

# Summative Evaluation Report

# PRISONS TODAY

QUESTIONS IN THE  
AGE OF MASS INCARCERATION

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September 21, 2016

## Introduction

Eastern State Penitentiary was once the most famous and expensive prison in the world, but stands today in ruin, a haunting world of crumbling cellblocks and empty guard towers. As a historic site, visitors come daily to learn about the building and those who lived and worked inside. *Prisons Today: Questions in the Age of Mass Incarceration* is the next step in Eastern State Penitentiary's continued focus on issues of contemporary corrections.

The United States now has the highest rate of incarceration in the world, by far, with 2.2 million citizens in prison or jail. This phenomenon has generally been driven by changes in laws, policing, and sentencing, not by changes in behavior. The results have disproportionately impacted poor and disenfranchised communities (mostly communities of color). In contrast, these historic changes remain nearly invisible to many Americans.

Three years in the making, *Prisons Today* calls on the most current scholarship in the fields of sociology and criminology, but presents concepts in a broad, direct, and interactive way. Innovative filmmaking elicits personal connections to the U.S. criminal justice system, and digital interactives encourage reflection on the purpose and effectiveness of American prisons. A call to action section suggests steps that visitors can take to help shape the American criminal justice system moving forward.

As part of the Pew grant that helped to fund the exhibit, a summative evaluation was performed in order to determine the success of the exhibit and help inform both Eastern State and other organizations about how exhibits about current and provocative issues can best be presented in exhibitions like *Prisons Today*.

### Evaluation Goals:

Eastern State Penitentiary would like to know:

- If visitors to *Prisons Today* perception of the U.S. criminal justice system changed, and if so how
- If visitors understand the main message of *Prisons Today*
- What visitors liked and disliked the most about *Prisons Today*
- The demographics of visitors to *Prisons Today*, specifically: location, age, gender, ethnicity, connection to the criminal justice system

## Executive Summary

- **Overall the exhibit was a success** with a high average rating of 6.2 out of a scale of 1-7, with 7 being the best. Visitors were deeply engaged in the exhibit spending an average of over a minute at each element. They also spent an exceptionally long time in the exhibit (14 min.), and a sweep rate ( $\frac{\text{Total Sq. Ft.}}{\text{Avg. Time Spent}}$ ) of 117, where anything under 300 is considered a successful exhibit. However, visitors only stopped at 40% of the exhibit elements and only 29% stopped at more than half of the exhibit. This is fairly low, and is likely because visitors felt overwhelmed with the number of exhibits in the space.
- **Almost all visitors (94%) understood some, or all, of the main message of the exhibit.** Many respondents mentioned mass incarceration today or in general (34%) and most gave an answer addressing issues with the current prison system such as: Increase in incarceration rates (18%), reform of the prison system (15%), problems with the prison system (13%), and the impact of mass incarceration on prisoners and their families (12%). For the few who did not understand the main message, they gave responses like: “informative”, “paying for your crime”, “about Eastern State Penitentiary”, and “I am not sure”.
- **Visitors were most interested in the interactives and multi media.** In particular, the **confessional** had the highest drawing power (highest percentage who stopped at 70%) and the **opening video** had the highest holding power (highest average time spent at more than 5 minutes). When asked, visitors also said these two elements were their favorite in the exhibit. Visitors were also likely to spend more time and stop at more elements at the beginning of the exhibit, showing they likely experienced exhibit fatigue by the end of the exhibit. The majority of visitors (72%) had nothing they disliked about the exhibit.
- **Visitors felt they had a minimal measureable change in their perceptions of the criminal justice system.** However, when asked what changes they felt they had, 63% felt they had some kind of change. The most frequent changes mentioned were *who does and does not go to jail* (13%) and *how the Criminal Justice System can be reformed* (12%).
- **Visitors who chose to experience the exhibit were similar to the general visitors to Eastern State Penitentiary.** Visitors were from slightly farther away with more than 50% coming from over 200 miles away. They tended to be more white/Caucasian with 85% present visiting Prisons today vs. 75% of ESP’s general audience. They had similar political leanings with 47% identifying as Left/Liberal/Democrat. Gender Identity was also very similar with 59% of respondents identifying as female.
- **Only 29% said they had no relationship with the criminal justice system, while 70% of general audience felt they had no relationship.** There are several reasons this large disparity could be attributed to and it is likely at least in part all of them.
  - The first, and probably largest reason is due to the different survey styles. The surveys for Prisons Today were in person interviews, and interviewers were more likely to make sure respondents read all the options than the self-administered surveys for the general audience.
  - It may also show a shift in how visitors define their relationship to the criminal justice system based on their experience in the exhibition.
  - It could be because those with a connection to the Criminal Justice System self selected to go to the exhibit as they felt a deeper connection to the topic.

## **Methodology**

In order to ascertain the above evaluation goals a mixed methodology of observations and interviews was done. Eastern State Penitentiary staff, with training from the evaluator, collected timing and tracking observations and interviews between June 22<sup>nd</sup> and July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2016. In order to obtain a valid representation of typical visitors, collection took place both on weekends and weekdays during peak hours. However, because this is the summer season the audience likely skewed to a more tourist audience, possibly causing the high number of respondents to come from distances over 200 miles (56%).

Short in-person interviews were collected as visitors exited the *Prisons Today* exhibit. Questions in the survey were both open and closed ended to obtain a mixture of qualitative and quantitative data. (See survey instrument at the end of this report.) From June 22<sup>nd</sup> to July 3<sup>rd</sup> 2016, 251 surveys were obtained, with 80 from those with a connection to the criminal justice system to allow for statistically significant numbers to compare to the general audience. With an approximate attendance of 4,000 during the time, the results have a 6.0% margin of error, with a 95% confidence level.

