

1. Young people are among the **least likely** to visit a museum or gallery



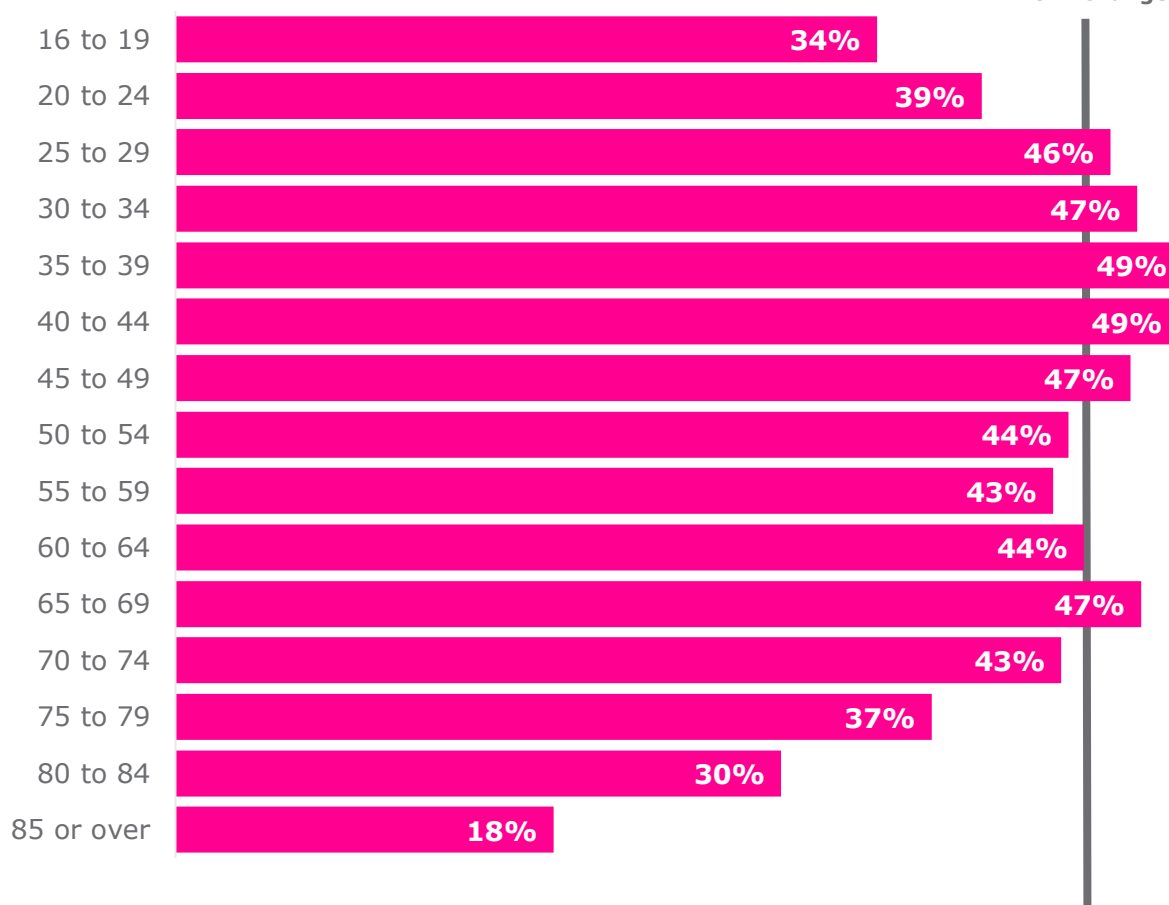
The headline narrative for museum and gallery visits is good – a 10-percentage point increase in the proportion of adults visiting in a 12-month period.¹ But as we might expect this isn't uniform growth.

For cohorts between 25 and 79, the proportion who have visited is up by between 10 and 12 percentage points, but for 20 to 24s, this increase is only +6 percentage points, and for 16 to 19s, no statistically significant increase is detected.

Put simply, under 25s have historically been less likely to visit than older adults, and they now aren't returning as quickly.

Visited a museum/gallery in person: past 12 months

Y-O-Y change



¹ from 33% in 2022/23 to 43% in 2023/24.

There are a lot of possible reasons for this, and while it's hard to apportion cause or measure effect size, it's clear that young adults today face a whole host of challenges. The "cost of living crisis" has a disproportionate impact on young people, limiting their ability to fully participate in society.²

- Students are taking on increasing amounts of paid work to afford their accommodation and living expenses.³
- Under 21s are eligible for a significantly lower minimum wage:⁴ 18 to 20s receive only 73% of the full minimum wage and 16 to 17s receive only 66%. Apprentices also receive the lowest rate while they are under 19 and/or in the first year of their apprenticeship⁵
- For those eligible for Universal Credit, under 25s receive less than 80% of the amount received by over 25s.⁶
- The number of 16 to 24s who are not in education, employment or training is also increasing, from 10% 2021 to 12% in 2023.⁷

In a reversal of historic trends, young people now exhibit the poorest mental health of all ages.⁸ This change is the result of a significant increase in young people experiencing "common mental disorders" such as depression, anxiety or bipolar disorder, from 24% in 2000 to 34% in 2021/22. Young adults who have a mental disorder are three times more prone to financial constraints preventing their participation in activities like sports, outings, or socialising with friends, compared to those who don't have a mental disorder.⁹

Beyond practical constraints, interest, awareness and confidence are also important to arts participation. We know that arts engagement correlates with socio-economic status, and that early exposure to museums and galleries can mediate socio-cultural barriers so it's instructive to consider educational visits to our nationally funded institutions.

