

Background

The Collaboration for Ongoing Visitor Experience Studies (COVES) is designed to unite science centers across the country (and now Canada!) in systematically collecting, analyzing, and reporting on visitor experience data. We believe that by supporting institutions in developing a better understanding of their visitors, we will be able to facilitate decision-making that allows for improved visitor experiences, which in turn can create opportunities for repeat visitation. COVES assists participating institutions by creating standardized measures and protocols for data collection, evaluation capacity building resources, and a strong Community of Practice focused on understanding our visitors.

Methodology

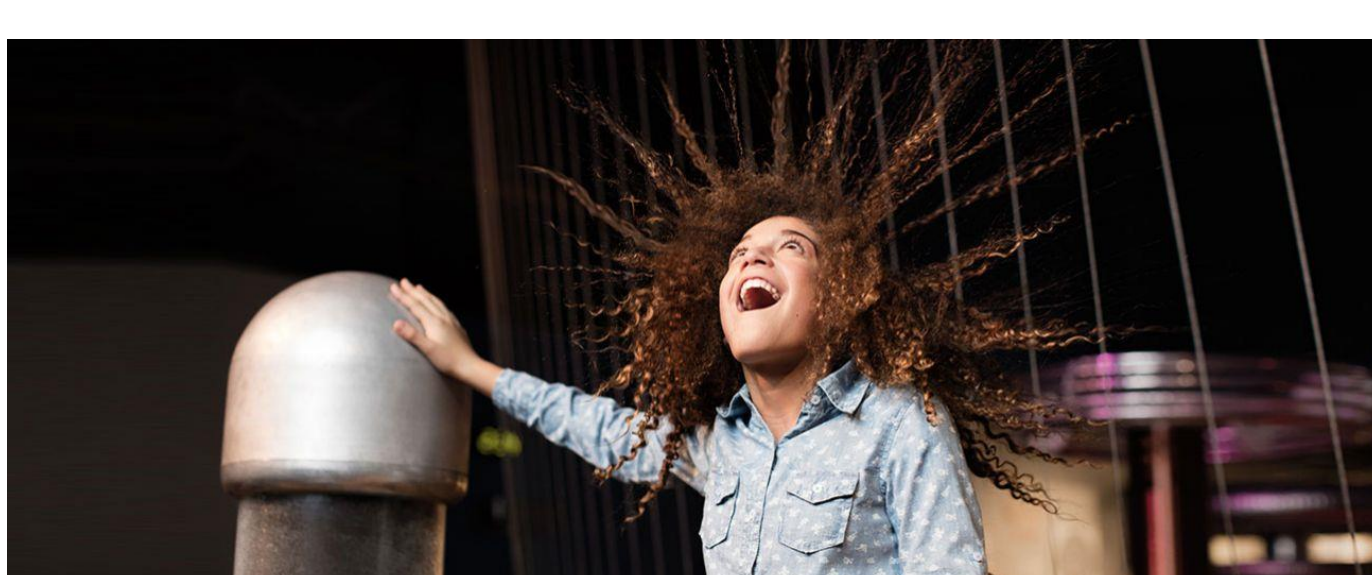
COVES data are collected through an electronic onsite exit survey using continuous random sampling of general public visitors. To standardize the data collection process, an initial cohort of eight science centers piloted three data collection techniques—an interview, an email survey, and an onsite exit survey—using the same questionnaire, as well as testing two sampling methods—individual and group sampling. The onsite exit survey proved to be most efficient across sites, while the group sampling method was found to be least obtrusive during data collection.

We collect data on four general areas of the visit, while providing institution-specific questions for flexibility:



Who visits?

What motivates them to visit?



What do they do or see?

How do they feel about their experience?