Observations were done through timing and tracking of visitors as they went through the exhibit. Drawing power and holding power were ascertained by determining which individual interactives, panels and videos were most frequently used and for how long. A "visit" was counted if the individuals were at the exhibit element for more than 2 seconds. Visitors were also observed for different behaviors like discussing the exhibit with others, reading the panels, interacting with staff, and using interactives. Over all time in exhibit and number of exhibits helped to determine overall success of the exhibit. 101 timing and tracking observations were collected.

In order to ensure a random sampling of visitors, interviewers chose the second person over 18 who exited the exhibit after the previous interview had been completed. During slower times the first person who exited the exhibit was chosen. For timing and tracking observations, the second person to cross the threshold into the exhibit over the age of 18 was followed as they went through the exhibit. During slower times the first person who crossed the threshold was chosen.

Survey and observation instruments are attached.

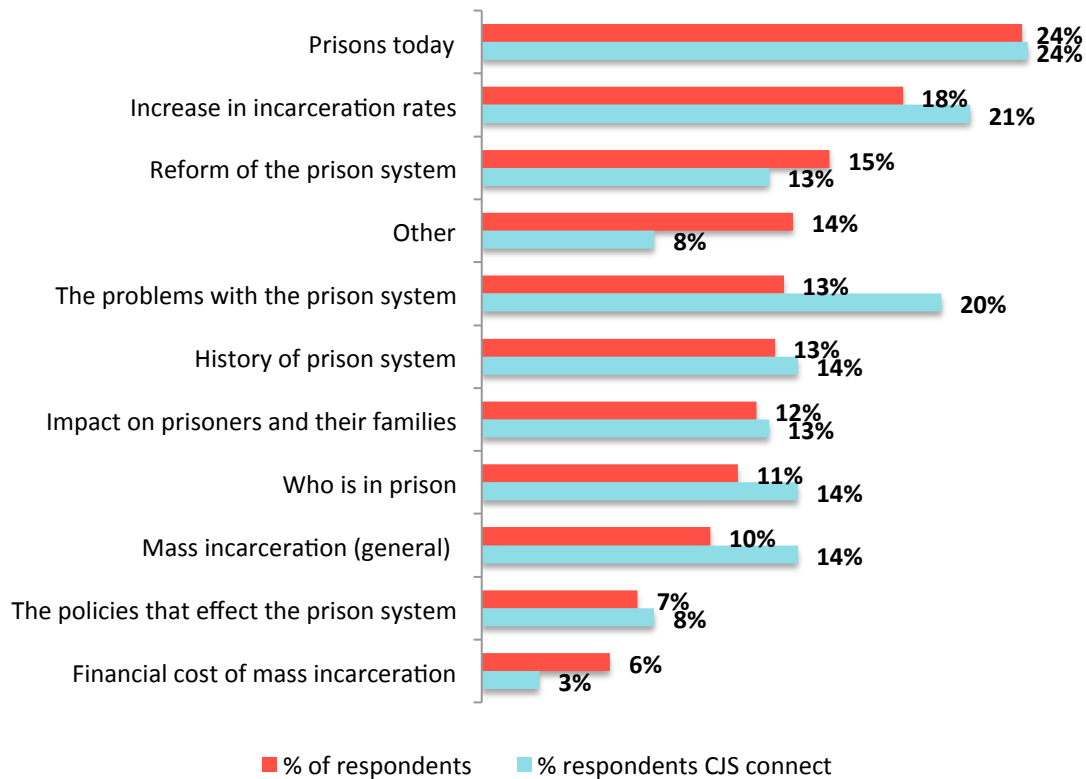
## Results of In – Person Interviews

### Q1. How would you rate this exhibit on a scale of 1-7, where 1 is the worst, and 7 is the best.

Visitors gave the exhibit an overall rating of 6.2. Those who had a connection to the criminal justice system gave it a rating of 6.3.

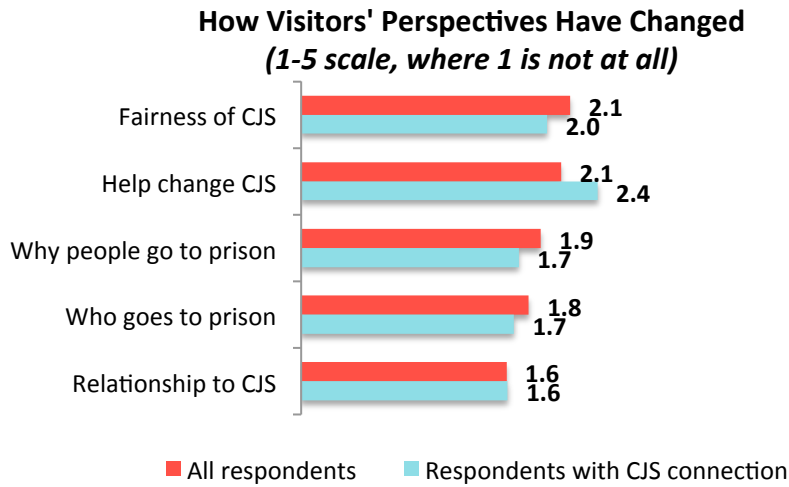
### Q2. What did you think the exhibit was about?

