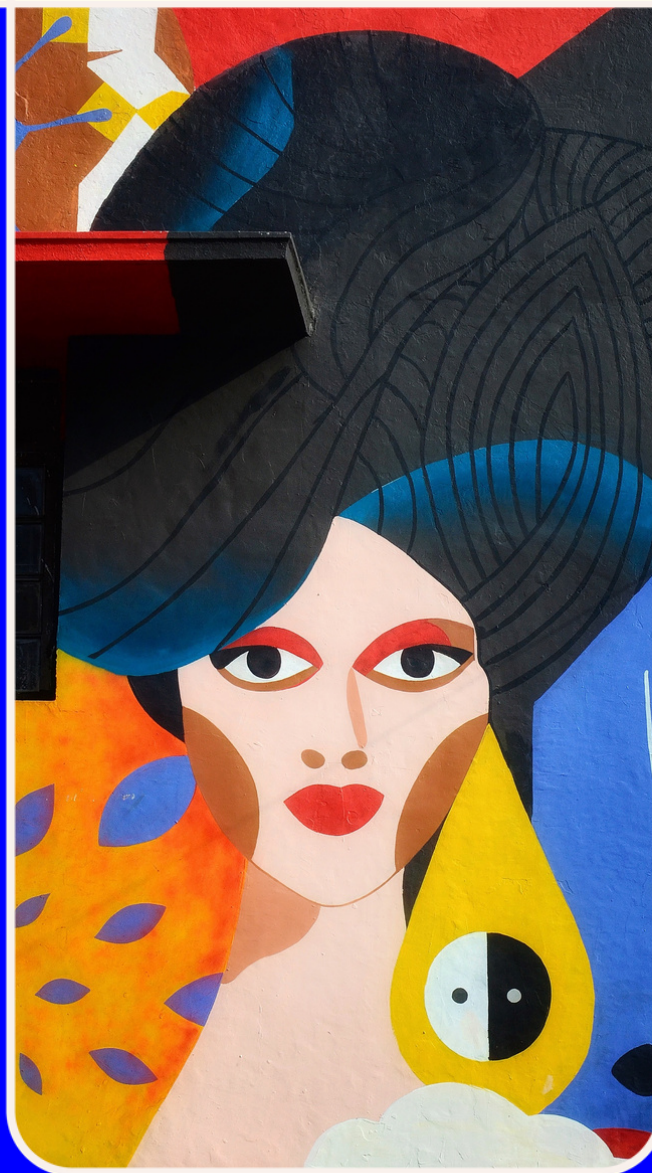


ONE—FURTHER

Discovering
Online
Collections

Benchmark
Report 2023



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Introduction

A museum's digital presence is no longer merely a facilitator of a physical visit, but a vital aspect of a museum's reach and impact.

That's especially true when it comes to the goal of transforming their treasures from exclusive artefacts into accessible resources for researchers and sources of inspiration for the public at large. Recently, this potential was neatly summed up by Mark Jones of the British Museum in the quote opposite.

We started this project because we work with clients who are intent on getting their digitised collections onto the screens of as many people as possible.

They recognise the potential that their online collections have to magnify the openness, reach and usage of their physical collections.

As part of those projects, we wanted to be able to provide greater context, identifying what's 'normal' and, where possible, what's 'exceptional'. I'm really glad we've been able to open this up to the sector so everyone can learn from it.

“Rather than locking the collection away, we want to make it the most enjoyed, used and seen in the world.”

Mark Jones, Interim Director of the British Museum

Before we get much further, I'd like to say a huge thank you to the individuals at each of the participating organisations who agreed to provide data for this study. If it wasn't for you all, there would be no report in the first place.

I also need to thank my fantastic colleagues Georgina Brooke, Anup Patel, and Simon Jones who have worked hard over the past few months to collect, analyse, and present the findings you're about to read.

We hope you'll find this report interesting and that it helps to inform the amazing and important work carried out across our sector.

Chris Unitt
ONE—FURTHER



Project Background

Participating organisations

We received data from 50 organisations and five countries.

- 33 museums
- 11 galleries
- 2 archives / libraries
- 2 collection-focused websites
- 2 historic houses

A mostly complete list of the participating organisations can be found to the right.

