
AVANT ARTE
NEW GENERATION SURVEY
Why they collect, their relationship with institutions, and why it matters
AVANT ARTE

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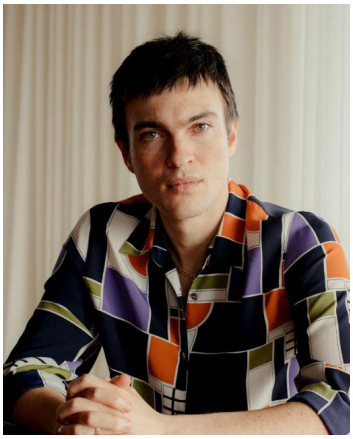
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Front cover
Photo by Julian Mora

Introduction by Mazdak Sanii



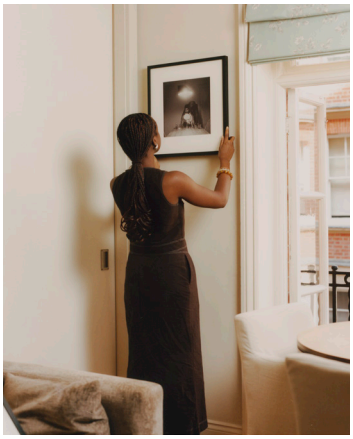
Mazdak Sanii, CEO and Co-Founder, Avant Arte

Through a combination of interviews and in-depth surveys, we engaged over two thousand art collectors, enthusiasts and professionals to understand a generational shift now reshaping the art world. Our respondents span 62 countries and all six inhabited continents, including many of Avant Arte's most committed collectors, with whom we have built deep relationships over the past decade. The picture that emerges challenges many familiar assumptions. This is a new generation of art lovers that, far from disengaging from art or institutions, is confidently redefining how they discover, collect, visit, support and participate.

In parallel, we consulted leaders from the world's leading arts institutions to capture their views on how collectors and patrons can better engage with and support them in the long term. Our view is that aligning these two perspectives is essential to understanding where institutional support is headed.

This is our third annual report on the new generation of collectors, and the first in which we can robustly track shifts over time across discovery, collecting, preferences, and institutional engagement. This year, we've focused specifically on the gap opening up between younger collectors (those under 45) and their older counterparts, as this new generation takes on a leading role across both the art market and institutional philanthropy.

Much has been written about how millennials and Gen Z relate to culture differently from previous generations: that cultural consumption has become more bound up with identity, and that participation matters more than observation. These shifts have reshaped fashion, food, travel and music, and our data suggests the same transformation is well underway in art.



Alayo Akinkugbe with Untitled (Man and Mirror) by Carrie Mae Weems

The scale of that transformation may surprise. This is a generation investing as much in art as in a car or a watch, with many spending over a month's salary on a single artwork. Their taste is wide, omnivorous, and far less driven by hype than many assume. They are building the foundations of their collections through editions and prints, finding an accessible entry point in an increasingly polarised market. They want to support museums financially, but not as passive patrons. They want giving to be tied to engagement, connection, social impact and community, rather than acquisitions and prestige.

Above all, this generation has its own principles for engaging with and supporting the arts, even as they continue to complicate the stereotypes they are often saddled with. Our findings show that this new generation are more serious, more knowledgeable, and more willing to spend than many in the sector give them credit for. But because art plays a fundamentally different role in their lives, they need fundamentally different things from the institutions that serve them. How they discover, what brings them through the door, what they want from memberships, and how they choose to give: in each case, the old models are struggling to keep up with a generation that is willing to engage, but on its own terms.

Thank you

With sincere thanks to everyone who contributed to bringing this report to life; Callum Hale-Thomson, Tom Lloyd, Josefina Cardini, Maria Zambrano Moreno, Dorian Chouteau, Claire Toole. In addition, we're grateful to the institutional professionals who spoke with us: Rachel Dingsdale and Josephine Chanter from the Design Museum; Sheila Shin from SFMOMA; Erin Wright, John Rice and Doug Leonhardt from LACMA; Anna Starling and Denise Vogelsang from the National Portrait Gallery; and Gwendolyn Perry Davis from MCA Chicago.

The Role of Art
An underestimated generation



1. Art is non-negotiable

For this generation, art isn't a hobby, but part of the fabric of how they live. Over 9 in 10 describe art as being as important to them as fashion, music or interior design for self-expression. But where previous generations may have treated art as something to appreciate at a distance, this cohort weaves it into their daily life.

Nearly 6 in 10 choose artwork partly based on how it fits with their interior and home styling, a figure that peaks at 65% among 18-24 year olds but drops to just 27% among over-65s. More than 8 in 10 say they buy art to decorate their home. As one collector in Spain put it: "I buy art because of how it makes me feel. A house isn't a home without art."

> "I buy art because it builds narration of my surroundings and me."
> Male collector, 35-44, Poland

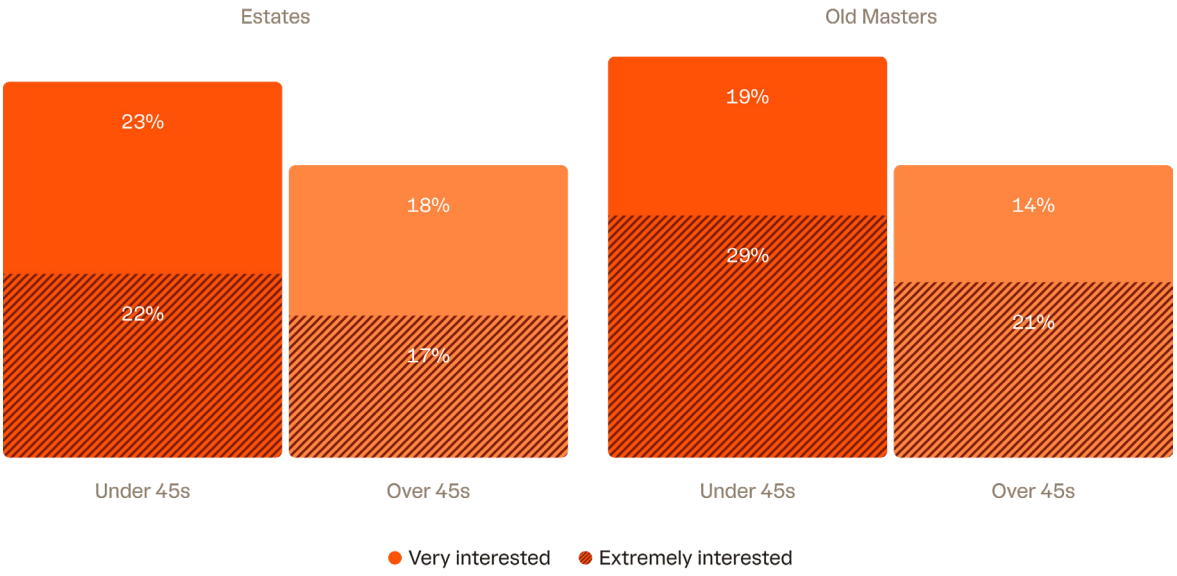
2. Broader, deeper, and more curious

A common critique of younger generations is that they are hype and trend-driven, prioritising the latest contemporary works over historical ones. Our research firmly counters this. These new generation collectors show depth and breadth in their interests, often to a surprising extent.

For one, the new generation are a third more likely than their older counterparts to have a strong interest in works by Old Masters, and 29% more likely to be drawn to works from artist estates. The assumption that younger collectors focus mostly on contemporary work doesn't bear out here.