#### What Visitors Think Prisons Today is About

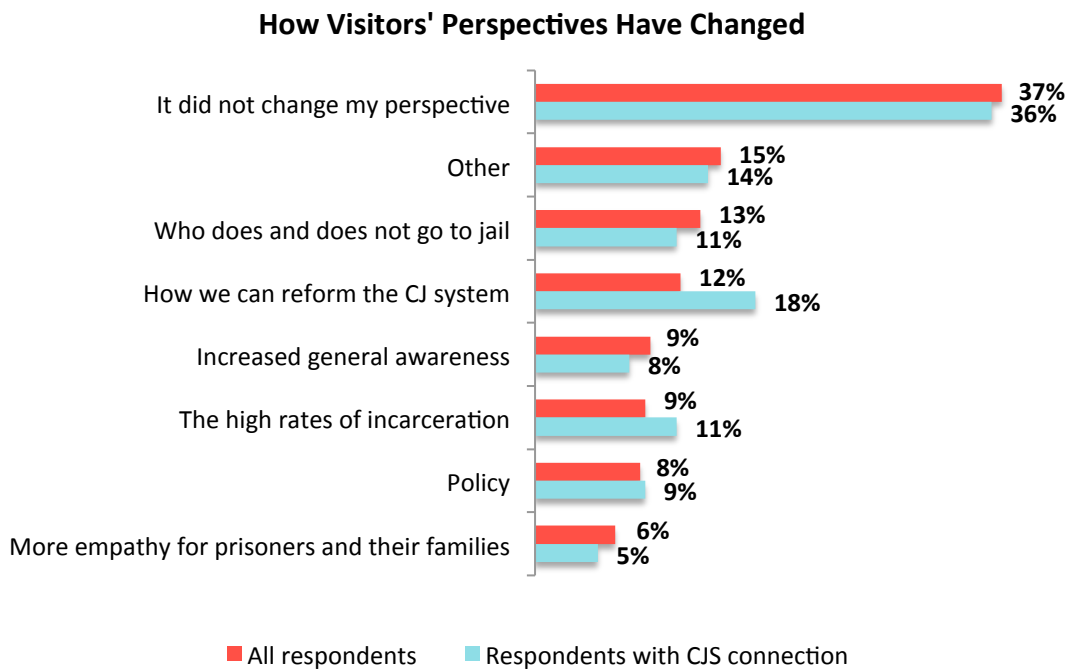


Code	Example responses
Prisons today	prison system today in the US. how we use imprisonment today
Increase in incarceration rates	high rates of incarceration, overpopulated prisons, rising incarceration rates and why
Reform of the prison system	reform in the justice system, helping inmates get out and stay out, need for more humane justice
Other	paying for your crimes, education and enlightenment, I did not know exactly
The problems with the prison system	mistakes in incarcerating people, the state of prisons in the US and problems facing them
History of prison system	prison throughout the history of the US, the change of the prison system, the contrast and progress of prisons over the years
Impact on prisoners and their families	the hard life of prisoners, what prison has done to people, incredible impacts on family
Who is in prison	demographics of prisoners, profiling populations of prisoners today, discrimination
Mass incarceration (general)	incarceration in America, the prison system, It's about U.S. prisons
The policies that effect the prison system	legislation, the effects of laws, how we messed up in the 90's with crime prevention
Financial cost of mass incarceration	the cost of incarceration, the cost of keeping prisoners in jail, expenditure

**Q3. How much has this exhibit changed your perspective on:**

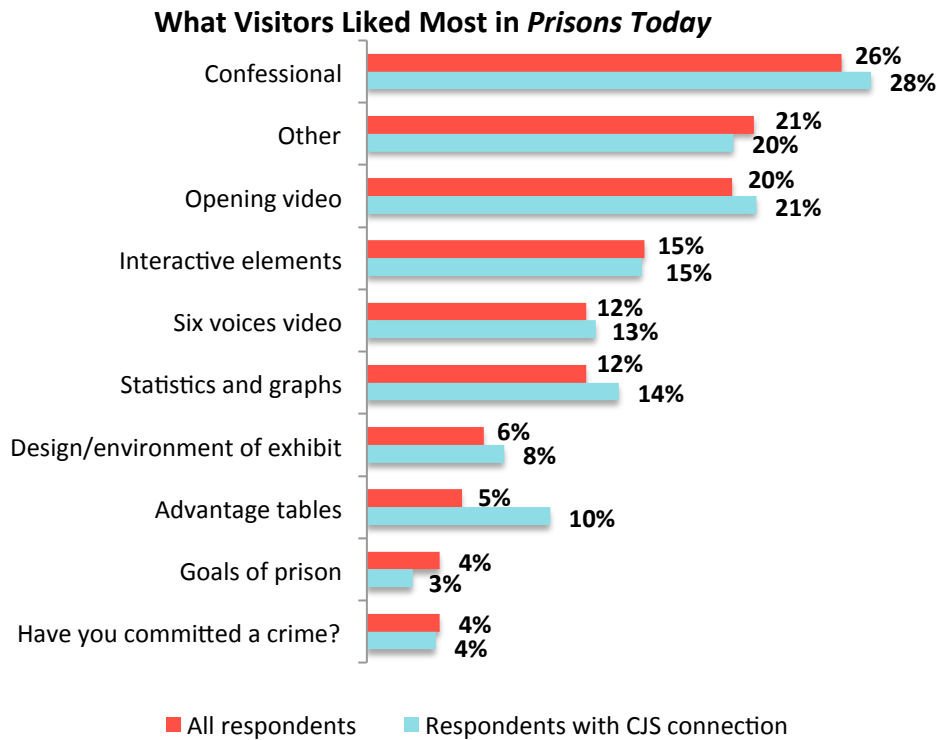


**Q4. If your perspective about the criminal justice has changed, how has it changed?**



Codes	Types of responses
It did not change my perspective	Hasn't changed, almost nothing, It has not
Other	prisons before were better than they are now, the expense of prison
Who does and does not go to jail	the demographics involved, race effects the possibility of being incarcerated
How we can reform the CJ system	there are solutions we need to consider, that I can help out more
Increased general awareness	eye-opener, more information
The high rates of incarceration	understanding how prison population has grown, I didn't know about the dramatic increase in imprisonment
Policy	the drug arrests for minor offenses, learned that there's a different severity of sentencing

