



November 2018

Museums Audience Report

*What Audience Finder
says about audiences
for Museums*

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This report, based on data from the Audience Finder standard national survey of visitors, shows the breadth of people museums are able to engage through their diverse appeal, collections, learning activities and specialist knowledge.

The Museums and Heritage sector is one of Britain's finest cultural assets, encompassing over 1700 accredited museums. A remarkable 52% of people* visited a museum in 2016/17 and an even greater 74% visited a heritage site.

Many museums have evolved, through sporadic acquisitions and the generous bequests of benefactors, to hold a diverse range of objects, often housed in older heritage buildings. For the contemporary non-museum-going audience, these can seem imposing mausoleums, filled with curious 'dead stuff' set in the past and bearing little personal relevance. Museums located beyond the convenience of a city centre face the further challenge of attracting visitors who are less mobile (financially and physically) in a competitive leisure market.

The Audience Finder data, however, shows us that museums are evolving to bridge this gap. There are clear examples of museums reaching and connecting with their local communities and contributing to important political agendas of social cohesion, improving health and well-being and boosting the visitor economy. Successful museums are using this data to build their resilience, influence funders and form collaborative partnerships.

This report is based on a sample of 39,318 visitors from 105 varied museums – those managed by local authorities, independent trusts, universities and national museums – collected in the 2017/18 benchmark year. The museums range in scale from specialist to broad collections, offering uniquely different visitor experiences. The report offers comprehensive insights into the demographic profile and behaviour of visitors, comparing them with patterns for other forms of arts and culture. Individual museums can use this national benchmark as a comparator for their own findings using Audience Finder dashboard analytics, as well as comparing to population data and other cultural organisations by region. More broadly, the report serves to illuminate how England's amazing range of museums is able to serve such a vast cross-section of its people.

* www.gov.uk/guidance/taking-part-survey

The Big Picture

What do we know about Museums audiences?

Older audiences are highly represented: 41% of all visitors are over the age of 55

Museums attract a broad range of visitors of **all ages**

Visitors whose primary **motivation is to learn something** travel further

Local audiences: 52% of visitors live within a 30 minute drive of the museum

Museums attract **more female than male** visitors - a higher proportion of male visitors attend sporting, science and transport museums

Museums with free entrance attract a higher proportion of **BAME** and **younger visitors**

Regular museum goers visit the same museum **3 times a year** on average

Museums attract a higher proportion of **family visitors** than other artforms



Looking at this demographic profiling, if your museum is on a 10 year exhibition cycle – what does this mean for the displays you should be planning for a decade’s time?

Who visits museums?

The Core Four

Four key audience groups, drawn along demographic and behavioural lines, emerge clearly from the dataset. These core four groupings, profiled below, exhibit notable differences in attitude and engagement. We'll be examining these distinct behaviours throughout the report.

Young Creatives

16 -24 year old independent young adults and thinkers who want to learn, create and curate their experiences.

Families

Visitors attending museums with children, wanting to be entertained and educated together.

Older Learners

Museum visitors aged 55+ who want to be active, social and connected.

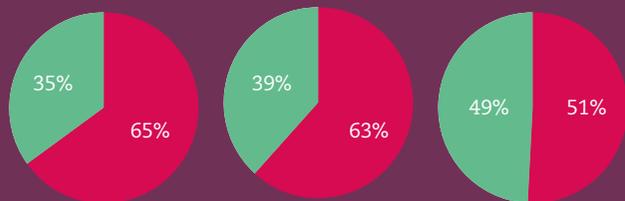
Cultural Tourists

Predominantly affluent adults, these cultural enthusiasts will frequently invest time and money to travel more than 60 minutes for new experiences and knowledge.

