



# Salary Research and Recommendations

November 2022

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# Foreword

01

We often say that people make museums – and it's true. All the people who work in and with our museums are essential to creating the amazing life-changing experiences that we deliver. But we also know that we are a poorly paid sector and that museums workers often don't get the recognition and reward that they deserve.

This research demonstrates that years of pay freezes and budget cuts have had a severe impact on the living standards of museum workers. The pandemic and now the cost-of-living crisis have taken a toll on wellbeing and pay; as a historically underpaid sector we are falling further behind as inflation hits double digits and the cost of essentials soars.

This has an impact on individuals and institutions. Our wellbeing survey showed that while people who work in museums have generally high life satisfaction, the opposite is true when it comes to work satisfaction.

For institutions, low pay and employment insecurity means talented and experienced staff are leaving the sector and we are facing a recruitment crisis. This has an impact on the diversity of the sector, with low pay and poor terms and conditions likely to put off people from ethnically diverse or lower-income backgrounds.

As the MA we are making clear recommendations that employers should pay in the upper quartile of salary ranges; that all staff should at least receive the Real Living Wage, which is calculated on what people actually need to live on; and that all employers should work with trade unions, staff and others to develop progressive working policies and terms and conditions.

Museums need a workforce that represents our communities and is respected and fairly rewarded. As employers we should take a holistic approach to our workforce which means including everyone that works in and with museums at every level. I hope this report can support employers, funders and stakeholders to be brave and progressive and to respect and reward the hard-work, knowledge and experience of our museum and gallery workforce.

**Sharon Heal**

Director, Museums Association  
November 2022



# Purpose of the report

The MA campaigns for inclusive and diverse museums that prioritise fair working conditions and workforce wellbeing. We encourage employers, staff and funders to use the findings in this report as an advocacy tool to highlight the serious issues around low pay in the museum sector, negotiate better salaries and demonstrate the urgent case for reform.

This report aims to provide clear and accurate data on the current state of pay levels in the museum sector, covering both support and specialist jobs as well as management. It also examines staff benefits, and some of the changes that have occurred since our previous Salary Guidelines were published in 2017.

Our figures are based on research into pay scales in 2021-22 across a variety of roles and levels of seniority, and across museums of different sizes, types and locations. It is important to note that this data precedes the soaring inflation rates seen since the start of 2022.

This document is intended as a practical resource for employers, staff and funders in the museum sector when considering salaries for jobs. The pay scales in this report apply to PAYE jobs. Rates for freelancers and apprentices fell beyond the scope of this research but are areas we are committed to exploring in the future\*.

This document can be used to inform decision-making on pay and policies at museums across the UK, regardless of type or size.

# 02

# Key findings and recommendations

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Since our previous [Salary Guidelines](#) were published in 2017, the museum workforce has dealt with challenges on multiple fronts, including the impact of Brexit, the Covid-19 pandemic and the current cost-of-living crisis. Our research found that this has exacerbated some longstanding issues around pay in the sector.

### Our findings

- Pay in museums has **failed to keep pace with inflation** over the past five years, with the median salaries in our 2022 survey on average 16% lower than the median salaries in our 2017 survey uprated by the Consumer Prices Index. This is before the current cost-of-living crisis is taken into account.
- Museum pay significantly **lags behind** the market and is on average 10% below comparator rates. This gap has widened since we published our previous salary guidelines in 2017, when it was on average 7% below the market median.
- Pay growth has been muted since 2017, averaging 5.14% across all job families. In some cases it has remained stagnant or fallen.
- Initiatives such as the introduction of the UK-wide National Living Wage in 2016 have had a **beneficial effect** on pay growth for museum attendants, front-of-house and security staff. However this builds on what was already a low starting point for pay and this group is also among the most vulnerable to rising inflation costs and redundancy.
- A significant proportion of respondents (52%) are having **difficulties recruiting** staff. More than two-fifths (43%) say recruitment pressures have worsened over the past year.
- Museums are introducing workforce initiatives that **support staff wellbeing**. A third of respondents pay the Real Living Wage, almost a third provide access to an employee assistance programme and nearly half offer flexible or hybrid working patterns.

# -10%

Average difference  
between museum pay  
and the market median

# 52%

Museum employers  
having difficulties  
recruiting staff

## Our recommendations

- We **recommend** that employers and funders use the **upper quartile** of salary ranges to set salaries, regardless of the size, type or location of their institution.
- Employers and funders **should not use** the lower quartile ranges to set pay rates.
- We **recommend** that all workers, regardless of contract type or hours of work, should at a minimum be paid the **Real Living Wage** set by the Living Wage Foundation, which is calculated annually based on what people need to live.
- We **recommend** that organisations work with trade unions and staff to develop **progressive working policies**, terms and conditions.
- We **recommend** that employers embed **fair and inclusive recruitment** practices, ensuring that job specifications are based on competence and knowledge, and that formal qualifications are sought only where necessary for the role. The MA is currently developing guidelines for inclusive recruitment.
- We **recommend** that employers and funders consider the recruitment, remuneration and wellbeing of the workforce in a **holistic** way. Our Workforce Wellbeing research, Front-of-House Charter for Change and Competency Framework may be used as complementary documents to this report to support progressive workforce policy.
- We **recommend** that employers set aside budget for **staff wellbeing initiatives** and listen to and act on staff and freelance concerns in this area.
- We **recommend** that **funders** use these guidelines to assess whether applicants for funding are paying fairly and have best practice workforce policies in place.
- Although the salary ranges in this survey do not cover freelance rates, we **recommend** that museums\*:
  - **Respect and value** freelancers as a core part of the sector workforce.
  - **Pay on time or ahead** of payment terms recognising that cashflow for freelancers is an issue.
  - **Pay fairly:** don't put downward pressure on freelancers' rates because of the cost-of-living crisis. Recognise that a freelance day rate covers costs such as such as pensions, training, tax and insurance.