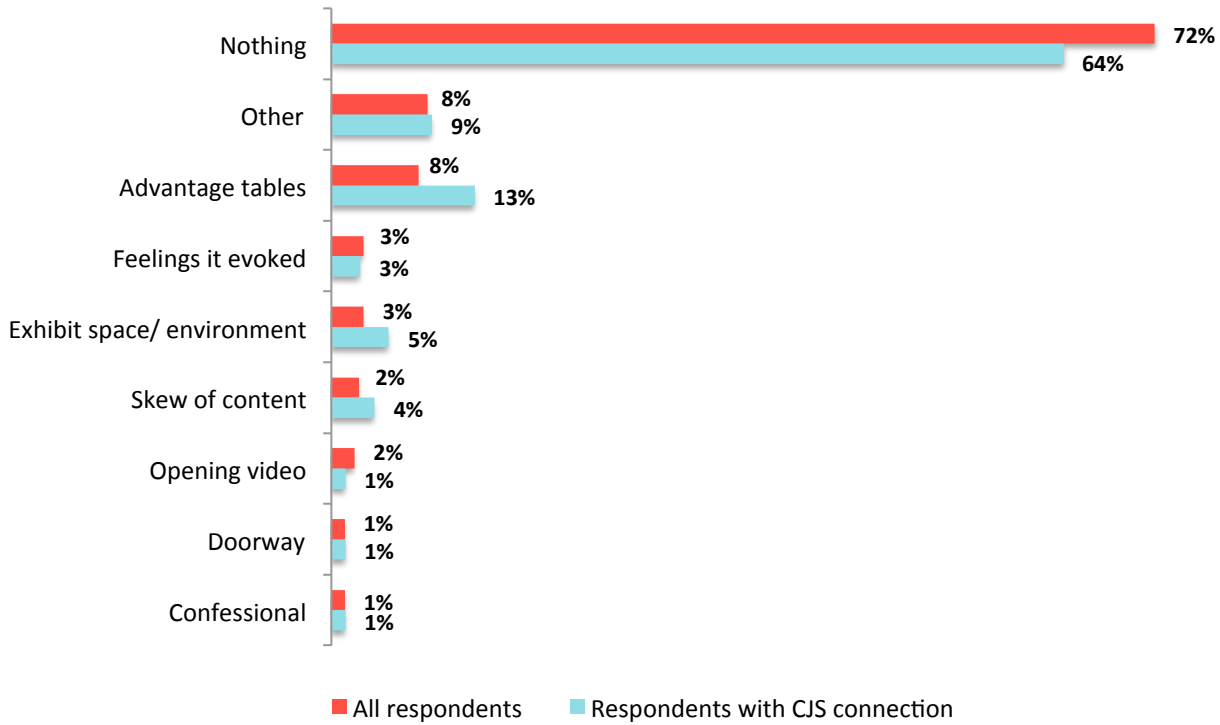
**Q5. What did you like the most in the exhibit?**



Codes	Example Responses
Confessional	the confession letters - profound, the confession wall
Other	it was all good, postcards, people working to change the system
Opening video	the first video, the videos with the politicians at the beginning
Interactive elements	interactive parts, the interactiveness, the hands on displays
Six voices video	the six voices video, personal stories video, the voices of actual people (six voices)
Statistics and graphs	graphics are excellent, actual statistics of incarceration, the comparative rates
Design/environment of exhibit	design, the flow of the exhibit, air conditioning
Advantage tables	the comparison of childhood interactive exhibit, the advantage tables
Goals of prison	vote for why the system is broken, the ipad survey exhibit
Have you committed a crime?	the choice of a path on whether you committed a crime, have you ever committed a crime

