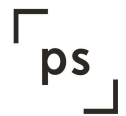


Analysis and trends from the Annual Museum Survey

2019-2024

Report: March 2025



ps research



Contents.

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Summary.

Overview of findings and key trends

Introducing this analysis.



The Annual Museum Survey

This report is based on data collected through a Museum Development survey of over 1200 non-national museums in England that are Accredited, which gathers evidence to help demonstrate the social and economic importance of museums to funders and stakeholders and to provide museums with data to enable them to benchmark their performance.



Aim of the analysis

Now that the Annual Museum Survey has reached its 5 year milestone for consistently collected data (since 2019/20), it can help us to understand the changing landscape for England's museums over that period.

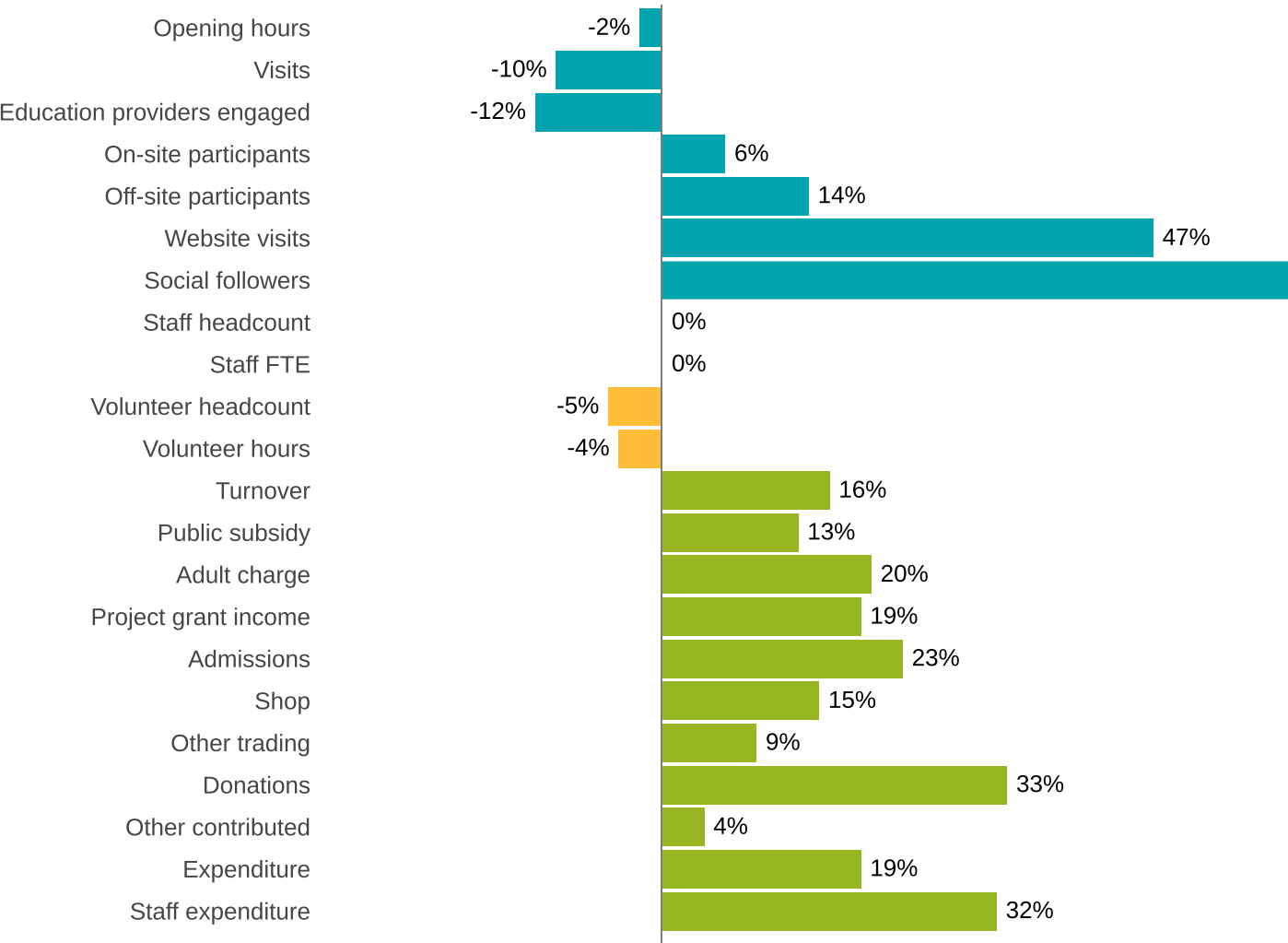


Considering the pandemic

The timing of the global Covid-19 pandemic coincided with the second year of this data collection period (2020/21), so part of the analysis story is how museums have recovered from this by comparing 2019/20 levels to the current position (2023/24).

How have things changed for museums over the last 5 years?

Average (median) change in audience, workforce and financial numbers between 2019/20 and 2023/24



What are these average changes telling us?

- On-site visits are still down on pre-pandemic levels, but digital audiences have seen significant growth
- Whilst staffing levels are unchanged, expenditure on staff is up by 32%
- Overall, there has been a small drop in volunteer numbers and hours contributed
- Turnover is up, but so is expenditure
- Earned income and donations are all up significantly

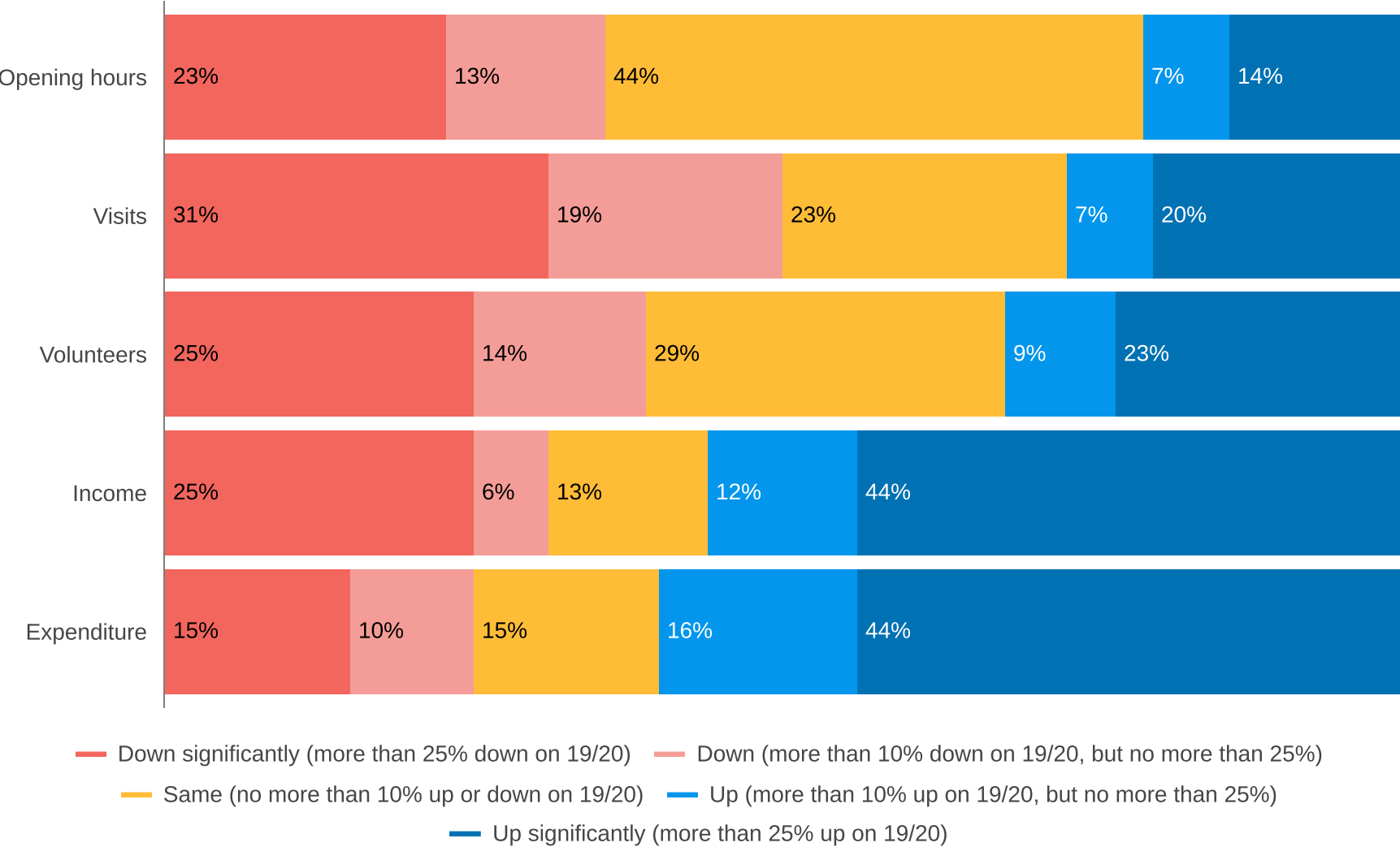


What about organisations with multiple sites?

- Volunteer headcount is down 32% over the last 5 years on average, with hours contributed by volunteers down by an average of 24% over the same period
- Turnover/income is up 8% compared to 2019/20 (compared to 16% for single site museums), but expenditure is also up by an average of 18%

But when we dig deeper, some museums are fairing better than others.

Based on an individual museum's change compared to 2019/20



Whilst the average change in visitor numbers across museums is -10%, three in ten museums have seen their visitor numbers drop by more than 25% compared to 5 years ago

Opening hours have recovered since the pandemic, but visits are still down.



Average opening hours are back to pre-pandemic levels

Average opening hours in 2023/24 equates to around 29 hours a week. Data on closures from Mapping Museums suggest there have been less closures since the pandemic compared to the previous two decades.



Visit numbers have not recovered to 2019/20 levels, and the gap is largest for local authority museums

Half of museums have seen their visit numbers drop by more than 10% since the pandemic, one in four (27%) have seen them increase by more than 10%.

Although local authority museums have higher visit numbers on average than independent museums, the gap between 2023/24 and 2019/20 is larger (down from an average of 44.4k to 30.2k). Three in four of the largest local authority museums and two thirds of museums part of a local authority multi-site organisation have seen visits remain down compared to 5 years ago.



On average, museums are engaging with more education providers but digging deeper reveals a different story

The proportion of museums engaging education providers has increased (from 80% in 2019/20 to 86% in 2023/24), particularly organisations with multi-sites (98%). And on average, the number of education providers they engage is higher than 5 years ago.

But when we look at the individual museums, we can see this is not the same for everyone; half of museums report this being down (and the average drop is actually 12%).

But trends on digital audiences are more positive.



Number of social media followers have increased

On average a museum's social media following has grown by 61% since 2019/20, this rises to 92% if they have seen on-site visitors increase by more than 25% over the last 5 years. Three in four museums have seen social media following increase by more than 25%.



Facebook continues to be the most commonly used platform

Over 90% of museums use Facebook and this has remained fairly constant over the last 5 years. The use of X/Twitter has dropped significantly in the last year (65% down from 72%), overtaken by Instagram (73% in 2024). The use of TikTok increased by three times over last 5 years (14% up from 5%).



And museums are reporting increased website traffic

On average, annual unique visitors to a museum's website is 47% higher than 5 years ago, with more than half (56%) seeing it grow by more than 25%.



External data also shows an increase in digital audiences since the pandemic

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sports 'Participation survey' found that 13% of respondents had engaged digitally with a museum or gallery in the last 12 months, up from 8% in 2021/22.

Staffing levels are largely unchanged but volunteering is down a little.



Overall, staff numbers have not changed since 2019/20

- When we look at different museums, a third (33%) have seen staffing increase by more than 10% since 2019/20 but 27% have seen it reduce by more than 10%
- The average number of local authority museum staff has actually gone up (9 from 7) but they are also more likely to have seen staffing reduce by more than 10% (37% vs 24% independents)



The proportion of museums hiring contracts has been increasing

- Contract hires (e.g. freelancers, consultants) has been increasing, from 12% in 2020/21 to 23% in 2023/24)
- In 23/24 the same proportion of museums either recruited staff or hired contracts
- One in five (22%) of museums with staff made redundancies in 2020/21, down to 6% in 2023/24



On average, volunteer numbers are 5% down on the level of 2019/20

- But two in five museums have seen volunteer numbers drop by more than 10%; 32% have seen them grow by more than 10%
- It is museums with staff that are more likely to have seen volunteer numbers reduce significantly (32% of museums with 10+ staff have seen volunteers drop by more than 25% over the last 5 years)



Hours that volunteers contribute are down by a similar amount

- On average, volunteer hours at museums are down 4% on 19/20, but again there is a divide when looking at individual museums
- 46% have seen hours drop by more than 10% over the last 5 years, whilst 39% have seen them increase by more than 10%

Organisations with multi-sites in particular seem to be struggling with volunteer capacity.

Context: 63% of multi-site organisations are local authorities



Whilst staffing levels have remained similar overall

With an average of 52 staff per organisation in 2019/20 compared to 53 in 2019/20



The number of volunteers is down

From an average of 88 volunteers per organisation in 2019/20 to 78 in 2023/24



And the average hours contributed by volunteers is significantly down too

From an average of 7,529 volunteer hours per organisation in 2019/20 to 4,980 in 2023/24



More than half (54%) have seen the number of volunteers drop by more than 25% over the last 5 years

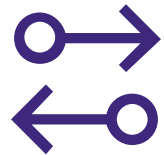
And close to half (46%) have seen volunteer hours drop by the same level

Both income and expenditure are on the up.



Income levels peaked in 2021/22

With half of museums receiving Covid-19 grants from local authorities and one in four accessing the Culture Recovery Fund in that year



Museums were more likely to have seen their income increase than decrease over the last 5 years

44% of museums have seen it increase by more than 25% since 2019/20, whilst one in four have seen it decrease by more than 25%



But expenditure has been rising over the last 5 years too

44% of museums have seen expenditure increase by more than 25% since 2019/20, with 55% seeing staff expenditure rise by that level. Over this time museums have faced higher interest rates, increased staffing costs, rising energy prices and food price hikes.

The majority (88%) of museums received earned income in 2024.

With this most likely to be through a shop (90%), by charging for admissions (50%) or a cafe (44%)



Average admissions prices are up

From £5 in 2019/20 to £6.50 in 2023/24



Half of museums have increased admissions income by more than 25% over the last 5 years

Whilst just 8% of museums have seen their admissions income fall by that level over the same period



Income from a shop and cafe are also rising

- 44% of museums with a shop increased income from this by over 25%, rising to a 92% increase if they have also seen visitor numbers increase by the same amount
- Income from a cafe has been growing year-on-year, with 47% of museums with a cafe seeing income from this more than 25% higher than 2019/20

What we know about other types of income.



The majority of museums (86%) received contributed or charitable income in 2023/24

42% of these museums have seen this income increase by more than 25% over the last 5 years, whilst 41% have seen it decrease by the same amount



Virtually all museums receive on-site donations, although this income is relatively modest

- With the average income from on-site donations being £3,614 in 2023/24, compared to £1,541 in 2019/20
- Over half of museums have seen on-site donations increase by more than 25% over the last 5 years, with the average increase being 33%



Two in five museums received public subsidy in 2023/24

- The average value of public subsidy is higher than it was 5 years ago, with the average in 2023/24 being £76.5k, and being significantly higher for local authority museums
- Half of museums receiving public subsidy have seen it increase by more than 10% compared to 2019/20



Museums receiving project grant income is up, but the proportion receiving capital grants is down

60% of museums received project grant income (also known as revenue grants for time-limited activities or one-off projects) in 2023/24, up from 53% in 2019/20; whilst 13% received capital grants in 2023/24, down from 21% in 2019/20

Local authority museums are more likely to have seen their visitor numbers fall.

There are a number of significant differences when looking at local authority museums:



Those opening all year round has dropped

From 85% in 2019/20 to 75% in 2023/24



The largest local authority museums and those part of a multi-site are most likely to be down on visit numbers

With over half of those typically receiving 50k+ visits a year seeing numbers drop by more than 25% since 2019/20



But they continue to engage higher numbers of education providers in comparison to independent museums

Engaging an average of 29 providers in 2023/24 compared to 12 for independent museums



Average public subsidy funding is higher for local authority museums

But they make less from other contributed and charitable income and on-site donations, and just 12% charge for admissions



There is a real divide in terms of changes in staffing levels amongst local authority museums

37% have seen staffing levels drop by more than 10% (compared to 24% of independent museums), whilst 34% have seen levels increase by over 10%



There is a noticeable split when it comes to change in staff expenditure over the last 5 years

38% of local authority museums have seen staff expenditure reduce by more than 25%, whilst 40% have seen it increase by more than 25%



They typically have fewer volunteers (and hours contributed) than independent museums

With an average of 19 volunteers in 2023/24 compared to 40 at independent museums

There are also interesting trends when looking at other types of museums.



Volunteer-run museums

They are less likely than other museums to have seen social media followers increase significantly

Half have seen it increase by more than 25% over the last 5 years compared to four in five museums with staff

They are less likely to have seen volunteer numbers reduce

15% have seen volunteer numbers drop by more than 25% over the last 5 years, half the 32% of museums with 10+ staff

And have seen the average number of contributed hours from volunteers increase

From an average of 2,400 hours in 2019/20 to 2,600 in 2023/24



Urban vs rural museums

Urban museums are more likely to have seen their social media following increase significantly

81% have seen it increase by more than 25% over the last 5 years compared to 55% of rural museums

Three in ten urban museums have seen staffing levels increase by more than 10% over the last 5 years

Compared to 16% of rural museums

Half (51%) of urban museums have seen volunteer numbers and contributed hours drop by over 25% since 2019/20

Compared to 36% of rural museums

Urban museums are more likely to have seen a significant increase in income from one-off donations

63% have seen this increase by more than 25% over the last 5 years, compared to 39% of rural museums

Reflections.

Some museums appear to have coped well over the last five years and very few have closed their doors compared to the previous 20 years, but there are a significant number struggling in terms of visits, people and finance:



Three in ten museums have seen on-site visit numbers fall by more than 25% over the last 5 years
Larger museums, those with multiple sites and local authorities appear to be struggling most with audience numbers



Staffing levels remain relatively unchanged but costs associated with staff have increased significantly
This is before additional National Insurance costs come into force in April 2025



Museums with staff, particularly larger ones and multi-sites, have seen volunteering numbers drop significantly
Although volunteering in small, rural, volunteer-run museums has generally recovered after the pandemic



Use of freelancers and consultants has been on the rise over recent years
Will this continue to rise as some museums deal with increased staff costs and a drop in volunteering?



Museums have been growing their income but are struggling to keep up with rising expenditure
Donations and earned income such as admissions (primarily through price increases) have increased significantly but a third of museums have seen their expenditure increase by more than 25% over the last 5 years

What will the impact on museums be if the trends of lower visitor numbers and rising costs continue?

Introduction.

Background and context to understand this report

Overview.

This report has been commissioned by Arts Council England as part of its ongoing partnership with Museum Development.

Arts Council England is the national development agency for creativity and culture. Our vision, set out in our strategy Let’s Create, is that by 2030, we want England to be a country in which the creativity of each of us is valued and given the chance to flourish, and where every one of us has access to a remarkable range of high-quality cultural experiences.

Between 2023 and 2026 we will have invested over £467 million of public money from Government, alongside an estimated £250 million each year from The National Lottery, to help ensure that people in every part of the country have access to culture and creativity in the places where they live.

Until Autumn 2025, the National Lottery is celebrating its 30th anniversary of supporting good causes in the United Kingdom: since the first draw was held in 1994, it has raised £49 billion and awarded more than 690,000 individual grants.



Background to this report

The purpose of the Annual Museum Survey is to gather evidence to help demonstrate the social and economic importance of museums to funders and stakeholders – locally, regionally, and nationally – and to provide museums with data to enable them to benchmark their performance. It is operated by Museum Development South West in partnership with the Arts Council on behalf of all Museum Development providers in England.

Now that the Annual Museum Survey has reached its 5 year milestone for consistently collected data, there is an opportunity to understand the survey’s capabilities not only to provide annual snapshots, but how it highlights trends over a period. The data of 2019 onwards is particularly significant as it provides a baseline of museums performance pre and post Covid, providing insight to the museums sector recovery rate.



Thank you

To all the museums that have responded to the Annual Museum Survey over the last five years. Without these responses, this report would not be possible.

Introducing the Annual Museum Survey.

Each year the Annual Museum Survey engaged non-national museums within the Accreditation scheme to contribute data on their workforce, finance, audiences, and insights.

The Annual Museum Survey aims to provide insights into the sector's health as well as the challenges and opportunities it is facing.

By retaining a consistent question set and methodology every year, it is possible to track past and current trends such as the impact of the pandemic on volunteering and finances. Open text questions allow us to dig into the stories behind the data, such as increasing pressures on the sector due to the cost of living crisis and how this has overshadowed post pandemic recovery.

Insights generated by the Annual Museum Survey are used by museums to demonstrate their social and economic value, both locally and nationally. Data insights also aid museums in benchmarking their operational activity.

Read Annual Museum Survey reports for England and areas at: southwestmuseums.org.uk/what-we-do/annual-museum-survey/



What does the survey cover?

- Museum profiling, from governance type to urban/rural location and levels of deprivation
- Opening hours and visitor numbers
- Engagement and participation from education providers
- Digital, including website, social and use of digital tools
- Staffing and volunteers
- Income, including a breakdown across public subsidy, project grants, capital grants, traded income and more
- Expenditure, including what proportion is from staff costs
- Open-text questions to gather qualitative feedback on the above areas



Organisations with multiple sites

Some museums are part of a larger organisation. These are known as multisite organisations. Their site specific data is limited to opening hours and visits. We treat all other data from these organisations separately for analysis due to complexity and scale.

What analysis do we use in this report?



Overview of analysis outputs

Analysis from each year of the Annual Museum Survey is typically provided through the 'Index of analysis'. This is a large set of cross-tabulations covering every question in the survey, cut by a wide-range of categories such as governance type, region, urban/rural, 'size' of museum, whether they are staff or volunteer run, and more. It also includes analysis of numeric questions, including median values, range between the 5th and 95th percentiles and the inter-quartile range.

Each year, the data is weighted by region/area, governance type and museum size to ensure different museum characteristics are not over or underrepresented and to aid comparisons over time.

Typically, the Annual Museum Survey will receive over 600 responses from museum sites and over 50 responses from multi-site organisations. It has consistently had a confidence interval (also known as the margin of error) below +/-3% at a national level.



Establishing a constant sample

A large 'constant sample' of museums responding in each of the last 5 years has been building. As part of this project, we have identified a sample of 400 museums that responded in both 2019/20 and 2023/24, with three-quarters of these responding in each of the five surveys. Key numeric data from these museums has been joined for the first time to track changes across a constant sample.

Where possible, trends relating to numeric data (e.g. number of hours, visits, etc) is based on the constant sample, i.e. where we have the highest level of confidence. However, whilst 400 museums may have responded over time, it does not mean that they have provided data for every data point.

When we are looking at broader trends across the 5 years, e.g. the proportion of museums selecting a particular response option, we use the Index of analysis given it was not feasible to link together every data point for every museum across the 5 years.

Any averages reported are median values rather than means.

Context to consider.



Covid 19 pandemic

The pandemic is a considerable factor in this 5 year analysis, with museums significantly impacted by it in 2020/21 and to some extent in 2021/22. It is inevitable that the story of the analysis focuses on how museums recovered from the pandemic.



Other significant context

Not only does this analysis cover the impact of the pandemic, there are other significant factors to consider when interpreting the analysis, particularly around financial data. This includes the rise in interest rates and general increase in cost of living due to rising energy prices, labour costs and food prices.



Baseline assumptions

2019/20 is effectively a pre-pandemic baseline with museums reporting based on an April to March year. This analysis must assume that 2019/20 was a 'normal' year for museums. There will inevitably be instances where a museum was under or over performing in 2019/20, but this would be the case regardless of the year benchmarked against and given the size of the sample being analysed this is unlikely to have a significant impact.

Learnings for future annual museum surveys.



Value of 3 year averages

There can be significant variance year-on-year in data reported, particularly income levels which are often based on grants and funding. To mitigate this when looking at financial data which is sensitive to large year-on-year change, we could look at using a 3 year average which should level out any one off spikes.



Opportunities to gain additional insights

Scope to make small tweaks to gain additional insights, for example, building out the economic impact calculator beyond visits, using employee data and addressing a gap around procurement.



Building on the constant sample

We have a significant constant sample now which we could build on each year for some specific, targeted trends analysis.



But recognising the limitations of the constant sample

The ongoing challenges and balancing act of collecting comprehensive, reliable data from museums. A museum may respond, but it is unlikely that they will provide data for every question. Banded questions were introduced several years ago which has given us a better view overall, but it is likely that this has reduced 'actual' data provided.

Audiences.

Opening, visits, educational engagement and digital

More than half (55%) of museums were open all year round in 2024.

With a third (33%) open for part of the year and 12% either open by appointment only or an 'other' pattern



The proportion of all museums opening all year round has not changed compared to 5 years ago (56% in 2019/20)



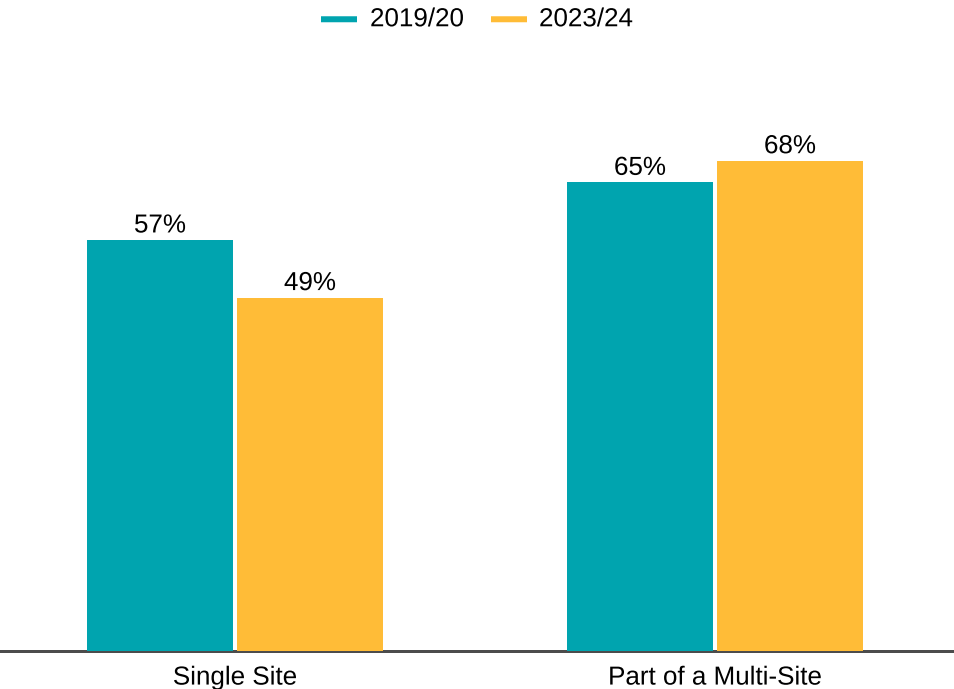
But the proportion of local authority museums opening all year round has dropped

85% of local authority museums were open all year round in 2019/20, down to 75% in 2023/24



Single site museums appear less likely to be open all year round than they were before the pandemic

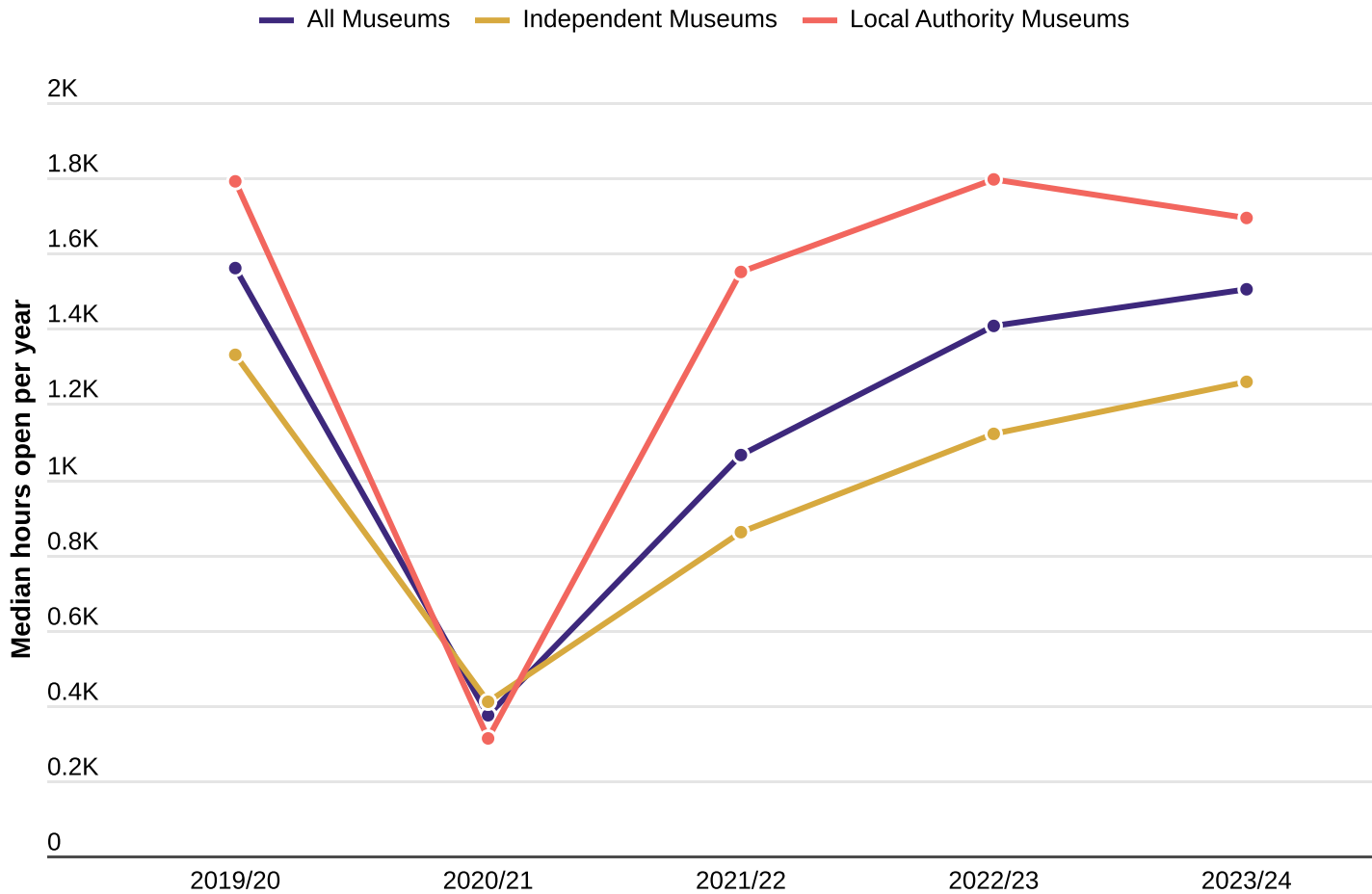
% of museums open all year round



% of museums open all year round. Base: Single Site 2019/20 (n=548); Single Site 2023/24 (n=423); Multi Site 2019/20 (n=171); Multi Site 2023/24 (n=199)

Opening hours have shown gradual and sustained recovery since the pandemic.

