



## International Museum Visitors

This brief report compares visitation of major museums in prominent international cities, as well as museum visitation compared with attendance of professional sports events.

Specifically, it compares visitation of Houston museums with those in several prominent international cities and with Houston professional sports teams (a benchmark of many U.S. cities). Aside from the obvious economic benefits, readers of the report will note that there is tremendous room for growth in Houston museums and that Houston needs one or two additional major museums to help support and sustain many of its other cultural resources.

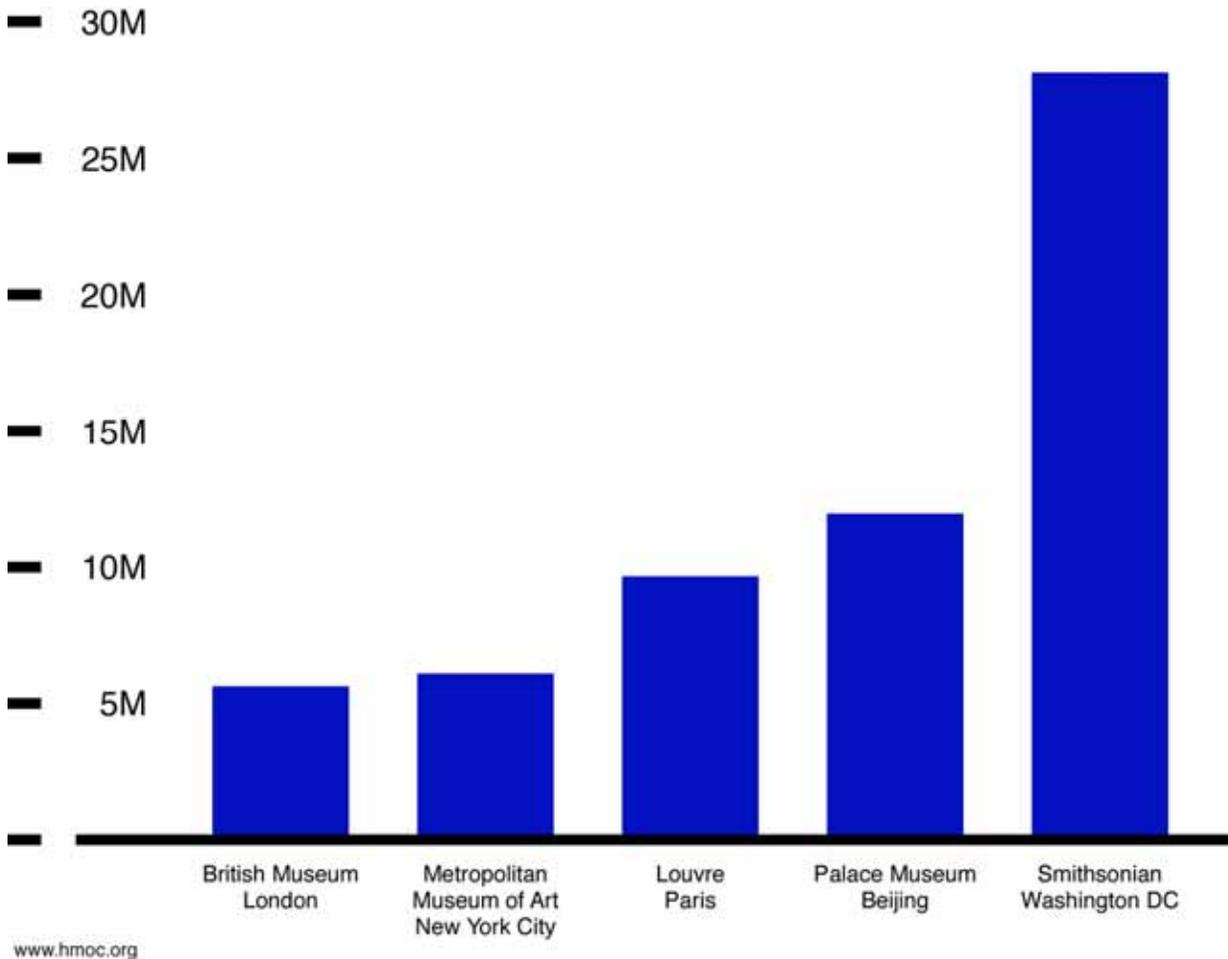
The report introduces basic information about trends in museum visitation, as well as motivation to visit museums. These extensive and dynamic subjects are further covered in live presentations for those interested.