\* These recommendations were developed by the Museum Freelance Network, which operated between 2015 and 2021. The MA is committed to supporting the sector's freelance workforce in terms of pay, treatment and wellbeing. Please contact us if there are key areas of practice for freelancing that you would like us to prioritise.



# Salary benchmarks: Summary

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These are the upper quartile figures for current rates of pay in the UK museum sector. We recommend paying at this level as standard upon appointment. More detailed tables can be found in [Section 10](#) of this report.

Salary benchmarks*	Assistant	Officer/Co-ordinator	Supervisor/Team leader	Manager/Head of dept
Attendants/Front-of-house/Security	20,868	24,298	28,863	41,915
Museum technician/Building management	24,337	27,000	34,900	45,381
Fundraising/Marketing	24,338	29,154	38,194	48,375
Learning/Programming/Outreach	23,698	26,728	32,306	45,000
Conservators	27,665	32,912	40,419	53,983
Curators/Collections management	23,640	29,125	34,685	52,469
		Manager/Director		Director/Group director
Directors/Group directors		69,000		84,821

These benchmarks may be used in combination with other sources of advice on pay in the sector, such as the Institute of Conservation's salaries research.

\* The cost of living varies within the UK. This figure should act as a baseline before London weighting, regional variants and markets are taken into account

# Methodology

The MA commissioned Incomes Data Research (IDR) to produce an independent research report on current levels of pay and benefits provided to staff in the museum sector.

IDR undertook a bespoke pay survey of museums and galleries across the UK. The survey ran for eight weeks in June and July 2022. Respondents were asked to provide salary data based on their most recent pay review, which for the majority covered the financial year 2021-22. IDR then benchmarked the data on current salary levels for the individual jobs covered by the survey against appropriate market comparator jobs. The analysis compares the median typical or midpoint salary for staff in each job covered by the survey with the market median salary for each of the comparator jobs.

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# Profile of the respondents

The survey received responses from 173 organisations that together operate 316 museums and galleries across the UK.

The respondents were a broadly representative group of museum employers in terms of size, type and location in the UK. Independent (60%) and local government/ex local government (25%) museums accounted for the majority of respondents, with 7% coming from national museums, and 7% from other museum types.

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# Understanding the pay scales

The survey looked at median typical salaries. The median is the middle value when all salaries are ranked in order of magnitude.

This approach is more representative of actual salaries than the average because it relies less on exceptionally low or high salaries in the sample than the simple average or mean.

The salary ranges set out in the document show the range between the median lower quartile (the median of the lowest 25% of salaries) and median upper quartile (the median of the highest 25% of salaries). The ranges do not, therefore, reflect the total salary range, and some museums paid higher or lower salaries than those in the range.

The pay scales state a typical salary for each job level; this range does not reflect the extent of the grade in which the post sits. Movement within grades is linked with the application of knowledge and skills, aptitude and contribution to the organisation, which is usually monitored through internal appraisal systems. We recommend that these figures be used as a baseline to set salaries on appointment.

A large, stylized graphic of the number '07' is positioned in the bottom left corner. The '0' is white with a teal outline, and the '7' is teal with a white outline. The graphic is set against a dark purple background.

# Job families

There is a huge variety of roles and job types across the museum sector and reducing these to a set of distinct categories can be difficult.

In consultation with our members, we identified seven distinct job families that we believe capture most job types in the sector. The survey outlined these job families to help respondents identify relevant matches within their own organisations.

## The job families are:

- Museum attendants/Front-of-house/Security
- Museum technicians/Buildings management
- Fundraising/Marketing
- Learning/Programming/Outreach
- Conservators
- Curators/Collections management
- Directors/Group directors

Definitions for each job area are provided in the [salary ranges section \(p18\)](#).

A large, stylized graphic of the numbers '08' in a light pink color, positioned in the bottom left corner of the page. The '0' is a simple circle, and the '8' is a classic serif-style figure-eight.

# Job levels

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The survey collected data on the minimum, maximum and typical salaries for museum jobs at four operational levels across the job families. We outlined a series of generic job profiles to determine different career levels within the sector\*. The section below outlines a profile that matches each job level.

These job levels have been designed to map out a possible career structure. Inevitably there will be exceptions, and differing circumstances that should be taken into consideration when using this report. For example, a person may have extra responsibilities such as managing large numbers of staff, caring for an important or large collection, specific expertise, or may work in an area with a significantly higher-than-average cost of living. The job families and levels should therefore be used for guidance only, with salaries to be used as a baseline and adjusted upwards to accommodate specific circumstances.

Job levels in the director/group director family fall into two categories: manager/director, for roles in museum sites that sit within a larger group, and director/group director, for roles in whole museums or groups of museums.

## Assistant

- **Professional knowledge:** Will have a basic level of professional competence and knowledge.
- **Management of resources:** No significant budget or people management responsibilities.
- **Decision making and influence:** Will be expected to deliver on short-term targets through an established work programme.
- **Freedom to act:** Work will be undertaken with the advice and guidance of more senior colleagues.
- **Communication and networking:** Ability to work as part of a team and provide public-facing services.
- **Skill level/competance:** Dependent on role.
- **Previous work experience:** Minimal experience.

## Officer/Coordinator

- **Professional knowledge:** Will have working knowledge in a particular discipline and/or responsibility for a discrete area of work/collection.
- **Management of resources:** May occasionally play a team leader role. Likely to have supervisory responsibilities for volunteers and/or freelance staff. Likely to have some budgetary responsibility.
- **Decision making and influence:** Generally working as part of a team to deliver work targets. Will have a degree of responsibility for projects and/or specialism. Will contribute to the development of their area of work.
- **Freedom to act:** Will have procedures/standards to follow. Will refer to a manager for guidance.
- **Communication and networking:** Likely to have good presentation skills. Ability to communicate well with the public, contractors and colleagues. Ability to engage with users/visitors.
- **Skill level:** Dependent on role. Will have a moderate level of experience, training or professional competence relevant to the organisation. May be working towards Associateship of the Museums Association (AMA).
- **Previous work experience:** Demonstrable relevant experience (Likely two to three years).

