

# MUSEUMS MOVING FORWARD

## Workplace Equity and Organizational Culture in US Art Museums

### 2025 Report

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## Foreword

This 2025 Report is published by Museums Moving Forward (MMF), a limited-life organization whose mission is to create a more just museum sector by 2030. MMF conducts and produces this data study and report every two years, analyzing patterns and trends in employment across US art museums and offering exclusive insights. This study is unique in that it delivers data collected firsthand from workers nationwide, across all roles and departments, distinguishing it from other studies of the field. Mirroring the format of [MMF's inaugural 2023 report](#), this year's edition introduces longitudinal data to track change over time in key areas.

Understanding the art museum workforce in 2025 requires consideration of the broader forces that are currently shaping the sector, including how diversity discourse is evolving, the intergenerational dynamics in the workplace, and the ongoing museum unionization movement.<sup>1</sup>

Art museum workplaces are still experiencing the effects of the 2020 racial justice uprisings and a corresponding pressure to address racism and other inequities. Simultaneously they find themselves navigating the recent backlash against diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion (DEAI) efforts and the even more recent anti-DEAI laws.<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile, as the percentage of Baby Boomers and Gen X workers in art museums decreases while that of Millennials and Gen Z workers increases, significant generational differences are being expressed within the workplace, all of which we explore in the report.<sup>3</sup>

These generational gaps are also playing a role in the unionization movement. According to 2024 data from Gallup, 77% of Americans under the age of 34 approve of unions, a higher approval rating among any other age group.<sup>4</sup> With 71% of art museum union members being Millennials and Gen Z, these national trends are reflected in the museum sector, too. It is not yet clear what the long-term impacts of these unions will be on the field, as over half (55%) of art museum unions have formed within the last five years. However, from this data we can extrapolate some key findings to better understand why workers are forming unions, as well as what younger workers value and expect from art museums moving forward.

The data for this study was collected between November 2024 and February 2025. There are comparisons throughout this report to MMF's inaugural 2023 Report. For that study, we collected data between October and December 2022, when workers were still feeling the acute effects of COVID-19 pandemic-era layoffs and the Great Resignation.<sup>5</sup>

The 2025 data shows improved conditions overall within art museum workplaces in the past two years. Workers report feeling more satisfied across most metrics, with a decrease in burnout and the desire to quit, but some key sticking points—low pay and few promotions—are still sticky. This report includes analysis of pay and promotion rates in addition to a new exploration of household income and living wages based on museum locations. MMF's core belief is that art museum workers should not have to choose between working in service to a mission and being able to afford basic living expenses. They should be able to do both, with dignity and respect, and sustain themselves for long-term careers in the field.

What does it mean to establish fair pay in the art museum sector? Which workers earn a living wage in art museums? What are the costs that museums bear without a diverse and sustainable workforce in today's competitive cultural environment? We believe these

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questions are essential to ask, even and especially in a moment of profound uncertainty, when we know the financial strain on art museums is increasingly acute. The field must listen and attend to the needs of its workers—which are clearly expressed in the data—because workers are as valuable an asset to these institutions as any other. Investing in workers now will help retain the diversity already present in the sector and support the growth of future museum leaders.

In the pages that follow, you will find insights on the art museum sector through an aggregate analysis of the data across all Partner Museums (see the full list [here](#)) and individual staff survey respondents. Each section of findings—Workplace Culture, Career Satisfaction, Pay and Promotions, and Discrimination and Harassment—includes a subsection on the impact of unions or worker perspectives of unions. At the end of the report, you will find MMF’s recommendations on how leaders can make more data-informed decisions to move the field forward.

We share this report as a tool for discussion and a catalyst in the evolving discourse on equity in art museums.

— Museums Moving Forward

## Executive Summary

In the two years since MMF's first report, the US art museum field has experienced a new dimension of pressure and strain amid broader political and cultural turmoil. The data for the 2025 Report was collected between November 2024 and February 2025, coinciding with the political shift from an incoming presidential administration. Much has happened since February, including the federal government's gutting of arts funding and calls for drastic shifts in what constitutes cultural heritage.<sup>6</sup>

In many ways, this study reflects a period of ongoing and profound transition within the cultural sector. Indeed, changes to museums' internal operations and their commitments to diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion (DEAI) were already underway.<sup>7</sup> What the data in this report reveals is a field that is no longer navigating the immediate aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic but is still grappling with the issues and inequities brought to light in the new culture wars.<sup>8</sup>

Throughout this report, we find tensions between the sense of purpose and satisfaction workers find in their jobs and the persistent inequities they experience, especially when looking at race, position level, and gender. Most art museum workers are buoyed by the interpersonal relationships they form and the meaning they derive from their work, even as they report that institutions still fall short of fostering a diverse and thriving workforce. Below are key findings in the 2025 Report:

- **Art museum workers are more satisfied with their careers than they were in 2023 on nearly every metric** except for satisfaction with opportunities for promotion (down to 24% from 28%).
- **More than three-quarters (78%) of art museum workers have never received a full promotion at their current workplace**, despite an average tenure of six years.
- **Small museums (with annual operating budgets of up to \$5 million) are outperforming larger museums on staff satisfaction and workplace culture**, even though they offer lower average salaries.
- **Executive-level staff are still more satisfied with their careers than staff at any other position level on the majority of metrics**, and 77% of executives are “thriving” in their current career outlook (versus just 31% of entry-level workers).
- **Nearly half (49%) of art museum workers have actively looked for another job in the last year.**
- **More than half (54%) of art museum workers have considered leaving the museum field altogether**, a significant portion of the workforce but representing a substantial improvement from the 68% reported in 2023.
- **The top three reasons workers want to leave the field remain unchanged from 2023: low pay, burnout, and lack of growth opportunities.**

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- **More than a quarter (28%) of full-time art museum workers do not make a living wage.** At the entry level, more than two-thirds (69%) of full-time workers do not make a living wage.
- The art museum workforce is undergoing a generational shift, with **63% of workers now Millennial or Gen Z** (compared to 54% in 2023).
- **White workers are still having the most favorable careers in art museums.** They have the highest household incomes, are most likely to have received a full promotion, and are least likely to have experienced discrimination in their current workplaces.
- **While union members are more dissatisfied on nearly every metric than the average museum worker, they consistently report positive impacts of their union** on their work lives, highlighting the motivations behind the recent unionization wave in art museums. Pay is one notable bright spot for union members: **nonunionized art museum workers earn 78% of what unionized workers make.**

These findings reveal a complex and evolving picture of art museum workplaces. As in 2023, workers are passionate about their museums' missions and the collegial relationships they develop—while also yearning for more financial security, accountability from leadership, and a voice in the decisions that affect them. With nearly two-thirds (63%) of the art museum workforce now made up of Millennial or Gen Z workers, art museum workplaces will inevitably be reshaped in the coming years. Together, as a field, we must act bravely and swiftly to ensure that the art museums of tomorrow reflect the needs and values of its dedicated workforce.

## Introduction

This report provides a snapshot of the art museum workplace in 2025 with analysis of shifts in many key areas since 2023. MMF intends to continue conducting this data study and report every two years until 2030, at which point we will have a critical record of the ups and downs experienced in the art museum sector during an increasingly volatile moment that many are calling the new culture wars.<sup>9</sup>

This study was designed using distinct but related surveys of three groups: staff, human resources (HR), and directors within US art museums. All three surveys were distributed to our 91 Partner Museums (full list below). The data reflects responses collected from the 3,102 staff members, 71 HR officers, and 67 museum directors who took these surveys between November 19, 2024, and February 11, 2025. The average staff response rate for this year's survey was 48%, up from 34% in 2023.<sup>10</sup>

Data collection was conducted through a custom portal within MMF's website using the survey platform Alchemer. Staff surveys were disseminated by museum leadership or by MMF directly, at the request of a museum. Partner Museums received customized Organizational Reports in spring 2025, which compared their individual museum's results against all Partner Museums as well as benchmarks by geographic region, budget size, and museum type. MMF does not collect any personal information from survey respondents, so that individual responses to the staff survey are not identifiable to the museum or to anyone on the MMF team.

All three surveys were designed in partnership with SMU DataArts, the National Center for Arts Research. When designing the 2024–25 surveys, we kept many questions the same as the 2022–23 surveys to enable direct comparisons for longitudinal analysis. Changes to the surveys were informed by cognitive interviews and feedback from our pilot study participants, museum leadership, and public comment on the 2023 Report. In a few instances, we made changes to response options to ensure our data was comparable to other surveys, including the Pew Research Center's labor workforce survey. The most significant addition to this year's survey was a new section on unions, enabling us to measure the growing presence of labor unions in the art museum sector. Wherever available, we pulled in relevant comparison data for the US workforce overall or for the nonprofit sector as points of reference for the data we provide on art museums.

All group comparisons within the text have been tested for statistical significance and have met the threshold that we are more than 95% confident that the differences are not due to chance (a calculation that considers sample sizes and magnitude of differences being compared). We specifically call out any comparisons in the text that have not met this threshold. A full record of sample sizes for every chart in the report can be found in [Appendix G](#).

This report would not have been possible without the generous support of the Mellon Foundation, Ford Foundation, and Teiger Foundation.

We are grateful to the members of our Vision Council for their ongoing support: Sarah Arison, Allison Berg, Dawn and Chris Fleischner, Molly Gochman, Jane Hait, Michi Jigarjian, Rashid Johnson, Miyoung Lee, Marley Lewis, Jarl Mohn, and Sonya Yu. Our sincere thanks also go to the members of our newly established Artists Alliance: Kathryn Andrews, Kevin Beasley, Diedrick Brackens, Jordan Casteel, Raven Chacon, Paul Chan, Danielle Dean, Derek Fordjour, Charles Gaines, Theaster Gates, Leslie Hewitt, Sky

## Introduction

Hopinka, Rashid Johnson, Jennie C. Jones, Stanya Kahn, Josh Kline, An-My Lê, Michelle Lopez, Julie Mehretu, Amalia Mesa-Bains, Ulrike Müller, Catherine Opie, Paul Pfeiffer, A.L. Steiner, Stephanie Syjuco, and Anicka Yi.

We are immensely grateful for the expertise and guidance from Jennifer Benoit-Bryan at SMU DataArts, as well as the other members of her team, including Daniel Fonner and Liz Quinn. Thanks also go to our Data Study Advisory Group: Charlotte Burns, Deirdre Harkins, Carys Kunze, Jenni Kim, and Amanda Tobin Ripley.

MMF's team is composed of three full-time staff members—Mia Locks, Liz Levine, and Hannah Marshall—and the Board of Stakeholders: Emma Batman, Makeda Best, Danielle Bias, Charlotte Burns, Connie Butler, Alana Hernandez, Rujeko Hockley, Diane Jean-Mary, Naima Keith, Christine Y. Kim, Jenni Kim, Nisa Mackie, Matthew Villar Miranda, and Amanda Tobin Ripley. Additionally, our colleagues within the DREAM Consortium—which includes Black Trustee Alliance for Art Museums, the Burns Halperin Report, and SMU DataArts—provided crucial thought partnership throughout the process.

Museums Moving Forward is a collaborative organization, and our work would not be possible without a vast network of cultural workers, leaders, and advocates from across the country. We would like to extend our deep thanks to our Editorial Council: Katherine Brinson, Marissa Del Toro, Liz Munsell, Margot Norton, Terrence Phearse, Anni Pullagura, and Lindley Warren Mickunas for their on-the-ground insights and support. Members of our Advisory Council also deserve our deep acknowledgments: Jennifer Benoit-Bryan, Ruba Katrib, Alex Klein, Brooke A. Minto, Jessica Morgan, Kelli Morgan, Melissa A. Passman, Christine Steiner, and Olga Viso.

The following cognitive interviewees provided critical feedback early on in the development of the survey: Emma Batman, Josh Davis, Lori Fogarty, Jillian Impastato, Miki Garcia, Lily Goldberg, Julianne Miao, and Shoshana Resnikoff. Thank you to Jane Hyun, our copyeditor; Michael Guidetti, our developer; Genevieve Hoffman, our data visualization designer; and Harsh Patel, our graphic identity designer.

Other groups we wish to acknowledge include the American Alliance of Museums, Association of Art Museum Directors, Beyond Neutrality, Black Trustee Alliance for Art Museums, Burns Halperin Report, Museum Workers Speak, National Emerging Museum Professions Network, Remuseum, SMU DataArts, and Verge.

Thank you to the many staff who attended our in-person and virtual convenings; your thoughtful engagement informed and continues to shape our programs. Finally, and not least, we wish to acknowledge the thousands of museum staff, HR professionals, directors, and administrators who took part in this study, demonstrating a meaningful commitment to moving the US art museum field forward.

# Partner Museums

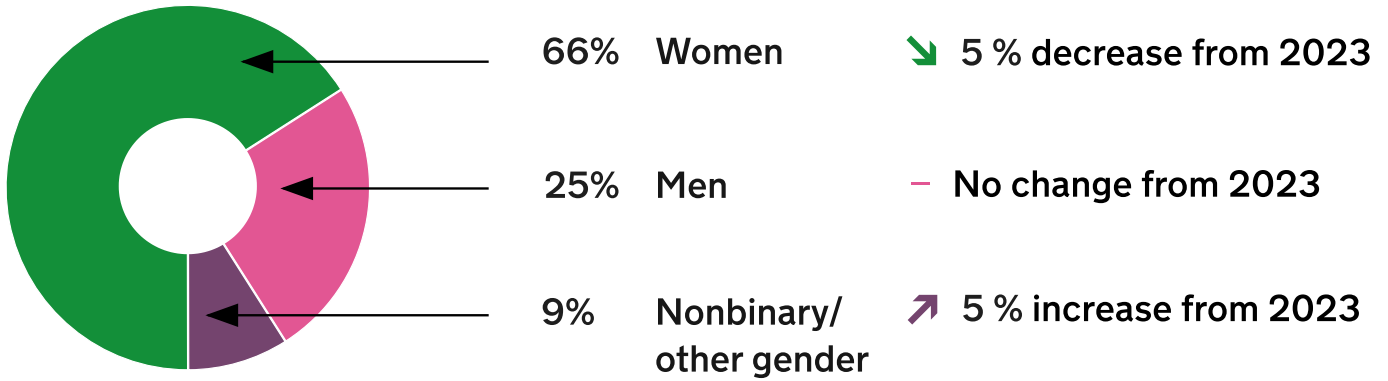
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Akron Art Museum  
 Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum  
 Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts  
 Asian Art Museum of San Francisco  
 Aspen Art Museum  
 ASU Art Museum  
 Bakersfield Museum of Art  
 The Bass Museum of Art  
 Berkeley Art Museum & Pacific Film Archive  
 Buffalo AKG Art Museum  
 Cantor Arts Center, Stanford University  
 Carnegie Museum of Art  
 Chazen Museum of Art  
 Clyfford Still Museum  
 Columbus Museum of Art  
 Contemporary Art Museum Houston  
 Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis  
 The Contemporary Austin  
 Crocker Art Museum  
 Dennon Museum Center  
 Dia Art Foundation  
 Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco  
 Flint Institute of Arts  
 Frye Art Museum  
 George Eastman Museum  
 Georgia O'Keeffe Museum  
 Greenville Museum of Art  
 The Gund at Kenyon College  
 Grounds for Sculpture  
 Harn Museum of Art  
 Henry Art Gallery  
 Honolulu Museum of Art  
 Houston Center for Contemporary Craft  
 Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles  
 Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia  
 Institute of Contemporary Art, San Diego  
 Intuit: The Center for Intuitive and Outsider Art  
 James Museum of Western and Wildlife Art  
 Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art  
 The Kitchen  
 LA Plaza de Cultura y Artes  
 Lan Su Chinese Garden  
 MASS MoCA  
 Mead Art Museum  
 Memphis Brooks Museum  
 Metal Museum  
 Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum  
 Minnesota Marine Art Museum  
 Mississippi Museum of Art  
 Missoula Art Museum  
 MIT List Visual Arts Center  
 Moody Center for the Arts  
 Morgan Library & Museum  
 MSU Broad Art Museum  
 Museo de Arte de Puerto Rico  
 Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago  
 Museum of Contemporary Art Cleveland  
 Museum of Contemporary Religious Art  
 Museum of Latin American Art  
 Nasher Sculpture Center  
 Newark Museum of Art  
 Oakland Museum of California  
 Oceanside Museum of Art  
 Parrish Art Museum  
 Peabody Essex Museum  
 Pérez Art Museum Miami  
 Philbrook Museum of Art  
 Phoenix Art Museum  
 Portland Museum of Art  
 The Print Center  
 Providence College Galleries  
 Pulitzer Arts Foundation  
 Pyramid Hill Sculpture Park & Museum  
 Queens Museum  
 RISD Museum  
 Saint Louis Art Museum  
 San Francisco Museum of Modern Art  
 Seattle Art Museum  
 Sheldon Museum of Art  
 Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum  
 Speed Art Museum  
 Spelman College Museum of Fine Art  
 Stanley Museum of Art  
 Studio Museum in Harlem  
 Taft Museum of Art  
 Toledo Museum of Art  
 Tufts University Art Galleries  
 University of Michigan Museum of Art  
 Walker Art Center  
 Weisman Art Museum  
 Wexner Center for the Arts  
 Williams College Museum of Art  
 Yale University Art Gallery

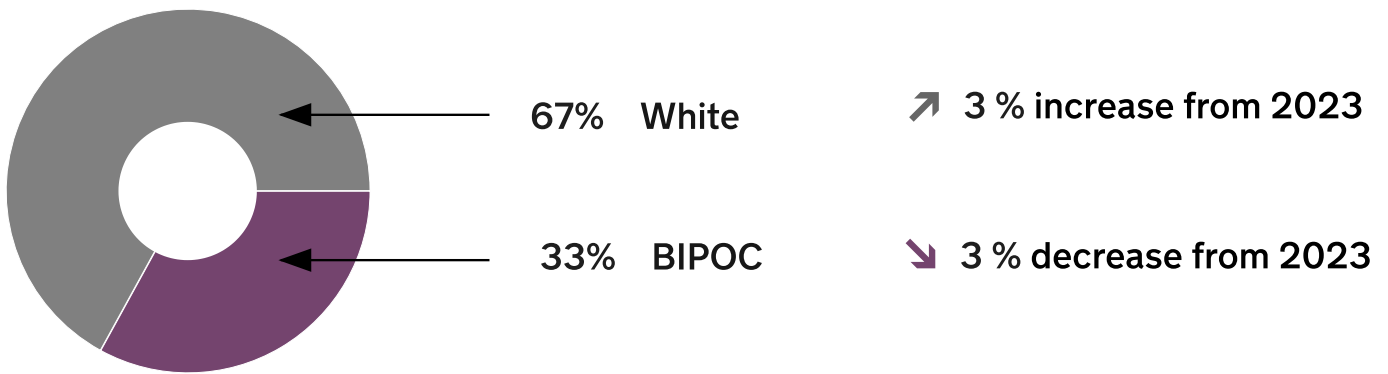
# Who We Heard From

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### Gender



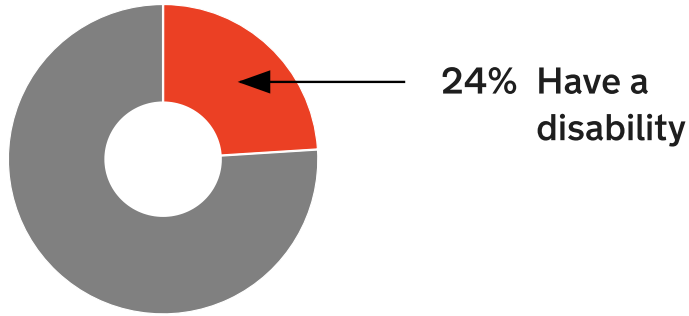
### Race



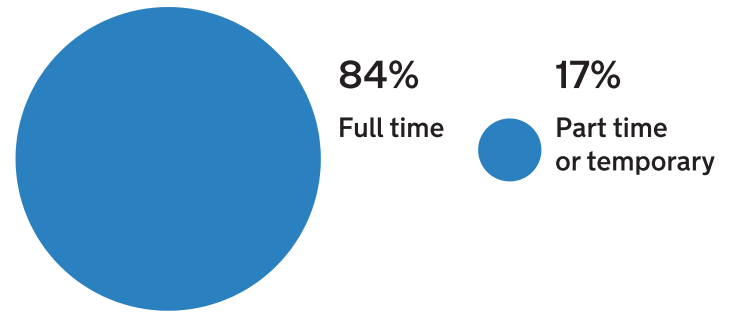
### Race and Ethnicity Detail



### Disability

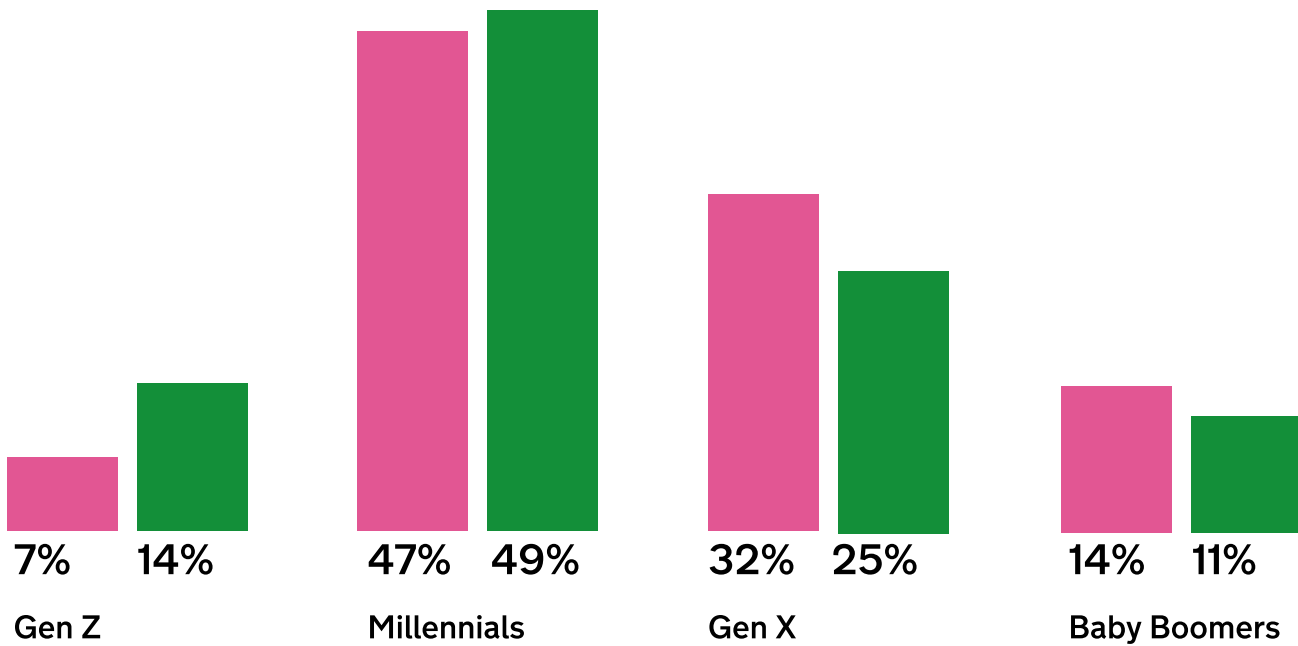


### Employment Basis

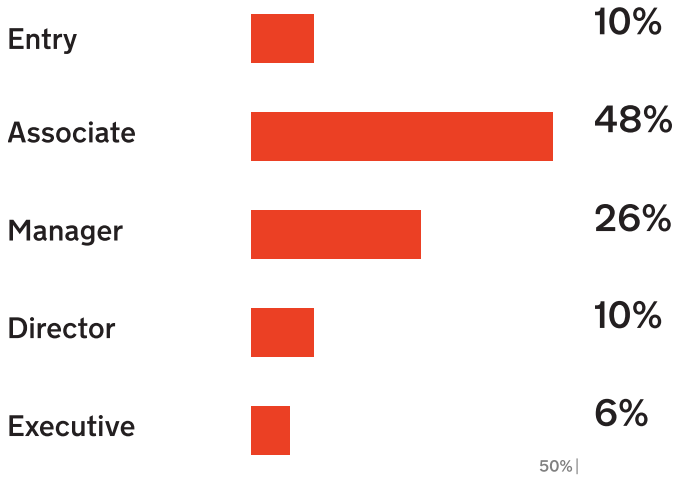


### Generation

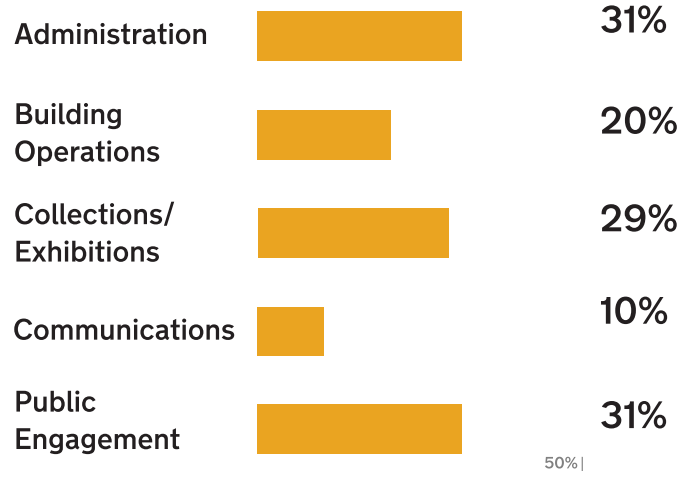
■ 2023 ■ 2025



### Position Level



### Department Area



### Average Tenure

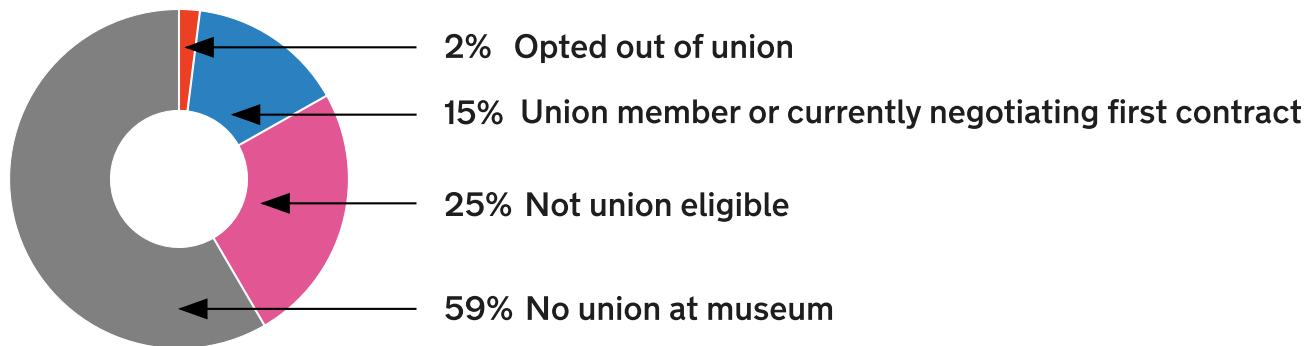
#### Years in the field

	Overall	Men	Women	Nonbinary	White	BIPOC
2025	9.3	11	9	5	10	8
2023	10.6	12	10	3	11	8

#### Years at current institution

	Overall	Men	Women	Nonbinary	White	BIPOC
2025	6	8	6	3	7	5
2023	7	9	7	2	8	5

### Union Status



# Findings: Workplace Culture

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## Findings: Workplace Culture

Workplace culture is the lived expression of an organization's norms and values as experienced by workers on a day-to-day level. A healthy workplace culture is crucial for the success of all organizations, determining long-term viability.<sup>11</sup> This is especially true for art museums, where staff serve as cultural ambassadors engaging a broad range of constituents and visitors with the world of arts and culture. Given the pervasive burnout, lack of psychological safety, and limited growth opportunities identified in [MMF's 2023 Report](#), revisiting the workplace culture of art museums was a top priority for this year's study.

This section explores staff perceptions of workplace culture, how the prospect and reality of union membership shape those perceptions, and where staff and leadership align and diverge on key cultural dimensions. We also analyze diversity in the workplace and examine how specific patterns vary across art museums of varying budget sizes.

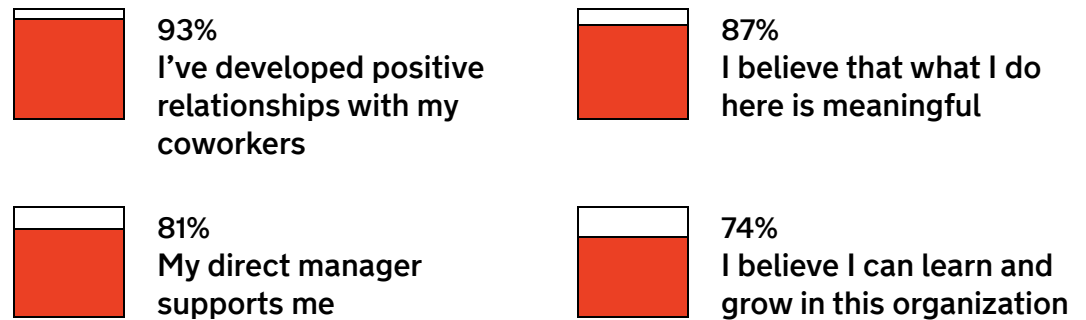
Findings:  
Workplace Culture

## Workplace Sentiments

Art museum workers view their workplaces equally or more positively than they did two years ago, with every dimension of workplace culture either remaining nearly the same or improving since 2023. There are four dimensions where art museums are performing especially well, highlighting two key strengths within the field: (1) widespread appreciation for the meaningful nature of art museum work, and (2) strong satisfaction with workplace relations and collegial connections.

### Figure 1. Positive Dimensions of Workplace Culture in Art Museums

Please rate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements in relation to the culture of your current museum workplace.\*



\* The proportion of respondents who agree or strongly agree with this statement, indicated by selecting a 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale

**Art museum workers have overwhelmingly positive views of their colleagues, direct managers, and the value of museum work itself.**

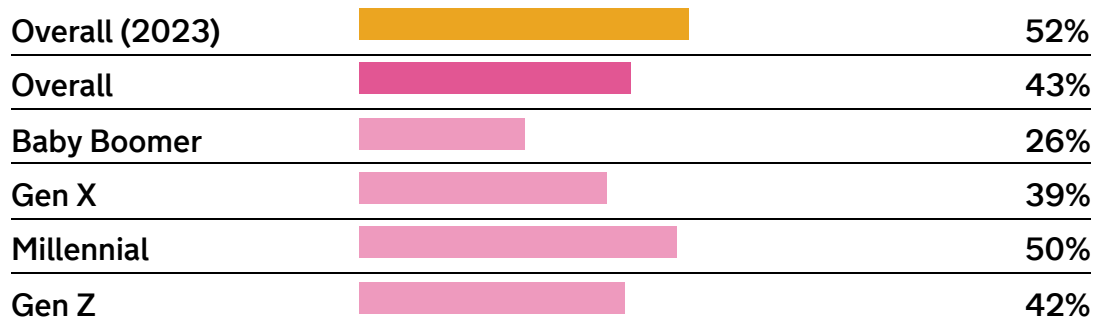
However, burnout in the art museum sector remains substantial and persistent, impacting 43% of the workforce. While this is an improvement from 2023 (when 52% reported it), burnout remains a critical concern because it affects the entire workplace experience. The World Health Organization defines burnout as “a syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed,” and it is now included in the International Classification of Diseases as an occupational phenomenon.<sup>12</sup>

Findings:  
Workplace Culture

43% of art museum workers are burned out.

The data shows significant generational differences in museum burnout, with Millennial workers feeling almost twice as burned out as their Baby Boomer colleagues (see fig. 2). This tracks with studies of intergenerational workers across other sectors and is likely related to the fact that Millennials are increasingly becoming the “sandwich generation,” feeling the squeeze between caring for children and/or aging parents while balancing the demands of work.<sup>13</sup>

**Figure 2. Burnout Among Art Museum Workers, by Generation**  
I feel burned out in this organization.\*



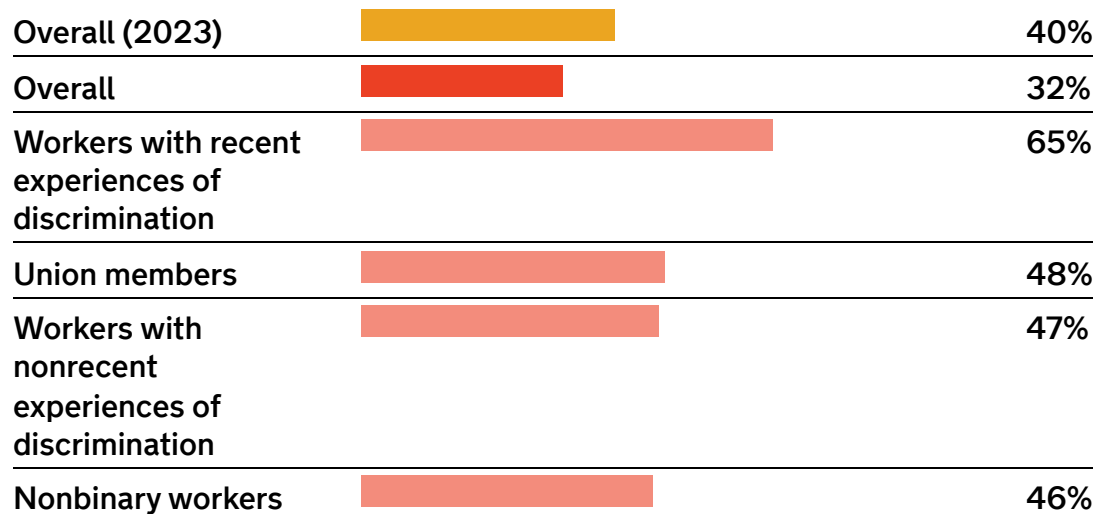
\* The proportion of respondents who agree or strongly agree with this statement, indicated by selecting a 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale

**Findings:  
Workplace Culture**

Relatedly, about one third of workers (32%) believe their art museum workplace is having a negative impact on their physical and mental health. While this reflects an improvement since the last report (it was 40% in 2023), the progress has not been felt equally by all workers. Those who have recently experienced discrimination or harassment continue to suffer nearly the same level of adverse health impacts from their art museum workplaces as they did two years ago. Not surprisingly, workers who have experienced discrimination or harassment view their workplaces much more negatively across almost all dimensions.

**Figure 3. Belief That Art Museum Workplace Culture Negatively Affects Health**

Please rate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements in relation to the culture of your current museum workplace: “The culture of my workplace negatively affects my mental and/or physical health.”\*



\* The proportion of respondents who agree or strongly agree with this statement, indicated by selecting a 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale

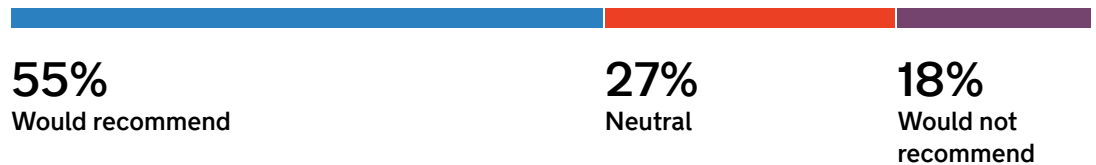
## Findings: Workplace Culture

Still, more than half of art museum workers (55%) would recommend their workplaces to friends and family, up 3% from 2023. This varies across groups: white workers are marginally more likely to recommend their workplaces compared with those of other racial groups. A starker contrast emerges among union members, who are significantly less likely to recommend their workplaces, as are those who have had recent experiences of discrimination or harassment.

