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# The Retail Connection

How Museum Shops  
Elevate a Museum's Mission

MSA Forward  
Denver, 2023



# Colleen Dilenschneider

Co-Founder  
IMPACTS Experience

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# Caltech

the David &  
Lucile Packard  
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## Sample sizes

**n=143,117**

US composite, exhibit-based organizations

**n=22,469**

Recent visitors to exhibit-based organizations  
(within the past three years)

**n=4,717**

Members of an exhibit-based organization

**n=6,001**

Recent visitors to museum store  
(within the past three years)

A blurred, grayscale image of a crowd of people walking through a museum hallway. The background is a wall with a grid pattern. The people are out of focus, creating a sense of movement and a busy environment.

**Your museum's mission matters.**

And retail experiences play an important role in this.



Let's go back to **2019** for a moment.

"Old Town Road" is playing on your Spotify.

Americans are spending **6.6 hours** a day online.

**65.3%** of Americans trust museums.

**68.9%** of Americans think that museums are "for people like me."



Enter **COVID-19**.

Museums close across  
the country.



Enter **COVID-19**.

Museums close across the country. And they begin to focus on **building relevance** beyond their own walls.



And now let's step into **today**.

"Anti-Hero" is  
playing on your  
Spotify.

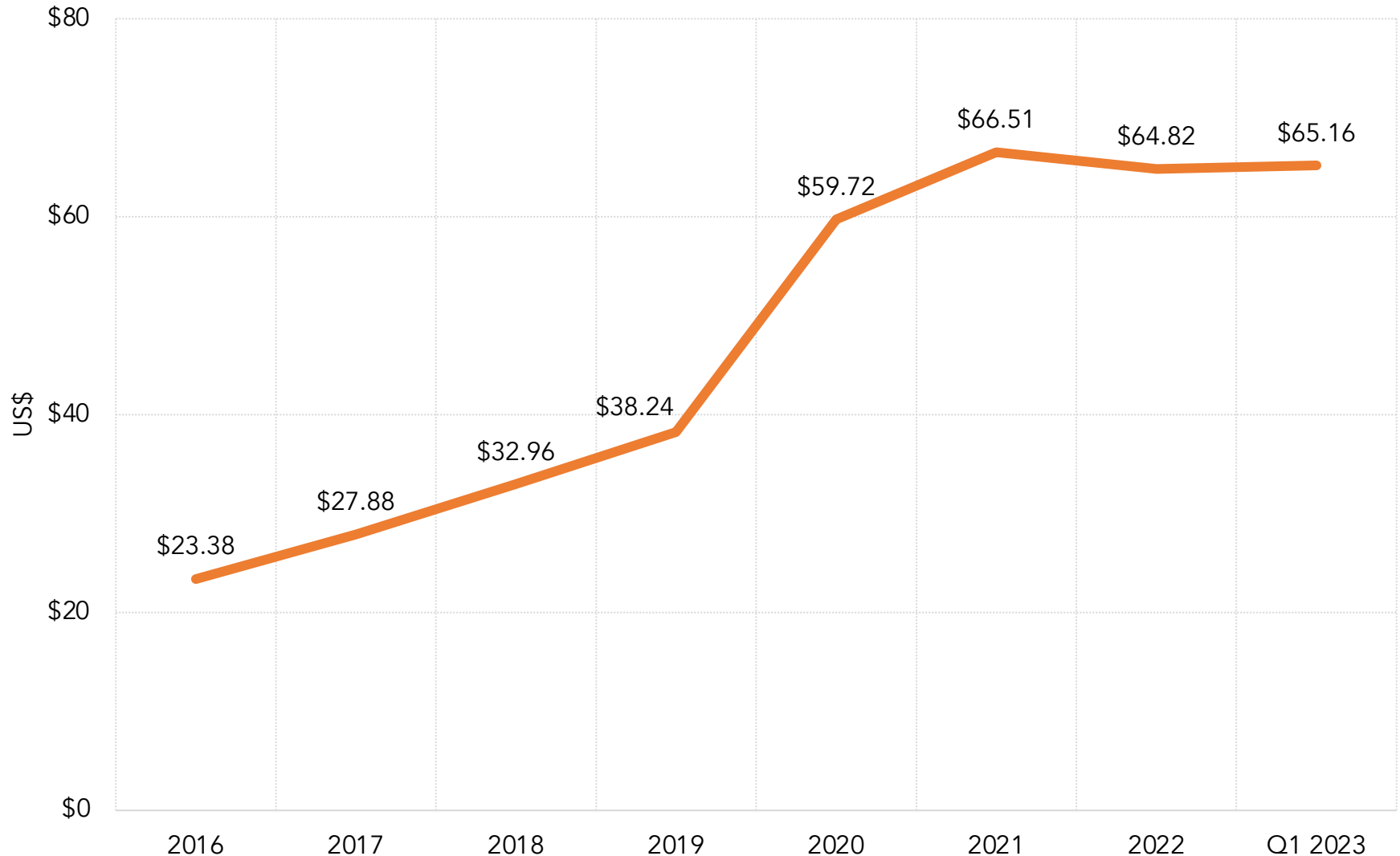
Americans are  
spending ~~6.6~~ **7.2**  
hours a day  
online.


~~65.3%~~ **72.2%** of  
Americans trust  
museums.

~~68.9%~~ **74.4%** of  
Americans think  
that museums  
are "for people  
like me."

# Per transaction online spending

All devices (desktop, laptop, tablet, smartphone, etc.)  
16 US visitor-serving cultural organizations





As of April 1, 76% of Americans believe that museums should suggest or recommend behaviors or ways **to support its mission and causes.**

This is up from 68.3% in 2019.



But how do **museum retail stores** contribute to the trend toward the perception of a museum's mission post-pandemic?

# Your museum store...



**Reinforces  
singularity**



**Strengthens  
membership**



**Secures the  
future of your  
museum**



**Makes  
treasured  
memories**

# Your museum store...



**Reinforces  
singularity**

What do you think is the **best thing** about the museum retail experience?

- A) Design elements of physical space
- B) Unique merchandise
- C) Friendly/helpful staff
- D) Finding gifts

# "What are the best things about the [museum retail experience]?"

Lexical analysis by descending frequency of mention  
80 cultural organizations with retail stores, Q1 2023

RANK	DESCRIPTION	INDEX
1	Unique merchandise (only available at location)	213.5
2	Supporting the organization	124.7
3	Finding gifts for friends/family (adult)	112.0
4	Finding gifts for child	104.1
5	Friendly/helpful staff	103.9

