

POST-PANDEMIC DESIGN + MUSEUMS: AN ANALYSIS OF COVID-19 REOPENING PLANS

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to understand post-pandemic policies currently being applied within museums. Our research was conducted with a mixed-method approach using an online survey and a content analysis of assorted museums in which the COVID-19 policies, procedures, and reopening plans of 24 different museums were analyzed (Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Large-scale museums located around the world were selected to generate a holistic sense of what pandemic policies can be found globally. After coding and analysis, some of the most common policies and procedures established by museums were found to be social distancing, mask mandates, hand sanitizer stations, increased cleaning, policy signage, Plexi-glass shields in transaction locations, and controlled traffic patterns.

REVIEW OF LIT

POST-PANDEMIC DESIGN - Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, public gatherings have decreased and, at times, have been prohibited.

- Museums rely on the gathering of people and have struggled to adapt.
- Social distancing is effective because it “avoids or decreases contact between individuals who may carry or be susceptible to pathogens that are commutable and contagious” (Kunjir & Patil, 2020, p. 3).
- Technology such as Mobile Augmented Reality (MAR) allows visitors to interact with an exhibit while spaced apart; “using MAR, visitors can engage with objects on a deeper level to experience various facets of the object from cultural, historical, political, and artistic points of view” (Kunjir & Patil, 2020, p. 4).

METHODOLOGY

MEASURES

This content analysis collected data about museum COVID-19 reopening plans using an excel document.

SITES

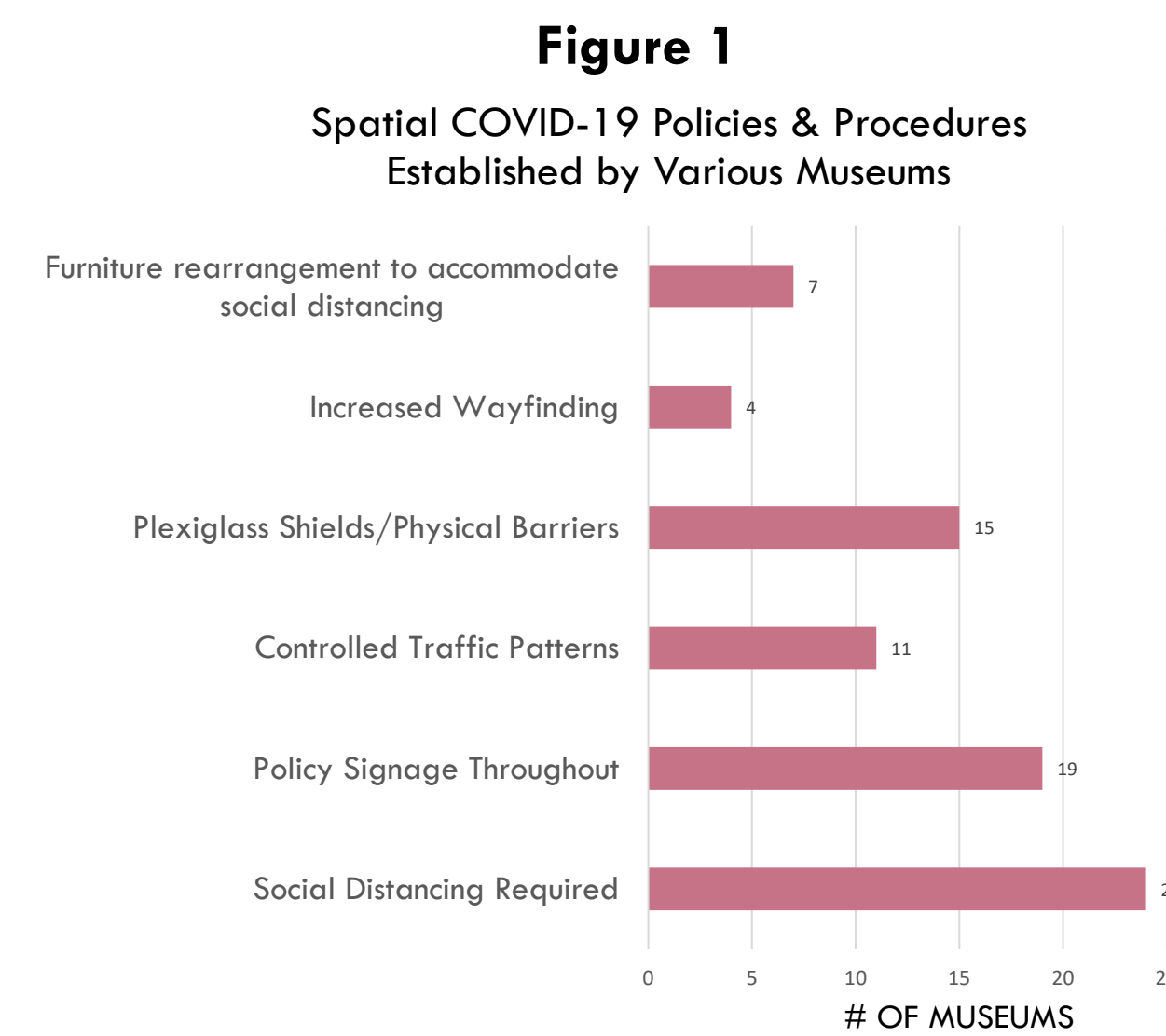
24 various museums were analyzed from around the world, including Historical (5), Children’s (1), Art (13), Science (2), Heritage (2), and Botanical (1) museums.