How strongly are you interested in the following types of artists?

But perhaps more tellingly, this isn't a pivot in one direction. A third of under 45s expressed strong interest in both Old Masters and contemporary artists simultaneously, 23% more than the older generation. This cohort are art omnivores, seeking depth and range, not one or the other.



This mirrors a broader cultural shift. Previous generations often defined their taste through allegiance: you collected contemporary or you collected Old Masters, in the same way you were a mod or a rocker. But this generation doesn't see those categories as competing, and might be as comfortable with a 17th-century Dutch still life as they are with a print edition from a living artist. Taste, for this generation, isn't necessarily a specific identity to defend, but rather the freedom to explore.

3. Driven by connection, not financial return

When asked why they buy art, the new generation's answers are remarkably consistent. Over 7 in 10 say they buy specifically to support artists, and a similar proportion say they connect with the story behind a work when choosing what to buy. Barely a third cite investment as a motivation. The assumption that younger buyers are in it for the flip isn't supported by our data.

> "I buy art that symbolises or brings to life thoughts I've held in my mind. It serves as a reminder."
> Female collector, 25-34, United Kingdom

The younger the collector, the more this matters. The youngest in our cohort (18-24) are 25% more likely to buy based on the story behind a work versus those over 65. For one young collector in Italy, the motivation was simple: "I buy art to express myself through someone else's work, when I'm not able to do it myself."

> "I need to fall in love with an artwork. Investment is great, but I also love living with what I purchase."
> Male collector, 45-54, Australia

This is consistent with a broader shift in how younger generations relate to culture. For this cohort, the line between personal taste and personal identity is thinner than it was for their predecessors. The art they buy isn't just something to hang on a wall, but an extension of who they are, with deep connections to the artist behind it and the story of how it was made.

4. Early in their journey, but deeply ambitious

There is a well-worn narrative that audiences for culture are ageing, and that younger generations aren't spending in the same way. Our data challenges this on both counts.

Many of our younger respondents are relatively new to buying art (a quarter have been collecting for under two years) but they are entering the market notably earlier in life than their predecessors, and with serious intent. A third of collectors in their late twenties and early thirties have already been buying for five years or more.



Miwa Komatsu, Three Guardians: Gatekeeping the Heat and Cold

Budgets grow quickly with experience, and the newest collectors are the most bullish: 39% of those who started in the past year plan to increase their spending. This is a generation early in a spending curve that steepens over time.

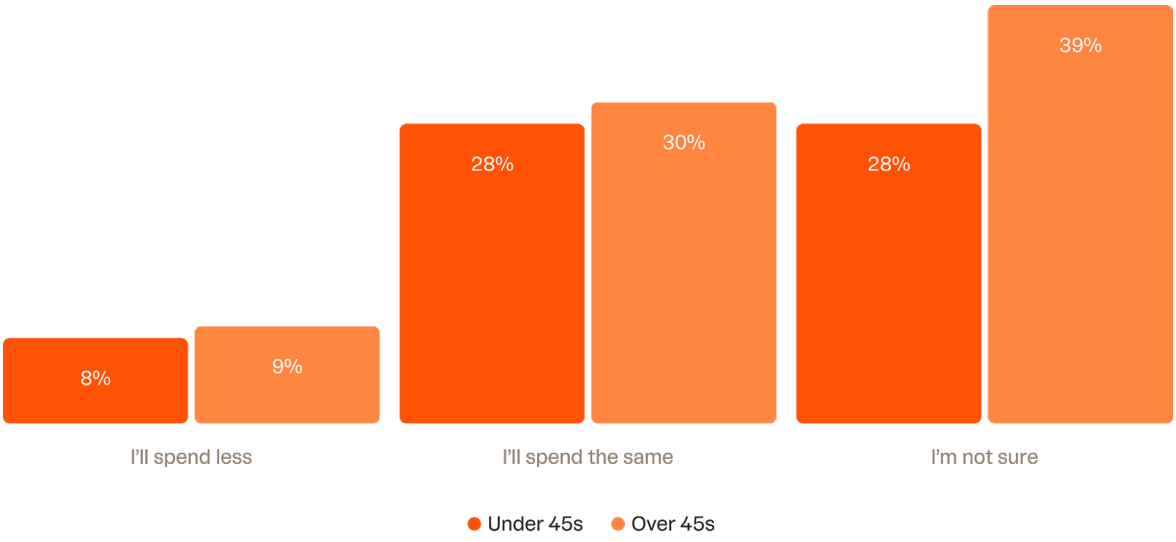
Among Avant Arte's collector community, that ambition is already reality. The majority purchasing editions priced above €5,000 are under 45. Over a fifth of our respondents dedicate at least 10% of their household income to art each year, rising to almost half in the US who spend over $5,000.

There's a strong appetite to spend meaningfully on art that moves them. Limited edition prints lead the pack for both generations, with around 6 in 10 purchasing at least one in the past year. But elsewhere, we see some notable differences in what the two generations are buying. Compared with the older generation, the new generation are:

- 41% more likely to buy prints
- 24% more likely to buy drawings
- 8% less likely to buy original paintings
- 14% less likely to buy sculpture

Notably, this generation is twice as likely to have purchased a limited rather than an open edition print. For the under 45s, scarcity and exclusivity matter.

How is your spend on art likely to change over the next year?



The drive to spend more is firmly generational. The new generation are 65% more likely to plan an increase in their art budget next year vs. those over 45. At the ends of the spectrum, this delta is even more extreme: 18-24 year olds are three times more likely to plan an increase versus those over 65.

5. Art is prioritised

Ask this generation to choose between art and other luxury purchases, and art consistently comes out on top. Nearly half would spend as much on art as a new car or a watch, matching the older generation exactly despite being earlier in their careers and having less disposable income.

40% would spend more than a month's salary on a single artwork. More than half already spend more on art each year than they do on fashion and clothes.

Among higher earners, the generational gap in ambition widens. Of those earning $150,000 or more, the new generation are 27% more likely to spend more than a month's salary on a single artwork. They are 28% more likely to value art alongside a car or a watch, and they are over 50% more likely to plan an increase in their budget next year. The wealthiest young collectors aren't just keeping pace with their older peers, they're pulling ahead.

6. The cost of living is biting, but art is holding

Post-pandemic cost-of-living pressures have tightened budgets across the board. Over a quarter of our younger respondents cite it as the reason they're not currently buying or are spending less, compared to a fifth of the older generation.

But when forced to make hard choices about where their money goes, this generation protects art. Those citing cost of living pressures plan to increase their art spending at the same rate as those who don't. Only 8% of current buyers plan to decrease their spending next year, and the new generation are 65% more likely to plan an increase.

Judy Chicago,
Reincarnation Triptych





"Following an extremely successful collaboration with George Condo in 2024, Dia's partnership with Avant Arte continued this past year with a series of prints by Lee Ufan. The resulting editions have proven to be both a meaningful fundraising tool and an important means of engagement, bringing new audiences to Dia while also offering deeper points of connection to our artists and their work to long-time supporters. As this report suggests, arts patrons seek relationships with institutions that extend beyond the museum visit itself.
At Dia, this has meant finding thoughtful ways to invite audiences into our mission-whether through public programs, special events, or initiatives such as these editions, which create an accessible and personal point of entry. Avant Arte are remarkably attuned to Dia's longstanding commitment to supporting artists through sustained and generous collaboration, and we are grateful for their partnership."