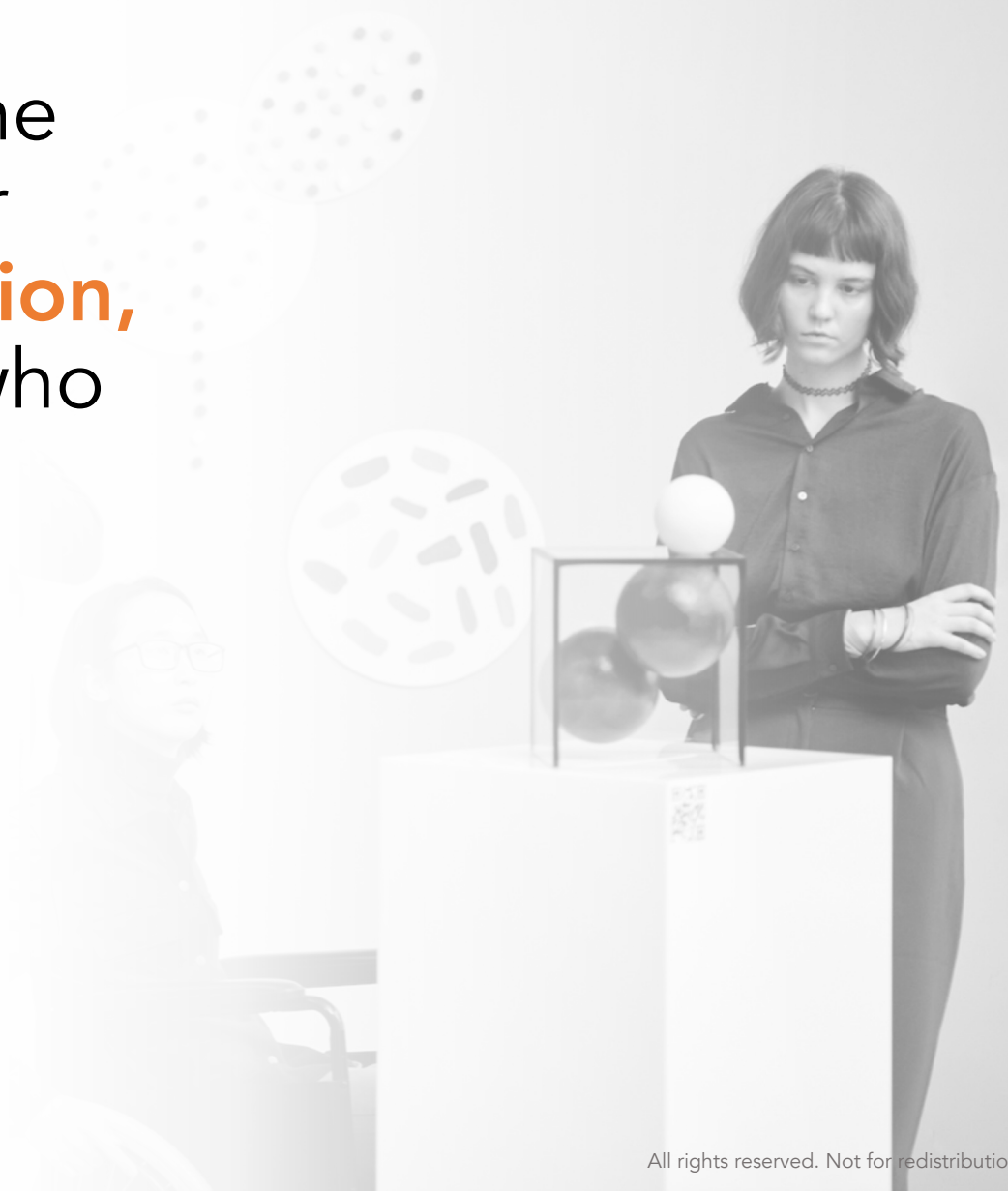
Museum retail experiences can help us reinforce **who we are,** who we **want to be,** and what **we stand for.**







Your museum  
store reinforces the  
singularity of your  
**museum**, its **mission**,  
and the **people** who  
support it.





Supporting the organization?  
Let's talk about **members.**

# Your museum store...



**Reinforces  
singularity**



**Strengthens  
membership**

**Members** are increasingly critical for museums' financial health.



Have higher satisfaction



Often have greater giving propensity



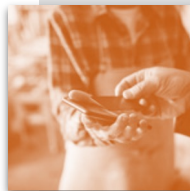
Tend to be more mission-driven



Have prepaid for their experiences



Are self-identified for easier targeting



Have a higher lifetime value

What do you think is the top reason why **lapsed members** have not renewed their memberships?

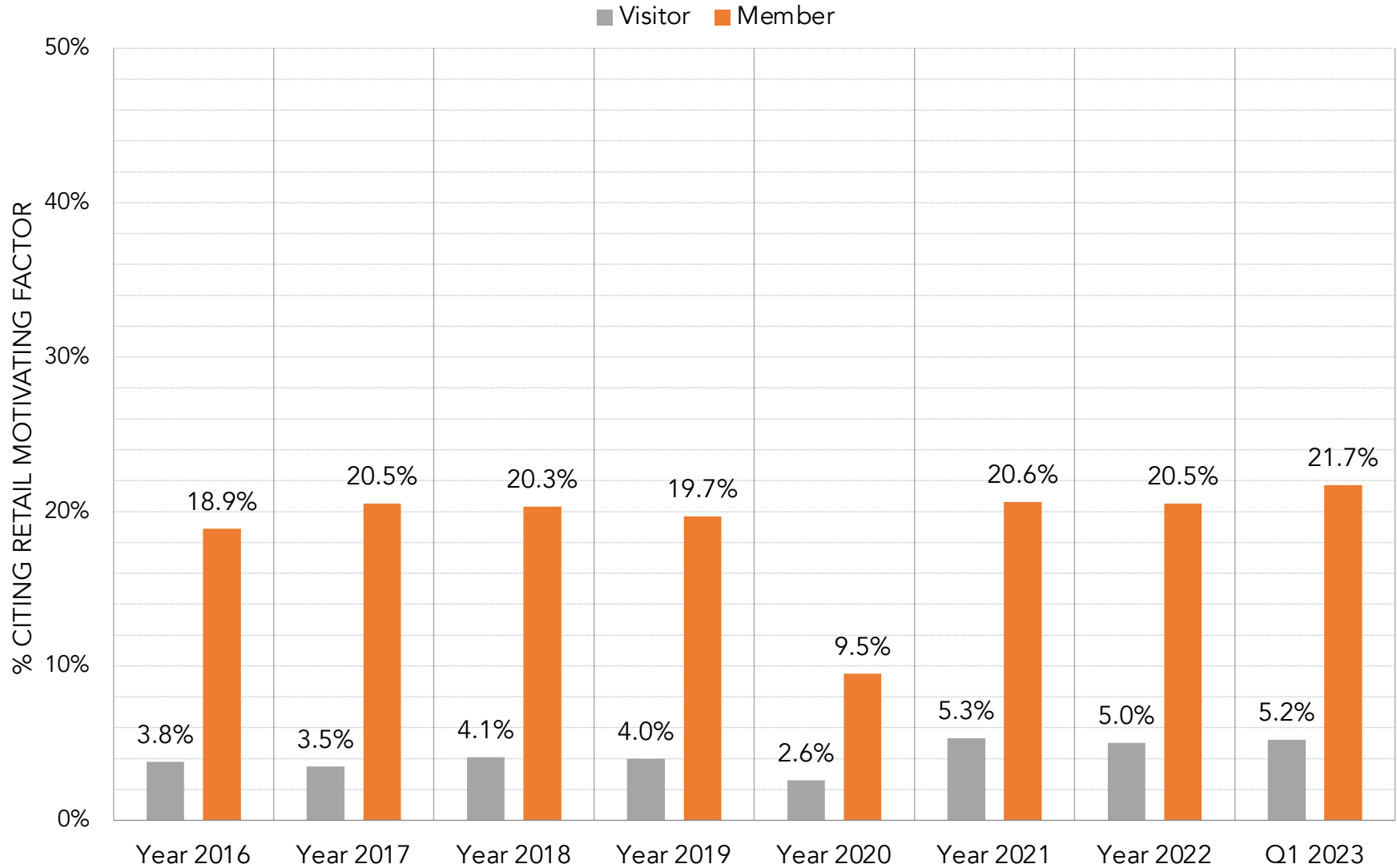
- A) Change in giving priorities or interests
- B) Dissatisfied with membership
- C) Intend to renew when they next visit
- D) Change in financial situation

What do you think is the top reason why **lapsed members** have not renewed their memberships?

- A) Change in giving priorities or interests
- B) Dissatisfied with membership
- C) Intend to renew when they next visit**
- D) Change in financial situation