PROCEDURE

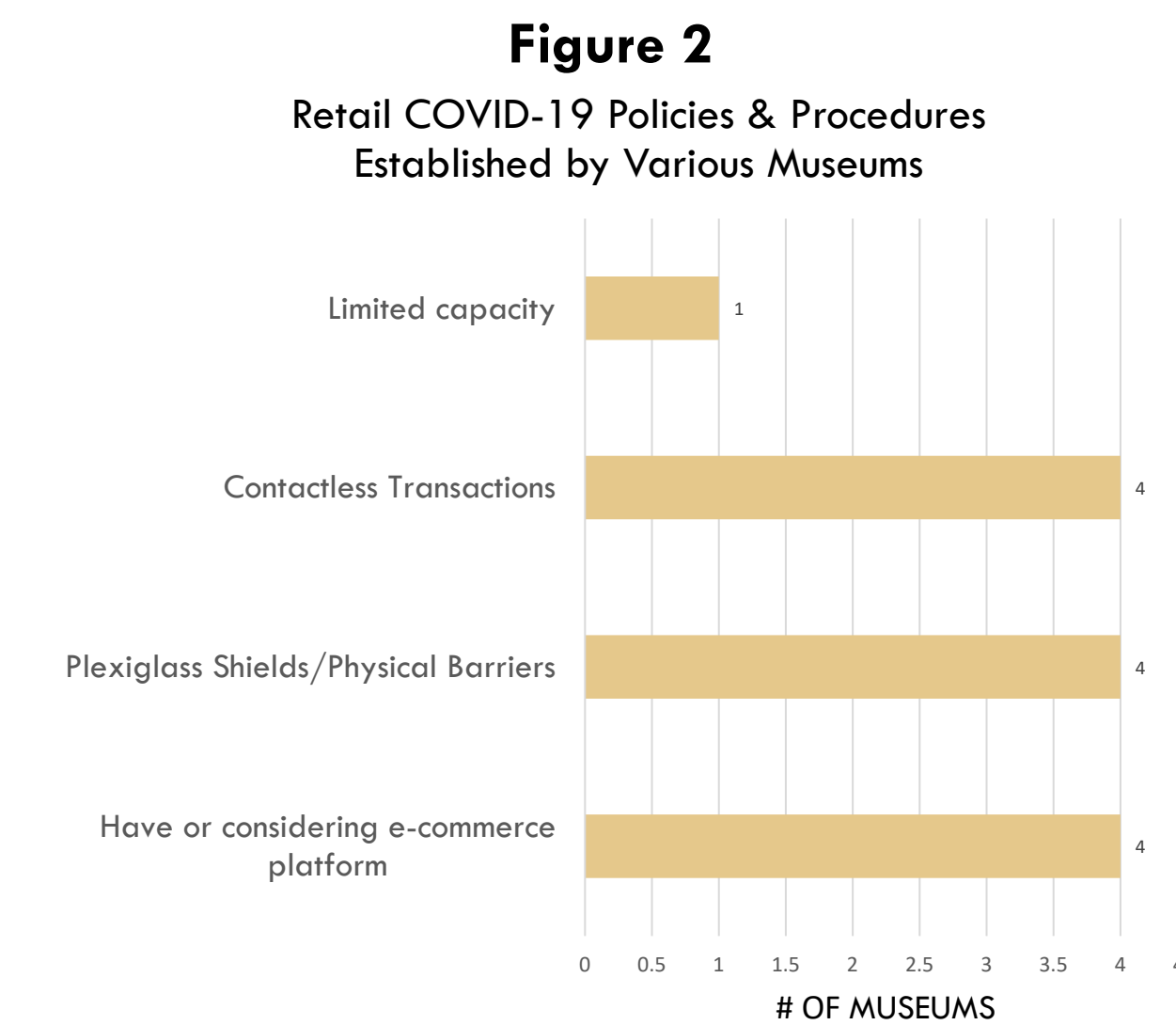
Policies/procedures were recorded under six themes: spatial, sanitary, attendance/admittance, on-site experience, retail, and food service. Data was then coded to analyze patterns.