\* If you identify any issues applying these levels, please inform our policy department so that your feedback can be taken into account when we design our next survey:  
[info@museumsassociation.org](mailto:info@museumsassociation.org)



### Team leader/Supervisor

- **Professional knowledge:** Will have a high level of professional competence relevant to the organisation.
- **Management of resources:** Will have supervisory responsibilities and will probably act as a team leader. Will likely be assigned a budget.
- **Decision making and influence:** Will be responsible for service delivery relevant to their role through project management and/or specialist input. Will play a role in developing the organisation strategically.
- **Freedom to act:** Will have freedom to set team and own work targets, subject to meeting organisational objectives.
- **Communication and networking:** Will have good negotiation and influencing skills. Will be expected to have a range of contacts and represent the organisation externally. Ability to engage with users/visitors.
- **Skill level/competence:** Dependent on role. Will have a high level of experience, training and professional competence relevant to the organisation. This could include a degree, postgraduate qualification or on-the-job training. May hold or be working towards the Associateship of the Museums Association (AMA).
- **Previous work experience:** Substantial relevant experience (around six or more years).

### Manager/Head of department

- **Professional knowledge:** Will have the acknowledged authority and ability to draw on extensive experience to develop policy and solve complex issues. Will have leadership and extensive organisational skills.
  - **Management of resources:** Likely to manage a complex function and department and act as team leader. Will probably manage a significant number of staff. Will have financial responsibility of whole function and have skills to balance conflicting demands.
  - **Decision making and influence:** Will play a significant role in planning, setting standards for others to follow. Will be a decision maker for major teams and projects, and have the ability to justify decisions to director.
  - **Freedom to act:** Will be able to introduce new practices under the guidance of agreed policy. Will be significantly involved with the formation and implementation of policy.
  - **Communication and networking:** Will have advanced communication skills, often leading negotiations with important stakeholders and representing the museum externally. Ability to engage with users/visitors.
- **Skill level/competence:** Dependent on role. Will have a high level of experience, training and professional competence relevant to the organisation. This could include a degree, postgraduate qualification or on-the-job training. May hold AMA, likely to have or be working towards Fellowship of the Museums Association (FMA). Previous work experience: Substantial relevant experience (around six years or more).

# Salary ranges

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## Museum attendants/ Front-of-house/ Security

We defined this group as those responsible for a variety of duties which ensure the smooth running of the museum. Staff may have responsibilities for the security of the museum, preventing loss or damage to collections and displays and monitoring public areas; and undertaking simple technical tasks to do with the building(s); and/or dealing with visitors, providing general information, acting as sales assistants, and using cash handling machines in the museum shop or café.

The MA strongly recommends using the upper quartile to set salaries.

The salary ranges for a FTE job in this group are as follows (all £pa):

Job level	Lower quartile	Median	Upper quartile
<b>Assistant</b>	18,576	19,517	<b>20,868</b>
<i>Comparator role (e.g. sales/retail assistant level 2, receptionist)</i>	–	19,578	–
<b>Officer/co-ordinator</b>	20,279	21,894	<b>24,298</b>
<i>Comparator role (e.g. sales/retail assistant level 3, security guard)</i>	–	20,134	–
<b>Team leader/supervisor</b>	22,666	24,549	<b>28,863</b>
<i>Comparator role (e.g. retail supervisor/team leader)</i>	–	20,335	–
<b>Manager/head of</b>	29,323	34,790	<b>41,915</b>
<i>Comparator role (e.g. retail manager)</i>	–	29,518	–

The cost of living varies within the UK. These figures should act as a baseline before London weighting, regional variants and markets are taken into account. Our research found that the London median salary is on average 17% higher than the UK median in this category.

## Museum technicians/ Buildings management

We defined this group as those responsible for technical, IT and buildings management; including hanging works; resolving technical issues; liaising with curatorial and conservation staff in the design and management of museum space and facilities; and managing audio/visual and interactive displays.

The MA strongly recommends using the upper quartile to set salaries.

The salary ranges for a FTE job in this group are as follows (all £pa):

Job level	Lower quartile	Median	Upper quartile
<b>Assistant</b>	19,650	21,750	<b>24,337</b>
<i>Comparator role (e.g. caretaker/facilities assistant level 4)</i>	–	25,097	–
<b>Officer/co-ordinator</b>	20,921	23,937	<b>27,000</b>
<i>Comparator role: (e.g. caretaker/facilities assistant, level 5)</i>	–	31,316	–
<b>Team leader/supervisor</b>	26,216	29,750	<b>34,900</b>
<i>Comparator role (e.g. caretaker/facilities manager level 6, building services)</i>	–	33,062	–
<b>Manager/head of</b>	31,000	36,576	<b>45,381</b>
<i>Comparator role (e.g. caretaker/facilities manager level 7, building services)</i>	–	40,430	–

The cost of living varies within the UK. These figures should act as a baseline before London weighting, regional variants and markets are taken into account. Our research found that the London median salary is on average 9.7% higher than the UK median in this category.

## Fundraising/ Marketing

We defined this group as those responsible for supporting the implementation and development of the organisation's fundraising strategy; researching and assessing potential funding opportunities; maintenance of a fundraising database to record, monitor and report on existing partnerships, new fundraising opportunities, and update records for individuals and companies. Marketing responsibilities may include preparing and presenting targeted and accurate copy for a range of marketing materials, tailoring messages to different audiences; promoting the organisation's brand and new exhibitions and collections to a variety of targeted audiences.

The MA strongly recommends using the upper quartile to set salaries.