# Museum retail motivates member visitation

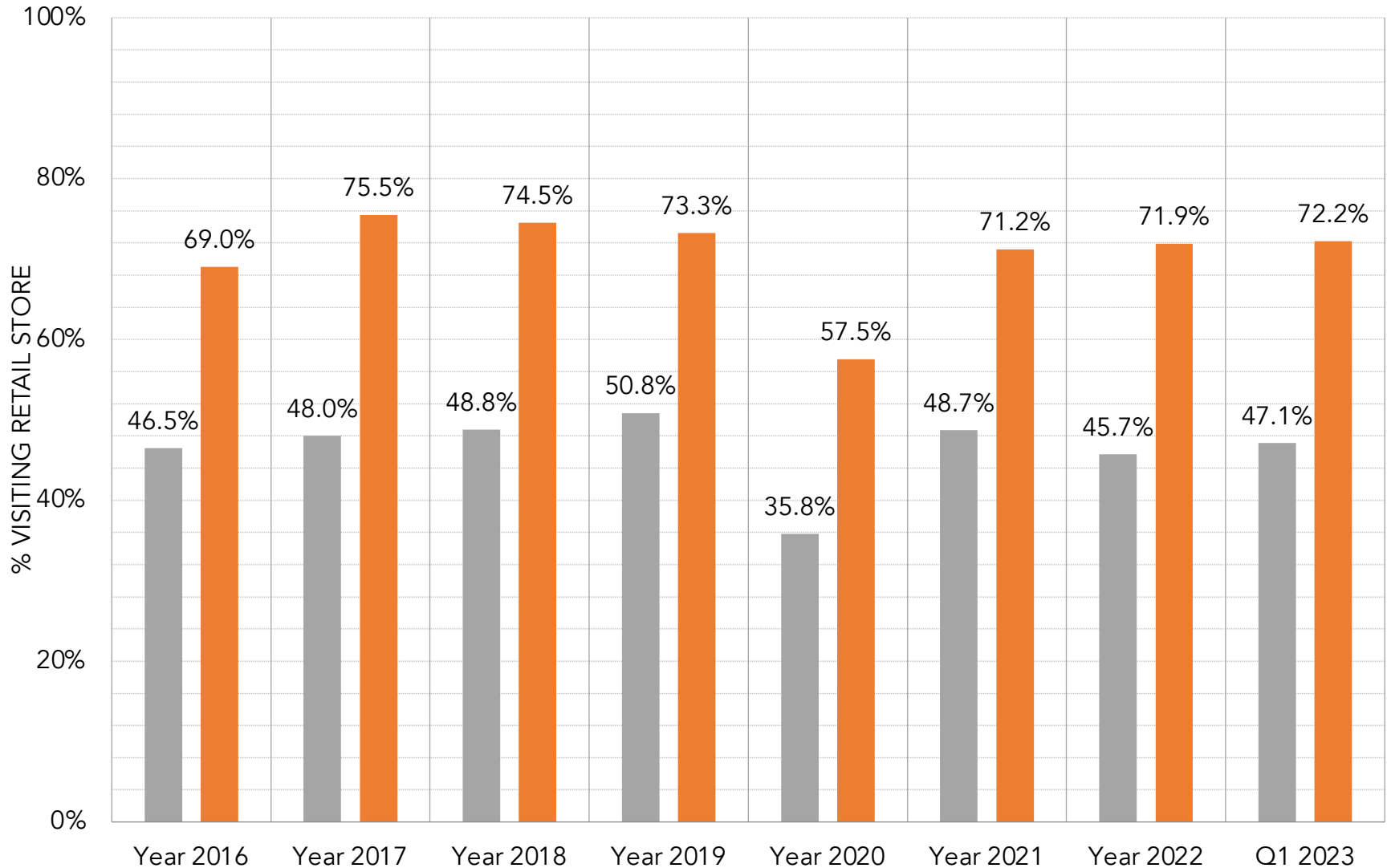
Respondents citing retail-related factors motivating most recent visit  
16 US visitor-serving cultural organizations



# Museum members visit the museum store

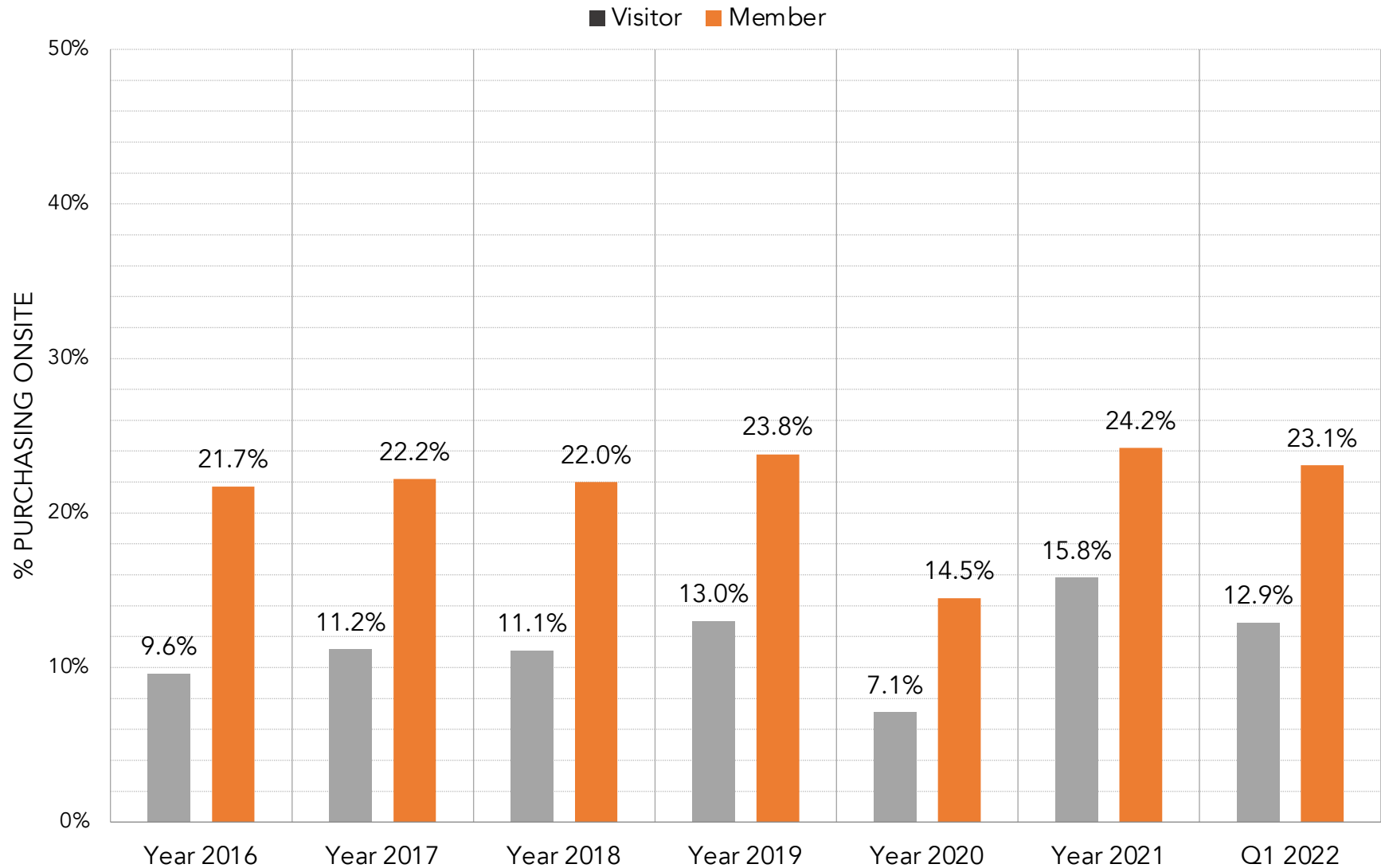
Most recent visit onsite usage, 16 US visitor-serving cultural organizations

■ Visitor ■ Member



# Museum members are more likely to make retail purchases

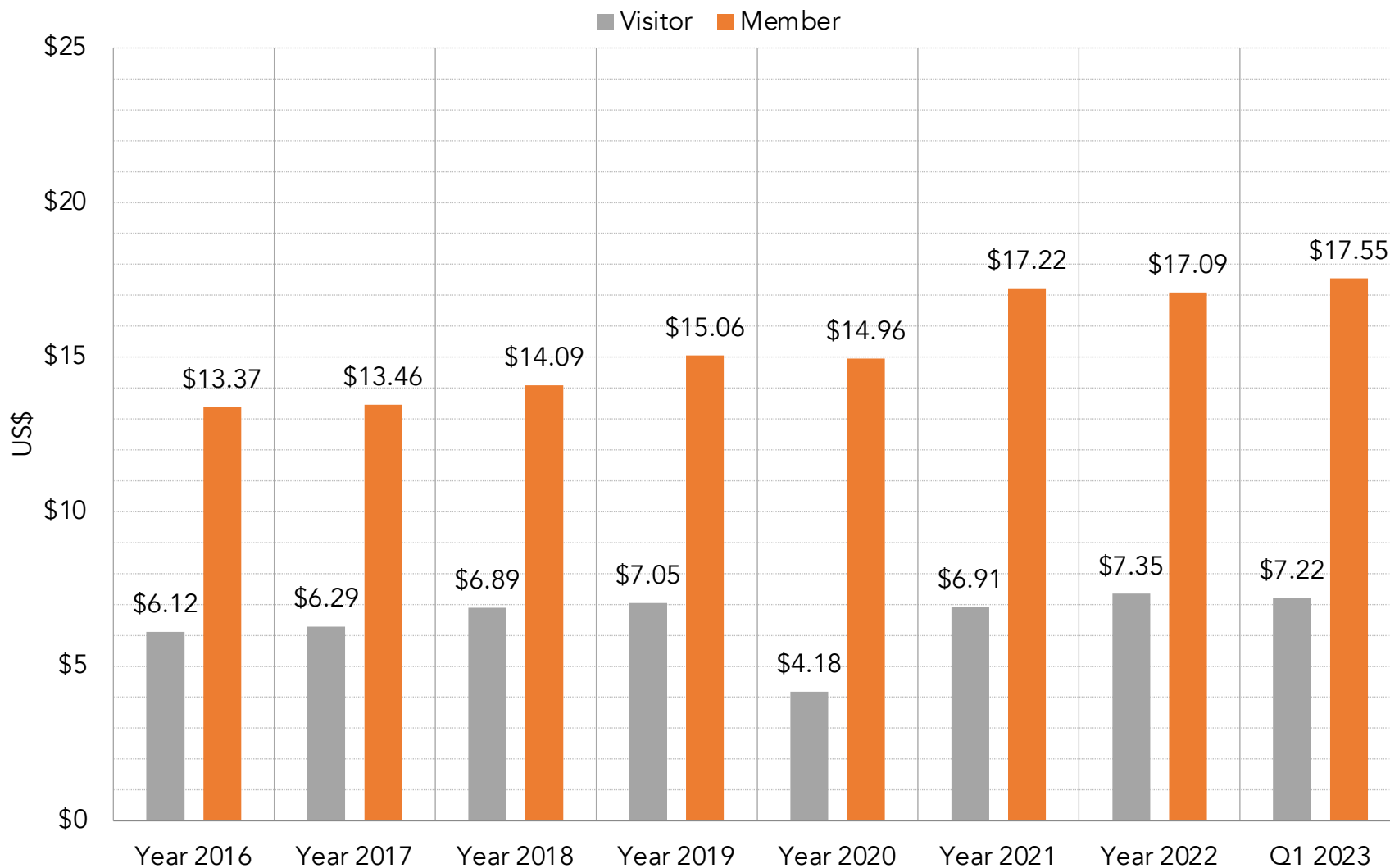
Most recent visit retail purchase, 16 US visitor-serving cultural organizations