And, the report gives a sense about the missions of the various museums that rank among the most significant in the world. They frequently examine culture and civilization by utilizing a variety of social sciences.

With prominent science and art museums, a distinctive space center, and a landscape of many heritage and cultural centers (as well as several more in the works), Houston's most provident new museum, with the greatest potential to be a major international attraction, is the Houston Museum of Culture.

The Houston Museum of Culture will utilize the best practices and features from existing international museums of culture. It will be the most innovative and effective education center about the world's civilizations and ways of life in the past, present and future.

## Significant International Museums

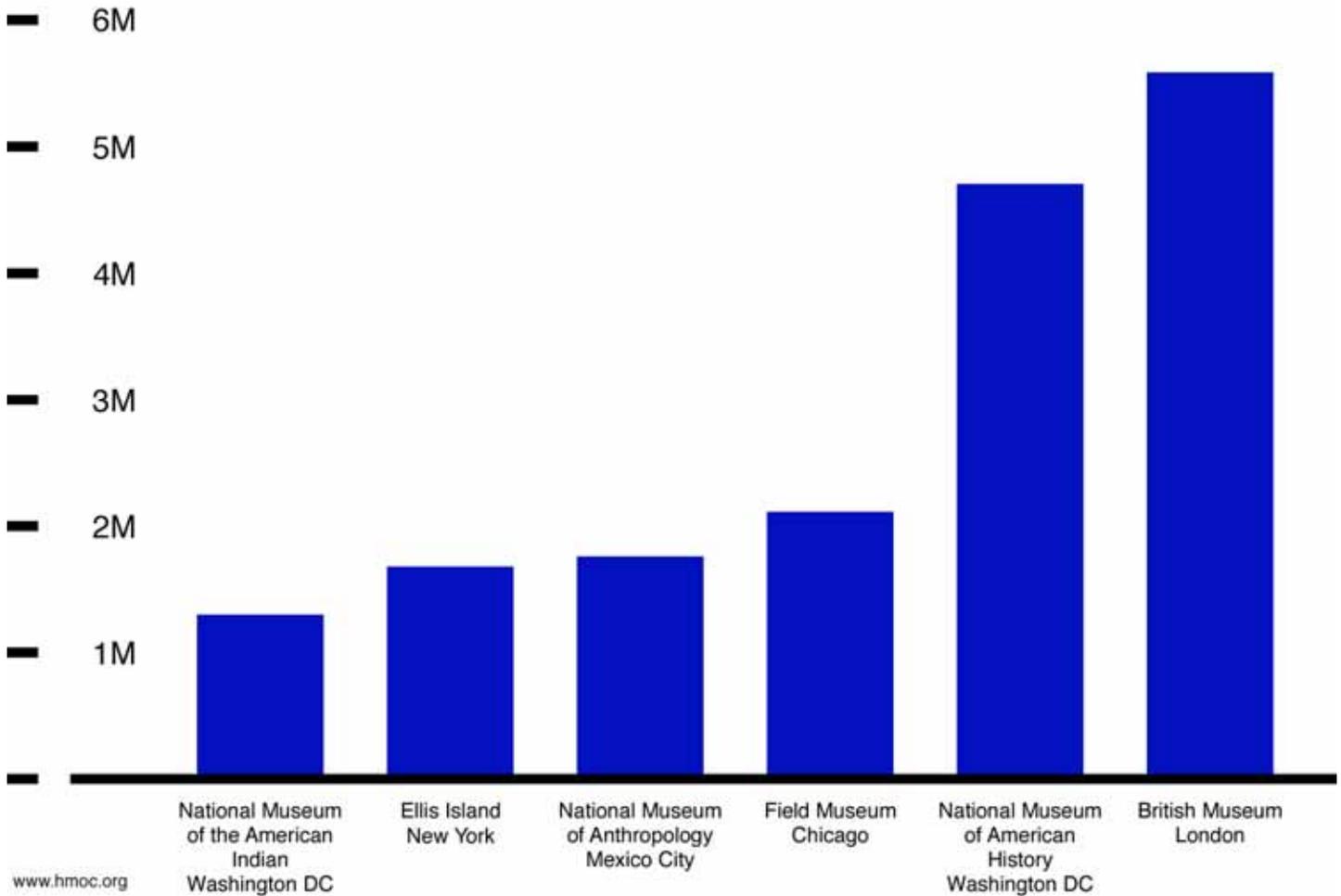


The great cities of the world offer the greatest museums, and they are known for their distinctive museums. The museums are usually representative of the legacy of each city and nation, as well as the historic and cultural impact and contributions the cities have made to civilization.

In the **2012 World Cities Culture Report**, London Mayor Boris Johnson said, "World cities are international hubs for commerce and trade, but as this groundbreaking report makes clear, they are powerhouses for culture too -- in London the creative industries alone contribute £19 billion (\$28 billion) to our economy and employ 386,000 people. In coming together as city leaders and policymakers we want to harness the full potential of culture, which makes our cities exciting and desirable places to live in and visit, but also makes a massive contribution to wider social and economic goals."

The above graph represents visitors at several prominent international museums. The museums are among the most significant cultural assets of their respective cities. With 28.1 million visitors in 2013, the Smithsonian (all units combined) is the most visited in the world. Smithsonian visitors have exceeded 30 million in recent years.

## Examples of Prominent Museums of Culture



Cultures and civilizations are the focus of many of the world's most prominent and best visited museums. The British Museum, "dedicated to human history and culture", achieved 5,575,946 (5.5 million) visitors in 2012, ranking as the most visited museum in London.

Consider the various approaches of the following museums to the subjects of cultures and civilizations:

-**The Museum of World Culture**, or **Varldskultur Museerna** (Gothenburg, Sweden), provides interdisciplinary interpretation of world cultures