Jessica Morgan, Nathalie de Gunzburg Director,
Dia Art Foundation

Digital and Social Media

The new front door

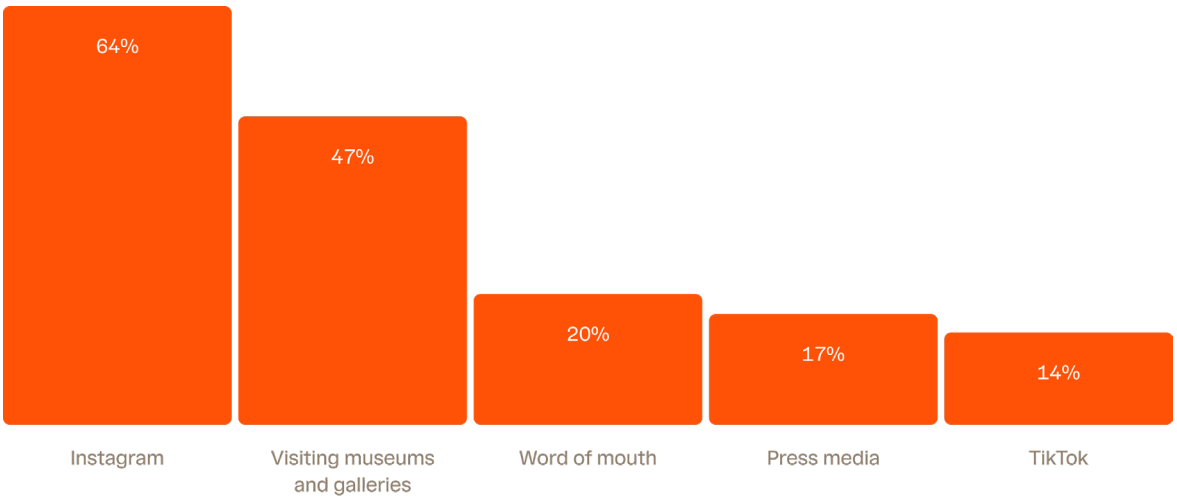


Photo by Ruben Mavarez

7. They are digital natives

When it comes to finding new artists and exhibitions, this generation starts online. They are around a third more likely than the older generation to say social media is their main route to discovering new artists and their work, with nearly two-thirds turning to Instagram as their primary channel.

How do you typically discover new art and artists? *Under 45s only*



The gap between social and traditional channels is stark. Over a third follow more than ten museums on social media, but fewer than 1 in 10 are on more than ten museum mailing lists. For discovery, social dominates, though email remains a powerful driver when it comes to converting that interest into purchases and support.

TikTok is accelerating fast. The new generation are seven times more likely to use it for discovery, a gap that widens further among the youngest collectors (18-24), who are sixteen times more likely.

And this isn't just browsing, but buying too. One in five new-gen collectors have purchased art directly through social media in the past year, nearly double the rate of the older generation.

8. They use social media in fundamentally different ways

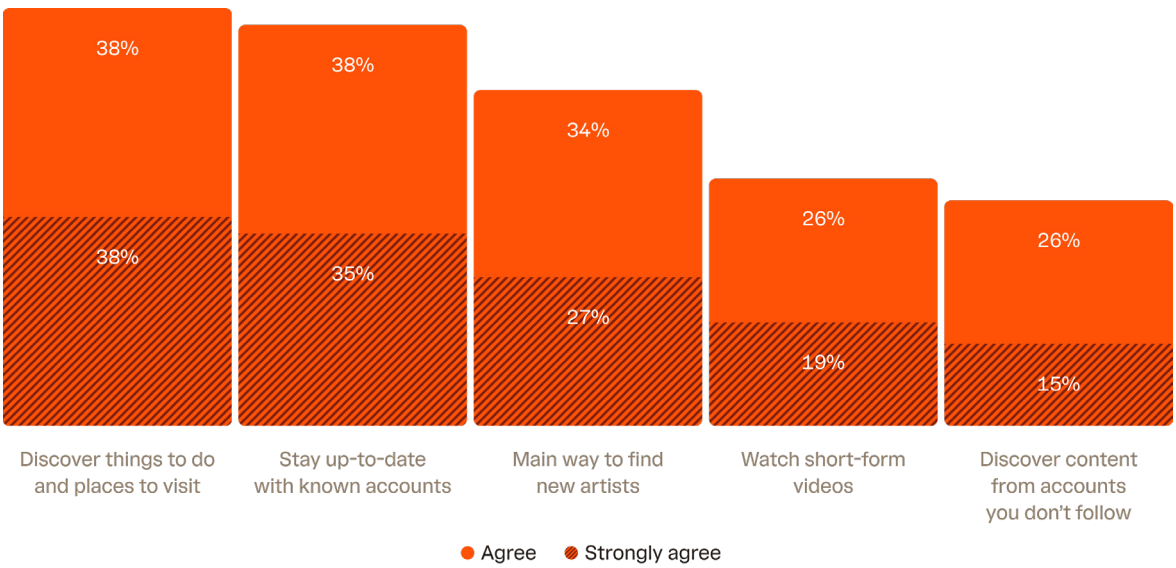
The age divide is not just about how much people use social media, but about what it's doing for them.

Changes to social media algorithms over the past few years have systematically reduced the organic reach of accounts' content and shifted platforms towards recommendation-led discovery. Where once a user's feed was primarily made up of accounts they chose to follow, today it increasingly surfaces content from accounts they've never encountered.

For younger collectors, algorithm-driven discovery is central to how they find new artists. This generation are nearly 50% more likely to say most of what they see comes from accounts they do not yet follow, and around a third more likely to favour short-form video (like Instagram Reels or TikTok) over static posts.

Avant Arte's own data reflects this. Content posted on our own Instagram account generated 171.5m views in the last 12 months, with Reels as the key driver. Reels reach 37% more people than carousels, generate 18% more engagement, and produce 57% more shares, making them fundamental for reaching new audiences.

To what extent do you agree with these statements about your use of social media?
Under 45s only



For the older generation, social media remains a more curated, familiar experience, one less likely to introduce them to something new. Museums that optimise their social content only for existing followers are invisible to the generation most likely to discover them through it.

9. Museums are stretched and struggling to keep up

Nearly two-thirds of new-gen collectors think museums perform worse digitally than large consumer brands in fashion, media and entertainment. Amongst the older generation, the figure is just over half. Only 29% feel museums understand how to engage people like them on social media.

And yet the appetite to be reached is clearly there. 48% say digital content from museums motivates them to buy products from those institutions, compared to 39% of their older counterparts. 7 in 10 already use Instagram to decide which exhibitions to visit, almost 40% more than those who rely on a museum's own website. 68% say they have been directly motivated to visit a museum after seeing a post.

When asked, 71% say they would visit more often if museums were better at notifying them about exhibitions they might like, 17% more than the older generation. Over two-thirds want more content from museums they follow in their feed. The demand exists. For most institutions, the infrastructure to meet it does not.