**Q6. What did you like the least about the exhibit?**

**Elements Visitors Dislike in Prisons Today**

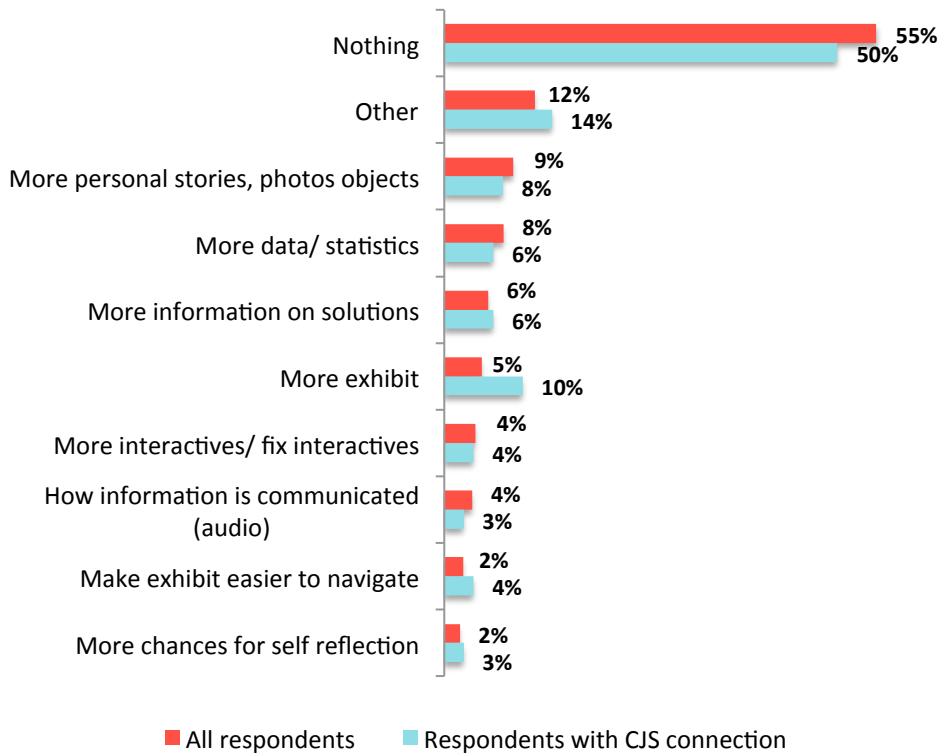


Codes	Example Responses
Nothing	Nothing, I can't think of anything
Advantage tables	button game, "what's the point?", the partnered sharing of upbringing --confusion
Other	there could always be more, more depth, the interactives, a little too much, a little overwhelming
Feelings it evoked	sad, it makes me uncomfortable, very stark
Exhibit space/ environment	more room to move around, construction and noise, no water, no bathroom
Skew of content	absence of balance, re: comparing non-homogeneous subsets of the population, that it was political
Opening video	tv screen froze, the initial video was a little long/drawn out
Doorway	"have to you ever committed a crime?", I wanted to see both sides
Confessional	didn't like the confession; they might have been lying



**Q7. What, if anything, could we do to make the exhibit better?**

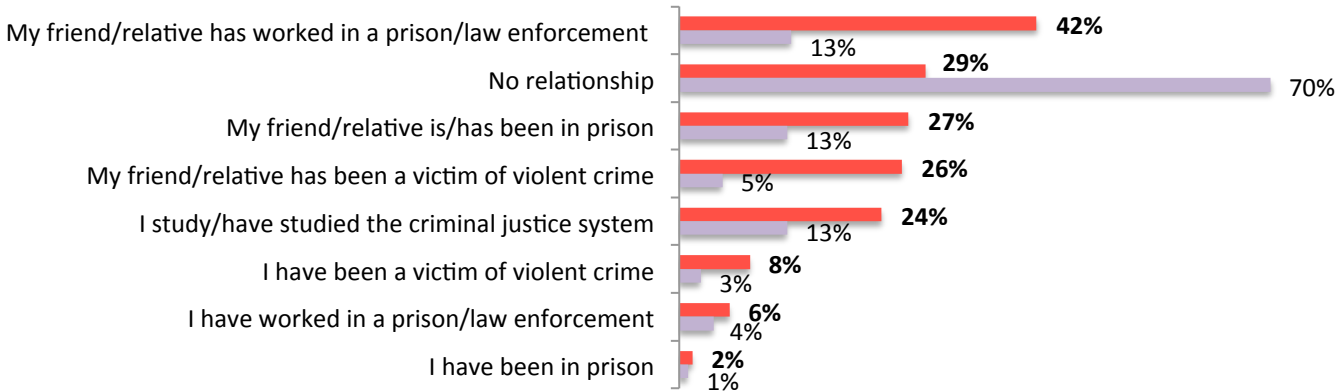
**What Could Make *Prisons Today* Better**



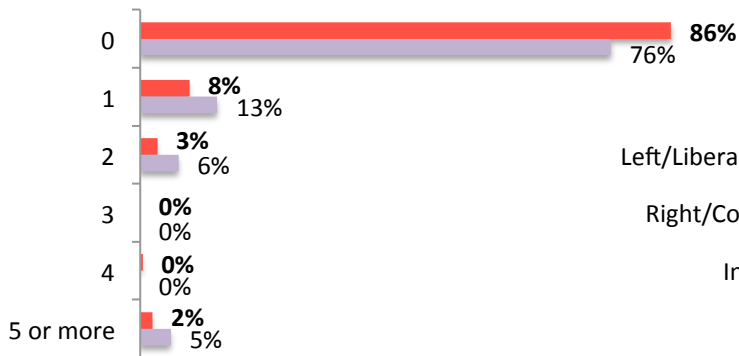
Codes	Example Responses
Nothing	Nothing, its good, no suggestion
Other	keep it current, get more people in there, more about for-profit prisons
More personal stories, photos objects	clothes of the prisoners, more photos, some more background story of inmates
More data/ statistics	more graphs, more statistics, more comparisons between countries
More information on solutions	more on rehabilitation / positive programs, info about change being made to prison system
More exhibit	make it bigger, bigger space, make it larger
More interactives/ fix interactives	a little more interactive elements, the lights did not work on childhood survey game
How information is communicated (audio)	add on audio portion for audio guides, more language, Spanish, have cc
Make exhibit easier to navigate	the latter half is too self-guided, change the entrance/exit signs on the exit door - confusing
More chances for self reflection	more exhibits like postcards from future self, capture at the end "what would you do?"