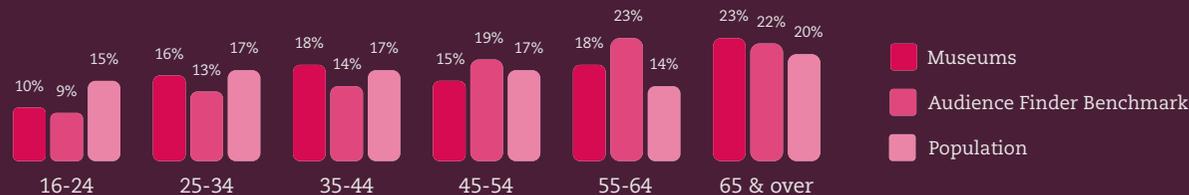
Men and Women

Women Men

Audience Finder Museums Audiences English Population

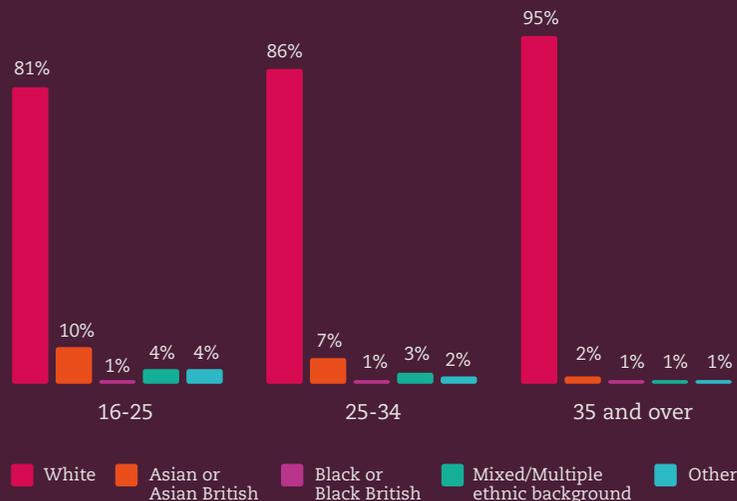


Age



- Museums attract higher proportions of 25-44 year olds than other artforms.
- Middle-aged audiences are slightly less prominent in museum audiences than for other artforms.
- Older learners are well represented. Over 55s make up 41% of museum audiences but only a third of the population.

Age x Ethnicity



The demographic of Museum audiences is broadly representative of the population and aligned to typical cultural engagement habits.

- Younger museum audiences are substantially more diverse, particularly in urban areas, reflecting museums' endeavours to engage a changing demographic in their locality. This not only reflects the population make-up but, more significantly, the levels of education being achieved by a greater diversity of people.
- Asian and Asian British groups have a particularly strong showing in younger museum audiences.

10% of museum visitors identify as having some degree of limiting disability, compared with 18% of the English population

What are their cultural habits and preferences?

Using Audience Spectrum helps identify key barriers to and opportunities for engaging different audiences. How can museums engage cash-strapped groups like Facebook Families?



High engagement

Medium engagement

Low engagement



Museums attenders



Audience Finder Benchmark (cultural events attendance across all artforms)



England population aged 15+



Audience Spectrum, which maps both levels of engagement and attitude towards the arts across the UK

population, shows how broad and accessible the museums offering is. Museum audiences are more evenly spread than other artforms across **High (30%) Medium (45%) and Low (25%)** cultural engagers, with almost half of attenders hailing from the middle-engaged segments. These middle groupings are typically regular (though not frequent) attenders, low-risk in their arts engagement habits and constitute the largest section of the population.

Museum audiences are less dominated by high engagers than most forms of culture and are more representative of the population. What we see in museums, then, is a broad array of cultural experiences that meet the needs of a wide range of people, including those who typically face more barriers to engagement.

The majority of museum visitors are medium or high cultural engagers.



Dormitory Dependables

Suburban and small towns' interest in heritage and mainstream arts



Trips and Treats

Mainstream arts and popular culture influenced by children, family and friends



Commuterland Culturebuffs

Affluent and professional consumers of culture



Home and Heritage

Rural and small town daytime activities and historical events

Young Creatives

Other artforms are dominated by highly cultural engaged **Experience Seekers**, but museums appeal as much to **Facebook Families** and **Trips and Treats** millennials.

Older Learners

For most art forms, older audiences tend to be **Commuterland Culturebuffs**. In museum audiences though, the older middle engaged groups of **Home and Heritage** and **Dormitory Dependables** are equally significant.

Families

Dormitory Dependables and **Trips and Treats** dominate family attendance to museums, making up 38% of all family audiences.

Cultural Tourists

47% of **Commuterland Culturebuffs** travel substantial distances to visit museums either with specific collections or in areas of interest.



Low culturally engaged audiences are far more local than cultural tourists, who tend to be high cultural engagers. What are the implications of this for pricing strategies?

Where do they come from?

Young Creatives

At 40% travelling less than 15 minutes to get to a museum, millennials are and Generation Z are the most hyperlocally-minded audiences.

Families

Family visitors are largely local. 65% of families visit within 30 minutes of their homes.

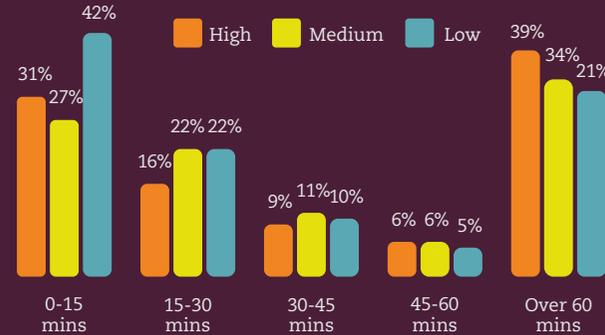
Older Learners

40% of 55+ audiences travel long distances to visit museums, suggesting that these visits form part of a day outing or longer trip.