Museums were open for an average of 1,560 hours over the 2019/20 year, recovering to an average of 1,504 hours in 2023/24

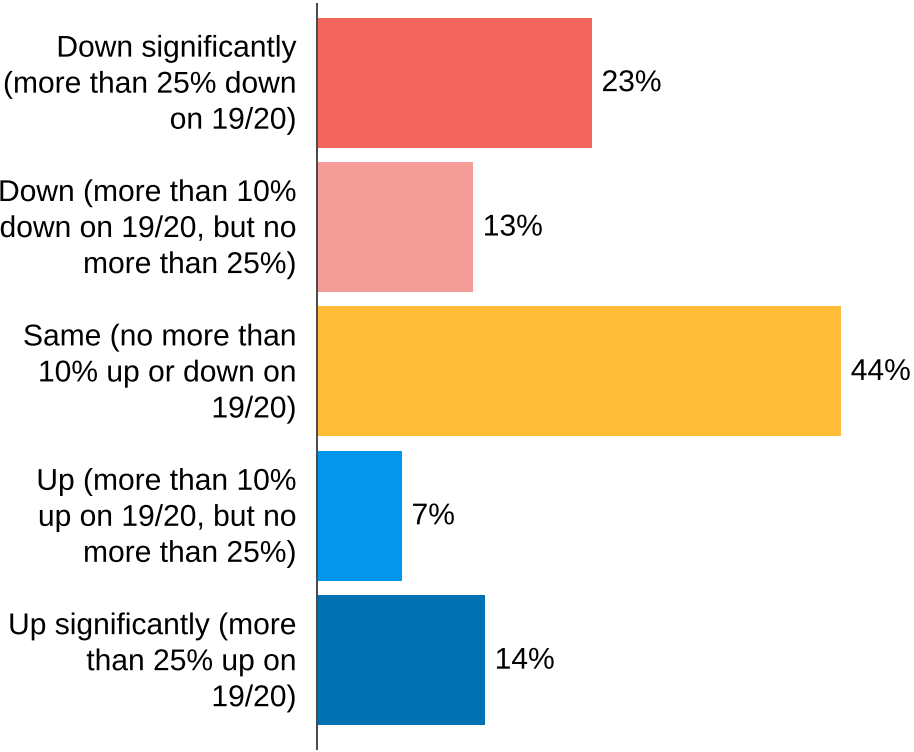


Median opening hours by year. Base: All Museums (n=227-366); Independent Museums (n=146-253); Local Authority Museums (n=70-96)



The average hours open in 2023/24 equates to approximately 29 hours per week

But opening hours in more than a third (36%) of museums are still down on the level of 2019/20

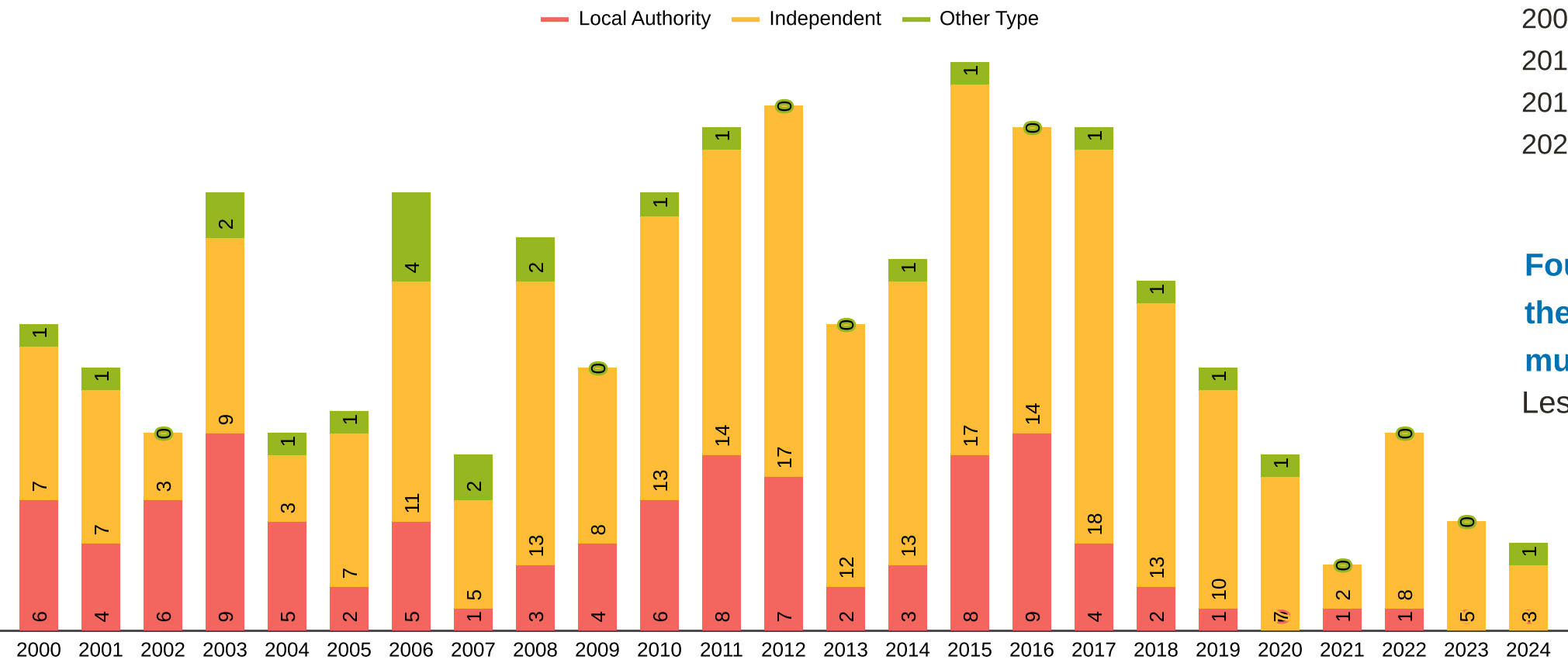


Change in opening hours (2023/24 compared to 2019/20). Unweighted base: All Museums (n=369)

What about museum closures?

There appear to have been significantly less closures since the pandemic

Museum closures since 2000, by governance type:



Average annual closures by five year period:

- 2000-04: 13
- 2005-09: 14
- 2010-14: 20
- 2015-19: 20
- 2020-24: 6

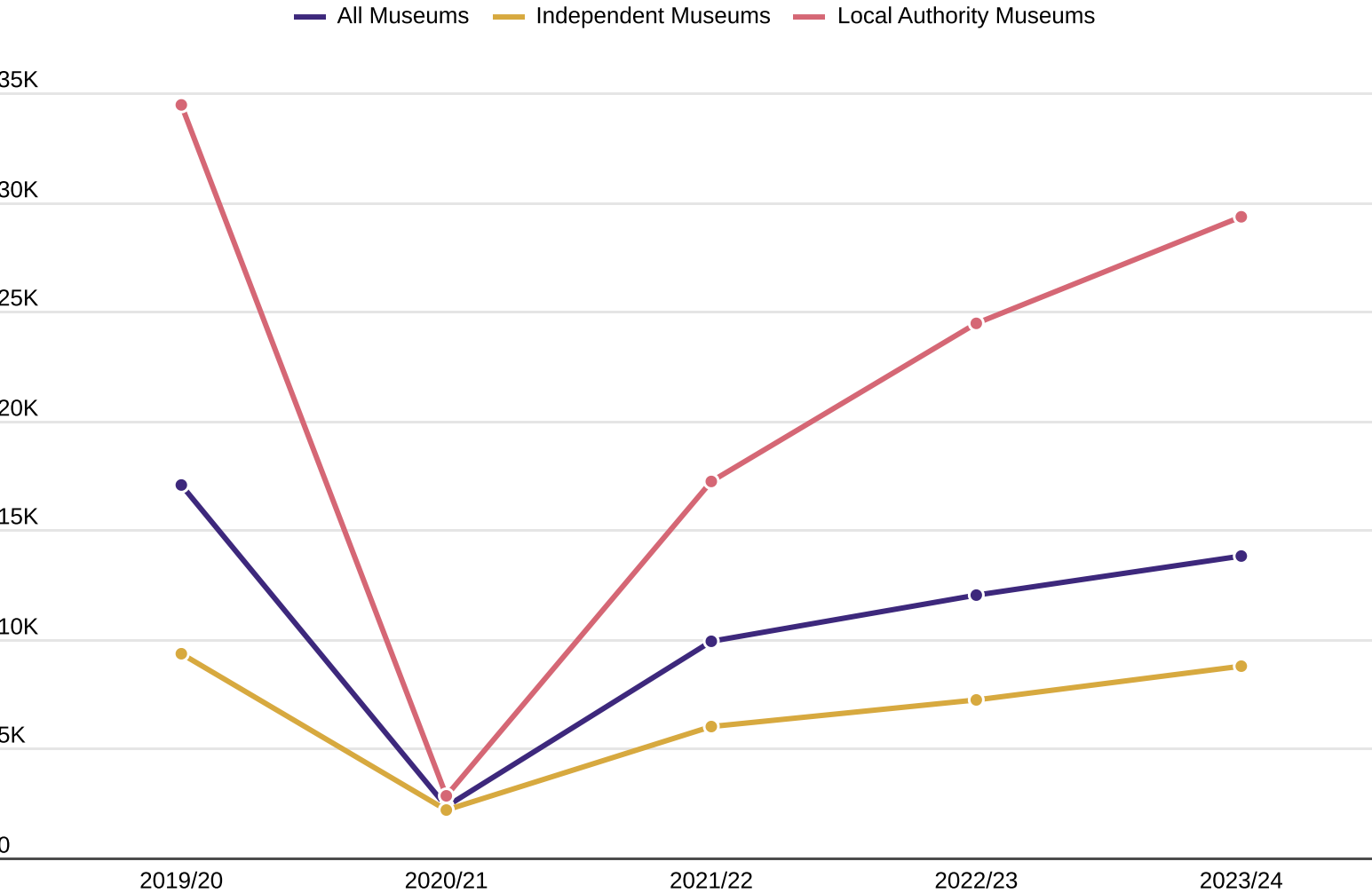
Four in five closures since the pandemic were small museums

Less than 20k visits per year

Source: 'Mapping Museums project website' Available at www.museweb.dcs.bbk.ac.uk/home. Accessed 10.02.2025
Any closures with an unknown year have not been included in this analysis

Whilst opening hours have recovered, visits are still to get back to pre-pandemic levels.

Overall, average visits are down from 17,041 in 2019/20 to 13,809 in 2023/24



Median annual visitor numbers. Base: All Museums (n=226-368); Independent Museums (n=142-250); Local Authority Museums (n=72-105)

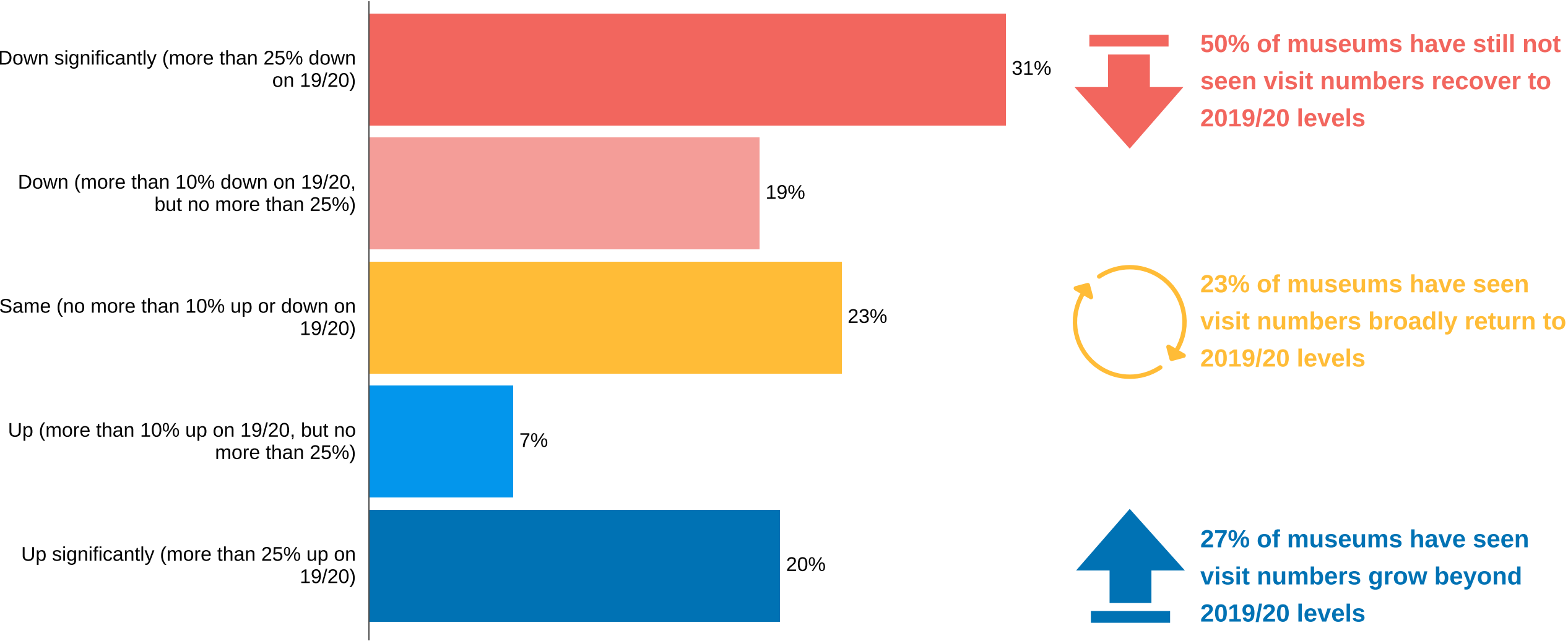
On average, a museum's annual visitor numbers are 10% down on where they were in 2019/20

Whilst local authority museums see more visits on average than independent museums, they are further away from pre-pandemic levels

Down from 44,364 average visitors in 2019/20 to 30,198 in 2023/24

Half of museums have seen their visitor numbers drop since 2019/20.

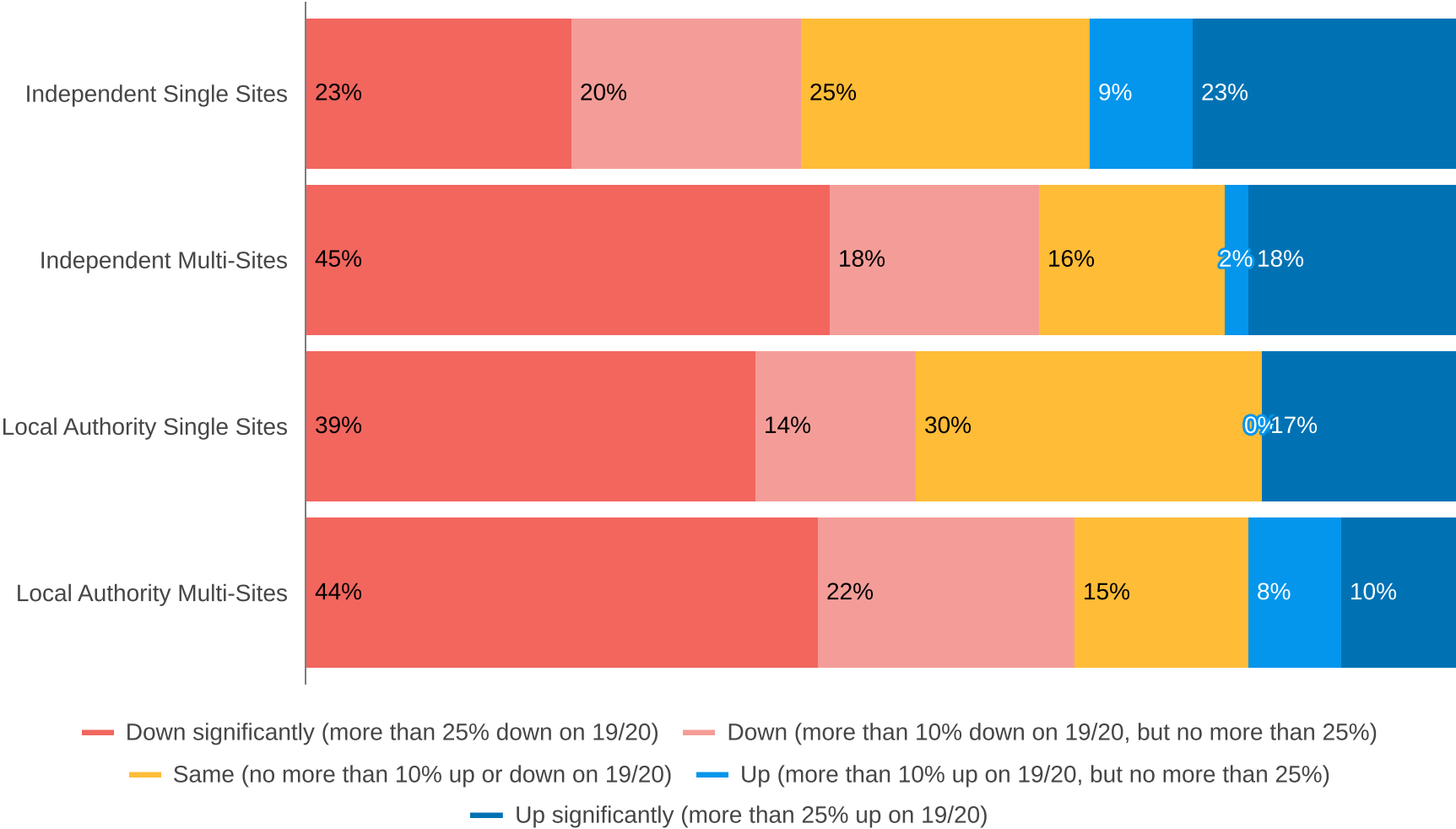
Visitor numbers in three out of ten museums are more than 25% down on the levels they were at in 2019/20



Change in annual visitor numbers (2023/24 compared to 2019/20). Base: All Museums (n=363)

Three in ten independent museums have seen growth in their visitor numbers.

But more than two thirds of museums part of a local authority 'multi-site' have seen their visitor numbers drop, with 44% seeing them drop significantly (by more than 25%)



Being part of a 'multi-site' means it is one of a number of museums run by a larger organisation

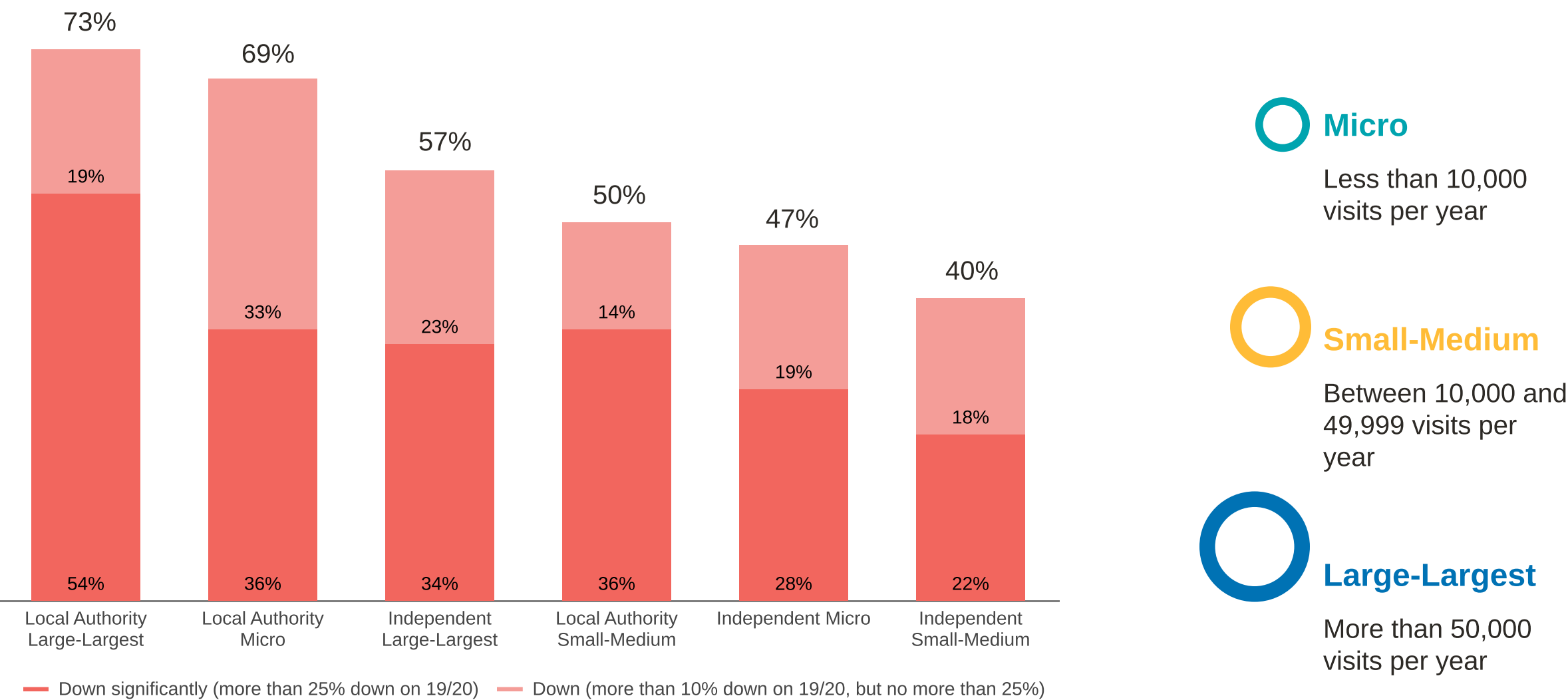


Annual visits at local authority multi-site museums are, on average, 21% down on pre-pandemic levels, despite their opening hours returning to 2019/20 level (+2%)

Change in annual visitor numbers (2023/24 compared to 2019/20). Base: Independent Single Sites (n=192); Independent Multi-Sites (n=37); Local Authority Single Sites (n=44); Local Authority Multi-Sites (n=72)

Larger local authority museums appear to be struggling the most with visitor numbers.

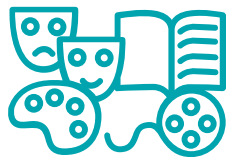
Based on historic categories identified by Museum Development as a general indication of size/scale



Change in annual visitor numbers (2023/24 compared to 2019/20). Base: Local Authority Large-Largest (n=41); Local Authority Micro (n=21); Independent Large-Largest (n=35); Local Authority Small-Medium (n=54); Independent Micro (n=115); Independent Small-Medium (n=79)

Wider context: Household spending on recreation and culture slowed in 2023.

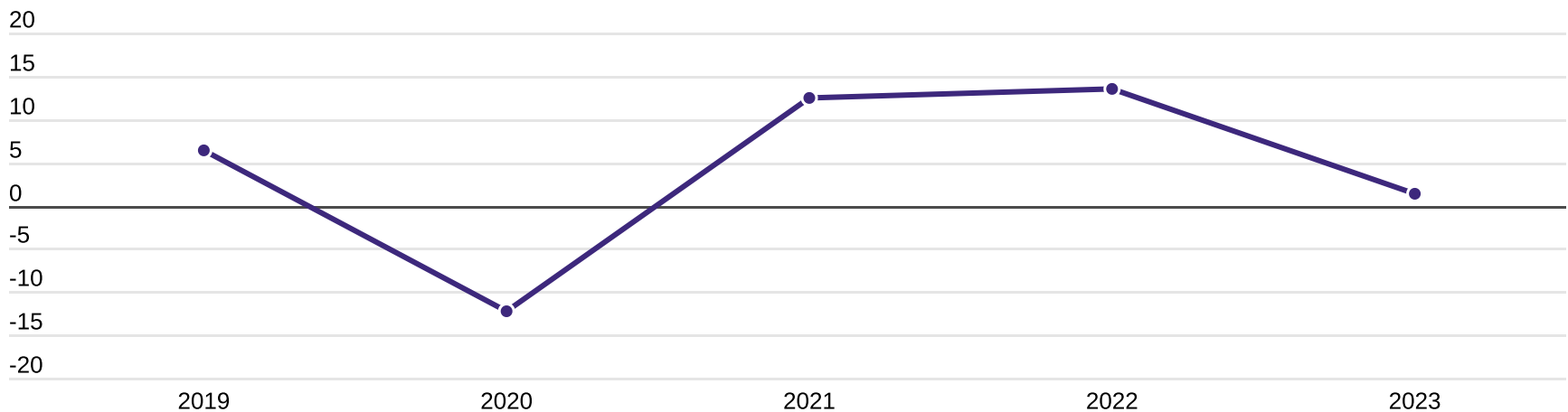
Although household expenditure on recreation and culture appeared to be bouncing back after the pandemic, 2023 saw a much smaller growth rate in expenditure (potentially due to the cost of living crisis)



The growth rate in household expenditure on 'recreation and culture' dropped from 13.6% in 2022 to 1.4% in 2023

The ONS 'Household final consumption: recreation and culture' annual growth rate % data tells us whether the average household spent more or less on recreation and culture than the previous year.

Although the amount of money households spent on recreation and culture increased slightly in 2023 (a 1.4% increase from 2022), the growth rate has dropped significantly from the levels in 2021 and 2022.

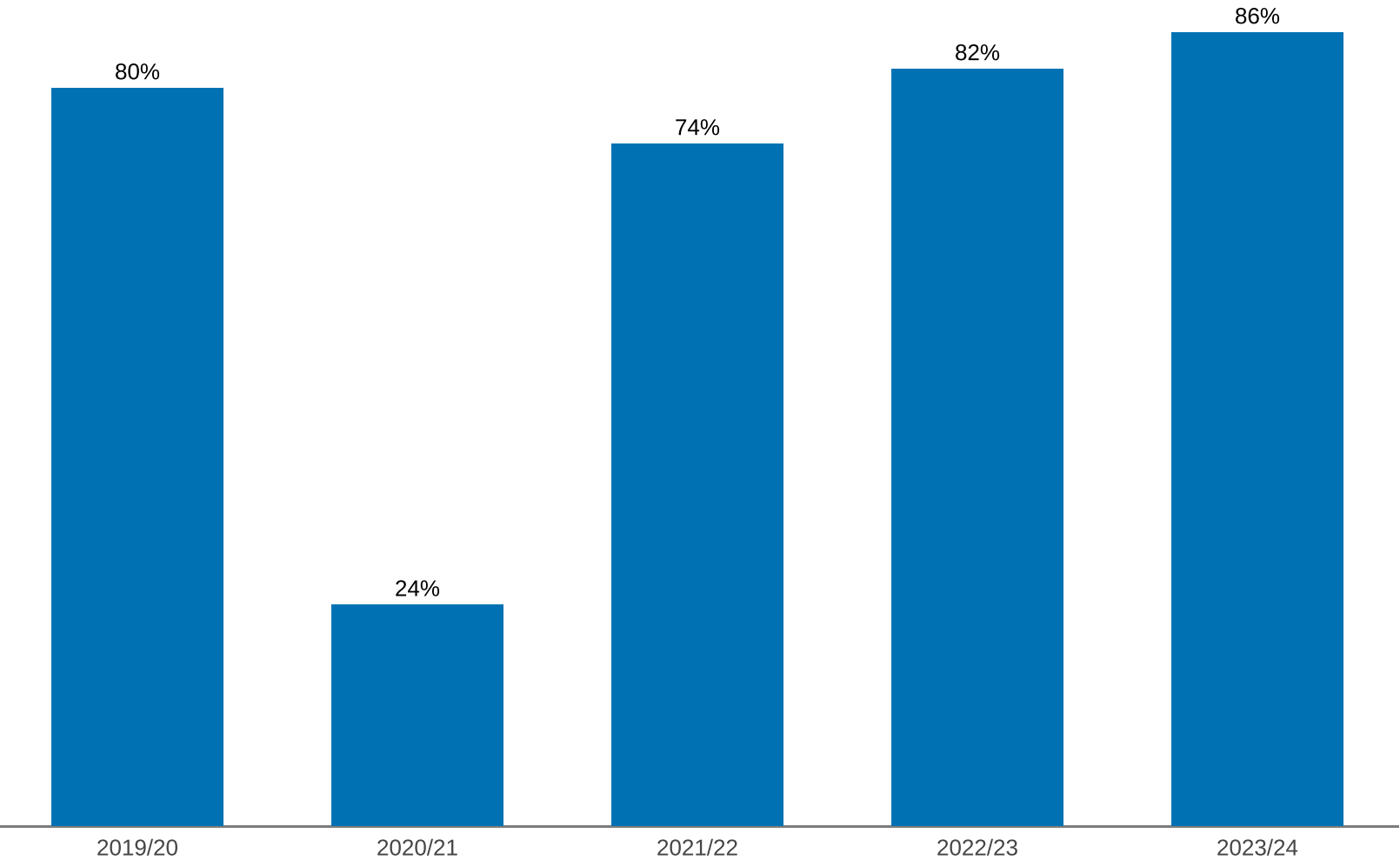


ONS Household Final Consumption Expenditure: Recreation & culture: Annual growth rate %: Current Price: Seasonally Adjusted
Source dataset: UK Economic Accounts time series (UKEA)

The focus on education providers within museums appears to be as strong as ever.