# Members spend more per transaction at museum stores

Per transaction onsite spending, 16 US visitor-serving cultural organizations

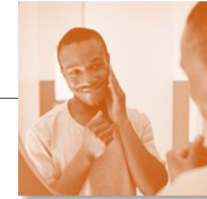


# Members are...

- More likely to visit the museum store
- More motivated to attend because of the museum store
- More likely to make a retail purchase
- Spending more money per transaction

Museum stores **attract, engage,**  
and **renew** members.

# Your museum store...



**Reinforces  
singularity**



**Strengthens  
memberships**



**Secures the  
future of your  
museum**

The **more satisfied** someone is with their museum visit, the more likely they are to...



Support



Endorse



Revisit

# Weighted contribution to overall satisfaction

EVALUATION CRITERIA	WEIGHT	%
Entertainment experience	0.2083870	20.84%
Favorability	0.1973655	19.74%
Admission value	0.1392858	13.93%
Employee courtesy	0.1058746	10.59%
Cleanliness	0.0839291	8.39%
Crowd control	0.0693879	6.94%
Parking	0.0685503	6.86%
Food service	0.0483722	4.84%
Education experience	0.0476664	4.77%
Retail	0.0311855	3.12%
<b>OVERALL SATISFACTION (COMPOSITE)</b>	<b>1.0000000</b>	<b>100.00%</b>



Wait. Retail only makes up **3%**  
of guest satisfaction?

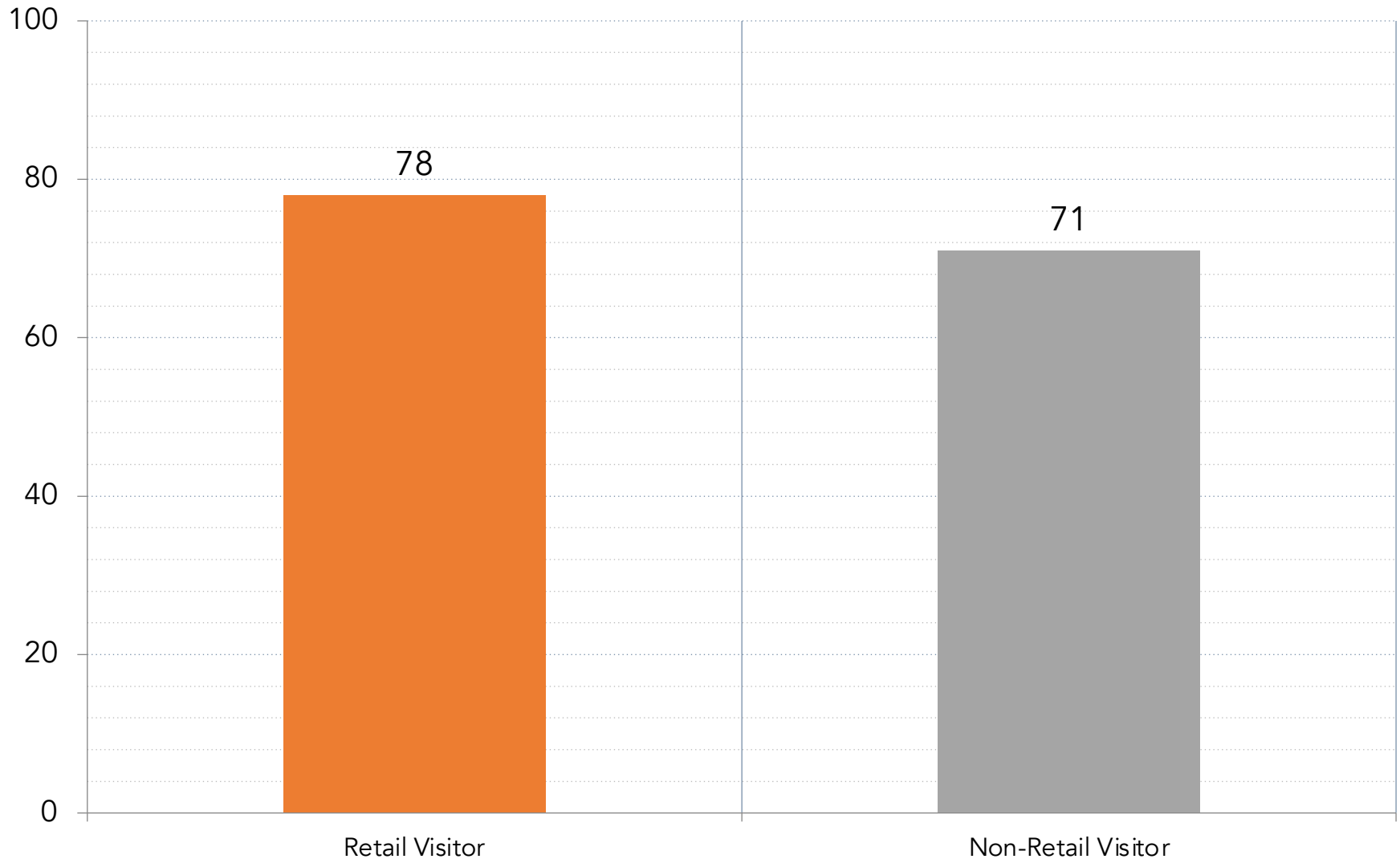
(Not so fast...!)