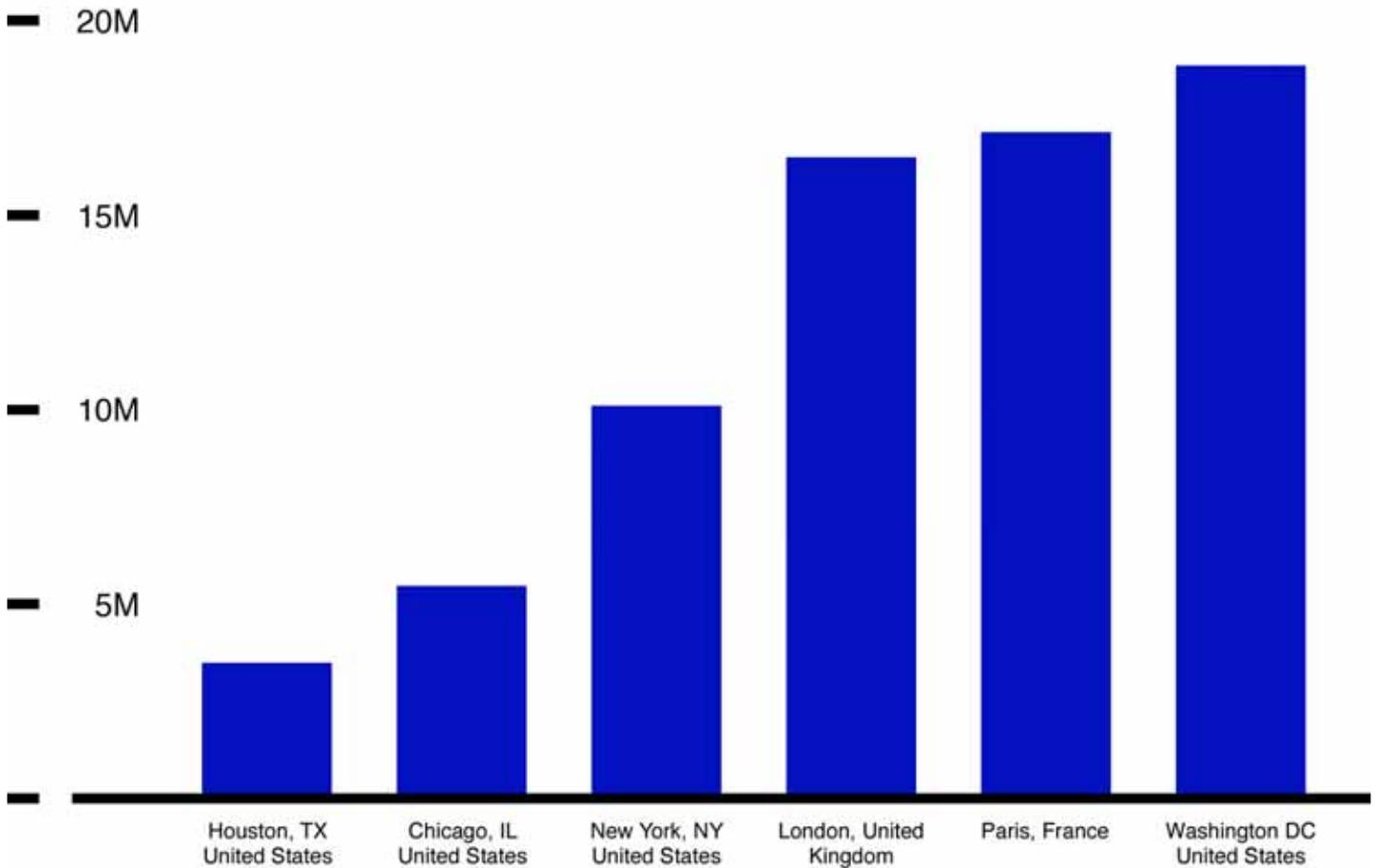
-**The Asian Civilisations Museum** (Singapore), presents a broad yet integrated perspective of pan-Asian cultures and civilizations

-**The Museum of New Mexico** (Santa Fe, NM), five units covering indigenous cultures, anthropology, art, history and international folk traditions

-**Ellis Island National Monument and Immigration Museum** (New York City), a monument and education center about the immigrant histories and diverse peoples of the United States

-**The Field Museum** (Chicago, IL), an educational institution concerned with the diversity and relationships in nature and among cultures