### Figure 4. Would You Recommend Your Workplace to Friends and Family?

Please rate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements in relation to the culture of your current museum workplace: “I would recommend this workplace to friends and family.”\*

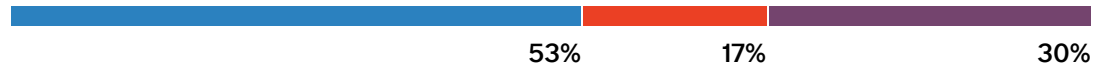
#### Overall



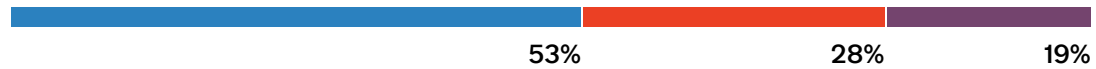
#### White



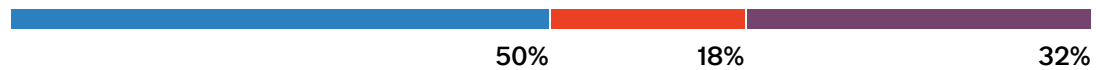
#### Hispanic or Latine/x



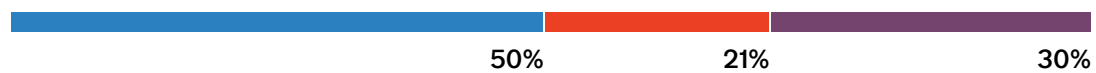
#### Native American/Alaska Native/First Nations



#### Black



#### Asian



\* Responses grouped into three categories based on a 5-point scale of “Strongly disagree,” “Disagree,” “Neutral,” “Agree,” and “Strongly agree”

## Findings: Workplace Culture

# Workplace Culture Differences by Budget Size

Smaller museums consistently outperform their larger counterparts across nearly every dimension of workplace culture, challenging assumptions about the advantages of scale and resources. After finding a correlation in the data between institutions' annual operating budgets and worker satisfaction, we conducted further analysis to compare small museums (annual budget under \$5 million), mid-sized museums (\$5–\$15 million), and large museums (more than \$15 million).<sup>14</sup> Our analysis of art museums by budget size revealed that small museums are outperforming larger institutions on almost every metric of worker well-being. This trend is mirrored in the broader US workforce beyond museums, as noted in a 2023 report by BambooHR: “Those at companies with fewer than 25 employees reported happiness scores that were on average around 50% higher than workers at firms with 151 to 300 employees.”<sup>15</sup>

**Small museums are outperforming large museums on nearly every dimension of worker well-being and workplace culture.**

The analysis of experiences of workers by size of museum reveals a crucial insight: **workers at smaller museums tend to be paid less but experience higher levels of satisfaction with their workplaces** (which we explore in more detail in the [Pay and Promotions](#) section). Despite offering lower salaries and fewer advancement opportunities on average, smaller museums offer workplace experiences that their staff find more satisfying and fulfilling than those provided by their larger and better-funded peers.

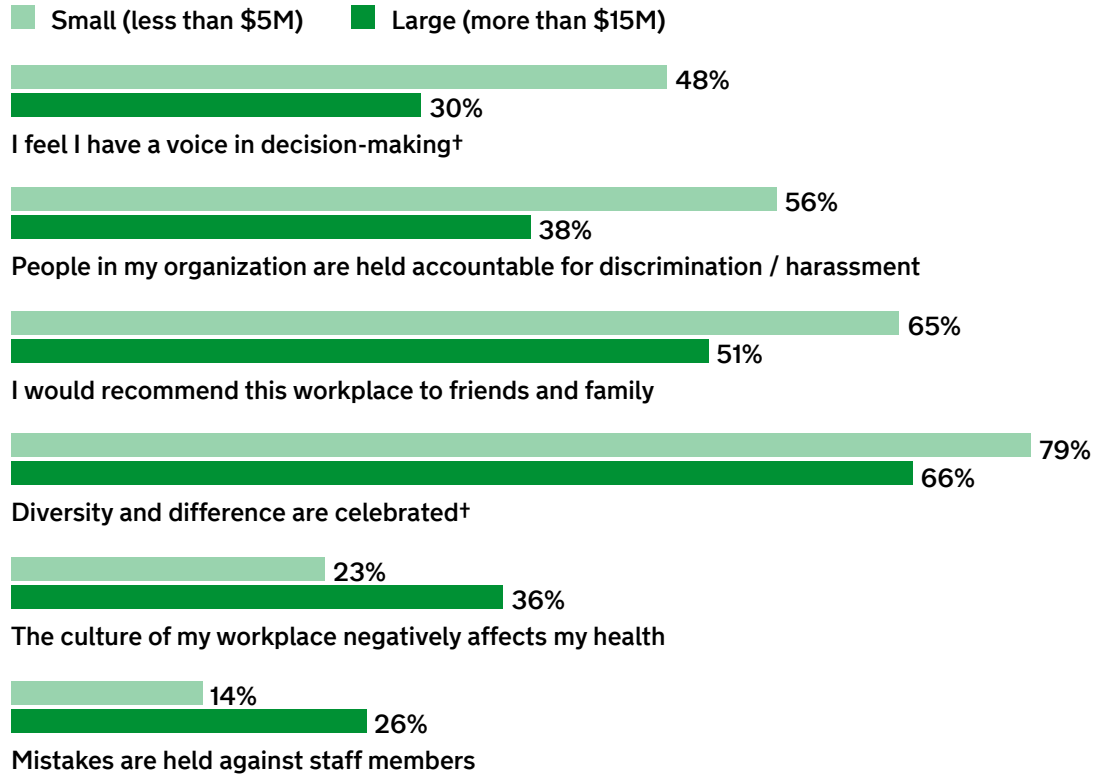
A significantly higher proportion of workers in small museums (48%) believe that they have a voice in decision-making compared to those in large museums (30%), that people in their organizations are held accountable for discrimination and harassment (56% vs. 38%), and that diversity and difference are celebrated in their museum (79% vs. 66%). Conversely, a higher proportion of workers in large museums (26%) feel that mistakes are held against them compared to small museums (14%). The data also reveals how much these workplace culture dynamics are impacting workers' health and their likelihood of recommending their workplaces to others. In small museums, fewer workers feel their workplaces are negatively affecting their health (23% vs. 36%) and a notably higher proportion say they would recommend their workplace to friends and family compared to large museums (65% vs. 51%).

When analyzing the workplace dynamics of small, mid-sized, and large museums all together, there are several cases where we find a clear and consistent pattern by budget size (see fig. 6). Two noteworthy examples are in the percentage of workers who believe they can learn and grow in their organizations (80% in small, 77% in mid-sized, 71% in large museums), and who report having a sense of purpose and dignity in their work (81% vs. 76% and 70%).

Findings:  
Workplace Culture

**Figure 5. Workplace Culture Dimensions, by Museum Budget Size**

Please rate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements in relation to the culture of your current museum workplace.\*



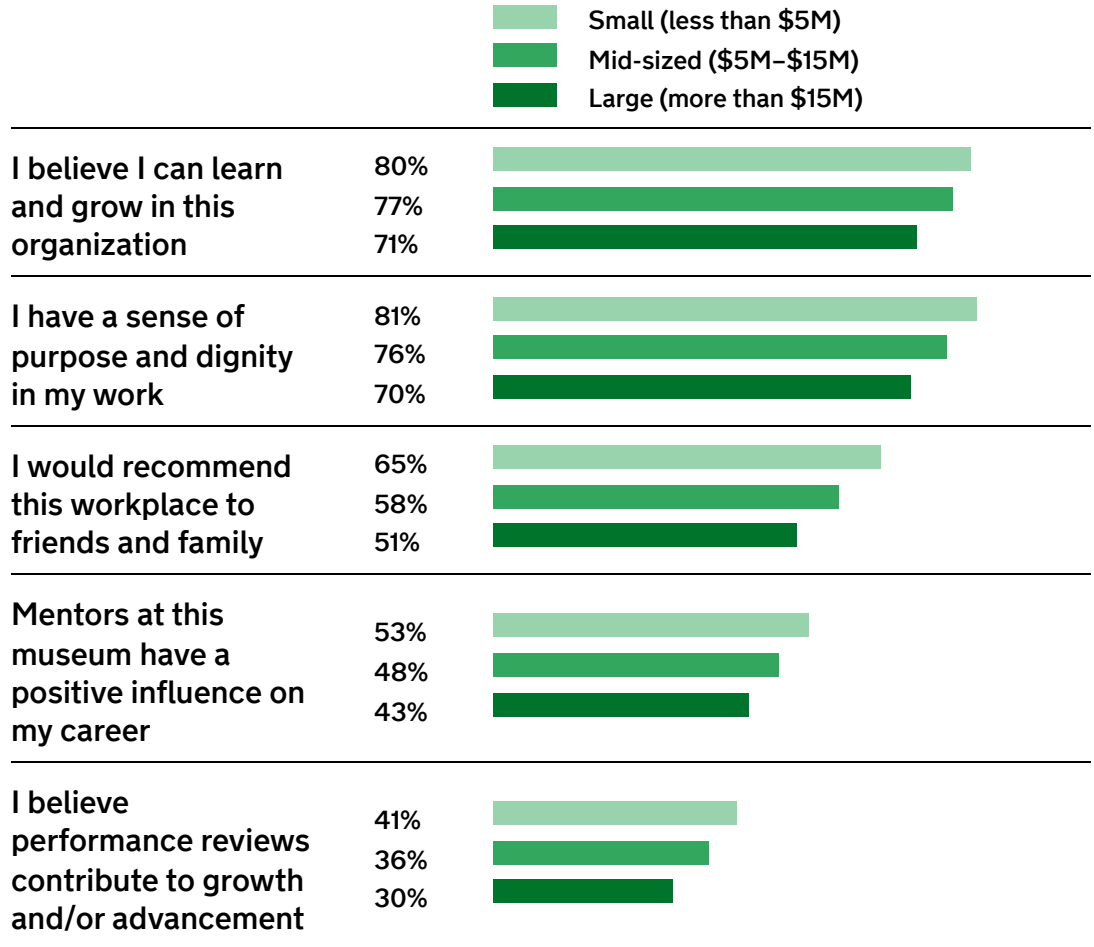
80%

\* The proportion of respondents who agree or strongly agree with this statement, indicated by selecting a 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale / † Response data has been inverted to reflect responses disagreeing with a negatively phrased question

Findings:  
Workplace Culture

**Figure 6. Trends in Workplace Culture Dimensions, by Museum Budget Size**

Please rate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements in relation to the culture of your current museum workplace.\*



\* The proportion of respondents who agree or strongly agree with this statement, indicated by selecting a 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale

Findings:  
Workplace Culture

## Churn Rates

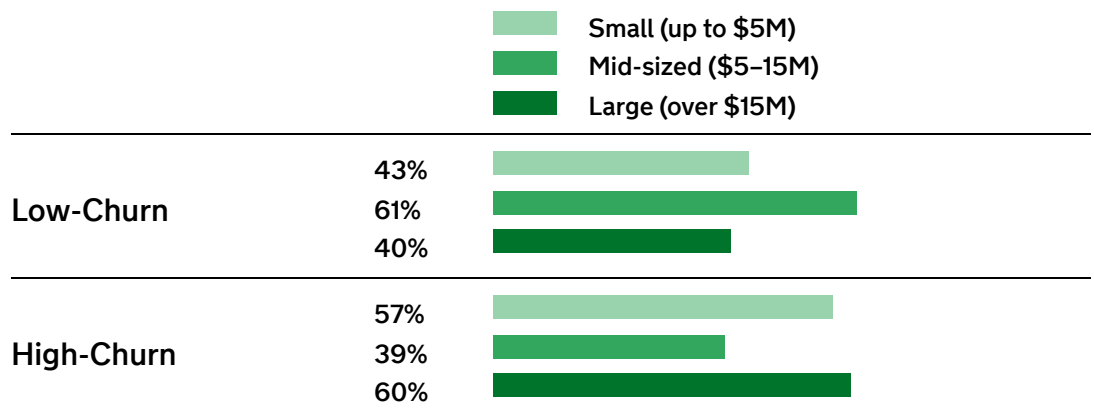
Another way to assess the health of a museum’s workplace is the employee turnover rate among new hires, which we call churn rate. To measure this, we calculated the number of permanent, full-time workers hired within the past two years who are still employed by their institution. The average churn rate for our Partner Museums is 27%, meaning that, on average, more than a quarter of workers hired within the past two years have already left their institutions.

Half of the art museums in our study had churn rates above 25%, meaning that more than 25% of the recently hired workforce left within the past two years; we classified these organizations as “high-churn” museums. The half who fell below 25% were classified as “low-churn” museums.

A quarter of the museums in our study had churn rates above 40%. This level of recent-hire turnover may have serious implications for the experiences of workers who stay and for the overall health of the museum. Turnover incurs direct costs like recruitment and training as well as indirect costs such as reduced productivity, loss of knowledge, and negative impacts on morale and customer service.<sup>16</sup>

Low-churn museums—where less than 25% of the recently hired workforce left within two years—are predominantly mid-sized institutions, whereas high-churn museums are mostly large institutions.

Figure 7. Churn Rate, by Museum Budget Size



## Findings: Workplace Culture

# Institutional Decision-Making

A worker's position level in an art museum is connected to their beliefs about who influences institutional decision-making, which, in turn, relates to how they feel about the cultures of their workplaces. The gap between executive and non-executive perspectives is illustrative of a persistent divide between museum staff and the executives who lead them.<sup>17</sup> It may also help clarify other trends in the data that we examine throughout this report, including increasing unionization in the field, a lack of alignment on the existence of workplace policies, and a reluctance to report complaints to HR.

As part of their Culture of Trust study, social science research organization Knology identified components of trust and conducted a review of news stories about staff-leader disputes in children's museums between 2018 and 2024.<sup>18</sup> In their 2025 report, they found that:

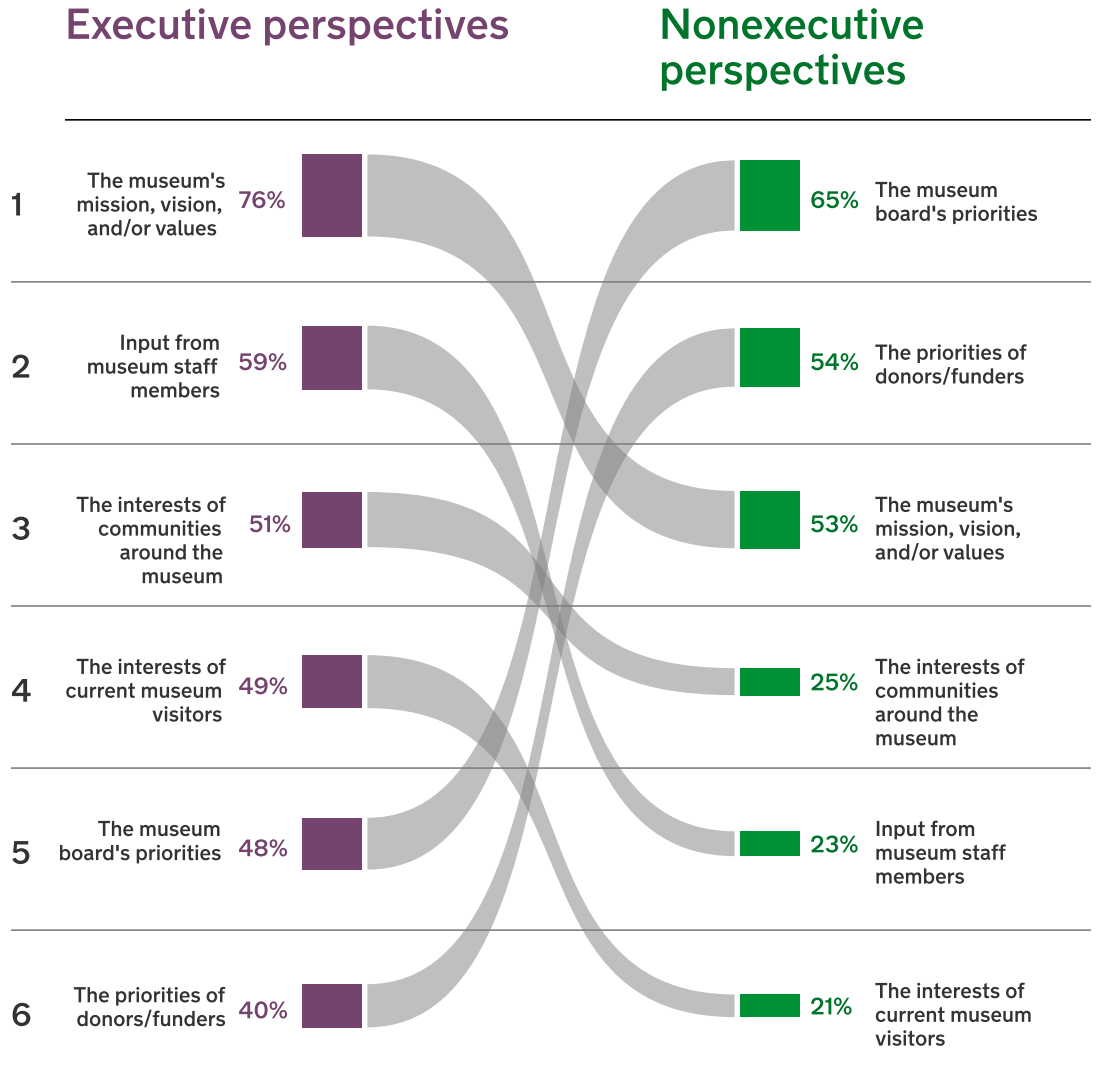
Almost all of the 100 stories we analyzed included an assessment of leadership trustworthiness.... Most of these assessments were negative.... No component of leader trustworthiness was assessed more often than integrity — which has to do with perceptions of how fairly others apply their principles. For leaders, most integrity assessments were negative. Example statements from staff included claims that leadership “failed to uphold its own policies” around equity and inclusion, engaged in “censorship,” did not “understand that workers have rights,” or was “complicit in injustices” taking place in the wider world.

Thinking about trust and trustworthiness can help explain why museum leaders struggle to stay aligned with their workers even with policies in place specifically to support their workforce.<sup>19</sup>

Findings:  
Workplace Culture

**Figure 8. Drivers of Institutional Decision-Making: Executive vs. Nonexecutive Perspectives**

What/Who do you believe has a large impact on your museum leadership’s decisions? Please select all that apply.

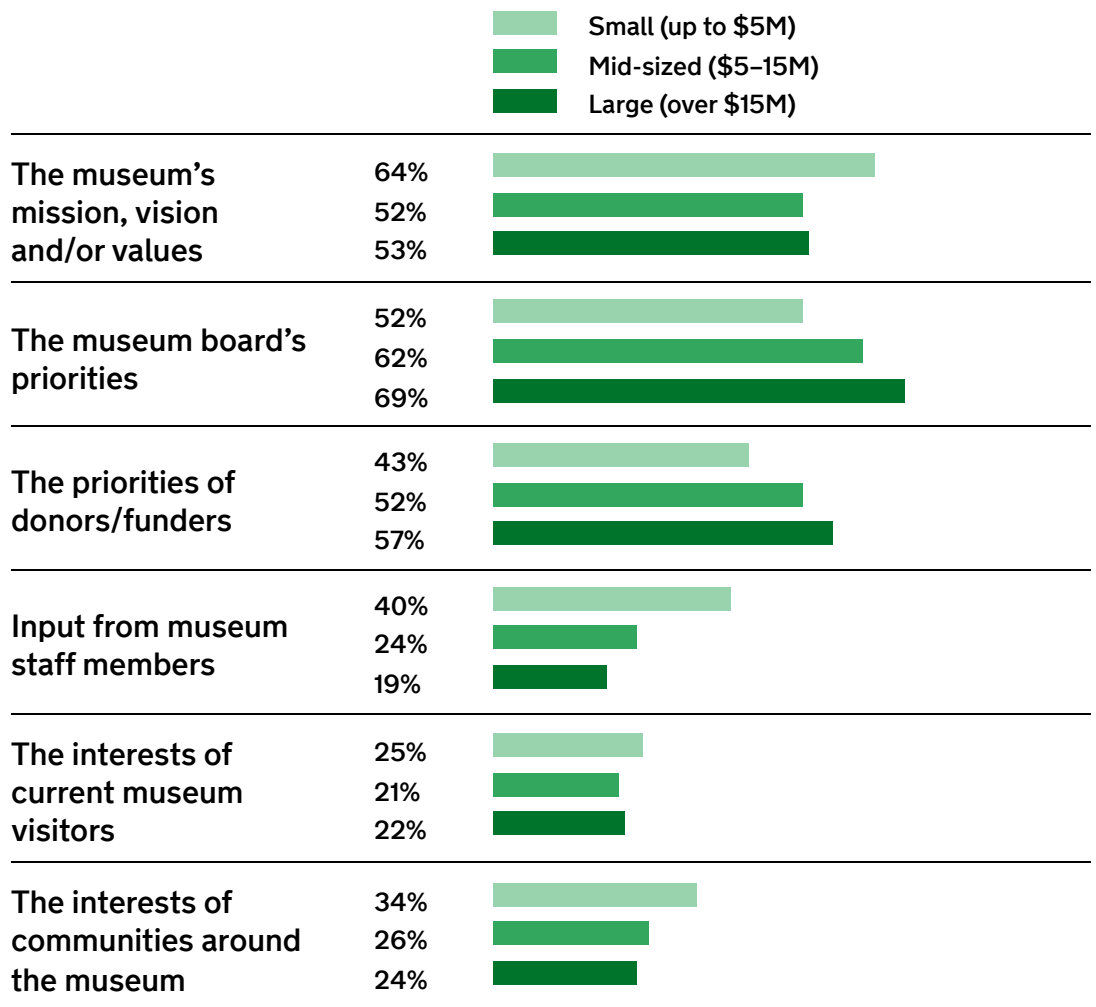


**Findings:**  
**Workplace Culture**

In small art museums, workers are more likely to believe that leadership decisions are driven by their institution’s mission, vision, and/or values and the interests of their local communities. Conversely, workers at large museums are more likely to believe that it is the board’s and/or donors’ priorities that have the most significant impact on institutional decision-making.

**Figure 9. Drivers of Institutional Decision-Making, by Museum Budget Size**

What/Who do you believe has a large impact on your museum leadership’s decisions? Please select all that apply.

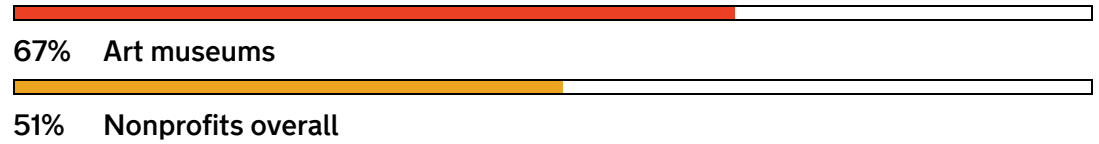


Findings:  
Workplace Culture

## Workplace Diversity

The art museum workforce remains overwhelmingly white at all position levels and across roles. The proportion of white workers in art museums<sup>20</sup> is significantly higher than in the nonprofit sector as a whole (67% vs. 51%).<sup>21</sup> For reference, according to the US Census Bureau in 2025, white people (non-Hispanic, white only) make up 58% of the population.<sup>22</sup>

**Figure 10. Percentage of White Workers in Art Museums vs. Nonprofits Overall**



There has been a slight increase of Asian (9% in 2025 vs. 8% in 2023), Black (9% vs. 8%), and Hispanic or Latine/x staff (13% vs. 12%) and a slight decrease of white staff (77% in 2025 from 78% in 2023) since 2023. **Entry-level workers continue to be the most racially diverse cohort in art museums**, comprising 31% people of color, an increase of 3% since 2023. Also consistent with MMF’s findings from 2023 is that the next highest proportion of racial and ethnic diversity is found at the executive level, comprising 28% people of color in 2025, a decrease of 1% since 2023. **There has been a notable decrease in Black executives in the past two years (down 4% to 12%) and an increase in Hispanic or Latine/x executives (up 3% to 12%).**

Findings:  
Workplace Culture

**Figure 11. Race/Ethnicity in Art Museum Workplaces, by Position Level**

With which of the following racial and ethnic groups do you identify? Select all that apply.\*

- Asian
- Black
- Hispanic or Latine/x
- MENA
- Native American/Alaska Native/First Nations
- Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- White
- Other

**Overall**



**Entry**



**Associate**



**Manager**



**Director**



**Executive**

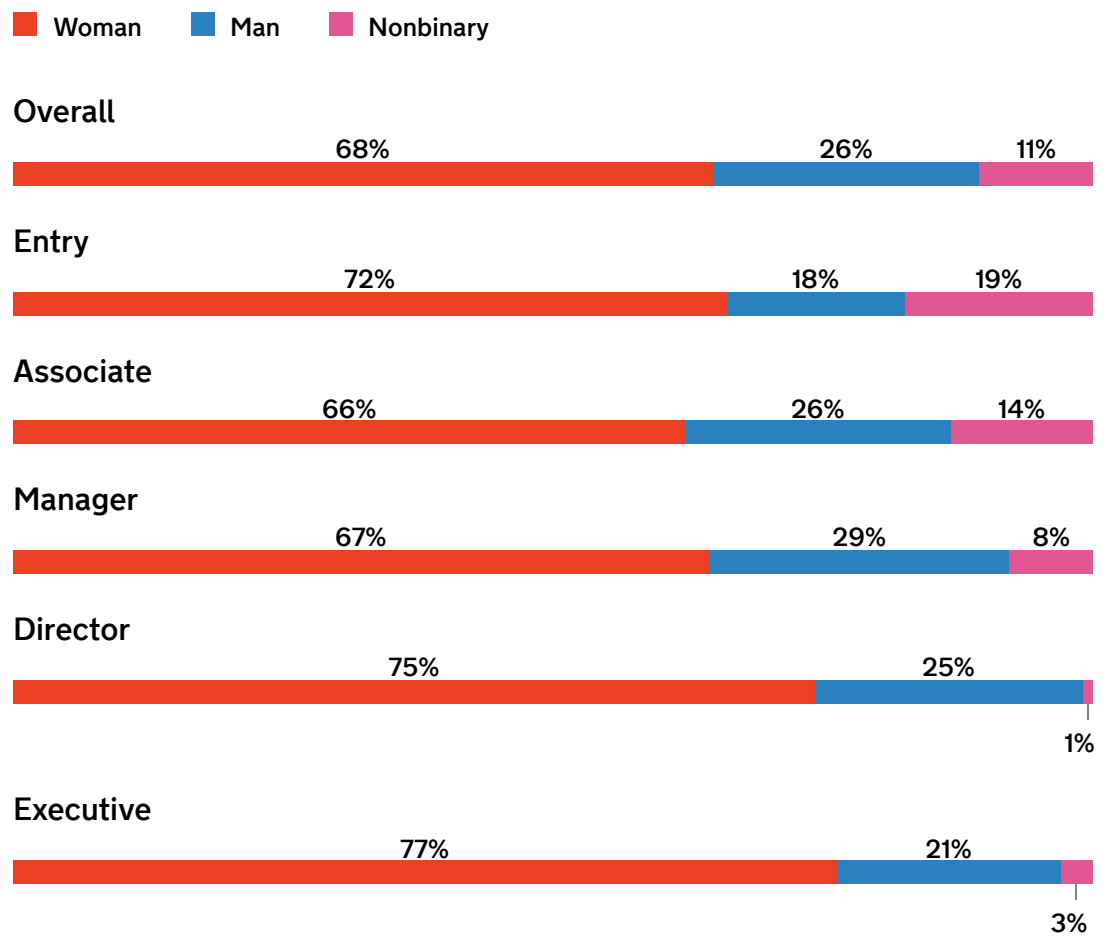


\* Study participants were able to select all identities that applied, resulting in overall data sums that exceed 100%. Visualization components are normalized but data are not.

**Findings:**  
**Workplace Culture**

In addition to racial diversity, the entry-level cohort (over half of whom are Gen Z) also reflects the most diversity in terms of gender identity and sexual orientation, with 19% identifying as nonbinary and 50% identifying as LGBTQ+. These statistics mirror national generational shifts: Gen Z is far more likely to identify as nonbinary than other generations (7% vs. 2% of Millennials and less than 1% of Gen X or Baby Boomers).<sup>23</sup> Similarly, 28% of Gen Z adults identify as LGBTQ+ compared to 16% of Millennials, 7% of Gen X, and 4% of Baby Boomers.<sup>24</sup> Looking specifically at Gen Z workers in art museums, they are significantly more likely to identify as nonbinary (24%) or LGBTQ+ (67%) than the Gen Z population in the US overall (7% and 28%, respectively).

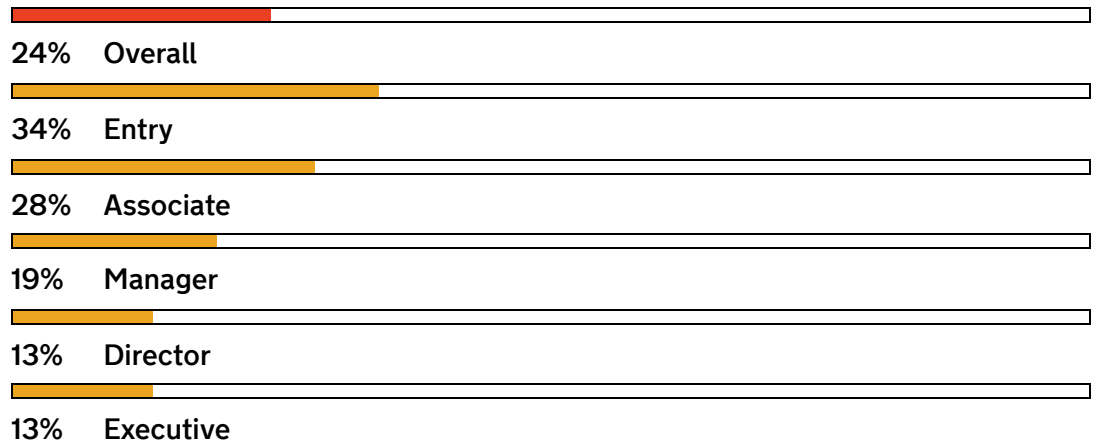
**Figure 12. Gender in Art Museum Workplaces, by Position Level**  
What is your current gender identity? Select all that apply.



## Findings: Workplace Culture

The percentage of workers who identify as having a disability has increased since 2023, with the largest proportion (55%) reporting a mental health disability specifically.<sup>25</sup> This is most pronounced at the entry level, where nearly two-thirds (66%) of workers with a disability report a mental health disability.

**Figure 13. Disability in Art Museum Workplaces, by Position Level**  
Do you identify as a person with a disability and/or as neuroatypical or neurodivergent?



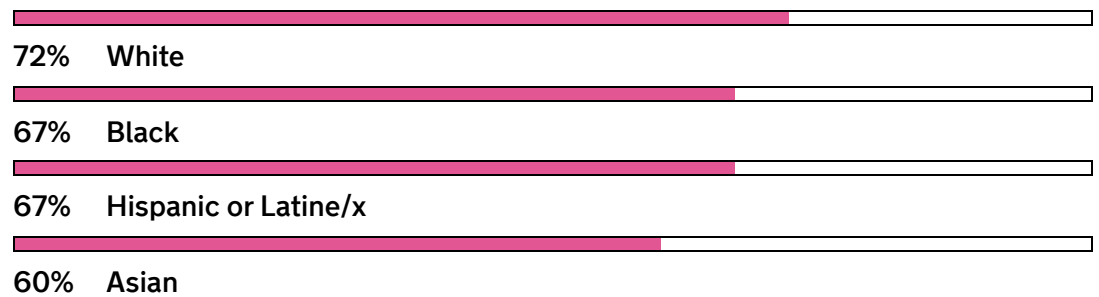
About a quarter (24%) of art museum workers have a disability.

**Findings:  
Workplace Culture**

It is noteworthy to see an increase since 2023 in workers’ beliefs that diversity and difference are celebrated within their institutions. More than two-thirds (69%) of art museum workers believe that diversity and difference are celebrated in their museums, up from 60% in 2023. As previously mentioned, the data for this survey was collected from late 2024 until early 2025, prior to a number of legal and policy changes regarding DEAI implemented since the current presidential administration took office.

**Figure 14. Belief in Museum’s Celebration of Diversity, by Race/Ethnicity<sup>26</sup>**

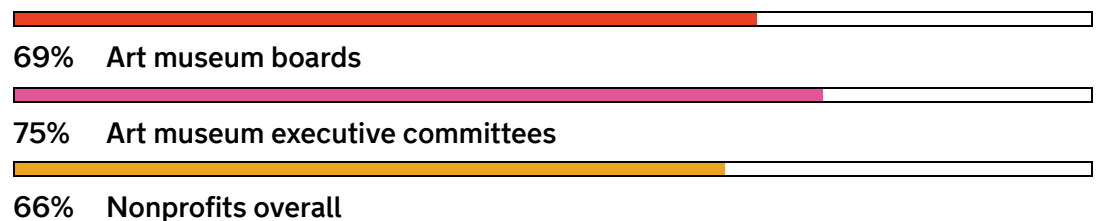
Please rate how much you agree or disagree with the following statement in relation to the culture of your current museum workplace: “Diversity and difference are not celebrated in this organization.”\*



\* The proportion of respondents who disagree or strongly disagree with this statement, indicated by selecting a 1 or 2 on a 5-point scale

The vast majority (81%) of art museum directors say their board supports their museum’s DEAI efforts. Directors also report that their boards remain predominantly white (69%), which is slightly more than nonprofit boards overall (66%).<sup>27</sup> Importantly, the executive committees of art museum boards are even less racially diverse (75% white) than boards overall.<sup>28</sup> This means that the locus of power within art museum boards is held by an overwhelmingly white group.

**Figure 15. Percentage of White Board Members in Art Museum Boards vs. US Nonprofit Boards Overall**



## Findings: Workplace Culture

### Union Findings: Workplace Culture

Undoubtedly, the recent surge in unionization in art museums is having a significant impact on workplace culture. In fact, many unions have cited workplace culture issues as a key motivation for organizing.<sup>29</sup> We also know that one primary goal of many unionizing workers is to have a greater voice in decisions that affect them.<sup>30</sup>

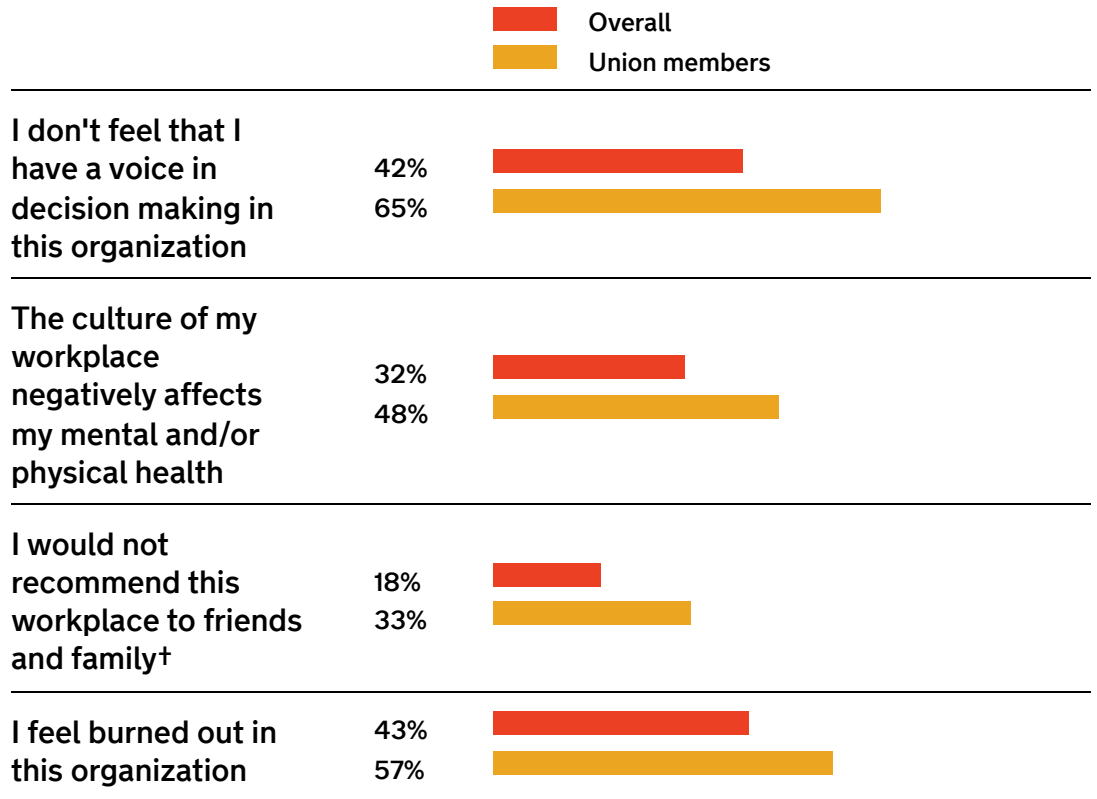
MMF's data shows that, across a majority of dimensions of workplace culture, a larger proportion of union members are dissatisfied than art museum workers overall, with gaps between the workers ranging from 2% up to 23%.<sup>31</sup> Given how new many of these unions are in art museums (55% of art museum unions have been certified for fewer than five years)—especially organization-wide (or “wall-to-wall”) unions—it is too soon to determine the full impact that unions are having on museum workplaces as a whole. However, looking at this early data can help us understand the major issues concerning unionized workers, as well as the areas where union members are noting the most significant positive impacts on their workplace's culture thus far. As Patrice Laroche notes in her 2017 article in *Harvard Business Review*: “Unions don't seem to make workers less satisfied. Rather, workers who are likely to be dissatisfied—even after controlling for various aspects of their work—are more likely to join unions.”<sup>32</sup>

The most significant gap in workplace culture sentiments between union members and art museum workers overall is in believing they do not have a voice in decision-making at their organization (65% of union members vs. 42% of workers overall).