The majority of museums (86%) engaged education providers in 2023/24

% of museums engaging education providers by year



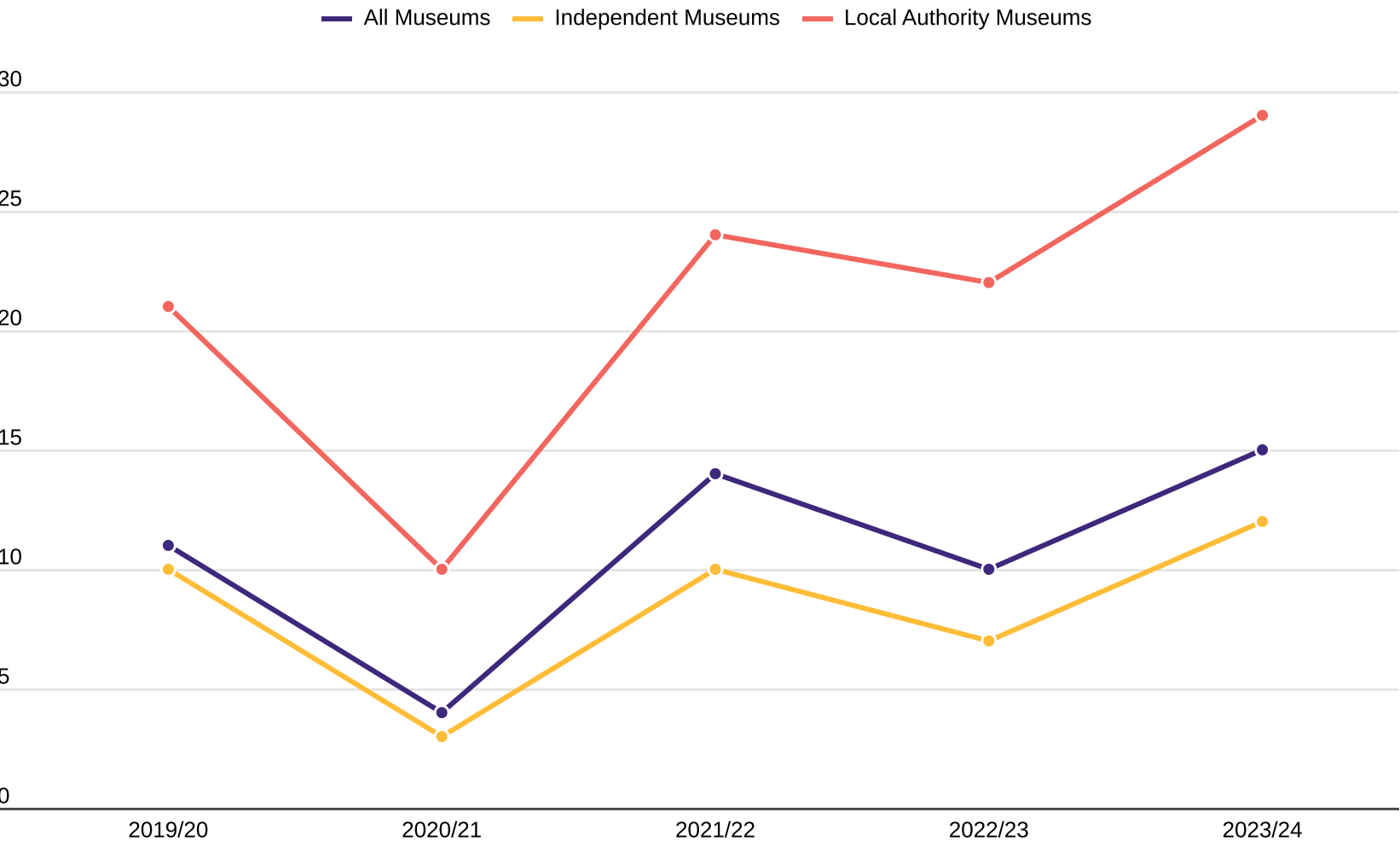
98% Of organisations with multi-sites engaged education providers in 2023/24

This is the same level as 2019/20

% of museums engaging education providers by year. Base: 2019/20 (n=541); 2020/21 (n=453); 2021/22 (n=498); 2022/23 (n=495); 2023/24 (n=423)

Museums appear to be engaging more education providers than they were 5 years ago.

Overall, museums engaged an average of 15 education providers in 2023/24, up from 11 in 2019/20



Median number of educational providers engaged by year. Base: All Museums (n=80-217); Independent Museums (n=55-171); Local Authority Museums (n=16-35)



And the gap between local authority and independent museums in terms of number of educational providers engaged is growing

The gap has grown from, on average (median), a difference of 11 providers to 17 providers over the last 5 years

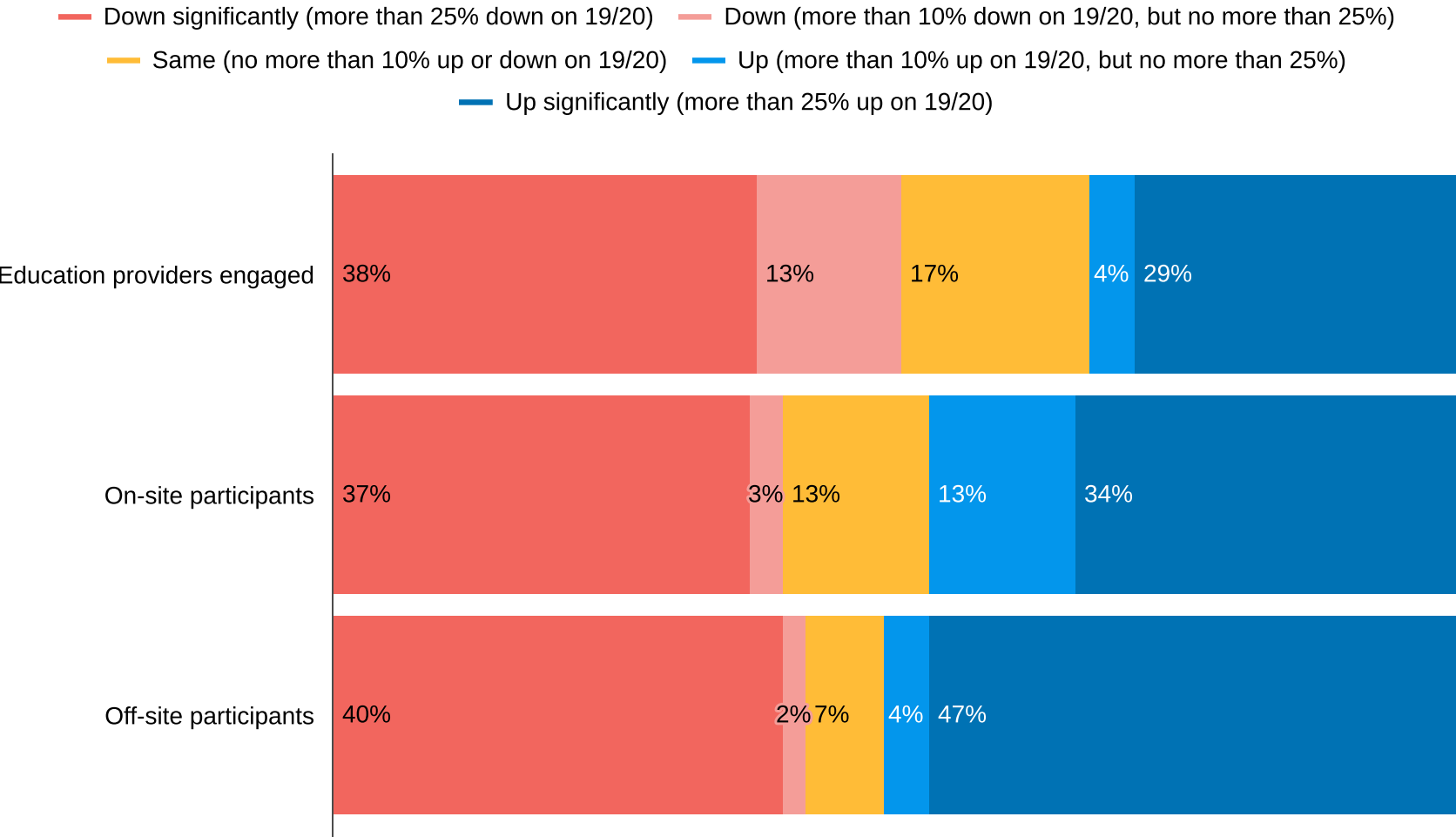


But local authority multi-site organisations have not seen a significant change in the number of education providers engaged

An average of 186 providers engaged in 2023/24, compared to 197 in 2019/20

But when we look at the change by individual museum, on average it is down by 12%.

And overall, half of museums have seen the number of education providers they engage drop over the last 5 years; two in five have seen it drop by more than 25%

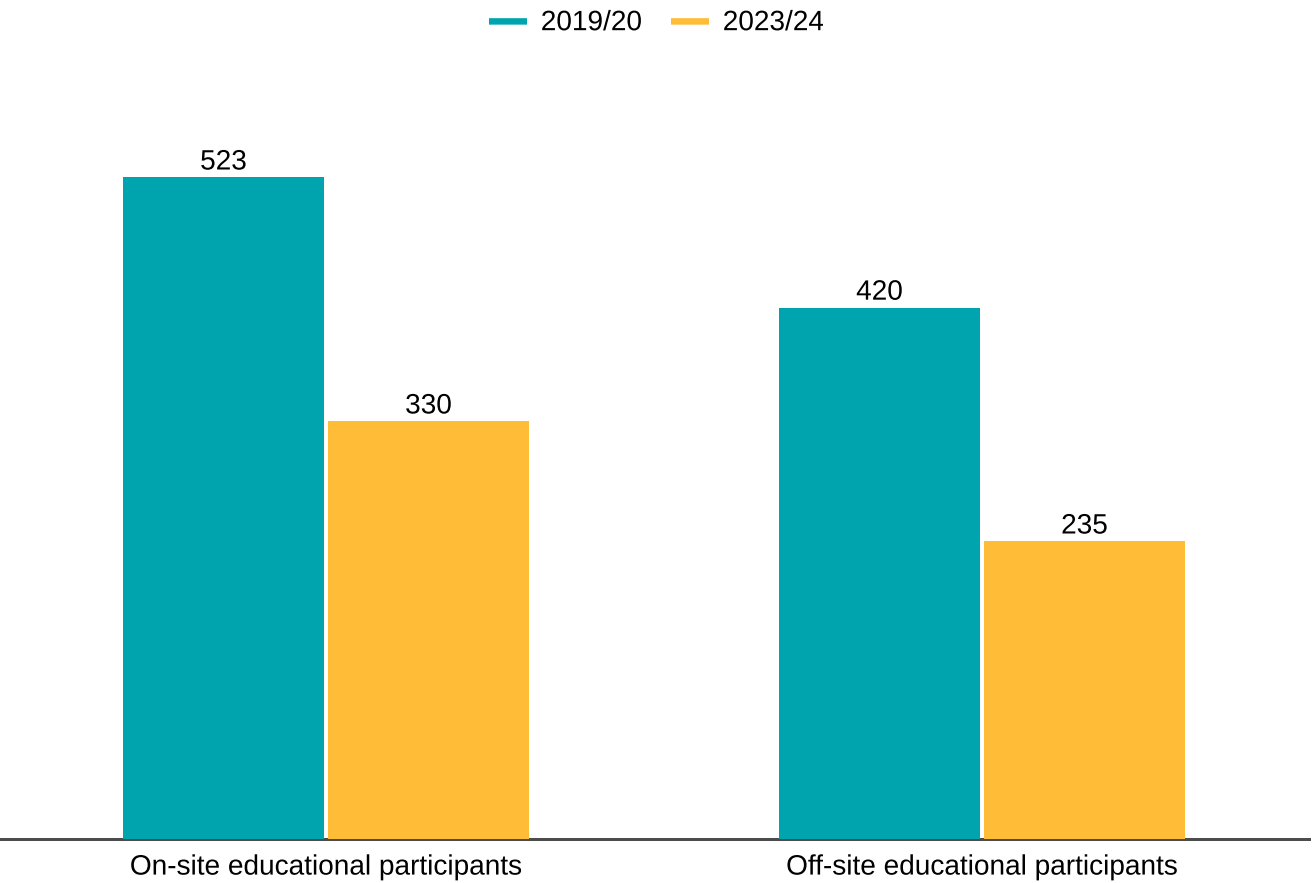


If they do engage education providers, around half have seen the number of participants engaged increase over the last 5 years

Change in educational providers engaged, on-site participants and off-site participants (2023/24 compared to 2019/20).
Base: Educational providers engaged (n=86); on-site participants (n=108); off-site participants (n=43)

Independent museums are engaging significantly less education participants.

Overall, the average number of educational participants engaged by museums is down over the last 5 years



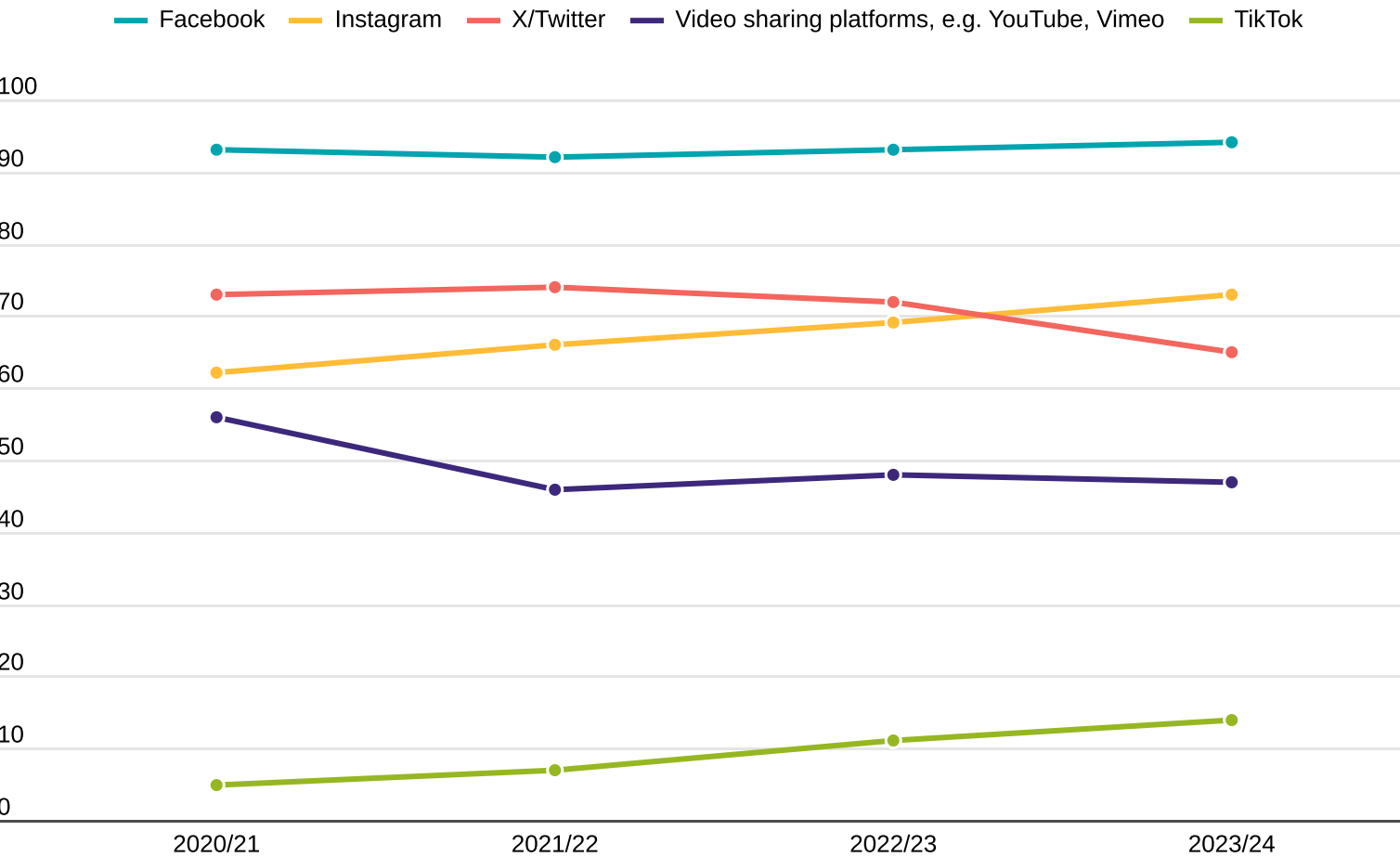
Local authorities engage significantly more educational participants, and this level has not dropped notably over the last 5 years

- Local authority museums engaged, on average, 667 educational participants at on-site sessions in 2023/24, similar to the level (660) in 2019/20
- Independent museums engaged, on average, 242 educational participants at on-site sessions in 2023/24, significantly down on the level (390) in 2019/20

How have museums used social media to engage audiences since the pandemic?

Facebook continues to be the most commonly used social media platform, but Instagram use has increased significantly over the last 5 years

% of museums reporting the use of different social media platforms:



Change in % using different social media platforms by year. Base: 2020/21 (n=489); 2021/22 (n=499); 2022/23 (n=495); 2023/24 (n=423)



Use of TikTok has increased by three times over the last 5 years

From 5% in 2020/21 to 14% in 2023/24



Whilst use of X/Twitter has dropped off in recent years

From 72% in 2022/23 to 65% in 2023/24

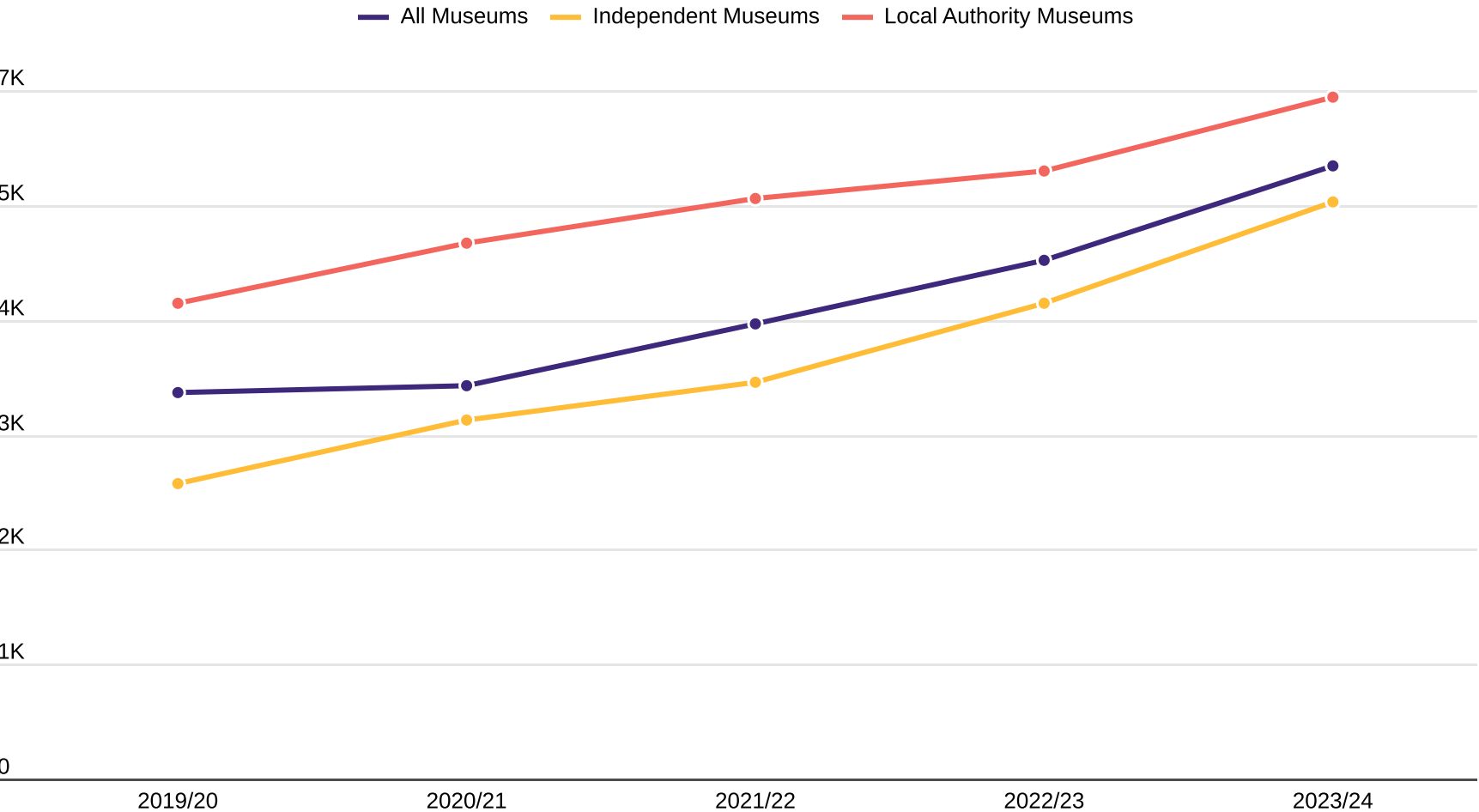


Around 83% of the UK population use social media

According to a 2024 report by Ofcom, 82% of internet users report using YouTube, 76% Facebook, 57% Instagram, 42% TikTok and 29% X/Twitter.

Social media followers for museums has grown significantly over the last 5 years.

Overall, a museum's average social media following has grown from 3,652 to 5,745; the average social media following of an independent museum has doubled



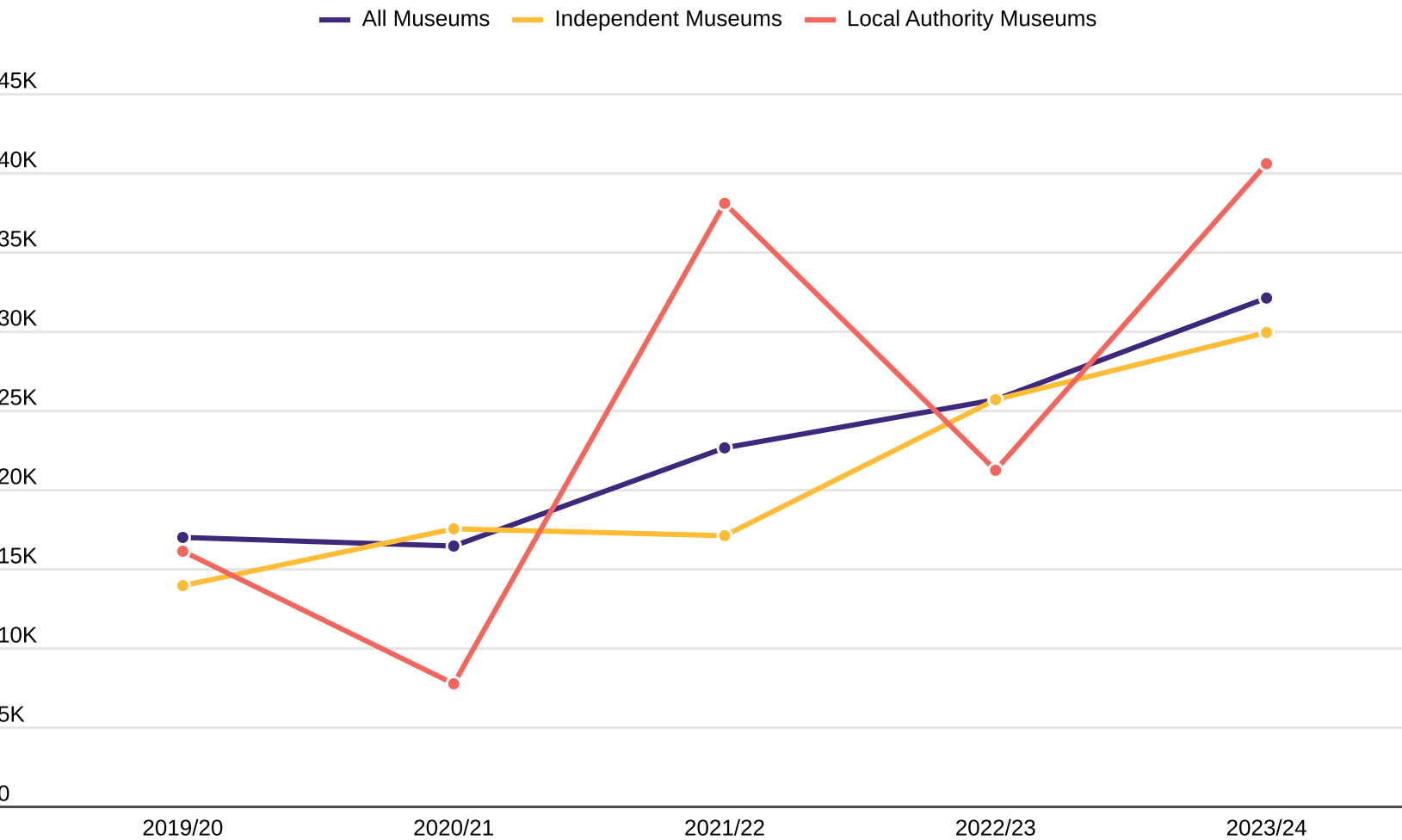
On average, a museum's social media following has grown by 61% over the last 5 years

Museums that have seen on-site visitor numbers grow by more than 25% over the last 5 years have also seen their social media audience grow by an average (median) of 92%

Median number of social media followers by year. Base: All Museums (n=75-156); Independent Museums (n=55-118); Local Authority Museums (n=15-25)

Overall, museums have been steadily increasing their website audience.

Overall, the average unique visitors to a museum's website per year was 16,933 in 2019/20 and 32,025 in 2023/24



Median number of unique website visitors by year. Base: All Museums (n=63-104); Independent Museums (n=49-82); Local Authority Museums (n=15-19)



On average, annual unique visitors to a museum's website has grown by 47% over the last 5 years

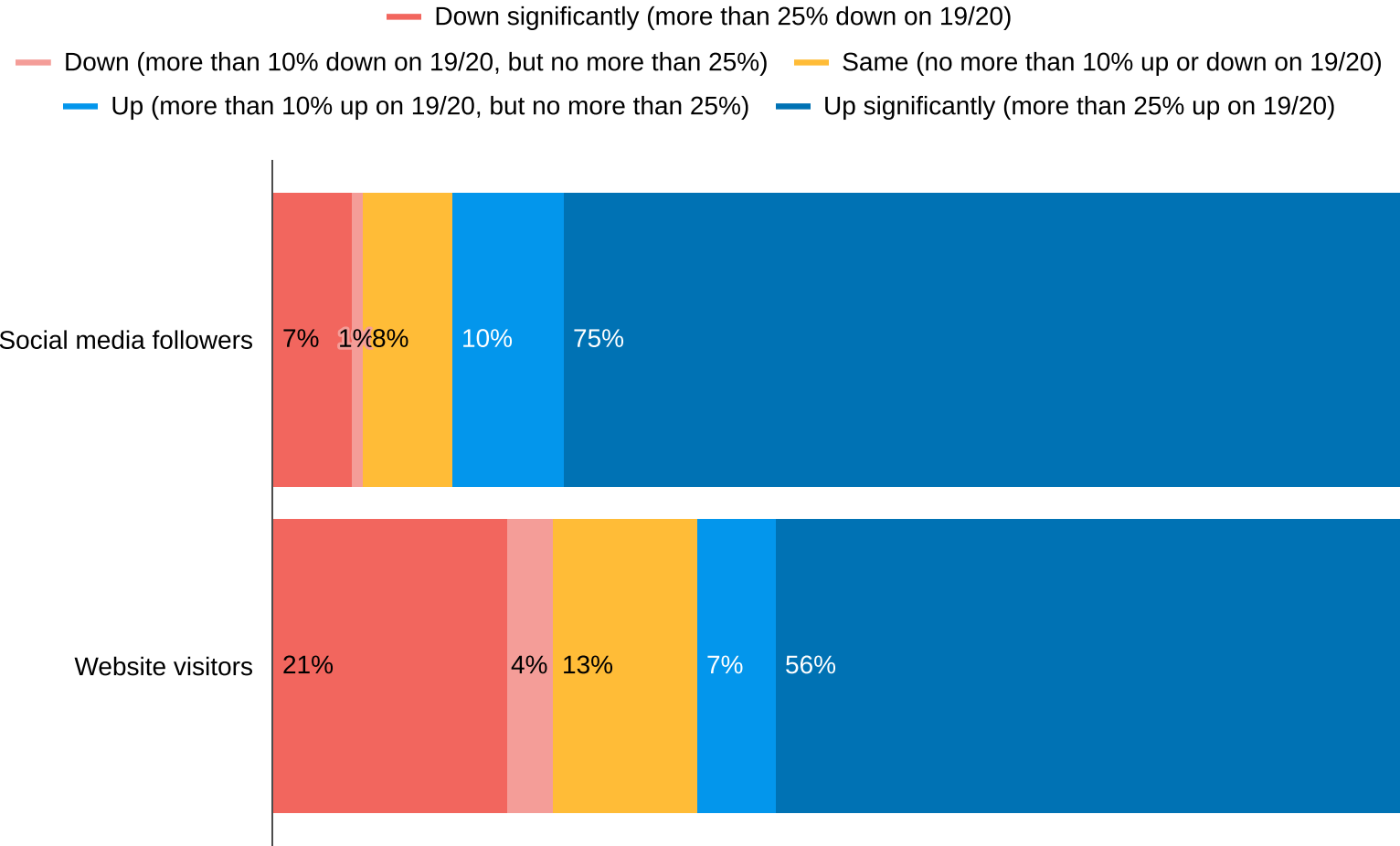


It appears that some museums temporarily adopted different digital methods of engagement in response to the pandemic

- 90% used video conferencing for external audiences in 2021, now down to 60% in 2024
- 27% used virtual 360 tours in 2021, now down to 15% in 2024

Looking across website and socials, the majority of museums have seen significant growth.