**26.7%** of all guests claim to visit the museum retail shop.

**81.9%** of those guests say the visit positively contributed to their overall satisfaction.

# Overall satisfaction

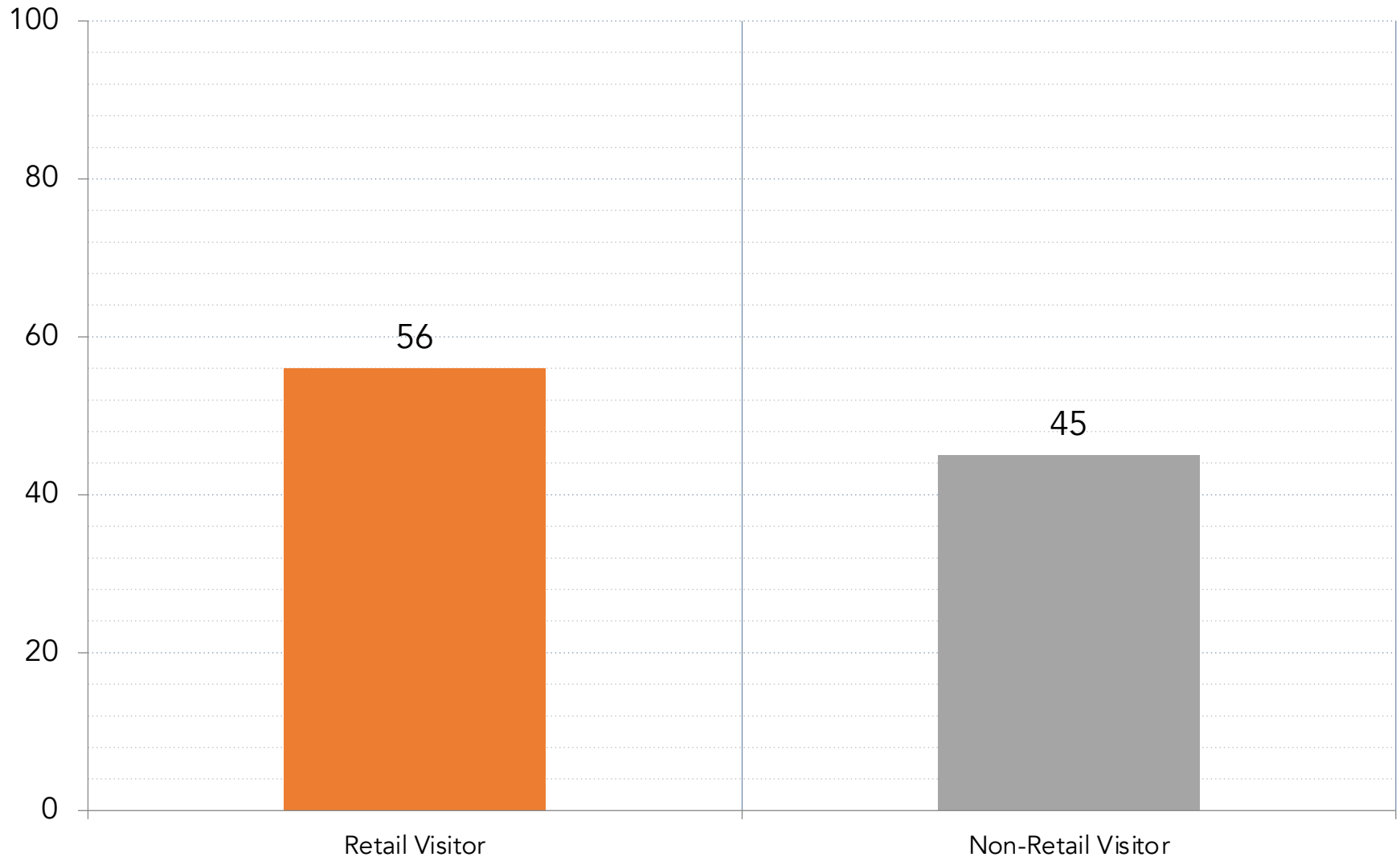
Q1 2023, retail visitor and non-visitor comparison





# Intent to revisit within one year

Q1 2023, retail visitor and non-visitor comparison





## The **peak-end** rule:

“Our memory of past experiences (pleasant or unpleasant) does not correspond to an average level of positive or negative feelings but to the most extreme point and the end of the episode.”

~ Daniel Kahneman



Retail stores can provide  
the **exclamation point** for  
the onsite experience.

You are agents of  
**good** to **great**.

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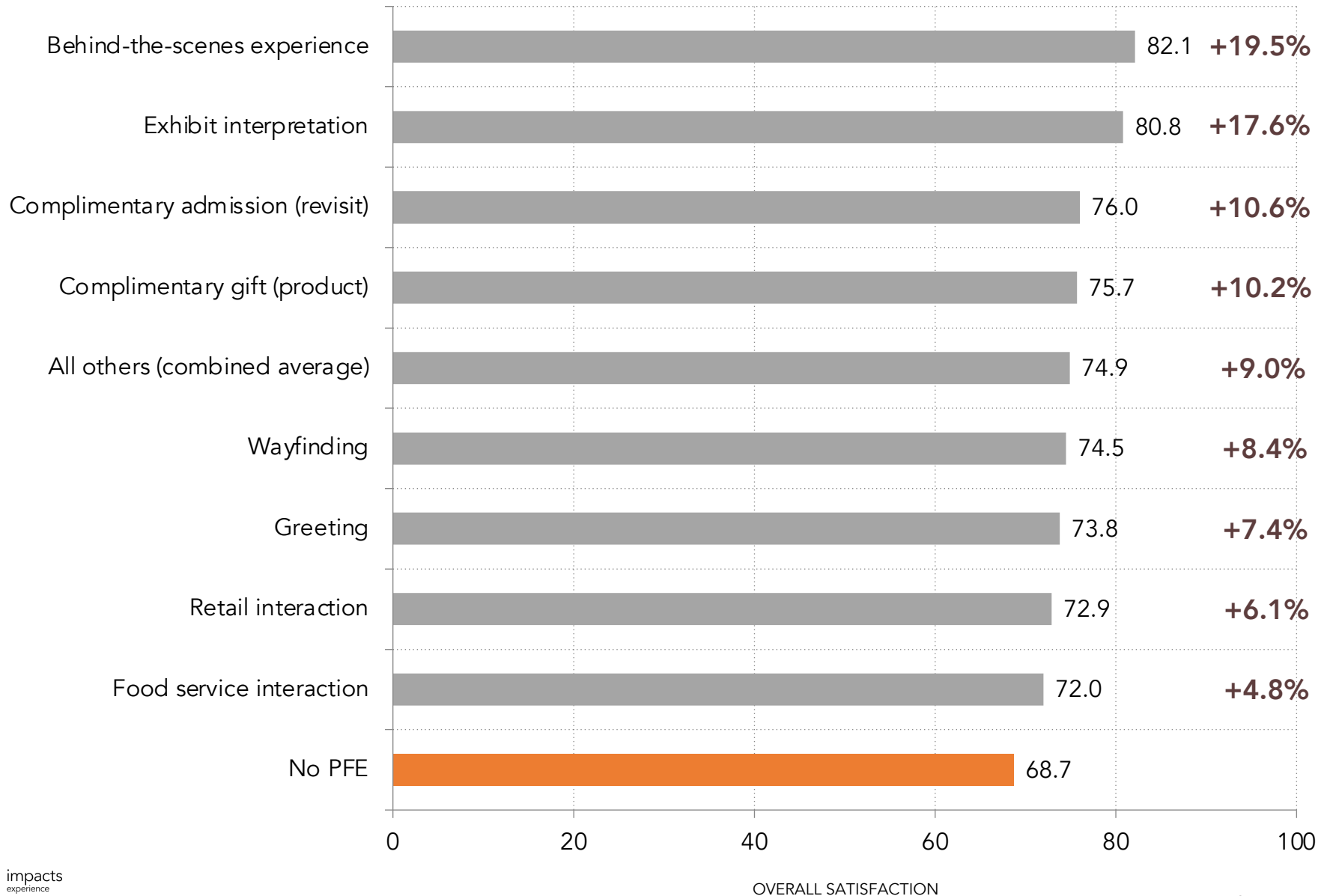