Findings:  
Workplace Culture

**Figure 16. Dimensions of Workplace Culture: Union Members vs. Art Museum Workers Overall**

Please rate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements in relation to the culture of your current museum workplace. \*



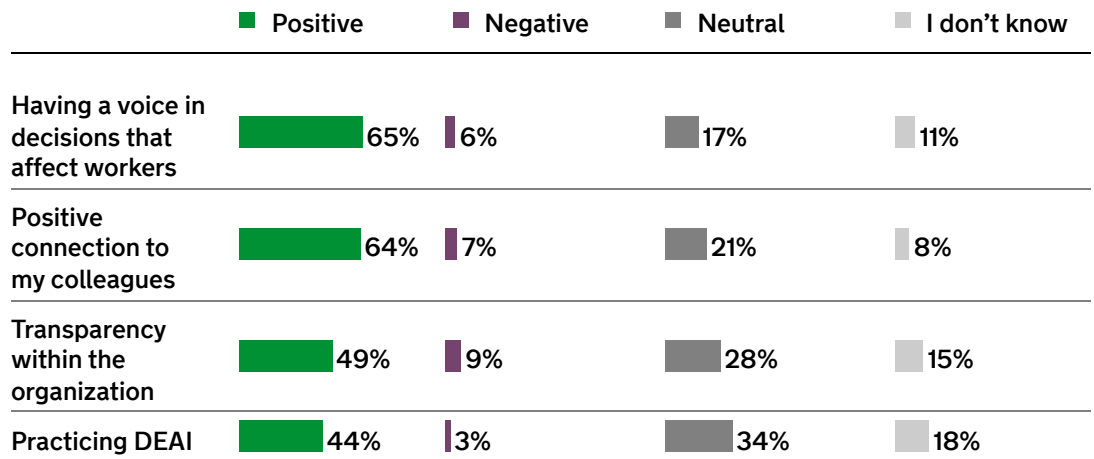
\* The proportion of respondents who agree or strongly agree with this statement, indicated by selecting a 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale / † Response data has been inverted to reflect responses disagreeing with a negatively phrased question

**Findings:**  
**Workplace Culture**

However, union members are broadly positive about the impact of their union on various aspects of workplace culture. This may help to explain why museum workers are choosing to form or join a union in the first place, believing it is a tool to address the dissatisfaction they are experiencing in their workplaces.

**Figure 17. Union Members’ Perceptions of Union Impact on Workplace Culture**

What impact (if any) do you believe your union has had on the following conditions at your museum over the past year?



\* Responses grouped into four categories based on a 6-point scale of “Large negative impact,” “Small negative impact,” “No impact,” “Small positive impact,” “Large positive impact,” and “Don’t know”

# Findings: Career Satisfaction

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## Findings: Career Satisfaction

Career satisfaction is complex to measure because it encapsulates how people feel about their jobs. For arts workers, these feelings can be influenced by a range of forces, from personal experiences to broader political or cultural contexts, in addition to specific opportunities or challenges at their museums. Analysis in this section focuses on multiple dimensions, including job satisfaction, pay satisfaction, and feeling supported at work. We also examine the emotions most associated with working in art museums, as well as workers' perceptions of themselves in relation to their career goals and professional advancement opportunities.

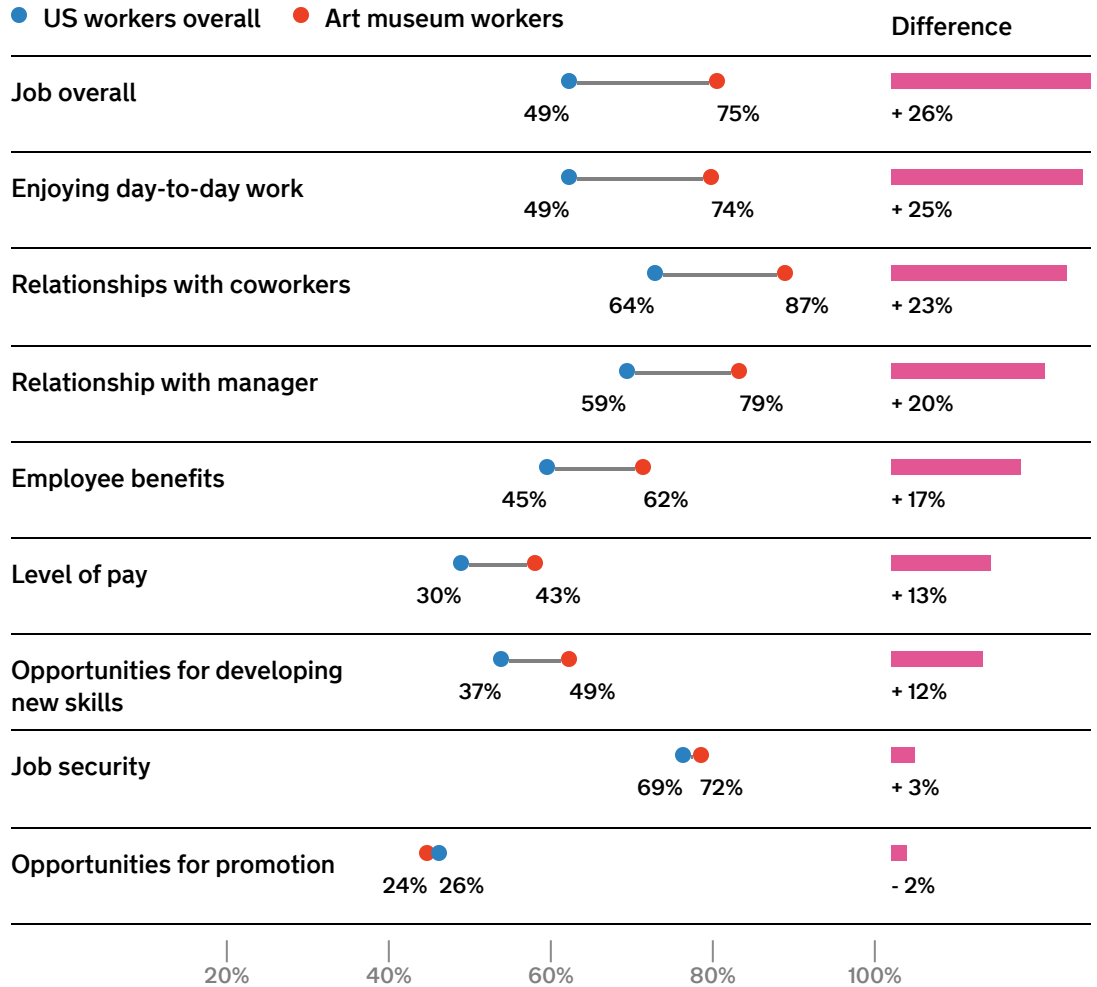
There have been sizable improvements in career satisfaction since 2023, with museum workers now feeling more positively about their careers than US workers overall. The areas where art museum workers rate their satisfaction highest compared to US workers overall are their relationship with coworkers (87% vs. 64%), the enjoyment of their day-to-day work (74% vs. 49%), and their job overall (75% vs 49%). In six out of seven consistent metrics, we see an increase in satisfaction since 2023. The only area where art museum workers both have a decrease in satisfaction since 2023 and are below the US workforce overall is in opportunities for promotion (24% vs. 26%).

In short, **art museum workers are largely more satisfied in 2025; however, career stagnation remains a persistent issue for the field.** Furthermore, career satisfaction is still most closely connected to position level within the museum.

Findings: Career Satisfaction

**Figure 18. Career Satisfaction, Art Museum Workers vs. US Workers Overall**

In your current employment situation, how satisfied are you with each of the following characteristics?\*

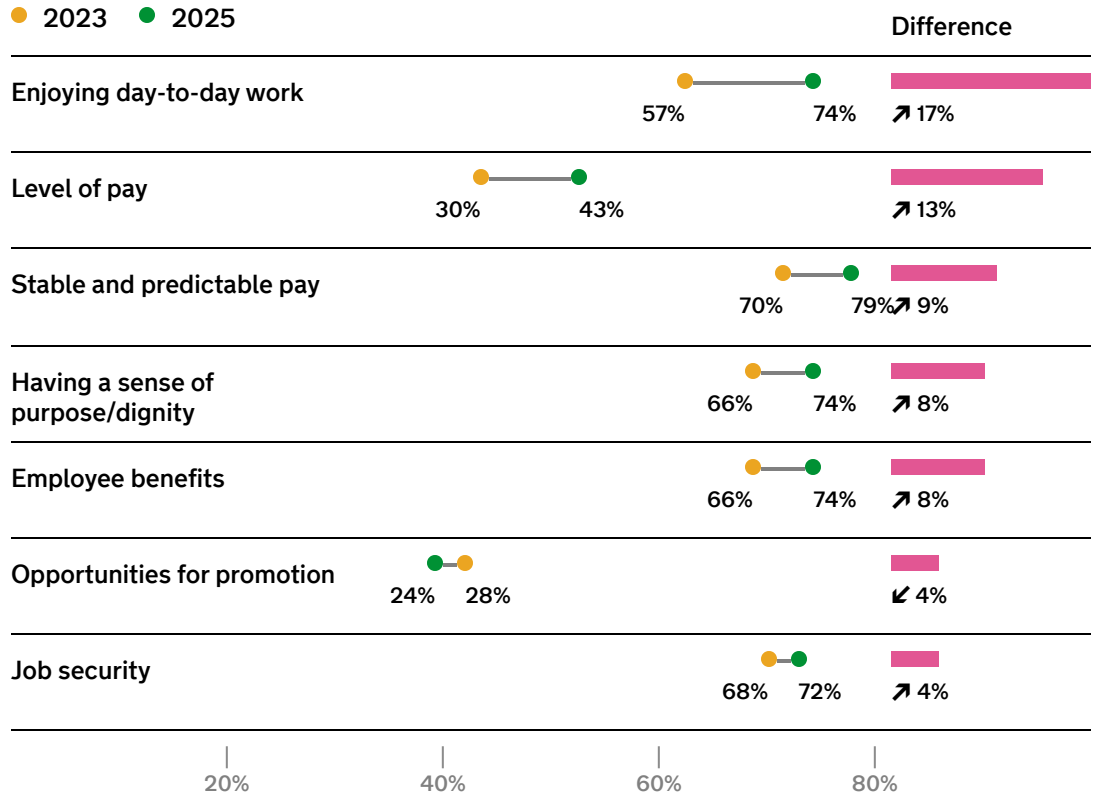


\* The proportion of respondents who are satisfied or very satisfied with this statement, indicated by selecting a 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale

Findings: Career Satisfaction

Figure 19. Career Satisfaction, Art Museum Workers in 2025 vs. 2023

In your current employment situation, how satisfied are you with each of the following characteristics?\*



\* The proportion of respondents who are satisfied or very satisfied with this statement indicated by selecting a 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale

## Findings: Career Satisfaction

Consistent with workers’ perceptions explored in the Workplace Culture section, art museum workers feel most satisfied with the interpersonal aspects of their jobs and the sense of meaning they derive from their work. They are least satisfied with opportunities for promotion, pay levels, and chances to develop new skills. This points to a prevailing tension in career satisfaction among art museum workers, who feel torn between enjoying their jobs and working with their colleagues but are unable to envision a sustainable future for themselves in the field.

### Figure 20. Art Museum Workers’ Areas of Highest and Lowest Career Satisfaction

In your current employment situation, how satisfied are you with each of the following characteristics?

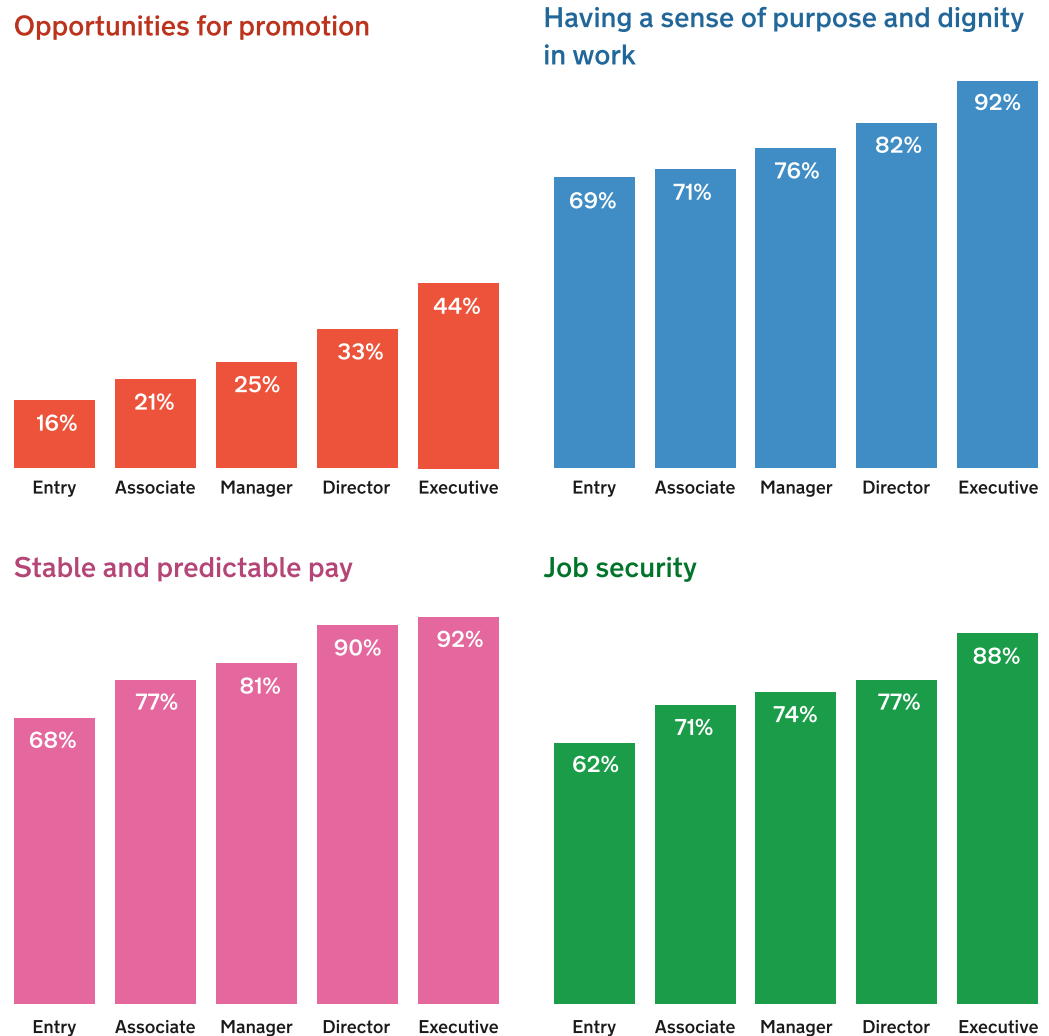
	Most satisfied		Least satisfied	
1	87%	Relationships with coworkers	24%	Opportunities for promotion
2	79%	Relationships with managers and/or supervisors	43%	Level of pay
3	75%	Job overall	49%	Opportunities for training and/or developing new skills

## Findings: Career Satisfaction

Executive-level staff report higher career satisfaction than staff at any other position level on nearly every metric, and there is a largely consistent progression in career satisfaction for each metric as position level rises from entry level. In other words, the higher a worker sits within the museum hierarchy, the more satisfaction they feel in terms of job security, stability and predictability of pay, opportunities for promotion, and sense of purpose and dignity in their work.

### Figure 21. Satisfaction with Sustainability and Value of Job, by Position Level

In your current employment situation, how satisfied are you with each of the following characteristics?\*



\* The proportion of respondents who are satisfied or very satisfied with this characteristic, indicated by selecting a 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale

## Findings: Career Satisfaction

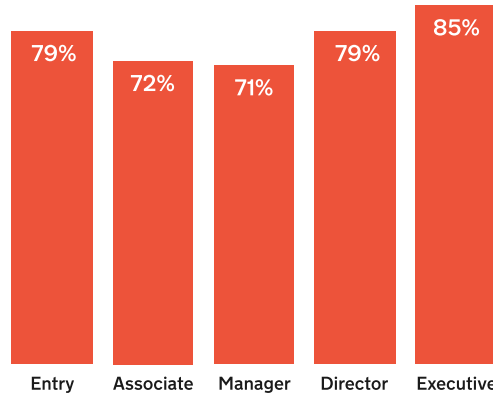
However, one notable exception to executive-level satisfaction is in relationships with managers or supervisors, where the highest satisfaction is at the entry level. This highlights the meaningful and positive impact of current managers on entry-level workers, a crucial mechanism for retaining younger workers. It also demonstrates a need for art museum leaders to focus on skills building and improvement particularly for those managing executive and mid-level staff, typically another executive-level staff member, the museum's director, or the board. When it comes to satisfaction with one's day-to-day work environment and relationships, art museum workers in the middle of the hierarchy are the least satisfied. For instance, while executive-level staff are the most satisfied with their day-to-day work, the next highest levels of satisfaction are found among entry-level and director-level staff, with lower satisfaction found among associate and manager levels.

Findings: Career Satisfaction

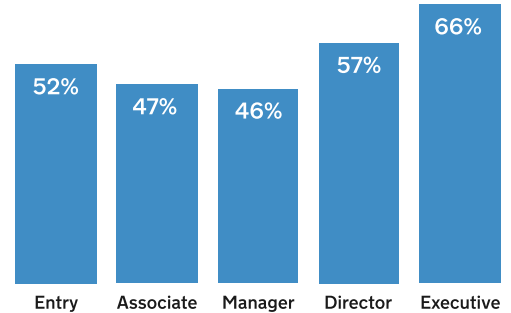
**Figure 22. Satisfaction with Daily Work Environment and Relationships, by Position Level**

In your current employment situation, how satisfied are you with each of the following characteristics?\*

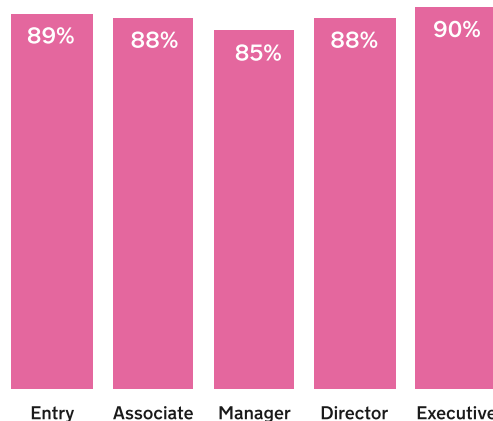
Enjoying day-to-day work



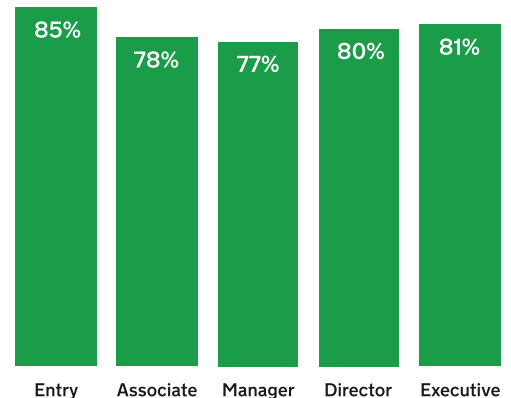
Opportunities for developing new skills



Relationships with coworkers



Relationship with manager



\* The proportion of respondents who are satisfied or very satisfied with this characteristic, indicated by selecting a 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale

Another key aspect of career satisfaction is feeling supported at work or, even better, having a mentor. When asked by whom they feel most supported,<sup>33</sup> most museum workers said their direct manager (45%) or other colleagues (43%). A lower proportion of Black workers reported experiencing the most support from other colleagues (34%) whereas a higher proportion reported support from their direct manager (48%). This distinction for Black workers is notable in the context of our findings in the Discrimination and Harassment section of this report, given the higher percentage of Black workers who have experienced discrimination from colleagues. By contrast, a higher proportion of union members (51%), those with recent experiences of discrimination (55%), and nonbinary workers (56%) feel most supported by their colleagues compared to museum workers overall.

## Findings: Career Satisfaction

When it comes to mentors, nearly half of the art museum workforce says that mentors are available to them in their workplaces (48%) and that they have a positive impact on their careers (47%), with a significantly larger proportion in the entry level citing mentor availability and positive impact of mentors on their careers (61% and 57%, respectively).

**Figure 23. Sources of Support at Work for Art Museum Workers**  
Whom do you feel most supported by within your museum?



**Figure 24. Percentage of Art Museum Workers Who Feel Most Supported by Their Colleagues**

Whom do you feel most supported by within your museum?\*

Overall		43%
Black workers		34%
Union members		51%
Nonbinary workers		56%
Workers with recent experiences of discrimination		55%

\* The proportion of respondents who selected “colleagues” in response

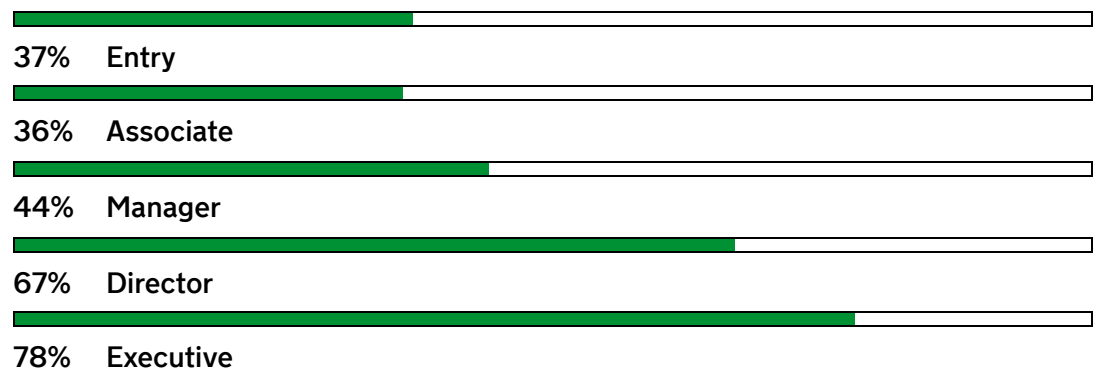
## Findings: Career Satisfaction

### Pay Satisfaction

In addition to the improvements to art museum workers' overall career satisfaction, there has been a sizable increase in pay satisfaction, up 13 percentage points to 43% in 2025. However, significant challenges remain, as fewer than half of art museum workers are currently satisfied with their level of pay, and executives are more than twice as likely to be satisfied compared to entry-level staff.

#### Figure 25. Pay Satisfaction of Art Museum Workers, by Position Level

In your current employment situation, how satisfied are you with your level of pay?\*



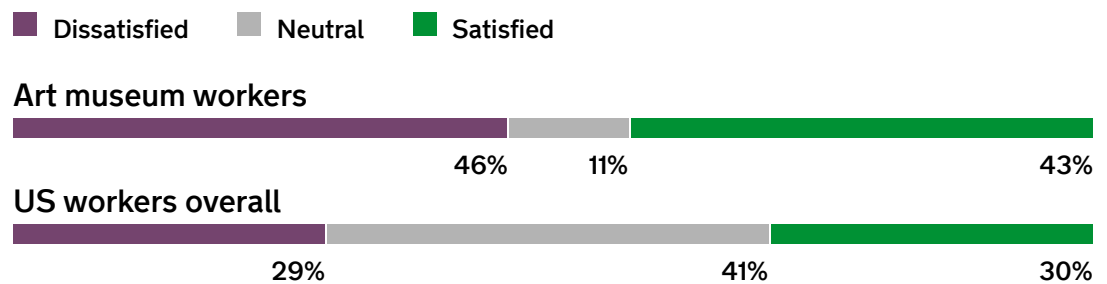
\* The proportion of respondents who are satisfied or very satisfied with this characteristic, indicated by selecting a 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale

## Findings: Career Satisfaction

When comparing pay satisfaction for art museum workers to US workers overall,<sup>34</sup> we find that museum workers are both more likely to be satisfied with their level of pay and more likely to be dissatisfied, meaning far fewer art museum workers are neutral. This highlights an extreme division where some workers are very happy and some are very unhappy with their pay in the art museum sector. We explore this gap further in the next section, on [Pay and Promotions](#), where we analyze the percentage of workers who are paid below and above a living wage.

### Figure 26. Pay Satisfaction: Art Museum Workers vs. US Workers Overall

In your current employment situation, how satisfied are you with your level of pay?\*



\* Responses grouped into three categories based on a 5-point scale from “Not at all Satisfied,” to “Extremely satisfied” with no labels for points 2-4

Findings: Career Satisfaction

## Career Outlook

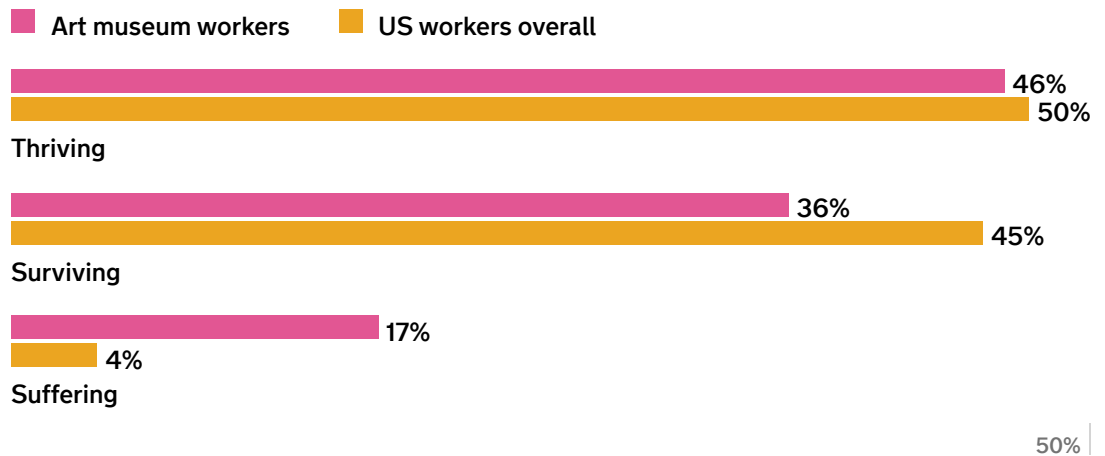
In 2025, we introduced the Gallup Life Evaluation Index as a benchmark to compare the current and future outlooks of US workers overall against that of museum workers. The Gallup Index “measures life satisfaction by quantifying the difference between the best possible life and the worst possible life” on a ten-point scale and then assigns responses at three levels of well-being: thriving (7 or above), surviving<sup>35</sup> (5–6), or suffering (4 or below). This measurement allows us to better understand workers’ overall quality of life now and their level of optimism for the future.

While nearly the same percentage of workers in art museums and the US overall are thriving, far more art museum workers are suffering (17%) than US workers overall (4%).<sup>36</sup>

However, museum workers are hopeful about their career futures, with nearly three-quarters (72%) seeing themselves as thriving in the next five years. This demonstrates that art museum workers, on average, feel positively about their professional future and anticipate a higher quality of life—a positive sign about art museum workers’ overall mental well-being.

### Figure 27. Current Career Outlook: Art Museum Workers vs. US Workers Overall

Please imagine a ladder with steps numbered from 0 at the bottom to 10 at the top. The top of the ladder represents the best possible work life for you and the bottom of the ladder represents the worst possible work life for you. On which step of the ladder would you personally feel your work life is at this time?\*



\* Responses grouped following the Gallup Life Evaluation Index: thriving (7 or above), surviving (5–6), or suffering (4 or below)

Executive- and director-level workers give the highest ratings of their current life compared to all other position levels, with a consistent progression in scores as position level increases. Nonbinary workers report the highest amount of suffering both in their current life (31%) and their expected career outlook in five years (14%), with rates only exceeded by those who

## Findings: Career Satisfaction

have experienced recent discrimination or harassment (35% suffering now and 21% suffering in five years).

Findings: Career Satisfaction

**Figure 28. Current and Future Career Outlook of Art Museum Workers, by Position Level**

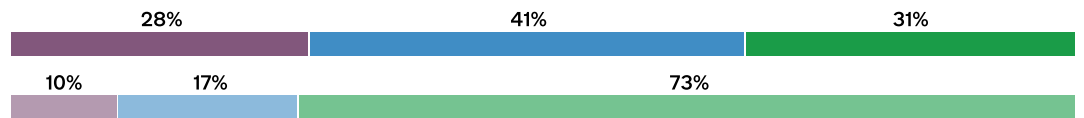
Please imagine a ladder with steps numbered from 0 at the bottom to 10 at the top. The top of the ladder represents the best possible work life for you and the bottom of the ladder represents the worst possible work life for you. On which step of the ladder would you personally feel your work life is at this time? On which step of the ladder do you think your work will be in five years?\*

Now                      Suffering      Surviving      Thriving  
 In five years          Suffering      Surviving      Thriving

**Overall**



**Entry**



**Associate**



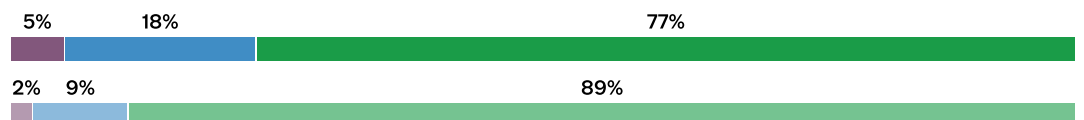
**Manager**



**Director**



**Executive**



\* Responses grouped following the Gallup Life Evaluation Index: thriving (7 or above), surviving (5–6), or suffering (4 or below)

## Findings: Career Satisfaction

# Workers' Emotional Landscape

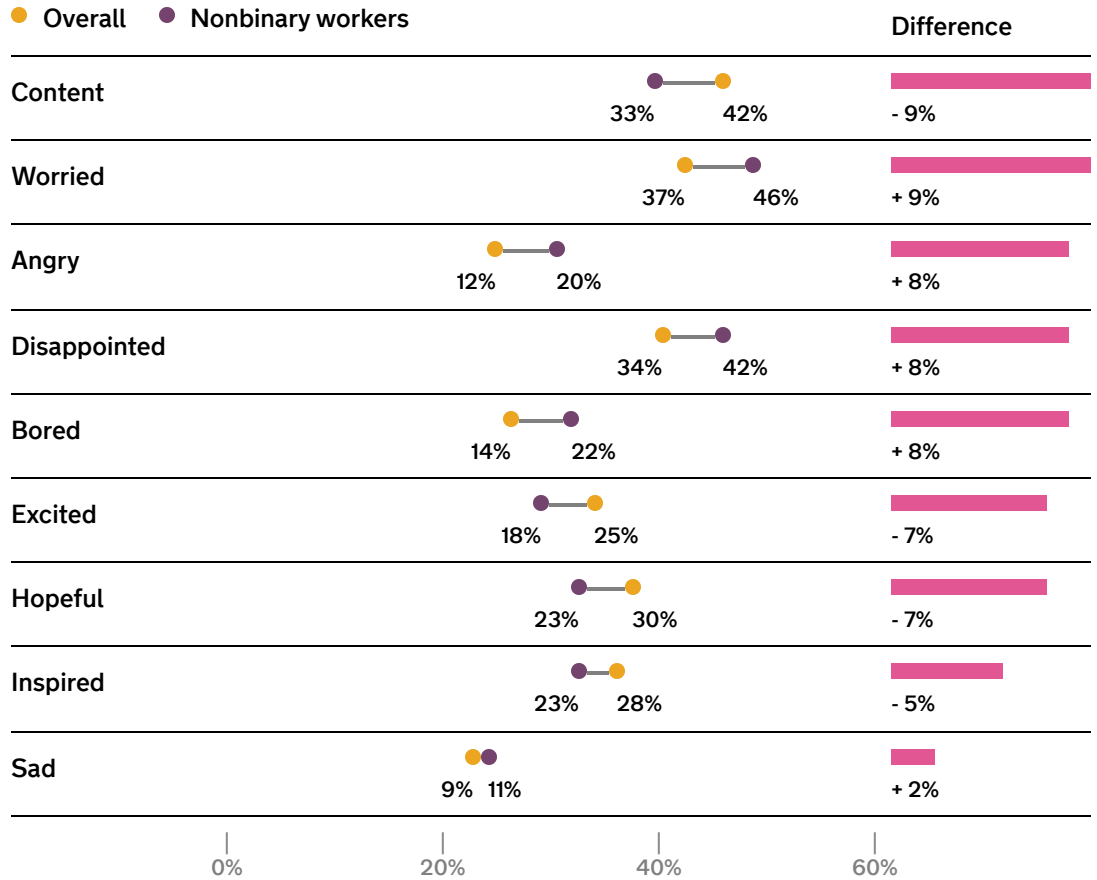
Measuring workers' top three emotions offers an additional lens with which to explore the harder-to-identify aspects of their experiences within art museums, namely how they feel at work.<sup>37</sup> The data shows that worker emotions have stayed relatively consistent since the last cycle of MMF's study. The most considerable positive shift is in the proportion of the workforce feeling content, up 7% since 2023 to 41% in 2025. On the other hand, the proportion of workers feeling excited (24%) and hopeful (30%) as well as feeling disappointed (34%) has gone down, all of which points to a nuanced emotional picture.

**Nonbinary workers are having the worst emotional experiences in art museums across the board.**<sup>38</sup> They report feeling the least content, excited, and hopeful, and simultaneously the most worried, angry, and disappointed about working in their current jobs. On the whole, they experience more negative emotions than even entry-level or Gen Z workers, who are more likely to identify as nonbinary. This points to the uniquely challenging emotional experiences that nonbinary workers face in their museum workplaces and a key opportunity to better support these workers.

Findings: Career Satisfaction

**Figure 29. Emotional Landscape: Nonbinary Workers vs. Art Museum Workers Overall**

Thinking about the past month in your workplace, which of the following emotions do you most associate with working at your museum?

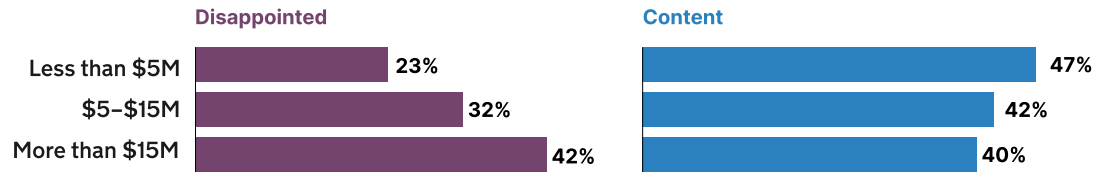


## Findings: Career Satisfaction

As we explored in [Workplace Culture](#), a museum’s budget size has a significant impact on its staff’s emotional experience and well-being. Those working in smaller museums reported experiencing positive emotions at higher rates, while those in larger museums reported negative emotions at higher rates. It is striking that disappointment tends to increase with the size of the museum’s budget, while contentment decreases.

### Figure 30. Disappointment and Contentment Among Art Museum Workers, by Budget Size

Thinking about the past month in your workplace, which of the following emotions do you most associate with working at your museum?



## Findings: Career Satisfaction

### Considerations for Quitting

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the increased satisfaction of art museum workers on the whole, we see a notable decrease in workers who have considered leaving their jobs. One of the most significant findings in MMF's 2023 Report was that 60% of art museum workers had considered leaving their jobs and 68% had considered leaving the field altogether. Importantly, that data was collected in late 2022, when the impacts of widespread layoffs and furloughs during the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent "Great Resignation" were causing upheaval within art museums and across sectors.<sup>39</sup> Now, two years since our last study and more than five years since the onset of the pandemic, the proportion of workers who have considered leaving their jobs or the museum field altogether has dropped to 54% for both.