> "Digital really is the key way. We launched TikTok a couple of years ago, and obviously that has a younger target audience. We also did a partnership with Snapchat. Our research has shown that you have to communicate with young people through digital channels because that is how they find out about things."
> Design Museum



> “Museums are not static. They are frames that need to keep widening to embrace multiple points of view, new people, new contexts. This report is a reminder that we have to keep reconsidering the frame - in how we reach people, how we invite them in, and how we earn their support over time.”
>
> Michael Govan, CEO and Wallis Annenberg Director of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA)

The New Generation and Museums
What brings them in (and back)

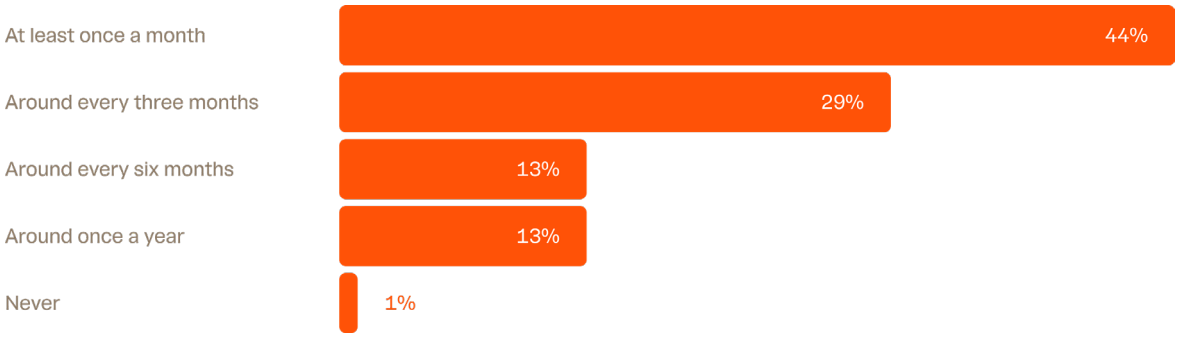


10. They don't just scroll, they show up

There's a familiar narrative that younger audiences, brought up on social media and smartphones, are losing interest in museums and institutions. Our respondents firmly reject this premise.

In fact, the new generation are avid museum-goers. Three-quarters visit at least four times a year, and 44% go every month, virtually identical to the rate among the older generation. Fewer than 1% report never visiting.

How often do you visit museums? *Under 45s only*



As the digital world grows louder and more consuming in everyday life, the pull of the physical experience is stronger than ever, and younger generations are leading the charge.

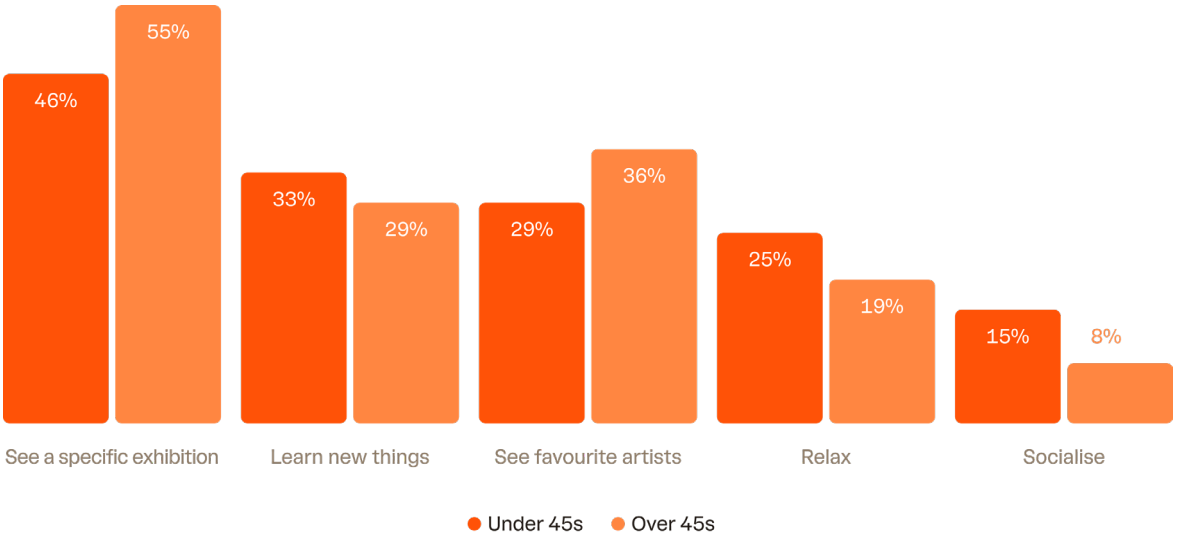
> "When they come to the gallery, often they do not want the digital. Our feedback indicates that they want the real-life experience because they spend their whole life on a screen, and actually they want to experience real things with real people."
> National Portrait Gallery

11. But why they visit is changing

Blockbuster exhibitions and strong permanent collections remain a powerful draw across all ages. But whilst the older generation are more likely to visit with a specific exhibition or favourite artist in mind, newer collectors show up for broader reasons: to socialise with friends, to relax, to learn something new.

> "Older audiences are truly driven just by the art. They want engagement with the art, whereas we see that younger audiences are often motivated by opportunities to be with friends and family. They are looking for more social opportunities."
> LACMA

Why do you visit museums?



How they behave once inside reflects this. The new generation are 70% more likely to meet friends at the museum, but 15% less likely to pay for a special exhibition. As our conversations with leaders at key institutions reiterated, museums increasingly find themselves in competition with other forms of entertainment and culture for our attention. Focusing on social, participatory experiences on top of their existing programming is one way in which institutions might reframe their offering to draw in more of this younger generation.

> "We are competing in the leisure economy for people's time. Are we competitive enough in the leisure economy to get them to give us the time on the weekends, to come out of their homes and say, 'Tonight I'm not going to watch my Netflix show, I'm actually going to go see an exhibition at the museum or go to an event there'"
> SFMOMA

12. What they want to see

When it comes to programming, a generational divide is clear. The new generation are 20% more likely to think museums should be more adventurous, and 19% more likely to support museums showing more works by historically underrepresented artists.

> "I'd like to see more marginalised people be given a seat at the table: women from migrant backgrounds, queer people, refugees, and those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds."
> Female collector, 25-34, Belgium

Over two-thirds feel strongly that programming should reflect contemporary cultural, political and social themes, and a similar proportion say museums should better tailor their offering to younger audiences.

> "Young audiences are looking for relevance, and a sense of themselves. You want to see yourself in what's being presented."
> Design Museum

But this isn't a call to abandon collections or chase trends. This is the same generation that is a third more likely than their elders to be interested in Old Masters. What they want is range: historical and contemporary, canonical and underrepresented, challenging and accessible.