The salary ranges for a FTE job in this group are as follows (all £pa):

Job level	Lower quartile	Median	Upper quartile
<b>Assistant</b>	20,400	21,957	<b>24,338</b>
<i>Comparator role (e.g. marketing and sales job family level 4, appeals/fundraising assistant)</i>	–	26,673	–
<b>Officer/co-ordinator</b>	22,856	24,960	<b>29,154</b>
<i>Comparator role (e.g. marketing and sales job family level 5, appeals/fundraising assistant)</i>	–	30,711	–
<b>Team leader/supervisor</b>	27,759	32,447	<b>38,194</b>
<i>Comparator role (e.g. marketing and sales job family level 6, senior appeals/fundraising organiser)</i>	–	35,194	–
<b>Manager/head of</b>	35,875	41,838	<b>48,375</b>
<i>Comparator role (e.g. marketing and sales job family level 7, appeals/fundraising manager)</i>	–	46,977	–

The cost of living varies within the UK. These figures should act as a baseline before London weighting, regional variants and markets are taken into account. Our research found that the London median salary is on average 6.5% higher than the UK median in this category.

## Learning/ Programming/ Outreach

We defined this job group as those with responsibility for the museum's learning activities, the development and delivery of accessible programmes of events, and/or devising audience-facing digital content. They provide educational resources and/or outreach and community programmes; organise school and college visits; volunteering opportunities and other lifelong learning activities; liaise with external organisations on opportunities for new partnerships; and/or have an input into displays, audience engagement and other museum activities.

The MA strongly recommends using the upper quartile to set salaries.

The salary ranges for a FTE job in this group are as follows (all £pa):

Job level	Lower quartile	Median	Upper quartile
<b>Assistant</b>	19,425	21,006	<b>23,698</b>
<i>Comparator role (e.g. teaching assistant level 4, programme/project assistant (not-for-profit))</i>	–	25,169	–
<b>Officer/co-ordinator</b>	23,000	25,000	<b>26,728</b>
<i>Comparator role (e.g. teacher level 5, programme/project officer (not-for-profit))</i>	–	27,398	–
<b>Team leader/supervisor</b>	27,514	29,569	<b>32,306</b>
<i>Comparator role (e.g. teacher level 6, senior programme/project officer (not-for-profit))</i>	–	32,452	–
<b>Manager/head of</b>	33,827	39,267	<b>45,000</b>
<i>Comparator role (e.g. teacher level 7, programme manager (not-for-profit))</i>	–	41,353	–

The cost of living varies within the UK. These figures should act as a baseline before London weighting, regional variants and markets are taken into account. Our research found that the London median salary is on average 8.2% higher than the UK median in this category.

## Conservators

We defined this group as those responsible for the ongoing conservation and care of collections; undertaking practical conservation work; organising and carrying out environmental monitoring, pest control and maintenance of collections. Responsibilities may include providing advice and training in collection care matters; advising curatorial staff; providing technical skills and assisting with exhibition programmes.

The MA strongly recommends using the upper quartile to set salaries.

The salary ranges for a FTE job in this group are as follows (all £pa):

Job level	Lower quartile	Median	Upper quartile
<b>Assistant</b>	21,073	22,075	<b>27,665</b>
<i>Comparator role*</i>	–	<i>n/a</i>	–
<b>Officer/co-ordinator</b>	26,000	28,000	<b>32,912</b>
<i>Comparator role (e.g. lecturer, level 16)</i>	–	40,944	–
<b>Team leader/supervisor</b>	35,418	37,893	<b>40,419</b>
<i>Comparator role (e.g. senior lecturer level 17)</i>	–	46,172	–
<b>Manager/head of</b>	40,430	50,956	<b>53,983</b>
<i>Comparator role (e.g. head of department (not-for-profit))</i>	–	51,828	–

The cost of living varies within the UK. These figures should act as a baseline before London weighting, regional variants and markets are taken into account. Our research found that the London median salary is on average 6.5% higher than the UK median in this category.

\* No comparator identified for this group

## Curators/Collections management

We defined this group as those managing and developing collections, including acquisitions, cataloguing, loans, registration duties, access and enquiries; managing and preparing briefs for exhibitions; contributing to research and publications; liaising with exhibitors over displays and the provision of interpretation panels. Senior positions may have budgetary control and responsibility for staff, resources and services. Responsibilities may also include front-of-house activities, working with the public and answering enquiries.

The MA strongly recommends using the upper quartile to set salaries.

The salary ranges for a FTE job in this group are as follows (all £pa):

Job level	Lower quartile	Median	Upper quartile
<b>Assistant</b>	19,923	21,269	<b>23,640</b>
<i>Comparator role (e.g. horticulturalist level 4)</i>	–	25,826	–
<b>Officer/co-ordinator</b>	23,036	25,439	<b>29,125</b>
<i>Comparator role (e.g. experienced horticulturalist level 5)</i>	–	28,068	–
<b>Team leader/supervisor</b>	27,511	31,188	<b>34,685</b>
<i>Comparator role (e.g. senior horticulturalist level 6, librarian)</i>	–	31,851	–
<b>Manager/head of</b>	35,111	39,174	<b>52,469</b>
<i>Comparator role (e.g. horticulturalist level 7, head of library services)</i>	–	46,724	–

The cost of living varies within the UK. These figures should act as a baseline before London weighting, regional variants and markets are taken into account. Our research found that the London median salary is on average 17.3% higher than the UK median in this category.



## Directors/ Group directors

We defined two broad types of museum director: “directors” refers to directors of museums that form part of a wider group of museums or galleries, while “group directors” covers directors of the whole museum or museum group. The former is referred to as a director and also comprises data for museum managers within a group of museums, while the latter is referred to as group director.