**More than half (54%) of the art museum workforce has considered leaving the field in the past five years.**

The top three forces driving workers out of art museums remain the same: low pay, burnout, and a lack of growth opportunities. This data aligns with research on the US nonprofit workforce, which shows that 45% of nonprofit employees are actively seeking new work within five years of beginning a position. That data found that the primary reasons for wanting to quit are low pay (49%), lack of growth opportunities (19%), and poor management (12%).<sup>40</sup>

#### Top Three Reasons Art Museum Workers Want to Leave the Field

1. Low pay
2. Burnout
3. Lack of opportunities for growth

## Findings: Career Satisfaction

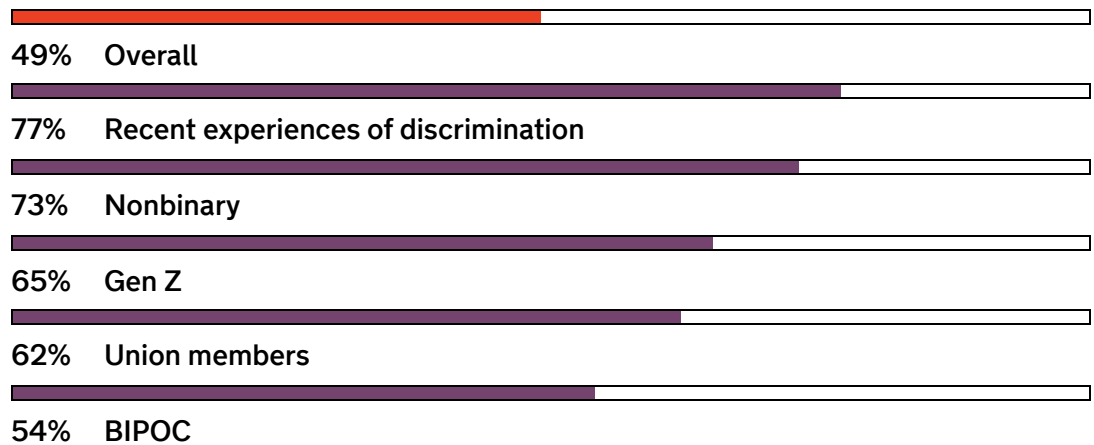
To gain a clearer understanding of how seriously workers are considering leaving, we also asked workers whether they had actively looked for another job within the past 12 months. About half (49%) of art museum workers said yes.

We see the impacts of low career satisfaction on specific workers’ desire to quit. In particular, **for workers with recent experiences of discrimination or harassment—who report some of the lowest career satisfaction metrics for any group—active job searches are significantly higher (77%).** We examine the impact of these experiences in greater detail in the [Discrimination and Harassment](#) section.

Through further regression analysis, we found that gender is the most influential factor (of those we tested) on museum workers’ likelihood to be actively seeking another job. This means that a workers’ gender is much more likely to predict their desire to quit than their age, position level, or union status. **Nearly three-quarters (73%) of nonbinary workers are actively searching for a new job.** In considering the findings of nonbinary workers’ more negative emotions, lower current life ratings, lower future career outlooks, and higher active job searches, art museum leaders must take seriously the largely unfavorable experiences of these workers in order to retain them.

White workers are less likely to be actively looking for another job or to have considered leaving the field compared to their BIPOC colleagues. While discrimination is cited as a reason for wanting to leave the field by only 8% of workers overall, it is cited by more than a fifth (21%) of Black workers who have considered leaving the field. Art museum leaders must give serious consideration to the impacts of discrimination on Black workers at their museums, which also should be understood as a field-wide problem. **With 4% fewer Black executives now than in 2023,** as noted in the Workplace Diversity subsection, **there is reason for concern that discrimination may be driving Black workers out of the field altogether.**

**Figure 31. Art Museum Workers Actively Looking for a New Job**  
Have you actively looked for another job in the last 12 months?

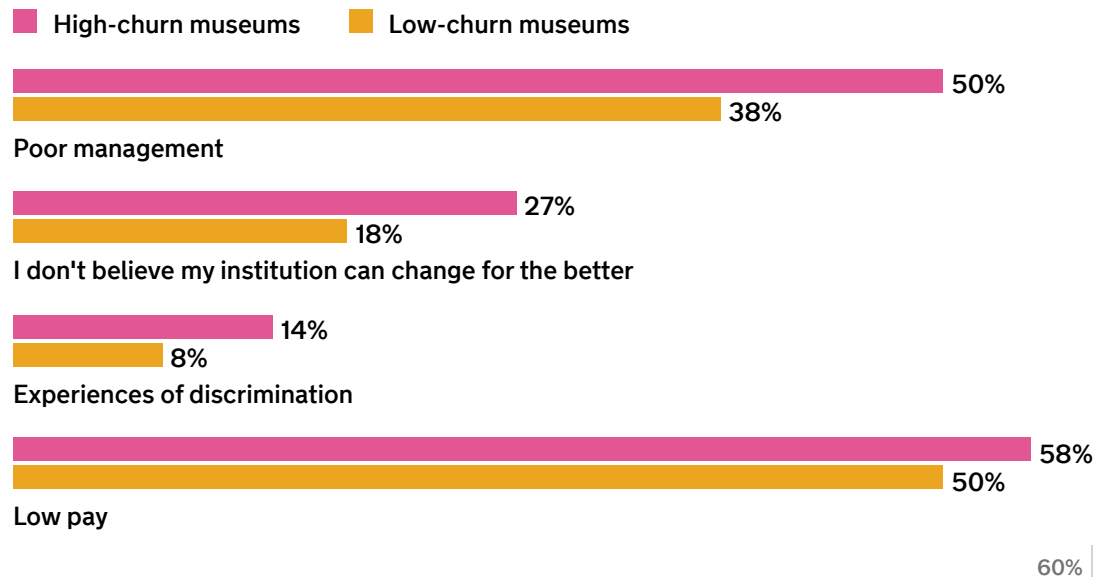


## Findings: Career Satisfaction

It is worth noting that more workers at high-churn museums who have considered leaving their current museum cite poor management as a reason (50% vs. 38% in low-churn museums). Workers in high-churn museums who have considered leaving their current museum also reported a lack of belief in their institution’s capacity to change for the better (27% vs. 18% in low-churn museums), experiences of discrimination or harassment (14% vs. 8%), and low pay (58% vs. 50%) as primary drivers to seek another job. These data points reveal key areas of opportunity for art museums seeking to enhance retention. Even if a museum is unable to increase staff salaries or provide other benefits in the short term, an institution can focus on better management and more accountability for discrimination to improve workplace satisfaction.

### Figure 32. Quitting Considerations and Motivators for Art Museum Workers, by Churn Rate

Which of the following reasons made you consider leaving your current museum workplace for another art museum? Select all that apply.



## Findings: Career Satisfaction

### Union Findings: Career Satisfaction

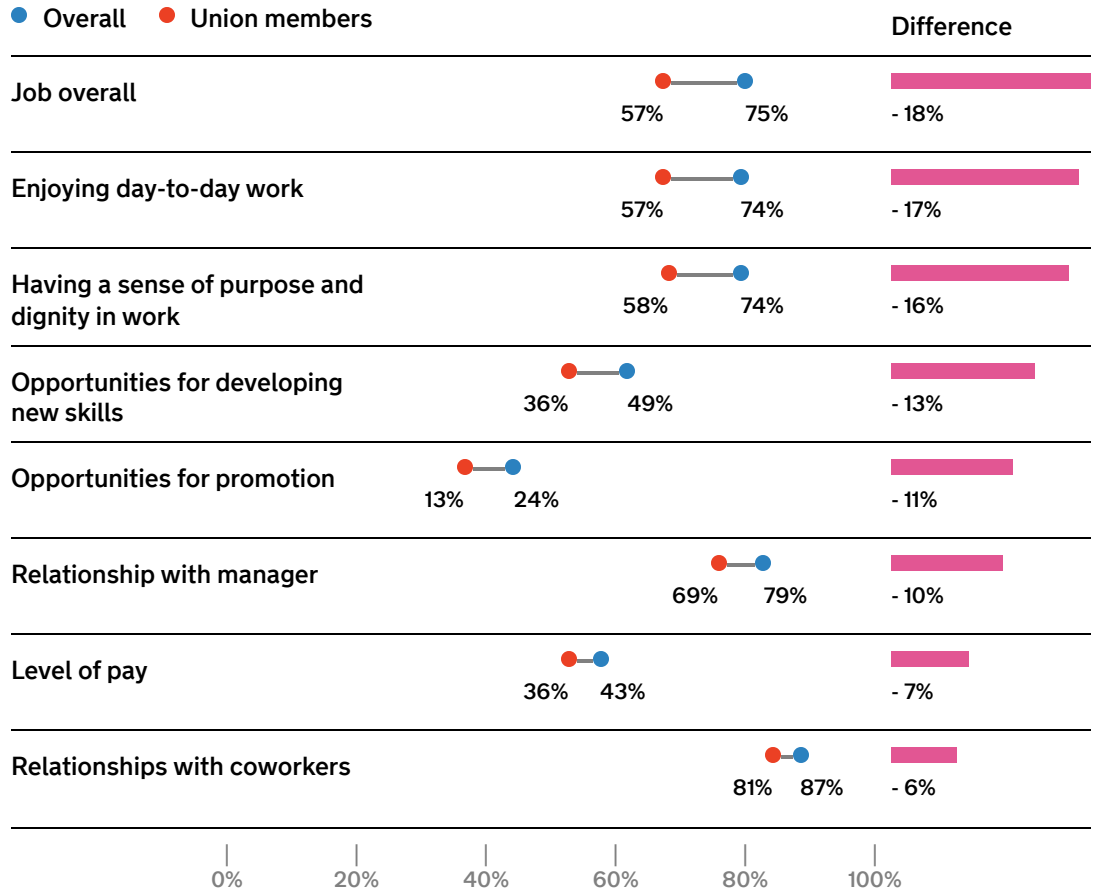
Across the data on workplace culture and career satisfaction, we see that those who have more positive impressions of their workplace's culture also report higher levels of satisfaction. This is consistent with research from other fields about the positive impact of workplace culture on workers' career satisfaction.<sup>41</sup>

We see this correlation most clearly when we look specifically at the career satisfaction of unionized workers. As we explored in *Workplace Culture*, union members report lower career satisfaction than the art museum workforce overall. The largest difference is in satisfaction with "my job overall" (57% union members vs. 75% overall). These gaps extend to union members' current career outlook as well. For example, nearly twice the number of union members rate themselves as "suffering" compared to art museum workers overall (30% vs. 17%), and fewer rate themselves as "thriving" (37% vs. 46%). As noted in the union subsection of *Workplace Culture*, these findings help us understand why workers may be turning to unions as a tool to address their negative work experiences or lack of career growth.

Findings: Career Satisfaction

**Figure 33. Career Satisfaction: Union Members vs. Art Museum Workers Overall**

In your current employment situation, how satisfied are you with each of the following characteristics?\*

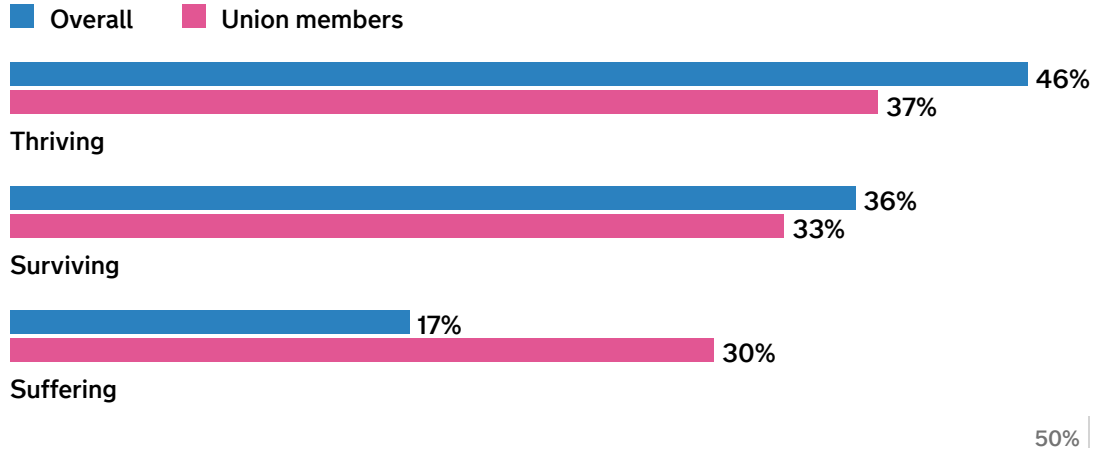


\* The proportion of respondents who are satisfied or very satisfied with this characteristic, indicated by selecting a 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale

## Findings: Career Satisfaction

### Figure 34. Union Members' Current Career Outlook

Please imagine a ladder with steps numbered from 0 at the bottom to 10 at the top. The top of the ladder represents the best possible work life for you and the bottom of the ladder represents the worst possible work life for you. On which step of the ladder would you personally feel your work life is at this time?\*



\* Responses grouped following the Gallup Life Evaluation Index: thriving (7 or above), surviving (5–6), or suffering (4 or below)

# Spotlights by Position Level

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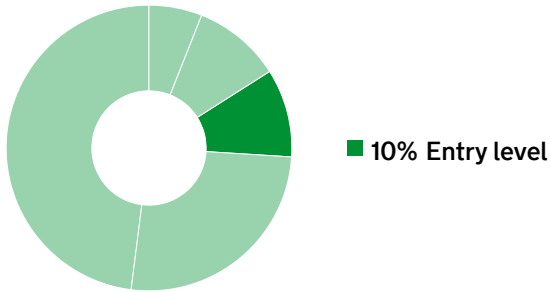
## Spotlights Introduction

This section includes spotlights on the art museum workforce by position level. More so than anyone else, entry-level workers feel inspired by working in art museums. Despite their low pay, they are thinking less about leaving the museum field for jobs in different sectors. We also see that burnout peaks for art museum workers in middle position levels (affecting half of workers at the manager level) and that the desire for these workers to quit their jobs or leave the field altogether is highest among manager- and director-level workers. Meanwhile, executive-level workers have the highest satisfaction with pay and across most metrics; they constitute the only position level that feels optimistic enough for “hope” to be included in their top three emotions associated with work.

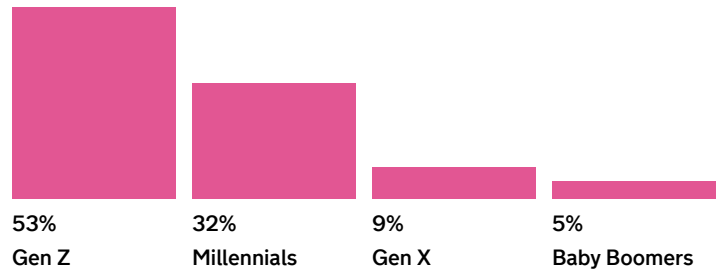
To see how each position level compares to the art museum workforce overall, visit the [Who We Heard From](#) section.

# Spotlight: Entry Level

## Percentage of Workforce



## Generation



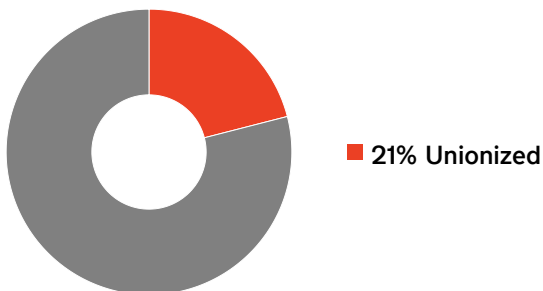
## Gender Breakdown



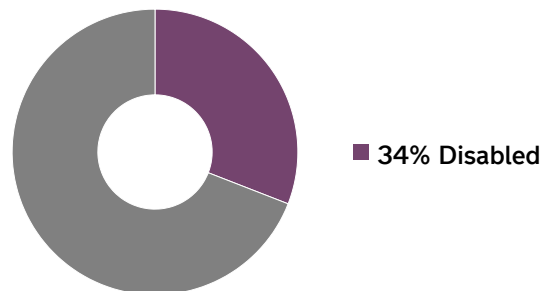
## Race/Ethnicity Breakdown



## Union Status



## Disability Status



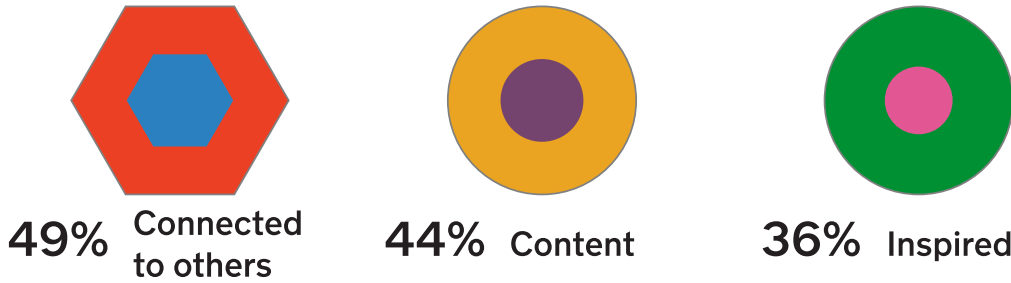
Median Full-Time Salary

**\$46k** Annually

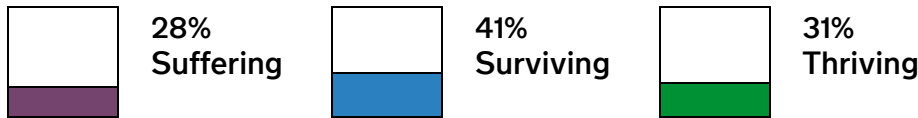
Pay Satisfaction

**37%** Satisfied

Top 3 Emotions



Current Work Life Rating



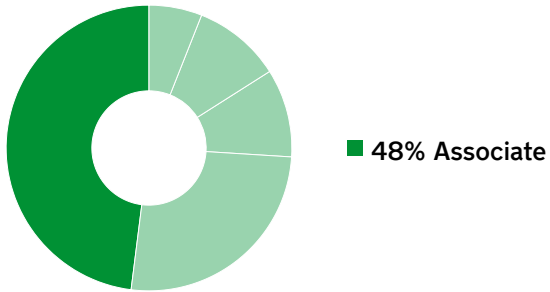
**46%** Considering Leaving the Field

Top 3 Reasons to Leave the Field

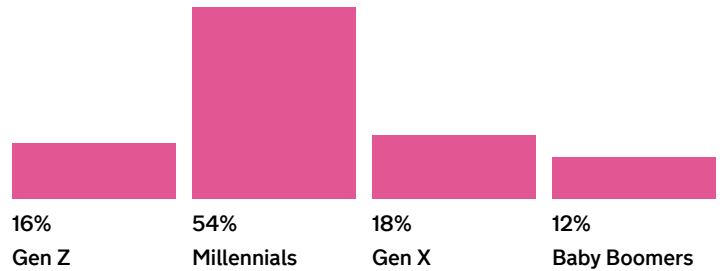
- |   |     |
|---|-----|
| 1 Low pay                                   | 73% |
| 2 Lack of opportunities for growth          | 48% |
| 3 Burnout AND opportunities in other fields | 34% |

# Spotlight: Associate Level

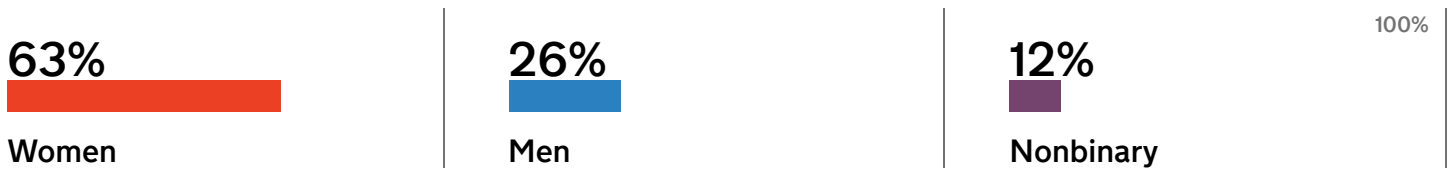
## Percentage of Workforce



## Generation



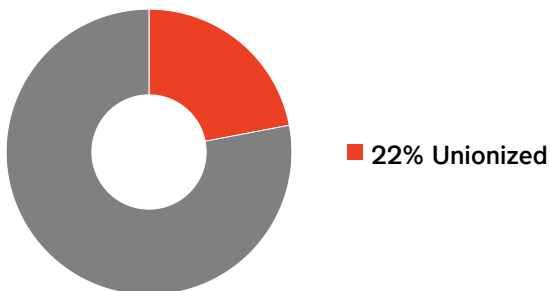
## Gender Breakdown



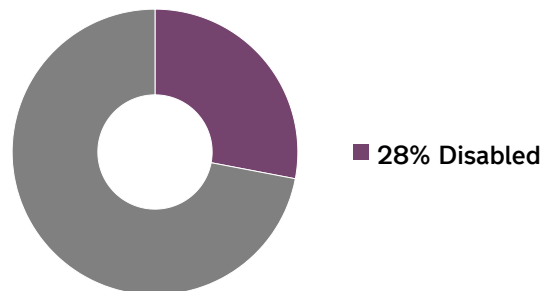
## Race/Ethnicity Breakdown



## Union Status



## Disability Status



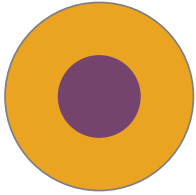
Median Full-Time Salary

**\$55k** Annually

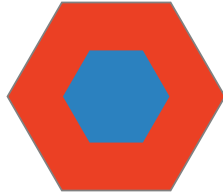
Pay Satisfaction

**36%** Satisfied

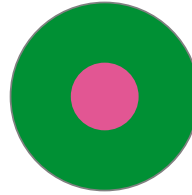
Top 3 Emotions



**46%** Content

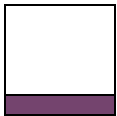


**45%** Connected to others



**35%** Inspired

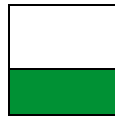
Current Work Life Rating



**19%** Suffering



**39%** Surviving



**42%** Thriving

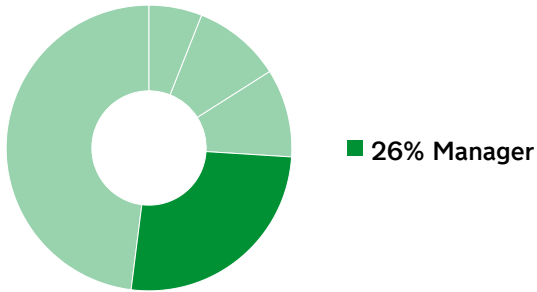
**53%** Considering Leaving the Field

Top 3 Reasons to Leave the Field

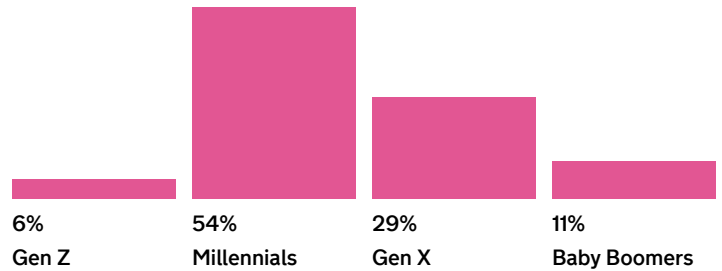
- 1 Low pay **65%**
- 2 Burnout **54%**
- 3 Lack of opportunities for growth **52%**

# Spotlight: Manager Level

## Percentage of Workforce



## Generation



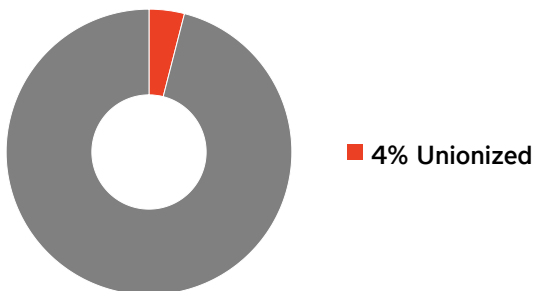
## Gender Breakdown



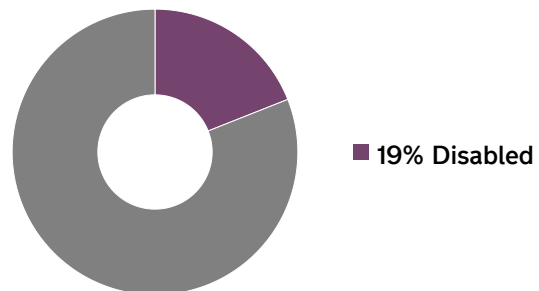
## Race/Ethnicity Breakdown



## Union Status



## Disability Status



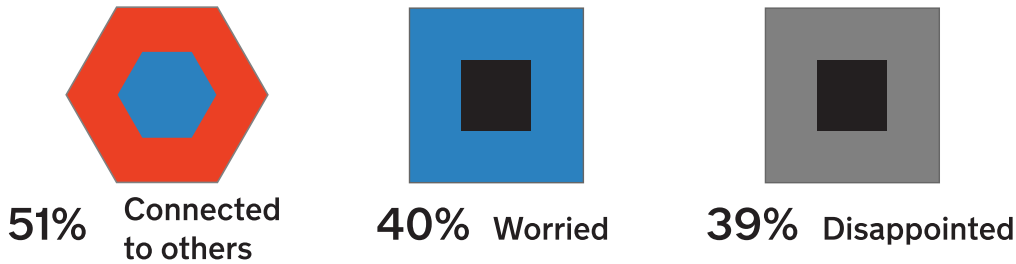
Median Full-Time Salary

**\$70k** Annually

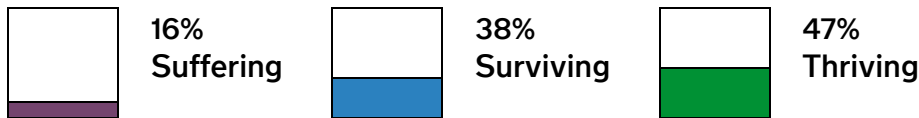
Pay Satisfaction

**44%** Satisfied

Top 3 Emotions



Current Work Life Rating



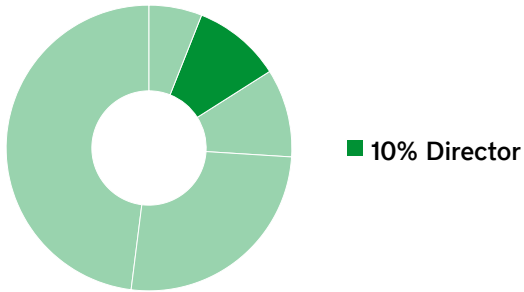
**57%** Considering Leaving the Field

Top 3 Reasons to Leave the Field

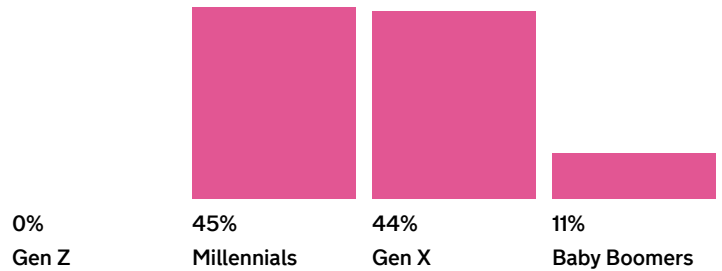
- |   |                                  |            |
|---|----------------------------------|------------|
| 1 | Low pay                          | <b>65%</b> |
| 2 | Burnout                          | <b>52%</b> |
| 3 | Lack of opportunities for growth | <b>34%</b> |

# Spotlight: Director Level

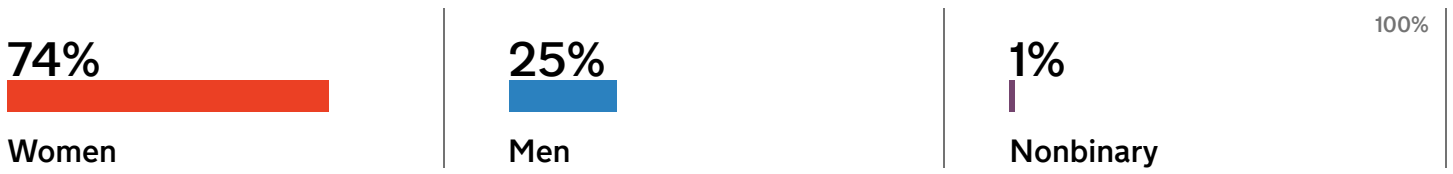
## Percentage of Workforce



## Generation



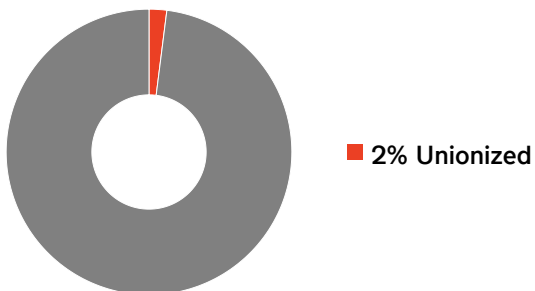
## Gender Breakdown



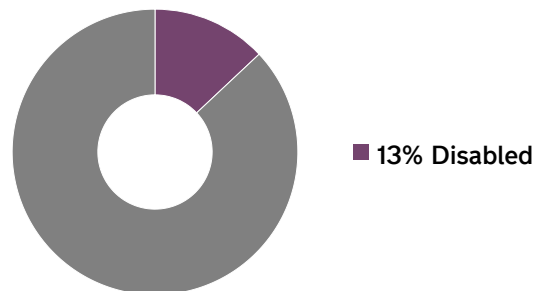
## Race/Ethnicity Breakdown



## Union Status



## Disability Status



Median Full-Time Salary

**\$100k** Annually

Pay Satisfaction

**67%** Satisfied

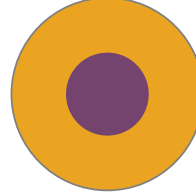
Top 3 Emotions



**47%** Worried

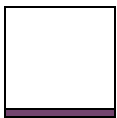


**44%** Connected to others

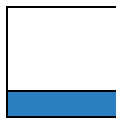


**38%** Content

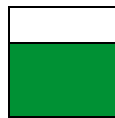
Current Work Life Rating



**7%** Suffering



**25%** Surviving



**68%** Thriving

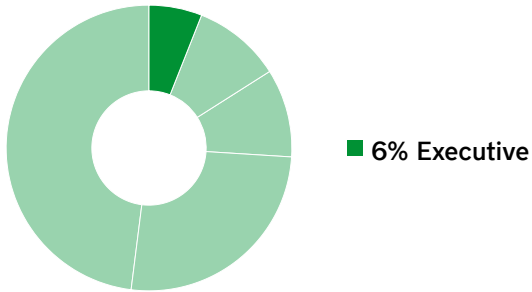
**58%** Considering Leaving the Field

Top 3 Reasons to Leave the Field

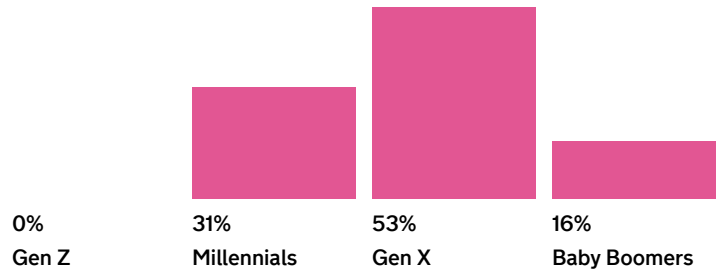
- 1 Burnout **52%**
- 2 Low pay **47%**
- 3 Poor management **38%**

# Spotlight: Executive Level

## Percentage of Workforce



## Generation



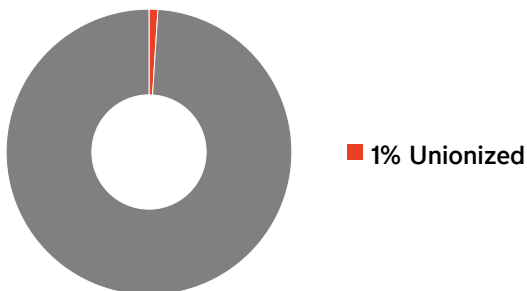
## Gender Breakdown



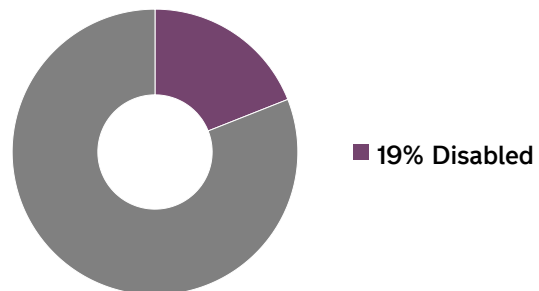
## Race/Ethnicity Breakdown



## Union Status



## Disability Status



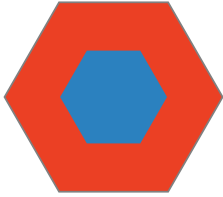
Median Full-Time Salary

**\$141k** Annually

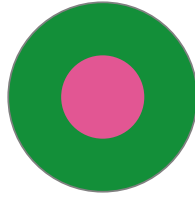
Pay Satisfaction

**78%** Satisfied

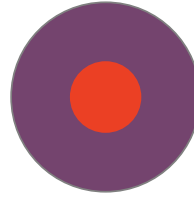
Top 3 Emotions



**51%** Connected to others

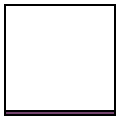


**46%** Inspired



**41%** Hopeful

Current Work Life Rating



**5%** Suffering



**18%** Surviving



**77%** Thriving

**53%** Considering Leaving the Field

Top 3 Reasons to Leave the Field

- 1 Burnout **68%**
- 2 Low pay **48%**
- 3 Poor management **47%**

# Findings: Pay and Promotions

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## Findings: Pay and Promotions

Despite many calls for living wages and pay equity in the art museum sector, the question remains of what constitutes fair pay and, importantly, how this fits within the financial realities of any given museum. As it stands in 2025, museums spend an average of 56% of their annual operating budgets on staff compensation and benefits.<sup>42</sup> Additionally, **nearly three-quarters (73%) of museum directors say “financial stability of the institution” is one of their top three priorities** (see fig. 35). This tension between adequate worker compensation and the financial stability of the institution is ever more acute in 2025, when once-stable funding streams from government entities are diminishing if not disappearing entirely, as competition for private funding skyrockets.<sup>43</sup>

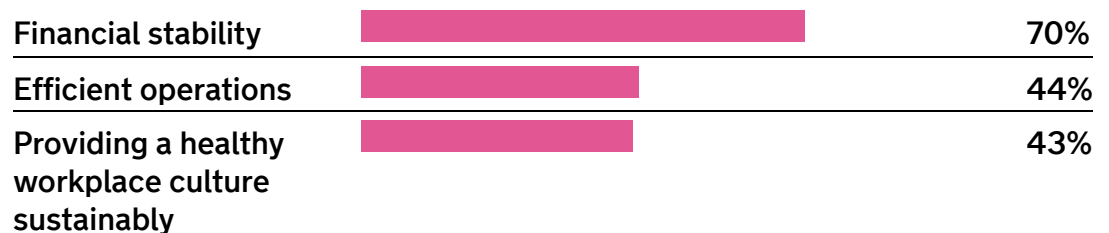
This section, utilizing detailed pay and household demographic data, aims to support a deeper understanding of what fair pay entails within this complex context. We use a living wage calculation reflective of local cost of living for each worker to establish a baseline for what full-time art museum workers should earn to cover their basic living expenses given their location. This calculation sets a floor, or the minimum amount of workers’ wages needed to meet their personal expenses, excluding dependent costs, savings, and any nonessential expenses.

Even using this conservative calculation, the data shows that 28% of full-time art museum workers make below a living wage for their region, and that full-time entry-level and associate-level workers are barely scraping by on their museum incomes to meet their basic needs. Although it may be unsurprising that the ability to cover basic living expenses improves with position level, this difference is particularly acute in a sector where advancing up the hierarchy is so challenging, and where 78% of workers have never received a full promotion at their museum. **In short, this data confirms what art museum workers have said time and again: many simply cannot afford to stay in the field long enough to earn a living wage.**<sup>44</sup>

Given the high costs of employee turnover,<sup>45</sup> museum leadership should consider how living wages for their full team would support their top priority of long-term financial stability.

### Figure 35. Top Three Art Museum Director Priorities<sup>46</sup>

Please select up to three of the following areas that you’re prioritizing at your museum over the next few years.