Cultural Tourists

Whilst most artforms attract just 7% of their audiences from overseas, museums audiences are 12% non-UK residents.

Drive time x engagement level



Families and single adults are more likely to visit museums and attractions closer to home, whilst groups of adults will travel further afield.

Across all engagement levels, museums audiences are more likely to attend either very locally – within 30 minutes of their homes – or as part of a substantial trip – an hour or more away from home.

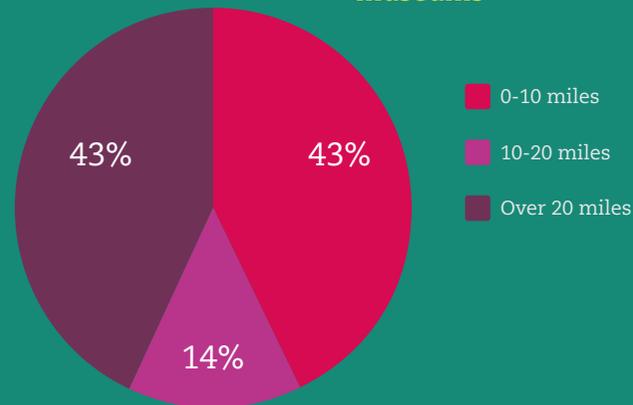
Within this pattern though, there are some stark differences between engagement levels, revealing almost as many 'cultural tourists' in high engaged groups as 'home bodies' in low engaged groups:

42% of low culturally engaged visitors live within 15 minutes of the museum they are visiting.

39% of highly culturally engaged visitors travelled over 60 minutes, compared to 21% of lower engaged audiences.

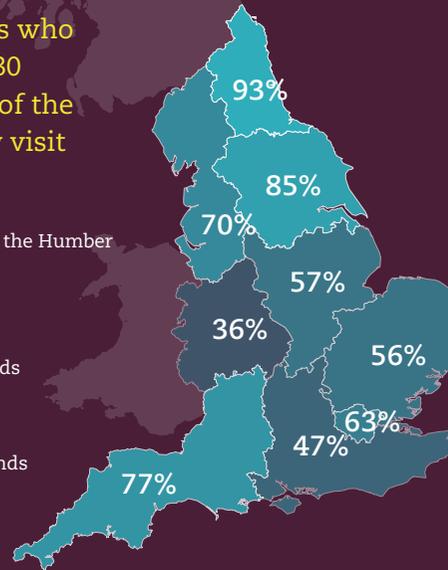
Home and Away

Travel distance to museums



% of attenders who live within a 30 minute drive of the museum they visit

- 93% North East
- 85% Yorkshire & the Humber
- 77% South West
- 70% North West
- 63% London
- 57% East Midlands
- 56% East
- 47% South East
- 36% West Midlands



Audience Finder data shows that museums in the **South East** and **West Midlands** attract more **tourists** whereas the **North East** audiences are **highly local**.

Regional Representation

Audience Spectrum profiles differ from region to region and museums generally attract a highly representative local demographic.

North Eastern museum audiences reflect the region's significant population of low **cultural engagers**. 39% of museums audiences in this region are usually low engaged.

London museums rely on cultural frequent flyers. **Metroculturals** alone make up a third of London's museum goers.

In **London**, 37% of visitors are from **overseas** **37%**

19% of overseas audiences visit from **USA** **19%**

40% of overseas audiences visit from **Europe** **40%**



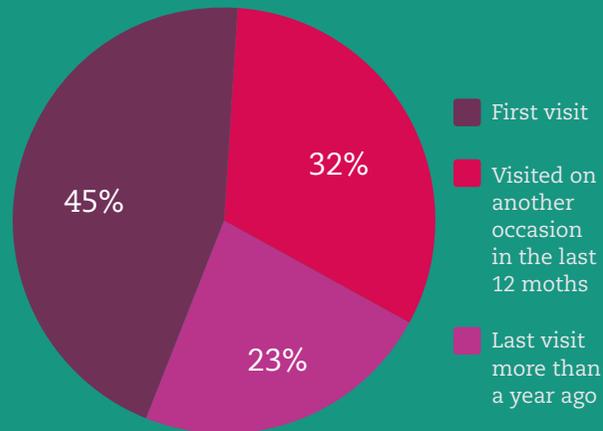
52% of all visitors live within a **30 minute** drivetime of the museum they visit

How do they visit?

