The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life](#), Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, 2000
28. [Museums & Public Opinion](#), AAM and Wilkening Consulting
29. [2021 Annual Report on Conservation and Science](#), Association of Zoos and Aquariums
30. [Neighborhood cognitive amenities? A mixed-methods study of intellectually-stimulating places and cognitive function among older Americans](#), Finlay et al, Wellbeing, Space and Society, Vol. 2, 2021