Findings: Pay and Promotions

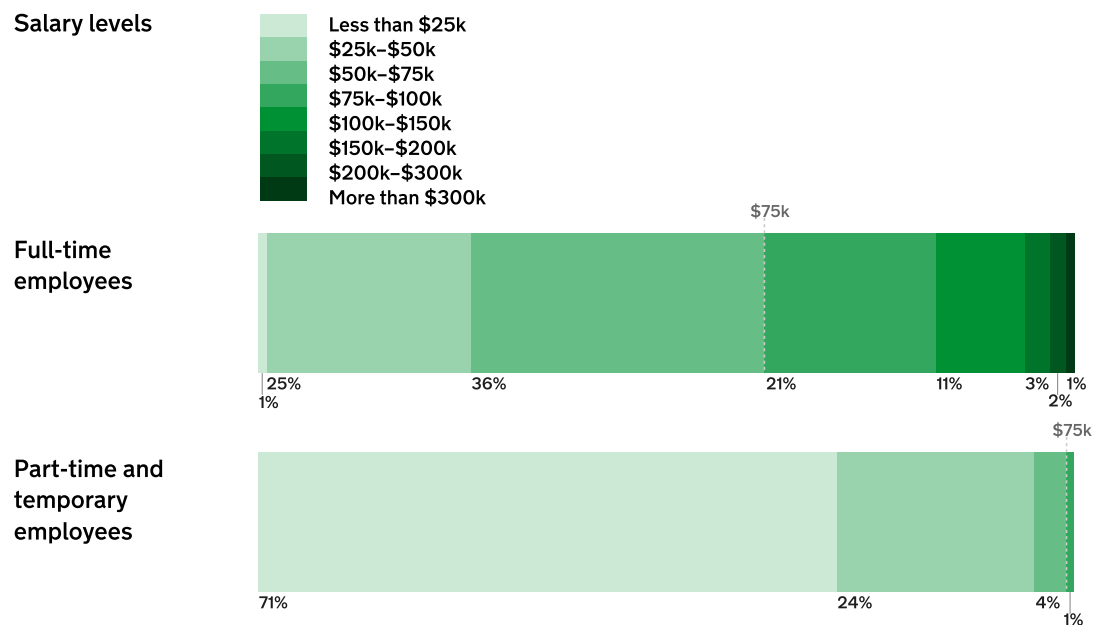
# Annual Compensation

The 2025 median annual compensation for art museum workers is \$45,800.<sup>47</sup> This median includes all workers, full-time and part-time, which constitutes 84% and 17% of the art museum workforce, respectively.

The median income for full-time art museum workers is \$65,000 per year, which is slightly higher than the US average of \$62,000 per year.<sup>48</sup> The median yearly income for part-time workers (from their museum income alone) is \$19,000. These numbers reflect the median earner, or the worker “in the middle,” of all art museum salaries.<sup>49</sup>

## Figure 36. Art Museum Salary Levels, Full-time and Part-time

What is your approximate gross annual income (before taxes and deductions) from your current position in the museum? (If this changes from month to month because of overtime or other reasons, please provide your best guess across this past year.) Report only your income from your museum job.



More than a quarter (26%) of full-time art museum workers make less than \$50,000 per year.

## Findings: Pay and Promotions

For the rest of this section, we will focus specifically on the experiences of full-time workers as a baseline to understand if they make a living wage from their museum income alone. Although it is to be expected that part-time workers rely on additional sources of income to meet their basic living expenses, we want to acknowledge that more research is needed to better understand how part-time workers are faring in art museums. Given that 40% of part-time workers say they would prefer full-time work within their museums, we plan to focus further on their experiences in future MMF programs and data studies.

The median salary for full-time Black workers is \$7,000 less per year than their white counterparts and \$9,000 less per year than their Asian counterparts. Even accounting for position level, we see that a larger proportion of Black workers are manager-level and above (compared to white and Asian workers) and still have lower-than-average salaries, which means **there is a racial pay gap wherein Black workers are paid less than their peers even at the same position level.**

### Figure 37. Median Gross Annual Salary of Full-Time Art Museum Workers, by Race/Ethnicity

What is your approximate gross annual income (before taxes and deductions) from your current position in the museum?

Asian		\$67,000
White		\$65,000
Hispanic or Latine/x		\$60,000
Black		\$58,000

## Findings: Pay and Promotions

The size and type of museum have a significant impact on workers’ median salaries. While we have explored the many ways in which small museums outperform larger museums in this report, particularly in terms of workplace culture and career satisfaction, this does not hold true for pay. **The median annual salary for full-time workers at small museums is nearly \$10,000 less than at large museums.**

Contemporary and/or modern art museums have the lowest full-time median compensation (\$61,500 annually) compared to all other museum types. City or county museums have the highest full-time median compensation (\$73,000 annually). It is relevant to note that city or county museums also have the largest proportion of union members (27% compared to a 14% average in art museums overall). We explore the impact of unions on worker pay later in this section.






### Figure 38. Median Gross Annual Salary of Full-Time Art Museum Workers, by Museum Budget Size

What is your approximate gross annual income (before taxes and deductions) from your current position in the museum?

Small (up to \$5M)		\$60,000
Mid-sized (\$5–\$15M)		\$62,000
Large (over \$15M)		\$69,000

### Figure 39. Median Gross Annual Salary of Full-Time Art Museum Workers, by Museum Type

What is your approximate gross annual income (before taxes and deductions) from your current position in the museum?

City/County/State/Gov't		\$73,000
Culturally specific		\$71,000
College/University		\$70,000
Encyclopedic		\$66,000
Contemporary/Modern		\$61,000

Findings: Pay and Promotions

## Household Income

Household income plays a significant role in workers’ overall finances. It includes any additional income or funds from another job, a partner’s pay, investments, or other sources. The median household income for full-time art museum workers is \$98,000. White full-time workers have higher household incomes than those of all other racial groups, which aligns with broader US trends.<sup>50</sup> **The largest gaps by race or ethnicity in household income are between white workers (\$100,000 annually) and Black workers (\$76,000 annually).**

It is critical to note that in the art museum sector, more than a quarter (28%) of full-time workers rely on other sources of household income to cover their living expenses. If art museums continue to rely on workers subsidizing low pay with other income, this will continue to impact the demographics of who can afford to work in the field, considering nationwide trends regarding racial wealth gaps.<sup>51</sup> Simply put, **white workers may be able to sustain longer periods of lower pay earlier in their museum careers than BIPOC workers.**

**More than a quarter (28%) of full-time art museum workers can only cover their living expenses in combination with other household income.**

**Figure 40. Median Household Income of Full-Time Art Museum Workers, by Race/Ethnicity**

What is your approximate gross household income (before taxes and deductions)?

White		\$100,000
Asian		\$98,000
Hispanic or Latine/x		\$80,000
Black		\$76,000

Findings: Pay and Promotions

## Living Wage

To better understand the financial picture of full-time art museum workers, we analyzed a minimum living wage,<sup>52</sup> which the Economic Policy Institute defines as the income needed for families to afford basic necessities such as housing, food, health care, childcare, and transportation.<sup>53</sup> This does not include other costs that many workers may feel are necessary, such as contributions to savings or retirement accounts, debt payments, support for nondependents, leisure activities, or unexpected costs. A minimum living wage is just that: the minimum salary required to be able to afford the basics given the cost of living for a specific location.

To estimate a full-time worker’s living wage, we used median income (individual and household), household size, number of dependents, and the museum’s metropolitan area to get a sense of the cost of living in that geographic area. Below is a point of reference for how the living wage is calculated for different household sizes for workers at MMF Partner Museums<sup>54</sup> in the metropolitan areas with the lowest and highest costs of living.

**Figure 41. Living Wage Benchmarks, Least and Most Expensive City with an MMF Partner Museum<sup>55</sup>**

### Flint, MI

<b>\$36,126</b>	<b>\$58,573</b>	<b>\$79,890</b>
1 adult	1 adult	2 adults
0 kids	1 kid	2 kids

### San Francisco, CA

<b>\$72,529</b>	<b>\$131,910</b>	<b>\$174,576</b>
1 adult	1 adult	2 adults
0 kids	1 kid	2 kids

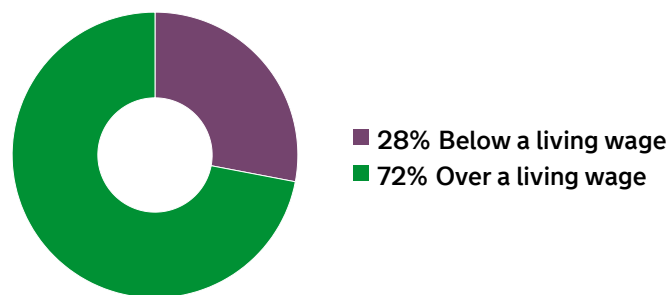
## Findings: Pay and Promotions

### Individual Income

First, we consider a very conservative measure of living wage: a full-time individual museum worker’s ability to cover just their own living expenses (not including dependents) with their museum income. What we find is that **the median art museum worker makes 124% of their region’s living wage from their museum income alone in this narrow context.** This means that the median full-time art museum worker, encompassing workers from the entry through executive levels, makes 24% above a living wage—before accounting for savings contributions, debt payments, or any dependents or nonworking adults they might need to support. However, there is a sizable portion (28%) of full-time museum workers who still make below a living wage even using this very narrow framing for what living wages would need to cover.

More than a quarter (28%) of full-time art museum workers cannot meet their own basic living expenses with their museum income alone. For full-time entry-level workers, it is over two-thirds (69%).

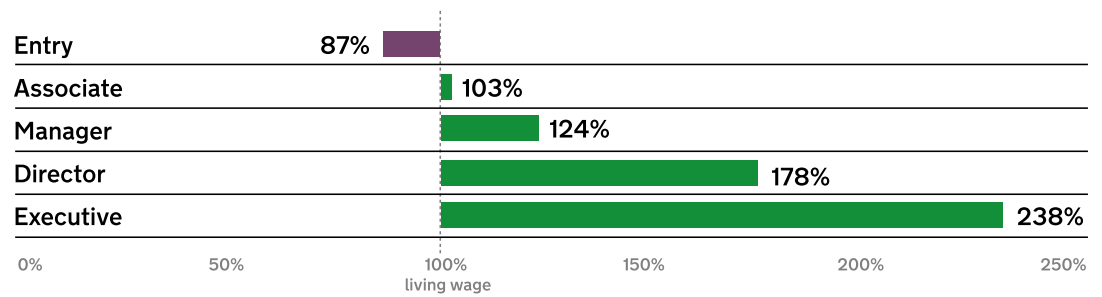
**Figure 42. Proportion of Full-Time Art Museum Workers Making Below a Living Wage (Museum Income Only)**



## Findings: Pay and Promotions

The above metric helps us understand the overall percentage of workers who are making above or below a living wage, but just how much are art museum workers making? **The median full-time entry-level worker makes 87% of the living wage, whereas the median executive-level staff makes 238% of the living wage.** This increase with position level is unsurprising, as income typically increases alongside career advancement, whereas the living wage remains the same. However, it is critical to consider both how common it is for workers not to be able to afford basic expenses at the lower position levels of the institution (69% of full-time entry-level workers make below a living wage) and what this data means for a museum worker’s ability to stay in the field long enough to earn a living wage.

### Figure 43. Percentage of Living Wage Earned by Full-Time Art Museum Workers, by Position Level



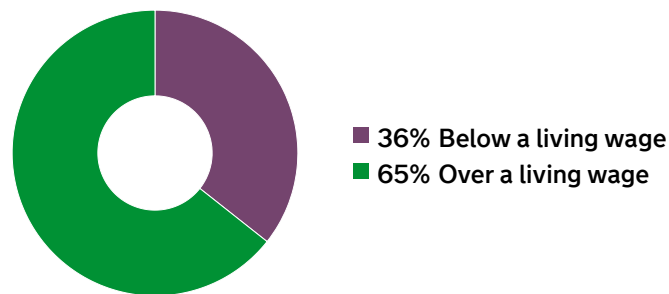
## Findings: Pay and Promotions

### Household Income

We also calculated the percentage of full-time art museum workers whose households make below a living wage, which includes income from multiple adults (if applicable) and the costs to support dependents (again, if applicable). To calculate a living wage based on household income, we took into account a worker’s household size, the number of adults working in the household, and the number of children (up to two), as well as their location (metropolitan statistical area).

When accounting for these additional factors, the median full-time art museum worker’s household income is slightly lower than for the individual (118% of the living wage for households vs. 124% for individuals). **This difference may be partially attributable to the fact that this calculation includes dependent costs, suggesting that it is more difficult to afford to work in an art museum as a parent or guardian, even with additional household income.**

**Figure 44. Proportion of Full-Time Art Museum Workers’ Households Making Below a Living Wage (All Household Income)**

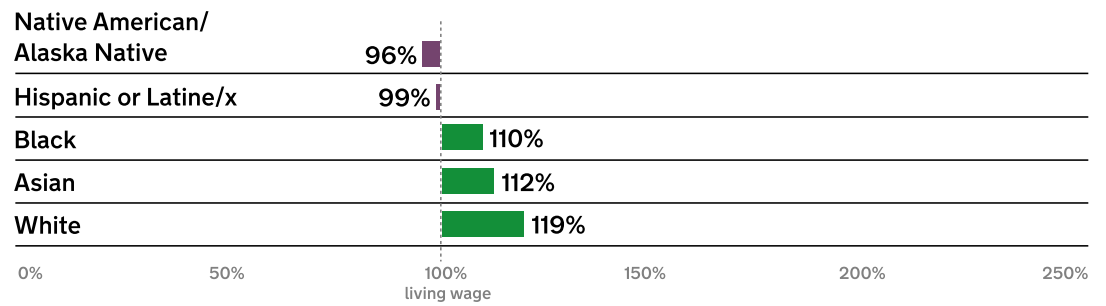


The households of over one third (36%) of full-time art museum workers do not make enough money to cover basic expenses.

## Findings: Pay and Promotions

In alignment with the racial pay gap noted earlier, white workers' households make the largest percentage above a living wage of any racial or ethnic group in the art museum sector.

**Figure 45. Percentage of Living Wage Earned Within Full-Time Art Museum Workers' Households, by Race/Ethnicity**



## Findings: Pay and Promotions

## Employee Benefits

Benefits coverage continues to be one area where art museum workers are predominantly satisfied, illustrating a bright spot for the sector. **Satisfaction with employee benefits (healthcare, retirement, etc.) is 62% (up from 58% in 2023), which is significantly better than among US workers overall (49%).** Workers at college or university art museums are even more satisfied (81%) with their benefits than peers at other museums.

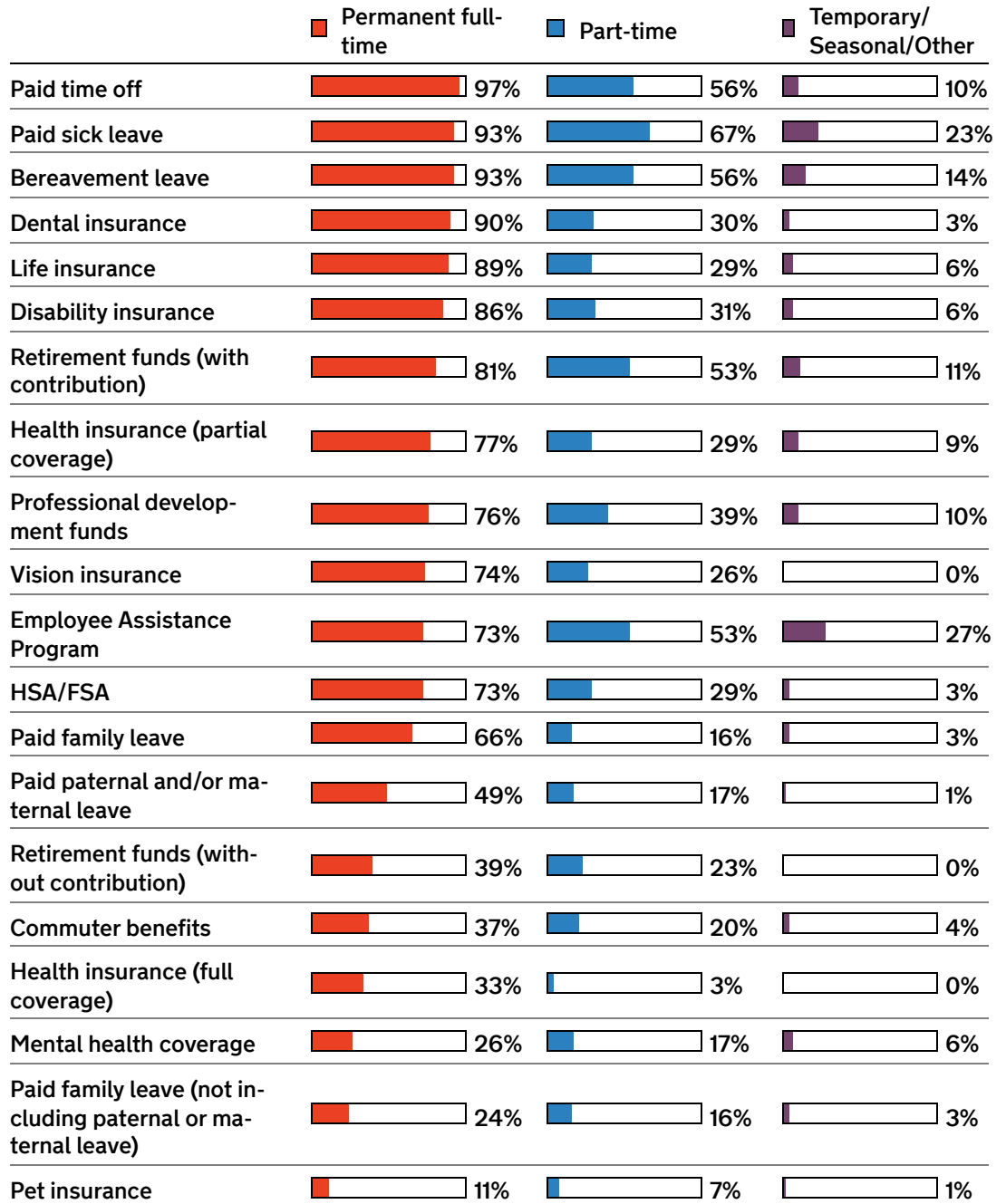
This satisfaction aligns with the fact that, when compared with US workers in private industries, US art museum workers have more access to many types of benefits.<sup>56</sup> This is particularly notable for part-time art museum workers as compared to US workers in private industries overall.

**Benefits coverage among both permanent full-time and part-time workers in art museums has increased since 2023.**

Findings: Pay and Promotions

**Figure 46. Access to Benefits by Job Status in Art Museums, as reported by HR**

Which of the following benefits does your organization provide for the following types of employees? Select all that apply.



## Findings: Pay and Promotions

### Promotions

As we explored in [Career Satisfaction](#), art museum workers are even less satisfied with their opportunities for promotion in 2025 than they were in 2023. Notably, this is the only dimension of workplace culture where art museum workers report lower satisfaction than US workers overall (24% vs 33%). In this section, we explore one of the likely reasons behind this decline in satisfaction: promotion rates in art museums have also declined since 2023.

We asked workers if they had experienced any one of three types of growth at their current museum: a pay increase and title change (full promotion), a pay increase beyond the cost of living (pay-focused promotion), or an elevation in title (hollow promotion). We do not consider the latter two types to be true promotions, but rather tools for an institution's leadership to manage the growth and retention of staff. Still, more than half (52%) of art museum workers have never received any type of promotion at their current workplace. For reference, a recent study by Nectar HR found that 63% of US workers surveyed had received some type of promotion (including the three listed above) in the last two years alone.<sup>57</sup>

Looking specifically at full promotions, we see that more than three-quarters (78%) of workers have never received a full promotion at their current institution. White workers are most likely to have received a full promotion (24%), followed by Hispanic or Latine/x (21%), Asian (18%), and Black workers (17%).

**Over three quarters (78%) of art museum workers have never received a full promotion at their current workplace.**

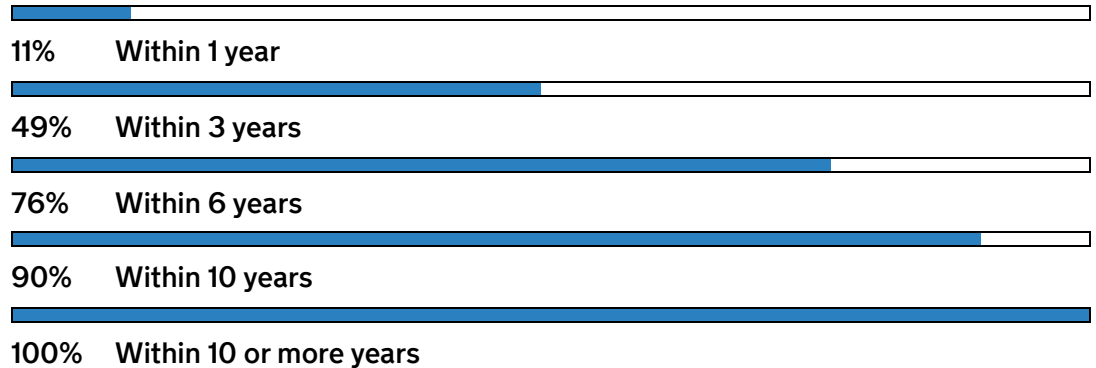
## Findings: Pay and Promotions

For workers who have received a full promotion at their museum, it took an average of 5.6 years to receive their most recent full promotion. As a point of reference, a study conducted by reviewing LinkedIn profiles of workers at large US and UK companies found that the average time to promotion was 2.5 years.<sup>58</sup>

While it may not be surprising that large companies in other sectors offer more opportunities for promotion than art museums, it is notable that nearly half (45%) of art museum workers considering leaving the field say it is due to lack of opportunities for growth and more than a quarter (26%) say it is due to exciting opportunities in other fields. If leaders are looking for reasons why they struggle with retention, a lack of promotion opportunities is most certainly a contributing factor.

### Figure 47. Promoted Art Museum Workers, Years to Promotion

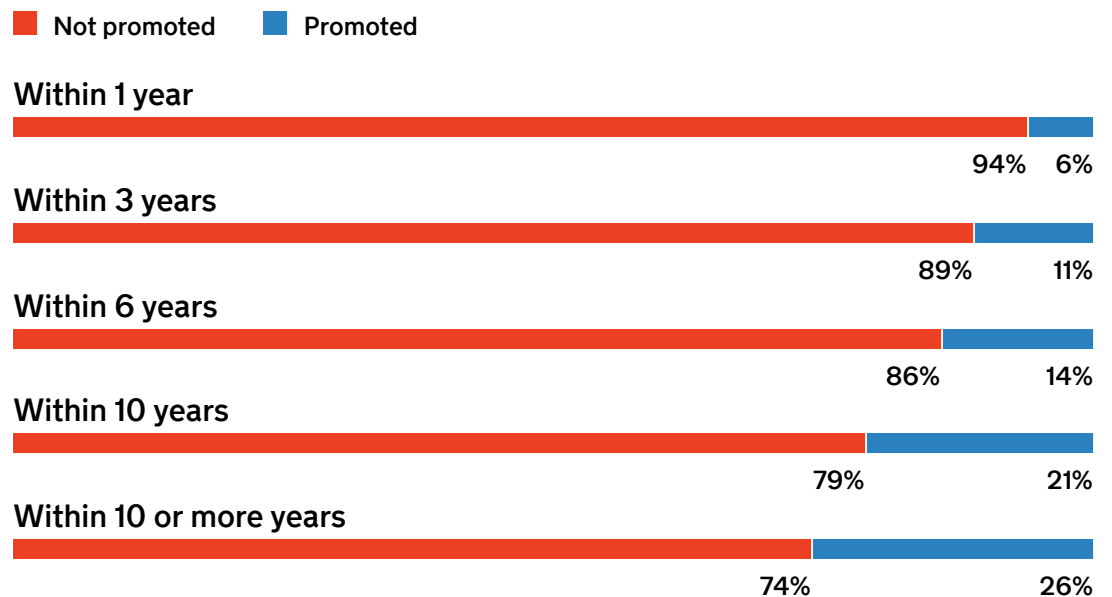
Respondents who selected that they received “A simultaneous promotion with title change and a pay increase beyond cost of living (typically a pay increase above the inflation rate)” were then asked, “And how long had you worked in your last role before getting promoted to your current role?”



## Findings: Pay and Promotions

The above chart shows us that more than three-quarters (76%) of workers who have received a full promotion were promoted within six years. However, this is only part of the picture. Since 78% of art museum workers have never received a full promotion, we analyzed full promotion rates alongside those who have never received a promotion of this type. The below chart shows how long a promoted worker remained in their previous role before receiving a promotion to their current role, as well as the percentage of workers who remained without a promotion. This data, taken in conjunction with the living wage data explored above, demonstrates that **the vast majority of art museum workers may be unable to afford to wait for a promotion before leaving their museums or the field altogether.**

**Figure 48. All Art Museum Workers, Promoted vs. Not Promoted**



## Findings: Pay and Promotions

### Union Findings: Pay and Promotions

Pay is one area in which union members are faring better than the average art museum worker, aligning with a commonly held goal for organizing a union. In the US overall, nonunion workers' weekly earnings were 85% that of union members.<sup>59</sup> This corresponds with other research, which also finds that unions have a broader impact on pay within a sector or region. For instance, according to the Economic Policy Institute, higher union density (more unionized workers in a sector or region) also contributes to higher overall salaries, noting in its August 2025 report: "In high-union-density states, 2023 median household income was on average more than \$12,000 higher than in low-union-density states."<sup>60</sup>

It remains to be seen what the larger impact of more unions in the art museum sector will be, especially as it relates to salaries, but given this research, it is an important trend we will continue to watch in future studies.

To better understand the impact of unions on workers' pay, we ran a salary comparison between unionized and nonunionized art museum workers. When controlling for gender, age, and position level, nonunion workers' museum wages were 78% that of union members.

**Nonunionized art museum workers earn 78% of what union members make.**

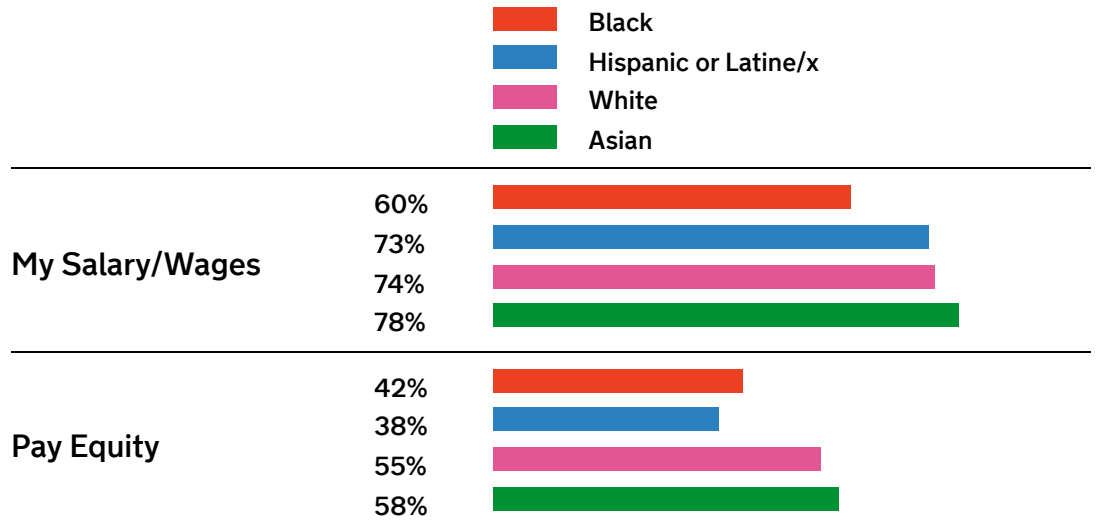
Relatedly, union members report an overwhelmingly positive impact of the union on their compensation (79% positive), and a majority (57%) believe that their union has had a positive impact on pay equity across the institution.

However, a smaller proportion of Black and Hispanic or Latine/x workers (60% and 73%, respectively) note the positive impact of their union on wages and pay equity compared to their Asian (78%) and white (74%) counterparts. This gap raises questions about whether the benefits of union membership are evenly distributed, especially given that Black and Hispanic or Latine/x workers, on average, already tend to make less money than their Asian and white colleagues.

Findings: Pay and Promotions

**Figure 49. Union Members’ Perceptions of Positive Union Impact on Salary and Pay Equity in Art Museums, by Race/Ethnicity**

What impact (if any) do you believe your union has had on the following conditions at your museum over the past year?



The proportion of respondents who selected “small positive impact” or “large positive impact” from six impact options: “large negative impact,” “small negative impact,” “no impact,” “small positive impact,” “large positive impact,” and “I don’t know”

When it comes to career advancement, it is too early to determine what the impact of the new wave of unionization will be. What we can see is that union members receive a smaller proportion of promotions than art museum workers overall (12% vs. 22% overall), although this may be due in large part to the fact that many union members are entry-level workers. The research from MMF’s Study Group on Museum Union Contracts and Equity found that 100% of art museum union contracts included a provision to post jobs internally, 28% guaranteed interviews to internal candidates, and 61% included clearly benchmarked promotion procedures.<sup>61</sup> The impact of these new provisions remains to be seen, although it is an important data point to watch as unions become more embedded in the art museum sector over time.

# Findings: Discrimination and Harassment

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## Findings: Discrimination and Harassment

Workplace discrimination and harassment have profoundly corrosive effects on workers and cause retention issues within individual museums and across the field at large. Research consistently shows that discrimination and harassment harm employee well-being and job performance, reduce productivity while increasing stress and turnover, and ultimately damage both individual and organizational outcomes.<sup>62</sup>

We define discrimination as unfair treatment and harassment as unwelcome conduct—including name-calling, intimidation, offensive jokes, threats, and physical assault—based on one’s identity. To better understand the duration of consequences of workplace discrimination and harassment, the 2025 survey asked specifically about the timing of these experiences at workers’ current institutions.

In this section, we explore the sources and impacts of discrimination in art museums, as well as the persistent gap in redressing these harms in the workplace. Most pressingly, while art museum workers overall have made sizable gains in workplace culture and career satisfaction, those improvements are nullified for those who have experienced recent discrimination or harassment. These workers consistently rate every culture and satisfaction metric significantly lower, and they report worse current and future career outlooks than their colleagues.

Even more concerning, significant impediments to accountability remain, lessening the potential to meaningfully redress instances of discrimination and harassment.

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## Overall Experiences of Discrimination






One-fifth (20%) of art museum workers have experienced one or more instances of discrimination or harassment in their current museum workplace, a 6% drop in all experiences of discrimination and harassment since 2023.

**One in five art museum workers (20%) has experienced discrimination or harassment in their current museum workplace.**

More than a quarter (26%) of BIPOC workers have experienced discrimination or harassment at their current museum. 28% of Black workers have experienced discrimination, more than any other racial or ethnic group.

### Figure 50. Art Museum Workers Who Have Experienced Discrimination, by Race/Ethnicity

Have you felt discriminated against or harassed on the basis of your gender, sexual orientation, racial or ethnic background, social or economic status, religion, age, or disability while working in your current museum workplace?\*

Overall		20%
Black		28%
Asian		26%
Hispanic or Latine/x		23%
White		18%

\* Proportion of respondents who answered “yes”

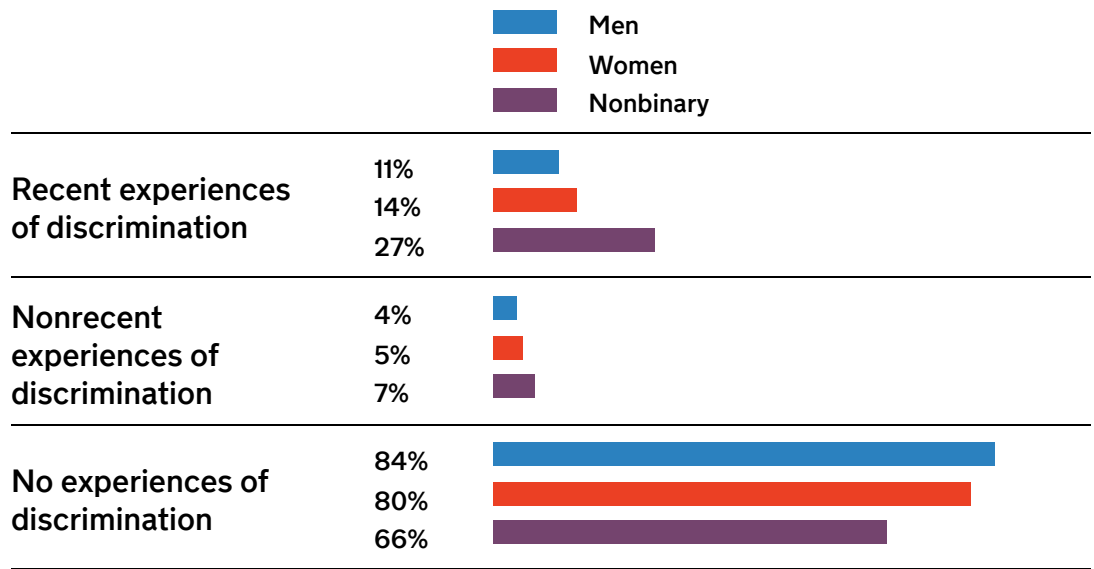
Digging further, we see that the majority of workers who have experienced discrimination in their current workplace have experienced it in the past two years, which we classify as “recent discrimination.” 15% of art museum workers overall have experienced recent discrimination at their current museum. However, a quarter (25%) of Black workers have had recent experiences of discrimination at their current museum, nearly double that of white workers (13%).

**Findings:  
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More than a quarter (27%) of nonbinary workers have experienced recent discrimination, about twice the rate of men or women (11% and 14%). When expanded to include experiences of discrimination beyond the past two years, that number rises to 34% for nonbinary workers (compared to 15% for men and 19% for women).

**Figure 51. Range of Discrimination Experiences in Art Museums, by Gender**

Have you felt discriminated against or harassed on the basis of your gender, sexual orientation, racial or ethnic background, social or economic status, religion, age, or disability while working in your current museum workplace?\*



\* Proportion of respondents who answered “yes”

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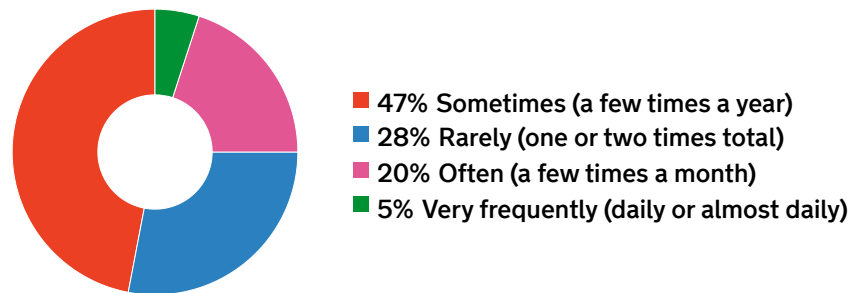
## Frequency of Discrimination

The frequency of discrimination varies widely across groups within art museums. A quarter (25%) of those art museum workers who have experienced recent discrimination report these instances occurring multiple times a month or more. Among those with recent experiences of discrimination or harassment, BIPOC staff (29%) also experience more frequent discrimination (“a few times a month” to “daily”) than White workers (21%). Reports of frequent experiences are higher among nonbinary workers (31%), union members (30%), Asian workers (29%), and Hispanic or Latine/x workers (29%), in particular.

The rate and frequency of experiences of discrimination is lowest at the entry level, with 10% who have had recent experiences of discrimination (compared to 18%–23% among workers at other position levels) and, of those, 91% reported the frequency of discrimination was rare (a few times total or once or twice per year). **The majority (63%) of executive level workers who have experienced recent discrimination report it occurring multiple times a month or more.** This is more than twice the frequency reported by other position levels.

**Figure 52. Frequency of Recent Discrimination**

How often have you felt discriminated against and/or harassed while working in your current museum workplace?