² <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5804/cmselect/cm youth/cost-living-crisis-young-people/summary.html>

³ Ibid.

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-national-minimum-wage-in-2024>

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/national-minimum-wage-rates>

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/universal-credit/what-youll-get>

⁷ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peoplenotinwork/unemployment/bulletins/youngpeoplenotineducationemploymentortrainingneet/may2024#main-points>

⁸ <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/app/uploads/2024/02/Weve-only-just-begun.pdf>

⁹ <https://natcen.ac.uk/publications/children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-2023>

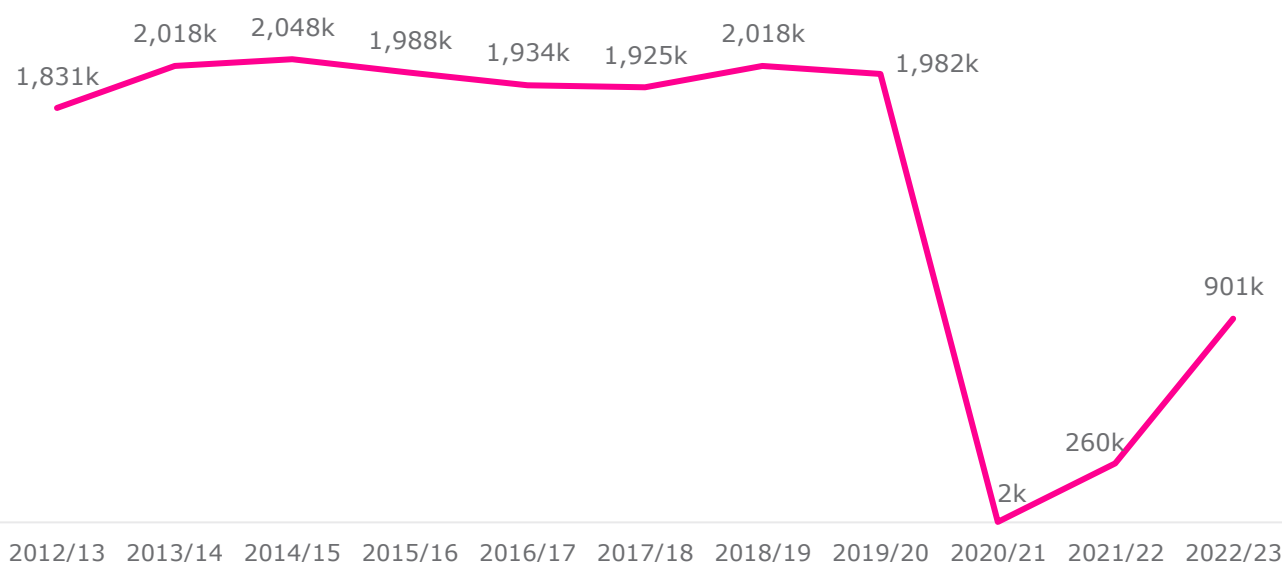
The chart below¹⁰ shows two things:

1. Educational visits were weakening before the pandemic – after a peak in 2014/15 facilitated and self-directed visits to nationally funded museums and galleries decreased for the next three years and did not fully recover before the COVID-19 pandemic closed both schools and cultural institutions in 2020.
2. Since pandemic closures, engagement remains significantly below 2019/20 levels.

The upward trend is encouraging, but the time-limited nature of formal education means there is a cohort of young people who have not received the same exposure to our nation's cultural assets as those who have come before.

Put simply, we can raise a legitimate concern that engagement might decline rather than grow in the short term.

Facilitated and self-directed visits by under 18s in formal education: 2012/13 to 2022/23, thousands



What does this mean for sector professionals?

Institutions wishing to maintain engagement over time should take a life-cycle approach. Build long-term relationships underpinned through developing trust in the brand and confidence in the value and relevance of a visit. Challenging market conditions can restrict engagement, deep emotional connections are the only way to overcome these headwinds.

¹⁰ Data drawn from <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/dcms-sponsored-museums-and-galleries-annual-performance-indicators-202223> only venues who provide data for all years are included in analysis. Museum of the Home, Tyne and Wear Museums and the National Portrait Gallery are excluded.