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This is your ride to  
the Moon and back.

# ANNUAL VISITOR SNAPSHOT

Multi-Institutional Museum Study  
January-December 2024

COVES

COVES was established as a grant-funded project in October 2014 through the generous support of the Institute of Museum and Library Services. The project has been an independent, membership-supported entity since October 2018. The Art Bridges Foundation provides financial support for their partner museums to participate in COVES.

The core COVES team is housed at the Museum of Science, Boston, with additional staff support from Association of Science and Technology Centers (ASTC) and Aurora Consulting. During the 2024 calendar year, the collaboration had 120 participating sites.

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Experience Studies

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# WHAT IS COVES?

The Collaboration for Ongoing Visitor Experience Studies (COVES) is designed to unite museums of all types to systematically collect, analyze, and report on visitor experience data. We envision a collaborative museum community seeking to better understand and improve the visitor experience. Our members learn about their visitors and we share aggregate data around who visits a particular museum, why they visit, what they experience during their visit, and how they react to different aspects of their experience.



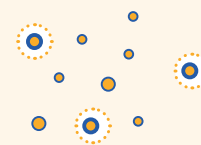
## SAMPLE INFORMATION

This report contains data collected from **January 1 to December 31, 2024** from our cohort of museums, including children’s museums, history museums, natural history museums, and science centers (collectively Science+) and art museums across the United States.

This includes **39,570 surveys across 78 COVES sites**. To be included in this report, institutions needed to collect at least 100 surveys with less than 33% of the sample collected through QR. Statistical weighting was used to account for differences in sample sizes across museums.

## DATA COLLECTION METHODS

- All COVES institutions collect data using an **onsite, electronic exit survey**. .....
- **Data collectors approach general visitor groups** (i.e., not school or tour groups) at the museum exit(s) and invite them to take the survey. **Groups are chosen at random using a sampling protocol**. .....
- **One adult in their group completes the survey** on a tablet at the end of their group’s time in the museum. If they are more comfortable using their own device (e.g., for personalized accessibility features), the individual may scan a QR code instead of using the offered tablet.
- **Visitors may complete the survey in either English or Spanish**. .....



# WHO VISITS

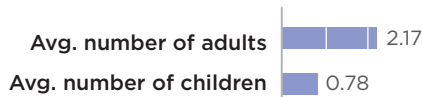
The COVES protocol involves selecting one adult from a visitor group to be the primary respondent. The survey asks for some information that describes the entire visiting group (this page), along with some information from the primary respondent only (the next page).

## GROUP DEMOGRAPHICS



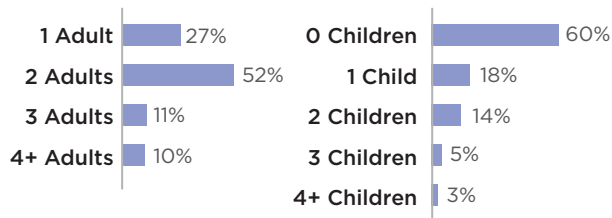
### AVERAGE GROUP SIZE

n=22,279 (adults), n=21,753 (children)



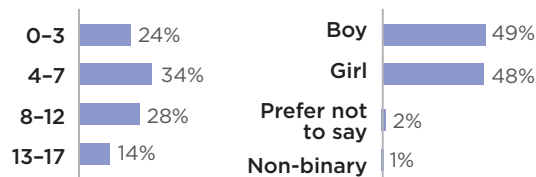
### GROUP COMPOSITION

n=22,279 (adults), n=21,753 (children)



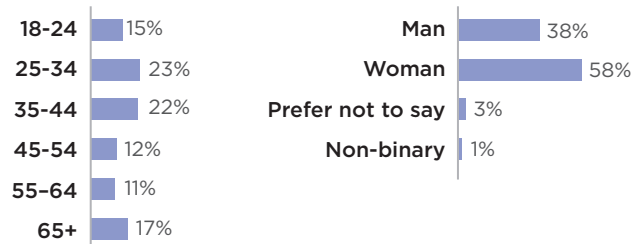
### CHILD AGE AND GENDER

n=10,803 (age), n=9,718 (gender)