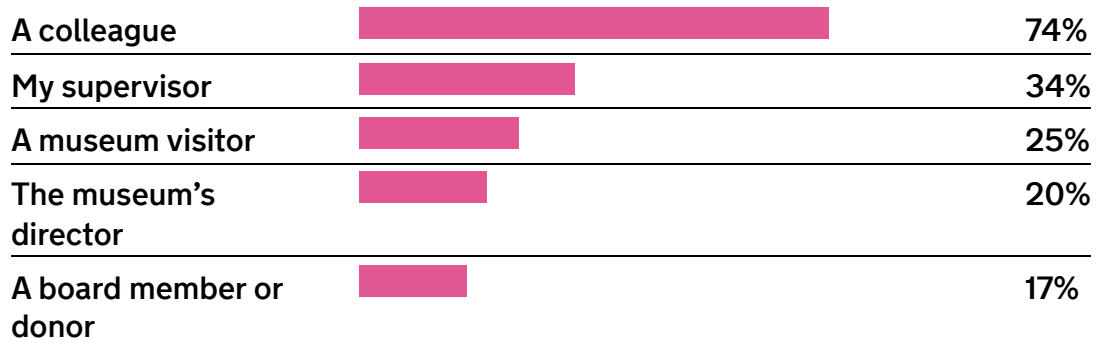
Findings:  
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## Sources of Discrimination

Nearly three-quarters (74%) of workers who have experienced discrimination in the past two years were discriminated against by a colleague.

### Figure 53. Sources of Recent Discrimination Among Art Museum Workers

Thinking about the last two years, who discriminated against or harassed you? Please select all that apply.











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## Types of Discrimination

The most common types of discrimination in art museums are those based on gender, age, and race/ethnicity, in that order. This was also true in 2023. As addressed above, nonbinary and BIPOC workers have experienced a higher likelihood and frequency of discrimination. In this section, we will explore the significantly higher rates of specific types of discrimination nonbinary and BIPOC workers experience as well.

### Figure 54. Types of Recent Discrimination Among Art Museum Workers

Thinking about the last two years, which of the following forms of discrimination and/or harassment have you experienced in your current museum workplace? Select all that apply.

Gender		48%
Age		41%
Race and/or ethnicity		36%
Social or economic status		27%
Other form		14%
Disability		13%
Sexual orientation		10%
Religion		5%

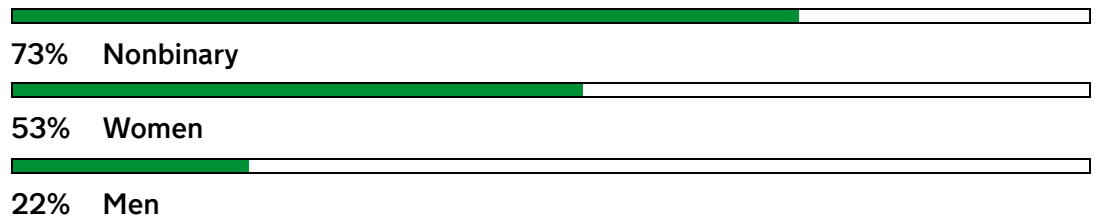
## Findings: Discrimination and Harassment

**Gender-based discrimination is the most common type of discrimination faced by art museum workers.** Among the 15% of art museum workers who have experienced recent discrimination, nearly half (48%) say it was gender based, with the highest rates among executive-level staff (75%) and nonbinary workers (73%).

Just 11% of Baby Boomers with recent experiences of discrimination report it was based on gender, the lowest by far of any generation. As we reported in 2023, this may be due to the normalization of such discrimination that older workers experienced earlier in their careers, as well as the much lower likelihood of Baby Boomers identifying as nonbinary (2% of Baby Boomers vs. 24% of Gen Z).

### Figure 55. Recent Gender-Based Discrimination Among Art Museum Workers, by Gender

Of those who have experienced discrimination at their current museum workplace, the proportion who selected “Discrimination and/or harassment based on gender (including pregnancy, gender expression, gender identity, etc.)”

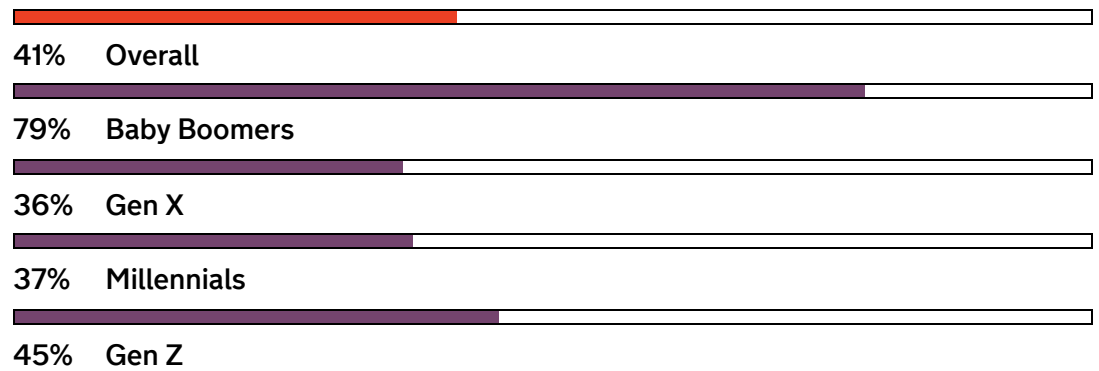


## Findings: Discrimination and Harassment

Age-based discrimination is most commonly experienced by Baby Boomers (79% vs 41% overall), followed by Gen Z (45%), within the past two years. While there are slight differences in generational composition within different-sized institutions, they do not fully explain the large gap in age-based discrimination. This may indicate another area where small institutions outperform their larger counterparts: how their staff are navigating intergenerational workplaces.

### Figure 56. Recent Age-Based Discrimination Among Art Museum Workers, by Generation

Of those who have experienced discrimination at their current museum workplace, the proportion who selected “Discrimination and/or harassment based on age”



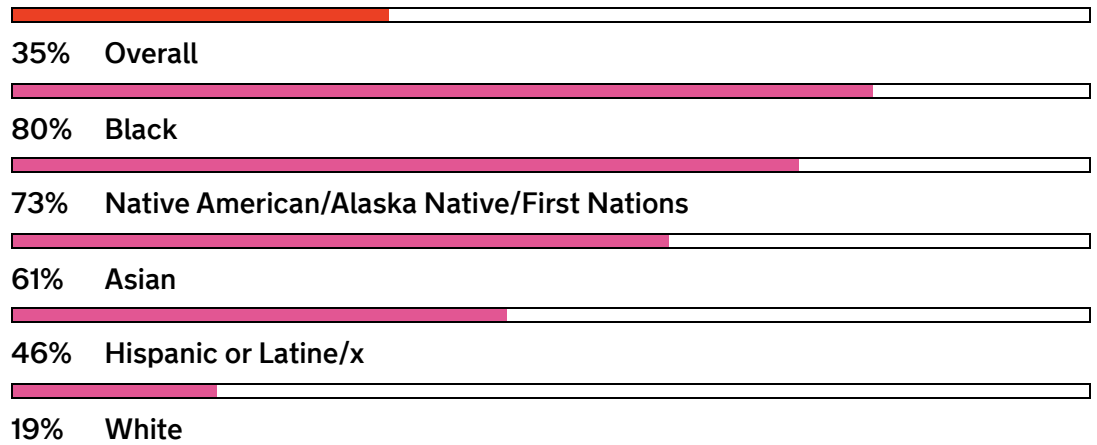
### Findings: Discrimination and Harassment

Race-based discrimination is more commonly experienced by BIPOC workers compared to white workers, and the gap is widest for Black workers (80%) and Native American/Alaska Native workers (73%).

Executive-level staff, the position level with the second highest racial and ethnic diversity after the entry level, also experience much more race-based discrimination than any other level. 58% of executives who have experienced recent discrimination say it was race based. Given the notable decrease in Black executives that we explored in the Workplace Diversity section in [Workplace Culture](#), the high level of race-based discrimination among Black workers and executives is another key opportunity for improvement.

### Figure 57. Recent Race-Based Discrimination Among Art Museum Workers, by Race/Ethnicity

Of those who have experienced recent discrimination at their current museum workplace, the proportion who selected "Discrimination and/or harassment based on race and/or ethnicity"



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## Impacts of Discrimination

Experiences of discrimination have profoundly negative impacts on workers’ assessments of their workplace cultures. Unfortunately, although not surprisingly, **art museum workers who have experienced recent discrimination are significantly more likely to be actively job-seeking, with 77% reporting that they have looked for a job at another institution within the last 12 months (compared to 49% overall)**. They are also much more likely to have considered leaving the field altogether (73% vs. 54% overall). This underscores the importance of institutional accountability in addressing discrimination or harassment if museums want to retain these workers.

Responses from those who experienced discrimination incidents two or more years ago now align more closely with those who have never experienced discrimination in their current museum than those with recent experiences of discrimination. However, keep in mind that this data only reflects those who chose to stay in their current workplaces after experiencing discrimination. Many workers who have experienced this type of mistreatment may have already left their museum or the field altogether, so their perspectives would not be reflected in the data.

**Figure 58. Art Museum Workers Actively Looking for Another Job: Workers with Recent Experiences of Discrimination vs. Overall**

Have you actively looked for another job at a different organization within the last 12 months?



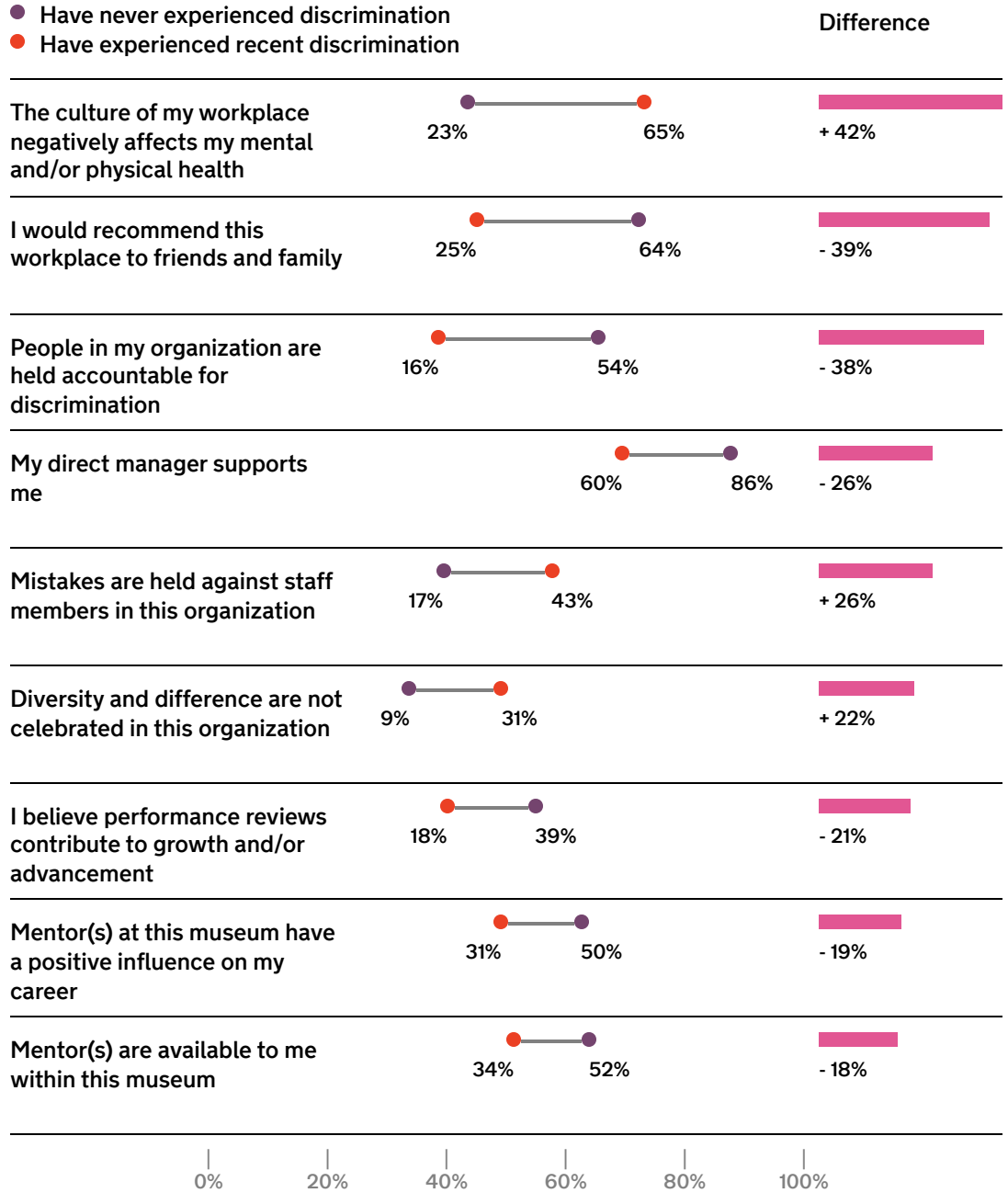
Among those who have considered leaving their jobs for another art museum, 11% say it is due to experiences of discrimination or harassment, which is even more common among Asian and Black workers (both 17%). Higher proportions of Black, Hispanic or Latine/x, and Asian workers who have considered leaving the field also cite experiences of discrimination or harassment as one of the reasons (21% for Black, 14% for Hispanic or Latine/x, and 12% for Asian workers, compared to 8% overall).

Additionally, on the emotional front, workers who have experienced discrimination feel far less excited, content, hopeful, inspired, and connected to others by significant margins. They also feel significantly more worried, sad, angry, and disappointed (see fig. 61).

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**Figure 59. Workplace Experience: Workers with Recent Discrimination vs. No Discrimination**

Please rate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements in relation to the culture of your current museum workplace. \*

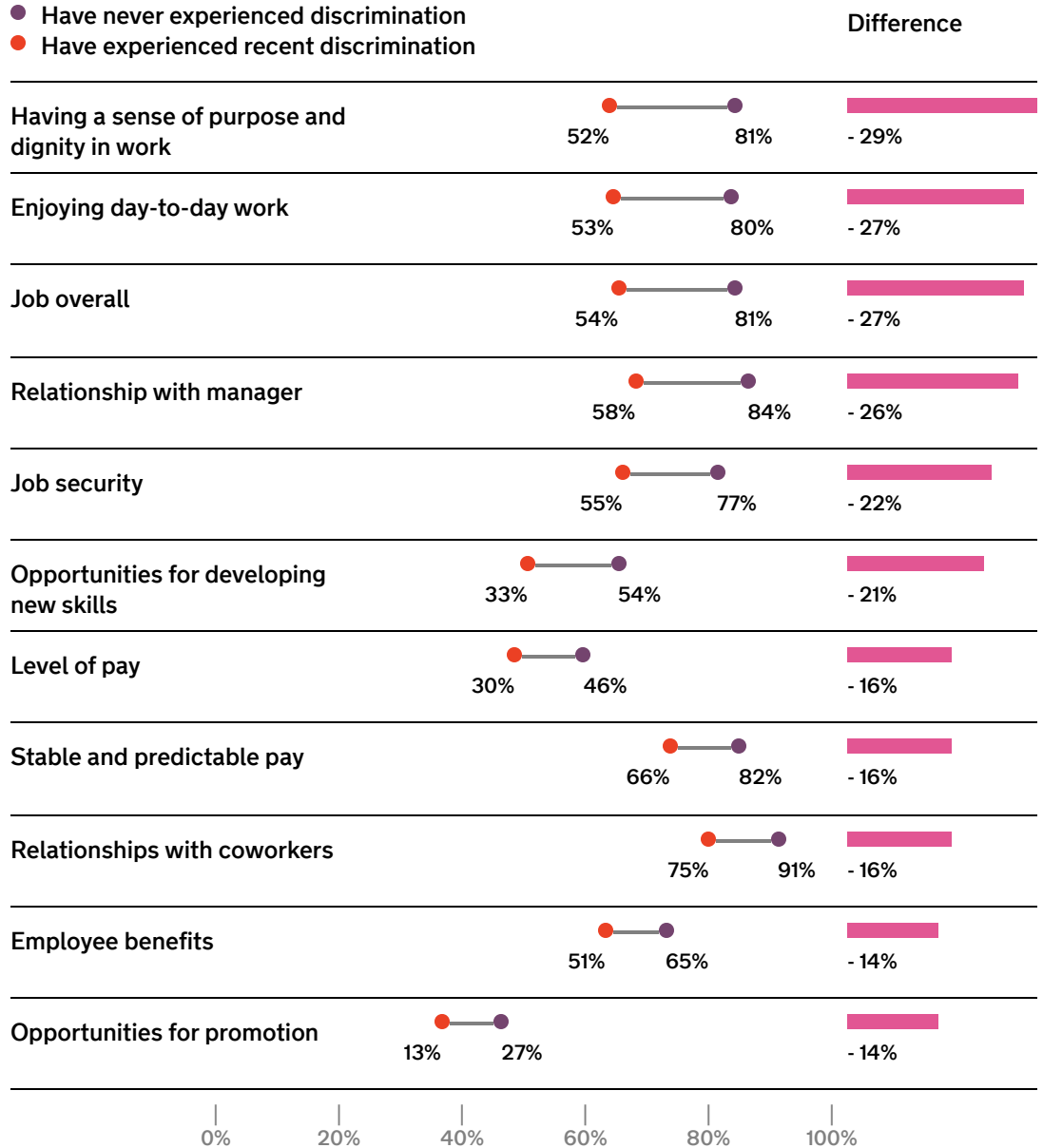


\* The proportion of respondents who agree or strongly agree with this statement, indicated by selecting a 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale

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**Figure 60. Career Satisfaction: Workers with Recent Discrimination vs. No Discrimination**

In your current employment situation, how satisfied are you with each of the following characteristics?\*



\* The proportion of respondents who are satisfied or very satisfied with this characteristic, indicated by selecting a 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale

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**Figure 61. Emotional Landscape: Workers with Recent Discrimination vs. No Discrimination**

Thinking about the past month in your workplace, which of the following emotions do you most associate with working at your museum? Select up to THREE.



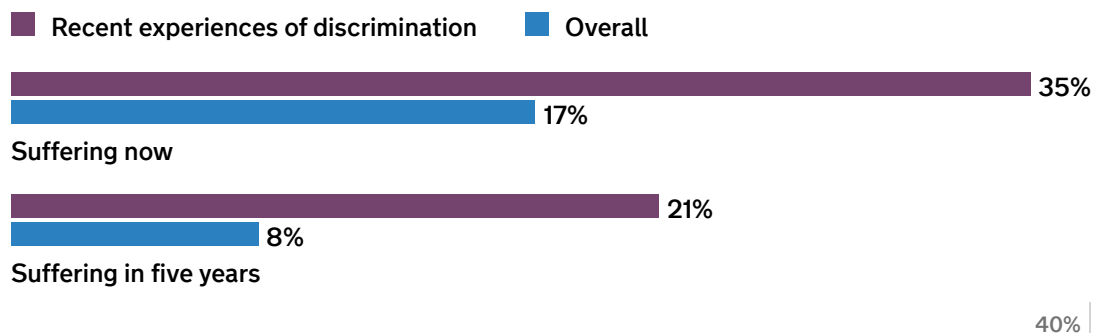
## Findings: Discrimination and Harassment

### Impact of Discrimination on Career Outlook

In addition to the deleterious effects of discrimination and harassment on workplace culture and career satisfaction, workers with recent experiences of such incidents also have less favorable career outlooks. They are more than twice as likely to be suffering when considering their career today (35% vs. 17% overall), and they expect to be still suffering in five years (21% vs 8% overall). They are also 22% less likely to be thriving now and 21% less likely to expect to be thriving in five years (see fig. 62). For more on this scale for measuring outlook, see Career Outlook in the [Career Satisfaction](#) section.

### Figure 62. Impact of Discrimination on Negative Career Outlook: Art Museum Workers with Recent Experiences of Discrimination vs. Overall

Please imagine a ladder with steps numbered from 0 at the bottom to 10 at the top. The top of the ladder represents the best possible work life for you and the bottom of the ladder represents the worst possible work life for you. On which step of the ladder would you personally feel your work life is at this time?\*

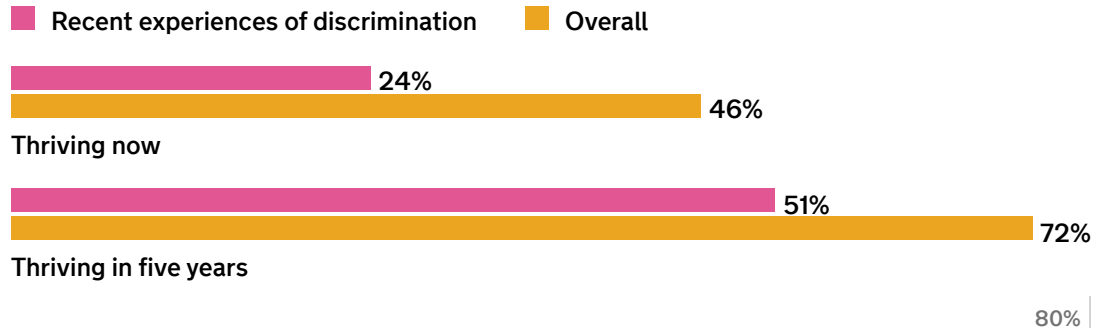


\* Responses grouped following the Gallup Life Evaluation Index: thriving (7 or above), surviving (5–6), or suffering (4 or below)

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**Figure 63. Impact of Discrimination on Positive Career Outlook:  
Workers with Recent Experiences of Discrimination vs. Overall**

Please imagine a ladder with steps numbered from 0 at the bottom to 10 at the top. The top of the ladder represents the best possible work life for you and the bottom of the ladder represents the worst possible work life for you. On which step of the ladder would you personally feel your work life is at this time?\*



\* Responses grouped following the Gallup Life Evaluation Index: thriving (7 or above), surviving (5–6), or suffering (4 or below)

## Findings: Discrimination and Harassment

### Worker Responses to Discrimination

The most common responses workers take after experiencing discrimination are “no action at all” (37%) or “speaking with a neutral employee who did not report” (37%), followed by “speaking with an HR staff member” (30%) (see fig. 64). This highlights a troubling dynamic where the majority of workers with recent experiences of discrimination seem to regard their mistreatment as unaddressable through the available mechanisms, which only serves to normalize inaction.<sup>63</sup>

It is a sign of positive change that the proportion of workers who took no action after their experience of discrimination has decreased to 37% from nearly half (47%) in 2023 (see fig. 65).<sup>64</sup> However, art museum workers in 2025 are no more likely to report these experiences to HR than they were in 2023.

There is some variance in worker responses to experiences of discrimination depending on generation and position level. Both the likelihood of reporting to an HR staff member and filing an HR complaint generally increase with position level (17% of entry-level workers talk to an HR staff member vs. 36% of executive-level workers).

**Among workers who took no action in response to experiences of discrimination or harassment, 70% say it is because they thought nothing would be done about it, and 56% say it is because they do not trust HR.**

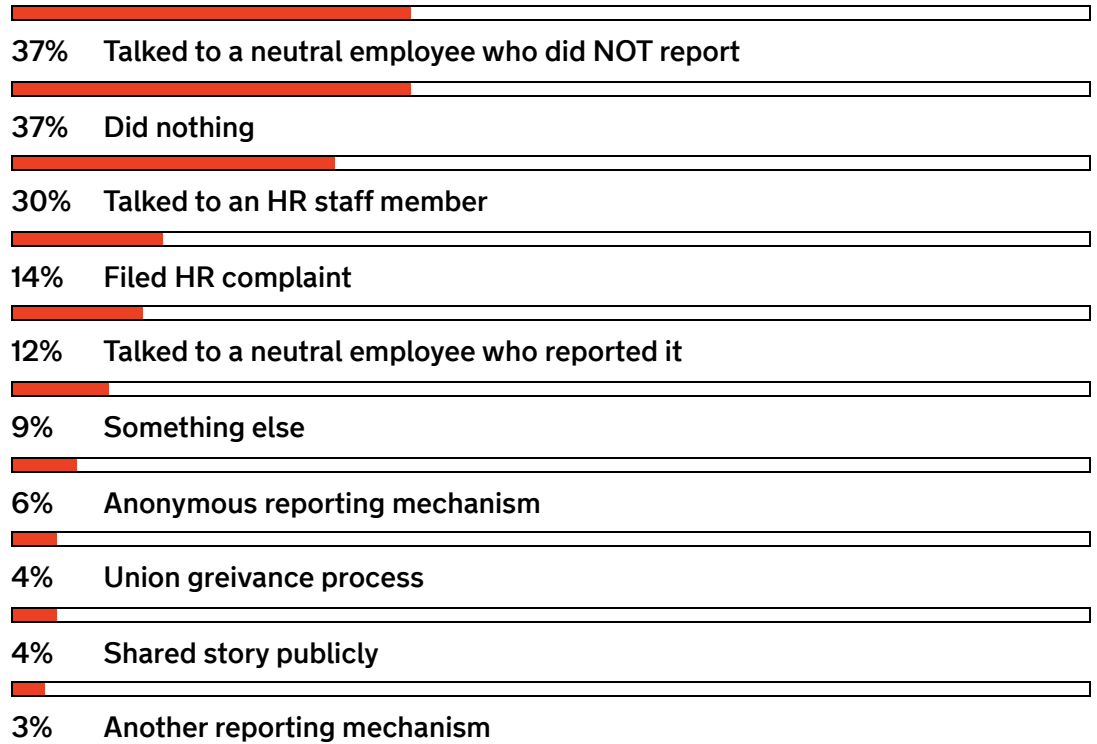
Interestingly, only 5% of workers who chose not to take any action in response to discrimination chose “I reported in the past and no action was taken” as a reason, indicating that, for the majority, their decision was not necessarily based on a previous negative experience with reporting. Viewed in the context of the most common responses for not reporting (“I thought nothing would be done about it,” “I don’t trust HR,” and “I worried about retaliation”), this finding suggests a broader lack of trust within these workplaces. Our survey did not ask about whether the participants had ever witnessed discrimination against others in their workplace, which might inform workers’ decisions around reporting.

Fifteen percent of workers who experienced discrimination and decided not to take any action say they were unsure of the action they could take, and 10% say their workplace provides no mechanism for reporting. Executive-level staff are most likely to say that they have no mechanisms for reporting their own experiences of discrimination and harassment. This indicates that institutional practices related to transparency and communication may signal to workers that accountability for discrimination is not a priority, whether or not that is the case. We explore this dynamic further by looking at data on HR/staff alignment in the next section.

Findings:  
Discrimination and  
Harassment

### Figure 64. Art Museum Workers' Responses to Recent Discrimination

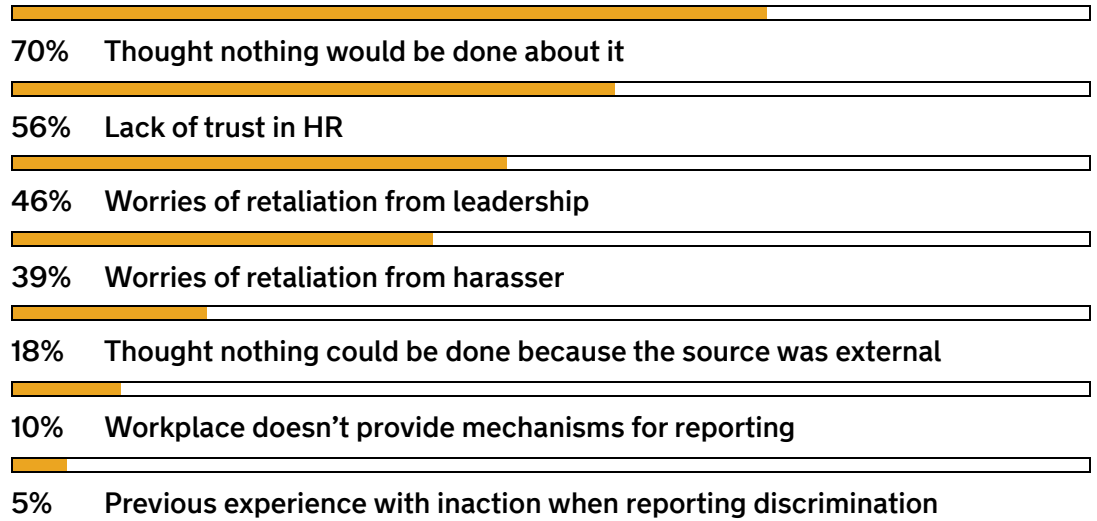
Thinking about the last two years, have you taken any of the following actions in response to discrimination and/or harassment in your current museum workplace? Select all that apply.



Findings:  
Discrimination and  
Harassment

**Figure 65. Reasons for Inaction in Response to Recent Discrimination in Art Museums**

If you have experienced any discrimination or harassment and decided NOT to take action in response, what were your reasons? Select all that apply.



These issues of nonreporting are even more acute in larger museums. Distrust of HR as the reason for inaction is higher for workers at large museums (those with annual budgets over \$15 million) compared to small museums (less than \$5 million): 66% of workers at large museums who chose not to report recent discrimination say it is because they do not trust HR compared to 39% at small museums.

**Meanwhile, workers at small museums tend to have greater confidence in institutional accountability for discrimination and harassment, greater trust in HR, higher satisfaction with how their complaints are resolved by HR, and less concern about retaliation for reporting.** There may be structural reasons for the higher level of trust in HR within smaller museums, including that HR functions may be split between workers, handled by someone in a blended role who is more familiar within a smaller team, or managed by an external HR consultant perceived as more independent.

## Findings: Discrimination and Harassment

### HR/Staff Alignment

Another metric that helps us understand the responses of workers and institutions to discrimination is the relationship between staff and leadership, particularly in terms of staff awareness of existing HR policies and practices. Specifically, we looked at the proportion of staff who were aware of existing HR practices and reported by their HR officer and found the average alignment was 56%, meaning that just over half of museum staff are aware of the basic HR practices and policies at their museums.<sup>65</sup>

This misalignment may be due to information not being communicated regularly or transparently enough by the institution and/or staff not fully engaging with employee handbooks and other information shared by HR and managers. It may also be due to differences in how staff and leadership define a policy or a lack of consistency in how a policy is applied.

Regardless of the cause, low awareness and understanding of HR policies and practices contributes to a lack of trust in the workplace, particularly for the 56% of staff who cite mistrust of HR among their reasons for not reporting their recent experiences of discrimination.

**Findings:  
Discrimination and  
Harassment**

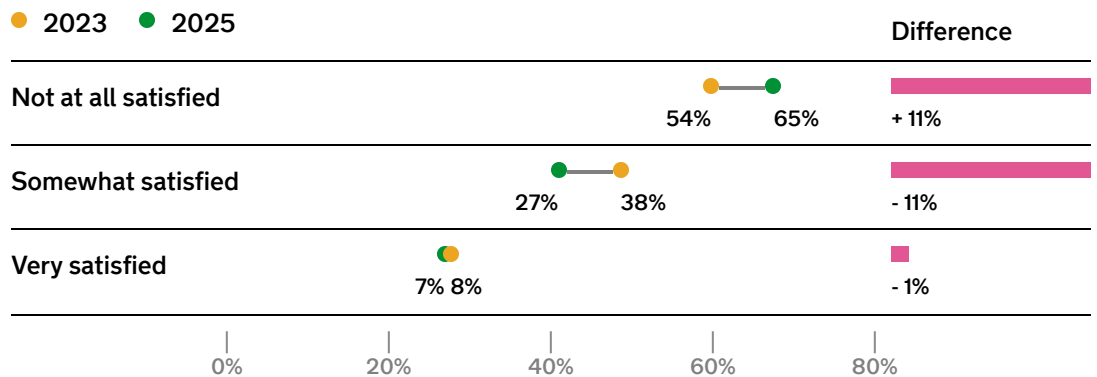
**Satisfaction with Responses to Reporting Discrimination**

While the rate of reporting discrimination or harassment has remained the same since 2023, satisfaction with responses among those who reported has dropped. It is important to consider the potential compounding effects of unsatisfying responses to discrimination. When workers choose to report experiences of discrimination or harassment without satisfying results, they may be less likely to report in the future, perpetuating patterns of distrust.

**65% percent of workers who report their experiences of discrimination are “not at all satisfied” with the response by HR and/or the museum as a whole.**

**Figure 66. Satisfaction with Institutional Response to Recent Discrimination in Art Museums**

Thinking about the last two years, how satisfied are you with how HR and/or the museum resolved your complaint(s) overall?\*



Findings:  
Discrimination and  
Harassment

## Union Findings: Discrimination and Harassment

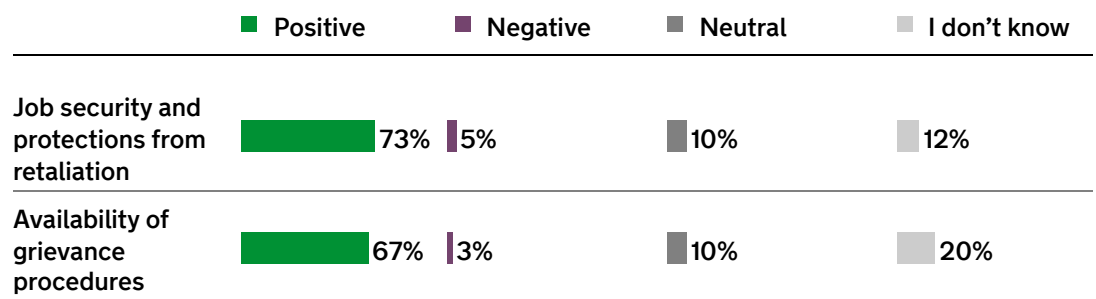
A higher proportion of union members have experienced discrimination (28% vs 20% overall) compared to their nonunion colleagues. Union members with these experiences are also significantly less satisfied with the outcomes of reported discrimination (81% are “not at all satisfied” vs. 65% of workers overall). This aligns with another data point where union members diverge significantly: a belief that people are not held accountable for their actions (40% of union members vs. 24% of workers overall). These beliefs, in addition to previously explored data about union members’ desire for a greater voice in decision-making, points again to a potential impetus for workers wanting to form and join unions.

The negative perceptions about how discrimination and harassment are handled in their workplace contrasts starkly with how union members see the impact of their union on these issues. For example, nearly three-quarters (73%) of union members identify protections from retaliation as an area where the union has had a positive impact. Two-thirds (67%) identify the availability of grievance procedures as another positive impact. Additionally, 16% of union members who have experienced recent discrimination used a grievance procedure to address it.<sup>66</sup>

While it remains to be seen what the long-term impact of unions may be on workers’ experiences of discrimination and reporting behaviors, as a noninstitutional mechanism to address issues in the workplace, unions are an important tool that need to be better understood in an increasingly unionized sector.

**Figure 67. Union Members’ Perceptions of Union Impact on Job Security/Protections from Retaliation and Grievance Procedures in Art Museums**

What impact (if any) do you believe your union has had on the following conditions at your museum over the past year?



\* Responses grouped into four categories based on a 6-point scale of “Large negative impact,” “Small negative impact,” “No impact,” “Small positive impact,” “Large positive impact”, and “I don’t know”

# Conclusion

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## Conclusion

This section is intended first and foremost for museum leaders, as we offer recommendations for action based on the data.

Before delving in, it is important to acknowledge how exceedingly challenging it is to be a museum leader in this particular moment in time. This study was conducted before the recent wave of cultural censorship and what PEN America aptly describes as “the US’s most fraught cultural and political debates,”<sup>67</sup> all of which especially impacts museum directors.

We see in MMF’s data that **half of art museum executives are considering leaving their jobs, and the number one reason is burnout.** There is no question that these jobs are demanding and exhausting. We also acknowledge how it can be hard, as a leader in any given moment, to hear about the challenges and dissatisfactions within your workforce. We hope the scale and scope of the findings within this report make clear that these patterns reflect field-wide trends. When workers voice their unhappiness or move to unionize, for instance, we encourage you to refer to the data here and consider these actions as expressions of what the art museum sector needs to sustain itself for the long-term future.

The art museum workplace is shifting partly because generational dynamics are in flux. However, as Lindsey Pollak, a leading expert on the multigenerational workplace, affirms, there are essential needs that all workers share, regardless of generation: “Those fundamentals—meaning, purpose, good leaders, professional growth—don’t change. What changes is how each generation expresses these needs and what expectations we have about employers’ fulfillment of them.”<sup>68</sup>

As the majority of today’s workforce, Millennials and Gen Z are reshaping museum workplaces with a particular emphasis on the need for social trust, which is lacking within the art museum sector, as evidenced by the data in this report (see [Workplace Culture and Discrimination and Harassment](#).) This distrust in art museum workplaces presents a key issue to address together as a field. Doing so will require more courage and compassion, better intergenerational understanding, and deeper support across hierarchies within the workplace.

The good news is that the art museum workforce remains full of purpose-driven people, the vast majority of whom develop positive working relationships and derive a sense of meaning from their work. Equally positive is that art museum workplaces have generally improved over the past two years.