The cohorts

We divided the organisations into three groups based on the number of visits their website received in total over the 12 month period:

- Larger: Over 10m sessions
- Medium: 1-10m sessions
- Smaller: Below 1m sessions

The Organisations

Amgueddfa Cymru – Museum Wales, Amon Carter Museum of American Art, Art Institute of Chicago, Art UK, Ashmolean Museum, Auckland War Memorial Museum, Australian Centre for the Moving Image, Barnsley Museums, British Library, British Museum, Compton Verney, Courtauld Institute of Art, Foundling Museum, Government Art Collection, Henry Moore Foundation, Horniman Museum and Gardens, Imperial War Museums, London Transport Museum, Museum of London, Museum of the Highlands, National Army Museum, National Galleries Scotland, National Gallery of Art, National Gallery of Denmark, National Museum of the Royal Navy, National Museums Liverpool, National Museums Scotland, National Portrait Gallery, National Sound and Film Archive, Oxford University Museum of Natural History, Royal Academy of Arts, Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Royal Museums Greenwich, Science Museum Group, Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, South London Gallery, Spencer Museum of Art, Tate, Te Papa, Thackray Museum of Medicine, The Fitzwilliam Museum, The Hunterian, The Museum of Contemporary Art, The Postal Museum, Victoria & Albert Museum, Waddesdon Manor, Wellcome Collection, and the Whitney Museum of American Art.

About the data

We took a variety of metrics from each participating organisation's **website analytics** tool (mostly Google Analytics). A full breakdown is available in the Appendix at the end of the report.

We focused on the 12 months from 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023.

To complement this, we incorporated scores from **Google Lighthouse**, a tool that evaluates web pages across performance, accessibility and search engine optimisation (SEO).

We ran this on each organisation's collections search page and the most immediately visible item page. This allowed us to gauge the technical calibre of the sites and their alignment with best practices. While these scores have their flaws, the context they give is helpful.

Further enriching our analysis, **Semrush's** SEO toolkit provided us with additional layers of competitive intelligence and keyword analytics.

What is an online collection?

For the purposes of this study, we focused on collection search interfaces and object pages. These are the common elements of online collections.

We're very aware that this is not the whole picture and, honestly, we wrestled with what to include. Several of the organisations in this study have created areas of their site that expand on their collections and provide additional routes into them.

To ensure as level a playing field as possible, we excluded those pages for these benchmarks.



Initial Findings

1. Volume of page views is not strongly related to collection size

2. Online collections are mostly accessed on desktop

3. Organic search is the primary traffic source for online collections

4. There is value in the long tail of a collection

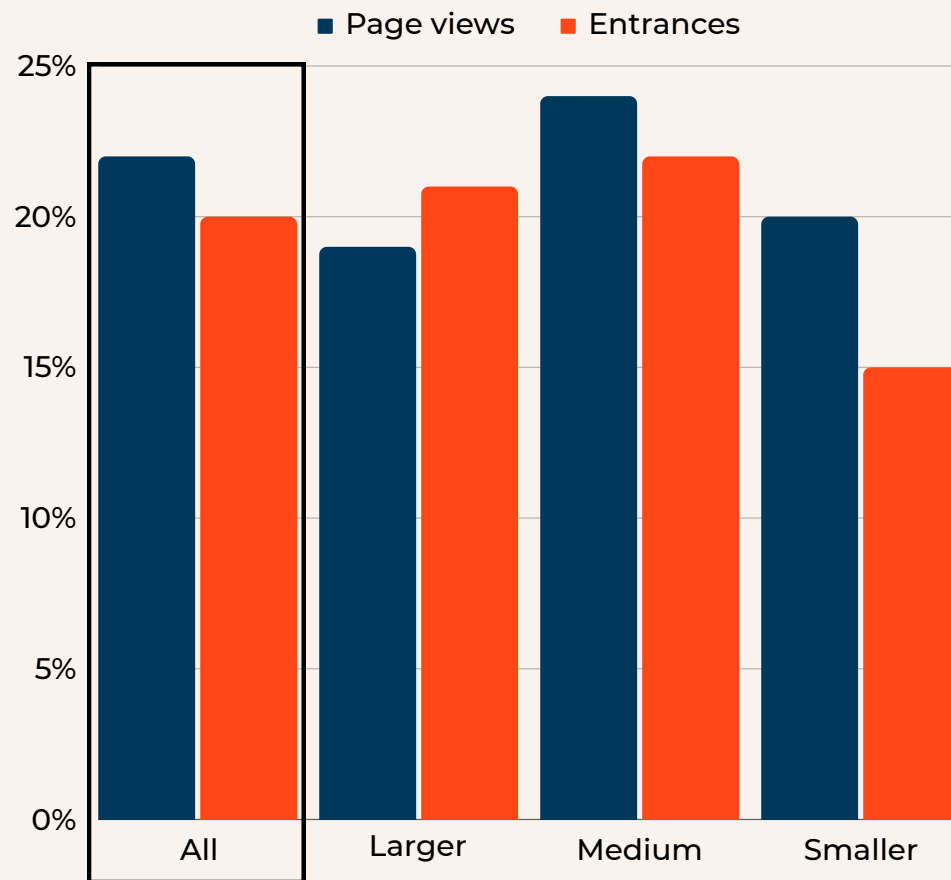
5. International reach is more likely for larger institutions and those outside of the US