COVES

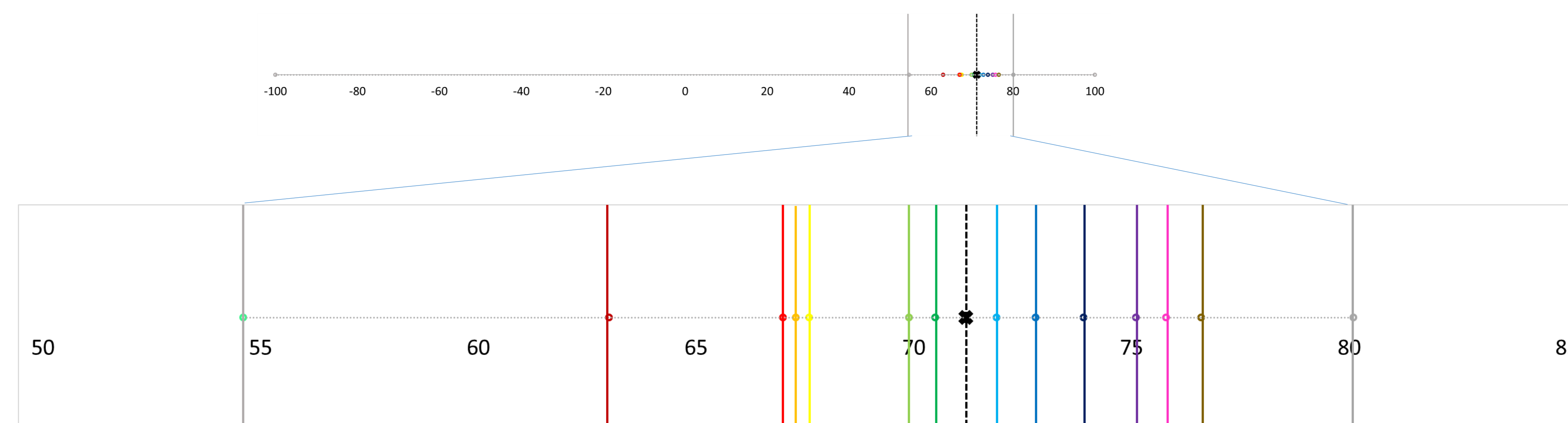
Collaboration for Ongoing Visitor Experience Studies

Findings from the first full year:

Everything you thought you knew, now supported by data!

Net Promoter Scores are generally high, but range quite a bit.

The Net Promoter Score (NPS)[®] question measures an individual's likelihood to recommend a business or company to a friend or colleague, asked on a scale from 0 to 10. NPS values can take on a range from -100 to +100, with higher net scores reflecting, in theory, stronger business performance. NPS has long been used to compare performance across a range of industries.