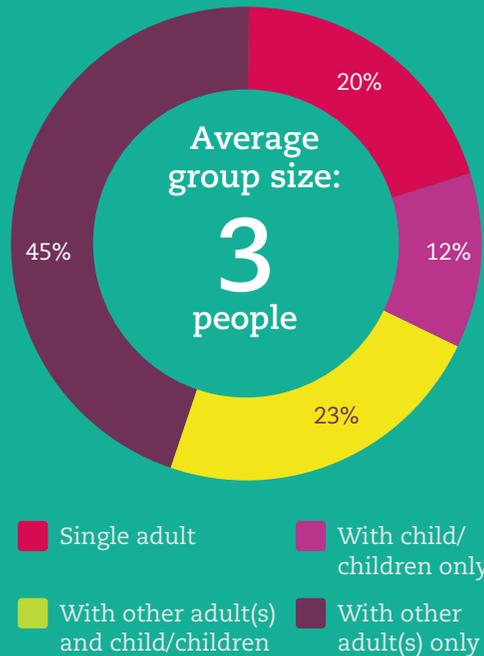
According to the *Taking Part* survey, repeat and regular visits to museums are very much on the rise. What more can museums do to nurture this trend?



Last museum visit



On average, museum audiences who have visited within the last year attended **3 times**. What implications does this have for programming exhibitions and activities?



Young Creatives

Young adults are more likely to attend with peers than in family groups, suggesting strong social and academic drivers.

Families

35% of audiences attend in family groups, whereas general cultural audiences are made up of just 14% families.

Older Learners

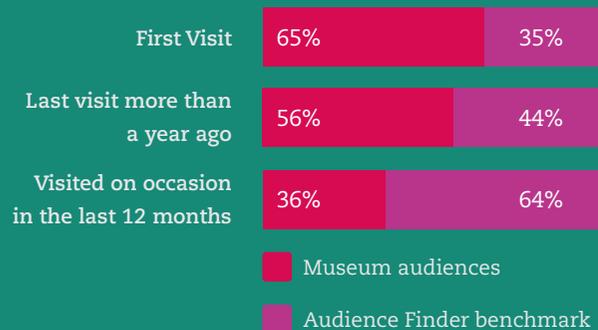
Over half of older learners attend in adult groups. These are active retirees with the means to engage with museums as learners, not just as grandparents.

Cultural Tourists

42% of adult groups travel over 60 minutes to visit museums, with a high proportion of adult groups visiting as part of a cultural break.

Families are the most likely group to return regularly to a museum.

When did you last visit?



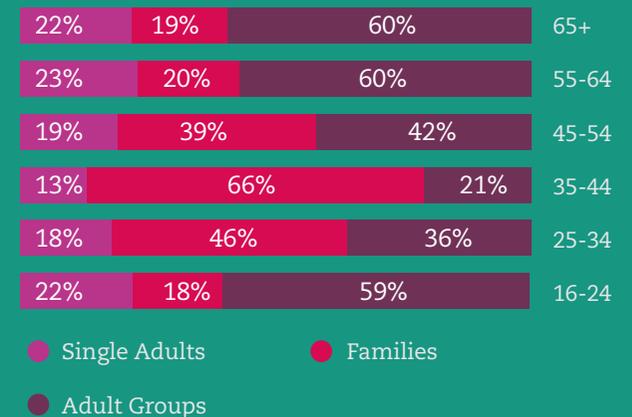
Museums are good at attracting first time visitors. Only about a third of audiences, though, return multiple times a year, as opposed to an average of 57% within the year returns to other artforms.

Almost **half** of museum audiences attend in **adult only groups**, rather than alone or as families. This is particularly prominent in the **oldest** and **youngest** visitor groups.



Medium Engagers' attendance is split fairly evenly between **Family** (44%) and **Adult** (41%) groups.

Group type x age





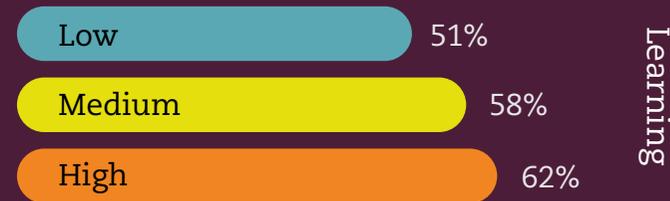
How can understanding visitor motivations help you to tailor your offering for potential first time and repeat visitors?

Why do they visit?



Social and Learning based motivations are the main drivers for museum attendance.