We defined the responsibilities of a director as running of the museum (or group of museums) and the principal decision-maker on policies regarding current collections, acquisitions, exhibitions and future direction of the museum (or whole museum organisation); responsibility for developing and implementing business strategies, setting and controlling budgets and attracting funding. The director typically delegates functions to senior management and/or a specialist team. The data on salaries at director level show the widest range, reflecting the substantial difference in directorial responsibilities in different sizes, types and locations of museums.

The MA strongly recommends using the upper quartile to set salaries.

The salary ranges for a FTE job in this group are as follows (all £pa):

Job level	Lower quartile	Median	Upper quartile
<b>Museum manager/Director</b>	42,614	58,699	<b>69,000</b>
<i>Comparator role (e.g. assistant director (central government), deputy headteacher)</i>	–	53,066	–
<b>Director/Group director*</b>	41,796	53,075	<b>84,821</b>
<i>Comparator role (e.g. director (central government), headteacher (large school))</i>	–	93,507	–

The cost of living varies within the UK. These figures should act as a baseline before London weighting, regional variants and markets are taken into account. Our research found that the London median salary is on average 18% higher than the UK median in this category.

\* The typical median salaries for both types of directors are broadly similar due to the survey receiving a large number of responses from single-site independent museums. Our recommendation is to use the upper quartile to obtain a view on typical pay levels for directors of large groups.

# Comparisons with pay in other sectors

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A key component of our research was to understand museum pay levels in relation to equivalent jobs outside the sector.

Our research analysed current museum pay levels against a basket of comparator occupations in the wider jobs market, comparing the median typical salary for each job and level from the survey with the market median salary for each of the comparator jobs. The comparator jobs were selected in consultation with IDR based on the company's wider market research.

Overall we found that museum pay significantly lags behind the market and is on average 10% below comparator rates. This gap has widened since we published our previous salary guidelines in 2017, when it was on average 7% below the market median.

Six out of the seven job families we surveyed pay 10% or more below their equivalent outside the sector. The gap is particularly large for conservators (-17%), directors (-16%), museum technician/building management, and fundraising/marketing jobs (both -14%).

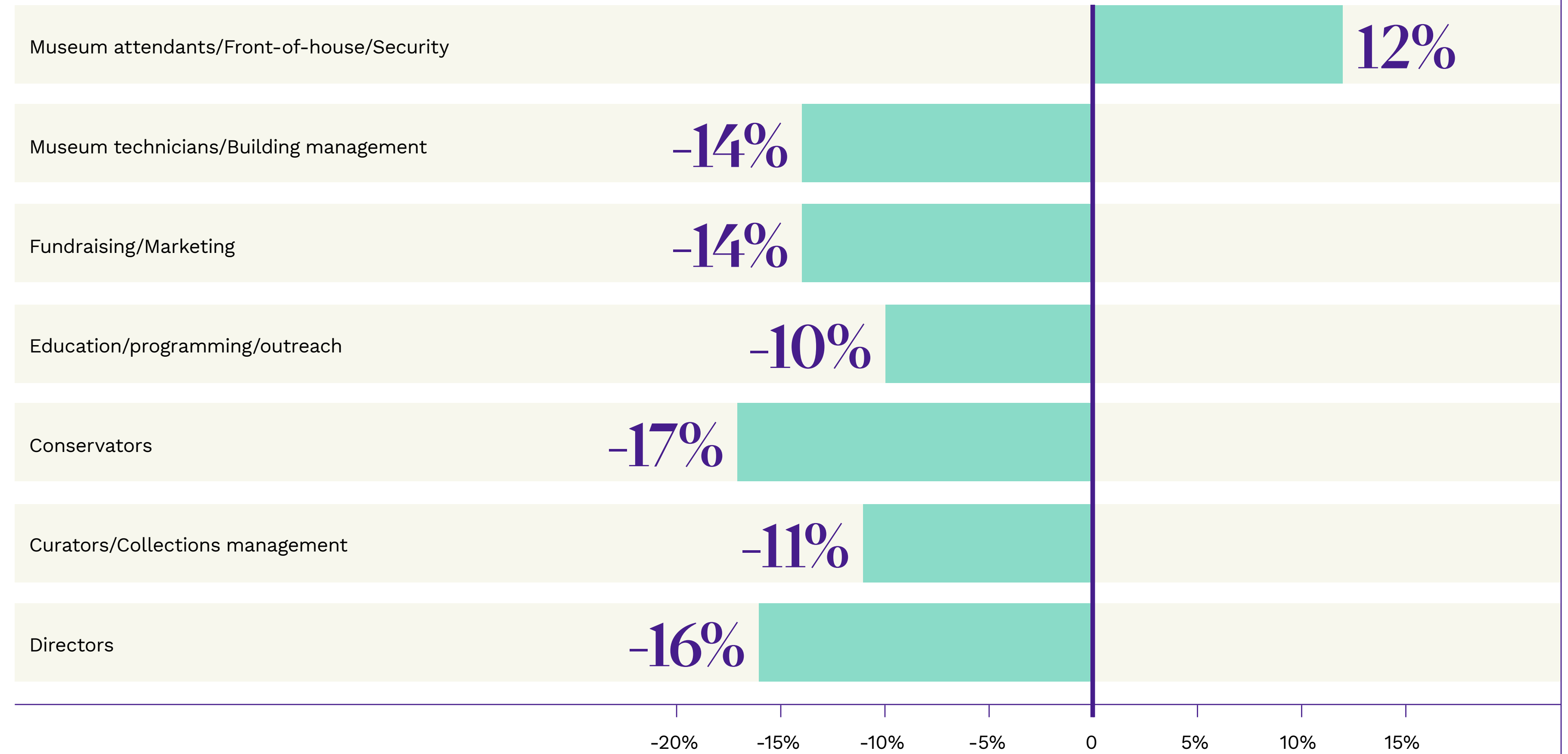
The exception is front-of-house/museum attendants/security jobs, where salaries are on average 12% more than the market median. Roles here are likely to have benefitted from upwards movement in statutory minimum rates in recent years, following the introduction of the UK-wide National Minimum Wage in 2016. However it must be noted that pay rates in this job family started from a low baseline and that pay growth is still behind the rate of inflation as calculated by the Consumer Prices Index ([see section 12](#)). Staff in this category continue to be the lowest paid in the sector. They were also among the groups most vulnerable to redundancy during the Covid pandemic<sup>3</sup> and continue to lack opportunities for training and progression<sup>4</sup>.