Three in four museums have seen their social media following increase by over 25% in the last 5 years, whilst more than half have seen annual website visits increase by the same



Volunteer-run museums are less likely to have seen social media followers increase significantly

Half (49%) increased social media followers by more than 25% between 2019/20 and 2023/24, compared to 82% of museums with 1-9 staff and 79% of museums with 10+ staff



Rural museums are less likely too

55% increased social media followers by more than 25% between 2019/20 and 2023/24, compared to 81% of urban museums

Change in social media followers and annual unique website visits (2023/24 compared to 2019/20). Base: Social media followers (n=93); website visitors (n=56)

Wider context: external data also shows an increase in digital audiences since the pandemic.



Museums report an increased focus on digital engagement during the pandemic

According to a 2021 report by ArtFund on the impact of Covid on museums, most respondents felt they had 'made a significant leap forward' in relation to digital engagement, and anticipated further development in the future.

Other reports (from the Network of Museum Organisations and the International Council of Museums also reported that the vast majority of survey respondents increased their online presence during pandemic related museum closures.



Government surveys show digital engagement has increased

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport's 'Taking part' survey found that:

- In 2018/19, 27% of respondents had visited or used a museum or gallery website or app in the last 12 months
- This increased to 32% in 2019/20

And their 'Participation survey' (from 2021/22 onwards) showed that:

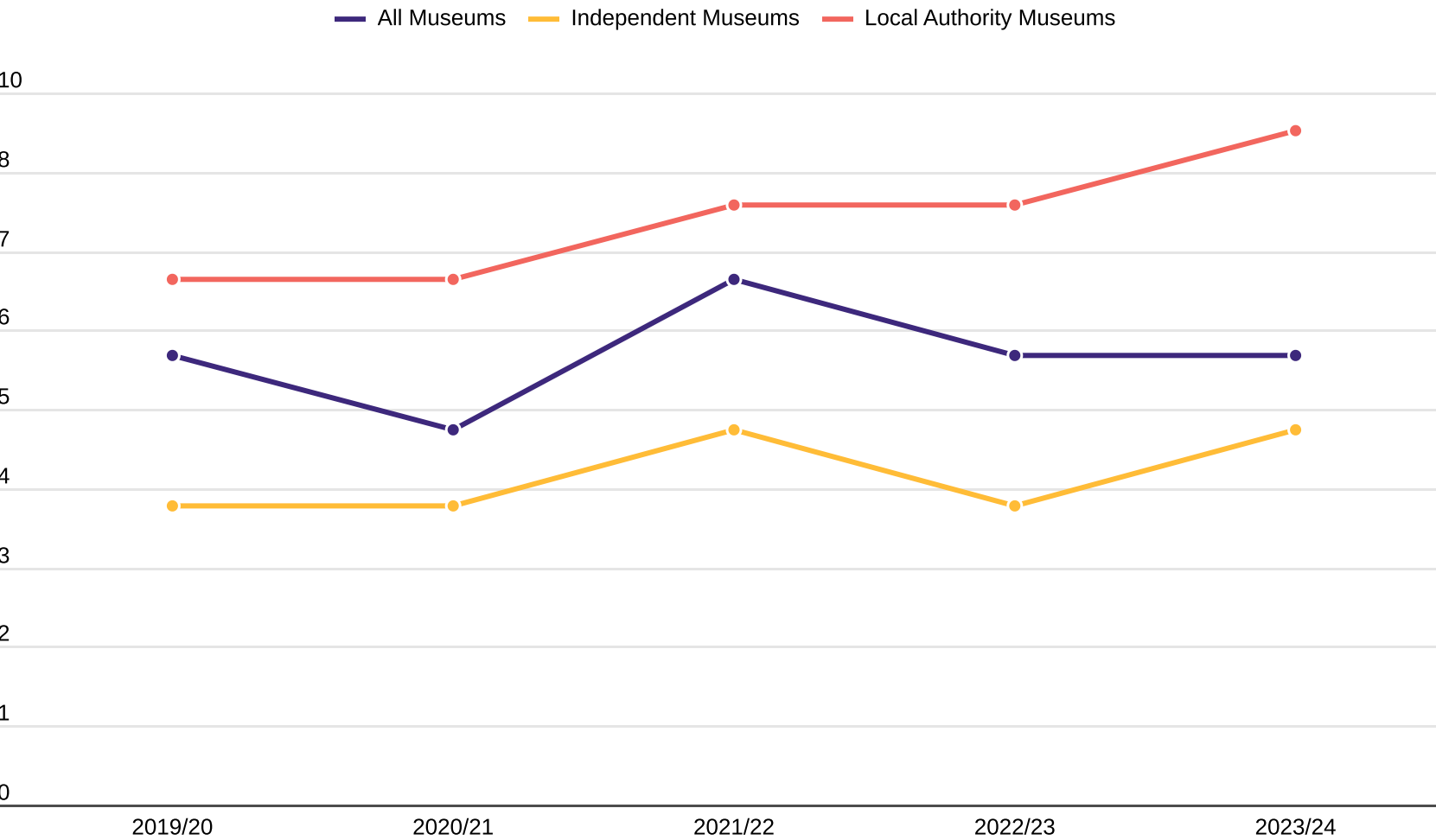
- In 2021/22, 8% of respondents had engaged digitally with a museum or gallery in the last 12 months (ie taken a virtual tour of a museum or gallery in England or researched items from a museums and gallery collection in England online)
- By 2023/24, this had increased to 13% (9% in 2022/23)

People.

Staffing and volunteers

Overall, staff numbers have not changed between 2019/20 and 2023/24.

The average number of staff in local authority museums has increased over that time



It is a similar pattern for organisations with multi-sites

They had an average of 53 staff in 2019/20 and 52 in 2023/24



It is a similar story for full-time equivalent (FTE) levels

- Overall, the average staff FTE in a museum was 3.4 in 2019/20 and 3.5 in 2023/24
- For independent museums, it was 2.7 in 2019/20 and 2.9 in 2023/24
- For local authority museums, it was 4.8 in 2019/20 and 5.8 in 2023/24

Median number of staff (headcount) by year. Base: All Museums (n=144-180); Independent Museums (n=107-134); Local Authority Museums (n=26-34)

Wider context: Significant staff cuts within local authorities.



Reductions in local authority budgets over the last decade led to significant staff cuts

By 2019/20, local authority spending power was almost a quarter (-22.5%) lower in real terms than it had been in 2010/11. In 2024/25, this spending power is still approximately 10% lower than in 2010/11 in real terms.

Local government employment decreased by 31.3% between 2010 and 2020.



Numbers employed in local government appear to be fairly stagnant between 2020 to 2024

ONS data shows that the number employed in local government hovers around the two million mark or just below between 2020 to 2024

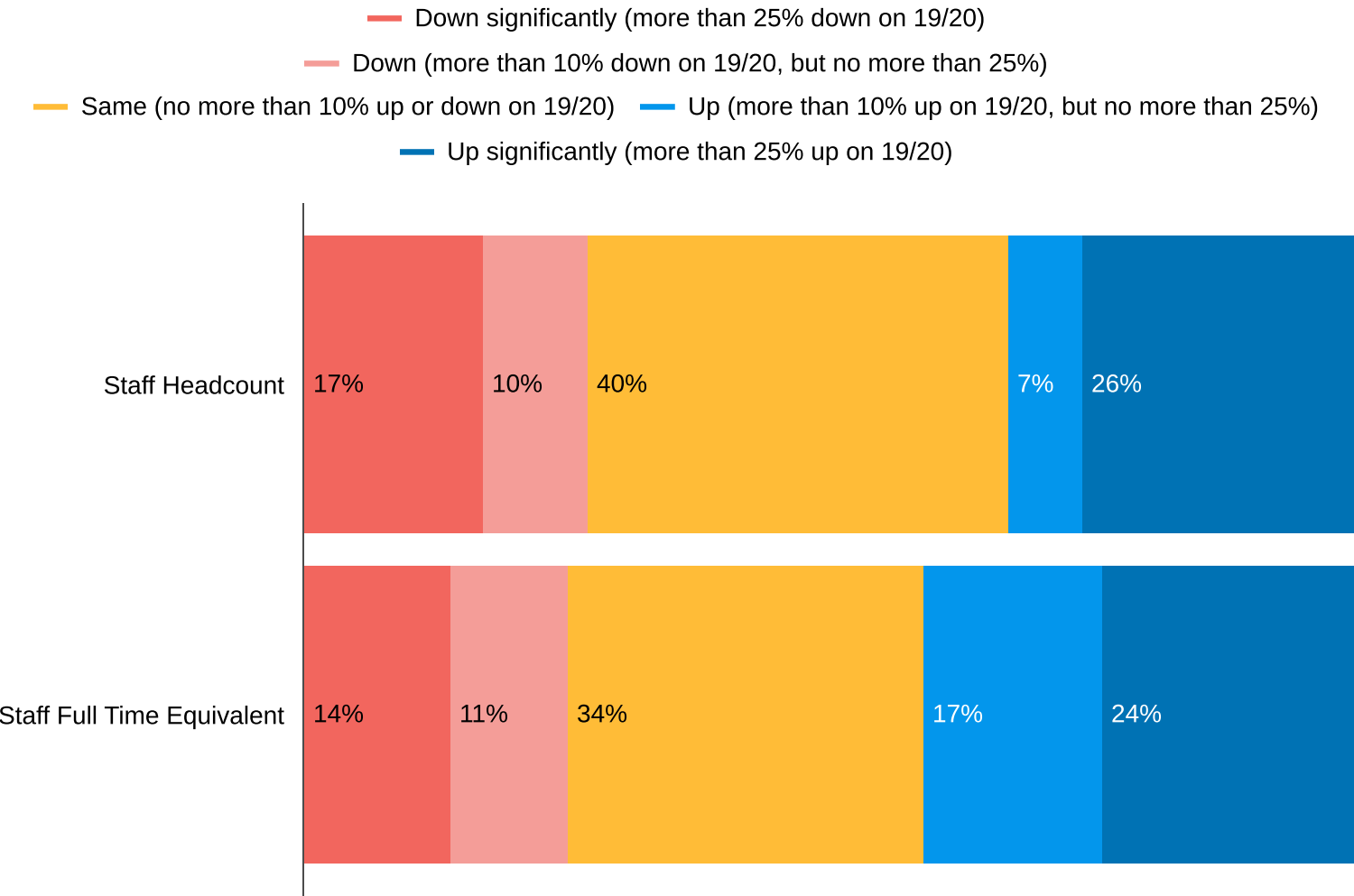


Across the UK, the employment rate dropped following the pandemic, and has also remained fairly stagnant ever since

The UK employment rate has remained close to 75% since the end of 2021. This is below the pre-pandemic employment rate of 75.9% in January to March 2020.

There is a noticeable split in how a museum's workforce has changed over the last 5 years.

27% have seen their workforce reduce, 40% have seen it be relatively unchanged, 33% have grown their workforce



This split is most noticeable in local authority museums

37% of local authority museums have seen staffing levels drop by over 10% in the last 5 years (compared to 24% of independent museums), whilst 34% have seen levels increase by over 10%



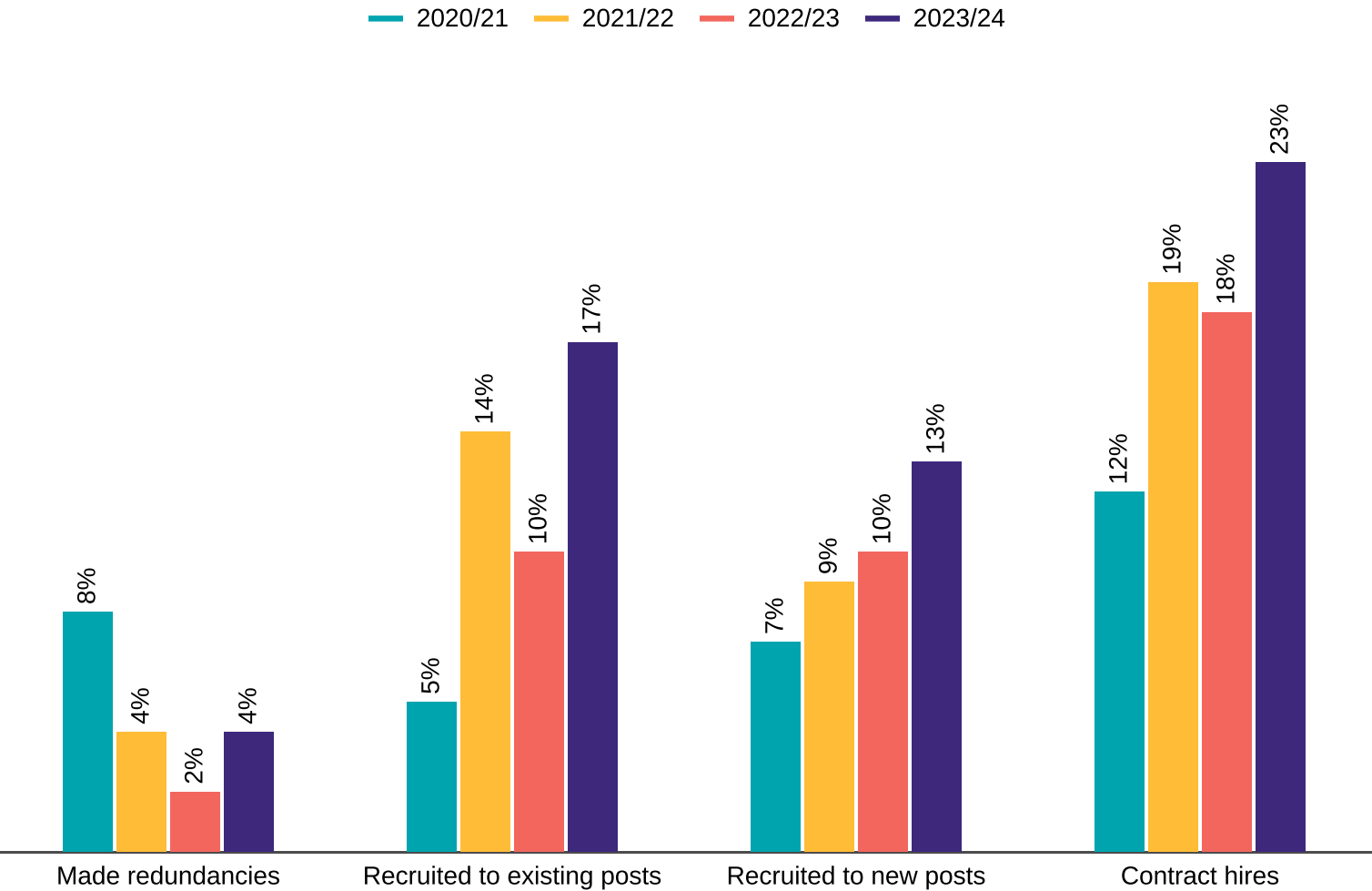
Three in ten urban museums have seen staffing levels increase by more than 10% over the last 5 years

Compared to 16% of rural museums

Change in staff headcount and staff FTE (2023/24 compared to 2019/20). Base: Staff headcount (n=175); staff FTE (n=151)

Museums making contract hires has been increasing over recent years.

With contract hires more likely for museums with paid staff
(31% compared to 8% of volunteer-run museums in 2023/24)



One in five (22%) museums with staff made redundancies in 2020/21

This has reduced to 6% in 2023/24



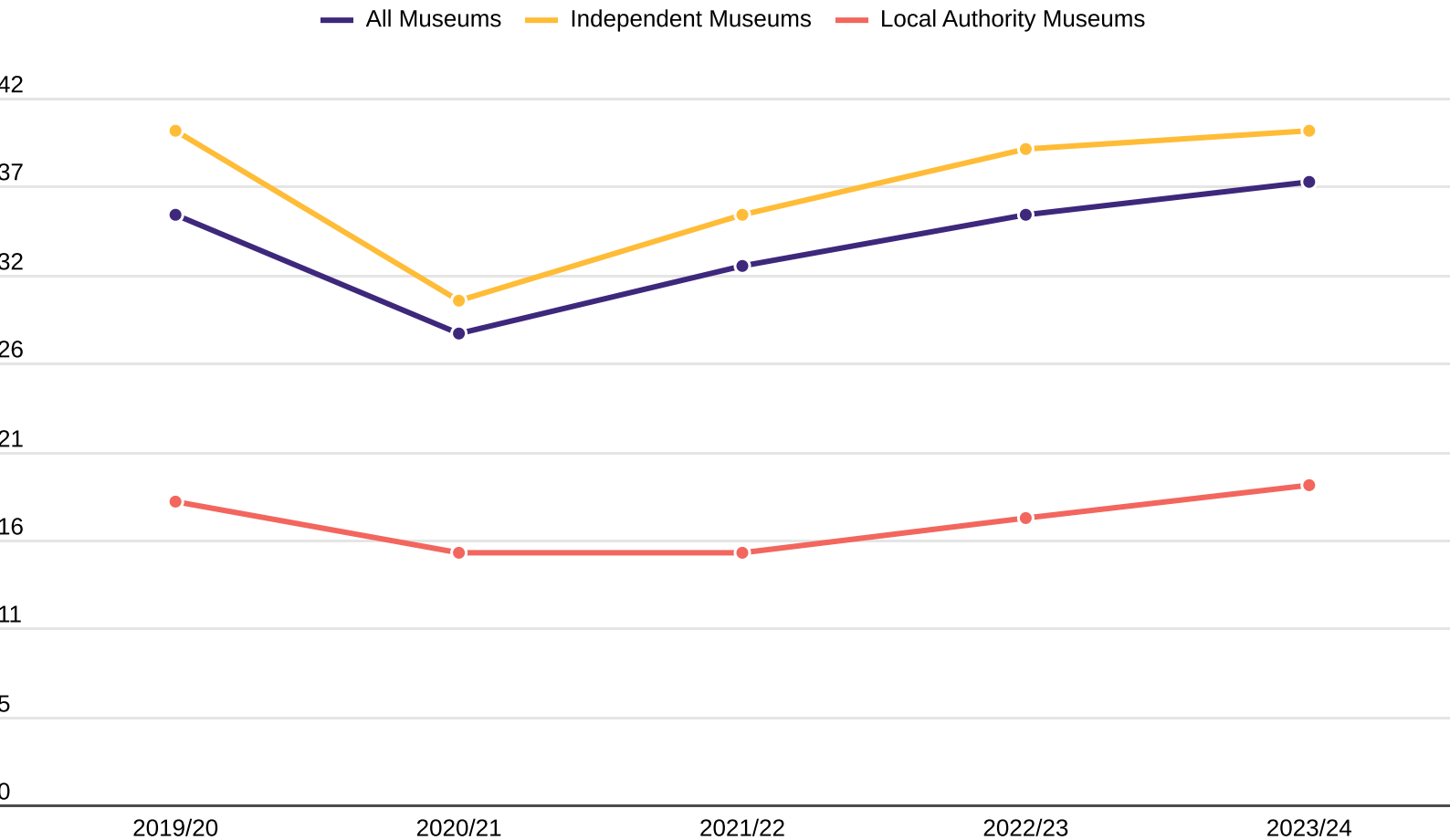
In 2023/24, the same proportion of museums either recruited staff or hired contracts

23% of museums made contract hires (e.g. freelancers, consultants), whilst 23% recruited to either existing or new posts

% of museums reporting redundancies, recruiting or hiring contracts by year. Base: 2020/21 (n=490); 2021/22 (n=498); 2022/23 (n=495); 2023/24 (n=423)

The number of volunteers at museums has generally recovered after the pandemic.

Overall, the average number of volunteers at a museum in 2023/24 was 37, compared to 35 in 2019/20



Local authority museums typically have fewer volunteers than independent museums

With an average of 19 volunteers in 2023/24, half that of independent museums (40)



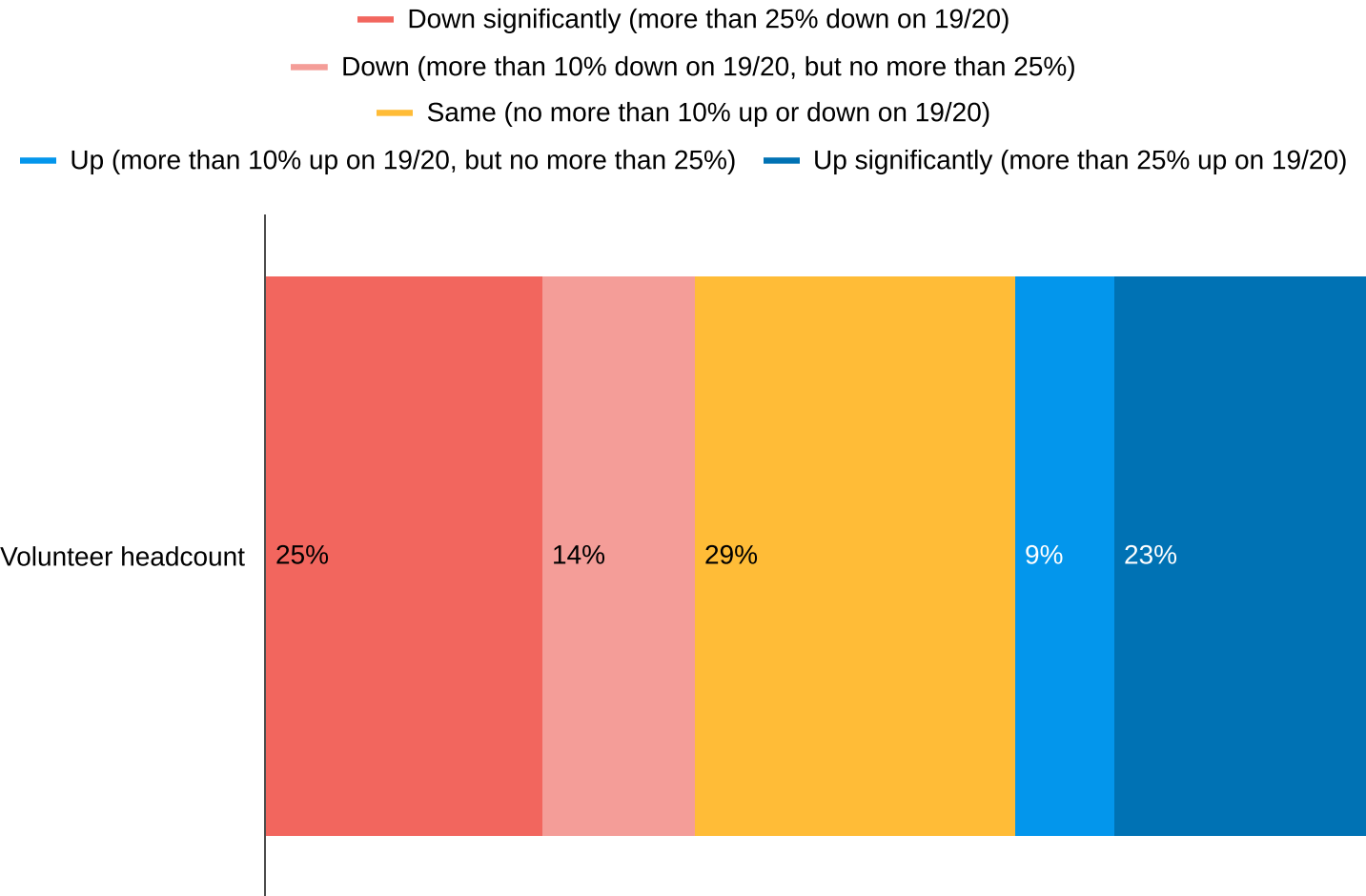
What about volunteer-run museums?

They had an average of 34 volunteers in 2019/20, and now have an average of 35 volunteers

Median number of volunteers (headcount) by year. Base: All Museums (n=180-252); Independent Museums (n=152-206); Local Authority Museums (n=20-36)

Despite this, two in five museums are down on volunteer numbers compared to 5 years ago.

Looking at individual museums, on average they have seen a 5% drop in volunteer numbers, with one in four seeing volunteer headcount fall by over 25% compared to 2019/20



Museums with more staff were most likely to see a significant reduction in volunteer numbers

32% of museums with 10+ staff have seen volunteer numbers fall by over 25% since 2019/20, double the proportion (15%) for volunteer run museums



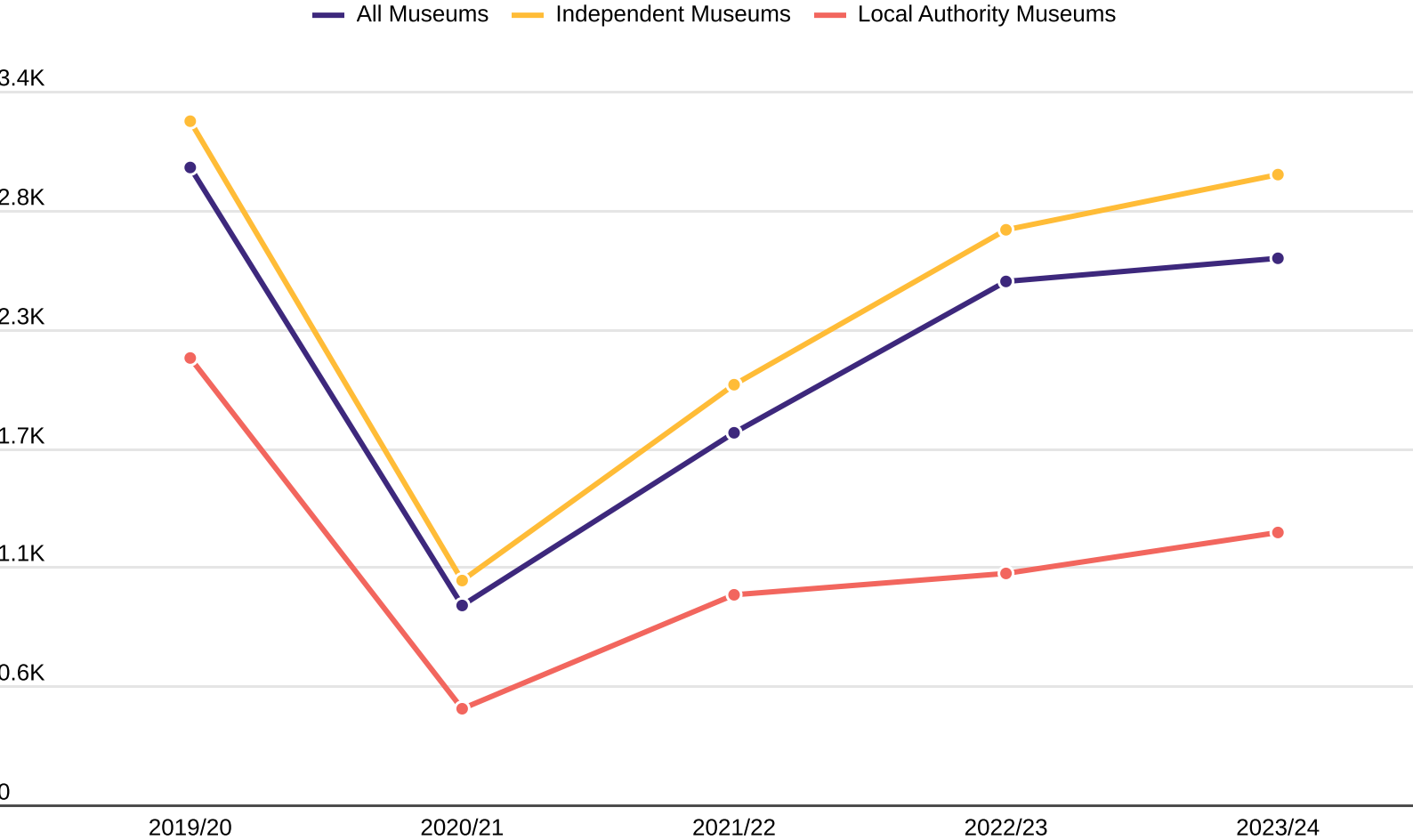
Urban museums were also more likely to see volunteer numbers drop

51% of urban museums have seen volunteer numbers fall by over 25% since 2019/20, compared to 36% of rural museums

Change in volunteer headcount (2023/24 compared to 2019/20). Base: all museums (n=247)

Hours contributed by volunteers appear down slightly on pre-pandemic levels.

