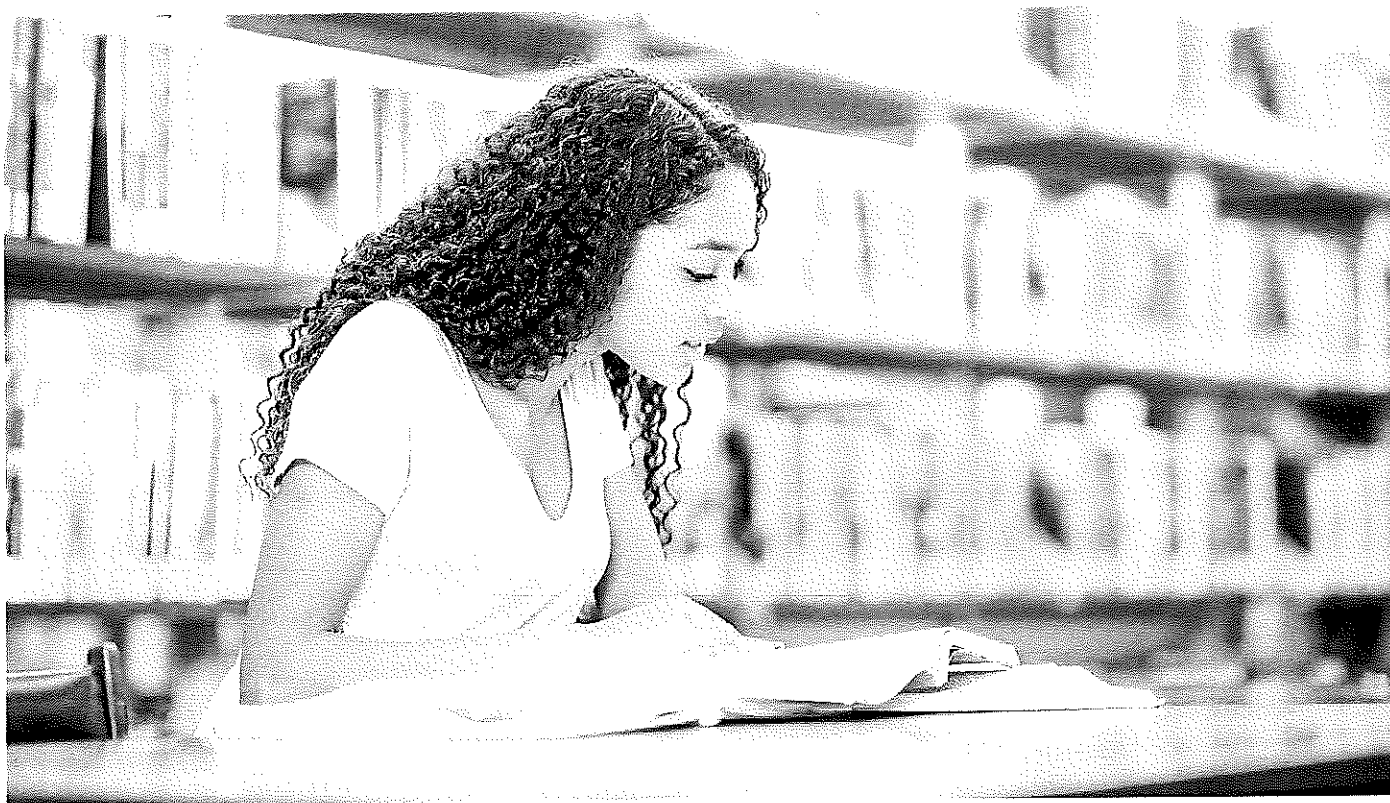


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In U.S., Library Visits Outpaced Trips to Movies in 2019

BY JUSTIN MCCARTHY



STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- Library most frequented by young adults, women and low-income households
- Average U.S. adult attended five movies and five live sporting events
- Age and income among key factors in frequency of activities

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Visiting the library remains the most common cultural activity Americans engage in, by far. The average 10.5 trips to the library U.S. adults report taking in 2019 exceeds their participation in eight other common leisure activities. Americans attend live music or theatrical events and visit national or historic parks roughly four times a year on average and visit museums and gambling casinos 2.5 times annually. Trips to amusement or theme parks (1.5) and zoos (.9) are the least common activities among this list.