Our research found that the two most junior job levels, assistant, and officer, are where museum salaries are most significantly behind comparator roles outside the sector. A museum technician/building management job at officer level is typically paid 24% less than its equivalent outside the sector. Assistants and officers in fundraising/marketing are respectively paid 18% and 19% less than comparator roles. And pay for an assistant working in education/programming/outreach lags 17% behind the comparator market rate. This has concerning implications for entry and retention rates among museum professionals at these levels.

<sup>3</sup> Redundancies in the Museum Sector during the First Year of Covid, Museums Association, 2021

<sup>4</sup> FoH in Museums Survey, 2019

## Average variation of typical museum pay from market median



# Pay growth

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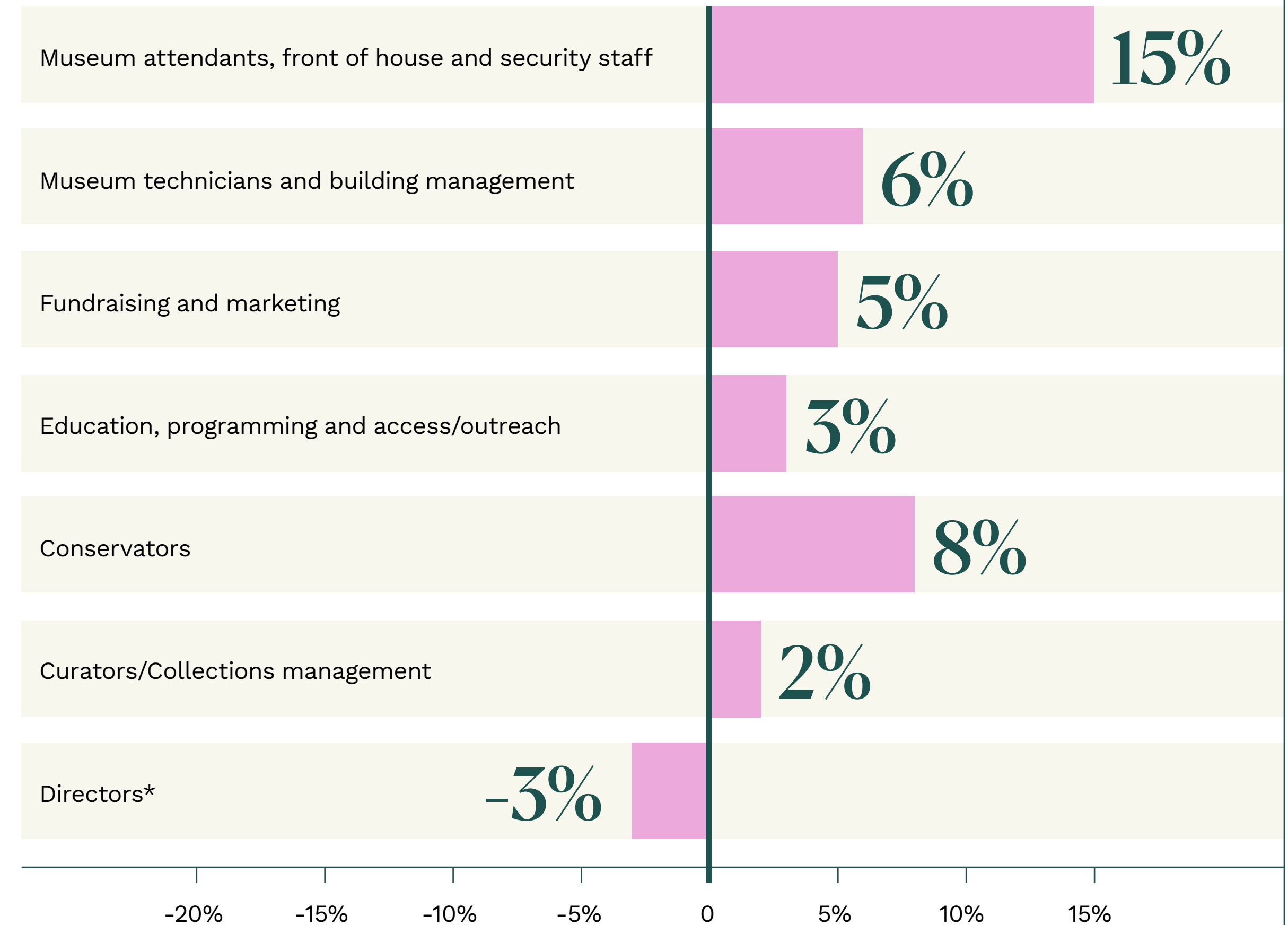
Our research found that pay growth since our 2017 salary survey has been modest for the majority of staff, and in some cases it has remained stagnant or fallen.

Our data showed that greater drops had occurred for roles at some specific job levels (not represented in the graph opposite). For example, the median salary for museum technicians/building management jobs at manager level is 5% below the 2017 rate, and there has been a drop of 3% in the median salary for curator/collections management jobs at officer level.

Some job families have fared better. Salaries for those in the attendants/front-of-house/security category have seen pay growth averaging 15%. This is likely the result of the rising National Living Wage, which was introduced in 2016 for workers over the age of 25, and currently applies to those over the age of 23.