The size of the museum really makes a difference for staff experiences. Smaller-budget museums tend to have better workplace cultures than mid-sized and larger-budget museums. However, it is striking and unfortunate that 54% of art museum workers across the sector have considered quitting their jobs in the last five years.<sup>69</sup>

Fortunately, as we see in the data, **workers are expressing precisely what they need from their art museum workplaces to remain in the field: more livable wages, less burnout, and more opportunities for professional growth.** These are the same three most-cited needs we heard from workers in 2023, expressed in the same order, so it could not be more evident that these are the critical issues to focus on moving forward.

## Conclusion

There is a large gap between purpose and reality: 87% of art museum workers believe their work is meaningful, but only 24% are satisfied with their opportunities for promotion. It is hard for these workers to imagine getting promoted because the vast majority (78%) of the workforce has never received a promotion at their museum despite average tenures of six years. Career stagnation is a persistent issue.

Meanwhile, 28% of the full-time workforce—and 69% of entry-level workers, specifically—earn below a living wage, which is part of the reason why many art museum workers are considering quitting or relying on other income sources to survive. This economic reality profoundly limits who can afford to work in art museums, especially in the long term.

There is also a persistent racial divide within art museums in the US. White workers have the highest household incomes and “continue to have more favorable careers than anyone else in art museums. They are getting promoted the most and staying in the field the longest. They are the most satisfied with their level of pay and job security, and they are better able to cover their living expenses from their museum compensation than their POC peers. They also believe at higher rates that their museums celebrate diversity, and they experience less discrimination than their POC colleagues.”<sup>70</sup> This quote is from MMF’s 2023 Report, yet the same holds true in 2025.

This study serves as a snapshot of art museum workplaces in 2025, as well as a reflection of the areas of change and stasis over time, and strives to reveal key areas of opportunity. Museums must prioritize a more supportive and sustainable work environment that enables everyone to thrive and to see a future for themselves in the field. Art museum workplaces can continue to improve and advance equity if they become more people-focused and worker-centered, which will in turn enable them to serve their missions more effectively and sustainably.

Rooted in the lived experiences of art museum workers at all levels, here are four ways to move museum workplaces forward in 2025.

## Conclusion



## Conclusion

# Trust and Transparency

Leaders must prioritize trust. It is the foundation upon which healthy workplace cultures are built, and the data shows we need more of it in art museums. In particular, being a more transparent leader is one of the best ways to earn the trust of colleagues.<sup>71</sup>

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Follow through on everything, big and small. This demonstrates reliability, a key component of trust. In other words, do as you say you will, and don't say it if you don't mean it. When mistakes or missteps inevitably occur, handle them with trust in mind. If there is conflict or disagreement, approach colleagues with curiosity first. Communicate openly and honestly, and develop solutions together as a team.
- Make clear that standards and expectations in the workplace apply to everyone, including leaders. Demonstrate irrefutable fairness, and act quickly when someone misses the mark.
- Share more detailed information and share more often, particularly around how decisions are being made, how money is being spent, and how strategies are being set. Share minutes or summaries after each board meeting to help workers understand what is happening at higher levels of the organization. Workers are not just curious, they are deeply invested in these aspects of museums and want to better understand them.
- Invite more staff to leadership meetings when decisions that affect them directly are being made. Giving workers a voice in decision-making is a learning opportunity for everyone, including leaders, and goes a long way in building trust and demonstrating transparency in the workplace.

## Conclusion

## Culture of Care

Leaders must demonstrate a commitment to a culture of care. This is critical for the future of art museum workplaces, and requires leaders with a high level of emotional intelligence to ensure that the institution is healthy (see the first recommendation from MMF's 2023 Report). A culture of care means ensuring workers have the support and resources they need to do their jobs and prioritizing worker well-being, including psychological safety (see the second recommendation from MMF's 2023 Report). As a recent article in *Harvard Business Review* notes, culture change does not happen as a result of communications and messaging. "It shifts when systems change. When leaders take personal risks. When norms are not just declared but demonstrated."<sup>72</sup>

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Ask questions that probe for aspects of emotional intelligence in manager interviews and evaluation settings. And for museum senior leadership, specifically, consider frameworks for self-awareness as one key aspect of emotional intelligence.<sup>73</sup>
- Train all managers with an emphasis on their role as coaches for their direct reports (avoiding the "command and control" style of management of the past). Be clear that part of the job of managers includes professional guidance and support for the growth of all team members.
- Implement and normalize ongoing feedback from workers, specifically related to what is making their jobs difficult or what resources they need to improve their job performance. Commit to clearing obstacles as quickly as possible.
- Ensure that performance evaluations for anyone managing staff includes a metric related to staff satisfaction. Good management means helping people succeed and ensuring these conditions are continually addressed.

## Conclusion

## Creative Growth

It is the responsibility of leaders to get more creative about the career paths they offer, with more options and choices for workers. The data shows just how few opportunities there are for promotions in art museums, but pay rate and title are only two aspects of a job. Plenty of workers, especially Millennials and Gen Z, are redefining success and the factors that contribute to job satisfaction. As qualitative research from MMF's 2024 Reimagining Career Advancement Study Group notes: "Rather than getting on an advancement 'escalator,' always in pursuit of ever-higher status or salary alone, we want to consider other factors that bolster quality of life, knowing that it is important to grow and sustain these as well."<sup>74</sup>In other words, workers of all generations want to feel they are growing, not stuck.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Create roadmaps for workers that allow for tailored career paths based on individual goals. Let workers articulate what they are looking for in their personal career and work together to set goals and timelines to support their growth.
- Be transparent about promotion rates at your museum. Let workers know specifically what they need to do to be considered for a promotion and the likelihood of receiving one.
- Offer more autonomy and flexibility as one of the perks of career growth. An investment in your employees' success includes trusting them to meet the expectations you have set without meddling or micromanaging.
- Be supportive if workers choose paths that might lead away from your museum. It is the responsibility of all managers to support the career growth of their team members, even when that includes a move that is external.

## Conclusion

### Living Wages

The World Economic Forum puts it succinctly: “Paying a living wage is an important investment in human capital, recognizing that employees are the most valuable resource of any company.”<sup>75</sup> If we want to be an inclusive field that thrives from diverse perspectives and offers equal opportunities to workers across the socioeconomic spectrum, then art museums need to pay living wages as a baseline.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Use credible living-wage estimate tools (such as the [MIT Living Wage Calculator](#) or the Economic Policy Institute’s [Family Budget Calculator](#)) to calculate the living-wage gap at your museum.
- Establish a living-wage strategy that includes a commitment to achieving living wages for all full-time workers within a specific timeframe, ideally in the next five years.
- Provide regular updates for staff on the progress of the living-wage strategy.
- Consider setting an internal pay ratio for full-time workers in your museum—that is, permitted differences between the lowest- and highest-paid workers.<sup>76</sup>

The above data-driven recommendations for moving museum workplaces forward are based on the findings from this report and qualitative insights from workers participating in MMF’s programs. These recommendations are intended to be further tailored to fit different art museum contexts and workshopped for impact. If you have tried one of these recommendations and have feedback to share, please email us at [info@museumsmovingforward.com](mailto:info@museumsmovingforward.com).

# Appendix A: Glossary of Terms

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## Appendix A: Glossary of Terms

### Race/Ethnicity

Throughout the report, we use aggregated categories guided by participants' self-identification with racial and ethnic groups. These categories include Asian or Asian American (including East Asian—Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Mongolian, Taiwanese, and Tibetan; South Asian—Bangladeshi, Bhutanese, Indian, Nepali, Pakistani, and Sri Lankan; and Southeast Asian—Burmese, Cambodian, Filipino, Hmong, Indonesian, Laotian, Malaysian, Mien, Singaporean, Thai, and Vietnamese); Black or African American; Hispanic or Latine/x (Hispanic, Latina, Latino, or Latinx); MENA (West Asian, Middle Eastern, or North African); Native American/Alaska Native/First Nations; Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander; white; or Other (defined as another race or ethnicity).

We acknowledge that selecting umbrella terms to describe complex and diverse racial/ethnic groups is not apolitical and that members within these groups may have different ways of describing their identities. We chose to use the shorthand “Hispanic or Latine/x” to describe anyone who selected “Hispanic, Latina, Latino, or Latinx” to reflect the ongoing discussion and evolution of gender-neutral terminology within that community.<sup>77</sup> We also chose to capitalize all racial/ethnic group names, with the exception of white, following the guidance of our Editorial Council, the Associated Press, and others.<sup>78</sup>

Participants had the option to select “prefer not to answer” and to choose as many racial or ethnic groups that apply to them. Those who selected multiple racial/ethnic groups were identified as multiracial and included in the racial or ethnic groups they selected (e.g., a participant who selected Asian and Black would be reflected within both of these groups as well as multiracial). At points in the study, we also refer to “BIPOC,” or people of color, where trends in the data exhibited similar experiences across workers of color, which includes any participant who self-identifies as Asian or Asian American; Black or African American; Hispanic or Latine/x; West Asian, Middle Eastern or North African; Native American/Alaska Native/First Nations; Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander; or multiracial.

### Gender

Similar to race/ethnicity, study participants were able to identify their gender. In the report, gender choices include woman, man, and nonbinary (including gender queer, third gender, and another gender). Nonbinary is an umbrella term<sup>79</sup> used to encompass the identities of participants who fall outside of the man/woman gender binary and those who experience gender fluidity or do not identify with a particular gender identity. Participants had the option to select “prefer not to answer” or to select as many identities that apply.

### Generation

In the report, we aggregated generation cohorts based on participants' birth years. Where significant trends emerged from the data, we referred to generation-specific categories including Baby Boomers (born 1946–1964), Gen X (1965–1980), Millennials (1981–1996), and Gen Z (1997–2012). “Gen” is sometimes used here as shorthand for “generation.” Given that the study focused on working-aged participants, we do not have data for the youngest generation (Gen Alpha, born 2013–2023), nor do we have data for the oldest generation (Silent Generation, 1928–1945).

## Appendix A: Glossary of Terms

### Position Level

Participants were asked to identify their current position level in their museum. In the report, we often compare the experiences of workers based on position level, sometimes referred to as “seniority,” within their museum. Position levels include Volunteer, Entry level, Associate (experienced nonmanager roles), Manager (with one or more direct reports), Director, and Executive (including museum leadership). Participants could only select one position level but also had the option to select “prefer not to answer.” We acknowledge that the way a worker chooses to describe their position level may differ from the way that their museums categorize them. For the purpose of this study, we used the workers’ self-descriptions.

### Department Area

In key places in the report, we include trends by museum department area. Participants were able to identify the department category of their current positions. Department areas include the following types of roles with classifications aligned with the Mellon Foundation’s Art Museum Staff Demographic Survey taxonomy:

**Administration** (membership/development, museum leadership, DEAI [diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion], finance, HR, IT [information technology], support/administration, research/evaluation)

**Building Operations** (gardens/grounds, facilities, food services, security, retail and store, exhibitions design and preparation, janitorial)

**Collections/Exhibitions** (collections information and management, conservation, curatorial, registration, library)

**Communications** (publications/editorial, rights/reproductions, marketing/public relations, digital strategy)

**Public Engagement** (education, public engagement, visitor services)

**None of the above**

Based on feedback from the cognitive interviews we conducted with museum staff, we added three additional types of roles to the MMF survey from what was included in the Art Museum Staff Demographic Survey: research and evaluation, janitorial services, and collections information and management.

### Unions

Participants were asked to identify their union membership status at their museum workplace. Status types include union member, not yet a union member (the museum has a union but is still negotiating its first contract), and not a union member (the participant is eligible for membership in a union but has not chosen to join, the participant’s position is ineligible for the union or unions at their museum, or there are no unions at the participant’s museum). Union members and those who are not yet members were asked to identify how long their museum union had been certified (length of time since the union

## Appendix A: Glossary of Terms

won its election or was voluntarily recognized). These periods include less than 1 year, 1–2 years, 3–5 years, 6–10 years, 11+ years, and unknown or unsure. We do not report on the specific experiences of those who identified as “not yet a union member,” due to the low number of respondents in that category.

For more information on what constitutes eligibility or ineligibility for union membership, please consult the US Department of Labor.<sup>80</sup>

### Discrimination and Harassment

For the purposes of this study, we provided participants with a list of identity-based categories—including gender, sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, social or economic status, religion, age, disability status, or another form—of discrimination or harassment. We defined discrimination in the survey as “unfair treatment and harassment as unwelcome conduct—including name-calling, intimidation, offensive jokes, threats, physical assault—based on identity.” Given the sensitive nature of discrimination and other harmful workplace experiences, participants were also able to select “prefer not to answer.” We also asked about the frequency of discrimination and harassment, which we broke down into rarely (one or two times in their entire tenure at their current museum), sometimes (a few times a year), often (a few times a month), and very frequently (daily or almost daily). In the chapter on discrimination and harassment, we use the umbrella term “discrimination” to encompass experiences of both discrimination and harassment among art museum workers.

### Museum Type

In a few areas in this report, we refer to different museum types when there are patterns or trends worth mentioning. Institutions chose from a list of categories (as many as fit their museums) when signing up to participate in the MMF study. These types include collecting, noncollecting, contemporary and/or modern, culturally specific, encyclopedic, college/university based, and city/county/state/government affiliated.

# Appendix B: Research Methodology

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## Appendix B: Research Methodology

### Overview

This is the second longitudinal study of workplace equity and culture in US art museums of a series of data collection surveys planned every two years between 2022 and 2030. The data collected in 2024–25 reflected a 70% increase in Partner Museums and utilized a more streamlined approach to data security and analysis, which enabled deeper insights.

The survey structure remained the same, with participating museums engaging in three distinct investigations: a director survey, an HR survey, and a survey of all paid staff members. In total, 3,018 museum staff participated in the 2024–25 MMF surveys through 91 art museums, which MMF calls “Partner Museums.” In addition, 83 staff from nonparticipating institutions completed the survey. The response rate for the staff survey among Partner Museums was 48% (the average response rate across all institutions), and the response rates for the director and HR surveys were 74% and 78%, respectively.

MMF partnered with Dr. Jennifer Benoit-Bryan and Daniel Fonner at SMU DataArts to lead the survey design, programming, weighting, and analysis. The MMF team also assembled a research advisory group in 2024 with a range of experts to help shape research design, analysis, and meaning making. The advisors (listed below) provided invaluable feedback, and their contributions are deeply appreciated.

- Charlotte Burns, founder of Studio Burns
- Deirdre Harkins, Senior Analyst, Ithaka S+R
- Jenni Kim, Senior Vice President, Operations, David Lynch Foundation
- Carys Kunze, Research and Data Manager, American Alliance of Museums
- Dr. Amanda Tobin Ripley, independent researcher

### Design Process

The research team reviewed all items from the pilot study in the survey instruments and identified a few questions to cut to make room for new lines of inquiry. Ultimately, of the 2023 survey questions, the team modified (by adding or removing options or slightly altering questions) 67% and removed 19% of the original questions. The team also added 19 new questions. Questions cut from the staff survey included if a worker’s position is endowed, perceptions of pay relative to peers, and role in museum DEAI efforts. New questions were added to the staff survey on preference for another employment level, unions, income, active job search in the past year, source of discrimination or harassment, life ladder assessment, sources of support in museums, household composition, caregiving responsibilities, and a detail regarding disability. The team also updated response options for items that were retained to streamline categories or add commonly written-in options from the pilot study. The survey was revised based on feedback from the research advisory group.

The MMF team continued to hold a set of three core criteria to recruit a range of Partner Museums by budget size, geography, and type (collecting/noncollecting, modern/contemporary, encyclopedic, culturally specific, college/university based, and city/county/state/government affiliated). All 54 institutions who participated in the pilot study were invited to participate again (74% continued their participation). The MMF research team and advisors reached out through their networks to share the open call for any additional interested institutions to participate in the research. One-on-one meetings were held with many art museum leadership teams to share the opportunity for

## Appendix B: Research Methodology

participation. Partner Museums were promised their own institution's results (including longitudinal data if they participated in the pilot) to be benchmarked against that of relevant institutions (by geography, budget size, and type). Staff at Partner Museums were given access to the same results as leadership received for the staff survey only.

For the HR and director surveys, only the officers who completed them for their institutions received access (alongside a survey administrator, if assigned) to the findings and benchmarks against comparable institutions. There was no monetary cost for institutions to participate. However, institutions were required to receive at least ten responses to see their organization's individual staff survey data in order to protect the privacy of participating workers. Interested institutions had the option of distributing the staff survey links themselves or providing their staff mailing list to the MMF team to distribute the survey. (30% were ultimately distributed by MMF). The surveys were open to all respondents between November 2024 and February 2025. Any institutions with fewer than ten responses were still provided access to fieldwide aggregate data and relevant benchmark comparisons based on budget, size, and institution type.

### Analysis Process

A longitudinal comparison across the years of the survey was a core motivation for this research design. The comparisons across data collection years reflect the full sample of Partner Museums from each year. To ensure that changes over time are not artifacts of additional museums new to the sample possibly skewing the results, we ran the comparative analysis for the consistent cohort only and compared it to the full cohort to identify any discrepancies. The full cohort aligned with the consistent cohort within 2% across all responses.

To assess how representative the respondents were of all staff within participating museums, the SMU DataArts team compared aggregate staff responses with data on the full staff provided by HR representatives. We found that staff survey respondents skewed toward higher incomes than the full staff population, so we developed weights based on income distributions reported by HR, which are applied in all salary analyses.

A set of analysis queries or splits for the data was determined in three main categories: organizational characteristics, individual demographics, and individual job characteristics. Five splits were run on organizational characteristics: region, budget size, collecting/noncollecting, institution type, and churn rate. An additional four individual demographic splits were run, including race/ethnicity (single-select), race/ethnicity (multi-select), gender, and generation. Four splits also were run on individual job characteristics: position level, union membership, full-time or part-time status, and if the worker had experiences of discrimination or harassment in their current workplace.

### Report Process

The MMF team—led by Emiliano Burgos, Genevieve Hoffman, and Michael Guidetti—built a password-protected portal system from which Partner Museums could manage the full data collection and reporting process. The portal was designed for leaders to access the HR and director surveys, as well as share unique survey links for the staff survey with their employees. Once the data collection period ended, MMF gave access to individual museums' organizational reports through the same portal.

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Data from all three surveys was provided to the leadership teams of participating museums on April 30, 2025, and the staff survey results were available to all staff on May 30, 2025. A series of convenings to walk through the portal, how to use the data, and preview field-wide trends were held for Partner Museum directors, HR officers, and staff.

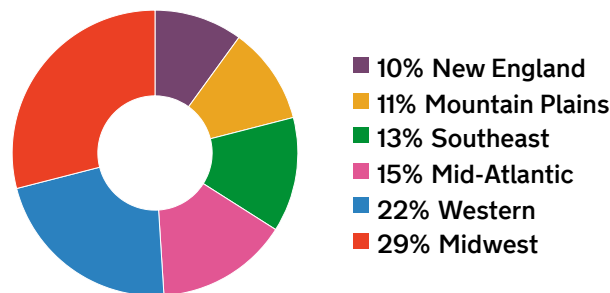
**Data Management**

MMF and SMU DataArts store and maintain data records in the cloud at Amazon Web Services (AWS). All data hosted at AWS is secured and backed up at regular intervals. Survey data is collected via the survey management platform Alchemer and is protected by AWS global infrastructure as well as Open Web Application Security Project (OWASP) standards. Data from Alchemer is then fed back into the MMF portal to provide aggregate response insights to partner museums. Data and metadata are preserved indefinitely on secure servers as well as via Alchemer. This preservation allows for future research that might include comparative analysis of multiple studies or probing the data if new research questions arise. A museum can request that their data be deleted after the 2025 Data Study report is developed, but doing so means the institution will not have the ability to compare their 2025 data to future waves of data collection.

**Profile of Participating Art Museums**

The MMF team aligned geographic categories for participating museums with those used by the Association of Art Museum Directors: Mid-Atlantic, Midwest, Mountain Plains, New England, Southeast, and Western. The largest geographic representation was from the Midwest (26 museums) and the smallest from New England (11). In terms of budget size, there were quite a few museums in the budget range of less than \$2.5 million (18), and at least six museums in each of the seven budget ranges that were used for analysis. The majority of institutions (73) were collecting, with 18 noncollecting institutions participating. Five or more museums of each type participated, with city/county/state/government affiliated (5) the least common, followed by culturally specific (10), encyclopedic (16), college/university affiliated (26), and contemporary and/or modern (61).

**Figure 68. Geographic Region**



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Figure 69. Museum Budget Size

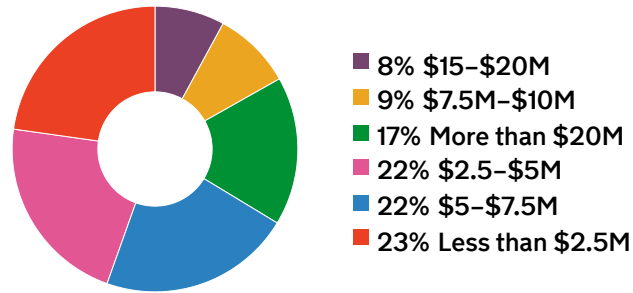


Figure 70. Museum Type

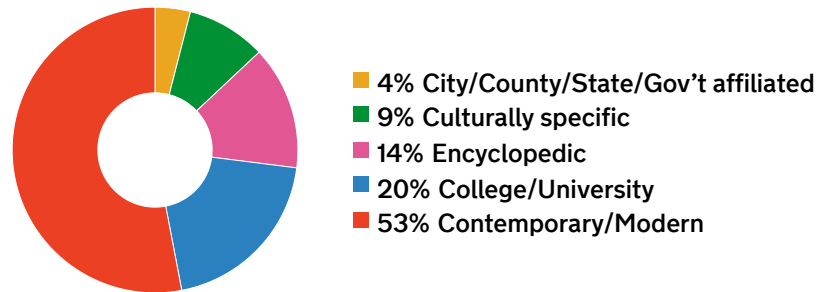
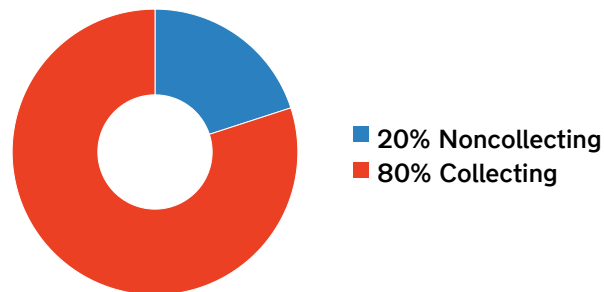


Figure 71. Museum Collecting Status



# Appendix C: Detailed Demographics and Institutional Context

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## Appendix C: Detailed Demographics and Institutional Context

### Gender

The majority of MMF’s survey respondents identify as women (66%), followed by men (25%) and a growing number of nonbinary workers (9%).

### Race and Ethnicity

Respondents were able to select more than one option in the race/ethnicity category, which we aggregated into seven identities, plus other (defined as another race or ethnicity). The vast majority of workers selected white (77%), followed by Hispanic or Latine/x (13%), Asian or Asian American (9%), Black or African American (9%), Native American/Alaska Native/First Nations (2%), another race or ethnicity (2%), MENA (1%), and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (0.5%). Respondents who selected more than one racial group were also classified as multiracial (and kept in each of the racial groups they elected). Those who selected Hispanic or Latine/x could also select (and be counted in) a separate racial identity. Therefore, responses by race and ethnicity add up to more than 100%. This approach privileges the multiplicity of individual identities held by art museum staff over the priority of having proportions for this category sum to 100%.

### Age/Generation

Nearly a majority (49%) of respondents are Millennials (born between 1981 and 1996), followed by 25% Gen X (born 1965–1980), 14% Gen Z (1997–2012), and 11% Baby Boomers (1946–1964).

### Disability Status

Nearly a quarter (24%) of respondents have a disability, a sizable increase from 2023 (17%). This is likely due to the linear correlation between age and disability, with 41% of Gen Z workers reporting a disability compared to 27% of Millennials, 15% of Gen X, and 9% of Baby Boomers.

This year, we also added options to select types of disabilities. Of respondents with disabilities, the most common type is a mental health condition (55%), a chronic illness (27%), and an emotional or behavioral disability (17%).

### Full-time and Part-time Status

84% of respondents work on a full-time basis, while 17% work part time. As in 2023, we recognize that this overrepresents the experiences of full-time employees. For context, HR officers reported their workforce split as 66% full time and 34% part time. In some cases, especially in the [Pay and Promotions](#) section, we focused our analysis on the experiences of full-time workers.

### Position Level

This year, we shifted our language from “seniority” to “position level” to describe the five categories that workers could serve within the museum. Nearly half (48%) of respondents selected associate, followed by 26% managers, 10% entry level, 10% directors, and 6% executives. We acknowledge that the way a worker chooses to describe their position level

## Appendix C: Detailed Demographics and Institutional Context

may differ from the way that the museum categorizes them. For the purpose of this study, we used the workers’ self-descriptions.

When we look at where different demographic groups fall within the museum hierarchy, we see some interesting patterns. Nonbinary workers are much more concentrated within entry-level and associate-level positions (78% vs. 58% overall) but, while women far outnumber men within our sample, how they fall across position levels is fairly equivalent.

For race and ethnicity, we see that Asian workers are disproportionately likely to be concentrated in the lower two position levels (68% in the entry or associate level vs. 58% overall), whereas Black workers are more concentrated in the upper two position levels (19% the director or executive levels vs. 16% overall).

### Figure 72. Position Level, by Gender

What type of position do you have at the museum?

	Entry	Associate	Manager	Director	Executive
Men	7%	48%	30%	10%	5%
Nonbinary	16%	62%	19%	1%	2%
Women	10%	45%	27%	11%	7%

### Figure 73. Position Level, by Race and Ethnicity

What type of position do you have at the museum?

	Entry	Associate	Manager	Director	Executive
Black or African American	14%	45%	22%	11%	8%
Asian or Asian American	15%	53%	18%	8%	5%
Hispanic or Latine/x	10%	51%	27%	6%	5%
MENA	22%	41%	25%	9%	3%
Native American/Alaska Native/First Nations	6%	55%	28%	4%	6%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	9%	55%	27%	0%	9%
White	9%	48%	27%	10%	6%
Another Race or Ethnicity	12%	45%	29%	8%	6%

### Tenure

On average, respondents have been working in the field for 9.3 years and at their current institutions for 6 years. As in 2023, there are clear differences in tenure depending on

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workers' gender, race, and/or ethnicity. Nonbinary workers have much lower tenures, in both their current institution (3 years) and the field (5). Men have the longest average tenures, both in the field (11 years) and at their current institution (8).

In their current institutions, white workers tend to have longer tenures (7 years), followed by Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (6), Native American/Alaska Native/First Nations (6), Hispanic or Latine/x (5), and then Asian, Black, and MENA (4 each).

White workers also have the longest tenures in the field along with Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (10 years), followed by Native American/Alaska Native/First Nations (8), Asian (8), and then Hispanic or Latine/x, Black, and MENA (7 each).

**Figure 74. Tenure in the Art Museum Field and Current Institution, by Gender**

Approximately how long have you been working in the art museum field? And how long have you been working at your current museum?

	In the field	At current institution
Men	11 years	8 years
Women	9 years	6 years
Nonbinary	5 years	3 years

**Figure 75. Tenure in the Art Museum Field and Current Institution, by Race/Ethnicity**

Approximately how long have you been working in the art museum field? And how long have you been working at your current museum?

	In the field	At current institution
White	10 years	8 years
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	10 years	6 years
Native American/Alaska Native/First Nations	8 years	6 years
Asian or Asian American	8 years	4 years
Hispanic or Latine/x	7 years	5 years
Black or African American	7 years	4 years
MENA	7 years	4 years

**Sexual Orientation**

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The majority of respondents (67%) identify as heterosexual, followed by 13% bisexual, 12% queer, 6% gay, 5% pansexual, 4% lesbian, and 2% asexual. Survey takers were able to select as many options as applied.

**Education level**

A plurality of respondents said that their highest level of education is a bachelor’s degree (45%), followed by a master’s degree (36%), some college/associate’s degree (10%), professor or doctorate degree (6%), and high school diploma (2%). As in 2023, women tend to have higher levels of education than men.

**Department Area**

Respondents were able to select as many department areas as applied. Positions for each department were listed in parentheses next to each department area (see [Glossary of Terms](#) for full list). Overall, the most common department areas were public engagement (31%) and administration (31%), followed by collections and exhibitions (29%), building operations (20%), and communications (10%).

**Figure 76. Race/Ethnicity in Art Museums, by Department Area**

	Administration	Building Operations	Collections & Exhibitions	Communications	Public Engagemen
Black or African American	8%	12%	7%	9%	11%
Asian or Asian American	8%	8%	11%	10%	8%
Hispanic or Latine/x	11%	14%	12%	12%	17%
MENA	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%
Native American/Alaska Native/First Nations	2%	3%	2%	2%	3%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0%	1%	1%	0%	0%
White	78%	79%	77%	76%	72%
Another Race or Ethnicity	1%	2%	3%	3%	3%

\* Study participants were able to select all department areas that applied, resulting in overall data sums that exceeded 100%.

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**Union Status**

15% of respondents are a union member or currently negotiating their first union contract. The majority (59%) of respondents have no union available at their museum, and 25% are not eligible for their museum’s union (due to their position level or type). 2% of respondents indicated that they opted out of the union available to them at their museum. The most common departments with unionized staff are: public engagement (16%), collections and exhibitions (15%), and building operations (13%).

The majority (59%) of unionized workers are members of unions that have been certified (since winning a union election or being voluntarily recognized by their museum’s leadership) for two or fewer years. Large museums (over \$15 million budget) are more likely to have a union presence (67% vs. 31% without unions).

**Figure 77. Union Status, by Department Area**

	Opted out of union	No union at museum	Not union eligible	Union member*
Administration	2%	57%	30%	10%
Building Operations	2%	59%	24%	13%
Collections & Exhibitions	1%	61%	22%	15%
Communications	2%	65%	23%	9%
Public Engagement	2%	61%	21%	16%

\* This category combines those who are currently negotiating their first contract and those who are already covered by a union contract.

**Figure 78. Length of Union Certification**

< 1 year	24%
1–2 years	35%
3–5 years	20%
6–10 years	2%
11+ years	19%

# Appendix D: Staff Survey Data Tables

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Museums Moving Forward Staff Survey

Fielded November 2024–February 2025

**Sample Size**

Number of Survey Respondents	3,102
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**1. Approximately how long have you been working in the art museum field?**

Average years in art museums	9.3
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**2. And how long have you been working at your current museum (this could be the same as the previous question)?**

Average years in current museum	6.1
---------------------------------	-----

**3. Which of the following best describes your current position level in the museum? Every museum uses different terms and titles; please choose whichever level you feel is most aligned with your experience.**

Entry	10%
Associate	48%
Manager	26%
Director	10%
Executive	6%

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**4. What type of position do you have at the museum? Please select all that apply (e.g., you may be both full time and temporary).**

Full-time employee	84%
Part-time employee	17%
Temporary/seasonal employee	1%

**5. What best reflects your compensation rate?**

< \$15/hour	6%
\$15–\$18/hour	29%
\$18–\$21/hour	27%
\$21–\$25/hour	21%
\$25–\$30/hour	10%
> \$30/hour	8%
Average	\$20.84/hour

**6. Would you prefer another level of employment (e.g., full time, part time, permanent) with the museum other than what you currently have? Please select all that apply.**

No, I have the type of employment that I prefer	85%
Yes, I'd prefer a full-time position	10%
Yes, I'd prefer a part-time position	2%
Yes, I'd prefer a permanent position	6%

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**7. In which of the following department categories does your current museum position fall? Select all that apply.**

Administration	31%
Building Operations	20%
Collections/Exhibitions	29%
Communications	10%
Public Engagement	31%
None of the above	3%

**8. Are you a member, or do you have the option of being a member, of a union with a collective bargaining agreement in place as part of your museum job?**

Yes, I am a union member for my museum job	14%
Not yet; We have a union but are still negotiating for our first contract	1%
No, I have the option to be a union member for my museum job but have not chosen to join	2%
No, there is a union at my museum but my position is ineligible for membership	25%
No, there are no unions at my museum	59%

**9. How long has your museum union been certified? (In other words, how long has it been since the union won its election or was voluntarily recognized?)**

< 1 year	18%
1-2 years	22%
3-5 years	15%
6-10 years	1%
> 11 years	13%
I don't know / I'm not sure	31%

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**10. What impact (if any) do you believe your union has had on the following conditions at your museum over the past year?\***

	Negative impact	Neutral	Positive impact	I don't know
My salary/wages	3%	11%	73%	12%
Pay equity across the institution	4%	22%	53%	21%
Opportunities for career advancement	9%	41%	31%	20%
Availability of healthcare benefits or paid family leave	1%	26%	51%	22%
Availability of grievance procedures	3%	14%	62%	21%
Transparency within the organization	9%	28%	47%	16%
Practicing diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion	3%	36%	41%	20%
Having a voice in decisions that affect workers	6%	19%	62%	13%
Job security and protections from retaliation	5%	13%	69%	14%
Positive connection to my colleagues	8%	21%	61%	10%

\* Collapsed from a 5-point scale: large negative impact, small negative impact, no impact, small positive impact, large positive impact, I don't know

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**11. What impact (if any) do you believe the union you're eligible for but have chosen not to join has had on the following conditions at your museum over the past year?\***

	Negative impact	Neutral	Positive impact	I don't know
My salary/wages	2%	29%	29%	39%
Pay equity across the institution	2%	24%	34%	39%
Opportunities for career advancement	15%	32%	20%	34%
Availability of healthcare benefits or paid family leave	3%	35%	25%	38%
Availability of grievance procedures	3%	23%	30%	45%
Transparency within the organization	13%	31%	21%	36%
Practicing diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion	2%	22%	37%	39%
Having a voice in decisions that affect workers	5%	28%	35%	33%
Job security and protections from retaliation	7%	23%	33%	38%
Positive connection to my colleagues	20%	23%	23%	35%

\* Collapsed from a 5-point scale: large negative impact, small negative impact, no impact, small positive impact, large positive impact, I don't know

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**12. What impact (if any) do you believe unions at your museum that you are ineligible to join have had on the following conditions at your museum over the past year?\***

	Negative impact	Neutral	Positive impact	I don't know
My salary/wages	6%	41%	29%	24%
Pay equity across the institution	8%	17%	46%	29%
Opportunities for career advancement	12%	33%	23%	33%
Availability of healthcare benefits or paid family leave	1%	36%	28%	35%
Availability of grievance procedures	8%	19%	36%	36%
Transparency within the organization	11%	28%	30%	31%
Practicing diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion	6%	35%	24%	35%
Having a voice in decisions that affect workers	7%	23%	38%	32%
Job security and protections from retaliation	6%	24%	38%	32%
Positive connection to my colleagues	20%	26%	24%	31%

\* Collapsed from a 5-point scale: large negative impact, small negative impact, no impact, small positive impact, large positive impact, I don't know

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**13. What is your approximate gross annual income (before taxes and deductions) from your current position in the museum? (If this changes from month to month because of overtime or other reasons, please provide your best guess across this past year.) Report only income from your museum job.\***

< \$25,000	12%
\$25,000–\$50,000	22%
\$50,000–\$75,000	36%
\$75,000–\$100,000	16%
\$100,000–\$150,000	10%
\$150,000–\$200,000	3%
\$200,000–\$300,000	2%
> \$300,000	1%
Average	\$68,039
Median	\$60,000

\* Percentages add up to 102% due to rounding

**14. Thinking back to this month last year, what was your approximate gross annual income (before taxes and deductions) from your position in the museum?**

Average change in salary over the past two years	6% increase
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**15. What is your approximate gross household income (before taxes and deductions)?**

< \$25,000	7%
\$25,000–\$50,000	13%
\$50,000–\$75,000	21%
\$75,000–\$100,000	13%
\$100,000–\$150,000	19%
\$150,000–\$200,000	12%
\$200,000–\$300,000	9%
> \$300,000	5%
Average	\$117,469
Median	\$88,000

**16. Have you ever received any of the following combinations of promotions and pay increases while at your current museum? Please consider promotions triggered by merit, tenure, union contract, etc. if they fit the criteria below. Select all that apply.**

FULL PROMOTION: title change and pay increase	31%
HOLLOW PROMOTION: title change but no pay increase	12%
PAY-FOCUSED PROMOTION: pay increase but no title change	28%
None of the above	45%

**17. How well does your current compensation from the museum cover your living expenses (e.g., rent, utilities, food, transportation, childcare)?**