## Visitors to Top Three Museums in Prominent Cities



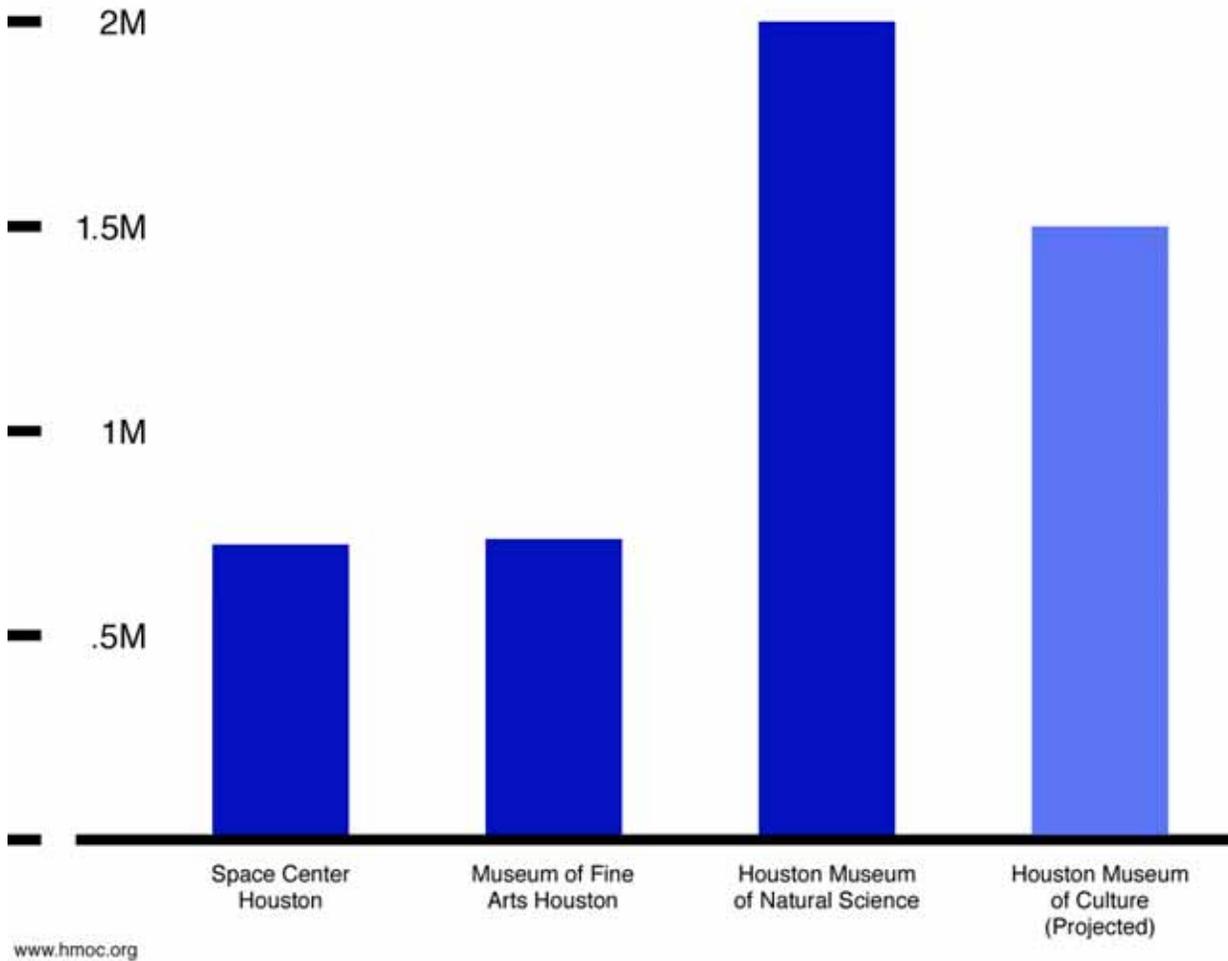
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Most of the important cities of the world have three or more major museums. In the top cities, the museums attract more than 2 million visitors each. It appears that for the top cities, additional major museums result in exponential growth in visitation of the museums and other cultural resources. Support for the largest museums in cities with three or more major museums is largely generated from visitors who come from outside the cities.

The Smithsonian offers free admission. It is, of course, publicly funded by taxpayers across the nation. Visitors to the Smithsonian, as well as federal government centers and National Park Service units on and near the National Mall, rank Washington DC as a top U.S. tourist destination with other industry-specific cities, including Orlando amusement parks, Las Vegas casinos, and New York City theatres and museums.

The above graph compares combined visitors to the top three most visited museums in several prominent cities. The three most visited units of the Smithsonian are used to represent Washington DC.