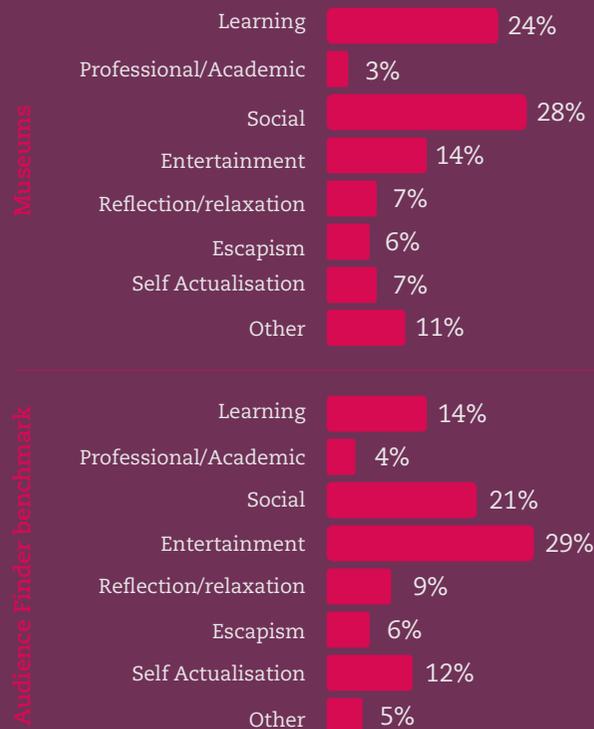
Whilst **Learning** increases with cultural engagement level, however, **Social** decreases.



22% of all audiences cite *'To spend time with friends and family'* as their single greatest motivation, as opposed to just 12% for most artforms.

Whilst museum visitors are significantly **more Learning** and **less Entertainment** motivated than audiences of other artforms, they are most often seeking **social experiences**.

Motivations for visiting:



Learning is the most consistent motivation across all age groups



% of respondents who expressed **Learning** as one of their motivations for visiting museums across all age brackets:

Museums audiences are more motivated by both personal learning and encouraging family and child learning than is typical across other artforms.	55%	16-24
	57%	25-34
	59%	35-44
	56%	45-54
	57%	55-64
	55%	65+

Young Creatives

Whilst 1 in 5 young people cite academics among their motivations, a third are primarily socially motivated.

Families

Families visit museums to educate, entertain and socialise with their children.

Older Learners

Intellectual stimulation, learning and self-actualisation drivers increase with age.

Cultural Tourists

This group is far more likely than local audiences to be visiting with a focus on learning and self-actualisation.

Regular visitors are more likely to perceive museums as a place of **entertainment**

Top 3 motivations of single adult visitors:

1. To learn something
2. To be intellectually stimulated
3. Museums are an important part of who I am

Individual specialist enthusiasts make up a distinct and important contingent of museum audiences

How do they feel about their visit?

Considering that likelihood to recommend increases steadily with age, what more can museums do to create advocacy in younger audiences?



Your **Net Promoter Score (NPS)** is an average score based on how likely your audiences are to recommend you to other people.

Net promoter scores for **free** and **paid** for museums are the **same**.

At **66**, museums' net promoter scores are **below** the cultural average of **74**.

Museums score similarly to other art forms across 'The whole experience' and 'Value for money', but lower for 'Quality of the exhibition'.

Visitors from the **middle engaged** Audience Spectrum groups are the most likely to recommend the museum to friends and family.

98%

of respondents rate their overall experience as *Very good* or *Good*



More contemporary-minded groups, including **Experience Seekers** and **Kaleidoscope Creativity**, demonstrate lower satisfaction levels.

There is a challenge here for museums to retain this future-focused audience and create positive word of mouth.

Highest



Home and Heritage

Lowest



Experience Seekers

More traditionally-minded visitors, such as **Home and Heritage**, are the most satisfied with their museums experience, both frequenting and identifying with their local museums.

Young Creatives

With an average NPS of just 51, 16-24 year olds are the least likely age-group to recommend their museum experience.

Families

Families give an average NPS of 68, which is slightly higher than other groups.

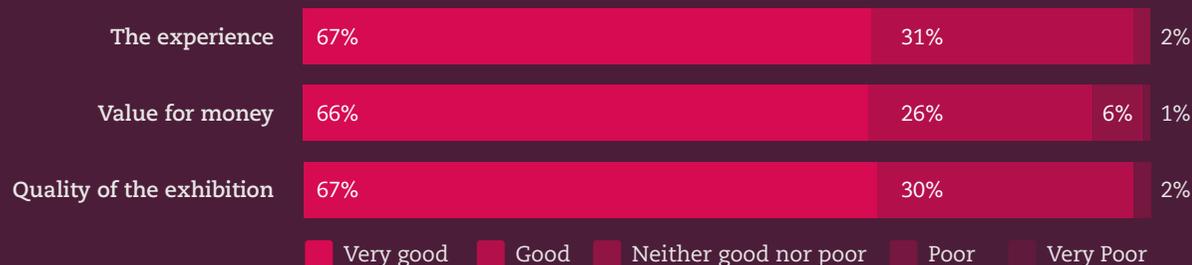
Older Learners

Museum advocacy is highest among older audiences, with over 65 year-olds giving an average NPS of 72.

Cultural Tourists

At just 55, overseas visitors score museums more than 10 points lower than UK residents, whose average score is 67. Lower tourist scores contribute to London's poor NPS performance.

How would you rate...