Always enough	18%
Usually enough	25%
Sometimes enough	16%
Rarely or never enough	12%
Only in combination with other household income (yours or someone else’s)	29%

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**18. What is your current work location?**

I am working on-site only	50%
I am working in a hybrid setup with some time on site and some from home	50%
I am working from home only	0%

**19. Please rate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements in relation to the culture of your current museum workplace.\***

I believe that I can learn and grow in this organization	74%
I believe that what I do here is meaningful	87%
I feel burned out in this organization	43%
I don't feel that I have a voice in decision-making in this organization	42%
I feel like I have to hide some of who I am working in this organization	29%
I've developed positive relationships with my coworkers	93%
My direct manager supports me	81%

\* The proportion of respondents who agree or strongly agree with this statement, indicated by selecting a 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale

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**20. Please rate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements in relation to the culture of your current museum workplace.\***

I believe performance reviews contribute to growth and/or advancement in my institution	34%
Diversity and difference are not celebrated in this organization	14%
The culture of my workplace negatively affects my mental and/or physical health	32%
People in my organization are held accountable for discrimination and harassment	46%
Mistakes are held against staff members in this organization	22%
I would recommend this workplace to friends and family	56%
Mentor(s) are available to me within this museum	48%
Mentor(s) at this museum have a positive influence on my career	47%

\* The proportion of respondents who disagree or strongly disagree with this statement, indicated by selecting a 1 or 2 on a 5-point scale

**21. Which of the following statements best reflect the salary sharing practices of your museum workplace? Select all that apply.**

My workplace shares the specific salaries of all positions	10%
My workplace shares salary ranges for all positions	21%
My union handbook lists salary levels for each job	8%
My workplace shares salary ranges for every open position	47%
My workplace actively discourages employees from discussing their salaries	15%
I don't know	22%

**22. Have you actively looked for another job at a different organization within the last 12 months?**

Yes	49%
No	51%

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**23. Have you ever considered leaving your current museum workplace for another art museum?**

Yes	54%
No	46%

**24. Which of the following reasons made you consider leaving your current museum workplace for another art museum? Select all that apply.**

Pay is too low (and/or my hours have been cut)	57%
No full-time work is available in this institution	9%
Opportunities for growth at the other museum	60%
Experiences of discrimination or harassment	11%
Lack of opportunities for growth at my museum	53%
Positive reputation of the other museum	24%
Burnout	52%
Desire to live in a different town or city	29%
Interpersonal issues with other staff members	18%
Poor management	42%
I don't believe my institution can change for the better	24%
I have felt disrespected at work	30%
I feel like I'm being pushed out	12%
Job isn't as described	10%
Other	13%

**25. Have you considered leaving the art museum field altogether in the past five years?**

Yes	54%
No	46%

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**26. Which of the following reasons made you consider leaving the art museum field altogether? Select all that apply.**

Pay is too low in art museums (and/or my hours have been cut)	66%
More interested in other fields	21%
Full-time work is unavailable to me in most art museums	12%
Experiences of discrimination or harassment in art museums	8%
Lack of opportunities for growth in art museums	45%
Burnout in the art museum field	54%
Exciting opportunities in other fields	26%
Interpersonal issues with other staff members are common in art museums	14%
Poor management in art museums	40%
I don't believe art museums can change for the better	13%
Personal reasons unrelated to art and/or museums	21%
I have felt disrespected at work	23%
I feel like I'm being pushed out	9%
Other	12%

**27. In the past two years, have you felt discriminated against or harassed on the basis of your gender, sexual orientation, racial or ethnic background, social or economic status, religion, age, or disability while working in your current museum workplace?**

Yes	15%
No, I haven't had any experiences of discrimination or harassment at my current museum	79%
No, but I had experience(s) of discrimination or harassment more than two years ago at my current museum	5%

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**28. Thinking about the last two years, how often have you felt discriminated against and/or harassed while working in your current museum workplace?**

Very frequently (daily or almost daily)	5%
Often (a few times a month)	20%
Sometimes (a few times a year)	47%
Rarely (one or two times total)	28%

**29. Thinking about the last two years, which of the following forms of discrimination and/or harassment have you experienced in your current museum workplace? Select all that apply.**

Based on gender (including pregnancy, gender expression, gender identity, etc.)	48%
Based on sexual orientation	10%
Based on race and/or ethnicity	36%
Based on social or economic status	27%
Based on religion	5%
Based on age	41%
Based on disability	13%
Another form of discrimination or harassment	14%

**30. Thinking about the last two years, who discriminated against or harassed you? Please select all that apply.**

My supervisor	34%
The museum’s director	20%
A colleague	74%
A board member or donor	17%
A museum visitor	25%
Other	14%

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**31. Thinking about the last two years, have you taken any of the following actions in response to discrimination and/or harassment in your current museum workplace? Select all that apply.**

I filed an HR complaint form (in person or online)	14%
I talked to an HR staff member	30%
I used an anonymous reporting mechanism	6%
I followed a union-provided grievance process for reporting	4%
I talked to a neutral employee or manager who reported to HR	12%
I used another reporting mechanism	3%
I talked to a neutral employee or manager who did NOT report to HR	37%
I shared my story publicly in some way	4%
I haven't done anything in response	37%

**32. Thinking about the last two years, how satisfied are you with how HR and /or the museum resolved your complaint(s) overall?**

Not at all satisfied	65%
Somewhat satisfied	27%
Very satisfied	7%

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**33. If you have experienced any discrimination or harassment and decided NOT to take action in response, what were your reasons? Select all that apply.**

I worried about retaliation from people in leadership at the institution	46%
I worried about retaliation from the person who discriminated against/harassed me	39%
I don't trust HR	56%
I reported in the past and no action was taken	5%
I didn't think anything would be done about it	70%
I didn't think anything could be done about it because the person who discriminated against/harassed me is not an employee of the museum (e.g., visitor, board member, artist)	18%
I didn't know about what actions I could take	15%
My workplace doesn't provide any mechanisms to report discrimination and/or harassment	10%

**34. In your current employment situation, how satisfied are you with each of the following characteristics?\***

Level of pay	43%
Enjoying your day-to-day work	74%
Employee benefits	62%
My opportunities for training/developing new skills	49%
My opportunities for promotion at work	24%
Having a sense of purpose and dignity in your work	74%
Stable and predictable pay	79%
Job security	72%
My job overall	75%
My relationship with coworkers	87%
My relationship with my manager or supervisor	79%

\* The proportion of respondents who agree or strongly agree with this statement, indicated by selecting a 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale

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**35. Thinking about the past month in your workplace, which of the following emotions do you most associate with working at your museum? Select up to three.**

Content	41%
Worried	37%
Excited	24%
Sad	9%
Connected to others	45%
Bored	15%
Angry	12%
Hopeful	30%
Disappointed	34%
Inspired	27%

**36a. Please imagine a ladder with steps numbered from 0 at the bottom to 10 at the top. The top of the ladder represents the best possible work life for you and the bottom of the ladder represents the worst possible work life for you.**

**On which step of the ladder would you personally feel your work life is at this time?**

Thriving (7-10)	46%
Surviving (5-6)	36%
Suffering (1-4)	17%

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**36b. Please imagine a ladder with steps numbered from zero at the bottom to 10 at the top. The top of the ladder represents the best possible work life for you and the bottom of the ladder represents the worst possible work life for you.**

**On which step of the ladder do you think your work will be at in five years?**

Thriving (7-10)	72%
Surviving (5-6)	20%
Suffering (1-4)	8%

**37. Who do you feel most supported by within your museum?**

My direct manager	45%
Museum leadership other than my direct manager	5%
Other colleagues	43%
Board member(s)	1%
Donor(s)	1%
Other	4%
I don't feel supported by anyone within my museum	2%

**38. Has your museum implemented any of the following within the last two years?**

Completed a compensation study	24%
Changed compensation systematically to better reflect museum market rates	28%
Conducted surveys or interviews with current employees to assess job satisfaction	39%
Improved onboarding support	29%
Implemented a diversity retention plan	12%
Conducted exit interviews to learn from departures	35%
Implemented new policies to reduce discrimination and harassment	24%
Provided management and /or leadership training for all supervisors	33%
None of the above	16%

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**39. What/Who do you believe has a large impact on your museum leadership's decisions? Please select all that apply.**

The museum’s mission, vision, and/or values	54%
The priorities of the museum’s board	63%
The priorities of donors/funders	53%
Input from museum staff members	25%
The interests of current museum visitors	22%
The interests of the communities around the museum	26%
Other	16%
None of the above	2%

**40. In order to help us calculate living wages for your position, which of the following best describes your household?**

I am the only adult in my household	33%
There are two or more adults working for wages in my household	57%
There are two or more adults in my household, with one who’s working for wages	9%

**41. How many children (under age 18) live in your household?**

None	77%
One	13%
Two	9%
Three or more	2%

**42. Other than children, are you an unpaid caregiver to a relative or friend, involved in assisting them with activities of daily living and/or medical tasks?**

Yes	12%
No	88%

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**43. Do you identify as transgender?**

Yes	3%
No	97%

**44. How would you define your sexual orientation? Select all that apply.**

Heterosexual	67%
LGBTQ+	36%

**45. What is the highest level of education that you have completed?**

Some high school	0%
High school graduate	2%
Some college/Associate’s degree	10%
Bachelor’s degree	45%
Master’s degree	36%
Professional or doctorate degree	6%

**46. Do you identify as a person with a disability and/or as neuroatypical or neurodivergent?**

Yes	24%
No	76%

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**47. If yes, how do you identify? Select all that apply.**

Blind or visually impaired	2%
Person with a chronic illness disability	27%
Person with a communication disorder, who is unable to speak, or who uses a device to speak	1%
Deaf or hard of hearing	3%
Person with an emotional or behavioral disability	17%
Person with a learning disability	15%
Person with an intellectual, cognitive, or developmental disability	15%
Person with a mental health disability	55%
Person with a physical disability or mobility impairment	9%
None of the above	13%

# Appendix E: Director Survey Data Tables

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Appendix E:  
Director Survey  
Data Tables

Museums Moving Forward Director Survey

Fielded November 2024–February 2025

**1. Through what group or fund is your salary as a museum director predominantly (or wholly) paid?**

The museum’s general operating funds	60%
An endowment or restricted funding for a named position	15%
Another form of endowment or restricted funding	4%
A municipality	0%
A university	19%
Other	1%

**2. How would you rate your museum's current performance in each of the following areas?**

	Negative	Neutral	Positive
Efficient operations	15%	26%	59%
Financial stability	22%	38%	40%
Providing living wages for employees	9%	40%	51%
Providing fair compensation for artists who participate in our exhibitions or programs	4%	35%	60%
Providing a healthy workplace culture sustainably	4%	21%	75%
Fostering a culture that supports experimentation, risk taking, and/or continual learning	1%	12%	87%
Diversity of our visitors	15%	37%	49%
Diversity of our staff	25%	38%	37%
Diversity of our board	29%	35%	36%

Appendix E:  
Director Survey  
Data Tables

**3. Please select up to three of the following areas that you're prioritizing at your museum over the next few years.**

Efficient operations	46%
Financial stability	73%
Providing living wages for employees	25%
Providing fair compensation for artists who participate in our exhibitions or programs	6%
Providing a healthy workplace culture sustainably	45%
Fostering a culture that supports experimentation, risk taking, and/or continual learning	31%
Diversity of our visitors	27%
Diversity of our staff	27%
Diversity of our board	18%

**4. In your last complete fiscal year, approximately what proportion of your annual budget was allocated to staff compensation and benefits?**

Average	56%
---------	-----

**5. For your last complete fiscal year, approximately what proportion of your organization's revenue was directly contributed by board members?**

Average	11%
---------	-----

**6. How many (voting) board members do you have?**

Average	20
---------	----

Appendix E:  
Director Survey  
Data Tables

**7. Thinking of new board members who joined within the past year, how were they recruited? Please select all that apply.**

Personal networks of board members	76%
My [the director's] personal networks	60%
Personal networks of other staff members	27%
Research of community members who may be a good fit	52%
Advertising	2%
A formal search process (including a recruiting agency or board matching service)	0%
Other	24%

**8. How would you rate your board's performance over the past year in the following areas?**

	Negative	Neutral	Positive
Understanding your organization's mission, programs, and priorities	7%	28%	65%
Understanding the individual duties and responsibilities of board membership	14%	45%	41%
Overseeing the museum's financial sustainability	20%	36%	44%
Supporting the museum's fundraising efforts	29%	34%	36%
Providing guidance and support to the museum director	12%	34%	54%
Providing legal and ethical oversight of the museum	13%	31%	56%
Attending board meetings	5%	40%	55%
Serving on a board committee	12%	33%	55%
Serving as an ambassador for the museum	15%	32%	53%
Supporting board recruitment	31%	38%	31%
Increasing the diversity of the board	36%	26%	38%
Promoting transparency and collaboration with museum staff	14%	42%	44%
Evaluating the performance of the museum director	24%	34%	42%
Evaluating the performance of the museum	14%	54%	32%
Evaluating the performance of the board	48%	37%	15%

Appendix E:  
Director Survey  
Data Tables

**9. Do you know the gender, race, and ethnicity of each of your board members?**

Yes	84%
No	16%

**10. How many people of each gender are on your board?**

Transgender woman	0%
Cis-gender woman	51%
Transgender man	0%
Cis-gender man	45%
Nonbinary	3%
I don't know	2%

**11. How many members of each race and ethnicity are on your board?**

African American or Black	16%
Asian or Pacific Islander	7%
Hispanic or Latine/x	4%
Middle Eastern, North African, or West Asian	2%
Native American / Alaska Native / First Nations / Native Hawaiian	2%
White	69%
I don't know	1%

Appendix E:  
Director Survey  
Data Tables

**12. Only keeping in mind the board members who serve on the executive committee, how many people are of each gender?**

Transgender woman	0%
Cis-gender woman	50%
Transgender man	4%
Cis-gender man	44%
Nonbinary	2%

**13. Again, only keeping in mind the board members who serve on the executive committee, how many members are of each race or ethnicity?**

African American or Black	12%
Asian or Pacific Islander	6%
Hispanic or Latine/x	5%
Middle Eastern, North African, or West Asian	1%
Native American / Alaska Native / First Nations / Native Hawaiian	1%
White	75%

**14. Do any of the following support or inhibit your ability to implement DEAI initiatives at your museum?**

	Negative	Neutral	Positive
Board	2%	18%	81%
State, municipal, or governmental policies	17%	38%	45%
Union(s)	12%	72%	16%
Local values or norms	11%	21%	68%

# Appendix F: HR Survey Data Tables

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Appendix F: HR  
Survey Data  
Tables

Museums Moving Forward Staff Survey

Fielded November 2024–February 2025

**1. How many people are currently employed by your organization in each of the following categories? Please consider only employees, not outside contractors.**

Full time	66%
Part time	34%
Permanent	73%
Limited term	4%
Temporary/seasonal	23%

**2. In the past calendar year, what percentage of permanent full-time staff in your organization received an annual salary/compensation at the following pay levels:**

< \$25,000	1%
\$25,000–\$49,999	25%
\$50,000–\$74,999	36%
\$75,000–\$99,999	21%
\$100,000–\$149,999	11%
\$150,000–\$199,999	3%
\$200,000–\$299,999	2%
> \$300,000	1%

Appendix F: HR  
Survey Data  
Tables

**3. In the past calendar year, what percentage of part-time, seasonal, and temporary staff in your organization received an annualized salary/compensation at the following pay levels:**

< \$25,000	71%
\$25,000-\$49,999	24%
\$50,000-\$74,999	4%
\$75,000-\$99,999	1%
\$100,000-\$149,999	0%
\$150,000-\$199,999	0%
\$200,000-\$299,999	0%
> \$300,000	0%

**4. In the past calendar year, what percentage of staff received a promotion (with title change and pay increase beyond cost-of-living adjustment) that resulted in a salary at the following pay levels:**

< \$25,000	5%
\$25,000-\$49,999	27%
\$50,000-\$74,999	41%
\$75,000-\$99,999	15%
\$100,000-\$149,999	9%
\$150,000-\$199,999	1%
\$200,000-\$299,999	1%
> \$300,000	1%

Appendix F: HR  
Survey Data  
Tables

**5. Over the past calendar year, what percentage of permanent full-time staff members were hired by your organization at the following pay levels:**

< \$25,000	7%
\$25,000-\$49,999	38%
\$50,000-\$74,999	33%
\$75,000-\$99,999	11%
\$100,000-\$149,999	8%
\$150,000-\$199,999	2%
\$200,000-\$299,999	1%
> \$300,000	0%

**6. Over the past calendar year, what percentage of permanent full-time staff members departed your organization in the following ways:**

Resignation	80%
Dismissal	13%
Layoffs	3%
Retirement	4%

**7. How many full-time employees hired in the past two calendar years still work for your organization?**

Employee retention	68%
--------------------	-----

**8. Is any portion of your employee workforce unionized?**

Yes	29%
No	68%
A union is currently negotiating its first union contract	3%

Appendix F: HR  
Survey Data  
Tables

**9. How many unions have collective bargaining agreements in place at your museum?**

1	68%
2	18%
3	5%
4	5%
5	5%

**10. Approximately what percent of your total workforce is covered under a union contract? (Benchmark comparisons only include organizations that have reported at least one union in their workplace.)**

Average	38%
---------	-----

**11. Has your museum implemented any of the following within the last two years?**

Completed a compensation study	54%
Changed compensation systematically to better reflect museum market rates	65%
Conducted surveys or interviews with current employees to assess their job satisfaction	56%
Introduced a new process to improve employee onboarding	66%
Implemented a diversity retention plan	13%
Conducted exit interviews to learn from departures	84%
Implemented new policies to reduce discrimination and harassment	37%
Provided management and /or leadership training for all supervisors	57%

Appendix F: HR  
Survey Data  
Tables

**12. Has your organization measured the composition of any of the following groups with respect to gender, race, and ethnicity within the last two years?**

Artists in the collection	45%
Board and/or trustee members	68%
Staff members by department	35%
Staff members overall (without department comparisons)	74%
Volunteers	14%
None of the above	9%
I don't know	12%

Appendix F: HR  
Survey Data  
Tables

**13. Which of the following benefits does your organization provide for the following types of employees?**

	Permanent full-time	Part-time	Temporary/Seasonal
Health insurance (covered 100% by the employer)	33%	3%	0%
Health insurance (covered partially by the employer)	77%	29%	9%
Disability insurance (long and short term)	86%	31%	6%
Life insurance	89%	29%	6%
Paid time off	97%	56%	10%
Paid sick leave	93%	67%	23%
Paid family leave (equal to the statutory requirement)	66%	36%	10%
Paid family leave (beyond the statutory requirement but not including paternal or maternal leave)	24%	16%	3%
Paid paternal and/or maternal leave beyond any statutory requirement	49%	17%	1%
401k/403b/other retirement funds (with employer contribution)	81%	53%	11%
401k/403b/other retirement funds (without employer contribution)	39%	23%	0%
Mental health coverage (beyond health insurance)	26%	17%	6%
Employee Assistance Program (other than mental health coverage)	73%	53%	27%
Dental insurance (fully covered or shared by employer)	90%	30%	3%
Vision insurance (fully covered or shared by employer)	74%	26%	0%
Bereavement leave	93%	56%	14%
Funding for professional development	76%	39%	10%
Commuter benefits	37%	20%	4%
HSA/FSA	73%	29%	3%
Pet insurance (fully covered or shared by employer)	11%	7%	1%

Appendix F: HR  
Survey Data  
Tables

**14. Which of the following statements best reflect the salary sharing practices of your museum?**

	Our institution does this	This is legally required for our institution
My workplace shares the specific salaries of all positions	11%	14%
My workplace shares salary ranges for all positions	46%	14%
My union handbook lists salary levels for each job	21%	4%
My workplace shares salary ranges for every open position	83%	23%
My workplace actively discourages employees from discussing their salaries	0%	1%

**15. What kind of reporting mechanisms for workplace disputes, harassment, or discrimination are currently in place at your organization?**

An HR complaint form (in person or online)	66%
An HR staff member who is available to employees	87%
A union-provided grievance process for reporting	28%
An anonymous reporting mechanism	50%
An employee complaint hotline	21%
A third-party reporting process (e.g., use of an ombudsman)	26%
My organization doesn't have any reporting mechanisms	4%

Appendix G:  
Sample Sizes

## Sample Size Data Tables

### Gender

---

Total = 2,450

---

### Race

---

Total = 2,407

---

### Race and Ethnicity Detail

---

Total = 2,407

---

### Disability

---

Total = 2,376

---

### Employment Basis

---

Total = 2,595

---

### Generation

---

Total = 2,402

---

### Position Level

---

Total = 2,999

---

Appendix G:  
Sample Sizes

**Department Area**

---

Total = 3,035

---

**Average Tenure**

---

In the field = 1,620

---

At current institution = 1,621

---

**Union Status**

---

Total = 2,836

---

Appendix G:  
Sample Sizes

## Workplace Culture

### Figure 1. Positive Dimensions of Workplace Culture in Art Museums

---

Total = 2,660–2,690

---

### Figure 2. Burnout Among Art Museum Workers, by Generation

---

Overall (2023) = 1,907

---

Overall (2025) = 2,663

---

Baby Boomer = 253

---

Gen X = 600

---

Millennial = 1,169

---

Gen Z = 342

---

### Figure 3. Belief That Art Museum Workplace Culture Negatively Affects Health

---

Overall (2023) = 1,907

---

Overall (2025) = 2,656

---

Recent experiences of discrimination = 365

---

Union members = 321

---

Nonrecent experiences of discrimination = 127

---

Nonbinary = 216

---

Appendix G:  
Sample Sizes

**Figure 4. Would You Recommend Your Workplace to Friends and Family?**

---

Overall = 2,639

---

White = 1,803

---

Hispanic or Latine/x = 315

---

Native American/Alaska Native/First Nations = 47

---

Black = 208

---

Asian = 208

---

**Figure 5. Workplace Culture Dimensions, by Museum Budget Size**

---

Small (less than \$5M) = 437-452

---

Large (more than \$15M) = 1,051-1,089

---

**Figure 6. Trends in Workplace Culture Dimensions, by Museum Budget Size**

---

Small (less than \$5M) = 436-458

---

Mid-sized (\$5M-\$15M) = 979-1040

---

Large (more than \$15M) = 1,042-1,099

---

**Figure 7. Churn Rate, by Museum Budget Size**

---

Small (less than \$5M) = 378

---

Mid-sized (\$5M-\$15M) = 931

---

Large (more than \$15M) = 810

---

Appendix G:  
Sample Sizes

**Figure 8. Drivers of Institutional Decision-Making: Executive vs. Nonexecutive Perspectives**

---

Executives = 146

---

Nonexecutives = 2,319

---

**Figure 9. Drivers of Institutional Decision-Making, by Museum Budget Size**

---

Small (less than \$5M) = 435

---

Mid-sized (\$5M-\$15M) = 988

---

Large (more than \$15M) = 1,034

---

**Figure 10. Percentage of White Workers in Art Museums vs. Nonprofits Overall**

---

Total = 2,407

---

**Figure 11. Race/Ethnicity in Art Museum Workplaces, by Position Level**

---

Overall = 2,407

---

Entry = 232

---

Associate = 1,109

---

Manager = 619

---

Director = 234

---

Executive = 139

---

Appendix G:  
Sample Sizes

**Figure 12. Gender in Art Museum Workplaces, by Position Level**

---

Overall = 2,450

---

Entry = 236

---

Associate = 1,126

---

Manager = 633

---

Director = 237

---

Executive = 141

---

**Figure 13. Disability in Art Museum Workplaces, by Position Level**

---

Overall = 2,376

---

Entry = 216

---

Associate = 1,087

---

Manager = 624

---

Director = 234

---

Executive = 137

---

**Figure 14. Belief in Museum’s Celebration of Diversity, by Race/Ethnicity**

---

White = 1,813

---

Black = 208

---

Hispanic or Latine/x = 316

---

Asian = 206

---

**Figure 15. Percentage of White Board Members in Art Museums vs. US Nonprofits Overall**

---

Art museum boards = 47

---

Art museum executive committees = 48

---

Appendix G:  
Sample Sizes

**Figure 16. Dimensions of Workplace Culture: Union Members vs. Art Museum Workers Overall**

---

Overall = 2,639–2,667

---

Union members = 320–324

---

**Figure 17. Union Members’ Perceptions of Union Impact on Workplace Culture**

---

Total = 401–406

---

Appendix G:  
Sample Sizes

Career Satisfaction

**Figure 18. Career Satisfaction, Art Museum Workers vs. US Workers Overall**

---

Total = 2,532–2,576

---

**Figure 19. Career Satisfaction, Art Museum Workers in 2025 vs. 2023**

---

Total (2025) = 2,532–2,580

---

Total (2023) = 1907

---

**Figure 20. Art Museum Workers’ Areas of Highest and Lowest Career Satisfaction**

---

Total = 2,538–2,576

---

**Figure 21. Satisfaction with Sustainability and Value of Job, by Position Level**

---

Entry = 241–248

---

Associate = 1,173–1,192

---

Manager = 662–666

---

Director = 239–245

---

Executive = 142–145

---

Appendix G:  
Sample Sizes

**Figure 22. Satisfaction with Daily Work Environment and Relationships, by Position Level**

---

Entry = 243-247

---

Associate = 1,129-1,190

---

Manager = 657-662

---

Director = 241-245

---

Executive = 142-146

---

**Figure 23. Sources of Support at Work for Art Museum Workers**

---

Total = 2,559

---

**Figure 24. Percentage of Art Museum Workers Who Feel Most Supported by Their Colleagues**

---

Total = 2,559

---

Black workers = 205

---

Union members = 317

---

Nonbinary workers = 216

---

Workers with recent experiences of discrimination = 363

---

**Figure 25. Pay Satisfaction of Art Museum Workers, by Position Level**

---

Entry = 245

---

Associate = 1,159

---

Manager = 661

---

Director = 245

---

Executive = 142

---

Appendix G:  
Sample Sizes

**Figure 26. Pay Satisfaction: Art Museum Workers vs. US Workers Overall**

---

Total = 2,538

---

**Figure 27. Current Career Outlook: Art Museum Workers vs. US Workers Overall**

---

Total = 2,575

---

**Figure 28. Current and Future Career Outlook of Art Museum Workers, by Position Level**

---

Overall = 2,516–2,575

---

Entry = 244–248

---

Associate = 1,147–1,186

---

Manager = 655–666

---

Director = 241–244

---

Executive = 144–146

---

**Figure 29. Emotional Landscape: Nonbinary Workers vs. Art Museum Workers Overall**

---

Overall = 2,593

---

Nonbinary workers = 217

---

**Figure 30. Disappointment and Contentment Among Art Museum Workers, by Budget Size**

---

Small (less than \$5M) = 441

---

Mid-sized (\$5M–\$15M) = 1,009

---

Large (more than \$15M) = 1,052

---

Appendix G:  
Sample Sizes

**Figure 31. Art Museum Workers Actively Looking for a New Job**

---

Overall = 2,507

---

Recent experiences of discrimination = 342

---

Nonbinary = 194

---

Gen Z = 320

---

Union members = 304

---

BIPOC = 733

---

**Figure 32. Quitting Considerations and Motivators for Art Museum Workers, by Churn Rate**

---

Low-churn = 452

---

High-churn = 429

---

**Figure 33. Career Satisfaction: Union Members vs. Art Museum Workers Overall**

---

Overall = 2,539-2,580

---

Union members = 310-317

---

**Figure 34. Union Members' Current Career Outlook**

---

Overall = 2,575

---

Union members = 317

---

Appendix G:  
Sample Sizes

Spotlights by Position Level

	Entry level	Associate	Manager	Director	Executive
Percentage of workforce	2,999	2,999	2,999	2,999	2,999
Gender	236	1,126	633	237	141
Race/ Ethnicity Breakdown	232	1,109	619	234	139
Generation	234	1,115	613	233	135
Union status	255	1,315	747	280	171
Disability	216	1,087	624	234	137
Median full-time compensation	245	1,207	694	262	153
Pay satisfaction	245	1,159	661	245	142
Top three emotions	247	1,194	669	245	146
Current work life rating	248	1,186	666	244	146
Considering leaving the field	238	1,158	659	243	152
Top three reasons to leave the field	97	569	364	137	77

Appendix G:  
Sample Sizes

## Pay and Promotions

### Figure 35. Top Three Art Museum Director Priorities

---

Total = 67

---

### Figure 36. Art Museum Salary Levels, Full-time and Part-time

---

Full-time employees = 1,538

---

Part-time and temporary employees = 1,066

---

### Figure 37. Median Gross Annual Salary (Full-Time) of Art Museum Workers, by Race/Ethnicity\*

---

Asian = 118.34

---

White = 1,012.55

---

Hispanic or Latine/x = 171.09

---

Black = 116.89

---

\* Sample sizes are based on full-time weighted calculations

### Figure 38. Median Gross Annual Salary (Full-Time) of Art Museum Workers, by Museum Budget Size \*

---

Small (less than \$5M) = 243.65

---

Mid-sized (\$5M-\$15M) = 591.72

---

Large (more than \$15M) = 615.13

---

\* Sample sizes are based on full-time weighted calculations

Appendix G:  
Sample Sizes

**Figure 39. Median Gross Annual Salary (Full-Time) of Art Museum Workers, by Museum Type \***

---

City/County/State/Govt. = 125.33

---

Culturally specific = 216.17

---

College/University = 249.99

---

Encyclopedic = 386.3

---

Contemporary/Modern = 908.56

---

\* Sample sizes are based on full-time weighted calculations

**Figure 40. Median Household Income of Art Museum Workers, by Race/Ethnicity \***

---

White = 1,012.55

---

Asian = 118.34

---

Hispanic or Latine/x = 171.09

---

Black = 171.09

---

\* Sample sizes are based on full-time weighted calculations

**Figure 41. Living-Wage Benchmarks, Most and Least Expensive City with an MMF Partner Museum**

---

N/A

---

**Figure 42. Proportion of Full-Time Art Museum Workers Making Below a Living Wage (Museum Income Only) \***

---

Total = 1,450.5

---

\* Sample sizes are based on full-time weighted calculations

Appendix G:  
Sample Sizes

**Figure 43. Percentage of Living Wage Earned by Full-Time Art Museum Workers, by Position Level \***

---

Entry = 82.14
Associate = 635.99
Manager = 432.34
Director = 170.59
Executive = 98.63

---

\* Sample sizes are based on full-time weighted calculations

**Figure 44. Proportion of Full-Time Art Museum Workers' Households Making Below a Living Wage (All Household Income) \***

---

Total = 1,362.27
------------------

---

\* Sample sizes are based on full-time weighted calculations

**Figure 45. Percentage of Living Wage Earned Within Full-Time Art Museum Workers' Households, by Race/Ethnicity \***

---

Native American/Alaska Native/First Nations = 22.64
Hispanic or Latine/x = 159.81
Black = 111.23
Asian = 103.45
White = 919.73

---

\* Sample sizes are based on full-time weighted calculations

**Figure 46. Access to Benefits by Job Status in Art Museums, as reported by HR**

---

Total = 70
------------

---

**Appendix G:  
Sample Sizes**

**Figure 47. Promoted Art Museum Workers, Years to Promotion**

---

Total = 814

---

**Figure 48. All Art Museum Workers, Promoted vs. Not Promoted**

---

Total = 814

---

**Figure 49. Union Members' Perceptions of Positive Union Impact on Salary and Pay Equity in Art Museums, by Race/Ethnicity**

---

Black = 19-20

---

Hispanic or Latine/x = 29-30

---

White = 235-243

---

Asian = 50-51

---

Appendix G:  
Sample Sizes

## Discrimination and Harassment

**Figure 50. Art Museum Workers Who Have Experienced Discrimination, by Race/Ethnicity**

Overall = 2,432
Black = 193
Asian = 199
Hispanic or Latine/x = 286
White = 1,743

**Figure 51. Range of Discrimination Experiences in Art Museums, by Gender**

Men = 578
Women = 1,513
Nonbinary = 201

**Figure 52. Frequency of Recent Discrimination**

Total = 361
-------------

**Figure 53. Sources of Recent Discrimination Among Art Museum Workers**

Total = 338
-------------

**Figure 54. Types of Recent Discrimination Among Art Museum Workers**

Total = 365
-------------

Appendix G:  
Sample Sizes

**Figure 55. Recent Gender-Based Discrimination Among Art Museum Workers, by Gender**

---

Nonbinary = 40

---

Women = 113

---

Men = 14

---

**Figure 56. Recent Age-Based Discrimination Among Art Museum Workers, by Generation**

---

Overall = 150

---

Baby Boomer = 15

---

Gen X = 30

---

Millennial = 60

---

Gen Z = 28

---

**Figure 57. Recent Race-Based Discrimination Among Art Museum Workers, by Race/Ethnicity**

---

Black = 39

---

Asian = 25

---

Hispanic or Latine/x = 21

---

Native American/Alaska Native/First Nations = 8

---

White = 41

---

**Figure 58. Art Museum Workers Actively Looking for Another Job: Workers with Recent Experiences of Discrimination vs. Overall**

---

Overall = 2,507

---

Recent experiences of discrimination = 342

---

Appendix G:  
Sample Sizes

**Figure 59. Workplace Experience: Workers with Recent Discrimination vs. No Discrimination**

---

Have never experienced discrimination = 1,822–1,902

---

Recent experiences of discrimination = 349–366

---

**Figure 60. Career Satisfaction: Workers with Recent Discrimination vs. No Discrimination**

---

Have never experienced discrimination = 1,871–1,911

---

Recent experiences of discrimination = 349–361

---

**Figure 61. Emotional Landscape: Workers with Recent Discrimination vs. No Discrimination**

---

Have never experienced discrimination = 1,912

---

Recent experiences of discrimination = 363

---

**Figure 62. Impact of Discrimination on Negative Career Outlook: Art Museum Workers with Recent Experiences of Discrimination vs. Overall**

---

Overall = 2,575

---

Recent experiences of discrimination = 361

---

**Figure 63. Impact of Discrimination on Positive Career Outlook: Workers with Recent Experiences of Discrimination vs. Overall**

---

Overall = 2,575

---

Recent experiences of discrimination = 361

---

**Appendix G:  
Sample Sizes**

**Figure 64. Art Museum Workers' Responses to Recent Discrimination**

---

Total = 361

---

**Figure 65. Reasons for Inaction in Response to Recent Discrimination in Art Museums**

---

Total = 130

---

**Figure 66. Satisfaction with Institutional Response to Recent Discrimination in Art Museums**

---

Total = 135

---

**Figure 67. Union Members' Perceptions of Union Impact on Job Security/Protections from Retaliation and Grievance Procedures in Art Museums**

---

Total = 402-406

---

Appendix G:  
Sample Sizes

## Research Methodology

### Figure 68. Geographic Region

---

Total = 91

---

### Figure 69. Museum Budget Size

---

Total = 91

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### Figure 70. Museum Type

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Total = 91

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### Figure 71. Museum Collecting Status

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Total = 91

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# Colophon

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## Colophon

### About MMF

MMF is an independent, limited-life organization devoted to envisioning and creating a more just museum sector by 2030. Together with a diverse network of museums, cultural workers, and philanthropists across the US, MMF drives urgent conversations about the most effective ways to make and measure real change inside museum workplaces. Through data, discourse, and empowerment, MMF is committed to the evolution of museums toward equity by improving the working conditions and lives of cultural workers.

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## Endnotes

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## Endnotes

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30. For instance, when workers at The Frick Pittsburgh voted to unionize in 2024, John Payne, a groundskeeper at the museum, said: “We are the backbone of this institution, and we’re excited to finally have a voice in shaping our work environment.” Mariko Aoyagi, a part-time educator at the Noguchi Museum, spoke to the press about Noguchi workers unionizing and said, “The staff are an integral part of the Museum, and our contribution and viewpoint should be recognized by the Museum.” The Tacoma Workers United Mission Statement states, “We neither have a real voice in the decisions that affect us nor clarity or accountability around how decisions are made. Institutional decisions are often made without buy-in from the community and staff, or enough resources to carry them out... These conditions led us to turn to one another for solidarity.” Amanda Tobin Ripley. “Another World Is Possible’: Liberatory Unionism in the US Art Museum Labor Movement,” Ph.D. diss., Ohio State University, 2025, [http://rave.ohiolink.edu/etdc/view?acc\\_num=osu1742981340549331](http://rave.ohiolink.edu/etdc/view?acc_num=osu1742981340549331).
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## Endnotes

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