### ADULT AGE AND GENDER BREAKDOWNS

n=24,938 (age), n=34,168 (gender)



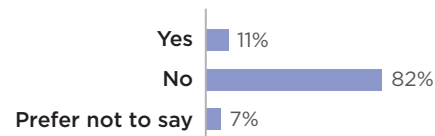
### RESIDENCE OF GROUP MEMBERS

n=20,971



### GROUP DISABILITY STATUS

n=20,690

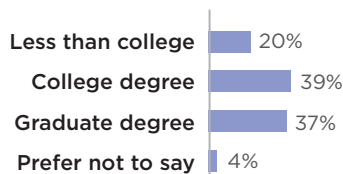


## INDIVIDUAL RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS



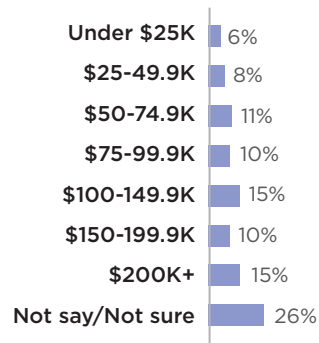
### EDUCATION

n=21,224



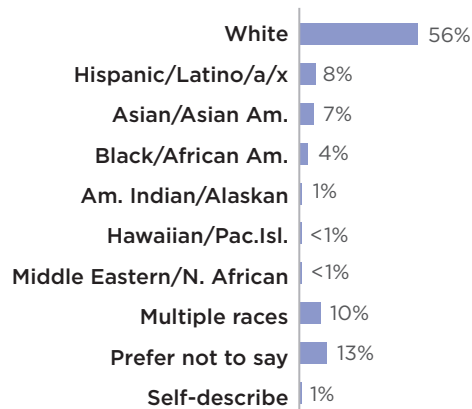
### HOUSEHOLD INCOME

n=20,734



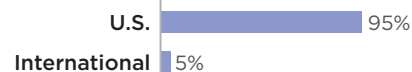
### RACE/ETHNICITY\*

n=11,120



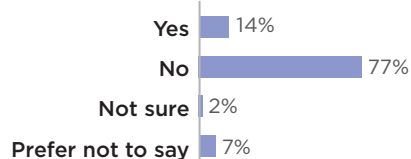
### RESIDENCE

n=22,573



### LGBT+ IDENTIFICATION

n=21,008



We acknowledge that no visitor can be reduced to a single demographic, and that the intersectional nature of identity and experience means that variation exists within each demographic group. We present each of these demographics to broadly understand patterns in who visits.

\*The race/ethnicity data represented here span the second half of 2024 only (July-December), as a new response option—"Middle Eastern or North African"—was added to the survey at that time.

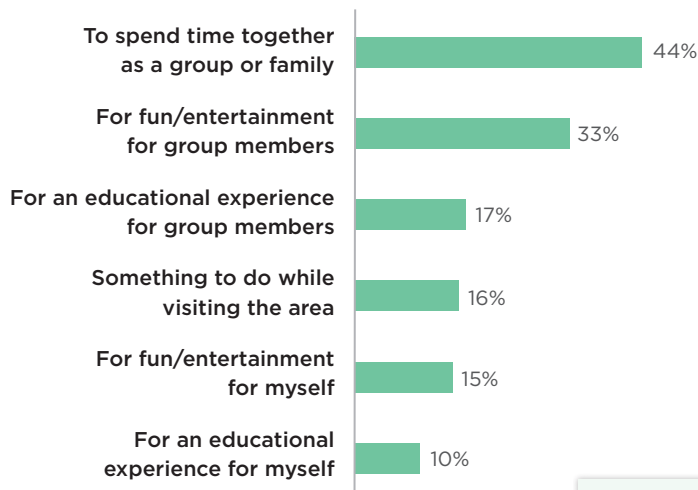
# VISITATION CHARACTERISTICS

## MOTIVATIONS

Visitors may have several reasons for deciding to come to a museum. In the COVES survey, they select the two most important reasons for visiting that day. Options differ between Science+ and Art museums, based on insights from research and professional experience.<sup>1</sup> Art museum motivations are typically grouped to reflect prior research into visitor behaviors.

