



UK museums and galleries are popular. Eight of the top ten visitor attractions in the UK are museums.<sup>1</sup> The UK has five of the top 20 most visited art museums in the world (more than any other country).<sup>2</sup> In a consumer survey, museums and galleries scored the highest satisfaction rating of any public service, leading to the conclusion that “investment in museums and galleries has paid off handsomely, with a world-class satisfaction rating”.<sup>3</sup>

Visit numbers are increasing. Generally, increased attendances have been stimulated by a growing attention to audiences, capital investment in new buildings and displays, increased spending on programming and free admission at national museums. Recently, visits have increased because of increased tourism in the UK. Museums and galleries attendances grew during 2008 and 2009 in all countries of the UK, except Scotland.

There is no figure available for total visits to all museums and galleries in the UK, but it is likely to exceed 100 million per year.

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*Museum and gallery attendance – a growing number of visits:*

- In summer 2009, 50% of UK museums saw an increase in visits, with 20% reporting a rise of over 10% compared to 2008.<sup>4</sup> This was after a strong year in 2008. One survey reports that attendance at UK museums was up 17% in 2008/09 compared to 2007/08.<sup>5</sup>
- The vast majority of the UK’s leading visitor attractions reported an increase in visits in 2009, partly due to greater numbers of overseas visitors attracted by the weak pound, and British tourists staying at home. The median increase was 10.9%.<sup>6</sup>
- Visits to museums and galleries in Wales increased by 5.4% from 2008 to 2009, after an increase of 8.2% from 2007 to 2008.<sup>7</sup>
- Northern Ireland visitor attractions (of all types, including museums and galleries) saw visits increase by 8% in 2009.<sup>8</sup>
- In Scotland, visits to museums and galleries were constant from 2008 to 2009, after falling from 2007 to 2008.<sup>9</sup>
- Visits to Museums and Galleries in England increased by 13% in spring 2009 compared to 2008, but fell slightly in the second half of 2009. They rose slightly in the first quarter of 2010 compared to the first quarter of 2009.<sup>10</sup> In 2008 visits to museums and galleries in England increased by 7% from 2007, building on increases of 3% from 2006 to 2007 and 8% from 2005 to 2006.<sup>11</sup>
- There were 18.3 million visits to Renaissance hub museums in 2009/10<sup>12</sup> – up from 15.8 million in 2008/09. From 2006 to 2008 there was an increase of 6.5%.<sup>13</sup>
- In 2008/09 97% of visitors to hub museums were either satisfied or very satisfied by their visit.<sup>14</sup>

- There were just over 40 million visits to Department for Culture, Media and Sport sponsored museums (which are mainly national museums) in 2008/09. Of these 8.4 million (21%) were under 16 years of age, and 13.9 million (34%) were from overseas.<sup>15</sup>
- The number of total visits to National Trust sites increased by over 16% from 2008/09 to 2009/10: from 14.8 million to 17.2 million (the National Trust covers England, Wales and Northern Ireland).<sup>16</sup>
- In 2008 there was an 8% increase in audiences at visual arts organisations funded by Arts Council England.<sup>17</sup>

*Museum and gallery attendance - more of the population are visiting:*

- A growing proportion of the population of England attends museums. 45.8% of adults attended a museum, gallery or archive at least once in 2009, up from 43% in 2006.<sup>18</sup> Two thirds of 5-10 year olds (66.3%) and well over half of 11-15 year olds (59.7%) attended a museum or gallery at least once in 2008/09.<sup>19</sup>
- In 2008, children under 16 made up 28% of all visits to Renaissance hub museums.<sup>20</sup>
- School visits are increasing. Year 1-11 visits to Renaissance hub museums increased by 8.2% between 2006/07 and 2008/09. Pre-5 and Reception visits to hub museums increased by 17.7% between 2006-07 and 2008-09.<sup>21</sup>