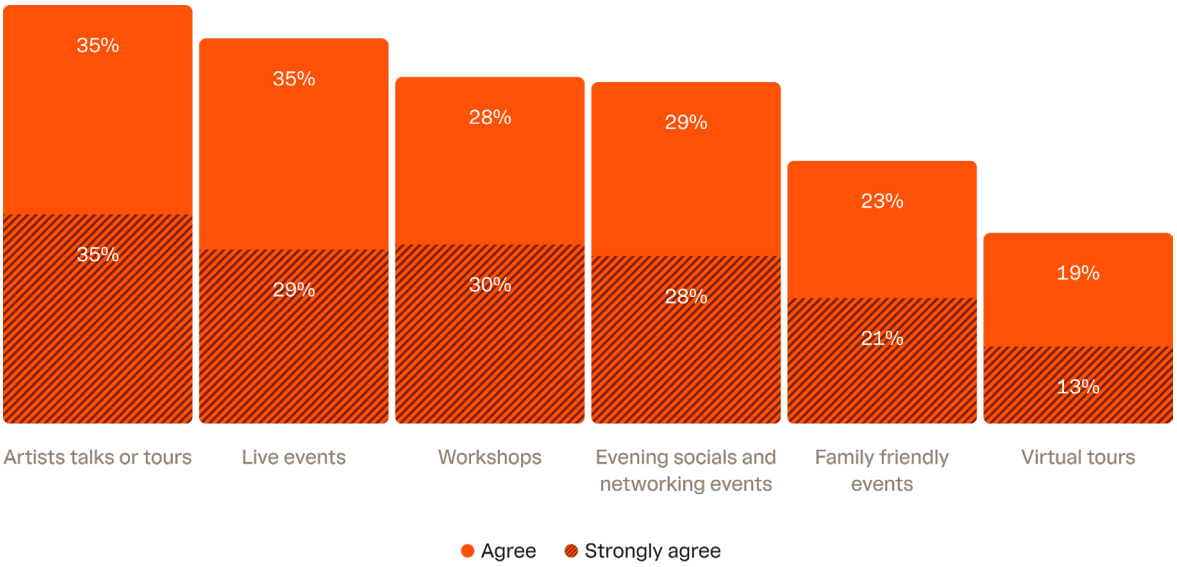
Alex Katz, Ada Ada

13.

They want more than just exhibitions

The strongest demand is for participatory, social experiences. 7 in 10 say they'd be more likely to visit for an artist talk or tour. But the real gap is in what happens beyond the programme: the new generation are 65% more likely to want parties and galas at museums, and 38% more likely to want workshops.

What type of events or programming would make you more likely to visit a museum or gallery? *Under 45s only*





> “MoMA PS1 sits in one of the fastest growing and most diverse boroughs in the country, and that shapes everything about how we programme. What this report confirms is something we feel every day - the new generation of art lovers are already here, already engaged with art and they want institutions to meet them where they are. That is both a reassurance that we’re moving in the right direction in how we approach programming and a motivation to continue rethinking what a museum can be and what it can offer the communities it serves.”
>
> Connie Butler, Director of MoMA PS1

Membership
The membership gap

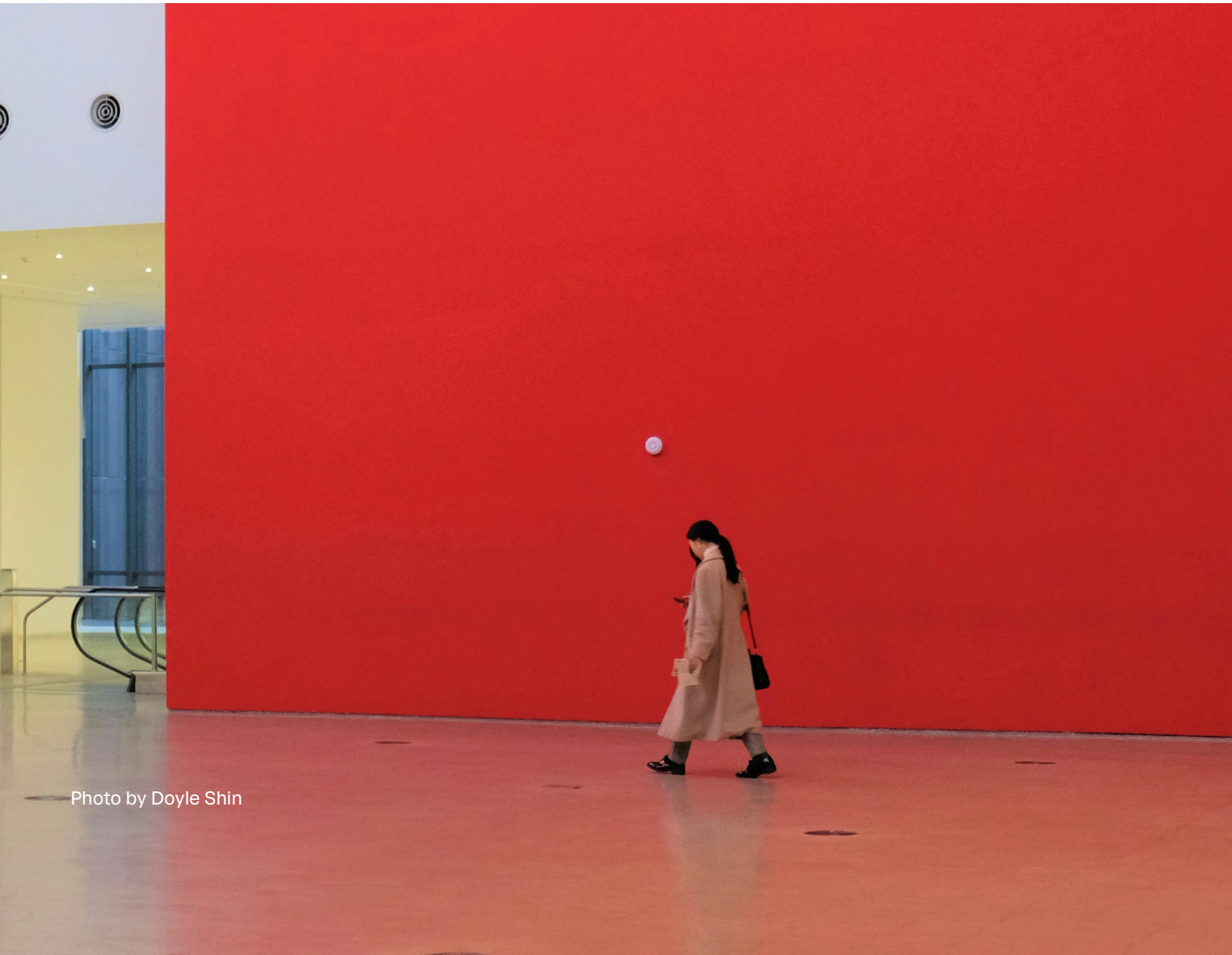


Photo by Doyle Shin

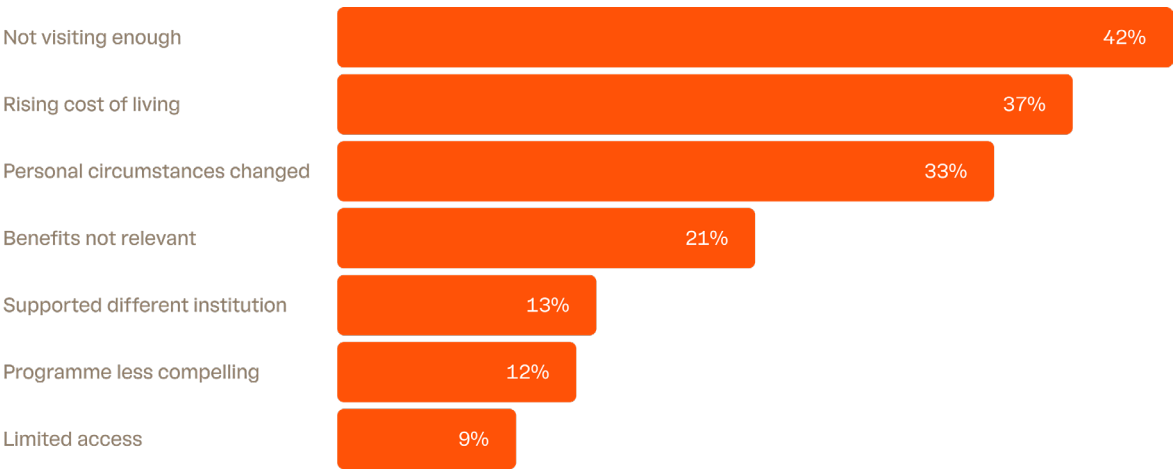
14.