References:

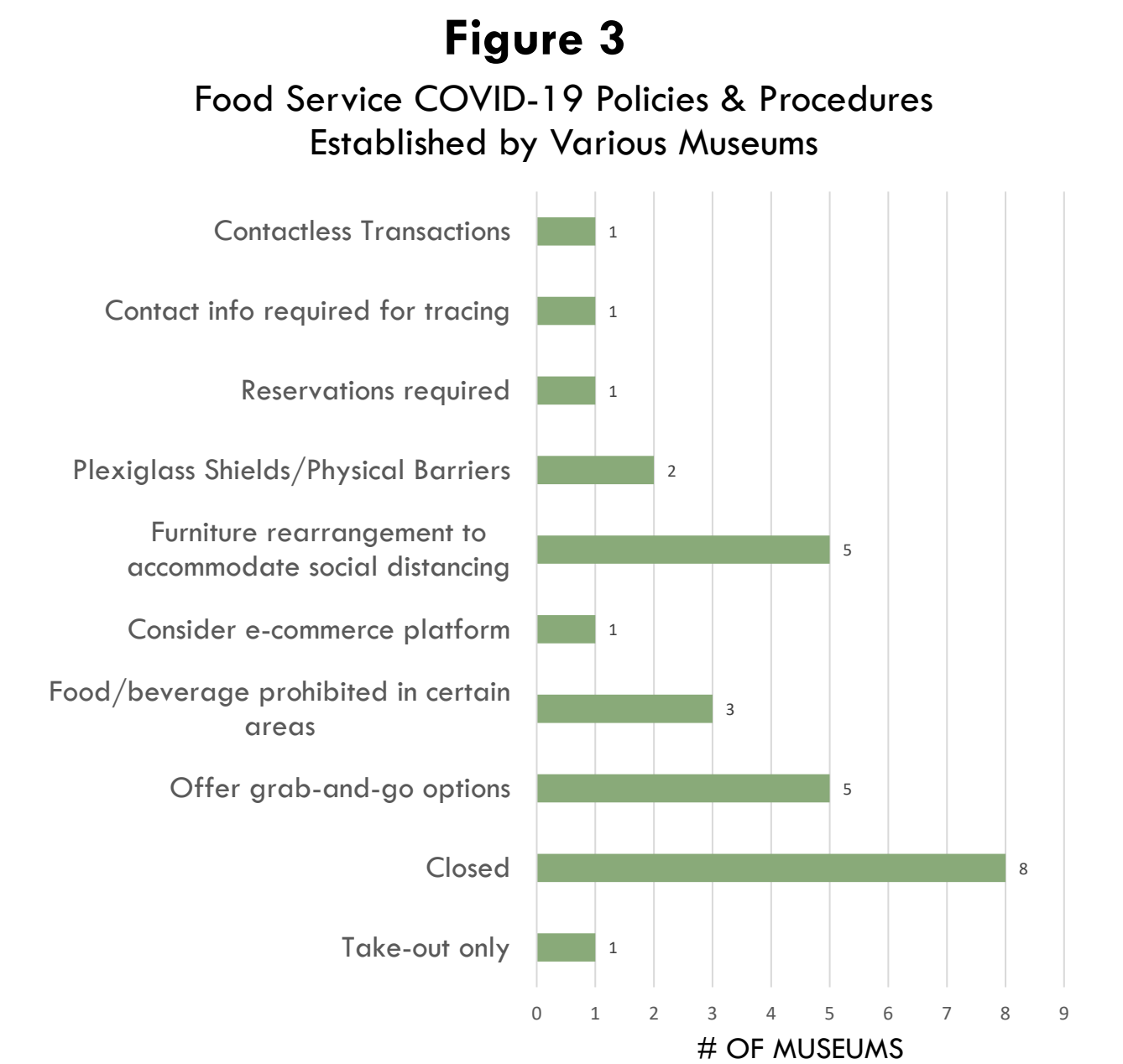
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications.
- Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S. (1994). *Handbook of qualitative research*. Sage.
- Kunjir, A. R. & Patil, K. R. (2020). Effectiveness of practicing social distancing in museums and art galleries for visitors using mobile augmented reality (MAR): S.M.A.R.T. - Social distancing using mobile augmented reality technology. *International Journal of Art, Culture and Design Technologies*, 9(1), 1-14. doi:10.4018/IJACDT.2020010101