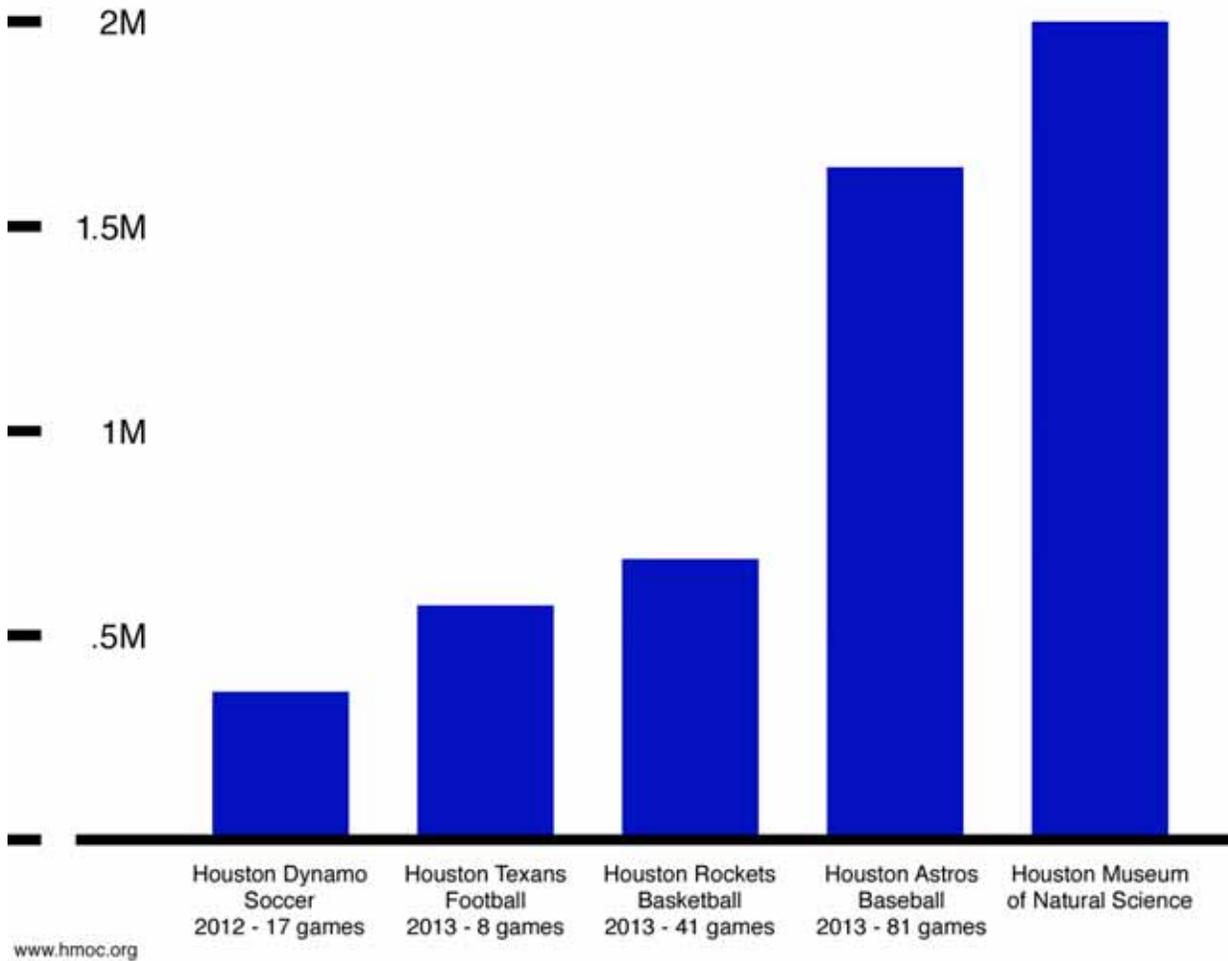
## Visitors to Major Houston Museums



The above graph represents visitors to the three most visited Houston museums, compared with projected visitors to the Houston Museum of Culture (represented with light blue) in its first year of full operation as a museum. The Houston Museum of Culture will help Houston achieve visitor numbers similar to Chicago and will benefit all of Houston's museums and cultural resources.

The most recent visitor numbers that are available are shown for existing Houston museums. Visitors to the Houston Museum of Natural Science are reported to reach or exceed 2 million. It should be noted that the Museum of Fine Arts Houston reported its visitor numbers of 737,480 in April 2013, but that 1.25 million people benefit from museum's programs according to several sources. 737,480 visitors for MFAH is the number used in the graph.