The Audience Finder sample includes 49 museums that are managed by local authorities, with annual visitor figures spanning from 20,000 to 200,000. These museums share similarities in their broad range of collections and urban placement across England. Distinct from those museums governed as independent trusts, the majority are free admission and have substantially fewer dedicated marketing resources.

Local authority museums often boast an eclectic collection, incorporating social history, art and artefacts specifically relevant to the local area. They may also include a permanent special interest nationally designated exhibition, such as the Metalwork collection at Museums Sheffield.

These museums' active engagement and exhibition programmes attract a high level of repeat visitors and audiences as participants.

Local Loyalties

Loyal

- Local authority run museums attract the **most loyal and regular audiences**.
- 40% of local authority museum visitors **attend multiple times a year** and almost twice as frequently as university museums audiences, only 21% of whom had visited in the preceding 12 months.

Local

- Museums are an important part of these audiences' **cultural and community lives**, attracting an **extremely local audience** to visit and participate in activities.
- Local museums attract the **highest proportion of family audiences**. 65% of local authority museum visitors live within a 30 minute drive-time, compared to 40% of university museums and 33% of independents.

Learners

- More specialist local authority museums can also attract audiences from further afield. Anecdotal evidence from museums participating in Audience Finder, alongside broader research, shows that **single adult enthusiasts travel the furthest to museums with specific collections** and to undertake their own research.
- Three top motivations emerge clearly for local authority museum attenders: **Social (29%), Learning (22%) and Entertainment (14%)**.

Approximately 2/3 of survey respondents visited free entrance museums, compared to 1/3 with entrance fees. The impact of charging entrance to museums has been an ongoing conversation.

National museums' ability to offer free entrance represents a challenge to all museums reliant on generating their own income to operate. As museums face the conundrum of sustaining services with restricted funding, the pressure to generate income by any means, including charging admission, is rapidly increasing. Findings from Audience Finder bring additional insights to fuel the debate.

Paying the Price

Free entrance

- Free entrance museums attract a higher proportion of visitors who are less culturally engaged, particularly **Up Our Street** and **Facebook Families**.
- **Families** are more likely to attend free entrance museums.
- A higher proportion of visitors to free museums and heritage attractions are **aged under 35**.
- Free entry museums attract a higher proportion of **BAME visitors**.

Paid entrance

- Paid museums attract a higher level of super-engaged **Commuterland Culturebuffs** and **Experience Seekers**.
- These museums attract more visitors **over the age of 45**.
- A higher proportion of visitors **from further afield** attend museums with paid entrance.
- On average, paid for museums attract a higher proportion of **first time visitors** (50%) than free museums (43%).

For more information about the impact of charging we recommend AIM's 2016 study [The Impact of Charging or Not for Admissions on Museums](#).

Barriers and Gateways

Every museum has a different propensity to attract and engage audiences. There are, though, a number of identifiable barriers to engagement that are common to many museums, along with gateway opportunities to pursue.

Timing is everything

The Audience Finder data set reveals patterns of attendance and seasonal trends.

- The rise in family attendance during school holidays is particularly significant in the autumn and spring half terms.
- Weekends are especially popular with families during the winter months.
- Major city museums have less variation in their visitor profile throughout the year, compared with rural locations and tourism destinations.

Thinking practically

Open comments in the Audience Finder surveys reveal that practical barriers vary, but common factors include:

- The availability and cost of public transport
- The cost of involvement (entrance fees etc.)
- Project closures
- Availability and cost of refreshments
- Lack of information on what's available
- Poor communication and marketing
- Rurality (scattered populations and isolation)
- Time constraints.

Happy families

Given the importance of family audiences, it is key for museums to recognise the needs and motivations of the changing family dynamics revealed by population research. The modern family is complex. A whole range of carers – parents, grandparents, partners etc. – will potentially be making the decision to either bring children to visit museums or choose to spend leisure time in another way.

Families are especially influenced by word of mouth and have a particularly high level of brand awareness. Research indicates that they are the most likely group to look to social media for recommendations. Family Arts Campaign's [Family Arts Standards](#) offer great guidance on how best to communicate with and welcome families.

Changing perceptions

According to Kids in Museums' study [Hurdles to Participation](#), museum audiences tend to be from better educated and more affluent homes. The Audience Agency's extensive qualitative research with less engaged families and young people reiterates that the impacts of differences in class and socio-economic backgrounds are critical.

Parental influence can be both positive and negative. If a parent is unwilling to engage, this impacts younger family members' attitudes. This unwillingness can be caused by a combination of emotional (fear, discomfort) or interest (awareness, perceived relevance) barriers. Children and young people may consequently hold a negative view of museums as remote, inaccessible and not relevant to their everyday lives.