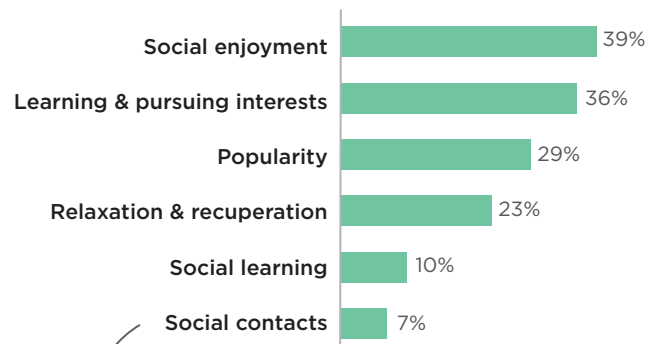
### SCIENCE+ MOTIVATIONS (TOP 6)

n=9,758



### ART MOTIVATIONS

n=13,071



#### Social Enjoyment

- To spend time together as a group/family
- For fun/entertainment as a group

#### Learning & Pursuing Interests

- To learn something new
- To deepen my areas of interest

#### Popularity

- Something to do while visiting the area
- It was recommended to me by others

#### Relaxations & Recuperation

- To relax
- To find peace

#### Social Learning

- To support my family/friends with their learning
- To discover new things as a group

#### Social Contacts

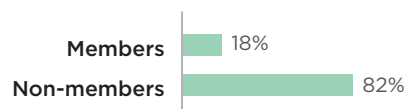
- To interact with others
- To feel connected to my community

1. Phelan, S., Bauer, J., & Lewalter, D. (2017). Visit motivations: Development of a short scale for comparison across sites. *Museum Management and Curatorship*. doi: 10.1080/09647775.2017.1389617.

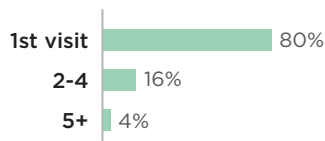
## VISITATION PATTERNS

**MEMBERSHIP**

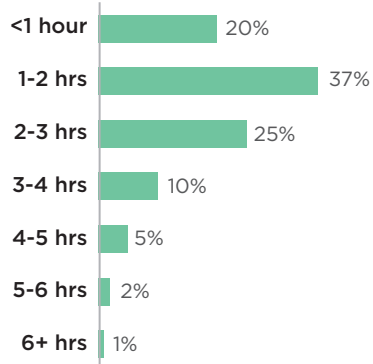
n=22,462

**NUMBER OF VISITS IN THE LAST YEAR**

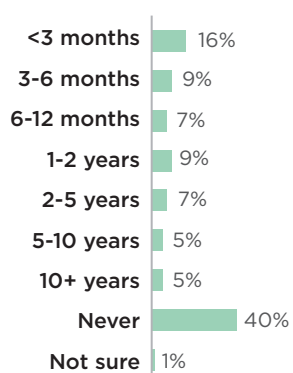
n=18,521

**STAY TIME**

n=20,058

**DATE OF LAST VISIT**

n=21,830



# HOW THEY RATE THEIR VISIT

Two commonly-used metrics in museums are **Overall Experience Rating** and **Net Promoter Score**.

The Overall Experience Rating (OER) is a direct *experience rating*, while the Net Promoter Score (NPS) asks *how likely the respondent is to recommend* the museum. The COVES survey also asks respondents to rate their agreement with eight statements about specific aspects of the visit.

## OVERALL EXPERIENCE RATINGS

The Overall Experience Rating (OER) is a direct *experience rating*.

Each dot represents one institution's percentage of "outstanding" ratings.

### OVERALL EXPERIENCE RATING

n=23,010

Less than  
Excellent  
**10.8%**

Excellent  
**42.1%**

Outstanding  
**47.1%**

The aggregate rating of the percentage "outstanding" for all sites.