# Demographics of Visitors to Prisons Today vs. General Audience in June 2016

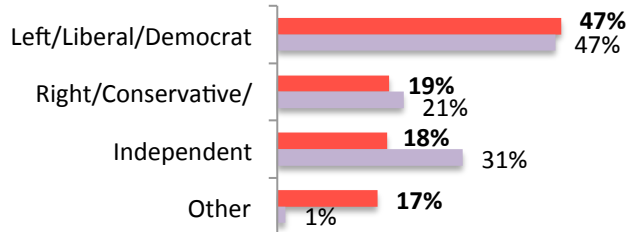
## Relationship to the Criminal Justice System



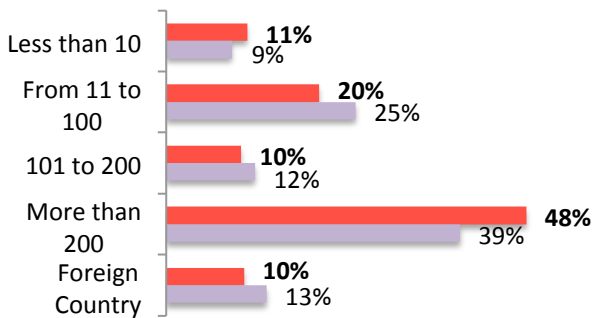
## Number of Previous Visits To Eastern State



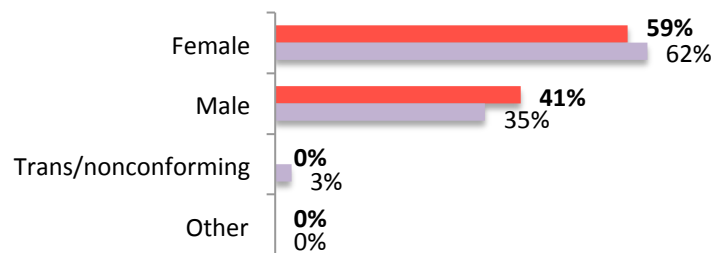
## Political Leanings



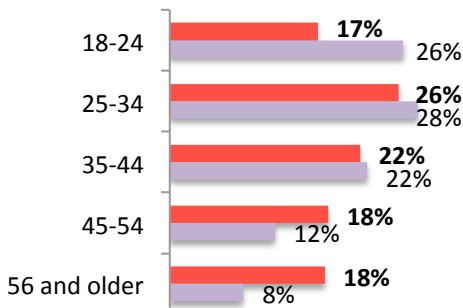
## Distance Traveled (Miles)