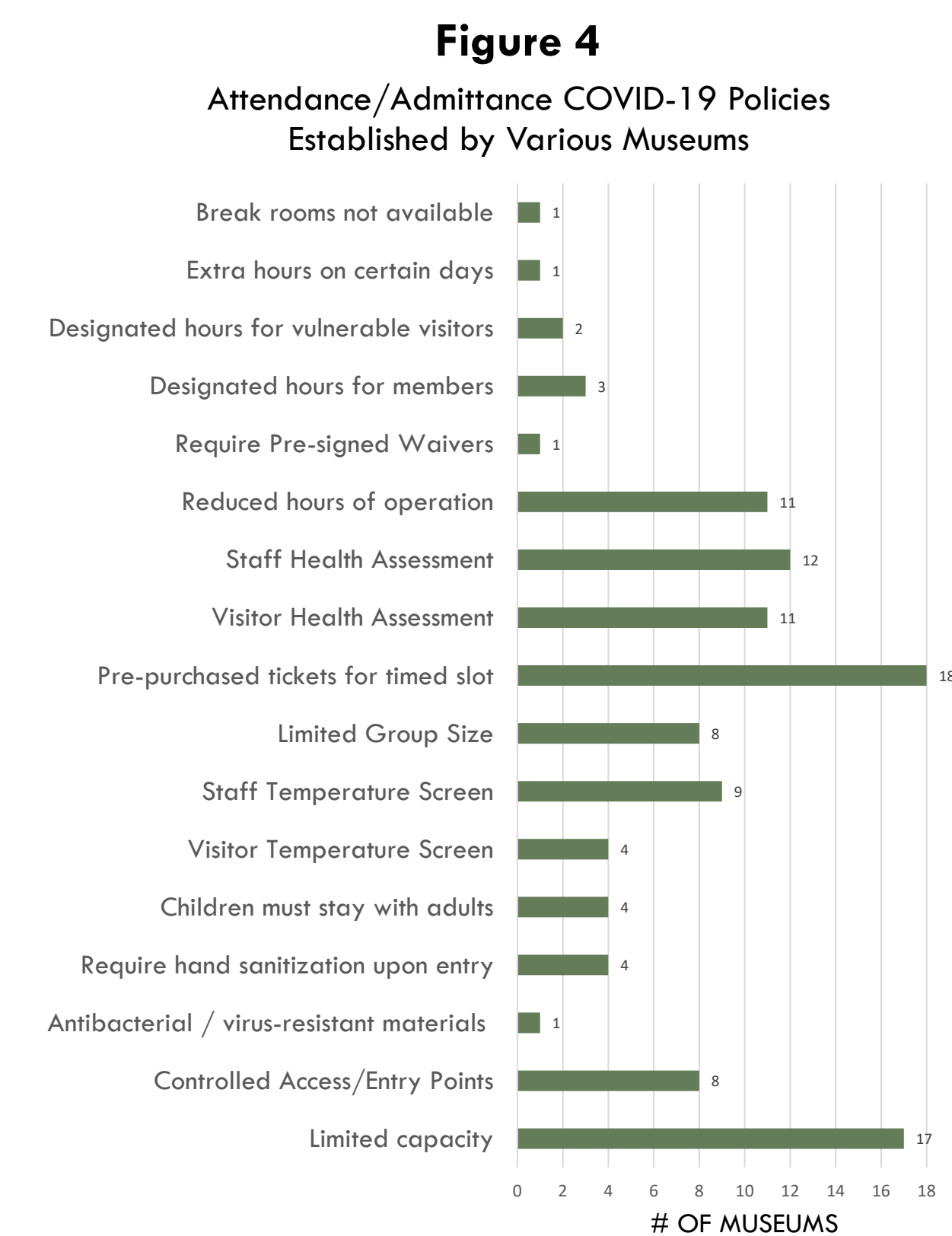
RESULTS - The two most common spatial elements established were social distancing and policy signage.