6. There are widespread data quality issues



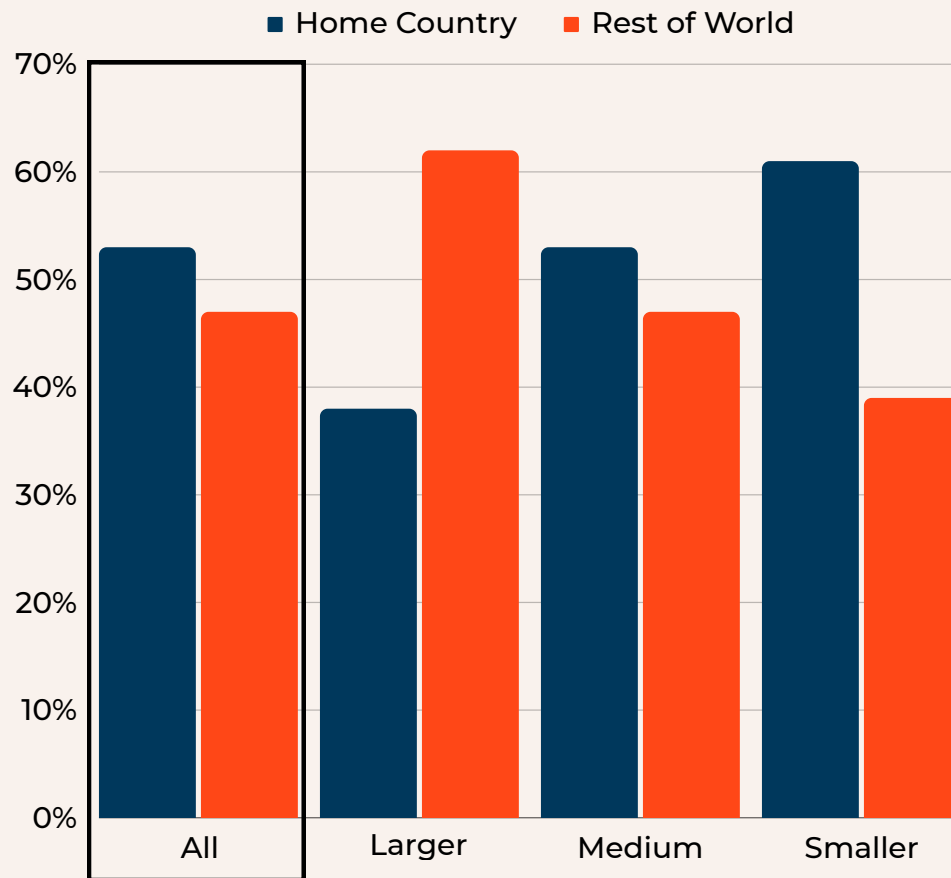
The Benchmarks

Collections as a % of all website traffic



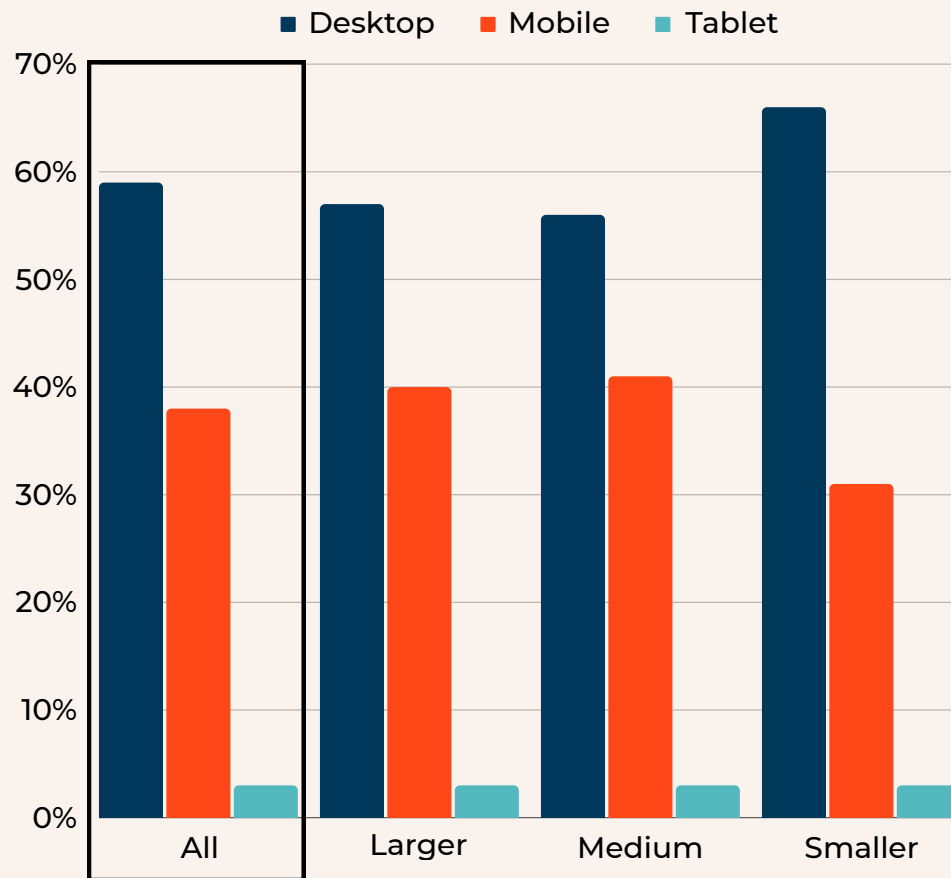
	Page views	Entrances
All	22%	20%
Larger	19%	21%
Medium	24%	22%
Smaller	20%	15%