Overall, the average number of volunteer hours at a museum in 2023/24 was 2,605, compared to 3,035 in 2019/20



And the gap between independent and local authority museums appears to have widened



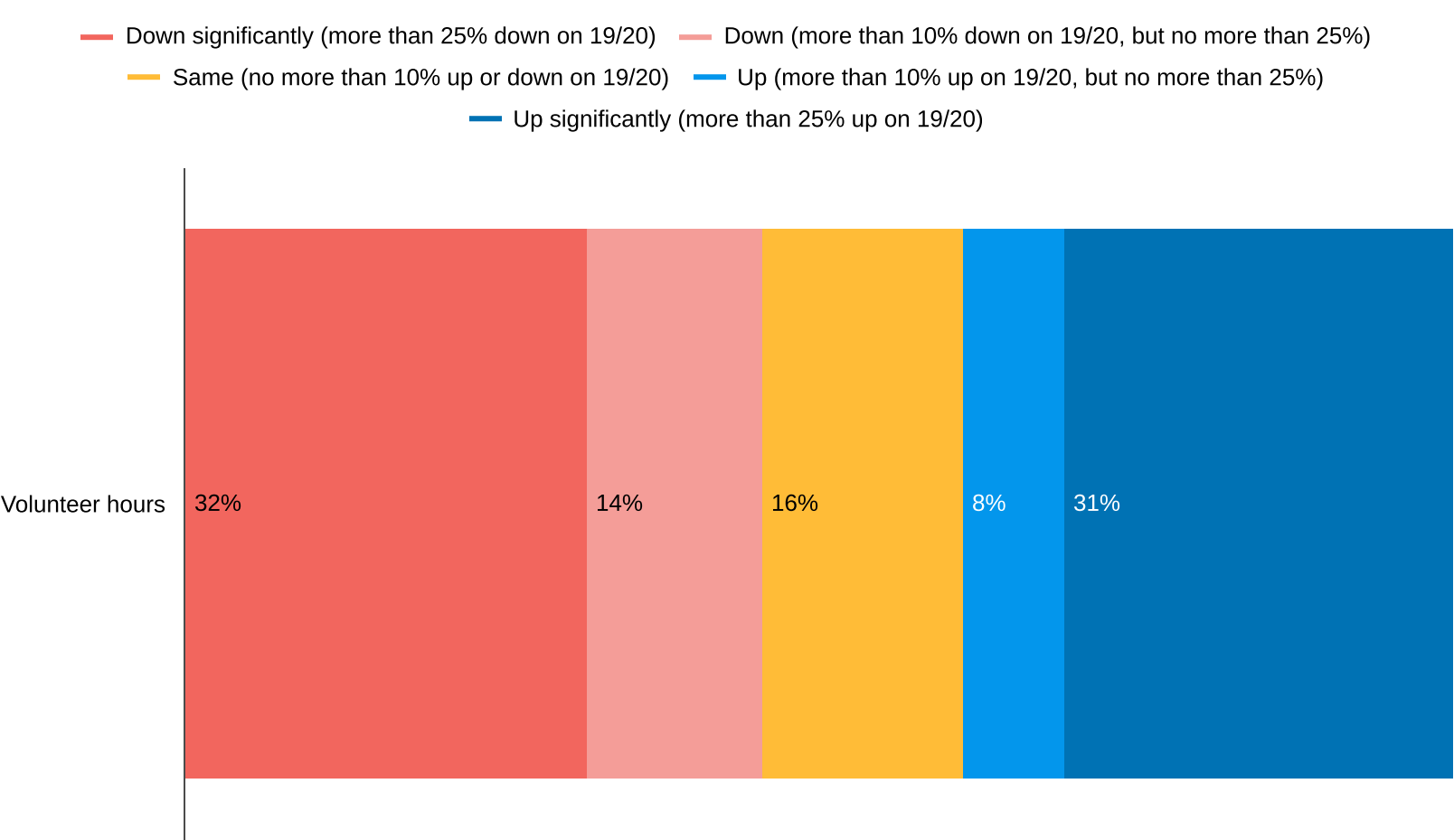
Volunteer-run museums have actually seen contributed hours increase overall over the last 5 years

From an average of 2,400 hours in 2019/20 to 2,600 in 2023/24

Median number of volunteer hours contributed by year. Base: All Museums (n=143-225); Independent Museums (n=120-178); Local Authority Museums (n=16-35)

And nearly a third of museums have seen volunteer hours drop by more than 25%.

On average, museums have seen volunteer hours reduce by 4% compared to 5 years ago, with a clear split in those seeing reductions (46%) and increases (39%)



Change in volunteer hours contributed (2023/24 compared to 2019/20). Base: all museums (n=193)



Three in five (61%) museums where volunteer numbers increased by over 25% also saw hours increase by 25%

Half (50%) of museums where volunteer numbers didn't increase significantly have seen hours drop significantly



Half (51%) of urban museums have seen volunteer hours reduce by more than 25% over the last 5 years

Compared to 36% of rural museums

Wider context: volunteer recruitment and retention is an ongoing issue across all sectors.

The 'Community Life Survey' 2021/22 from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport found that:



The pandemic saw a decline in the numbers of people volunteering

In 2021/22, only 27% of those surveyed said they had engaged in formal volunteering at least once in the past year, compared to 37% before the onset of the pandemic (similar to rates for a relatively stable period in the years before).

And according to the VSCE Barometer Survey* (May 2024):



Recruiting and retaining sufficient volunteers is a challenge

- Three in five Voluntary, Social and Community Enterprise organisations report that volunteer recruitment is a challenge
- Four in ten say they lack sufficient volunteers to meet their primary objectives
- Three in ten say they found it difficult to retain volunteers over the past 12 months



And this shortage of volunteers may be putting pressure on existing volunteers

Four in ten (42%) Voluntary, Social and Community Enterprise organisations have seen an increase in unpaid volunteer hours in the last 12 months and recent trends indicate declining volunteer satisfaction and lower likelihood of continuing to volunteer.

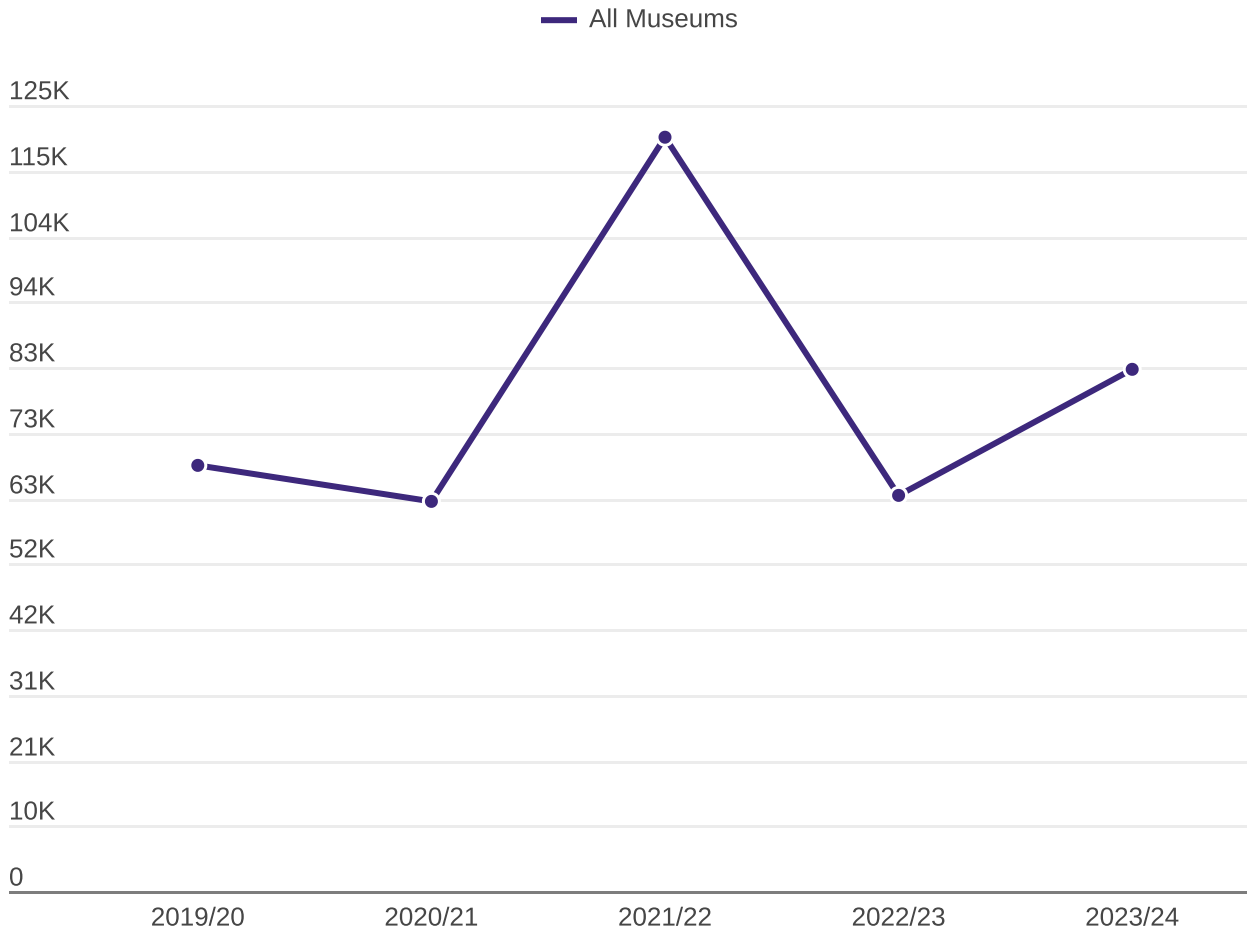
*Source: 'Present struggles, past origins: current challenges in volunteering amidst two decades of decline: an analysis of the VCSE Barometer Survey by the VCSE Data and Insights National Observatory May 2024

Finance overview.

Income and expenditure

Average income/turnover levels for museums spiked in 2021/22.

Average museum income in 2021/22 was £120k, significantly higher than the level in 2019/20 (£68k) and 2023/24 (£83k)

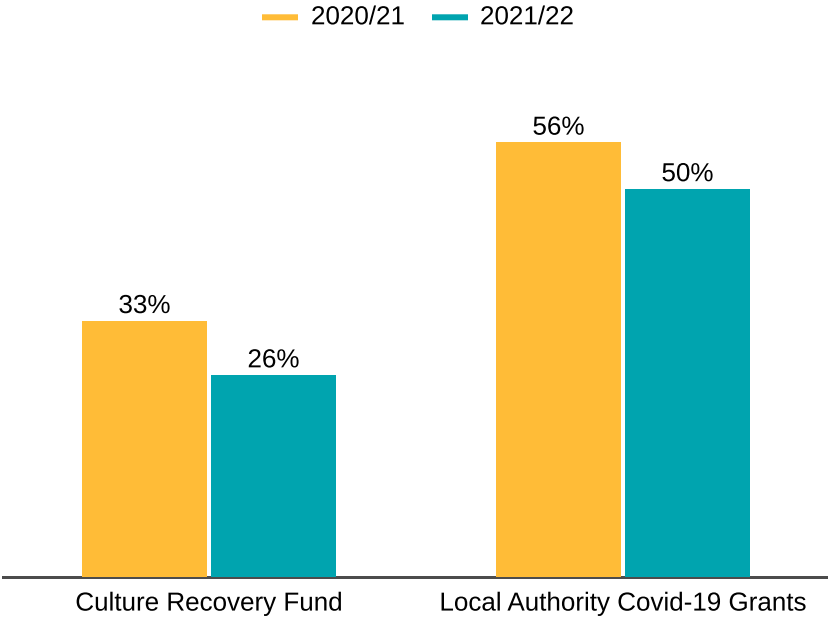


Median income/turnover by year. Base: 2019/20 (n=246); 2020/21 (n=202); 2021/22 (n=103); 2022/23 (n=100); 2023/24 (n=157)



It is likely that Covid-19 grants and funding contributed to this spike

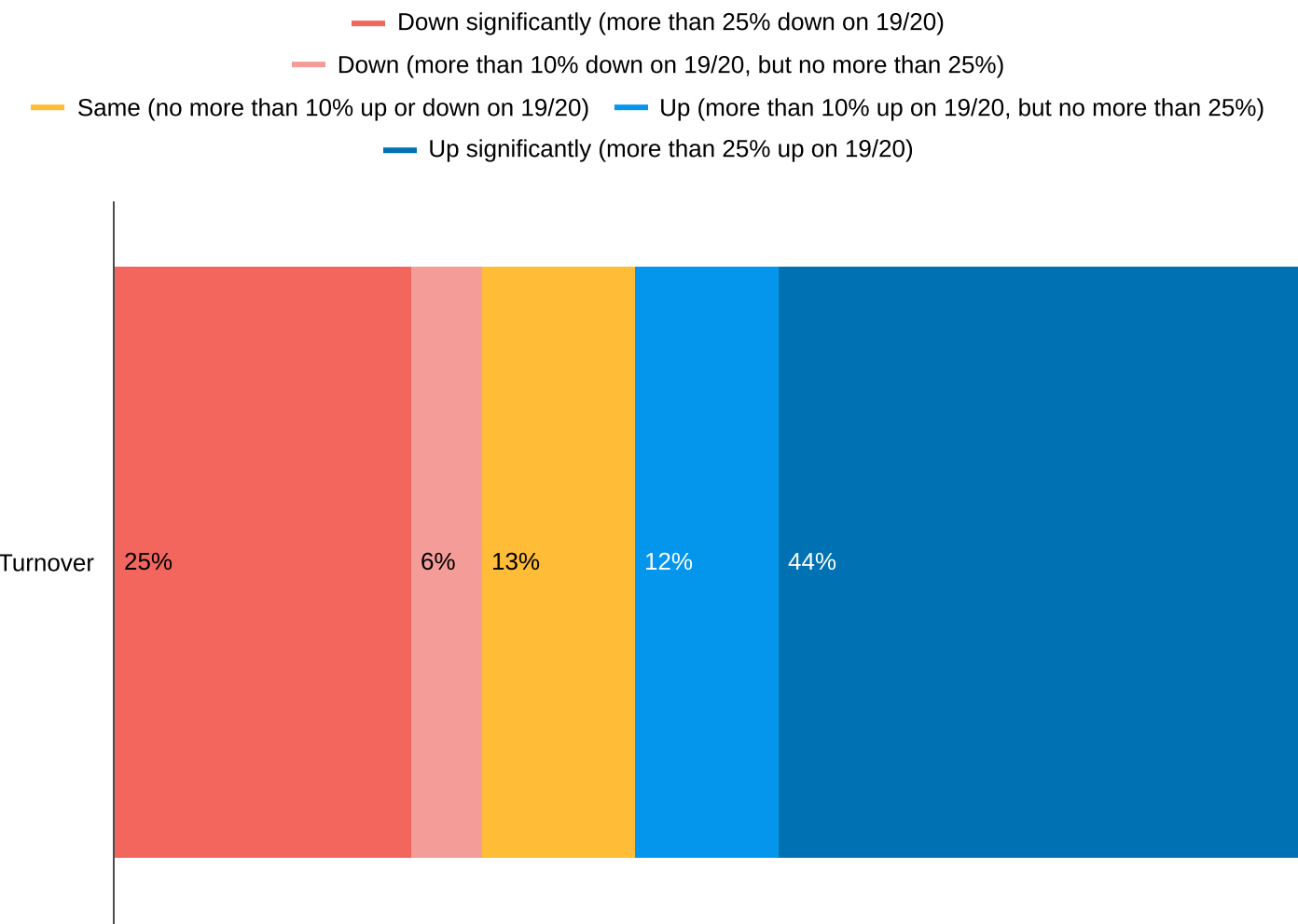
Half of museums received a local authority Covid-19 support grant in 2021/22 and a quarter received support from the Culture Recovery Fund (CRF)



% of museums reporting receiving CRF and local authority Covid-19 support grants. Unweighted base: 2020/21 (n=449); 2021/22 (n=477)

More than half of museums have seen income/turnover grow over the last 5 years.

On average, a museum has seen their income/turnover increase by 16% between 2019/20 and 2023/24

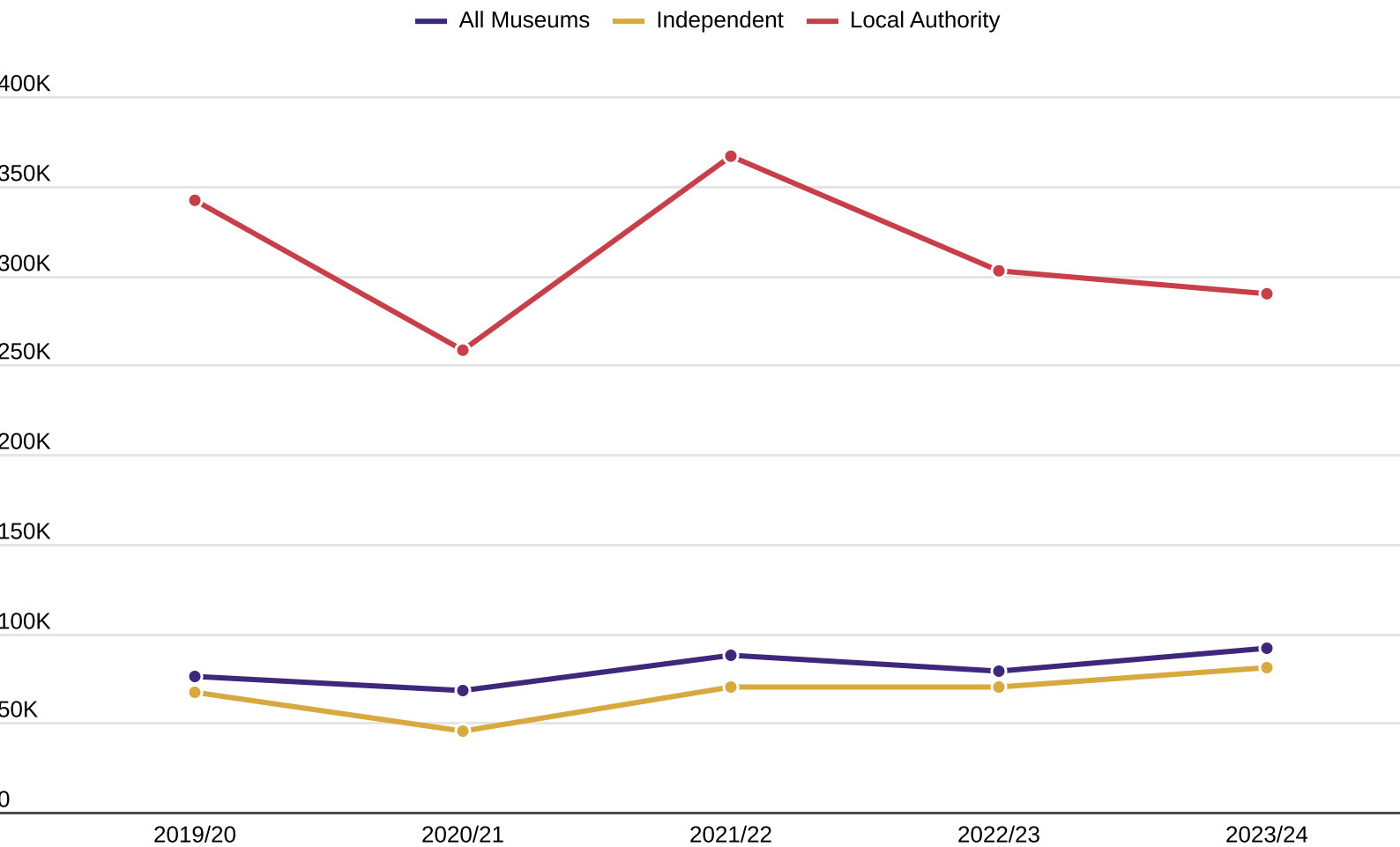


Nearly half of museums (44%) have seen their turnover increase by over 25% compared to 5 years ago, but one in four have seen it reduce by over 25% in the same period

Change in income/turnover level (2023/24 compared to 2019/20). Base: all museums (n=157)

Overall, average expenditure for museums has been on the up over the last 5 years.

From an average of £76k in 2019/20 to £91k in 2023/24



Median expenditure by year. Base: All Museums (n=103-247); independent museums (n=93-203); local authority museums (n=8-34)



Average staff expenditure follows a similar pattern to overall expenditure

From an average of £71k in 2019/20 to £88k in 2023/24



Average expenditure for organisations with multi-sites has increased too

From £622k in 2019/20 and £646k in 2023/24

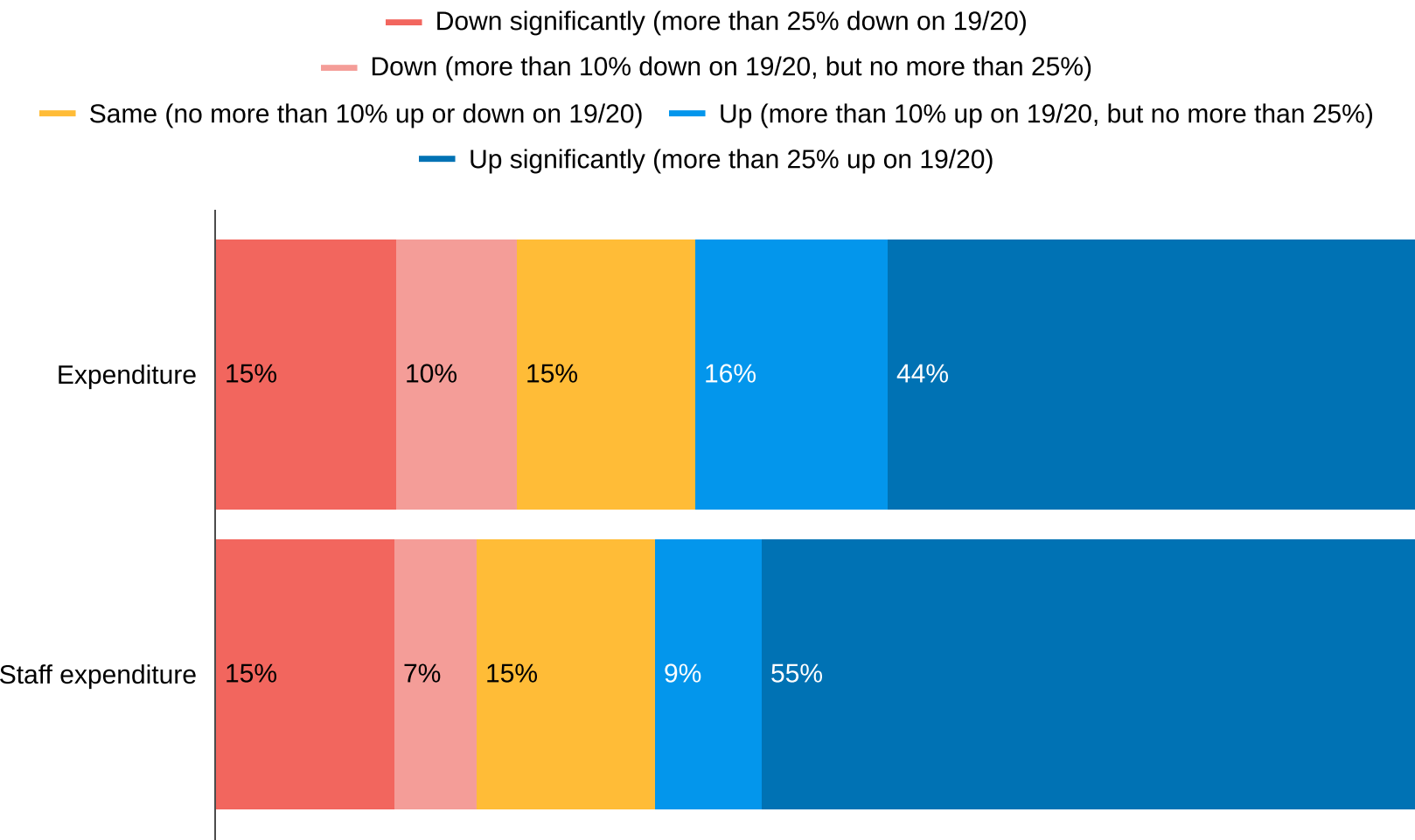


Organisations faced higher (and unpredictable) interest rates

The UK interest rate has fluctuated from a low of 0.2% in Aug 2020 up to a high of 11.1% in Oct 2022 (4.5% in February 2025), impacted by factors such as labour and supply shortages, rising energy costs, food price inflation, Brexit and the war in Ukraine.

Museums were much more likely to see expenditure rise than fall over the last 5 years.

On average, a museum has seen their expenditure increase by 19% between 2019/20 and 2023/24, and staff expenditure by 32% over the same period



Local authority museums appear to be one side or the other when it comes to changes in staff expenditure

Two in five (38%) local authority museums have seen staff expenditure reduce by more than 25% over the last five years; a similar proportion (40%) have seen staff expenditure increase by more than 25%

Change in expenditure and staff expenditure (2023/24 compared to 2019/20). Base: Expenditure (n=160); staff expenditure (n=93)

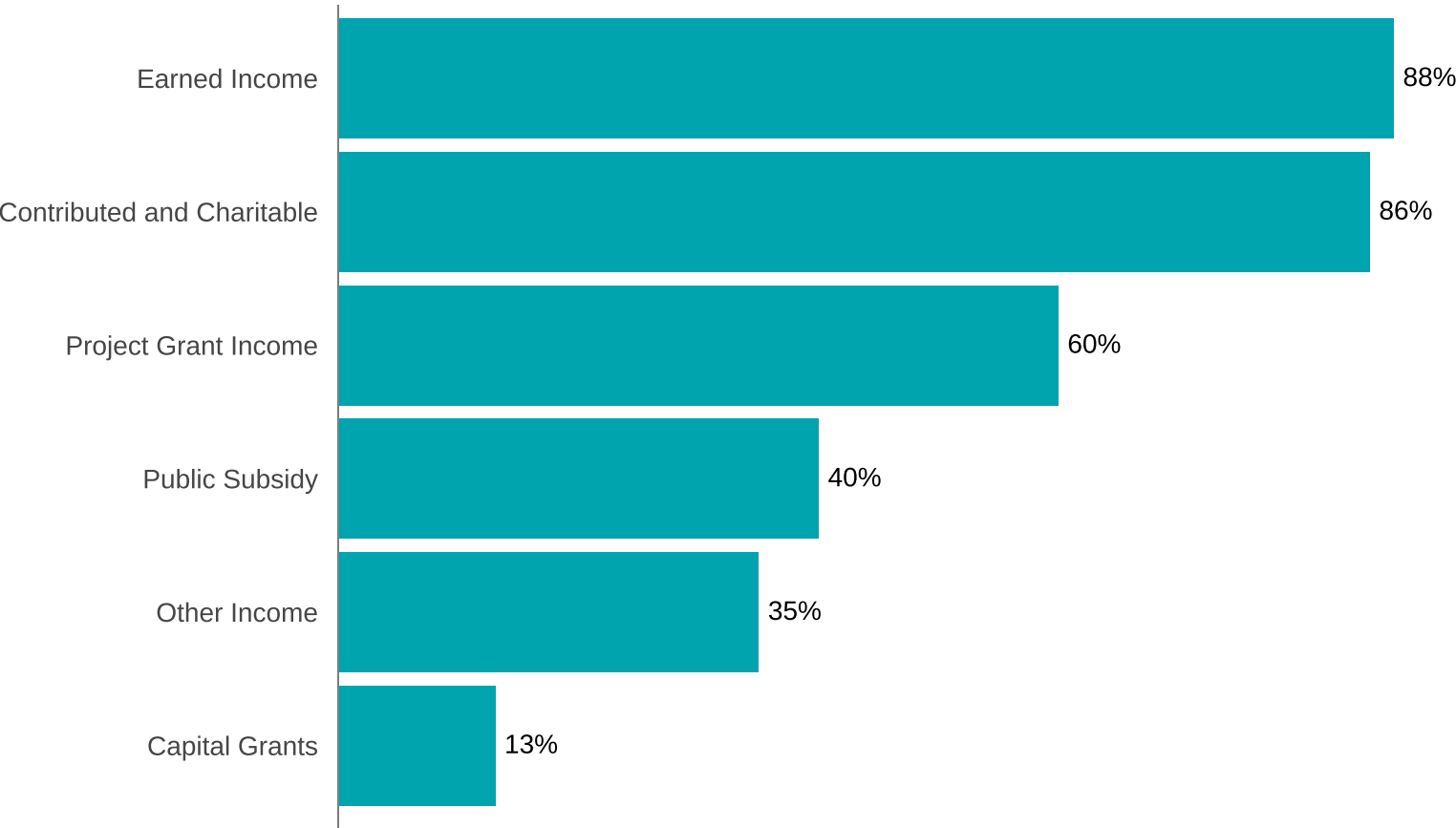
Types of income.

Breaking down income streams

Where do museums get their income from?