## Major Sports Attendance Compared with HMNS

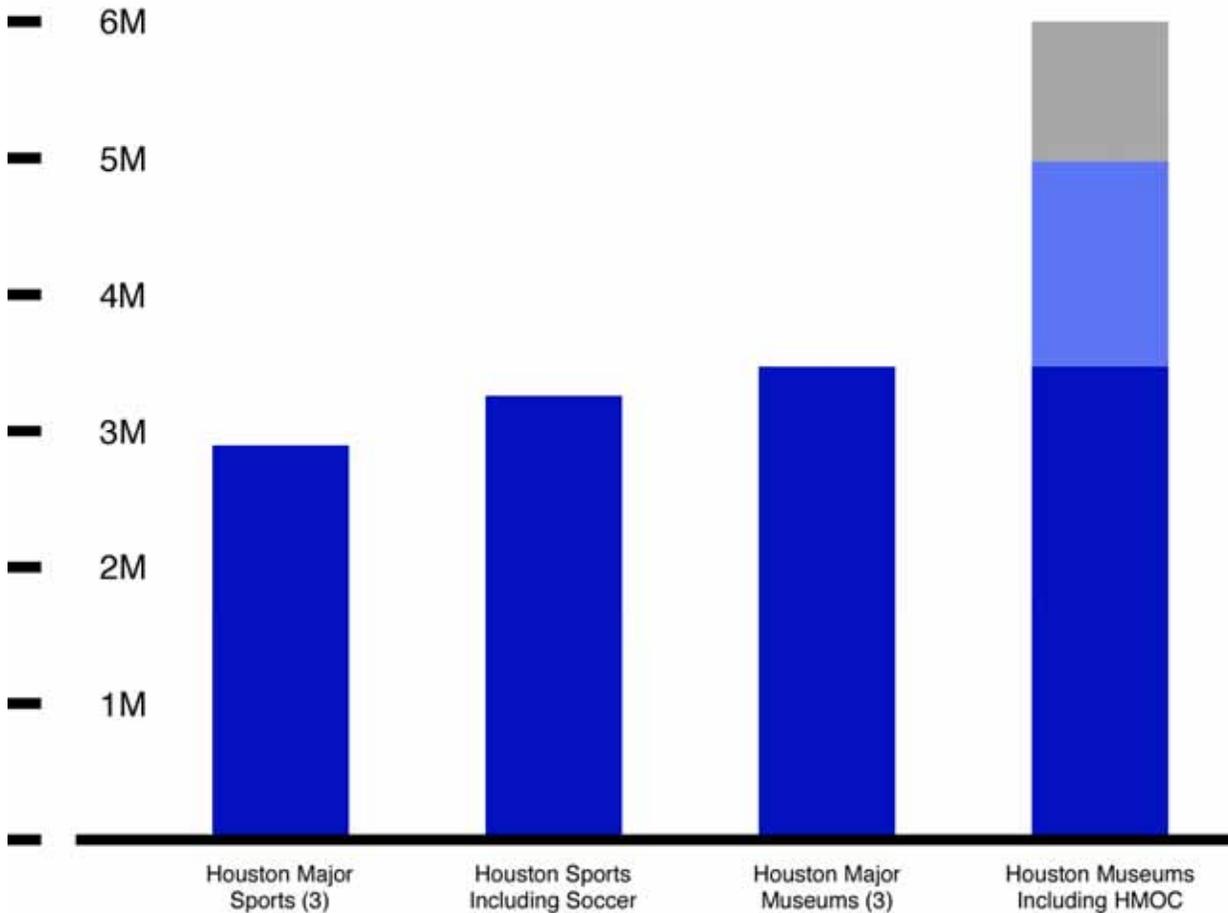


Regular season attendance at Houston major sports teams' events is compared with annual visitors to the Houston Museum of Natural Science, which regularly exceeds 2 million visitors.

In cities with three or more major museums, the museums attract more visitors and more out-of-town visitors than the sports teams. While many of the cities have seasonal highs, visitation is generally steady throughout the year.

