

# ENGLISH SUMMARY

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The Institute for Museum Research (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz) reports annually on visitor attendance in all museums in the Federal Republic of Germany. This publication documents the 2020 statistical survey for all German museums. It is regarded as most comprehensive in this field and is used by the Government – both Federal and at the level of the 16 Federal State Countries („Bundesländer“) – , as well as the regional and local bodies and cultural organizations in Germany.

The total number of museums taken into account for the 2021 survey was 6,809. This figure remained after combining the data of a few museums that counted their visits together into one figure, and after leaving out a few museums that were closed during 2021. The quota of returned questionnaires for 2021 was 62.7%.

The Institute for Museum Research uses an **operational definition of „museum“** in order to enable precise counts. This definition primarily serves to provide a delimitation with the greatest possible discriminatory power vis-à-vis other institutions. It thus contains by far not all elements of a general museum definition such as for example the specification of functions, tasks and relationships with other cultural organizations (cf. e.g. ICOM-Germany, ICOM-Austria, ICOM-Switzerland (eds.); Ethical Guidelines for Museums 2003). Therefore, the purely operational definition used by the Institute does not at all claim to substitute the recognition as a museum, as the ministries, museum associations and offices in the individual Federal States do it.

Regarding the **classification system for museums**, the Institute for Museum Research stays close to the categories employed by UNESCO (UNESCO/STC/Q/853). Due to the particular museum structure in Germany, local ethnography and regional museums were grouped together in one class. Contrary to UNESCO and ICOM usage, too, zoological and botanical gardens as well as monuments and sites without inventory were not included in the survey. Furthermore, the classification does not cover purely commercial exhibits of private and state industries. Thus, the Institute for Museum Research currently distinguishes the following **nine museum types**:

1. Local history, local ethnography and regional museums
2. Art museums
3. Castles with inventory
4. Natural history and natural science museums
5. Science and technology museums
6. Archaeology and history museums
7. Complex museums with different kinds of collections
8. Specialised cultural heritage museums
9. Museum complexes with different kinds of museums

**The total number of visits counted in museums in Germany 2021 was 38,756,038.**

Of the 6,809 museums who were sent a questionnaire, 3,268 (48.0%) reported their data on **visitor attendance 2021**. As compared to 2019, the total number of visits saw a sharp decline due to the pandemic situation caused by COVID-19 outbreaks and repeated lockdowns throughout Germany starting from March 2020. The decline in visit numbers in museums was minus 65.3%. Table 07 shows that 82.4% of all answering museums reported up to 15,000 visits in 2021. Due to different methods of counting, the aggregated total numbers include some estimated figures. The data also includes attendance of special exhibitions held in museums or organized by them. Only a few museums were able to count visits to their special exhibits separately from visits to their permanent exhibitions. Therefore, total attendance figures for special exhibitions only are not available.

**Table 6** shows variations in attendance as correlated with the different museum types. Art museums (422 museums) led the listing with 7.7 million counted visits. In second place came the Archaeology and history museums (382) with roundabout 5.9 million. Local history, local ethnography and regional museums accounted for the highest number of reporting museums (1,276). However, they added only 5.1 million visitors to the total. **Table 12** shows the distribution of museum types in the individual Federal States („Bundesländer“).

For the survey year 2021, 678 museums reported that they were closed for the entire year. This is 15.9% of the responding museums or 9.9% of all museums contacted. By comparison, for 2020 18.3% and for 2019 2.7% of the responding museums reported being closed for the entire year. Pandemic reasons resulted in a complete closure of 5.0% of the responding museums in 2021 and 9.4% in 2020. Many of these museums are among those institutions with seasonal winter closures.

Due to the COVID pandemic, the year 2021 started with a complete shutdown for museums that lasted until Spring. From March 8th on, the **ability of museums to reopen** was regulated differently from federal state to federal state and also varied from museum to museum. In addition, the protective and sanitary measures that had to be implemented by museums after the lifting of the lockdowns, could not be implemented in all museums. On average, in 2021 museums in Germany were closed for 5.4 months, similar to the situation in 2020 (2020: 5.6 months; see table 01).

Museum visits in 2021 belonged to the **less expensive cultural activities** for the German consumer; however, there are differences between the former states of West Germany and East Germany. In the western part of the Republic, 37.0% of the museums asked no entrance fee; in the eastern part, only 17.6% of the answering museums were free of charge. **Table 19** summarizes our findings on conditions of museum visits.

In order to achieve compatibility with other statistical data, our findings on museums are also allotted to **categories of administrative jurisdiction** that are used by the Association of German Cities („Deutscher Städtetag“) in order to achieve a clearer picture of private and public patronage of museums. **Table 16** shows the distribution of museums according to this classification. Half of the institutions contacted were under public administration (51.1%), 45.1% were privately operated, and 3.8% had a mixed, mainly public and private, governing board.

Exhibition activity has stabilized in 2021 compared to the previous year: **4,704 special exhibitions were reported by 1,846 museums** (2020: 4,643 in 1,856 museums) after a decrease of 43.8% in 2020 compared to 2019 (2021 vs. 2019: -43.0%). These numbers do not include exhibitions in sales galleries („Verkaufsgalerien“), exhibitions not intended for the public and/or exhibitions in exhibition halls.

**Exhibition halls** do not have their own collections, but they organize large museum-type exhibitions. The Institute for Museum Research therefore raises attendance figures of exhibition halls separately from the museum statistics. For 2021, the Institute asked 507 Exhibition halls for their data on visits and received 333 filled out questionnaires. These institutions have organized a total of 1,071 exhibitions in which 1,988,300 visits were counted.

### Digitalization, online portals and controlled vocabularies

The **special questionnaire** of the overall statistical survey for 2021 revisited the digitalization of the permanent collections, their inventory and public availability. Previous surveys for comparison were evaluated in 2016 and 2011.

3,059 museums (44.9%) returned questionnaires with information on this topic. 2,493 (81.5%) of them reported on their **collection size**. In total, 384,751,521 objects were notified in 2021, one third of them are stored in historical and archaeological museums. Electronic databases and/or digital data were used by 63.8% (1,953) of the museums that responded to the way of documentation (n=3,059; **Table 43**). 2.3% of the museums indicated that they share data on their collections online. Most of the museums (41.6%) used their exhibition space to present the digital data, a quarter used their online presence (27.3%) and 10.6% social media to make the digital data publicly available (**Table 53**). **Online portals** were increasingly used to gather digital information on collections and objects; most popular were regional portals such as “museum digital” or “Digicult”. 15.1% of the museums returning the special questionnaire reported to contribute to a regional portal.

Sharing digital object data, **controlled vocabularies** and authority control gain increasing importance. However, only 13.6% of the museums report to use controlled vocabularies and/or authority control, e.g. GND (**Table 46**).

Digitalization in 2021 was done in almost two thirds of the museums (63.7%), two thirds by temporary (63.9%), one third by permanent (30.1%) staff (**Table 55**). The digitalization was mainly financed from own funds (63.7%) or by successfully applying to federal (11.3%) and/or state government funding programmes (6.2%, **Table 56**). 27.9% of the museums are planning digitalization projects within the next two years.