Home country vs rest of the world



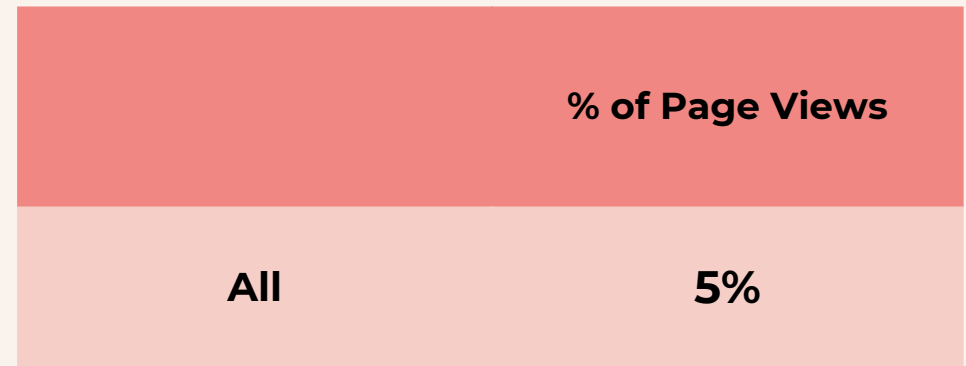
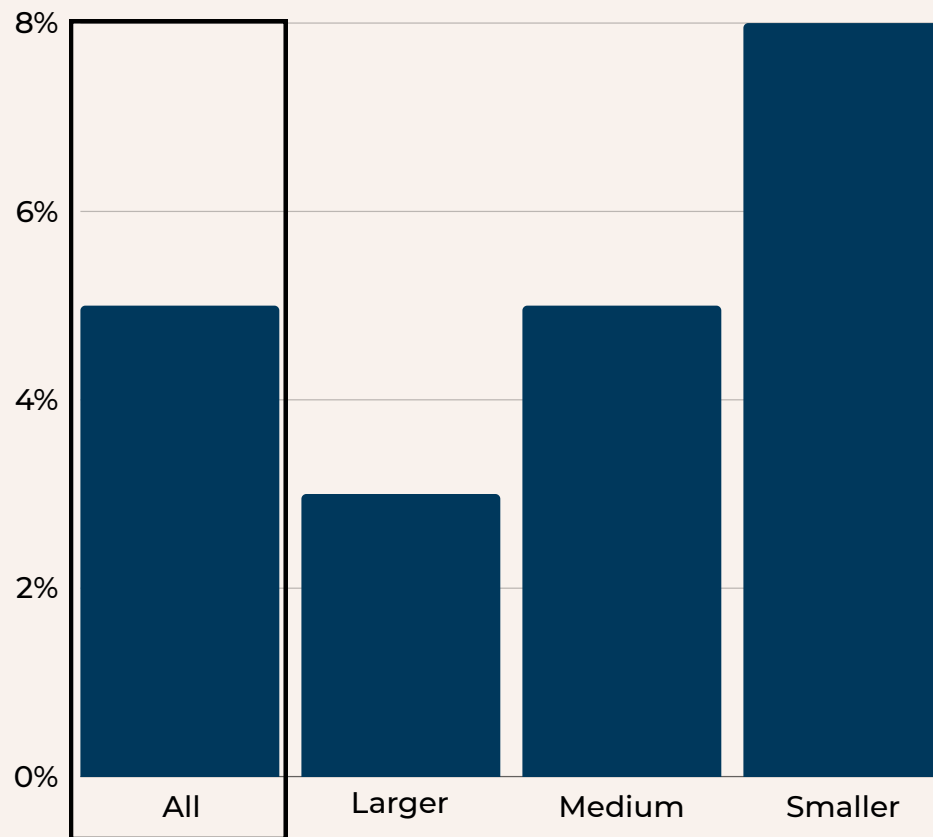
	Home Country	Rest of the World
All	53%	47%
Larger	38%	62%
Medium	53%	47%
Smaller	61%	39%

Collection traffic by device type



	Desktop	Mobile	Tablet
All	59%	38%	3%
Larger	57%	40%	3%
Medium	56%	41%	3%
Smaller	66%	31%	3%