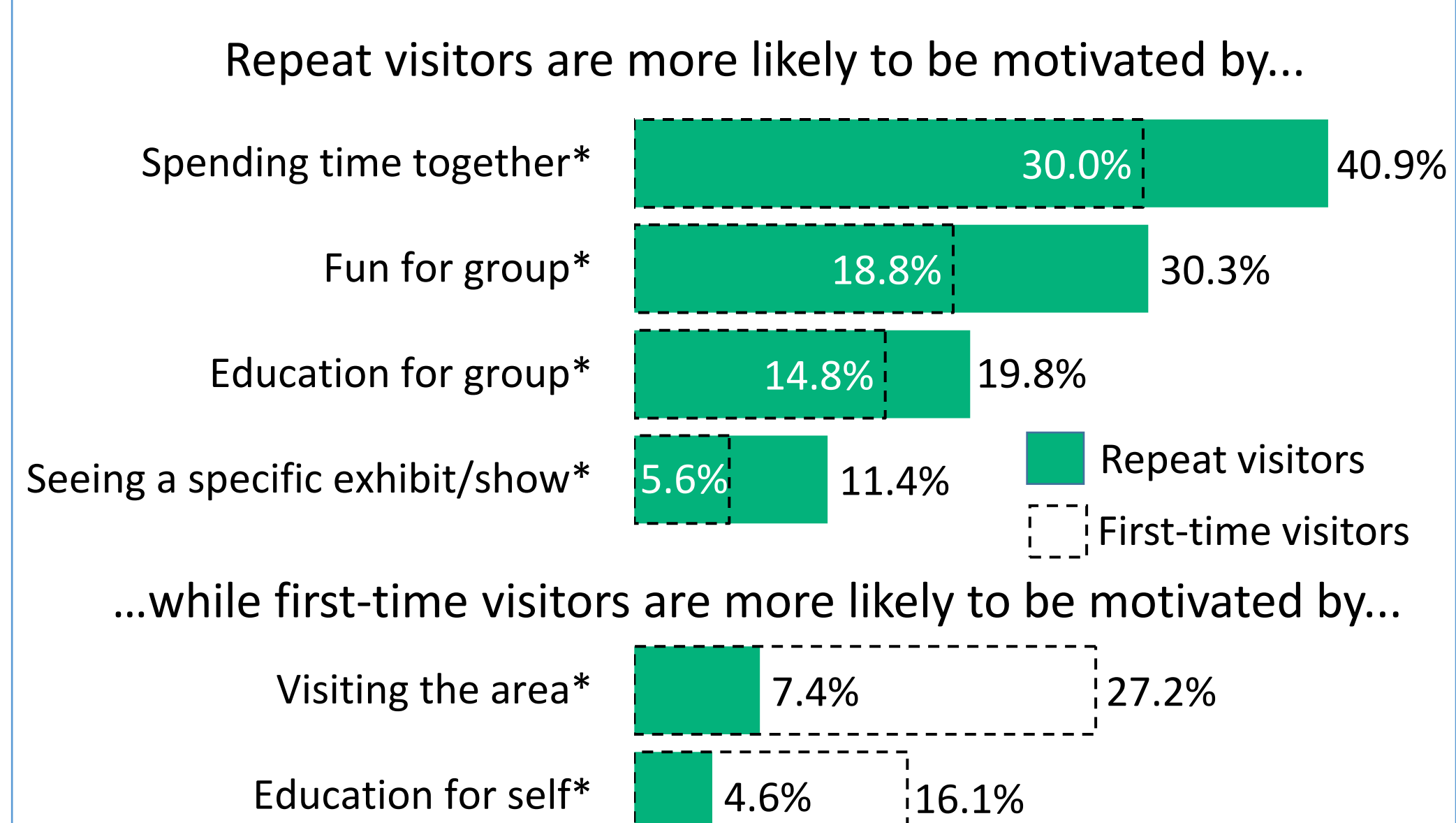


The median COVES NPS is 71.2, with a range of 54.6 to 80.1

Why is this important? For years, we have been asked what a "good" Net Promoter Score is, and these data points help us benchmark our performance as a field as well as over time. Identifying within-institution factors related to NPS can help drive changes in performance.