The majority of museums had earned income and contributed and charitable income in 2023/24

% indicating they receive income from the following in 2023/24



% of museums reporting receiving a range of different income types. Base: all museums 2023/24 (n=413)

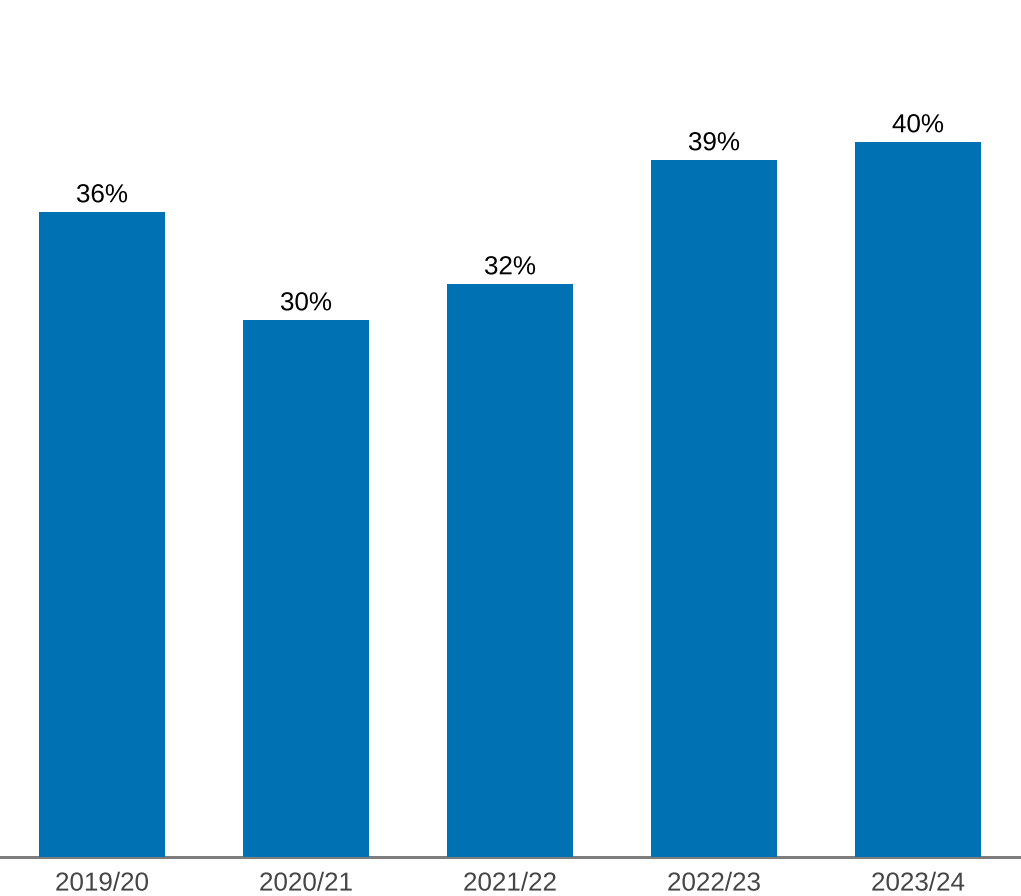


What do these different income streams mean?

- **Earned income** - admission charges, café, shop/retail, events, hospitality, other trading, property rental or a core activity which generates income
- **Contributed and charitable** - all types of donations, friends/member schemes, fundraising or sponsorship
- **Project grant income** (or 'revenue grants') - grants for time-limited activities or one-off projects
- **Public subsidy** (or 'core funding') - for the running costs of the museum
- **Other income** - such as investments and interest
- **Capital grants** - grants or budget for new or refurbished buildings, galleries or equipment

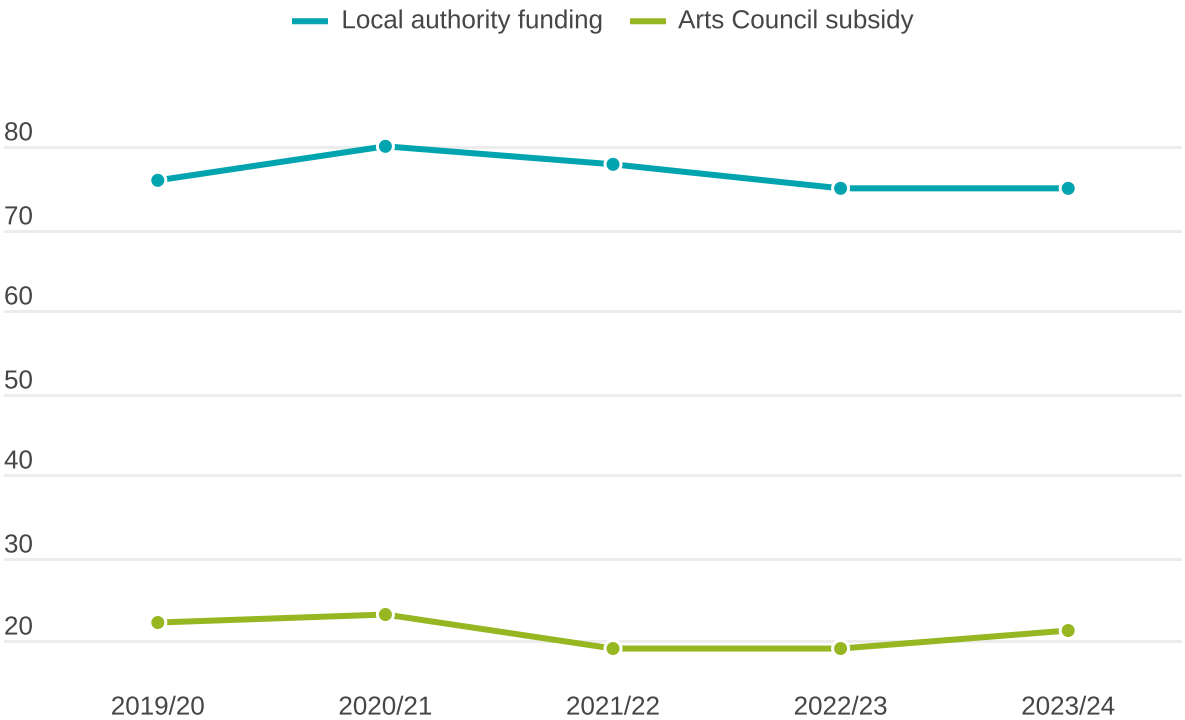
Public subsidy: the % of museums receiving public subsidy dropped during the pandemic.

40% of museums received public subsidy in 2023/24, compared to 36% in 2019/20;
The majority (86%) of multi-site organisations received public subsidy in 2023/24



% of museums reporting receiving public subsidy by year. Base: 2019/20 (n=494); 2020/21 (n=449); 2021/22 (n=477); 2022/23 (n=481); 2023/24 (n=413)

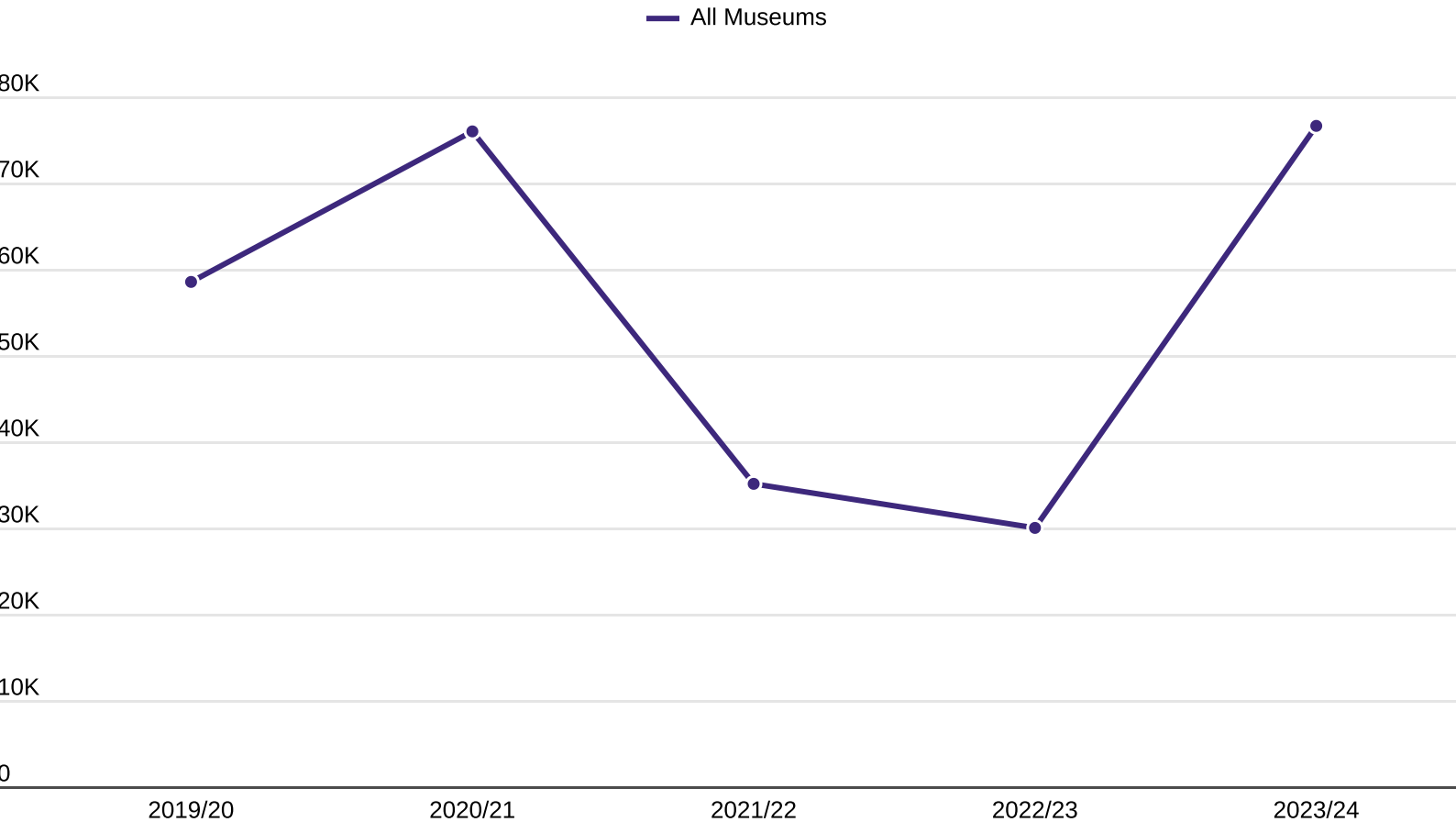
There has been no significant change in the proportion of museums receiving local authority funding and Arts Council subsidy across the 5 years



% of museums receiving public subsidy: local authority funding or Arts Council subsidy. Base: 2019/20 (n=205); 2020/21 (n=133); 2021/22 (n=158); 2022/23 (n=185); 2023/24 (n=163)

Public subsidy: the average value of public subsidy is higher than it was 5 years ago.

Overall, public subsidy levels appear to have increased, from an average of £58.6k for a museum receiving public subsidy in 2019/20, to £76.5k in 2023/24



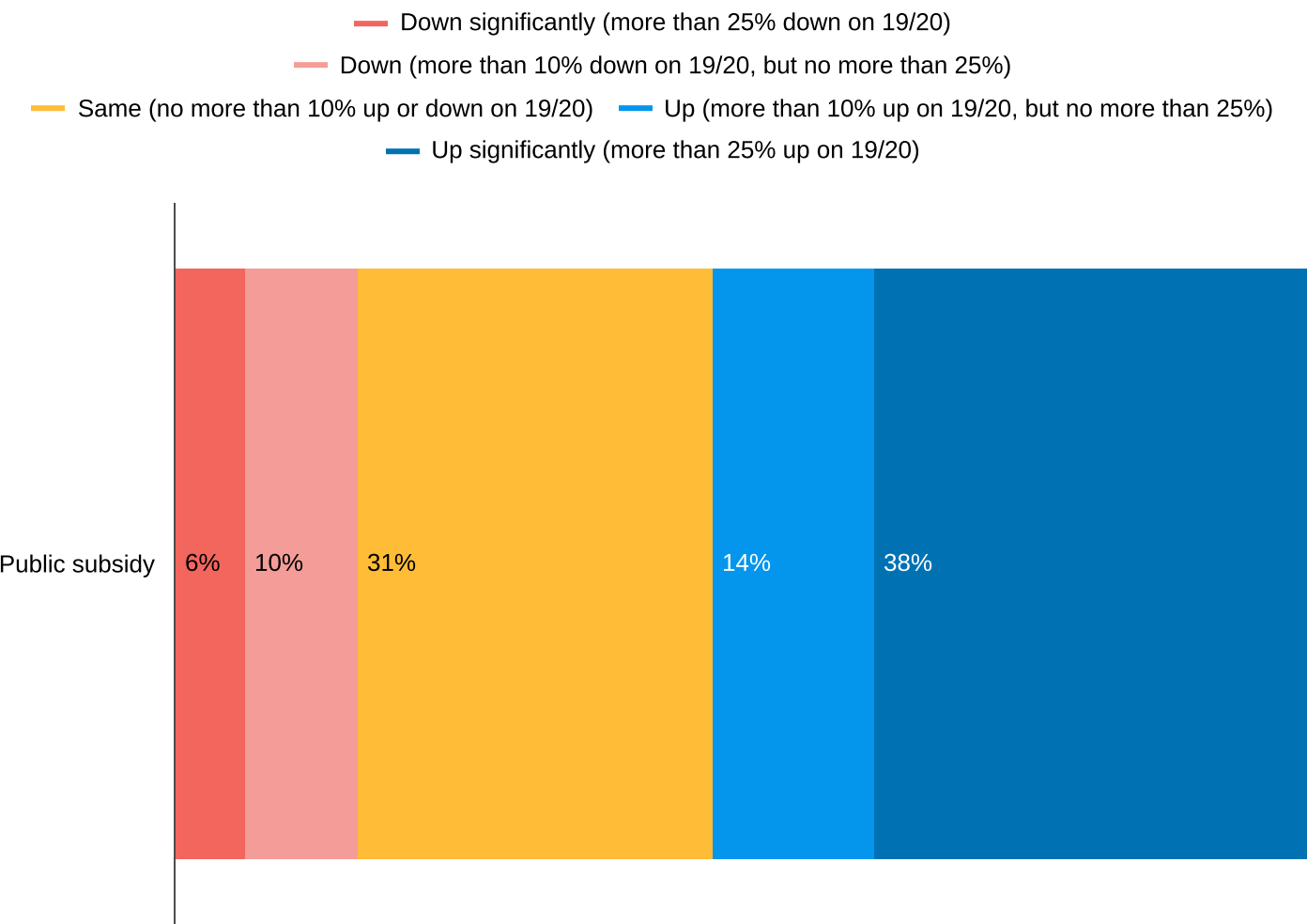
Public subsidy is higher for local authority museums

- With the average value increasing from £279k in 2019/20 to £319k in 2023/24
- By comparison, the average value of public subsidy to independent museums was £30k in 2023/24, up from £23k in 2019/20

Median public subsidy by year. Base: 2019/20 (n=91); 2020/21 (n=63); 2021/22 (n=39); 2022/23 (n=36); 2023/24 (n=62)

Public subsidy: half of museums receiving public subsidy have seen it increase.

Two in five (38%) have seen it increase by more than 25% over the last 5 years



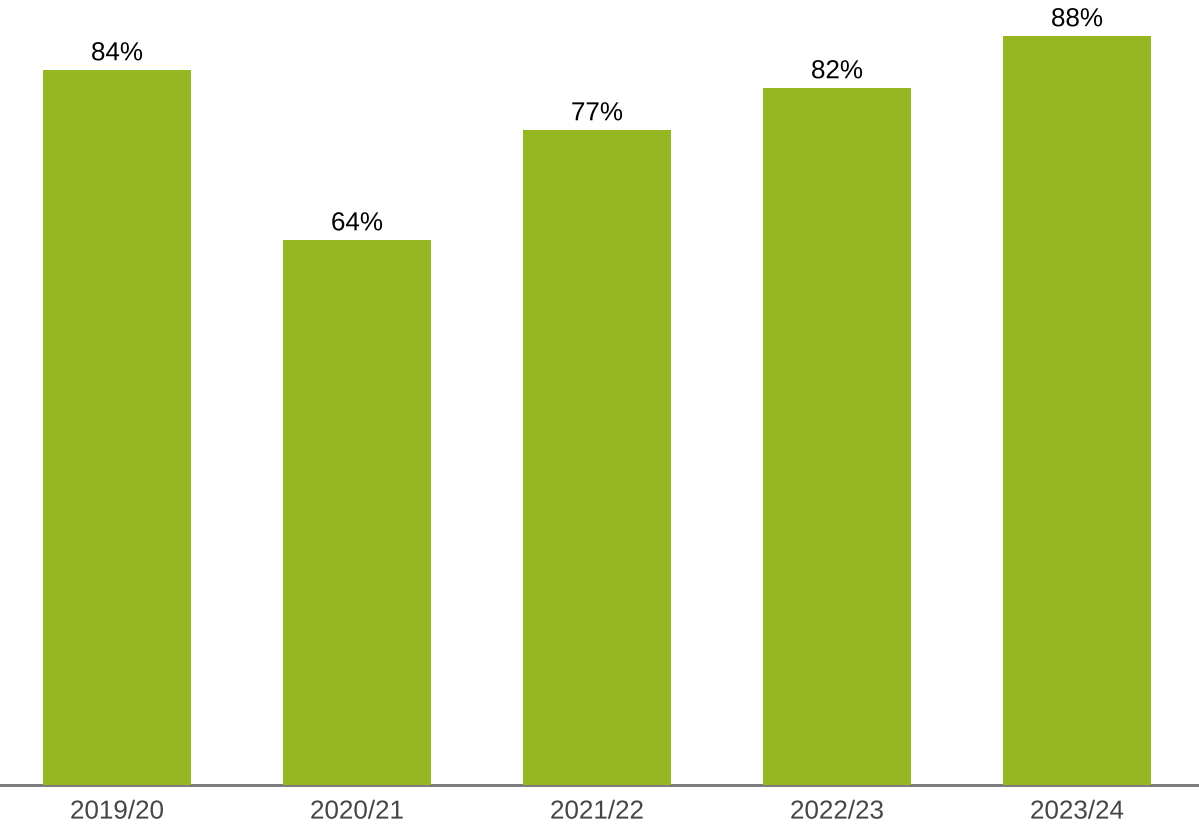
Museums with more staff were most likely to see a significant increase in public subsidy

65% of museums with 10+ staff have seen their public subsidy increase by more than 25% over the last 5 years

Change in public subsidy (2023/24 compared to 2019/20). Base: All museums (n=50)

Earned income: the majority of museums receive earned income, most likely from a shop.

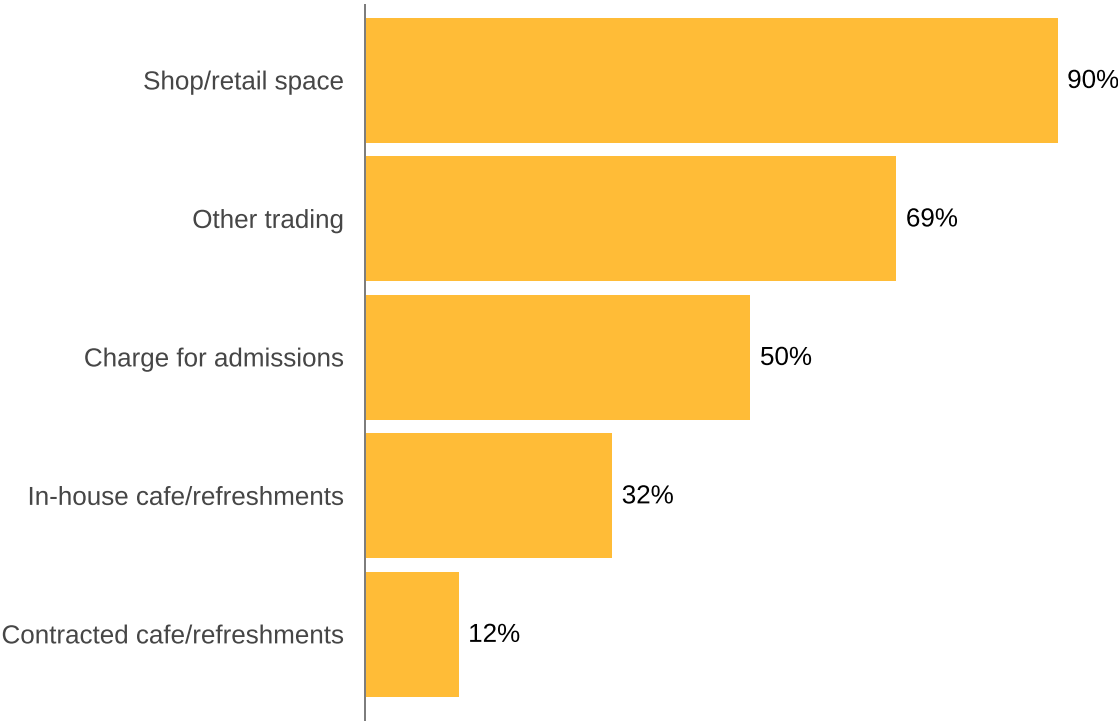
88% of museums received earned income in 2023/24, compared to 84% in 2019/20; the majority (89%) of multi-site organisations received earned income in 2023/24



% of museums reporting receiving earned income by year. Base: 2019/20 (n=494); 2020/21 (n=449); 2021/22 (n=477); 2022/23 (n=481); 2023/24 (n=413)



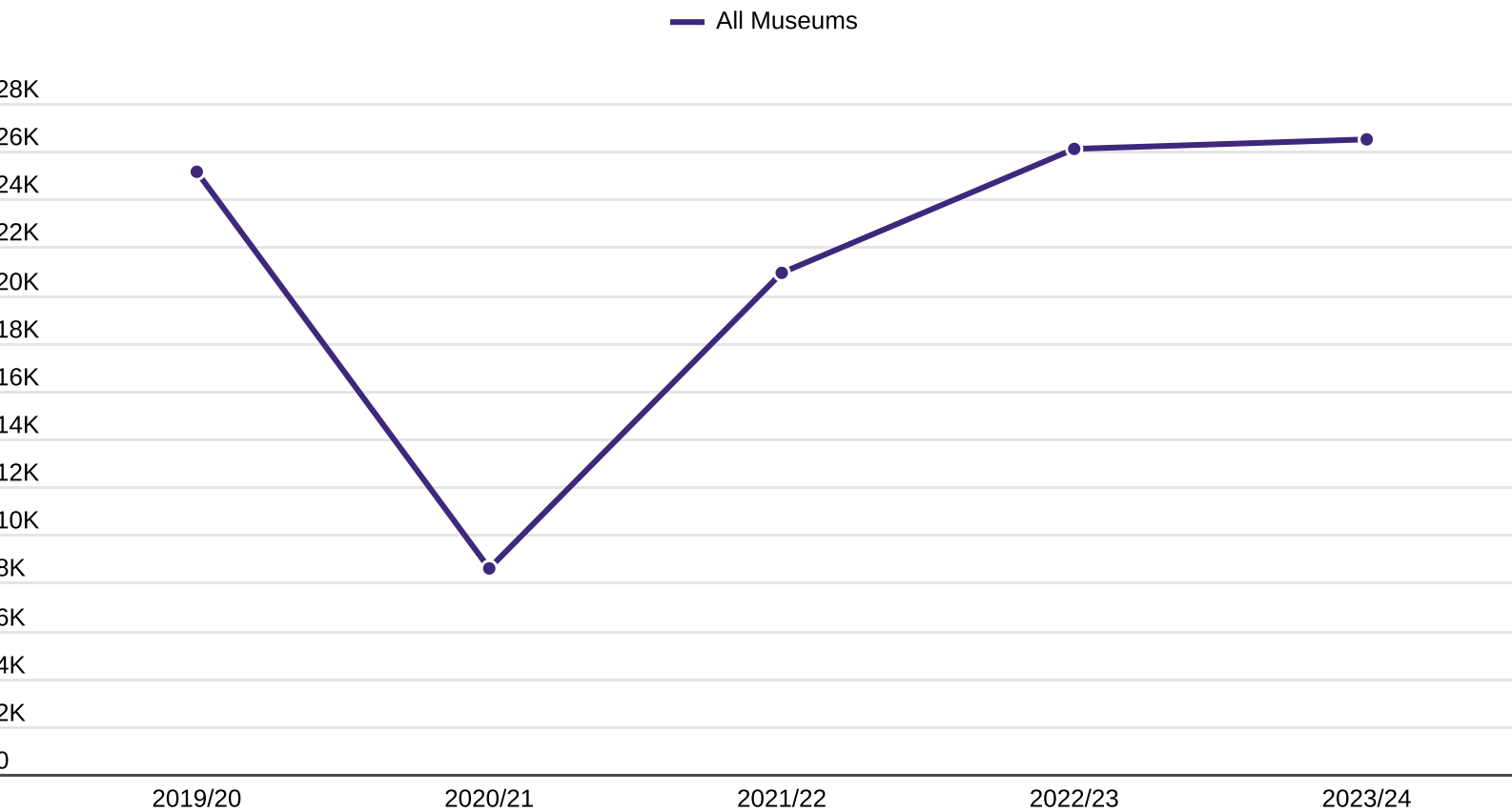
Nine in ten museums receiving earned income have a shop and half charge for admissions (annually or seasonally)



% of museums with earned income reporting receiving a range of different earned income types. Base: all museums 2023/24 (n=365)

Earned income (admissions): average admissions income dropped during the pandemic, but is now back past the 2019/20 level.

Average income from admissions was £25.1k in 2019/20 and £26.5k in 2023/24



Independent museums are significantly more likely to charge for admissions than local authority museums

58% of independent museums charged for admissions in 2023/24, compared to 12% of local authority museums

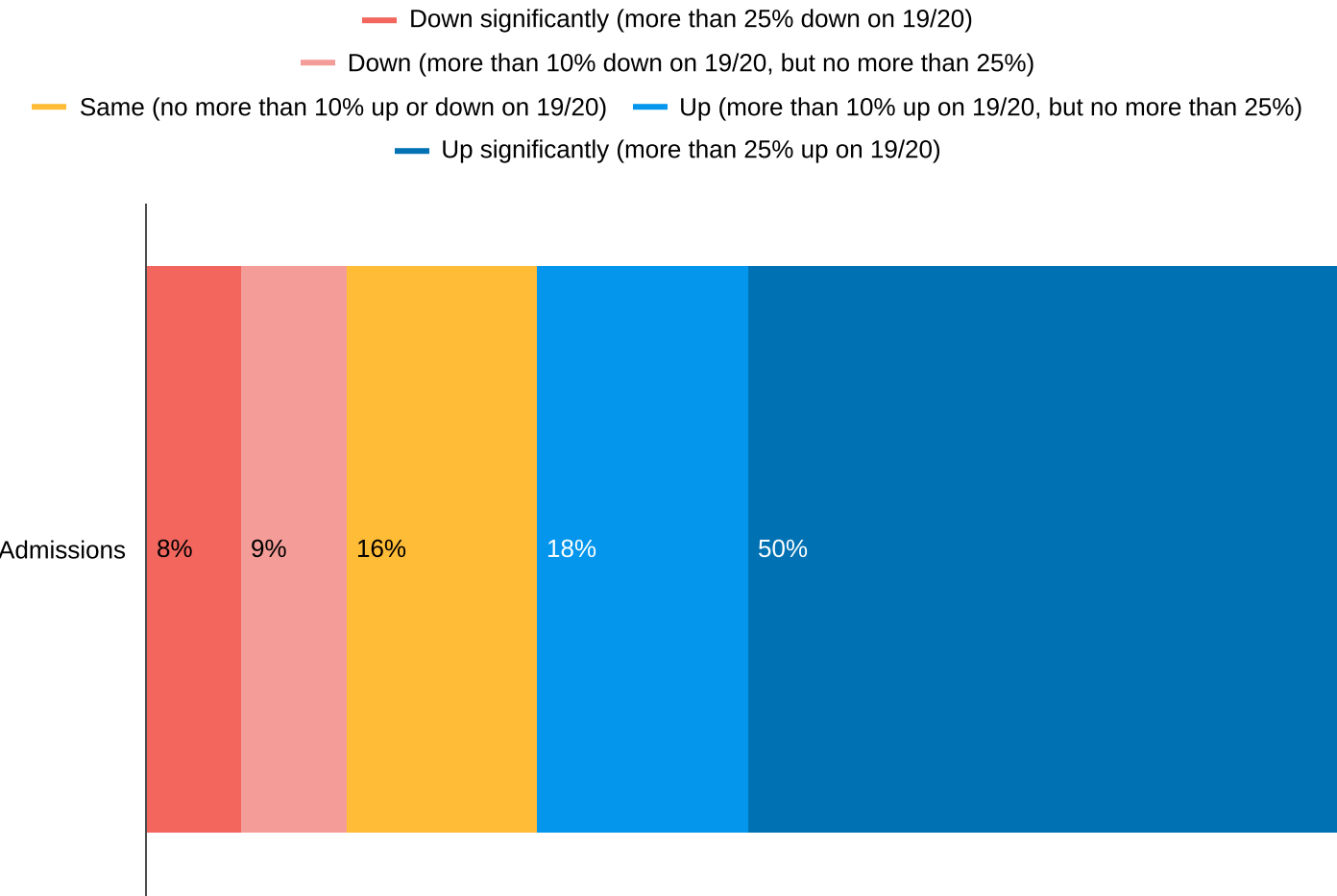


The average standard admissions charge for an adult has risen from £5 in 2019/20 to £6.50 in 2023/24

Median admissions income by year. Base: 2019/20 (n=111); 2020/21 (n=53); 2021/22 (n=55); 2022/23 (n=56); 2023/24 (n=79)

Earned income (admissions): half of museums have increased admissions income by over 25% in the last 5 years.