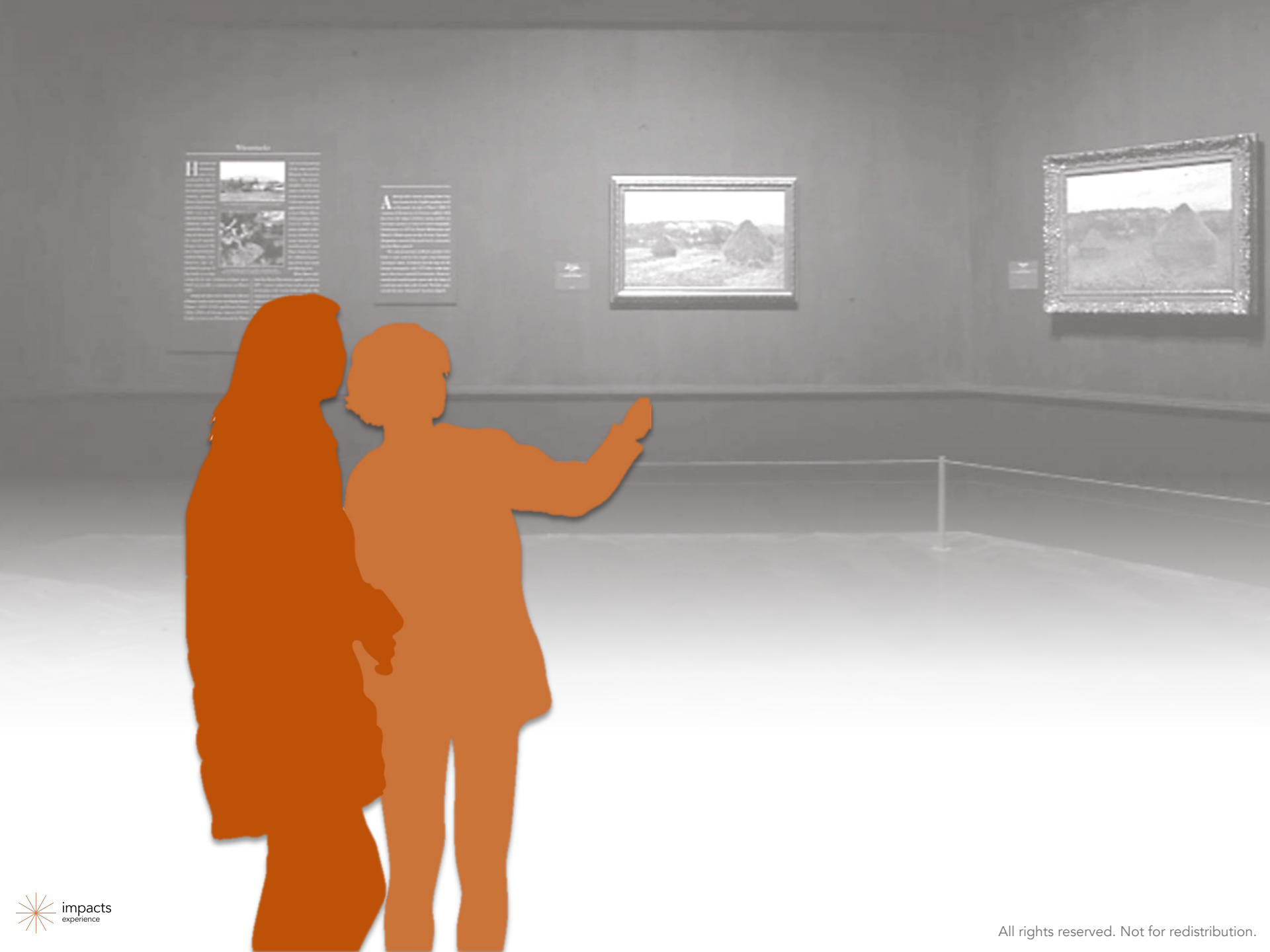
# Personal Facilitated Experiences

A PFE is a **one-to-one** or **one-to-few** interaction between a staff member or volunteer and an individual, couple, or small family.

# Overall satisfaction by primary PFE descriptor

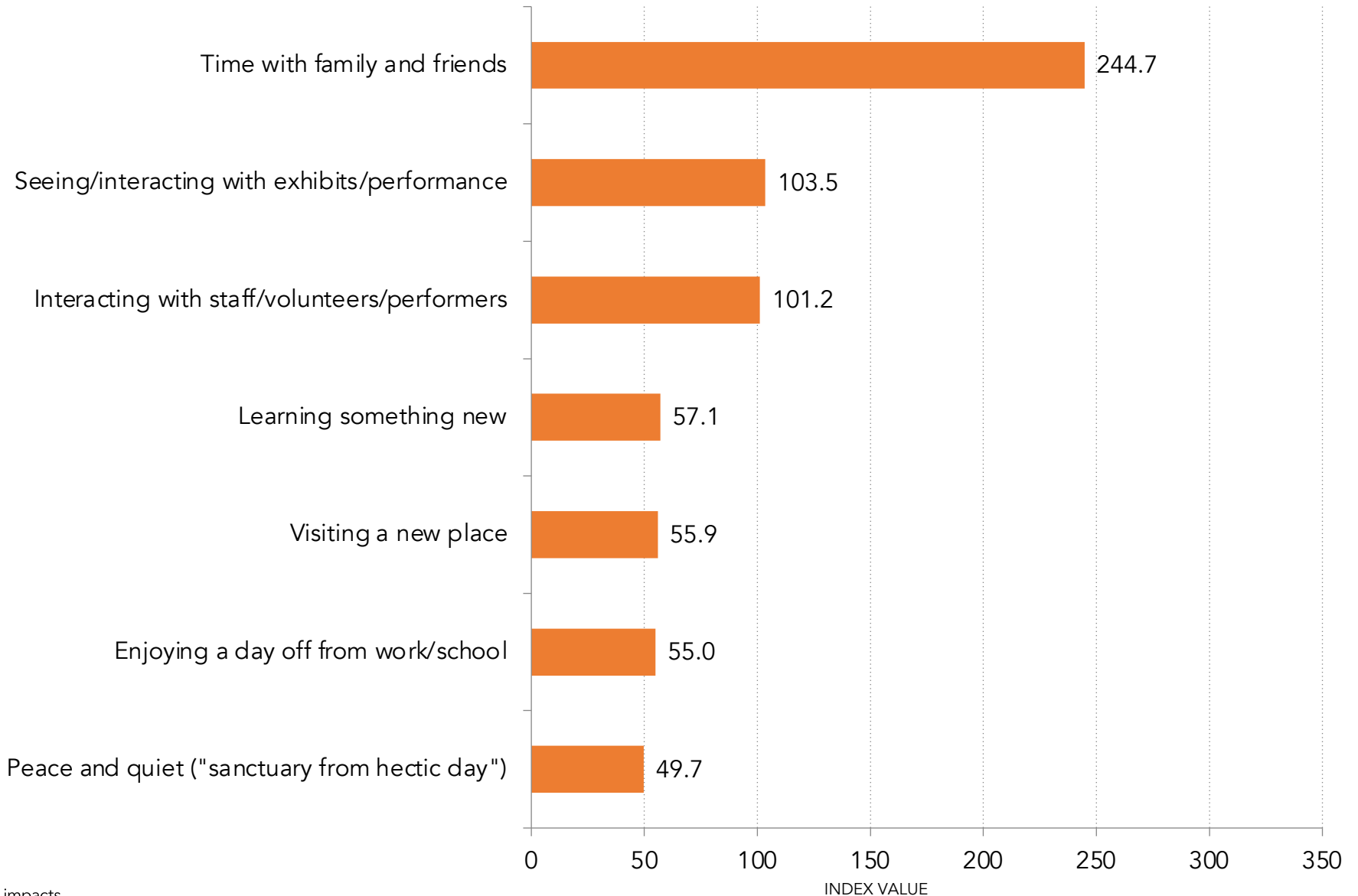
EOY 2022, US exhibit-based visitor-serving cultural organizations