Our survey also showed strong growth at some specific job levels. Entry-level positions in technicians/building management and fundraising/marketing have seen pay growth averaging 15%. Conservators at supervisor and manager level have seen their salaries grow an average of 14% and 15% respectively. This may reflect retention and recruitment pressures in these roles.

Average variation in typical salary levels for museum staff between 2017 and 2022



\* Anomalies in the profile of respondents for the director category may account for some of this variation

# Cost of living

Our research found that although salary growth has been strong in a number of specific categories, no job family has seen overall salaries rise in line with inflation over the past five years, which means a real-terms cut across all job families.

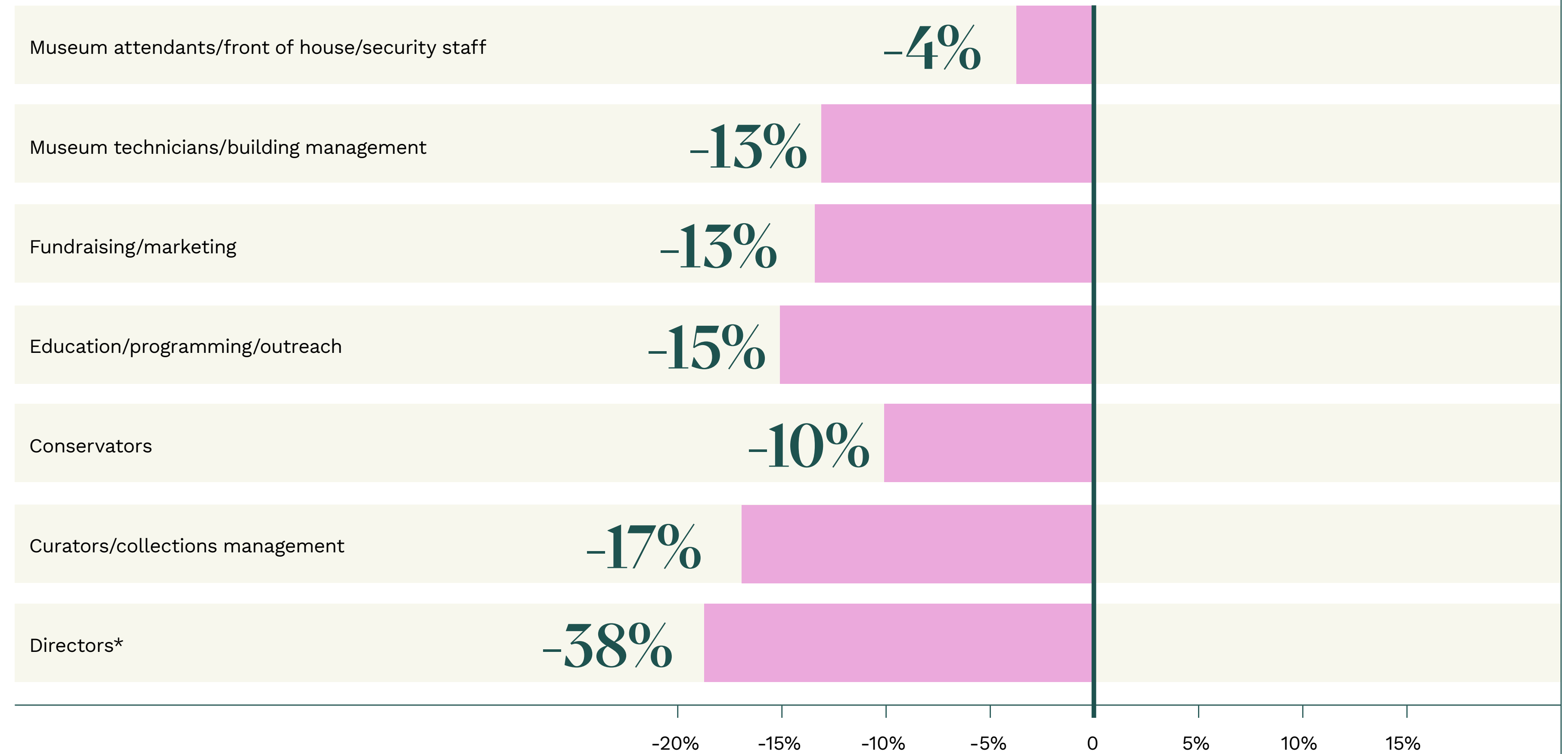
Using the median salaries from our 2017 Salary Guidelines, we calculated how these figures would appear today if they had been updated using the Consumer Prices Index (CPI), which is the UK Government's preferred measure of inflation.

We found that the median salaries our 2022 survey are an average of 16% lower than the updated 2017 median salaries. Jobs in the curators/collections management job family are particularly lagging behind, at an average of 16.8% below the 2017 salary updated by CPI. For example, our 2022 survey found that the median salary for a curator at manager level is £39,174. The 2017 salary updated by CPI comes to £45,721, a difference of 16.7%.

This finding has serious implications for the museum workforce as inflation continues to rise. Measured by CPI, inflation increased by 8.6% in the 12 months up to August 2022 and prices are continuing to rise due to the instability of the domestic and global political situation. Our findings indicate that the average museum employee is likely to have significantly less disposable income in 2022 than they did in 2017. This is before the significant inflation rises of 2022.

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Average variation of median salary 2022 from CPI-uprated median salary 2017



\* Anomalies in the profile of respondents for the director category may account for some of this variation



# Recruitment and retention

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Our research found that a significant proportion of respondents are experiencing issues with recruitment of staff. This is largely because of the impact of external forces such as Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic, but our data showed that low pay is a considerable factor, with a number of respondents advising that their inability to offer competitive salaries has hampered recruitment.

The survey asked respondents about the pressures they are facing in respect of recruitment and retention. Of the 110 responses to this question, 34% reported difficulties across certain job families and 18% said they are having issues with recruitment across most staff groups. Asked about changes in recruitment pressures over the last year, 43% advised that this has worsened.