### SPECIFIC EXPERIENCE RATINGS

Average rating, scale from 0 to 10 where 10 is highest

Staff member helpfulness	9.49	n=21,064
Restroom cleanliness	9.45	n=9,198
Educational experience	9.06	n=22,308
Giftshop experience	9.06	n=14,414
Value for cost	9.06	n=21,399
Entertainment experience	8.99	n=9,482
Exhibits in working order	8.93	n=8,313
Café/restaurant experience	8.87	n=6,355

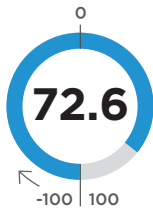
47.1

## NET PROMOTER SCORE

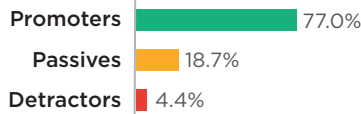
The Net Promoter Score (NPS) asks how likely the respondent is to recommend the museum to a friend or colleague.

### NET PROMOTER SCORE

n=23,007



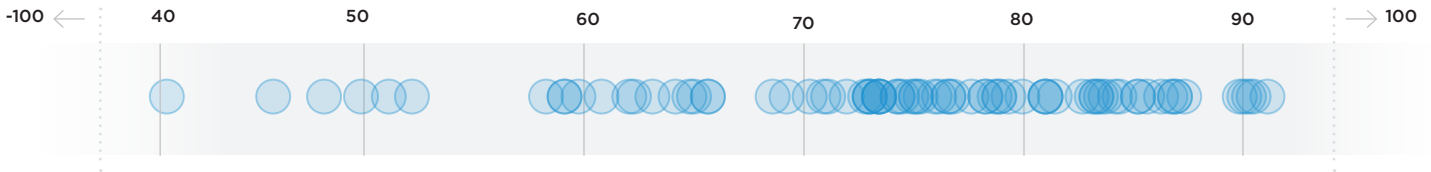
### NPS BREAKDOWN



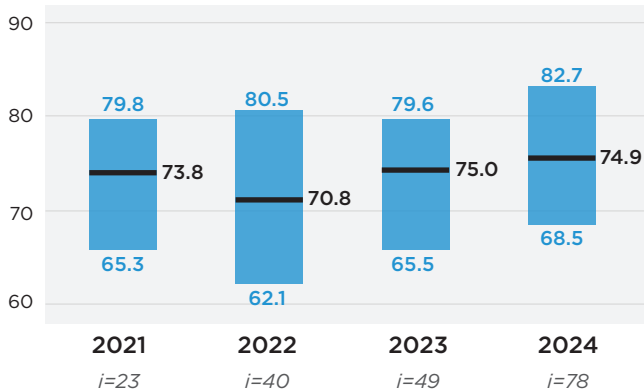
$77.0\% - 4.4\% = 72.6\%$

### NPS RANGE ACROSS INSTITUTIONS

n=23,021



### NPS INTERQUARTILE RANGE | 2021-2024



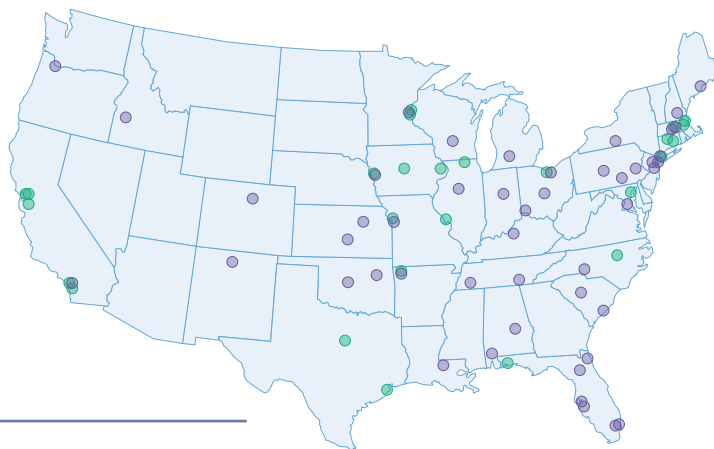
The Interquartile Range (IQR) represents the middle 50% of all Net Promoter Scores when they are arranged from highest to lowest. The bold line in the middle is the median (middle score), and the *i* beneath each year's axis label shows the number of institutions represented. Tracking the IQR allows us to focus on longitudinal trends that are not influenced by outliers at the low and high ends of the NPS range.