Young people of today, however, have entirely different needs and interests as they age – they are not necessarily their parents in waiting. It is increasingly important to consider lifetime engagement strategies for younger audiences, such as developing:

- User-led experiences
- Informal learning
- Wider family and community engagement
- The role of exploration and play.

What's Next

Audience Finder supporting Accreditation

The Audience Agency is working with other Sector Support Organisations and Arts Council England to support museums to use data to understand their audiences and to extend their engagement with non-users.

From November 2018 the **Museums Accreditation Scheme** will be refreshed and museums will be asked to demonstrate a sound knowledge of audiences and their needs in order to achieve the standard. Audience Finder can help your museum bridge the data gaps. It offers a range of resources to support audience development planning and a free research toolkit to undertake your own visitor research.

To subscribe for free visit www.audiencefinder.org

Top tips for museums

Creating an audience development plan

Use our **audience development guidance** to evaluate your current visitors and their experience, understand barriers to attendance and develop approaches to overcoming them.

Scoping your potential visitors

Within the Audience Finder national data information you can access more detail about audiences in your region as part of an **Area Profile Report**. This invaluable tool supports tactical marketing, fundraising and programme planning and includes Audience Spectrum, lifestyle, demographic and socio-economic profiles.

Increasing learning and participation

Sign up for our regular digest of **research advice** and look out for features on different audience groups, such as our new **Engaging Older Audiences Snapshot**.

Useful sources and references

- **Taking Part Survey**
- **Museums Accreditation Scheme**
- **Museum Sector Support Organisations**

Participating Museums

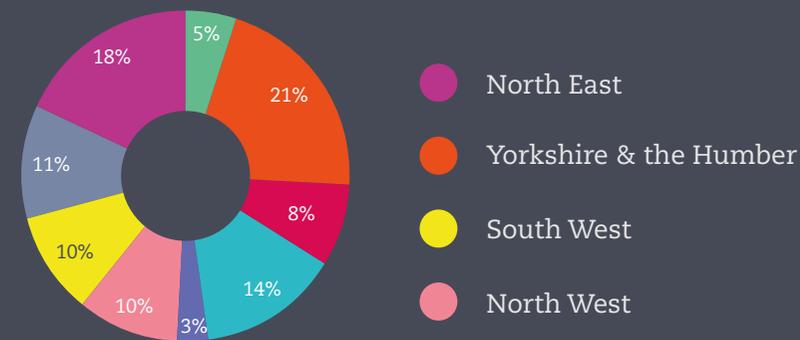
Abbot Hall
 American Museum
 Amersham Museum
 Andover Museum
 Arbeia Roman Fort
 Ashmolean Museum
 Bassetlaw Museum
 Berwick Museum
 Blackwell
 Botanic Gardens
 Bowes Museum
 Brighton Museum & Art Gallery
 Brighton Royal Pavilion and Museums
 Cannon Hall Museum
 Captain Cook Birthplace Museum
 Castlefield Gallery
 Castleford Museum
 Centre for Chinese Contemporary Arts
 Chelmsford Museum
 Christchurch Mansion
 Clifton Park
 Colchester Castle
 Cooper Art Gallery
 County Museum at Hartlebury
 Coventry Transport Museum
 Derby Museum and Art Gallery
 Design Museum
 Discovery Museum
 Dorman Museum
 Dorset County Museum
 Dr Jenner's House Museum
 Eastleigh Museum
 Elsecar Heritage Centre
 Eureka!

Experience Barnsley
 Falmouth Art Gallery
 Fashion Museum Bath
 Fitzwilliam Museum
 Graves Art Gallery
 Great North Museum
 Harris Museum and Art Gallery
 Hartlepool Art Gallery
 Hatton Gallery
 HCT The Gallery
 Head of Steam
 Henry Moore Institute
 Herbert Art Gallery
 Hexham Museum
 Higgins Bedford
 History of Science Oxford
 Holbourne Museum
 Horniman Museum
 Hull & East Riding Museum
 Hull Maritime Museum
 Ipswich Museum
 Ironbridge Gorge Museum
 IWMN
 Jewish Museum
 Kettle's Yard
 Kirkleatham Museum
 Laing Art Gallery
 Lowewood Museum
 Maidstone Museum
 Manchester Art Gallery
 Manchester Museum
 Mansfield Museum
 Millennium Gallery
 MOLLI
 MOSI
 Museum in the Park
 Museum of Archaeology & Anthropology

