

# Science Center Statistics

The Association of Science-Technology Centers (ASTC) is a global organization providing collective voice, professional support, and programming opportunities for science centers, museums, and related institutions, whose innovative approaches to science learning inspire people of all ages about the wonders and the meaning of science in their lives.

ASTC collects and publishes data about science centers and museums to help its members plan and manage their operations, and to provide basic information to those with an interest in the field. Currently, of ASTC's over 650 members, 487 are science centers and museums operating or under development in 47 countries. Every U.S. state has at least one member; California alone has 40. The following information is based primarily on data collected from 184 ASTC science center and museum members from late December 2016 through April 2017.





120  
million visits  
worldwide

## Serving Millions Around the World

In 2016, 181 science centers and museums reported total attendance of over 67 million visits in their most recent fiscal year (59.3 million on-site and 8.3 million through off-site events and programs, such as school outreach). In the United States, total attendance for 149 centers was over 45 million.

Extrapolating from reported data to include all ASTC science center and museum members, ASTC estimates that there were 120 million visits worldwide last year. An estimated 70 million visits were made to ASTC's 386 science center and museum members in the United States.

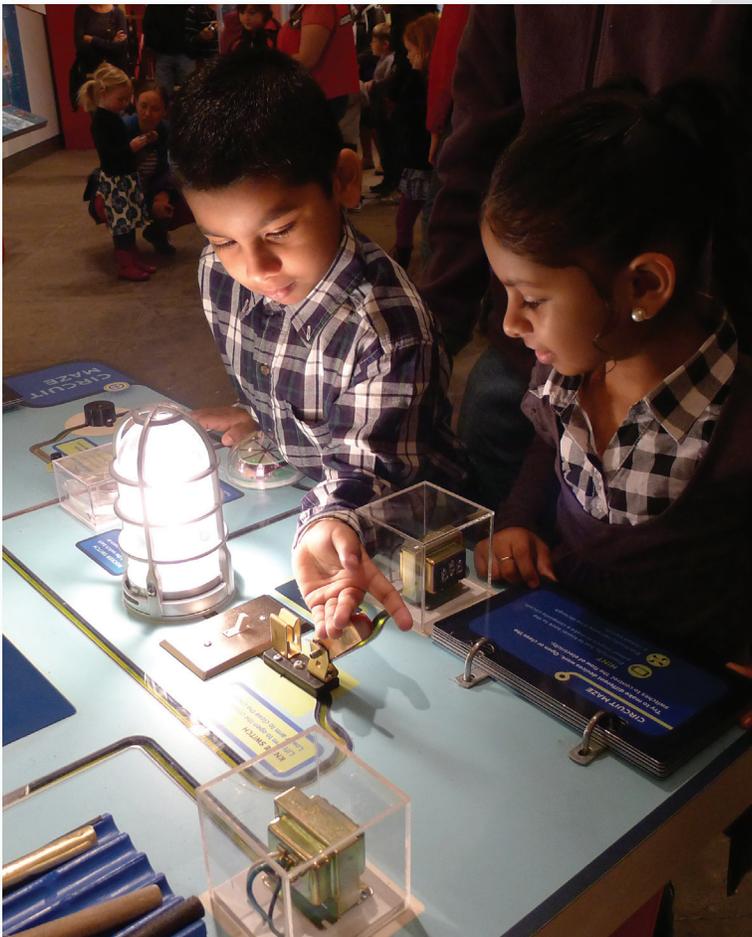
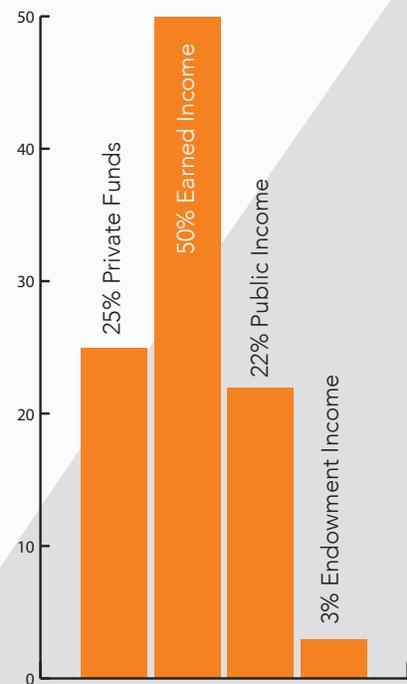
Median on-site attendance at individual centers was 174,232, with 67% of respondents reporting an increase over the previous year. Paid on-site attendance increased for 67% of the 158 respondents providing that data. In past surveys, we have found individual institutions' attendance fluctuates with the seasons; extremes of weather; disruptions caused by construction; special events; and changes in public policies, practices, and funding. Occasionally, an exhibition or giant-screen film also may contribute to a significant attendance change.

## Adding Value to the Local Economy

As cultural amenities, science centers add value to their local economies. While they count on public funding, on average, 50 cents of every operating dollar comes from ticket sales, program fees, facility rentals, and other “earned income” sources.

Most centers (93.5%) charge for general admission, with adult admission prices ranging from US \$2.08 to \$34.95. The median admission charge worldwide is US \$10.75 for adults, US \$8.85 for children.

Science centers also bring jobs to their communities; 20,594 paid employees were reported by 183 institutions (150 U.S. respondents reported a total of 14,760 paid employees). The median number of full-time equivalent employees at individual institutions was 44.5. On average, personnel costs constitute 56.6% of operating expenses.



## Integral to the Global Educational Infrastructure

School groups make up a significant percentage of science center and museum attendance. At the 175 institutions that reported both total on-site and school on-site attendance, school groups accounted for a median 15.2% of total on-site attendance.

Extrapolating from reported data to include all ASTC science center and museum members, the estimated school group attendance was 18.2 million worldwide in 2016 (12 million in the United States).

But field trips are just the beginning. Most science centers offer demonstrations and workshops, school outreach programs, professional development for teachers, curriculum materials, and programs for home schoolers.

## About the 2016 ASTC Statistics Survey

This document is based primarily on data collected in a survey carried out from late December 2016 through April 2017. The survey was distributed by mail and email to the 484 science centers and museums that were then members of ASTC. By the time data entry closed, we had received 184 responses, a response rate of 38%.

Science centers vary widely in scale, from very large institutions with over 300,000 square feet of exhibits, to very small centers, with as little as 1,600 square feet of interior exhibits. Among the institutions reporting this data for 2016, the median size was 28,141 square feet of interior exhibit space. In addition to the hands-on, experiential exhibits and programs that are the hallmark of science centers, 45% of respondents also have large-format theaters.

The breakdown of respondents by location generally reflected that of the ASTC membership as a whole. Eighty-one percent of respondents were U.S.-based, compared with 79% of members. Science/technology centers and museums made up 55% of respondents, compared with 54% of ASTC members. Institutions with budgets under \$1 million, however, are underrepresented among respondents to the survey, making up only 21% of respondents, compared with 42% of ASTC members. Institutions with budgets over \$3 million are overrepresented—52% of respondents, compared with 38% of ASTC members.

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