Collection page views represented by the 10 most-viewed items

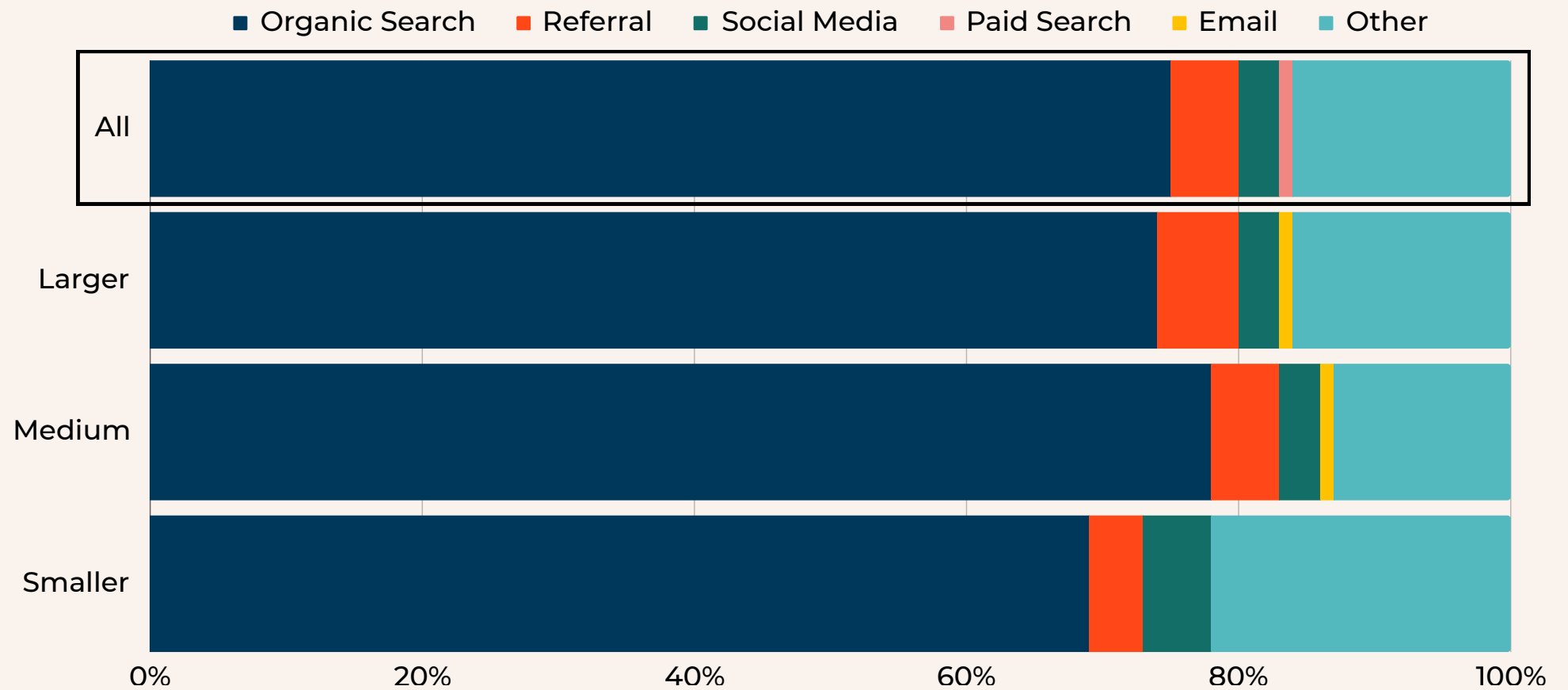


All	5%
Larger	3%
Medium	5%
Smaller	8%

Visits to online collection pages by traffic source

	Organic Search	Referral	Social Media	Paid Search	Email	Other