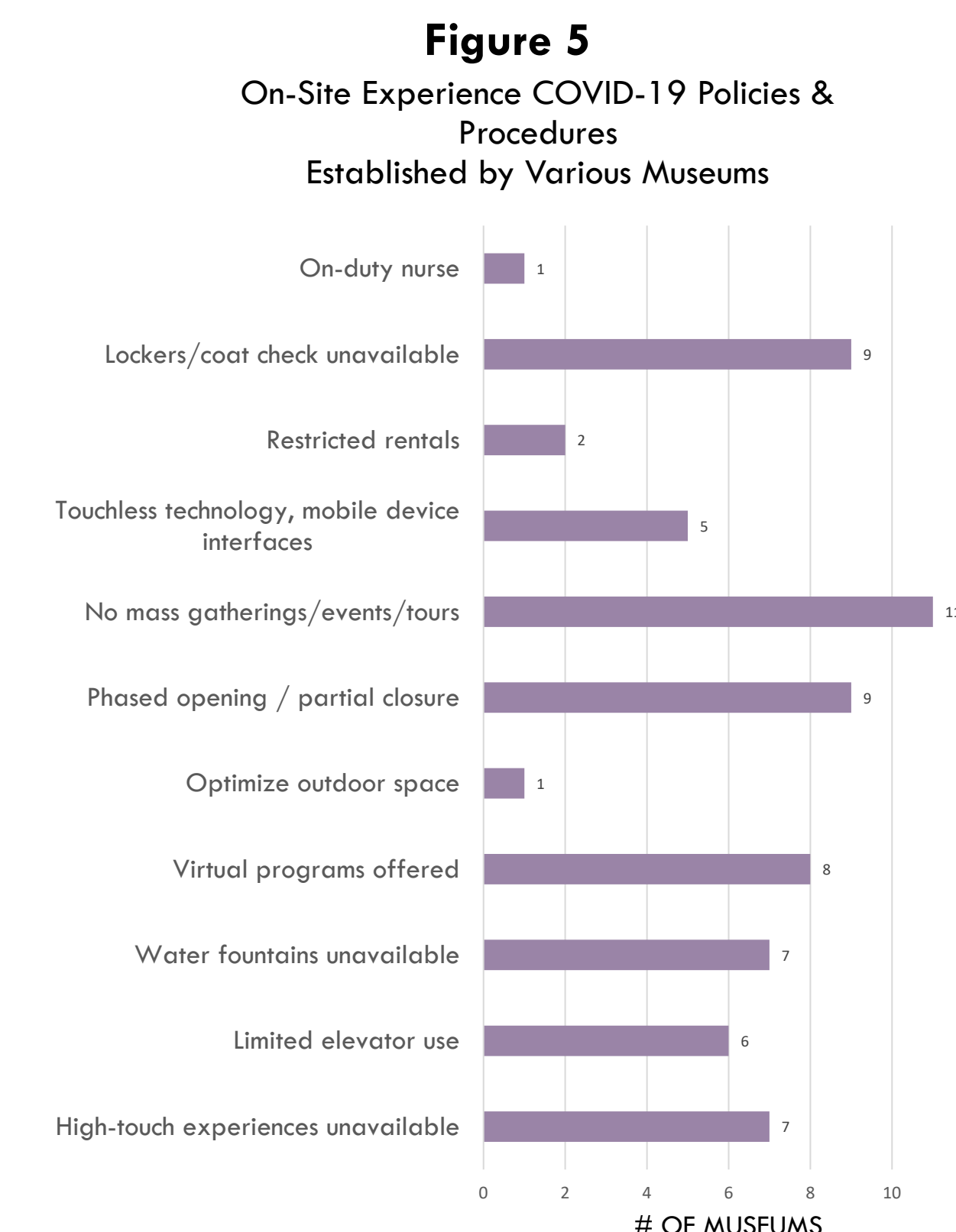
RESULTS - 15 of the museums had on-site retail options. Of those 15, it was common to see Plexi-glass shields upon checkout, e-commerce platforms, and contactless transaction options.