Americans' Reports of Leisure and Activities

About how many times in the past year, if any, did you do each of the following? How about -- [RANDOM ORDER]?

2019 Dec 2-15

Average

Go to a library	10.5
Go to a movie at a movie theater	5.3
Attend a live sporting event	4.7
Attend a live music or theatrical event	3.8
Visit a national or historical park	3.7
Visit a museum	2.5
Visit a gambling casino	2.5
Go to an amusement or theme park	1.5
Visit a zoo	0.9

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These data -- collected in a Dec. 2-15, 2019 Gallup poll -- are an update from a December 2001 survey. Though the overall rankings at the beginning of the millennium remain the same today, a small decrease has occurred in reported trips to the movie theater (down 1.3 average visits). Meanwhile, small increases have taken place in average reports of visiting a museum (up 0.7 average visits), attending a live music or theatrical event (up 1.1 average visits) and visits to a national or historical park (up 1.3 average visits).

Women Visit Libraries Nearly Twice as Frequently as Men

Men and woman report doing most activities at about the same rate, but there are a few key differences:

- Women report visiting the library nearly twice as frequently as men do, 13.4 to 7.5 visits.
- Men are more likely than women to visit casinos, attend sporting events and visit national or historical parks.

Reports of Leisure and Activities, by Gender

	Men	Women	Difference
	Average	Average	(Men minus women)
Go to a library	7.5	13.4	-5.9
Go to a movie at a movie theater	5.1	5.6	-0.5
Attend a live music or theatrical event	3.7	3.8	-0.1
Visit a zoo	0.9	0.8	+0.1
Visit a museum	2.7	2.3	+0.4
Go to an amusement or theme park	1.8	1.3	+0.5
Visit a gambling casino	3.4	1.7	+1.7

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	Men	Women	Difference
	Average	Average	(Men minus women)
Attend a live sporting event	5.7	3.7	+2.0
Visit a national or historical park	4.9	2.4	+2.5

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The 30-49 Age Group Most Active Across Most Activities

Across nearly all measures, the highest average activity rates are among the 30 to 49 age group, while the lowest are among those 65 and older.

The 30 to 49 age group's higher activity may reflect their relative youth combined with mid-life financial stability. Middle-aged adults' activity is particularly above-par in terms of attending live sporting events. Their average attendance of 7.4 events during the year is more than twice that of younger adults and exceeds older adults by more than three visits.

The two exceptions to the pattern of middle-aged adults being the most active are visits to libraries and casinos. U.S. adults aged 18 to 29 visit the library much more than all older age groups -- possibly reflecting college-going adults, who visit the library for studies. This youngest age group also visits casinos the most.

Reports of Leisure and Activities, by Age Group

	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+
	Average	Average	Average	Average
Go to a library	15.5	12.3	6.8	8.2
Go to a movie at a movie theater	6.6	6.8	4.1	3.6
Attend a live sporting event	2.8	7.4	3.9	3.7

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	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+
	Average	Average	Average	Average
Attend a live music or theatrical event	3.1	4.5	3.8	2.7
Visit a national or historical park	4.2	5.9	2.3	1.6
Visit a museum	2.9	2.9	2.0	1.8
Visit a gambling casino	4.4	2.9	1.8	1.4
Go to an amusement or theme park	1.8	2.6	1.0	0.5
Visit a zoo	0.7	1.5	0.6	0.4

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High-Income Households Generally Do More Activities

In general, Americans in high-income households report doing activities the most, while Americans in low-income households participate the least.

- The widest gaps between high- and low-income households are in reports of attending a live sporting event, a live music or theatrical event, a museum, and going to the movie theater -- all things often associated with significant ticket prices.
- Conversely, the library -- which is free and offers a variety of services including WiFi -- is visited most by adults in low-income households and least by adults in high-income households.
- Despite having smaller incomes, Americans in low-income households visit gambling casinos with slightly greater frequency.
- Meanwhile, the three income groups are about as likely to attend an amusement or theme park as well as the zoo.