All	75%	5%	3%	0%	0%	15%
Larger	74%	6%	3%	0%	1%	15%
Medium	78%	5%	3%	0%	1%	14%
Smaller	69%	4%	5%	0%	0%	22%

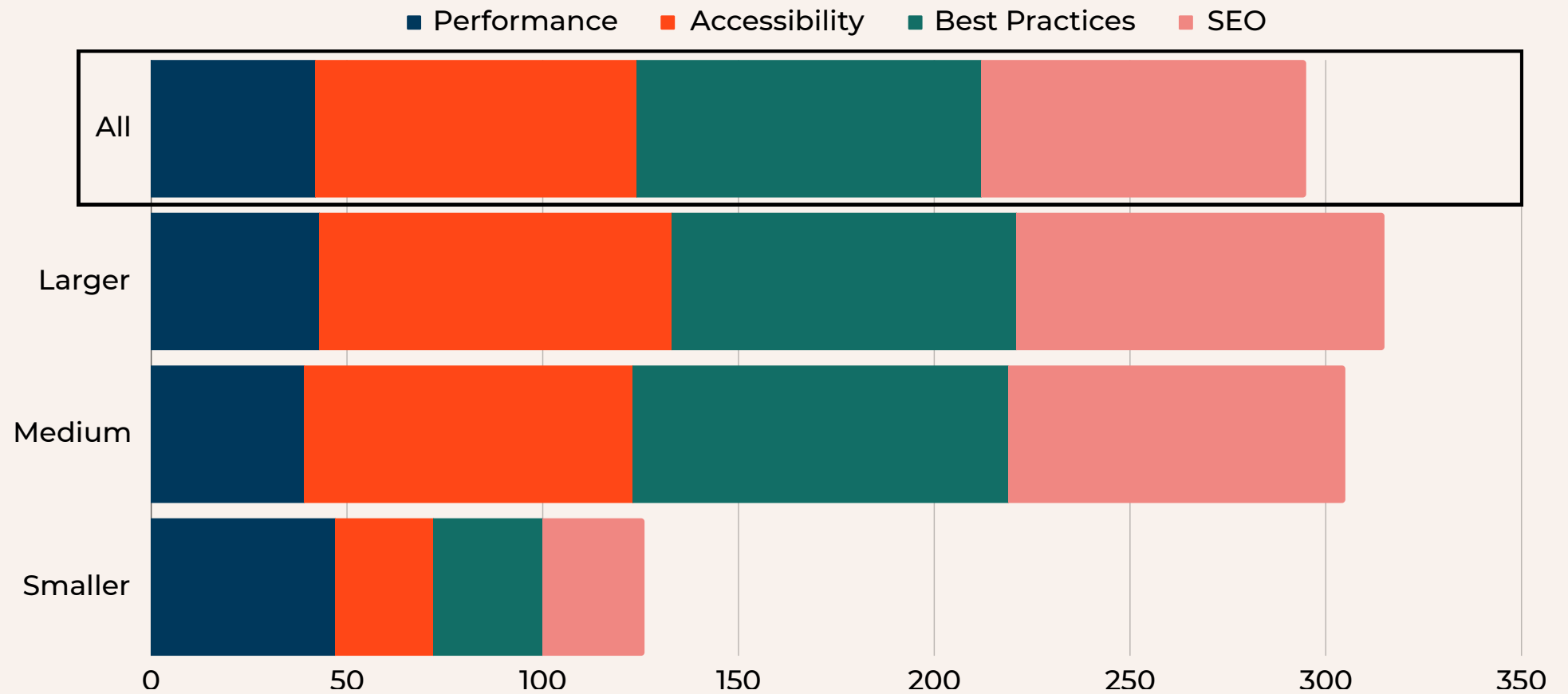
Visits to online collection pages by traffic source