# What is the best thing about a visit?

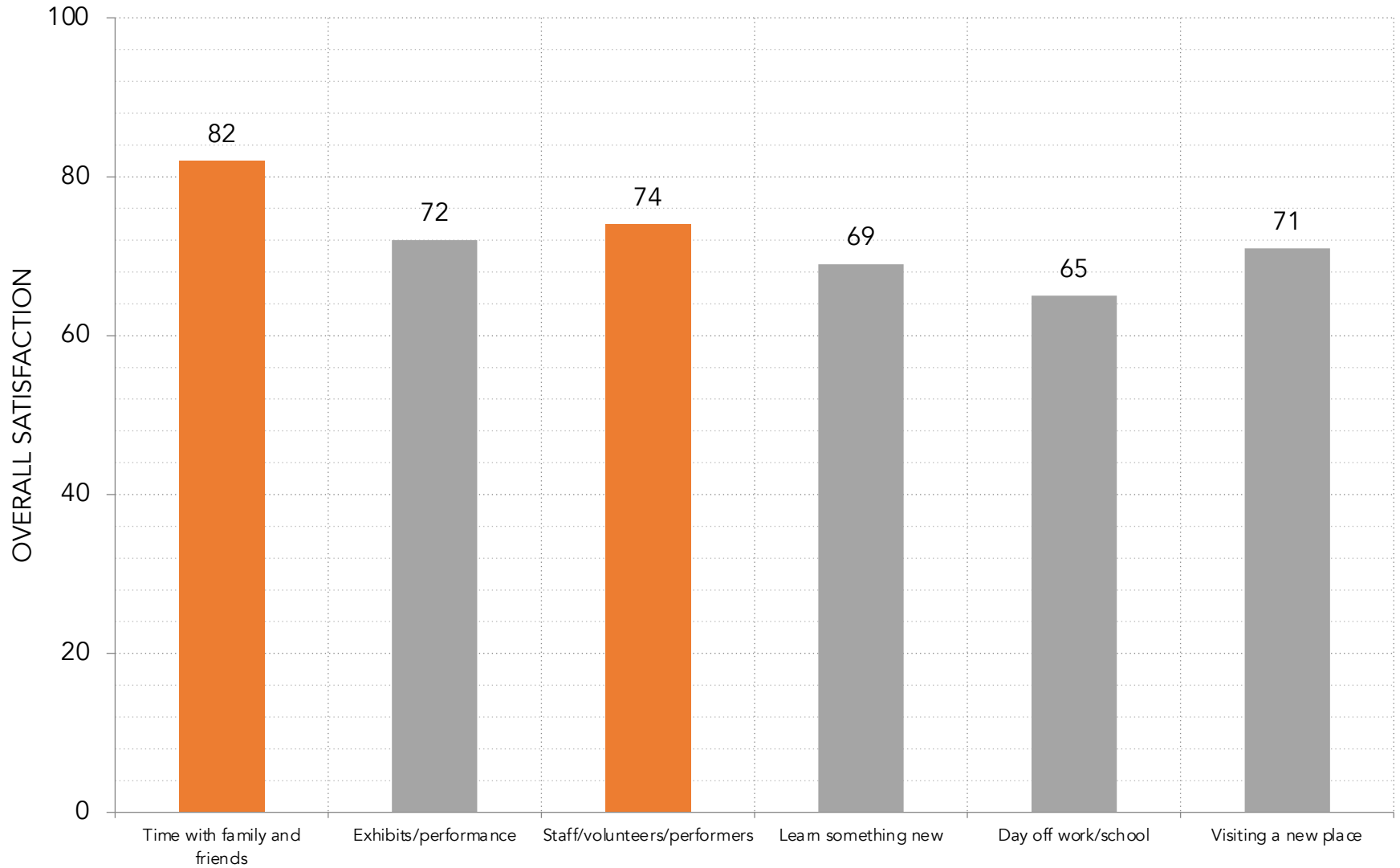
With>what, EOY 2022





# Overall satisfaction by best visit attribute

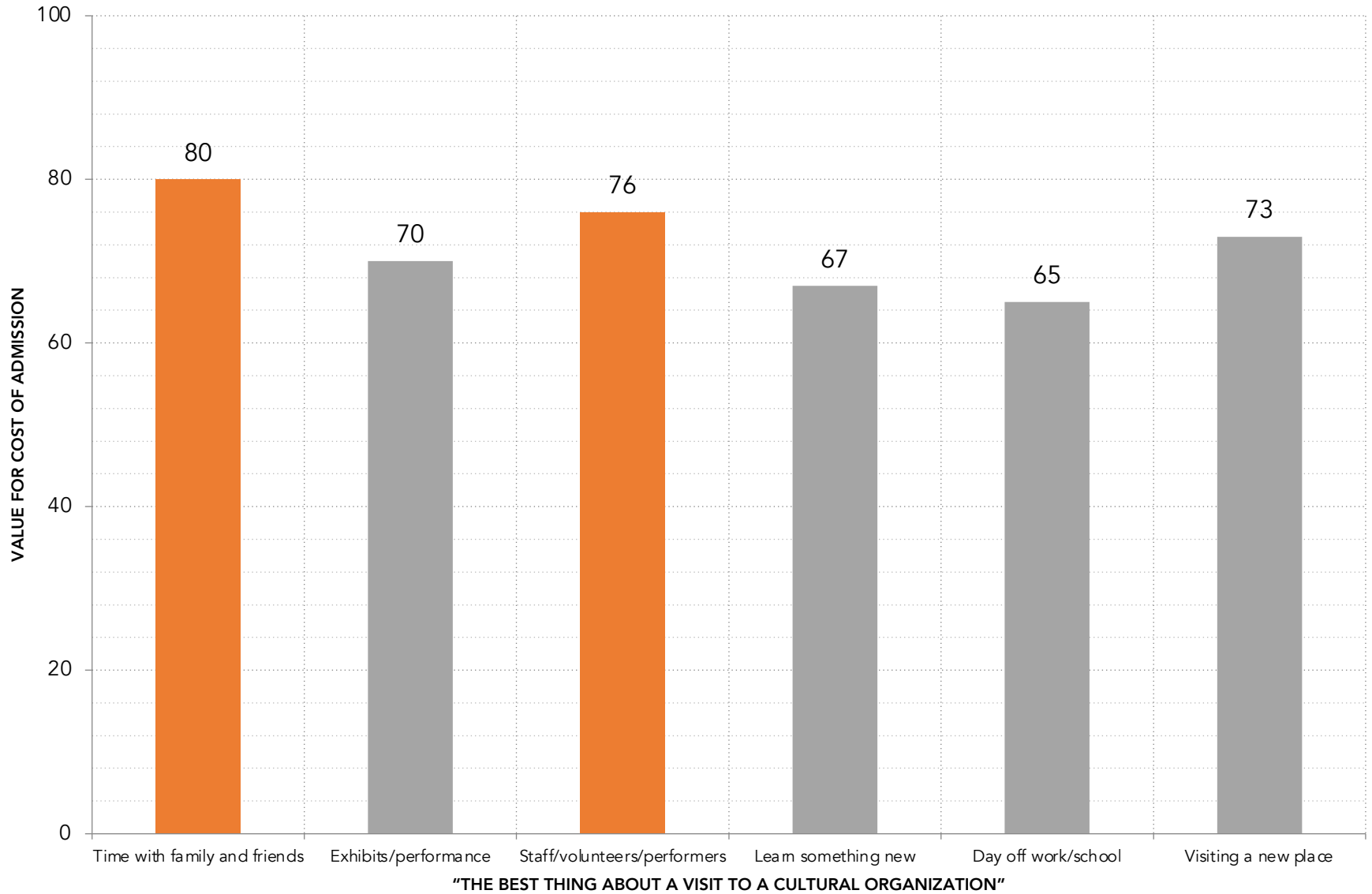
EOY 2022



“THE BEST THING ABOUT A VISIT TO A CULTURAL ORGANIZATION”

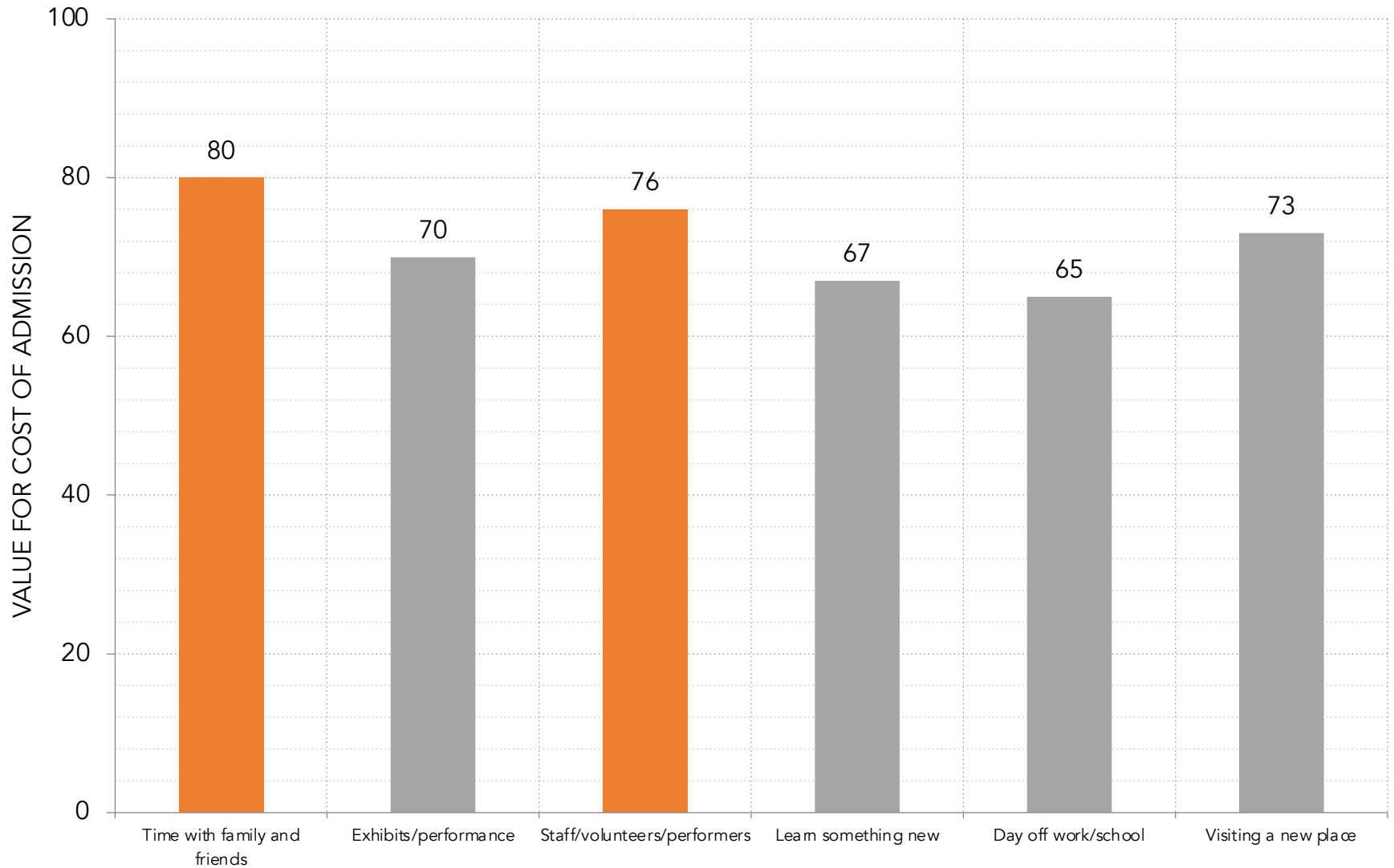
# Value for cost by best visit attribute