On average, income from admissions at museums has increased by 23% over the last 5 years



Three in four (74%) museums have increased their admissions charge by more than 25% over the last 5 years

25% have kept their charge the same, with volunteer-run museums (41%) and urban museums (35%) even more likely to keep it the same



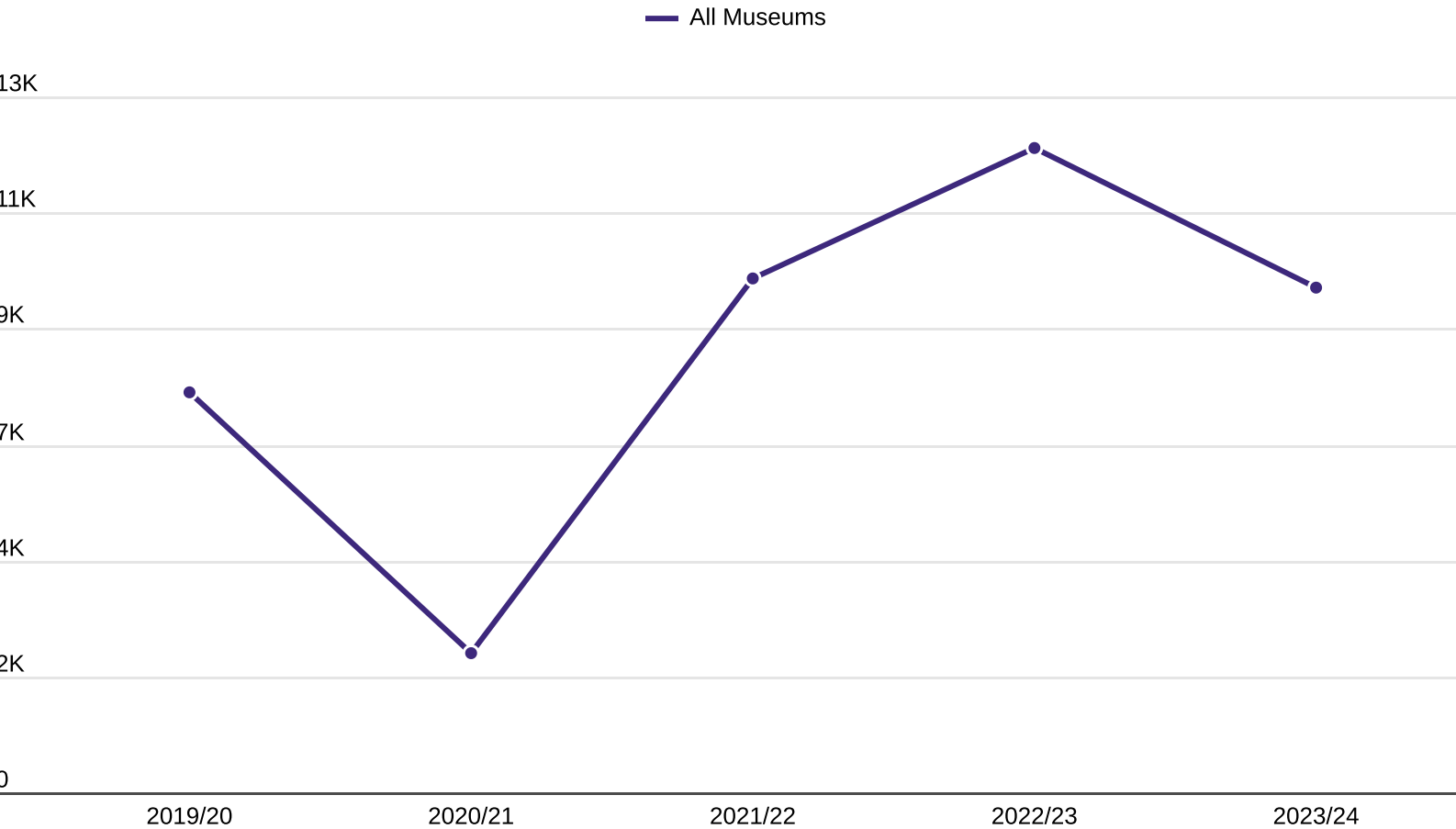
If museums increased their charge, they were more likely to see admissions income increase

64% of museums that increased the adult charge by more than 25% also saw admissions income increase by more than 25%, compared to 30% of museums that did not change their admissions charge

Change in admissions income (2023/24 compared to 2019/20). Base: All museums (n=72)

Earned income (shop): average income from shop/retail is higher than it was in 2019/20.

On average, museums earn £9.4k from a shop (2023/24), compared to £7.5k in 2019/20



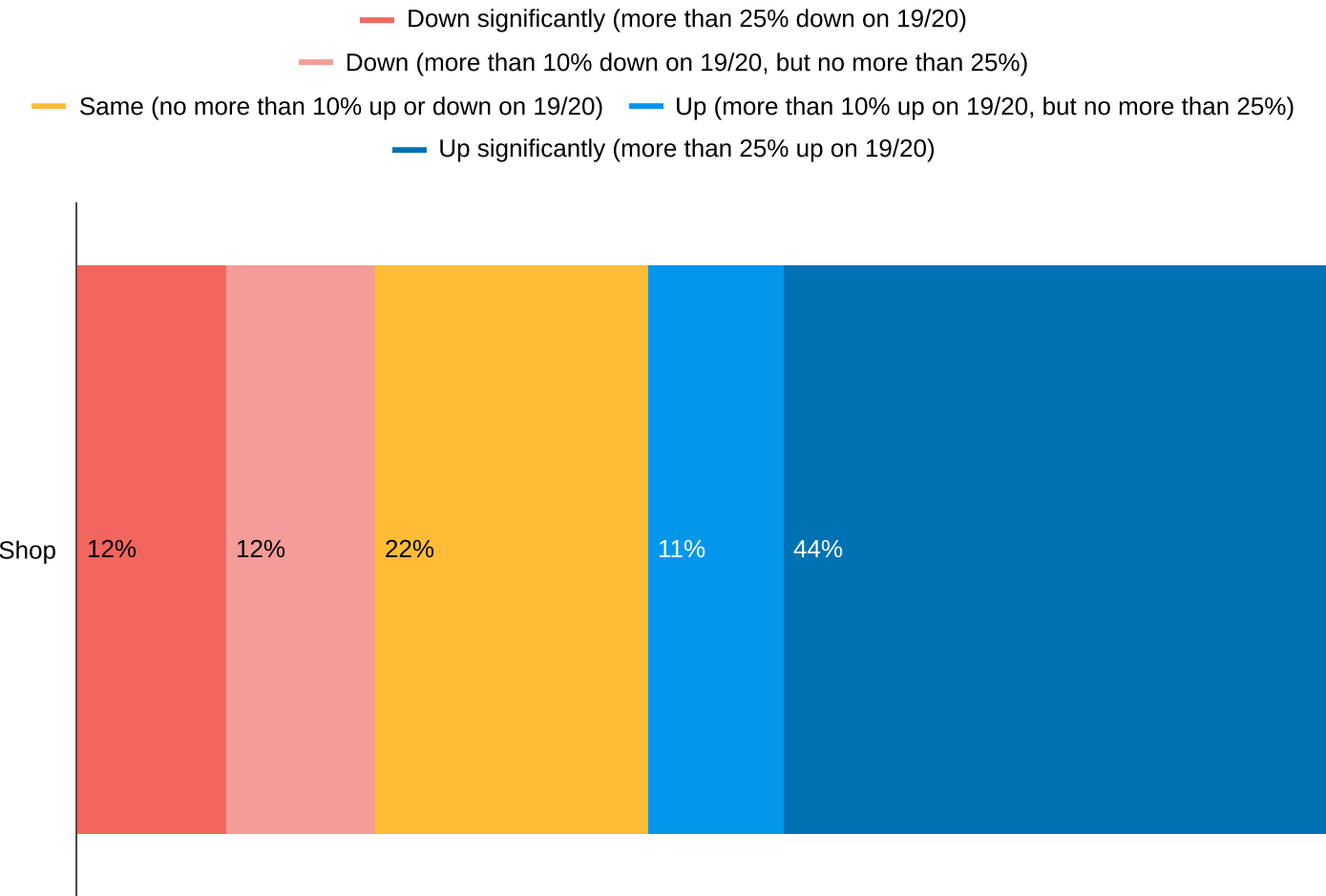
Average income from shop or retail is higher for local authority museums

- The average shop income for a local authority museum in 2023/24 was £13.9k, up from £8.8k in 2019/20
- By comparison, the average shop income for an independent museum in 2023/24 was £8.8k, up from £6.9k in 2019/20

Median income from shop/retail by year. Base: 2019/20 (n=198); 2020/21 (n=107); 2021/22 (n=81); 2022/23 (n=87); 2023/24 (n=135)

Earned income (shop): 44% of museums have increased income from their shop by over 25% in the last 5 years.

On average, income from shop/retail at museums has increased by 15% over the last 5 years



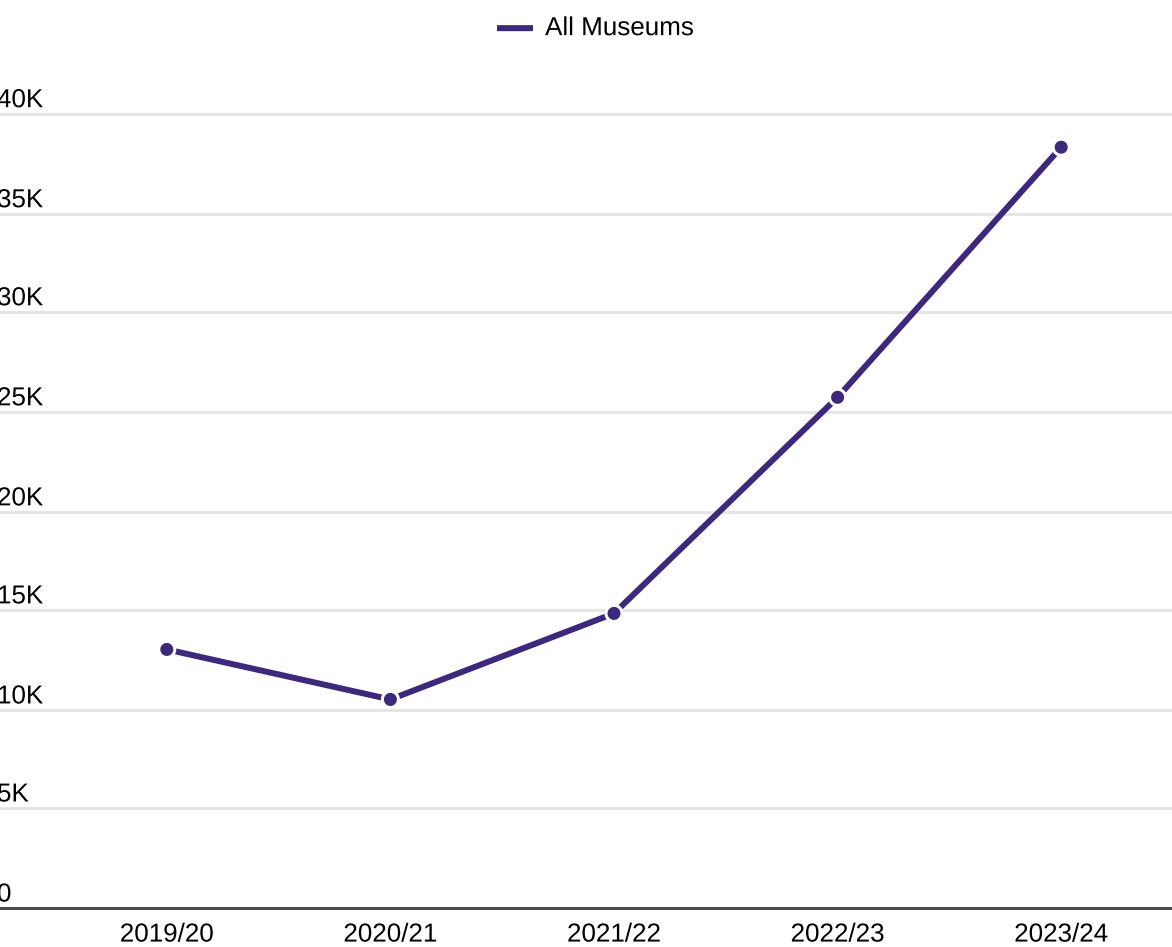
There is a link between on-site visitors and shop income

- 39% of museums which have seen visitor numbers drop by more than 25% in the last 5 years have also seen income from their shop drop by the same amount
- 92% of museums which have seen visitor numbers increase by more than 25% in the last 5 years have also seen income from their shop increase by the same amount

Change in shop/retail income (2023/24 compared to 2019/20). Base: All museums (n=125)

Earned income (cafe): average income from cafe/refreshments has been rising year-on-year.

From an average of £13k in 2019/20 to £38.3k in 2023/24



Median income from in-house or contracted cafe by year. Base: 2019/20 (n=78); 2020/21 (n=42); 2021/22 (n=37); 2022/23 (n=44); 2023/24 (n=47)



Three in five museums have seen cafe income increase over the last 5 years

- 61% of museums have seen cafe income increase by more than 10% (47% by over 25%)
- 19% have seen it remain broadly similar (+/-10%)
- 20% of museums have seen cafe income decrease by more than 10% over the last 5 years

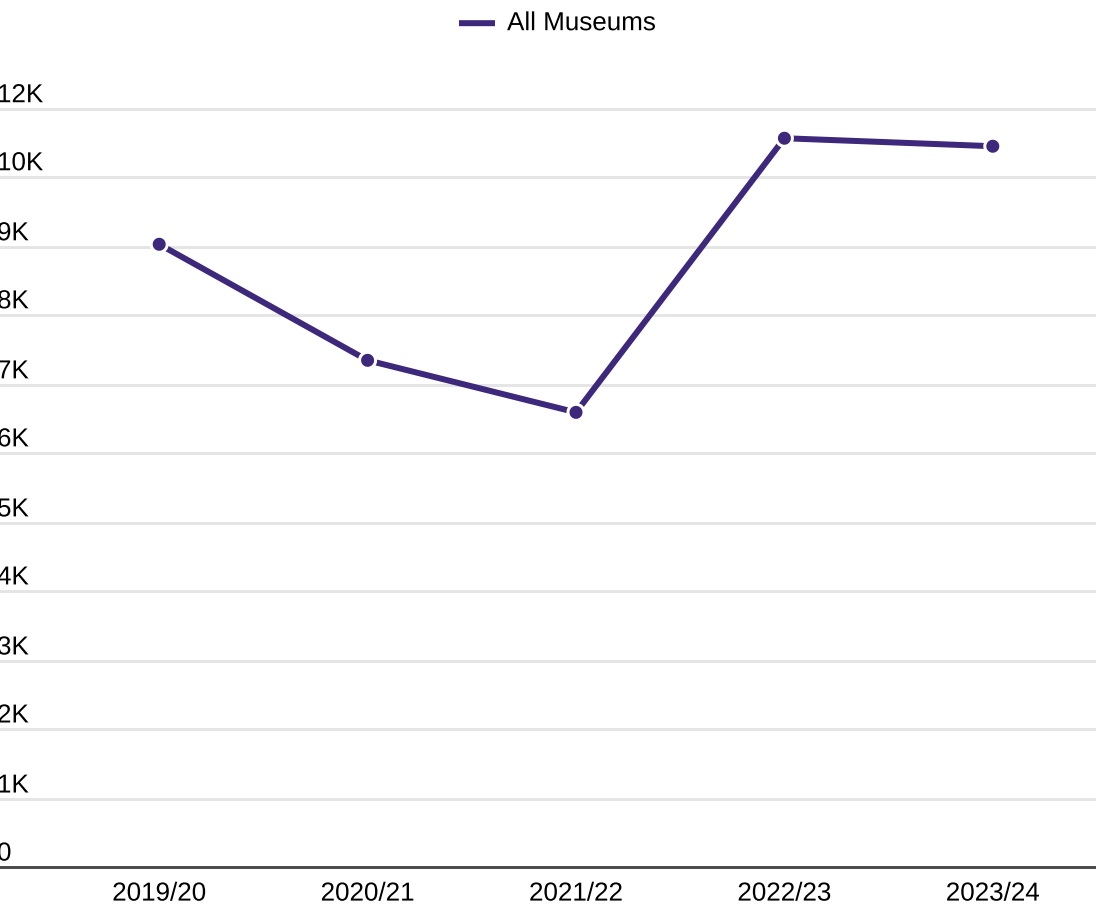


Rising costs and food price inflation are likely to have led to increased prices in cafes and therefore increased income

According to several reports, in recent years the UK hospitality industry has been hit by high energy costs, record food and drink inflation, reduced consumer spending power, labour shortages, increased wage bills and increased interest rates. Data from the ONS shows that food price inflation peaked in March 2023 stood at 19.2% (down to 2% Jan 2025).

Earned income (other trading): average income from other trading and earnings has increased markedly in the last 2 years.

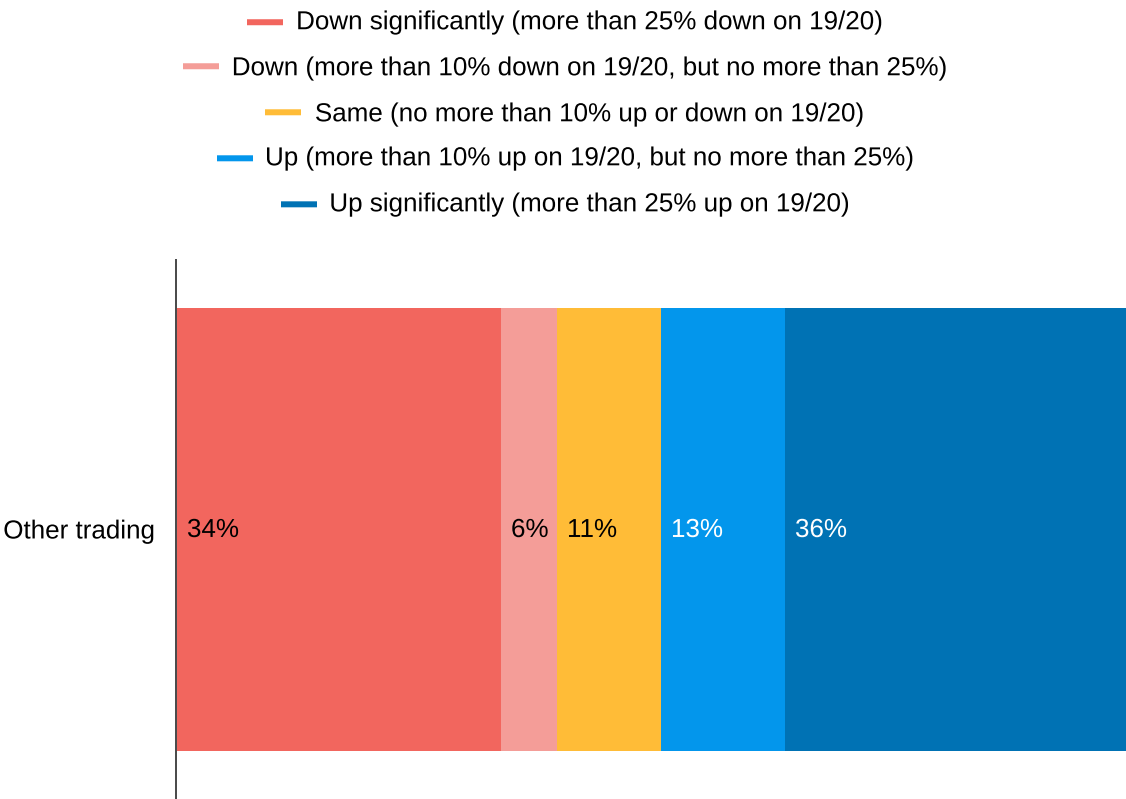
Average income from other trading and earnings was £10,934 in 2023/24, compared to £9,424 in 2019/20



Median income from other trading and earnings by year. Base: 2019/20 (n=139); 2020/21 (n=70); 2021/22 (n=57); 2022/23 (n=56); 2023/24 (n=92)



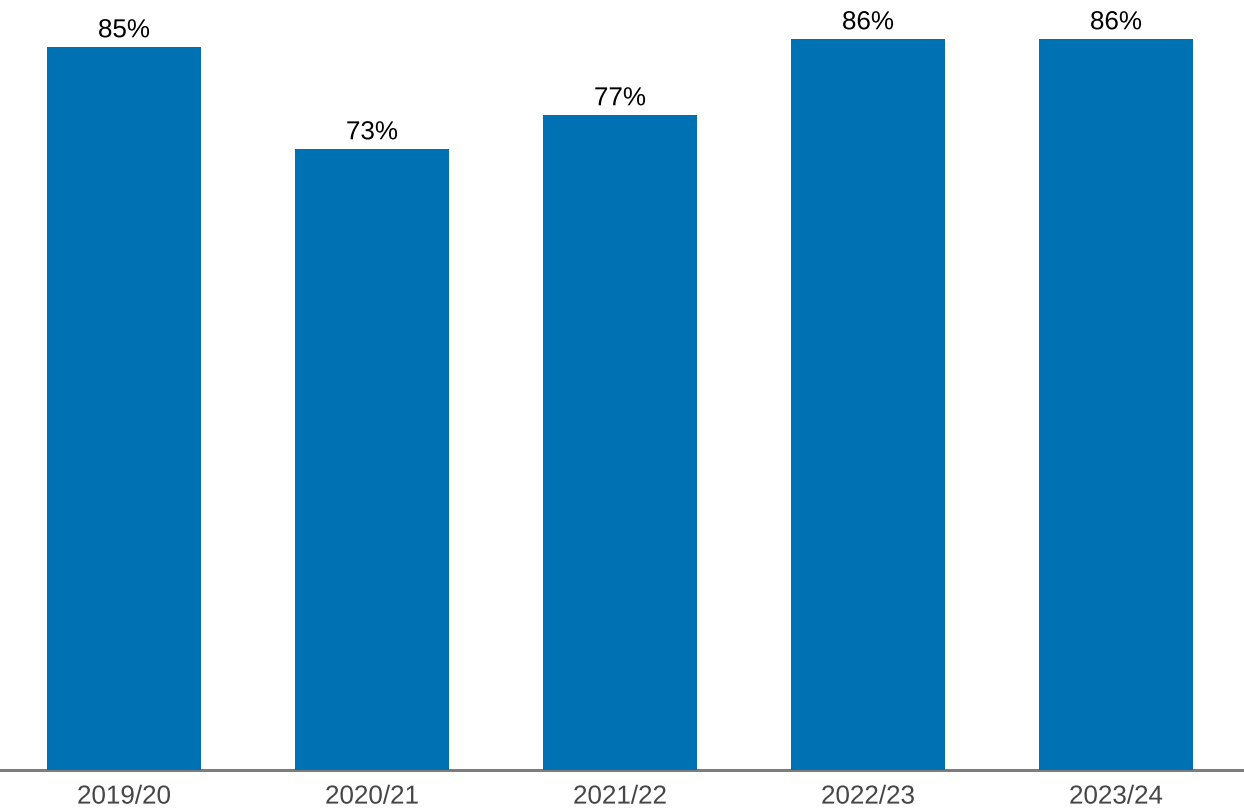
On average, income from other trading and earnings at museums has increased by 9% over the last 5 years, with an even split of museums seeing significant increases and falls in this income stream



Change in other trading and earnings income (2023/24 compared to 2019/20). Base: All museums (n=73)

Contributed and charitable income: proportion of museums receiving contributed or charitable income is the same as it was in 2019/20.

86% of museums received contributed or charitable income in 2023/24, similar to 85% in 2019/20

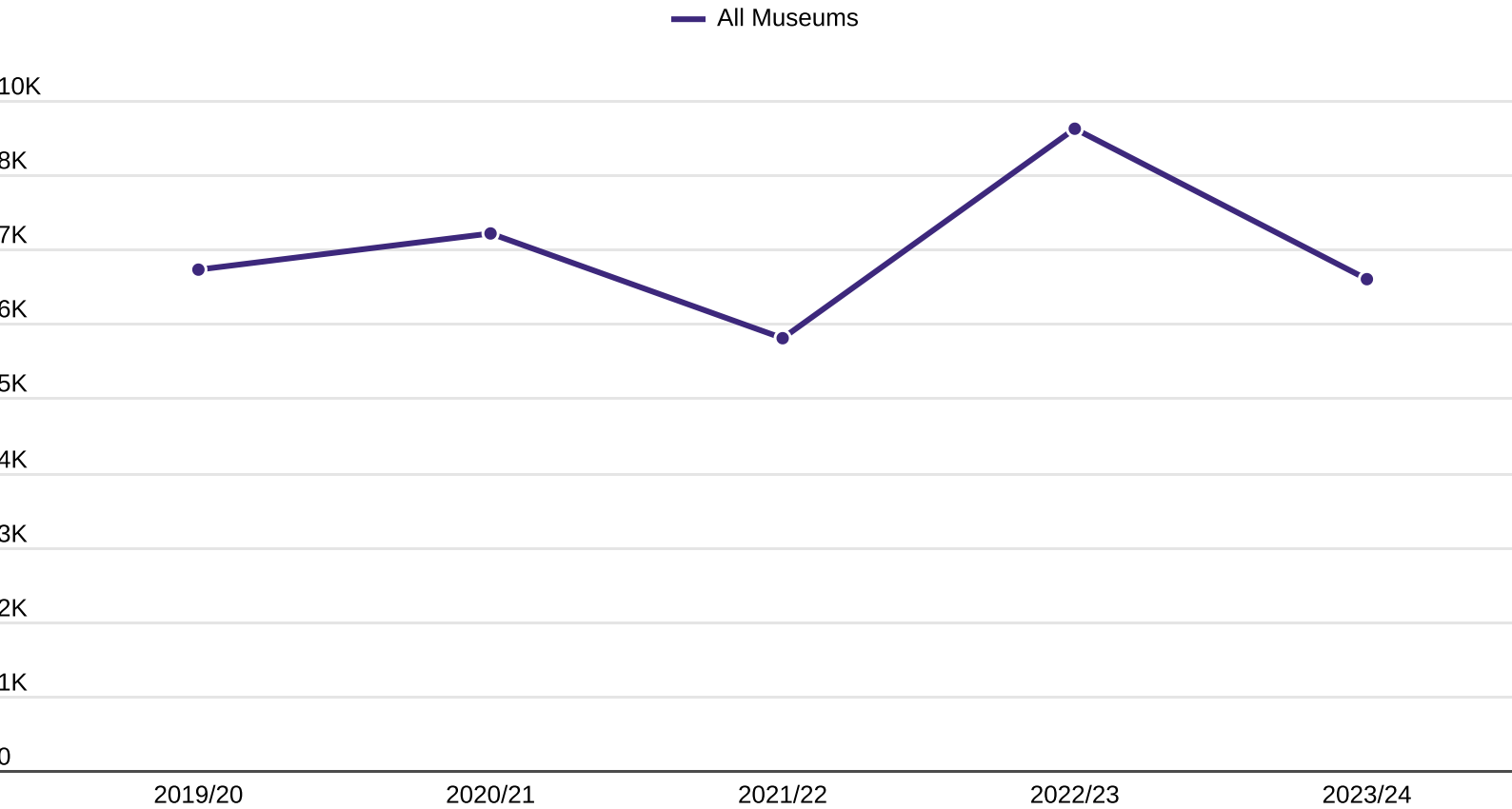


The majority (84%) of multi-site organisations received contributed and charitable income in 2023/24

% of museums reporting receiving contributed or charitable income by year. Base: 2019/20 (n=494); 2020/21 (n=449); 2021/22 (n=477); 2022/23 (n=481); 2023/24 (n=413)

Contributed and charitable: average income from other contributed and charitable giving has been up and down over the last 5 years.

But overall, the average income from this is at a similar level to what it was in 2019/20



Median income from contributed or charitable by year. Base: 2019/20 (n=188); 2020/21 (n=115); 2021/22 (n=59); 2022/23 (n=50); 2023/24 (n=73)

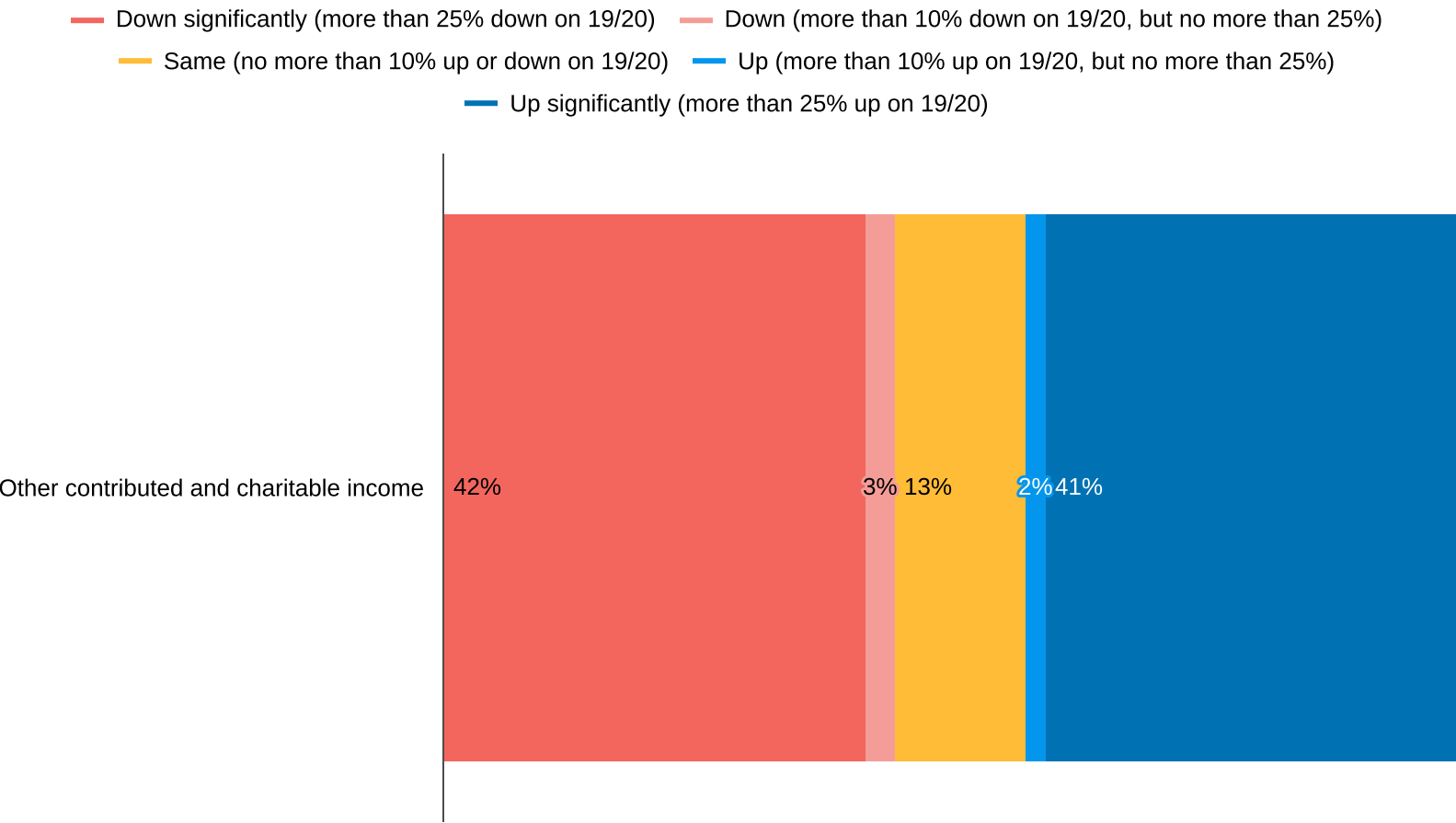


Other contributed and charitable giving is higher for independent museums

- The average value of contributed or charitable income for independent museums was £7k in 2023/24, compared to £8k in 2019/20
- By comparison, the average value of contributed or charitable income for local authority museums was £2.5k in 2023/24, compared to £1.2k in 2019/20

Contributed and charitable: museums are split when it comes to how contributed and charitable income levels have changed over the last 5 years.