First-time visitors make up 29% of all visitors

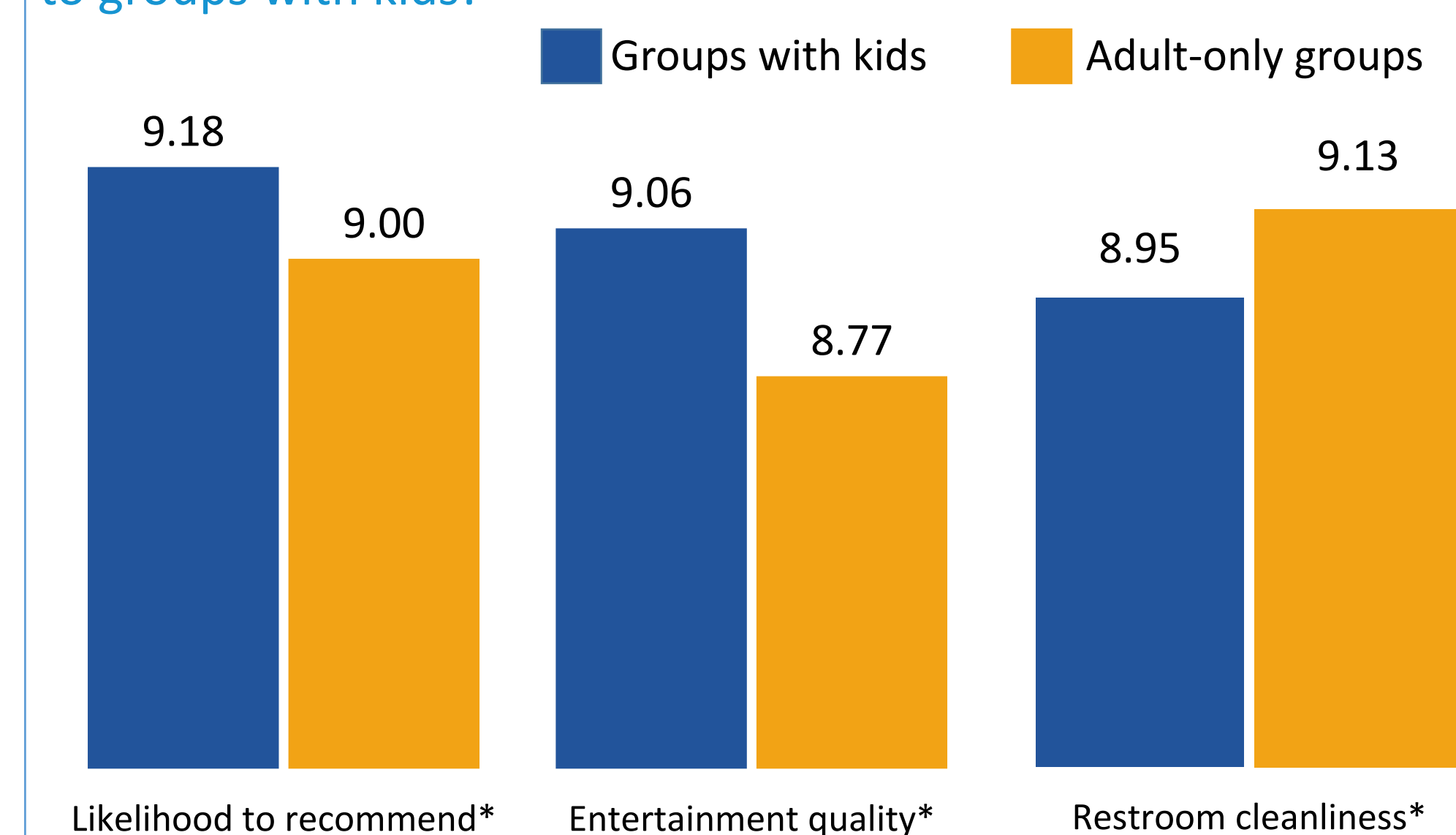
These attendees are often a focal point when considering how to increase overall institutional attendance. Although COVES data show that these first-timers don't differ significantly from repeat visitors on most demographic characteristics, they are more likely to come for "selfish" reasons, or as a something to do while visiting the area from elsewhere.



* Chi-square tests of independence determined statistically significant differences between group proportions at $\alpha = .05$.

Adult-only groups have lower "loyalty" ratings

...but they feel better about bathroom cleanliness when compared to groups with kids!



Testing for differences in ratings between groups helps us identify areas for improvement, and also allows us to consider how experiential differences may arise between different subgroups of visitors.

* Mann-Whitney non-parametric tests determined statistically significant differences between group distributions at $\alpha = .05$.



2016-2017 Participating Sites

- Sample sizes ranged from 64 to 796 across the 13 participating sites.
- The **average response rate** across sites was 61% (with a range from 32% to 96%).
- **Average survey response time** for visitors was 3:46.

Due to the proportional sampling targets that COVES sets for each institution based on size and the vastly unequal samples across sites in these data, the analyses presented here employ statistical weighting:

$$w_i = \frac{\left(\sum_j n_j\right)}{n_i}$$

This resulting weighted sample size for each institution was 449.

Future Directions

This poster presents COVES data from July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017, our first full year of data collection. Our intent is to collect feedback from visitor studies professionals and use this information to guide our subsequent analyses for the most recent year's data (July 1, 2017 through June 30, 2018) to produce an aggregate report, which we will make available at the ASTC 2018 Annual Conference. We are interested in discussing with you:

- Are any of these preliminary findings surprising?
- Do you have suggestions for additional analyses?
- Do *your* data reflect similar findings?
- ...anything else?

COVES is transitioning from a grant-supported project to a self-sustaining membership model—as of July 1, 2018, we have 22 paying members conducting ongoing visitor data collection! We are always looking to expand, so if you are interested and would like to be involved, please talk to a COVES team member, or email info@understandingvisitors.org.

Ryan Auster and Alexander Lussenhop, Museum of Science, Boston

For more information, go to our website, www.understandingvisitors.org