Reports of Leisure and Activities, by Income Group

\$100,000+	\$40,000-99,999	Less than \$40,000
Average	Average	Average

	\$100,000+	\$40,000-99,999	Less than \$40,000
	Average	Average	Average
Go to a library	8.5	10.4	12.2
Go to a movie at a movie theater	6.3	5.7	4.4
Attend a live sporting event	7.5	3.8	3.6
Attend a live music or theatrical event	5.9	3.8	2.3
Visit a national or historical park	4.0	3.6	3.5
Visit a museum	3.5	2.8	1.5
Visit a gambling casino	2.5	2.2	3.5
Go to an amusement or theme park	2.1	1.3	1.5
Visit a zoo	0.9	0.8	1.0

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Certain Activities More Frequent Among Households With Children

For most measures, there are not meaningful differences between adults who report having children under the age of 18 in their households versus adults who do not have children living in their homes. But for a few activities, there are some differences between the two groups:

- Adults with children in their household attend live sporting events and go to the movies about two times or more than adults who do not have children.
- Meanwhile, adults who have no children in their household attend live music or theatrical events slightly more frequently than adults who have children in their homes.

Reports of Leisure and Activities, by Children Under 18 in Household

Children under 18	No children under 18
Average	Average

	Children under 18	No children under 18
	Average	Average
Go to a library	10.1	10.8
Go to a movie at a movie theater	6.8	4.7
Attend a live sporting event	6.7	3.7
Attend a live music or theatrical event	3.1	4.2
Visit a national or historical park	3.9	3.5
Visit a museum	2.2	2.7
Visit a gambling casino	3.9	2.0
Go to an amusement or theme park	2.0	1.3
Visit a zoo	1.5	0.6

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Regional Variations in Some Activities

Americans' reports of doing activities vary by the four regions in which they live:

- Those who live in the East report having visited a museum with the greatest frequency.
- In the West, adults have the highest reports of visiting historical or national parks and gambling casinos.

Reports of Leisure and Activities, by Region

	East	Midwest	South	West
	Average	Average	Average	Average
Go to a library	10.4	12.9	9.3	10.1
Go to a movie at a movie theater	5.3	4.9	5.4	5.6

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	East	Midwest	South	West
	Average	Average	Average	Average
Attend a live sporting event	4.5	4.6	5.1	4.3
Attend a live music or theatrical event	3.7	3.0	3.8	4.6
Visit a national or historical park	3.0	2.7	3.1	5.9
Visit a museum	4.0	1.7	2.0	2.5
Visit a gambling casino	1.4	3.3	1.0	5.1
Go to an amusement or theme park	1.8	0.8	1.7	1.7
Visit a zoo	0.6	1.1	0.9	0.7

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Bottom Line

Despite the proliferation of digital-based activities over the past two decades -- including digital books, podcasts, streaming entertainment services and advanced gaming -- libraries have endured as a place Americans visit nearly monthly on average. Whether because they offer services like free Wi-Fi, movie rentals, or activities for children, libraries are most utilized by young adults, women and residents of low-income households.

Activities that typically cost money are visited or attended less frequently. Among this group of activities, outings to movie theaters and sports events remain the trips Americans make the most, while zoos are the least frequented.

Many factors determine how Americans spend their free time, and financial means is a key factor. Age, too, is a large determinant. While middle-aged Americans may tend to be the most active in these activities due to their relative youth and greater financial stability, the 30 to 49 age cohort's activeness may also reflect its household makeup. The average age of a first-time mother in the U.S. is 26 and 31 for a first-time father, according to 2016 data from the National Center for Health Statistics. So, the need to

keep growing children entertained through trips to the movies or to sporting events -- which are more popular among households with children -- may be more common among this age group.

But one's personal interests also factor into such decisions, which may bear out in activities showing significant gender differences, such as a women's book club at the local library, or activities that are more popular or available in certain parts of the country.

[View complete question responses and trends.](#)

SURVEY METHODS



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