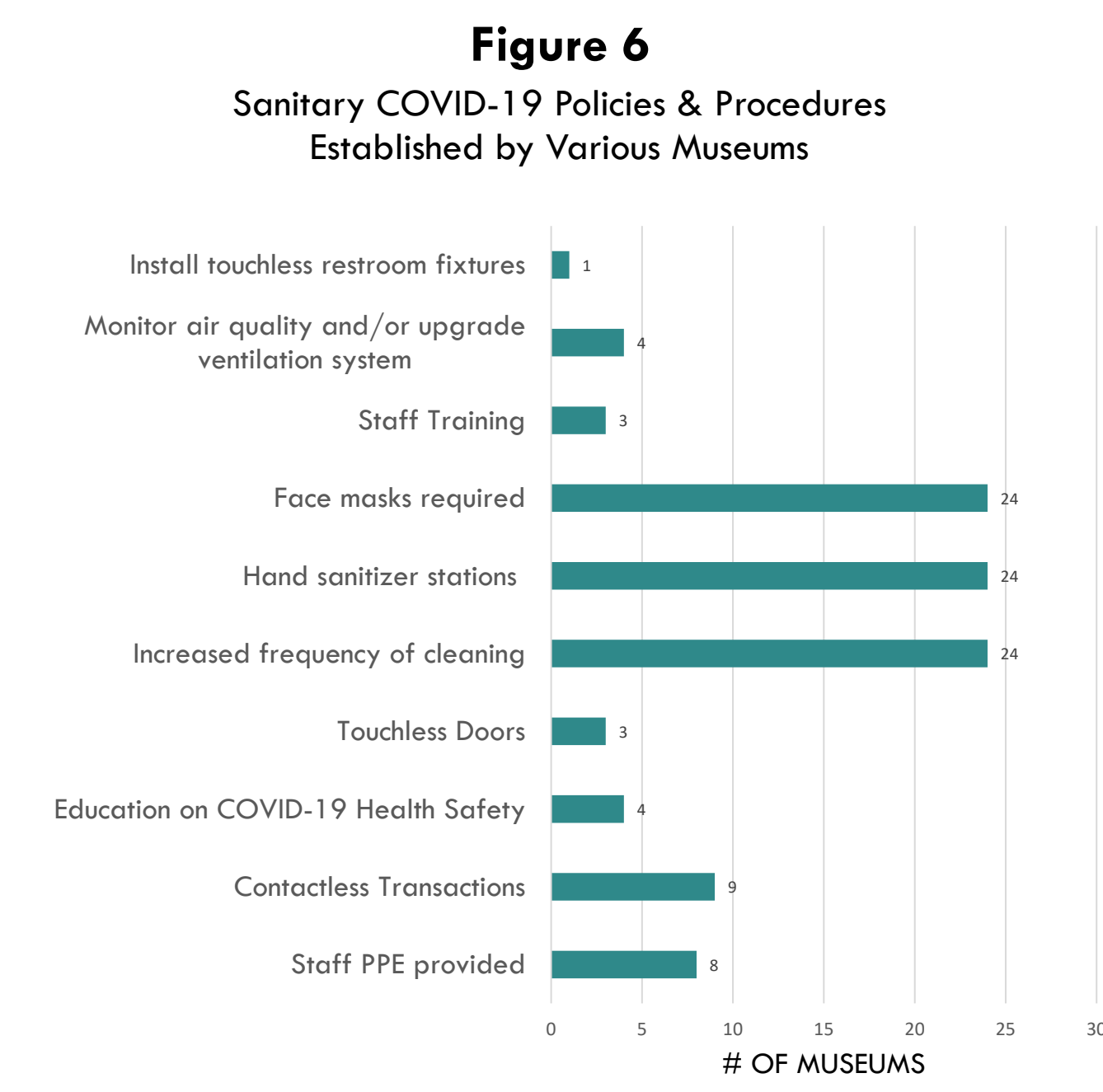
RESULTS - 15 of the museums studied had offered a food service, most of which have been temporarily closed due to COVID-19. Other common procedures found included furniture rearrangement to provide social distancing and dine-out options.



RESULTS - The leading attendance/admittance policies include pre-purchased tickets for timed slots, limited capacities, and staff health assessments.



RESULTS - Museums often prohibited mass gatherings, reopened in phases, eliminated high-touch experiences, and offered alternative virtual programming.



RESULTS - Face mask requirements, the inclusion of hand sanitizer stations, and increased frequency of cleaning were all policies in effect by the reviewed museums.

DISCUSSION

MEANINGS - Results of this study suggest that some of the most important museum COVID-19 policies and procedures are social distancing, policy signage, Plexi-glass shields, contactless transactions, face mask usage, hand sanitizer stations, frequent cleaning, limited capacities, and elimination of high-touch experiences.

APPLICATIONS - These results indicate that elements such as flexible furniture, cleanable materials, touchless features, integrated technology, and controlled wayfinding can support a pandemic-safe museum design.

WEAKNESSES - Museum policies and procedures were limited to what they stated on their public website; furthermore, a relatively small sample of museums were analyzed.

RECOMMENDATIONS - In the future, we recommend gathering information from more museums and contacting museum directors for more policy and procedure information.