

Barron Hilton Pioneers of Flight: Exhibition Evaluation
Office of Policy and Analysis
Smithsonian Institution
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ABSTRACT

Barron Hilton Pioneers of Flight (PoF) is a major exhibition in the National Air and Space Museum (NASM) Mall Building. *PoF* presents an eclectic assortment of aircraft and artifacts united by the fact that all were associated with aviators and aviatrix who pushed existing social and technological limits of flight.

NASM asked the Smithsonian Office of Policy and Analysis (OP&A) to conduct a study of visitor reactions to the exhibition, especially considering that a reinstatement emphasized activities for families. OP&A staff intercepted visitors exiting the exhibition. Interviews were conducted on Thursday, July 12, Saturday, July 14, and Monday, July 16. Overall, 473 visitors were intercepted. 328 completed the survey for a participation rate of 69 percent.

Visitors were asked to rate their overall experiences at the *Pioneers of Flight* Exhibition on a five point-scale that has been applied by OP&A across Smithsonian exhibitions and museums: *Poor, Fair, Good, Excellent, and Superior*. Nearly four-fifths of the exhibition visitors said that their experiences were Superior (14%) or Excellent (64%). Overall, exhibition visitors gave *PoF* a higher rating compared to the average Smithsonian exhibition (Excellent and Superior combined; 67%).

The exhibition actively engaged a target audience of families with young children with features of the exhibit design designed to appeal to it. Half of the visitors at *Pioneers of Flight* “Definitely would recommend” (50%) this exhibition to families with young children, while another 38% “Probably would recommend” the exhibition.