Memberships that don't fit

The new generation are 30% less likely to hold an active museum membership than those over 45. Just 16% currently do, and barely a third have ever held one. Given how often they visit, that's a significant gap.

Look closer, and it's apparent that the issue isn't just recruitment, it's retention. Half of new-gen who have held a membership have cancelled one in the last three years, and they're 40% more likely to have done so than the older generation. Cost of living is the obvious explanation, and it does play a role, but it's dwarfed by a simpler feeling: memberships don't offer what this generation is looking for.

Why have you cancelled a museum membership in the past? *Under 45s only*



This is further supported by the fact that the wealthiest members of this generation (and those with the most disposable income) are in fact the most likely to cancel, a trend not seen amongst the over-45s. Among those earning $60,000 to $100,000, the cancellation rate for the new generation is 60%

higher than for their older counterparts. This is all the case while two-thirds of new-generation members say they want to increase their financial support of museums: evidently, there is a mismatch between what new-gen are looking for, and what memberships offer.

When we asked why they weren't members, high-spending younger collectors similarly flagged their top reason to be that benefits aren't compelling enough. They are twice as likely as the older generation to describe memberships as "outdated" whilst cost ranks just fourth or fifth to them. One respondent summed up their desire simply: for a more "modern concept of membership."

> "We have been talking a lot about what membership means to younger audiences. Do we develop something for younger audiences that is not only tied to a value proposition, but gives them a sense of belonging?"
> SFMOMA

15. The new generation seeks belonging from membership

Traditional museum memberships are built around transactional benefits: free or discounted entry, advance booking for sold-out exhibitions. These can be powerful acquisition drivers for museums, especially where becoming a member is sometimes the only way to guarantee access to tickets for the most sought-after, and often sold-out, exhibitions. And they remain important: 82% agreed that discounted access was a crucial component of any paid membership, regardless of age.

> "One thing people are asking for from membership is a sense of belonging, a place where they can have social, mindful experiences and be with others they can connect with."
> SFMOMA

But the younger the audience, the more social interaction drives the decision to join. 18-24 year olds are over 60% more likely to view belonging as a key driver for membership versus those over 45. Transactional benefits rank similarly across generations, but it's on emotional and community benefits where the gap opens up:

> "Anything that makes the museum space more social is a draw: staying open late, evening events, concert series"
> Female collector, 25-34, United States



> "I'd be more likely to join if they made activities that built a community of art enthusiasts and made us feel part of something, not just elevated visitors."
> Female collector, 35-44, France

> "I think they should have events that are not so formal like drinks receptions. These feel very old school and attract a certain crowd that I don't connect with."
> Female collector, 25-34, United Kingdom

8 in 10 said they'd consider becoming a member or increasing their support level if there were more in-person events, and almost half said they would pay more for better benefits. When asked what types of events would draw them to a museum, the answers skew toward access and intimacy. 58% want behind-the-scenes tours, nearly half want late openings, and over 40% want talks, parties, and preview tours. The desire isn't for more programming, it's for programming that makes people feel like insiders, not visitors.

> "I'd like more opportunities to engage with the artists. Maybe an open hour or a Reddit AMA-style gathering. I'd also want to interact with curatorial teams on how they shape exhibitions and learn their process."
> Collector, 35-44, Germany

> "It's hard to find engaging events during non-work hours that aren't rowdy or for children."
> Collector, 35-44, Ireland

What comes through consistently is a desire for transparency and purpose:

> "I'd like the possibility of supporting emerging artists or contributing to special cultural initiatives. It would make the membership feel more personal and impactful, transforming it from a simple subscription into a form of cultural patronage."
> Female collector, 25-34, Romania

> "The benefits I'd get would have to equate to the amount I'm spending. Not even perks for me personally, just let me know where the money is going."
> Female collector, 18-24, United States

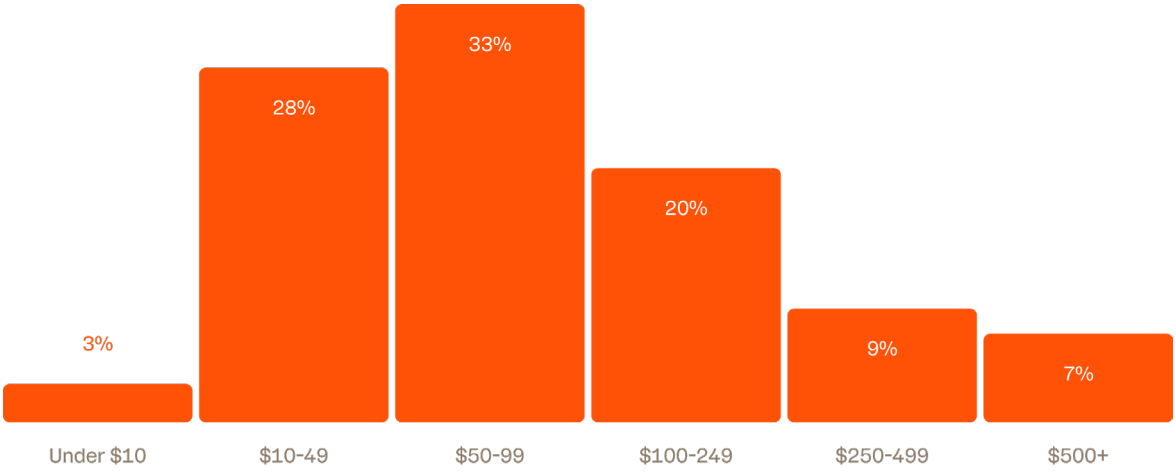
> "For me, membership becomes attractive when it offers both practical benefits and a feeling of belonging, not just discounted entry. I'd like opportunities to learn more, attend exclusive events, and feel connected to the museum's work."
> Collector, 45-54, United Kingdom

16.

The shop as a pathway to wider support

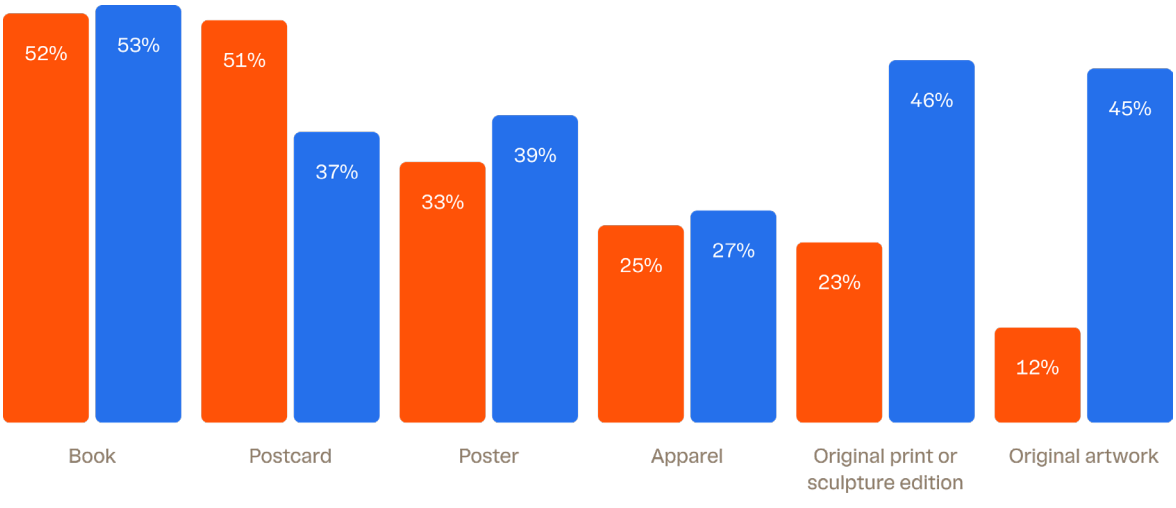
What's the most you have ever spent in a museum or gallery shop? *Under 45s only*

This generation is open to making significant purchases from museum shops, but only with the right offering. Nearly two thirds have made a purchase in the past year, over 4 in 10 have spent over $100 in a single visit, and 1 in 10 over $500.