EOY 2022



# Value for cost by best visit attribute

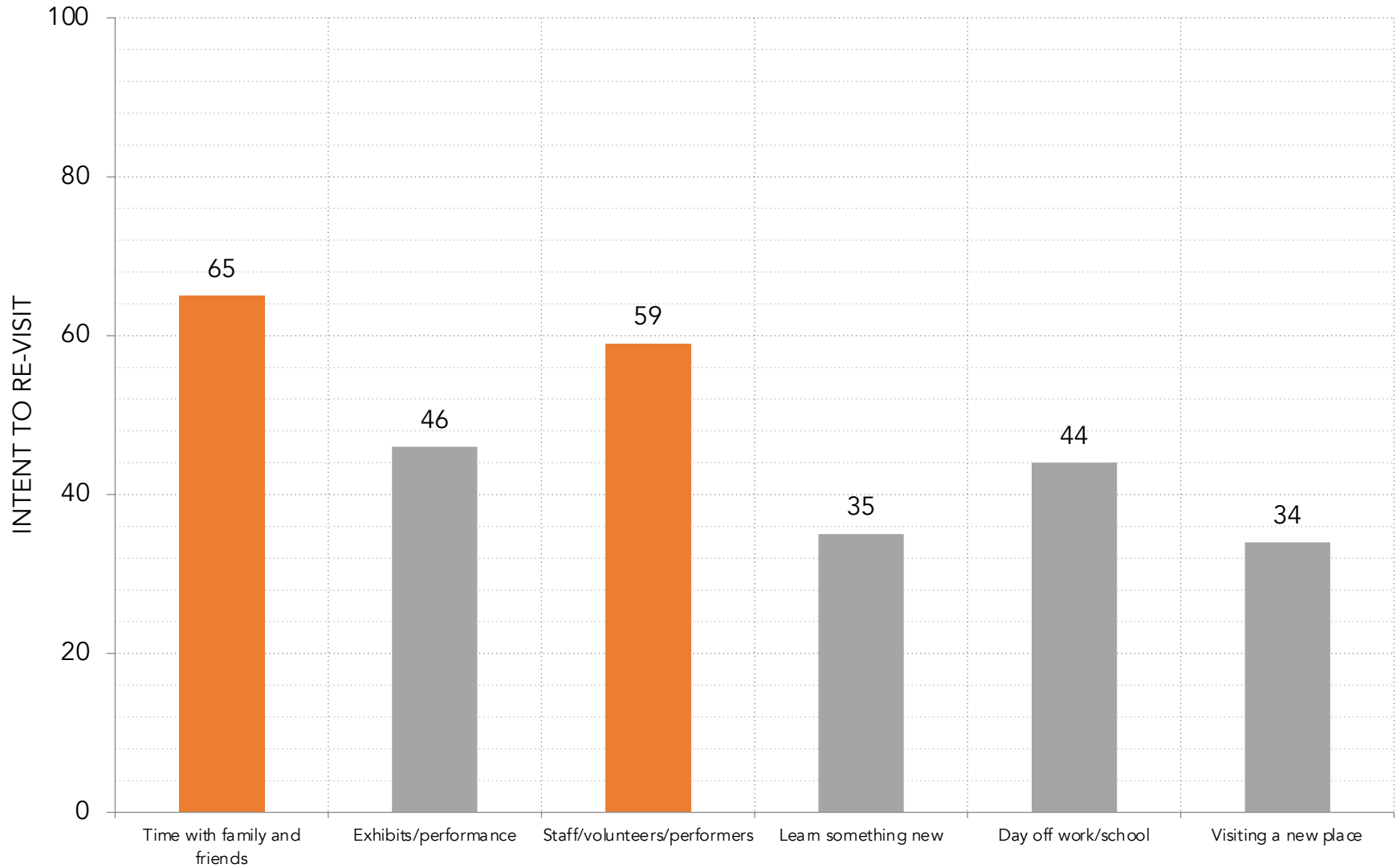
EOY 2022



“THE BEST THING ABOUT A VISIT TO A CULTURAL ORGANIZATION”

# Intent to revisit within one year by best visit attribute

EOY 2022

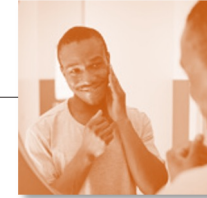


“THE BEST THING ABOUT A VISIT TO A CULTURAL ORGANIZATION”

A museum retail  
superpower:

**Commemorating**  
and **reinforcing**  
positive memories.

# Your museum store...



**Reinforces  
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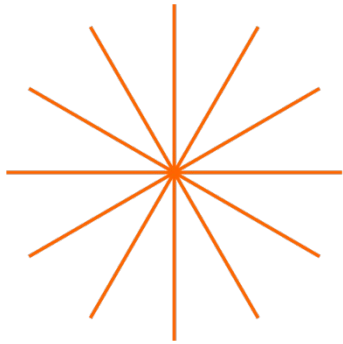
**Makes  
treasured  
memories**



Retail store leaders:

Thank you for your important  
work making people's memories  
**more meaningful...**

And our museums **stronger.**



impacts  
experience

## Contact

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(And keep scrolling for a bit of bonus data!)



# Factors that comprise retail satisfaction

88 US cultural organizations with retail stores – EOY 2022

CONTRIBUTORY FACTOR	WEIGHTED VALUE
Design elements/aesthetic of the physical space ("atmosphere")	28.32%
Quality/uniqueness of merchandise	18.75%
Friendly/welcoming staff	9.01%
Clean/organized ("tidy")	7.03%
Sufficient staff ("no wait to pay" and "easy to find help")	6.64%
Knowledgeable staff	5.42%
Ample space ("room to move" and "not crowded")	5.34%
Well-lit ("bright")	5.22%
Availability/inventory of merchandise (not being "out" of item)	4.76%
Good value ("fair prices")	3.73%
Layout/wayfinding	3.32%
Ability to test/trial	1.34%
Sales and discounts ("deals" and "bargains")	1.12%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

# "What are the best things about the [museum retail experience]?"

Lexical analysis by descending frequency of mention  
80 cultural organizations with retail stores, Q1 2023

EOY 2019*	RANK	Q1 2023*
Unique merchandise (193.2)	1	Unique merchandise (213.5)
Supporting organization (103.5)	2	Supporting organization (124.7)
Finding gifts for adult (100.5)	3	Finding gifts for adult (112.0)
Finding gifts for child (97.1)	4	Finding gifts for child (104.1)
Friendly/helpful staff (94.4)	5	Friendly/helpful staff (103.9)
<b>Sale items ("discounts") (92.8)</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>High-quality merchandise (96.9)</b>
<b>High-quality merchandise (90.2)</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>Educational merchandise (85.0)</b>

\*EOY 2019 contemplates 92 organizations. Q1 2023 contemplates 80 organizations.

The ... should suggest or recommend certain behaviors or ways for the general public to support its causes and mission.  
Exhibit-based organizations, percentage of respondents who "agree" or "strongly agree"