*The effect of free admission to museums and galleries:*

- Generally, free museums are seeing a greater increase in visits than those that charge. Among leading visitor attractions in the UK the increase in visits in 2009 was particularly marked in free attractions, "as people sought good value days out in the recession".<sup>22</sup>
- Since the introduction of universal free access to national museums throughout the UK (December 2001), visits to the nationals in England that used to charge for entrance have more than doubled, increasing by 128%.<sup>23</sup>
- Visits to free attractions (of all types, not just museums and galleries) in Wales increased by 16.6% between 2008 and 2009 (and by 20.2% between 2007 and 2009). Meanwhile visits to charging attractions increased by 9.7% between 2008 and 2009 (and 1.9% between 2007 and 2009).<sup>24</sup>
- From 2006-2008 visits to free Renaissance hub museums increased by 7.6%, whilst those at charging hub museums increased by 3.2%. However, the trend is not consistent, with some charging museums showing significant increases in visits.<sup>25</sup>
- In 2008 charging museums and galleries in England did well with a 9% increase in visits (free sites had an increase of 6%). In previous years the increase in museum visits was driven primarily by increases in visits to free museums and galleries.<sup>26</sup>

*Museums have different experiences:*

- The figures above are all averages or overall totals and it is important to note that individual museums have different experiences. For example, from 2007 to 2008 in England, although 57% of museums experienced an increased number of visitors, 35% experienced a decrease.<sup>27</sup>
- As another example, for Renaissance-funded museums, the overall increase in visits from 2006 to 2008 is not necessarily consistent either across, or within hubs. Increases

or decreases in school visits are neither uniform across venues within a hub nor across all nine hubs.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> VisitEngland, 'Top 20 UK Attractions – Free' (2008)

[http://www.enjoyengland.com/Images/UK-Free\\_tcm21-175213.pdf](http://www.enjoyengland.com/Images/UK-Free_tcm21-175213.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> The Economist (Subscriber only - article published 4 May 2009)

<http://www.economist.com/node/13565756>

<sup>3</sup> National Consumer Council, 'A Playlist for Public Services', (2005):

[http://www.customerserviceexcellence.org.uk/UserFiles/File/Playlist\\_for\\_public\\_services.pdf](http://www.customerserviceexcellence.org.uk/UserFiles/File/Playlist_for_public_services.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> The Art Fund, 'The Art Fund Museum Survey: March – September 2009', (2009):

[http://www.artfund.org/pdf/Factsheet\\_autumn\\_09.pdf](http://www.artfund.org/pdf/Factsheet_autumn_09.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Arts and Business, 'Private Investment in Culture 2008/09: the arts in the 'new normal'', (2010):

[http://www.artsandbusiness.org.uk/Media\\_library/Files/Research/pics0809/pics0809\\_fullreport.pdf](http://www.artsandbusiness.org.uk/Media_library/Files/Research/pics0809/pics0809_fullreport.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Association of Leading Visitor Attractions, 'Britain's visitor attractions report buoyant 2009 and voice their concerns for the future', (23 February 2010):

[http://www.alva.org.uk/press\\_releases/](http://www.alva.org.uk/press_releases/)

<sup>7</sup> VisitWales, 'Visits to Tourist Attractions 2009' (2010):

<http://wales.gov.uk/docs/drah/publications/Tourism/100524atteng.pdf>,

VisitWales, 'Visits to Tourist Attractions 2008' (2009):

<http://wales.gov.uk/docs/drah/publications/Tourism/091120visits08eng.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Northern Ireland Tourist Board, 'Visitor Attractions Survey : Northern Ireland performance during 2009':

<http://www.nitb.com/CategoryPage.aspx?path=2e3c2831-b6cb-4bcd-a276-e0283e5bd203.62566f30-0631-4812-b779-673912c2d258.67089e4c-9428-4179-9d4b-93731ed7f797>

<sup>9</sup> VisitScotland, 'The 2009 Visitor Attraction Monitor', (2010):

<http://www.visitscotland.org/pdf/visitor-attraction-monitor-2009.pdf>

Visit Scotland, 'The 2008 Visitor Attraction Monitor', (2009):

<http://www.visitscotland.org/PDF/visitor-attraction-monitor-2008.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Final 2009 figures for England are not available at the time of writing (August 2010). These are interim figures from Visit England, 'England Attractions Monitor', quarterly reports available at:

<http://www.enjoyengland.com/corporate/corporate-information/research-and-insights/statistics/England-Attractions-monitor/England-Attractions-Monitor.aspx>

<sup>11</sup> VisitEngland, 'Visitor Attractions Trends in England 2008', (2009):

<http://www.enjoyengland.com/corporate/corporate-information/research-and-insights/statistics/Annual-Visitor-Attractions-Survey/Visitor-Attractions.aspx>

<sup>12</sup> Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, 'Statistical Report: Renaissance 2009/10', (July 2010):

<http://research.mla.gov.uk/evidence/view-publication.php?dm=nrm&pubid=1120>

<sup>13</sup> Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, 'Renaissance Data Collection: Hub Results for 2008-09', (2009):

<http://research.mla.gov.uk/evidence/view-publication.php?dm=nrm&pubid=984>

<sup>14</sup> Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, 'Hub exit survey 2008/09'.

<sup>15</sup> Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), 'Annual Performance Indicators 2008/09':

[http://www.culture.gov.uk/what\\_we\\_do/museums\\_and\\_galleries/6423.aspx](http://www.culture.gov.uk/what_we_do/museums_and_galleries/6423.aspx)

<sup>16</sup> Museums Journal, 'UK-wide surge in visitor numbers', (Member or subscriber-only - August 2010):

<http://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/news/02082010-uk-wide-surge-in-visitor-numbers>

<sup>17</sup> Arts Council England, 'Regularly funded organisations: Key data from the 2008/09 annual submission' (2010):

[http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/uploads/regularly\\_funded\\_organisations\\_2008-09\\_key\\_data.pdf](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/uploads/regularly_funded_organisations_2008-09_key_data.pdf)

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- <sup>18</sup> DCMS, 'Taking Part Statistical Release', (18 March 2010):  
[http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+http://www.culture.gov.uk/images/research/PSA21\\_IN6Rollingannualdatas\\_et\\_StatisticalRelease\\_March2010.pdf](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+http://www.culture.gov.uk/images/research/PSA21_IN6Rollingannualdatas_et_StatisticalRelease_March2010.pdf)
- <sup>19</sup> DCMS, 'Taking Part Statistical Release', (29 October 2009):  
[http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+http://www.culture.gov.uk/images/publications/08-09\\_Child\\_Baseline\\_report.pdf](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+http://www.culture.gov.uk/images/publications/08-09_Child_Baseline_report.pdf)
- <sup>20</sup> Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, 'Hub Results for 2008-09', (2009):  
<http://research.mla.gov.uk/evidence/view-publication.php?dm=nrm&pubid=984>
- <sup>21</sup> Ibid
- <sup>22</sup> Association of Leading Visitor Attractions, 'Britain's visitor attractions report buoyant 2009 and voice their concerns for the future', (23 February 2010): [http://www.alva.org.uk/press\\_releases/](http://www.alva.org.uk/press_releases/)
- <sup>23</sup> DCMS, 'Free admission':  
[http://www.culture.gov.uk/what\\_we\\_do/museums\\_and\\_galleries/3380.aspx](http://www.culture.gov.uk/what_we_do/museums_and_galleries/3380.aspx)
- <sup>24</sup> VisitWales, 'Visits to Tourist Attractions 2009', (2010):  
<http://wales.gov.uk/docs/drah/publications/Tourism/100524atteng.pdf>
- <sup>25</sup> Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, 'Hub Results for 2008-09', (2009):  
<http://research.mla.gov.uk/evidence/view-publication.php?dm=nrm&pubid=984>
- <sup>26</sup> Visit England, 'Visitor Attractions Trends in England 2008', (August 2009):  
<http://www.enjoyengland.com/corporate/corporate-information/research-and-insights/statistics/Annual-Visitor-Attractions-Survey/Visitor-Attractions.aspx>
- <sup>27</sup> Ibid
- <sup>28</sup> Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, 'Hub Results for 2008-09', (2009):  
<http://research.mla.gov.uk/evidence/view-publication.php?dm=nrm&pubid=984>