**Reasons cited by respondents for recruitment issues:**

“  
Not providing competitive pay, and a lack of interest in weekend or seasonal work.

“  
Pay competition, moving from heritage sector to commercial sector roles.

“  
There is a lack of candidates with the right experience, and we are unable to compete with salaries at other organisations.

Staff retention has fared slightly better, with 63% of respondents to this question reporting that they have had no issues retaining staff. Out of 81 respondents who provided data, the average staff turnover was 11% per year, which is below the UK average of 15% per year.

Fourteen respondents said they have improved the competitiveness of their pay awards to improve recruitment and retention issues.

# Staff wellbeing and benefits

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The MA is committed to supporting workforce wellbeing and has made this a [campaign priority](#).

Our research found museums are introducing workforce policies that support staff wellbeing. This is likely to be influenced by greater awareness around the impact of low pay and work-related stress, as well as pressure to provide more attractive packages for staff due to increased competition in the jobs market. The Covid pandemic also precipitated significant changes to working patterns that are clearly apparent in the data.

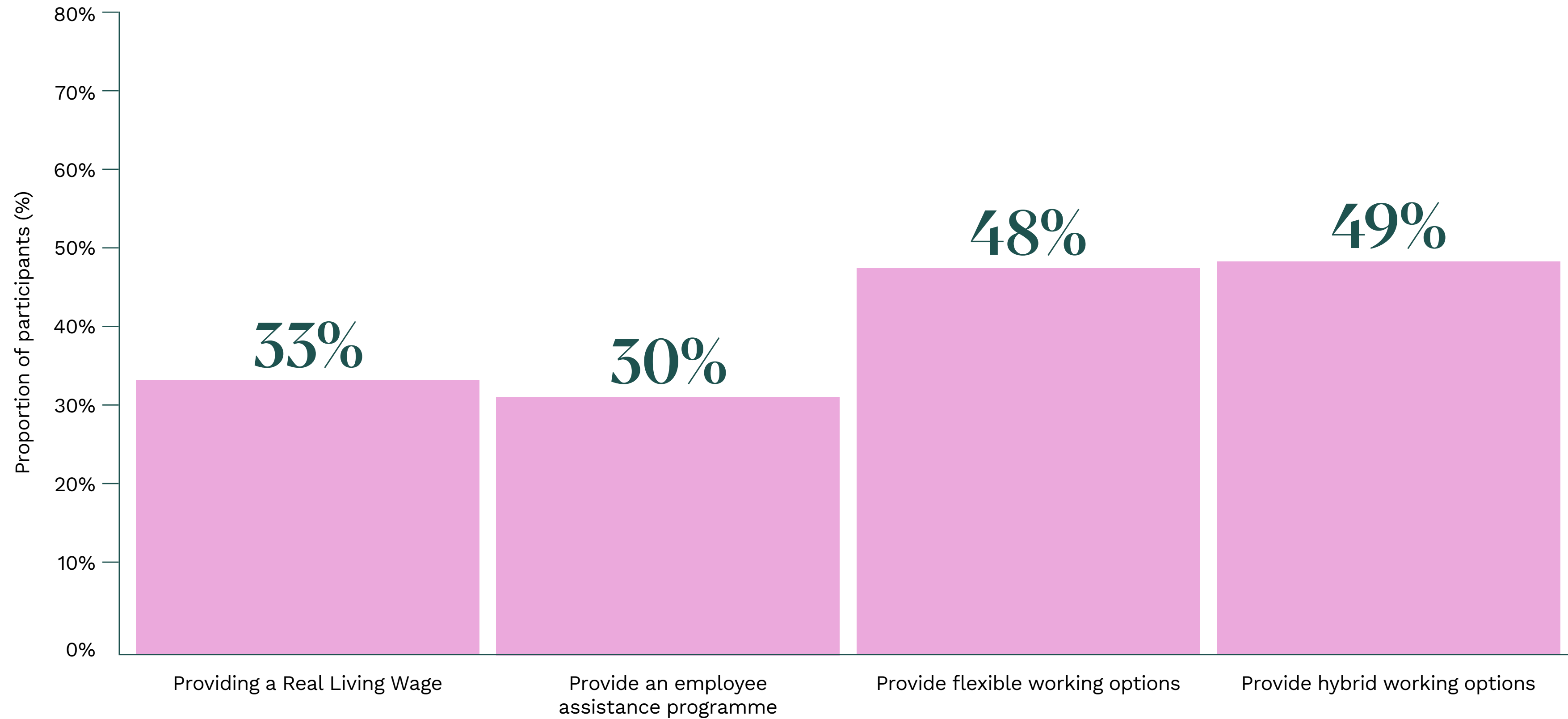
The survey asked whether museums and galleries support staff wellbeing through paying the voluntary Real Living Wage, providing access to an employee assistance programme or by offering flexible or hybrid working patterns. Of 173 respondents, a third reported paying the Real Living Wage, almost a third provide access to an employee assistance programme and nearly half report to offer flexible or hybrid working patterns\*.

Specific wellbeing initiatives cited by respondents included monthly “lunch-and-listens” for staff and freelancers, increased sick pay entitlement, free gym access, a support line for staff, compassionate and carers’ leave, and annualised hours contracts (where staff work an agreed number of hours per year rather than per week or month).

“  
**We have a budgetary line for wellbeing. This includes payment of counselling sessions for staff diagnosed with anxiety, depression, or work-related stress.**”

\* A separate survey by IDR has found that hybrid or home-working can offer significant benefits, with 92% of staff agreeing it offers a better work-life balance, 62% saying it improves health and wellbeing, and 84% saying it improves recruitment and retention.

Staff wellbeing initiatives operated by museums



**Front cover image:** Participants in the Multaka Project at Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford. Photograph by Ian Wallman.