Lighthouse scores - mobile

	Performance	Accessibility	Best Practices	SEO
All	42	82	88	83
Larger	43	90	88	94
Medium	39	84	96	86
Smaller	47	25	28	26

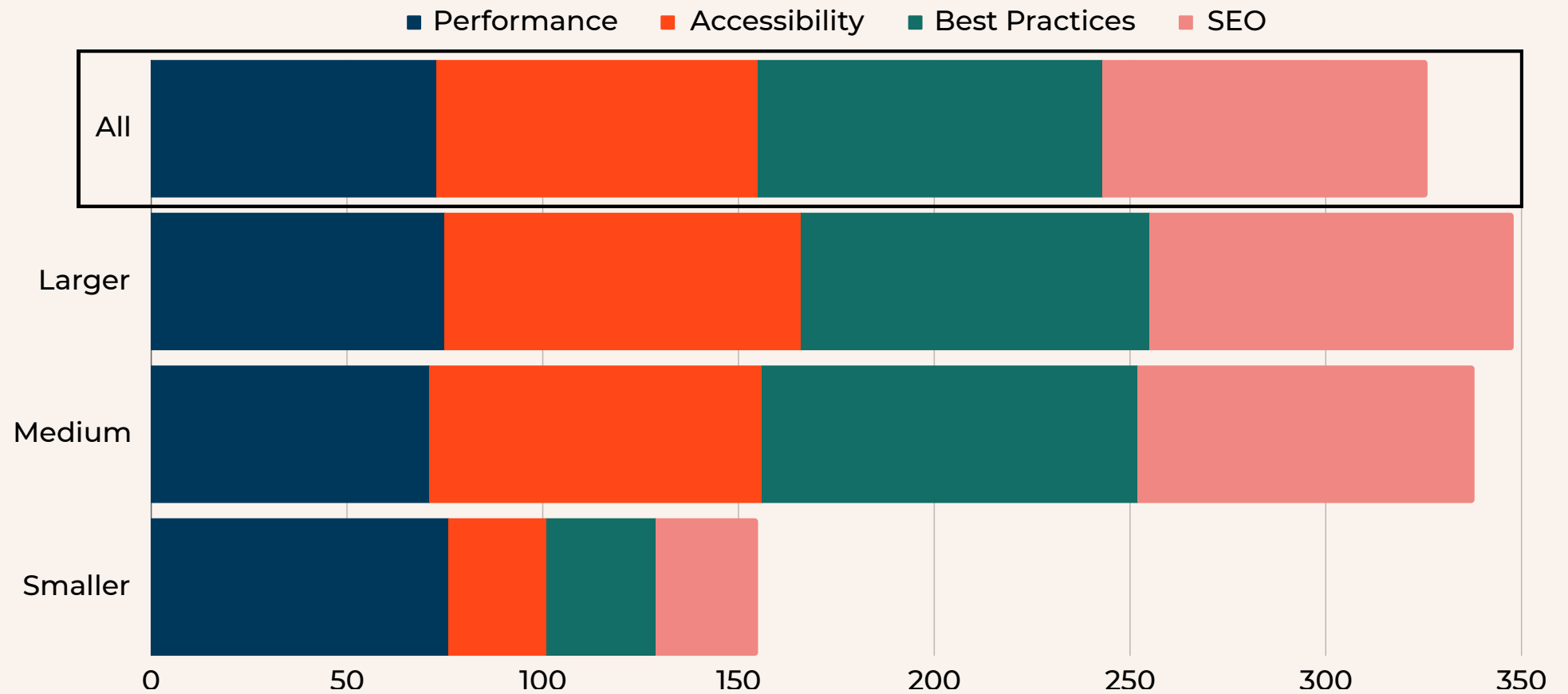
Lighthouse scores - mobile



Lighthouse scores - desktop

	Performance	Accessibility	Best Practices	SEO
All	73	82	88	83
Larger	75	91	89	93
Medium	71	85	96	86
Smaller	76	25	28	26

Lighthouse scores - desktop



Semrush SEO data

	Domain Authority	Backlinks
All	50	295,000
Larger	63	596,000
Medium	51	328,000
Smaller	38	2,100



What's Next

Continuing the project

This benchmark report is the first step in our ongoing Discovering Online Collections project. There are many more questions to answer, and there will be further opportunities to learn and participate as it develops.

Further interpretation of the data

We intend to keep going back to the data that we've collected to see what other insights we can glean.

These will see the light of day in articles published on our website and bite-size posts on social media.

Workshops and consultations

We will be discussing the findings of this report with individual institutions and in group settings.

Collaborations

We're open to discussing how we can build on these findings, either taking data to answer additional questions, or running this benchmark study again with more and/or different organisations.

How to follow the Discovering Online Collections project

If you'd like to hear about future updates then you should:

- Sign up to the One Further mailing list
- Follow us on social media

For links to these, and for the latest updates, visit the project page at onefurther.com/discovering-online-collections.

Appendices

1. Data
2. Glossary

Appendix 1: Data

Page views

- The total number of page views
- The number of views of collections pages

Sessions

- The total number of sessions
- The number of sessions that started on a collections page

Breakdown of sessions by:

- Home country vs rest of the world
- Device type (desktop, mobile, tablet)
- Channel (organic search, referral, social media, paid search, email, other)

Collections