2013 attendance numbers were used for the Houston Texans, Houston Rockets and Houston Astros, while 2012 attendance numbers for the Houston Dynamo were the latest available.

## Sports Attendance Compared with Museums



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Museums provide activities for numbers of visitors comparable to attendance of sports events in many major U.S. cities. However, cities with at least four major museums, such as Washington DC and New York City, have dramatically higher visitor totals for museums, and those numbers appear to increase exponentially with each major museum. Those cities subsequently attract many more out-of-town visitors than most other U.S. cities. Even the addition of one or two major museums to a city may exponentially increase visitors to all of its museums, while also having a positive impact on most of the city's other cultural resources.

Houston's three major museums currently exceed total attendance of its four major sports teams' events. The addition of the Houston Museum of Culture will provide a dramatic increase (represented with light blue, shown in the fourth bar), and with the impact of higher visitor numbers at each museum, the total visitors to all museums is projected to exceed 6 million (represented with grey). This is an important goal for Houston to achieve for economic benefits, viability of cultural assets, international standing, ability to host international events, as well as the internal benefits of improved cultural experience, education, and quality of life.

While Houston may take for granted that, as an entire city, it is a sort of museum of culture, far beyond the scope of most other U.S and world cities. But considering the limitless benefits and existing resources available for Houston to formally develop its own modern version of the Smithsonian, the concept of the Houston Museum of Culture is infallible.

## Additional Notes

Cultural museums are clearly important to prominent cities.

As a city with a population of 5.3 million, Singapore's museums attract more than 6.5 million visitors. Singapore's National Heritage Board surveyed visitors to Singapore's national museums and found that 37 percent come from overseas, and 11 percent of those are repeat visitors. Singapore Tourism Board director of attractions, Jeanie Lim said, "Museums mirror the growth of our city and present to the world various aspects of the Singapore story."

High quality cultural museums are important to cities of any size. Though it is small and only ranks fourth in its state, Santa Fe is an important city in the southwestern United States and the capital of New Mexico. With the addition of a new unit to the Museum of New Mexico in Santa Fe (a city with a population under 70,000), annual visitors to the museum units will exceed four times the city's population.

### **"Museum Visitation as a Leisure Time Choice"**

Museum visitation appears to hold up well when compared to all leisure activities. In studying a number of comprehensive reports, including "Museum Visitation as a Leisure Time Choice: A Background Report to the Smithsonian Board of Regents" (October 2007), which includes data on leisure activities collected for the National Endowment for the Arts in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Census, museum visitation has remained fairly constant over the past several decades. Much of the data tracks visits to art museums and galleries, as well as historic sites. Additional evidence shows that visitation of museums covering natural sciences and social sciences has not only remained constant, but has risen steadily in many cases. Several of the most prominent museums (including the Houston Museum of Natural Science) have faced the challenge of too many visitors and the need to expand to accommodate rising visitation.

It is important to consider all of the leisure activities surveyed in order to understand the full dynamics involved in bringing audiences to museums. Of course, while many leisure interests are complimentary in growing interests in museums, the steady rise in use of the Internet, home computers and video games has to be considered in positive and negative terms as it relates to museums, and more broadly, to quality of life. Where those interests are negative, museums are a preferred, more productive and socially-beneficial leisure activity. Since these are extremely complex dynamics that change rapidly, they are better covered in live presentations.

### **Motivations for Visiting Art Museums and Galleries**

Although the following survey focused on art museums and galleries, it provides highly relevant information for broad cultural institutions. An Urban Institute study conducted in 2005 identified seven general motivations for visits to art museums and galleries.

Educational: learning and gaining knowledge (65 percent)  
Aesthetic: seeing high-quality art (56 percent)  
Affective: having an emotionally rewarding experience (54 percent)  
Social: spending time with friends and family (45 percent)  
Civic: supporting a community organization (27 percent)  
Economic: low cost (24 percent)  
Cultural pride: celebrating cultural heritage (18 percent)