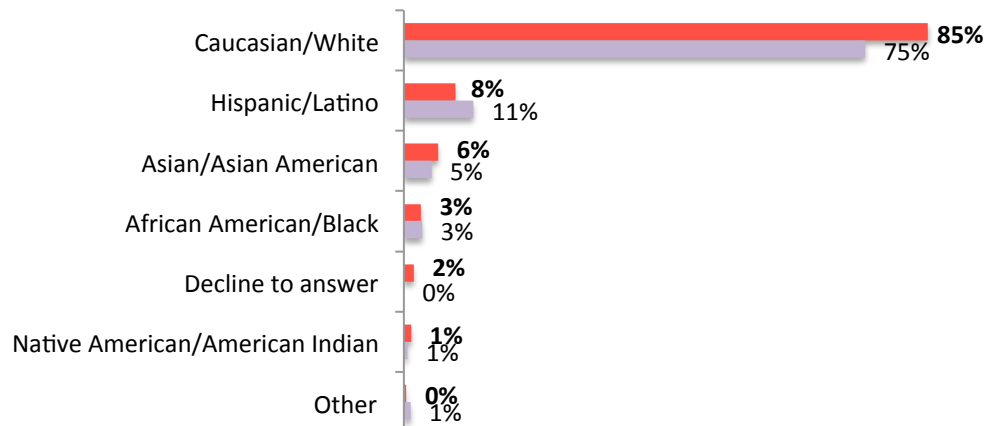
## Gender Visitors Identify As



## Age



## Ethnicities Visitors Identify As

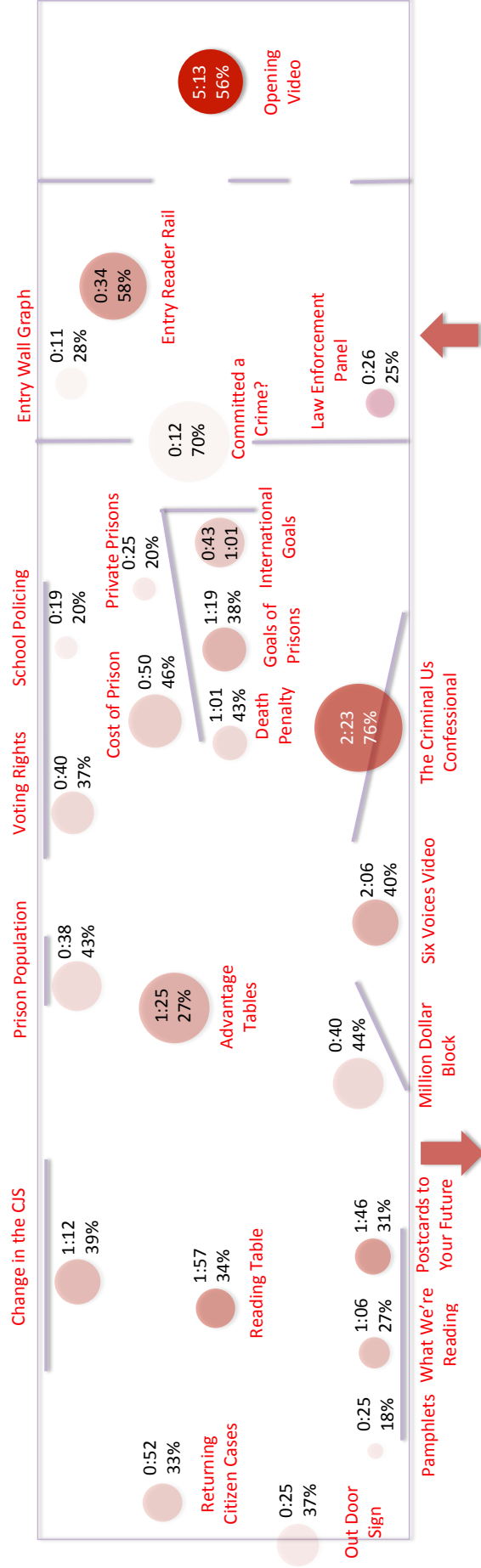


## Results of Timing and Tracking Observations

- The average time spent in the exhibit was 14 minutes with a sweep rate index of 117. The sweep rate index (square feet of exhibition space divided by average time in the exhibition) was much better than the average of 287.1 and the benchmark of 300. Sweep rate allows relative comparisons of exhibitions of different sizes. Lower sweep rates indicate that visitors spent more time in an exhibition. Serrell 1998
- The average time spent at an exhibit element was 1 minute 7 seconds.
- Visitors visited on average of 40% of the exhibit elements and 29% of visitors were defined as diligent, or stopped at more than 50% of the exhibit elements. A higher percentage of diligent visitors indicates visitors are more thoroughly and deeply engaging with the exhibit. The percentage of diligent visitor is very close to average %DV of 29.7 percent ( $\pm 22.8$ ) for small (<3,900 square feet) non-diorama exhibitions that Serrell reports. Serrell 1998
- Few visitors interacted with staff (8%) and those who did spent an average time of 1:19.
- Most visitors came in an adult only group (67%), 23% came with a group with children, and 8% came alone.
- The average size of a group was 2.5 people.

# PRISONS TODAY EXHIBIT HEAT MAP

## Results Based on Timing and Tracking Observations - June 2016



**PRISONS TODAY**

QUESTIONS IN THE AGE OF MASS INCARCERATION

Larger Circle = Higher Percentage of Visitors Who Stop at Exhibit Element

Avg. Min. % Who Stop

Darker Color = Longer Average Time Spent at Exhibit Element

Exhibit Element	% Who Stop	Avg Time (Min:Sec)	% Who Read	% Who Interact	% Who Discuss	% Who Have Headset	% Who Use Take A Picture
<b>9. The Criminal Us confessional</b>	76%	2:23	54%	38%	29%	4%	2%
<b>5. Committed a crime? Doorway</b>	70%	0:12	23%	0%	13%	3%	1%
<b>17. Advantage Tables</b>	61%	1:25	26%	41%	19%	1%	0%
<b>2. Entry Reader Rail</b>	58%	0:34	30%	1%	14%	5%	0%
<b>1. Opening Video</b>	56%	5:13	9%	1%	10%	4%	2%
<b>11. Cost of Prison Panel</b>	46%	0:50	24%	0%	16%	4%	2%
<b>16. Million Dollar Block Video</b>	44%	0:40	17%	0%	7%	1%	1%
<b>7. International Goals of Prisons Panel</b>	43%	1:01	29%	0%	8%	1%	1%
<b>14. Prison Population Panel</b>	43%	0:38	32%	0%	10%	1%	1%
<b>15. Six Voices Video</b>	40%	2:06	4%	0%	2%	0%	0%
<b>18. Change Panels</b>	39%	1:12	29%	2%	12%	0%	1%
<b>6. iPad Goal of Prisons</b>	38%	1:19	18%	22%	9%	0%	0%
<b>13. Voting Rights Panel</b>	37%	0:40	22%	0%	11%	1%	2%
<b>24. Out door sign</b>	37%	0:25	16%	0%	14%	1%	1%
<b>22. Back Reading Table</b>	34%	1:57	21%	14%	6%	0%	1%
<b>23. Returning Citizen Cases</b>	33%	0:52	19%	0%	7%	1%	0%
<b>19. Postcards to Your Future</b>	31%	1:46	12%	13%	11%	1%	0%
<b>8. Death Penalty Panel</b>	30%	0:42	22%	0%	6%	1%	1%
<b>3. Entry Wall Graph</b>	28%	0:11	12%	0%	3%	3%	3%
<b>20. What We're Reading</b>	27%	1:06	21%	0%	4%	1%	1%
<b>4. Law Enforcement Panel</b>	25%	0:26	15%	0%	1%	1%	0%
<b>10. Private Prisons Panel</b>	20%	0:25	12%	0%	2%	0%	0%
<b>12. School Policing Panel</b>	20%	0:19	14%	0%	0%	1%	0%
<b>21. Pamphlets</b>	18%	0:25	9%	4%	2%	1%	0%

ESP Summative Timing and Tracking Map Time In: \_\_\_\_\_ Time Out: \_\_\_\_\_ Staff Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Obs: \_\_\_\_\_ Map #: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: a) 18-24 b) 25-34 c) 35-44 d) 45-54 e) 55-64 f) 65+ Who with: a) Ind b) Group adults only c) Group with children # of people in group: \_\_\_\_\_