What have you bought from a museum shop in the past year vs. what would you like to buy from one? *Under 45s only*

Books remain the most popular purchase, but the real story is the gap between what the new generation buys and what they say they want to buy. 1 in 5 have purchased an original art print or sculpture edition, but half say that is what they would most like to buy, alongside original artwork (45%). Many museum shops still default to books, postcards, and branded merchandise, but the data suggests an appetite for something more: unique, artist-made items that connect back to the institution's programme and mission.



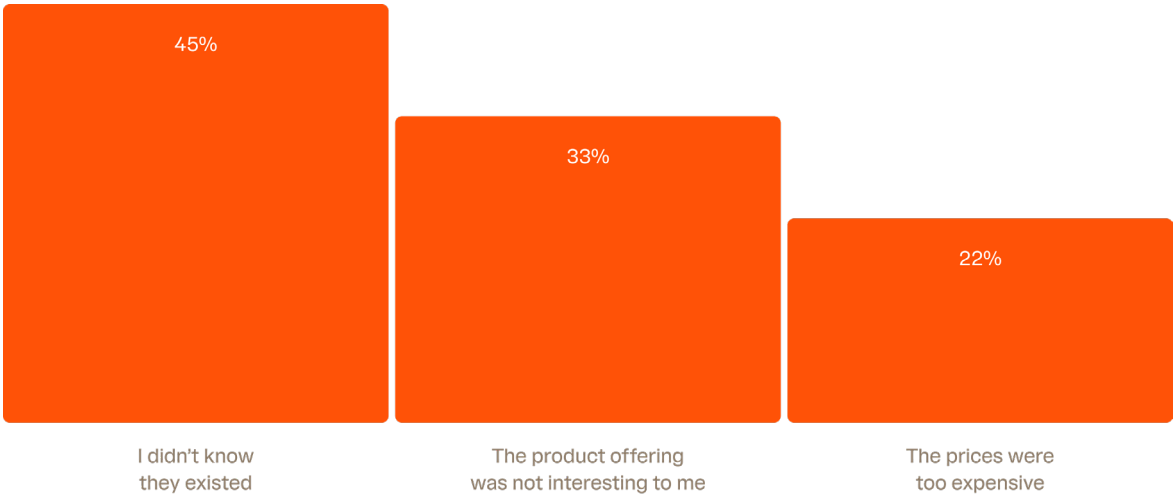
The new generation are 50% more likely to buy because of a curated selection they like and trust (26% vs 18%). They value the institution's eye, not just its logo. And 46% would consider buying a higher-priced item if they knew it directly supported the museum, compared to 39% of the older generation.

17. Online is a missed opportunity

Museums are increasingly becoming global brands. The National Portrait Gallery told us that three quarters of their million-plus Instagram followers are located outside the UK, an audience that may never walk through the door but already feels a connection to the institution.

The online shop is one of the simplest ways to reach those people, and to keep existing supporters engaged between visits, and yet just a third of our respondents have ever made a purchase from a museum online shop.

Why haven't you purchased from an online shop? *Under 45s only*



For those who hadn't, the most common reason was simply not knowing it existed, and for those who had, the experience often fell short. The new generation are 50% more likely to describe museum shop websites as clunky and hard to use (35% vs 23%).

When people do buy online, exclusivity is the main reason. 57% of new generation shoppers said they purchased because the item wasn't available anywhere else, well ahead of price, or convenience.

> “We see our onsite and online museum store as something unique to SFMOMA, with offerings that you can only find from the museum. That has meant looking at more collaborations with artists, looking at more creative partnerships, and looking at things that you can’t simply find on Amazon.”
> SFMOMA

Asked what would encourage them to buy from an online shop (or do so again), respondents ranked a more compelling product offering and better curation alongside competitive pricing. Over 4 in 10 have made a purchase from an institution after engaging with its digital content, and almost half said better communications alone would make them more likely to buy.

Harland Miller,
Love Saves The Day





> "I have long believed museums are more than care takers of objects; instead, they are places for learning about our past, leaning into our present, and imagining a better shared future. They are places for conversation, and debate, as well as places to find joy and community. What this survey shows us is that the next generation of collectors agree. They aren't coming to art passively. They want something participatory, social, alive. And museums have a mandate to build experiences that truly speak to them."
>
> Anne Pasternak, Director of the Brooklyn Museum

Supporting Institutions
Reimagining patronage



Cindy Sherman, Untitled,
for the Museum of Cycladic Art

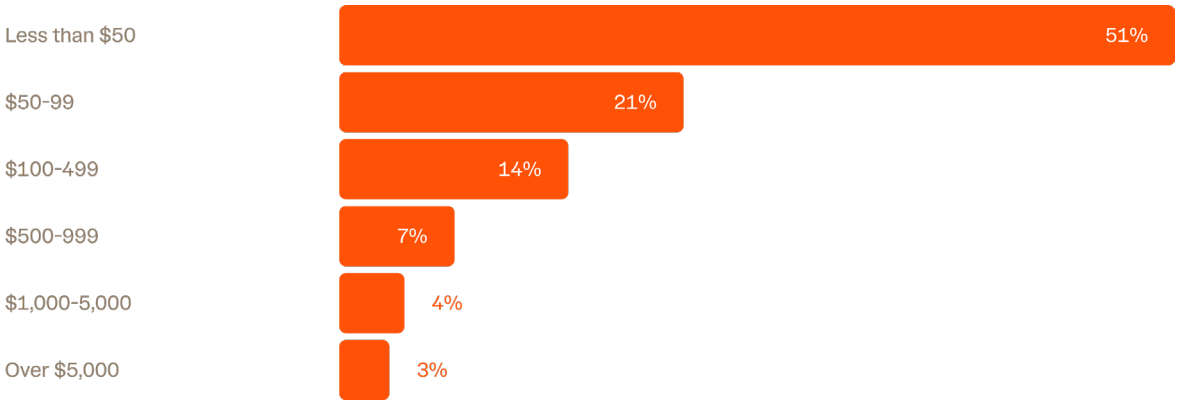


18.

They are already donating

It is often assumed that younger collectors aren't giving back to institutions in the same way as older generations. Our data paints a more nuanced picture. As a starting point, nearly two-thirds of the new generation have donated to museums or galleries in the last year. But digging deeper shows that not only do 6 in 10 have the means to give more, and 7 in 10 said they'd like to increase their support over the next 12 months.