- Top 10 item page views as a % of all collections item page views

Lighthouse scores

- Performance
- SEO
- Accessibility
- Best practice
- Mobile and desktop

SEMRush

- Domain authority score
- Top countries the site appears in search for
- Backlinks
- Top SERP features for online collection pages

Appendix 2: Glossary

Google Analytics: A web analytics service by Google that tracks and reports website traffic and user behaviour.

Page views: The total number of pages viewed on a website, where repeated views of a single page are counted.

Sessions: A group of user interactions with a website that take place within a given timeframe.

Organic Search: Web traffic that comes from unpaid search engine results, based on the relevance to the user query.

Paid Search: Traffic generated through paid advertisements on search engines, eg Google Ads.

Referrals: Visitors who arrive at a website by following a link on another website (other than a search engine).

Semrush: A digital marketing tool used for SEO, paid traffic, social media, content, and competitive research.

Domain Authority: A score that predicts how well a website will rank on search engine result pages.

Backlinks: Links from one website to another, which can influence the ranking of a site on search engines.

Lighthouse: An open-source tool by Google for measuring the quality of web pages, with audits for performance, accessibility, and more.

Search Engine Optimisation (SEO): The practice of increasing the quantity and quality of traffic to a website through organic search engine results.

About One Further

One Further is a digital consultancy that helps cultural organisations understand and better serve the needs of their online audiences.

We do that using website analytics, usability research, and content strategy.

Our clients include the British Museum, Royal Academy of Arts, Royal Museums Greenwich, Tate and the V&A.

Recent work with online collections

Henry Moore Foundation

National Museums Scotland

National Portrait Gallery

Victoria & Albert Museum

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Credits

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