

# Science Center Statistics—2017

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. As of January 2017, of ASTC's 675 members, 487 were science centers and museums operating or under development in 49 countries. Every U.S. state had at least one member; California alone had 40. The following information is based primarily on data collected from 151 ASTC science center and museum members from January through April 2018.





## Serving Millions Around the World

In 2017, 151 science centers and museums reported total attendance of over 62 million visits in their most recent fiscal year (52.4 million on-site and 10.1 million through off-site events and programs, such as school outreach). In the United States, total attendance for 123 science centers was over 45 million.

Extrapolating from reported data to include all ASTC science center and museum members, ASTC estimates that there were 110 million visits worldwide last year. An estimated 80 million visits were made to ASTC's 393 science center and museum members in the United States.

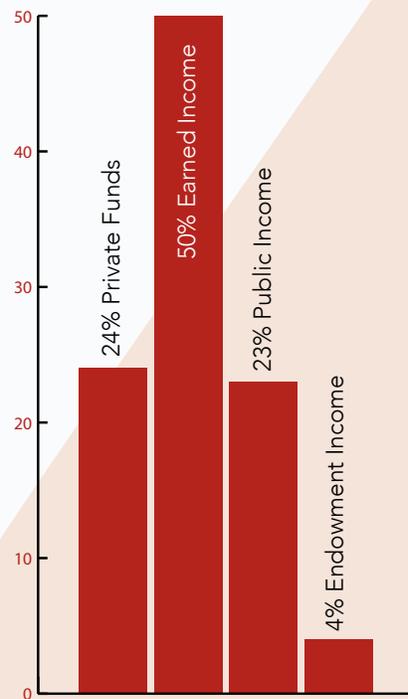
Median on-site attendance at individual centers was 204,040 with 47% of respondents reporting an increase over the previous year. Paid on-site attendance increased for the 44% of the 142 respondents providing those data. In past surveys, we have found individual institutions' attendance fluctuates with 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 (91%) charge for general admission, with adult admission prices ranging from USD \$1 to \$31. The median admission charge worldwide is USD \$12 for adults, USD \$9.50 for children.

Science centers also bring jobs to their communities; 19,294 paid employees were reported by 149 institutions (122 U.S. respondents reported a total of 14,289 paid employees.) The median number of full-time equivalent employees at individual institutions was 55. Median personnel costs constitute 58% of operating expenses.



## Integral to the Global Educational Infrastructure

School groups make up a significant percentage of science center and museum attendance. At the 148 institutions that reported both total on-site and school on-site attendance, school groups accounted for a median 15% of total on-site attendance.

Extrapolating from reported data to include all ASTC science center and museum members, the estimated school group attendance was nearly 18 million worldwide in 2017 (13 million in the United States).

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

## About the 2017 ASTC Statistics Survey

This document is based primarily on data collected in a survey carried out from early January through April 2018. The survey was distributed by email to the 487 science centers and museums that were then members of ASTC. By the time the data entry closed, we had received 151 responses, a response rate of 31%.

Science centers vary widely in scale, from very large institutions with over 360,000 square feet (33,445 square meters) of exhibits, to very small centers with as few as 1,700 square feet (158 square meters) of interior exhibits. Among the institutions reporting these data for 2017, the median size was 35,360 square feet (3,285 square meters) of interior exhibit space. In addition to the hands-on, experiential exhibits and programs that are the hallmark of science centers, 48% of respondents also have large-format theaters.

The breakdown of respondents by location generally reflected that of the ASTC membership as a whole. Eighty-two percent of respondents were U.S.-based, compared with 81% of ASTC members. Science/technology centers and museums made up 58% of respondents, compared with 53% of ASTC members. Institutions with budgets under USD \$1 million, however, are underrepresented among respondents to the survey, making up only 17% of respondents, compared with 42% of ASTC members. Institutions with budgets over USD \$3 million are overrepresented—59% of respondents, compared with 14% of ASTC members.

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Photos: Experiencing the solar eclipse of August 21, 2017, in special programs at The Discovery Science Place in Tyler, Texas; using design thinking to engineer a roller coaster at The Tech Museum of Innovation in San Jose, California