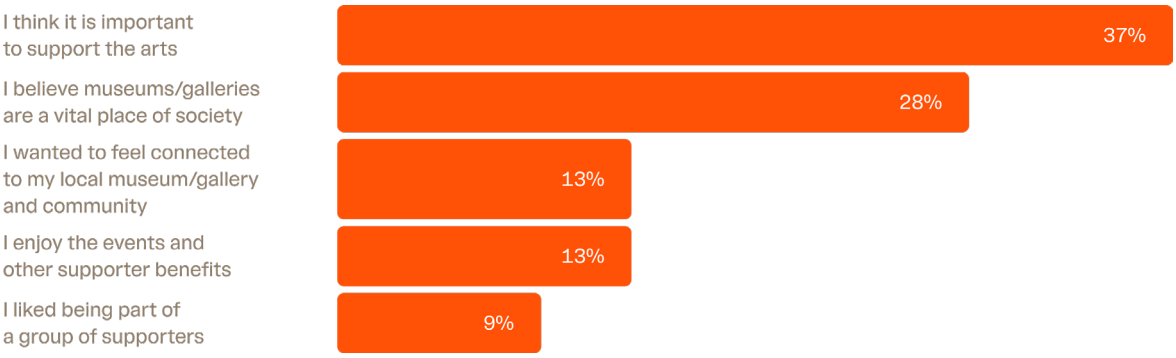
How much have you donated to museums or galleries in the last 12 months? *Under 45s only*



At higher income levels, this generation is actually notably more generous. Among those spending $1,000 or more per year on art, the new generation are 40% more likely to have donated $500 or more versus the over 45s.

When asked why they chose to donate, the overwhelming response was a belief that the arts matter and that museums are a vital part of society. This new generation is five times more likely to cite this as their reason than receiving specific benefits in return.

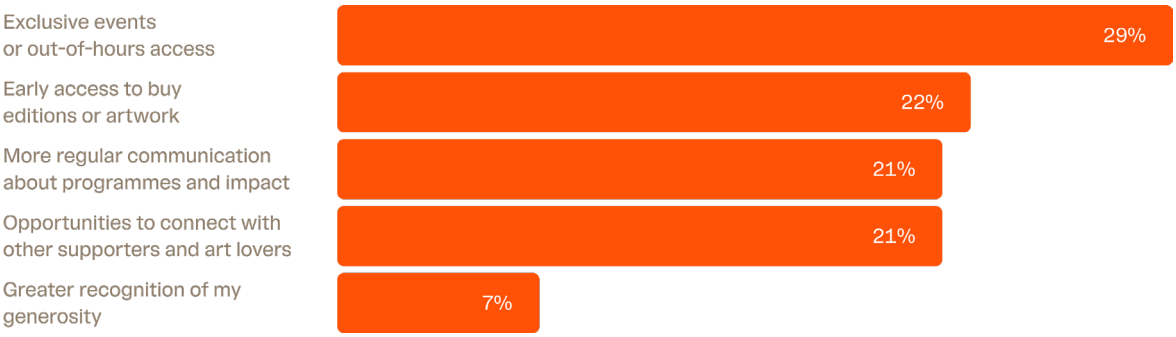
What prompted you to donate? *Under 45s only*



But many aren't even being asked, or at least, not in the right way. More than half have never been asked to donate, or can't remember the last time they were. Fewer than one in six are asked more than once every three months.

So, capture this audience's attention, and how do you persuade them to give? This new-generation seeks experience, exclusivity and community, whilst less than 5% said they wanted greater recognition of their generosity.

What would encourage you to make a donation, or donate again? *Under 45s only*



19. New-gen give differently

When this generation does give, what motivates them looks quite different. Over 4 in 10 prioritise social impact and local community engagement when supporting a museum. Among the older generation, the top priority is different: they are 40% more likely to want to help the museum acquire new work by important artists.

This tension between community and legacy runs through every section of this report, from how this generation chooses art for their homes to what they want from membership, and it should reshape how institutions frame their ask.

Large, one-off donations, which form the backbone of traditional museum fundraising, came dead last when respondents were asked how they'd prefer to support museums. A third ranked it as their least preferred option. What they want instead is the chance to donate more frequently, in smaller amounts, with more tangible benefits and impact.

Transparency matters too. Over half say they would be more likely to donate if they had a clearer sense of exactly how the funds would be used, compared to 40% of the older generation. And they are 36% more likely to say the reason they aren't giving more is that they don't understand how their money could make a difference.

> "I'd like a better understanding of how donations are invested."
> Male collector, 35-44, United Kingdom

> "I would love to see what the money is used for directly, get an insight into the projects and use of the donations."
> Female collector, 25-34, United Kingdom

20.

Editions are the bridge

50% of the new generation say they are willing to donate more when they receive something tangible in return, compared to 40% of the older generation. Fundraising editions sit at exactly this intersection: something meaningful to own, with a direct line to institutional support.



Carrie Mae Weems, Untitled (Woman and phone), Untitled (Woman brushing hair), Untitled (Man and mirror)

Our data bears this out. New-generation collectors who have purchased from Avant Arte are 56% more likely to have bought a museum edition than their older counterparts. And what happens after that purchase is telling.

Over half of new-generation museum edition buyers went on to take further action with the institution: signing up to a mailing list, visiting an exhibition, becoming a member, or becoming a patron. That conversion rate is notably higher than for the older generation. Most strikingly, new-generation edition buyers are twice as likely to subsequently make a donation, and three times more likely to go on to become a patron of the institution.

Editions aren't a substitute for traditional fundraising, but can be a powerful bridge to it. For a generation that wants transparency, tangible impact, and a personal connection to the institutions they support, they offer an excellent entry point.

21. Closing Thoughts

Despite concerns that 'the great wealth transfer' is actively shifting new-generation collectors away from the art market, younger collectors and patrons do have a huge appetite for art and institutions. The cost of living may be eating disposable incomes, but this generation still prioritises art as a crucial part of their identity, and shows a strong desire to both increase their own spend on artworks, and their support of museums as they develop professionally.

Many of the stereotypes that are often applied to this generation fail to hold under scrutiny. Younger collectors are not as fickle or hype-driven as we are made to believe, but have wide, omnivorous taste across time periods and mediums. They may be digital-first and prioritise new forms of media for discovery, but relish the museum as a space to escape the overwhelm of technology and to re-engage with other like-minded individuals in person.

The main question for institutions is how they are able to adapt their fundraising and programming models to meet the needs of this growing audience. This year's findings show there are still so many opportunities for institutions to capture and convert the patrons of the future. Namely that the museum shop could be so much more than a thoroughfare but an entry point for philanthropy; that memberships should be gateways to community, not just access to free tickets; and above all that this generation want patronage to be rewarded by access and experience, not their names above the door.

The desire from the next-generation is there, and so are the means. All that's missing is the invitation.

Methodology

This report brings together insights from our survey of 2,028 individuals carried out during March 2026, as well as a series of interviews with key executives at institutions across the world.

- 61% of survey respondents were under 45 (“new-generation”), 37% over 45 and 2% preferred not to disclose
- 54% were female, 40% male, 2% non-binary and 4% preferred not to disclose
- 25% of respondents are existing members of the Avant Arte collector community
- 21% were based in the UK, 15% in the US and Canada, 60% across Europe, 2% in Asia, and the remainder across the rest of the world

Back cover
Lee Ufan, From Line


AVANT ARTE