# PARTICIPATING INSTITUTIONS

included in this report

● Science+ Museums

● Art Museums



- Mobile Museum of Art | AL
- Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts | AL
- Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art  
The Momentary | AR
- Scott Family Amazeum | AR
- California Science Center | CA
- Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose | CA
- Exploratorium | CA
- Lawrence Hall of Science | CA
- Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County  
La Brea Tar Pits | CA
- The Huntington Library, Art Museum,  
and Botanical Gardens | CA
- The Tech Interactive | CA
- MCA Denver | CO
- Connecticut Science Center | CT
- Mystic Seaport Museum | CT
- The Bruce Museum | CT
- National Museum of Asian Art | DC
- Cummer Museum of Art & Gardens | FL
- Frost Art Museum | FL
- Harn Museum of Art | FL
- Museum of Fine Arts (St. Petersburg) | FL
- Pensacola MESS Hall | FL
- Sarasota Art Museum | FL
- The Bass | FL
- Des Moines Art Center | IA
- Putnam Museum and Science Center | IA
- Science Center of Iowa | IA
- Boise Art Museum | ID
- Discovery Center Museum | IL
- Peoria Riverfront Museum | IL
- Eiteljorg Museum | IN
- Marianna Kistler Beach Museum of Art | KS
- Wichita Art Museum | KS
- Speed Art Museum | KY
- LSU Museum of Art | LA
- Discovery Museum | MA
- Museum of Science | MA
- Springfield Museums | MA
- The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art | MA
- Maryland Science Center | MD
- Farnsworth Art Museum | ME
- Kalamazoo Institute of Arts | MI
- Bell Museum | MN
- Minneapolis Institute of Art | MN
- Science Museum of Minnesota | MN
- Walker Art Center | MN
- National WWI Museum and Memorial | MO
- Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art | MO
- Saint Louis Science Center | MO
- The Mint Museum | NC
- Kiewit Luminarium | NE
- Currier Museum of Art | NH
- Zimmerli Art Museum | NJ
- Harwood Museum of Art | NM
- Corning Museum of Glass | NY
- Hudson River Museum | NY
- MoMA PS1 | NY
- New York Hall of Science | NY
- Akron Art Museum | OH
- Cincinnati Art Museum | OH
- Columbus Museum of Art | OH
- Great Lakes Science Center | OH
- Imagination Station | OH
- Taft Museum of Art | OH
- Oklahoma City Museum of Art | OK
- Philbrook Museum of Art | OK
- Portland Art Museum | OR
- Allentown Art Museum | PA
- Palmer Museum of Art | PA
- Susquehanna Art Museum | PA
- Columbia Museum of Art | SC
- Gibbes Museum of Art | SC
- Dixon Gallery and Gardens | TN
- Hunter Museum of American Art | TN
- Mayborn Museum | TX
- Space Center Houston | TX
- Chazen Museum of Art | WI



Image credit:  
Minneapolis Institute of Art

## GET INVOLVED!

Join COVES to learn from your visitors and contribute to the robust aggregate data set that informs our field!

If you are interested in this report, we know that you are interested in understanding visitors. And if you are interested in learning about your visitors and think that COVES is right for you, we want you to be involved. Currently, we have museums that engage their visitors in a variety of topics or experiences, including art museums, children's museums, history museums, natural history museums, and science centers—and we hope to have even more types of cultural institutions involved. Don't see your institution type represented? Talk to us—we'd love to figure out what that means for participation!



Interested in joining or just want to learn more about our collaboration or survey?

PLEASE CONTACT US AT

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