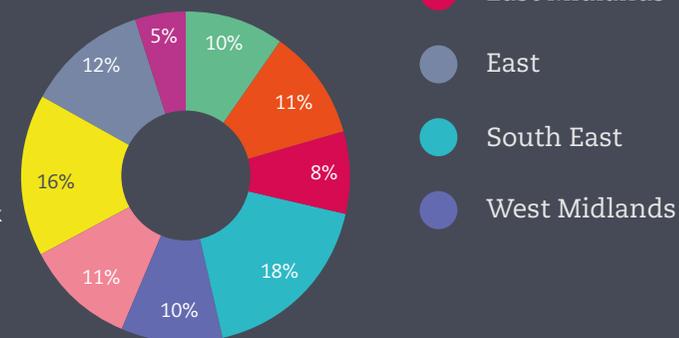
Museum of East Asian Art
 Museum of Hartlepool
 Museum of London
 Museum of Natural History Oxford
 Museum of Timekeeping
 National Football Museum
 National Maritime Museum Cornwall
 National Waterways Museum Gloucester
 Newstead Abbey
 No.1 The Crescent
 Normanby Hall
 North Lincolnshire Museum
 Norwich Castle
 Nottingham Castle
 Nottingham Industrial Museum
 OUM Ashmolean Museum
 OUM History of Science Museum
 OUM Museum of Natural History
 Penlee House
 Peoples History Museum
 Pickfords House
 Pitt Rivers Museum
 Plymouth City Museum
 Polar Museum
 Pontefract Castle
 Pontefract Museum
 Poole Museum
 Porthcurno Telegraph Museum
 Preston Park Museum
 RAMM
 Roman Baths
 Royal Cornwall Museum
 Royal West of England

Academy
 Russell Cotes Art Gallery
 Salisbury Museum
 Scott Polar Museum
 Sedgwick Museum
 Segedunum Roman Fort
 Sewerby Hall
 Shipley Art Gallery
 Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum
 South Shields Museum
 Stephenson Railway Museum
 Streetlife Museum
 The Architecture Centre
 The Commandery
 The Geffrye Museum
 The Hepworth Wakefield
 The Silk Mill
 The Story Museum
 Tullie House
 V&A
 Vestry House Museum
 Victoria Art Gallery
 Wakefield Museum
 Westbury Manor Museum
 Westgate Museum
 Weston Park Museum
 Wheel Martyn China Clay Park
 Whipple Museum
 Wilberforce House
 Wiltshire Museum
 Wollaton Hall
 Woodhorn Museum
 Worcester City Art Gallery
 Wordsworth Trust
 Worsborough Mill
 York Art Gallery
 York Castle Museum
 Yorkshire Museum

% of Audience Finder data-contributing museums 2017/18



% of ACE accredited museums 2017/18



Context and Methodology

Background and Methodology

Over the past three years, The Audience Agency has collaborated with the museums sector using Audience Finder to better understand audiences for museums and support the sector to make the case for the impacts of its work.

The data included in this report was collected in the 2017-18 benchmark year by 105 museums including local authority, independent, national and universities from across England. The sample of 39,318 surveys was collected through face-to-face interviews or e-surveys. Comparisons made in the report are between the stated sample, England population data as per the 2011 census and the Audience Finder dataset of other artforms (Audience Finder benchmark), which represents 800+ organisations and 30% of households in England.

Audience Finder

Audience Finder is a national audience development and data aggregation programme, enabling cultural organisations to share, compare and apply insight. It is developed and managed by The Audience Agency for and with the cultural sector and is funded by the National Lottery through Arts Council England.

Audience Finder provides tools for collecting and analysing data in a standardised way which builds a clear picture of audiences locally and nationally. The results help organisations to find new audience opportunities using a range of tools, features and support. These include user-friendly reporting dashboards, online mapping and insight tools and the opportunity to work in collaborative, data-sharing groups.

Audience Spectrum

Audience Spectrum segments the whole UK population by their attitudes towards culture, and by what they like to see and do. There are 10 different Audience Spectrum profiles that you can use to understand who lives in your local area, what your current audiences are like, and what you could do to build new ones.

Audience Spectrum is the most accurate tool the sector has ever had to help target audiences and include a wider public. Analysis and customer tagging with Audience Spectrum work at both household and postcode levels, to help cultural organisations understand audience profile and reach, enabling really accurate targeting of activity and communications.

Get in touch to find out more

More about Museum audiences

To discover more about research into audiences for museums, or if you would like to contribute, contact:

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Head of Partnerships, The Audience Agency

Disclaimer

The information contained within this report is not intended to be used as the sole basis for any business decision and is based upon data that is provided by third parties, the accuracy and/or completeness of which it would not be possible and/or economically viable for The Audience Agency to guarantee. The Audience Agency's services also involve models and techniques based on statistical analysis, probability and predictive behaviour. Accordingly, The Audience Agency is not able to accept any liability for any inaccuracy, incompleteness or other error in this report.

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General Enquiries

For general enquiries about Audience Finder and The Audience Agency's work as a Sector Support Organisation, contact:

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ENGLAND**

The Audience Agency is funded by the Arts Council, as a Sector Support Organisation, to lead on supporting cultural organisations to gain a deeper understanding of current and potential audiences.