**Key:**

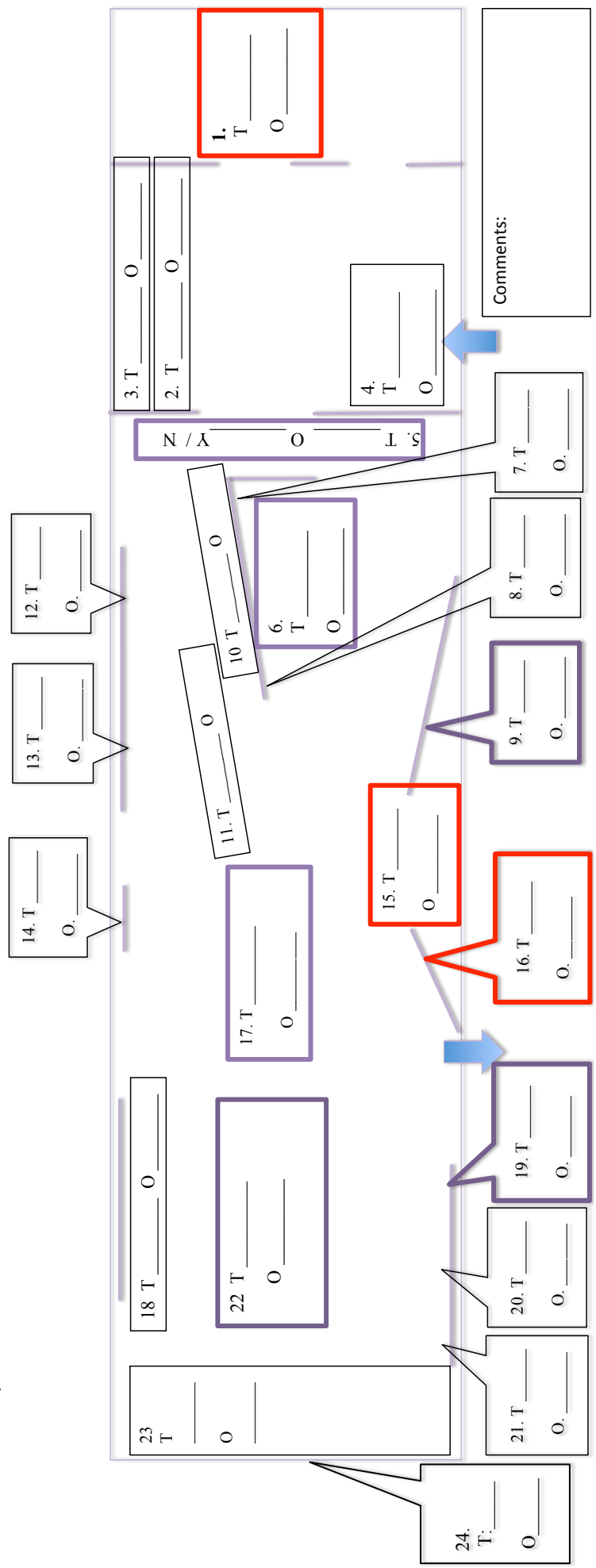
- 1. **Opening Video**
- 2. Entry Reader Rail
- 3. Entry Wall Graph
- 4. Law Enforcement Panel
- 5. Committed a crime? Doorway
- 6. iPad Goal of Prisons
- 7. International Goals of Prisons Panel
- 8. Death Penalty Panel

- 9. The Criminal Us confessional
- 10. Private Prisons Panel
- 11. Cost of Prison Panel
- 12. School Policing Panel
- 13. Voting Rights Panel
- 14. Prison Population Panel
- 15. **Six Voices Video**
- 16. **Million Dollar Block Video**
- 17. Advantage Tables

- 18. Change Panels
- 19. Postcards to Your Future
- 20. What We're Reading
- 21. Pamphlets
- 22. Back Reading Table
- 23. Returning Citizen Cases
- 24. Out door sign

**Observations:**

- R: reading
- I: Interact
- D: Discuss
- S: interact with Staff
- H: Head set
- P: Used Phone



**ESP Summative Evaluation**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_ Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_. Are you finished looking at the exhibit? Do you mind if I ask you some questions to help us improve the exhibit?

1. How would you rate this exhibit on a scale of 1-7, where 1 is the worst, and 7 is the best.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

2. What did you think the exhibit was about?

3. How much has this exhibit changed your perspective on:

Has not changed

Has changed a great deal

Who goes to prison	1	2	3	4	5
Why people go to prison	1	2	3	4	5
The fairness of the U.S. Criminal Justice system	1	2	3	4	5
Your relationship to the U.S. Criminal Justice system	1	2	3	4	5
Your ability to help change the current system	1	2	3	4	5

4. If your perspective about the criminal justice has changed, how has it changed?

5. What did you like the most in the exhibit?

6. What did you like the least in the exhibit?

7. What, if anything, could we do to make the exhibit better?

8. Which of the following best describe(s) your relationship with the U.S. criminal justice system? Circle all that apply.

- a) No relationship      b) I have been in prison      c) My friend/relative is/has been in prison
- d) I have worked in a prison/law enforcement      e) My friend/relative has worked in a prison/law enforcement
- f) I have been a victim of violent crime      g) My friend/relative has been a victim of violent crime
- h) I study/have studied the criminal justice system      i) Other: \_\_\_\_\_

9. How many times have you visited Eastern State Penitentiary before today?

- a) 0    b) 1    c) 2    d) 3    e) 4    f) 5    or more

9a. If visited before, what for?

- a) Site visit    b) Terror Behind the Walls    c) Other Event
- d) Other \_\_\_\_\_

10. Political Leanings?

- a) Right/ Conservative/ republican    b) Independent
- c) Left/ Liberal/ Democrat    d) Other \_\_\_\_\_

11. Ethnicity? Please choose any that apply.

- a) African American/ Black    b) Asian/Asian American
- c) Caucasian/ White    d) Hispanic/ Latino
- e) Native American/ American Indian
- f) Other \_\_\_\_\_    g) Decline to answer

12. What gender, if any, do you identify as?

- M    F    Trans/ nonconforming    Other \_\_\_\_\_

11. Zip Code or country \_\_\_\_\_

What is your age?

- a) 18-24    b) 25-34    c) 35-44    d) 45-54    e) 55-64    f) 65

Serrell, Beverly, *Paying Attention: Visitors and Museum Exhibitions*. Washington, D.C.: American Association of Museums, Technical Information Service, 1998