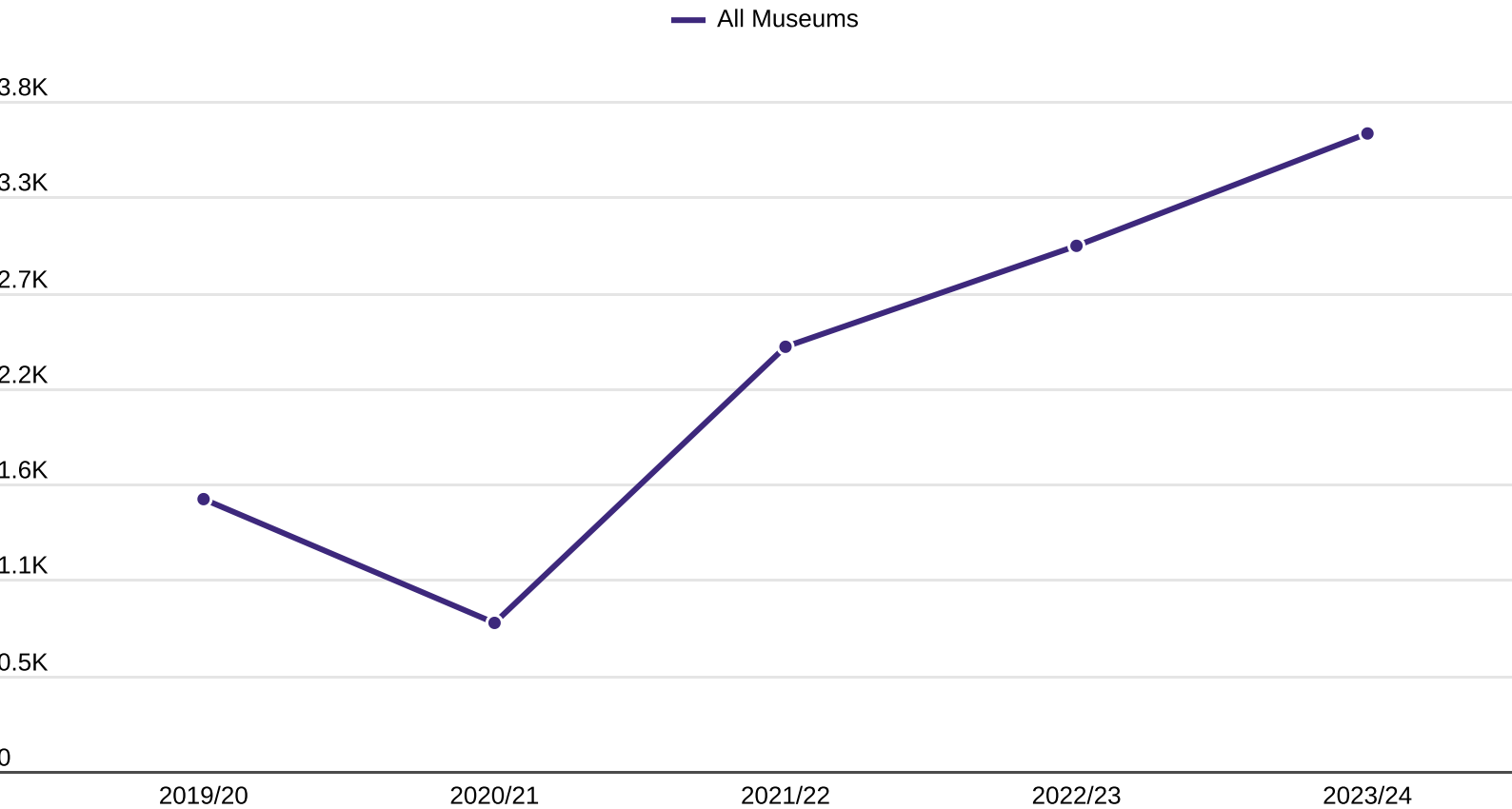
Two in five have seen it increase by more than 25% over the last 5 years; the same proportion have seen it decrease by more than 25%




Change in contributed and charitable income (2023/24 compared to 2019/20). Base: All museums (n=72)

One-off donations: Income from one-off donations is modest, but the average income from it has increased significantly over the last 5 years.

With an average income from donations of £3,613 in 2023/24, compared to £1,541 in 2019/20



 **Virtually all museums (97%) collect one-off donations at their museum site**

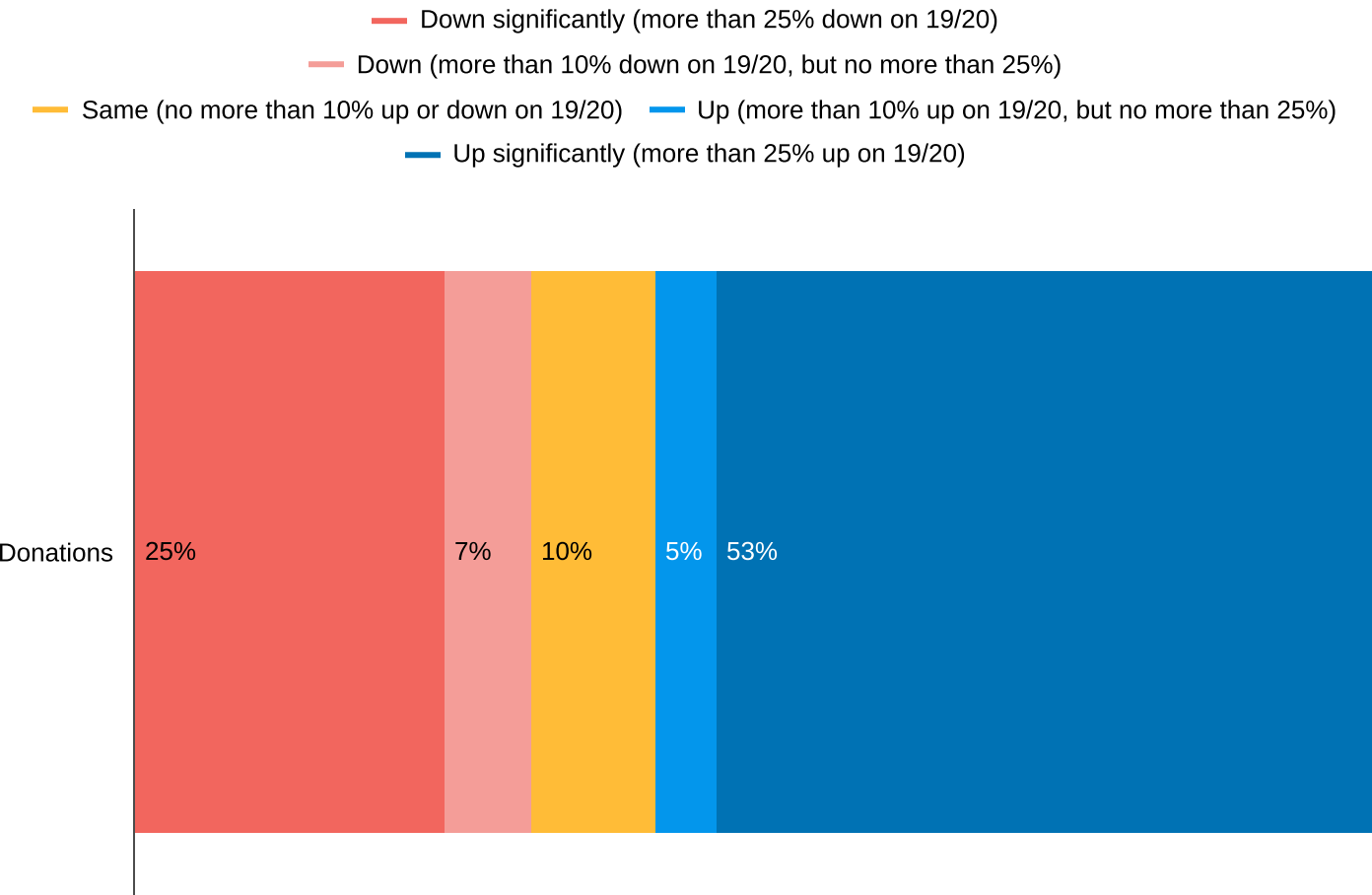
 **Average donations are higher for independent museums**

The average one-off donations at an independent museum in 2023/24 was £3.6k, compared to £2.4k for local authority museums

Median income from one-off donations by year. Base: 2019/20 (n=204); 2020/21 (n=115); 2021/22 (n=81); 2022/23 (n=85); 2023/24 (n=127)

One-off donations: half of museums have increased income from one-off donations by over 25% in the last 5 years.

Whilst one in four have seen income from one-off donations drop by more than 25% over the same period



Change in income from one-off donations (2023/24 compared to 2019/20). Base: All museums (n=112)



On average, one-off donations at museums have increased by 33% over the last 5 years

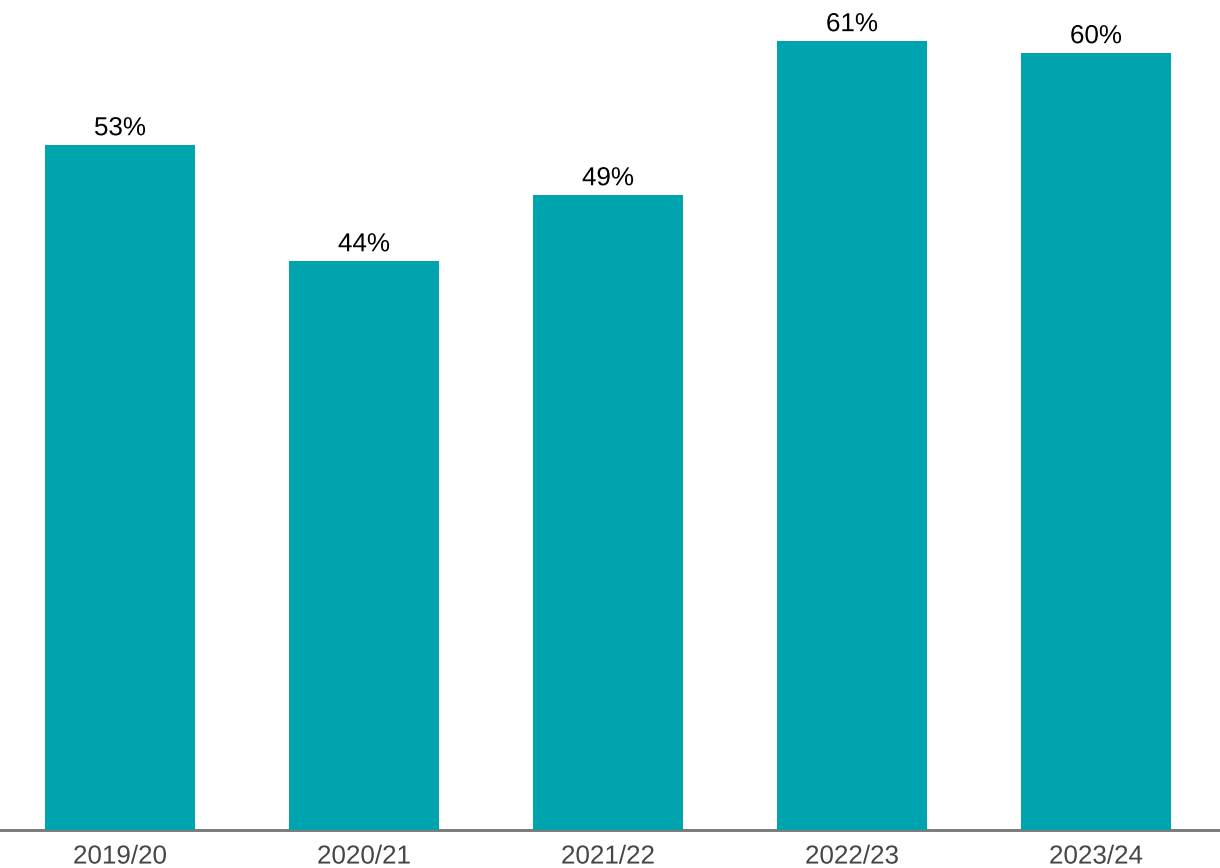


Urban museums are more likely to have seen a significant increase in income from one-off donations

63% of urban museums have seen income from one-off donations increase by more than 25% over the last 5 years, compared to 39% of rural museums

Project grant funding: museums receiving project grants also dipped during the pandemic.

But 60% of museums received project grants in 2023/24, up from 53% in 2019/20

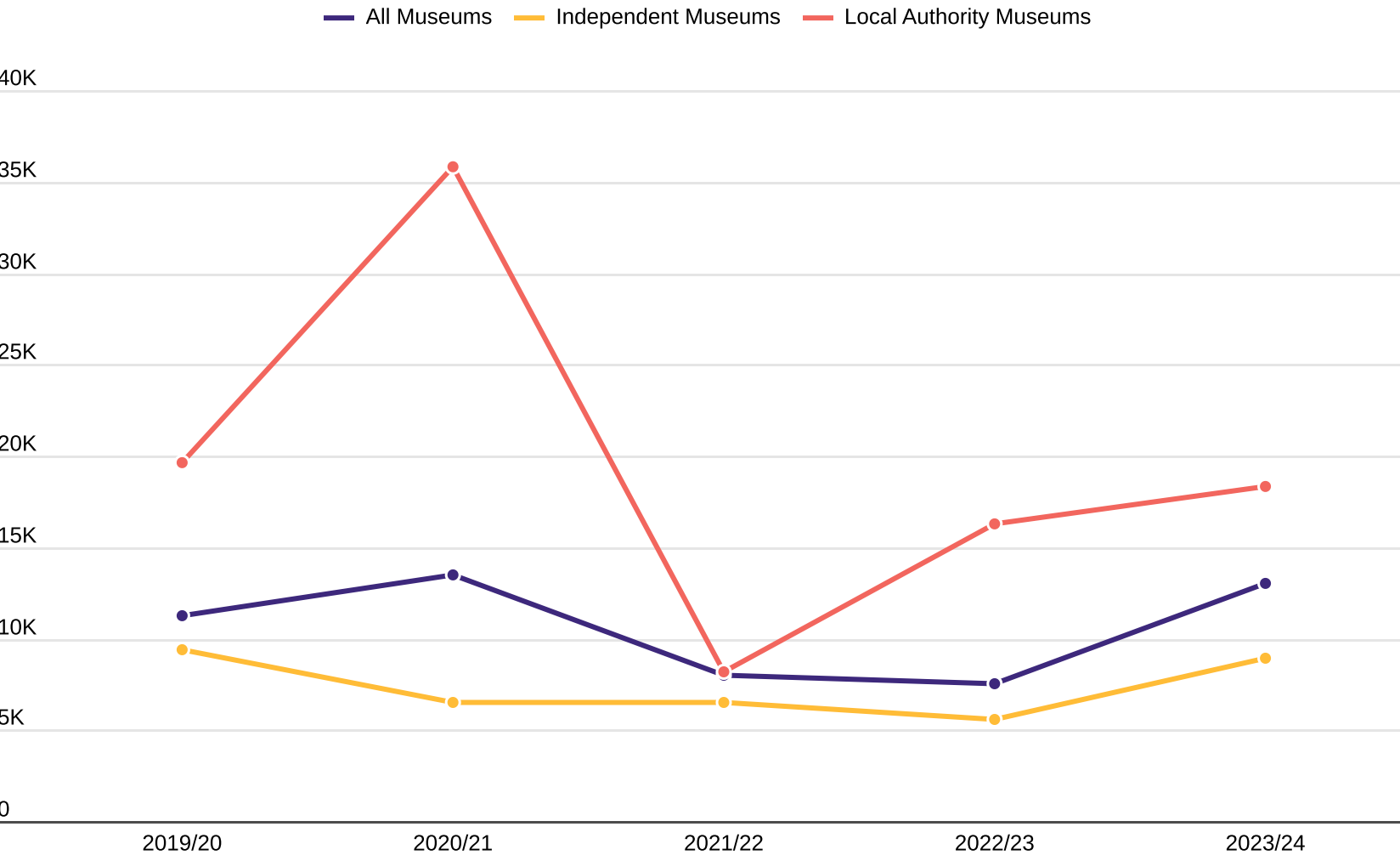


The majority (81%) of multi-site organisations received project grants in 2023/24

% of museums reporting receiving project grants by year. Base: 2019/20 (n=494); 2020/21 (n=449); 2021/22 (n=477); 2022/23 (n=481); 2023/24 (n=413)

Project grant funding: average value of project grants currently higher than pre-pandemic.

On average, museums received £13k in project grants in 2023/24, compared to £11.3k in 2019/20



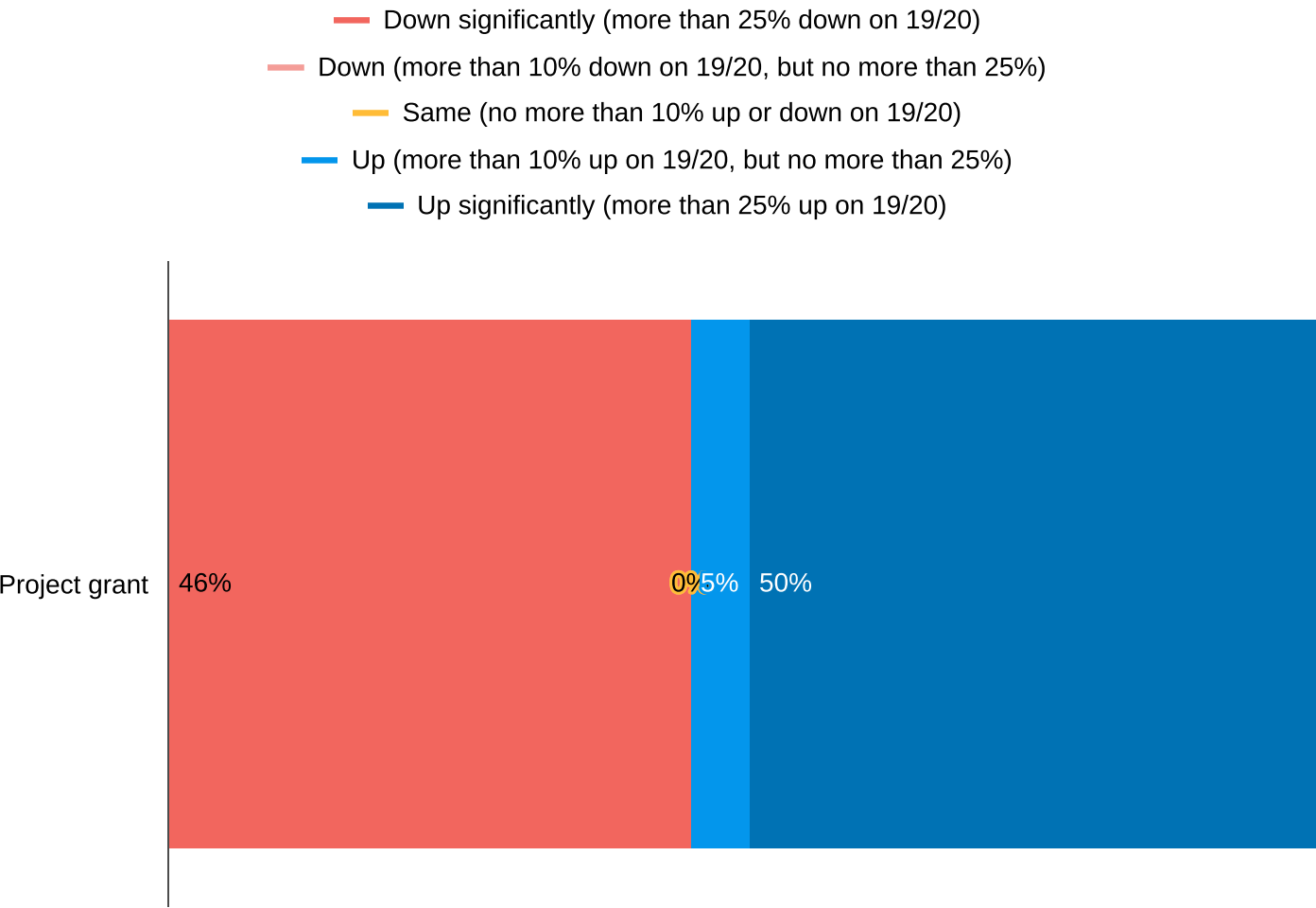
Whilst fewer museums received project grants in 2020/21, for those that did the average value was higher

Particularly for local authority museums

Median income from project grants by year. Base: All Museums (n=52-140); independent museums (n=43-114); local authority museums (n=7-22)

Project grant funding: for individual museums, income from project grants is either up or down.

50% have seen income from project grants increase by more than 25% compared to 5 years ago, whilst 46% have seen project grant income reduce by more than 25%



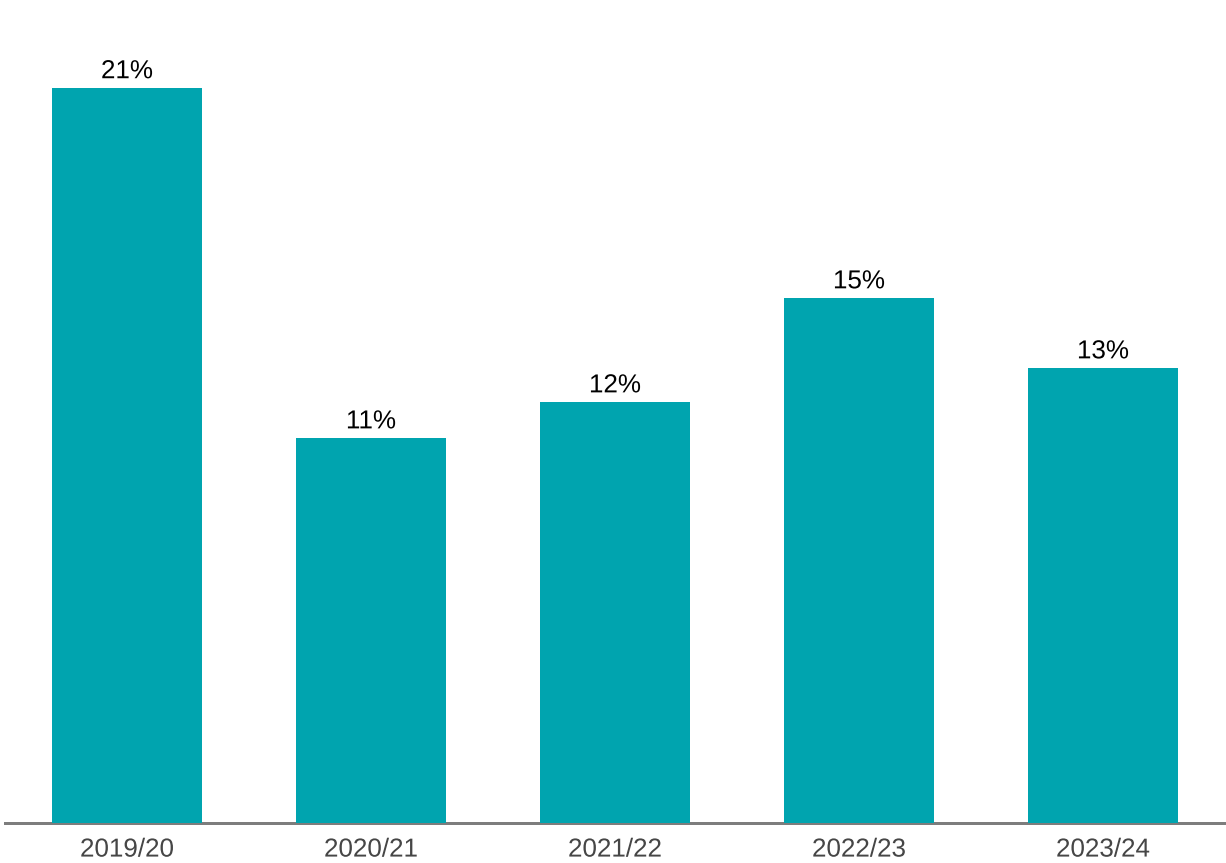
The nature of project grants is that they tend to be one-off for specific projects or activity

So it is more likely than other income streams that individual museums will see these go up and down significantly over time

Change in income from project grants (2023/24 compared to 2019/20). Base: All museums (n=62)

Capital grants: Museums receiving capital grants is down on the level 5 years ago.

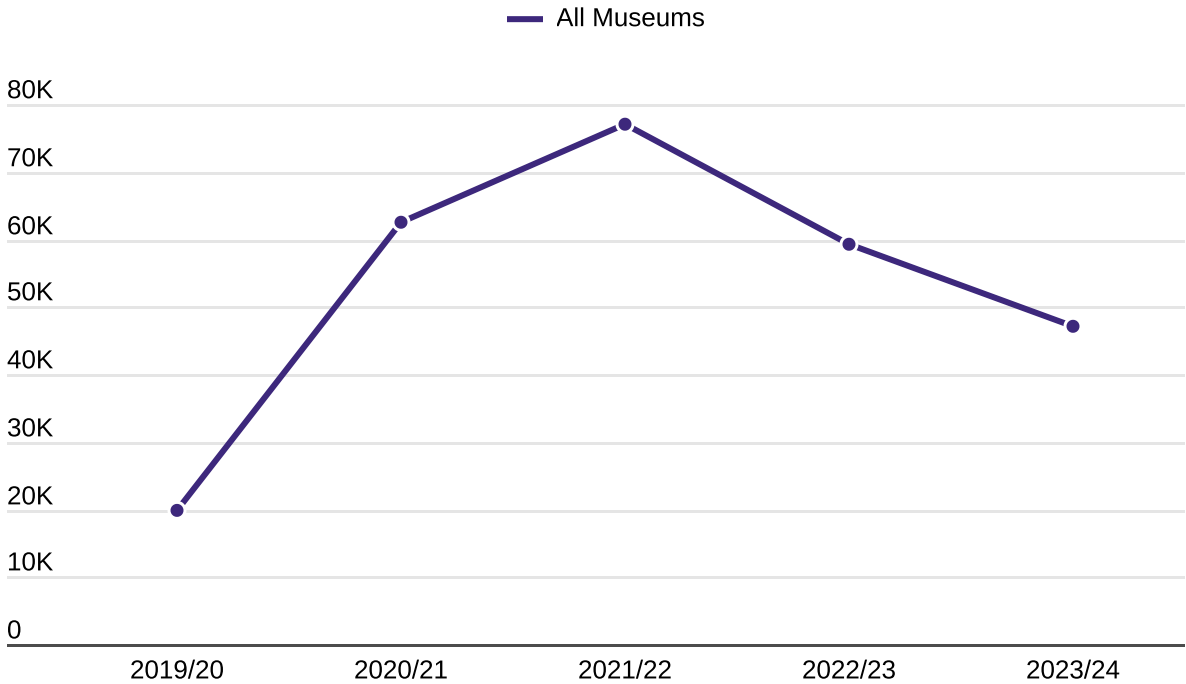
13% received capital grants in 2023/24, down from 21% in 2019/20; three in ten (29%) of organisations with multi-sites received capital grant income in 2023/24



% of museums reporting receiving capital grants by year. Base: 2019/20 (n=494); 2020/21 (n=449); 2021/22 (n=477); 2022/23 (n=481); 2023/24 (n=413)



How has the average value of capital grants to museums changed over the last 5 years?



Median income from capital grants by year. Base: 2019/20 (n=58); 2020/21 (n=21); 2021/22 (n=13); 2022/23 (n=12); 2023/24 (n=14)



5 of 6 museums receiving capital grants in 19/20 and 23/24 saw the values increase by more than 25%