

FISHING FOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

RESULTS FROM THREE PILOT PROJECTS ABOUT FISHERIES POLICY



MYSTIC
AQUARIUM

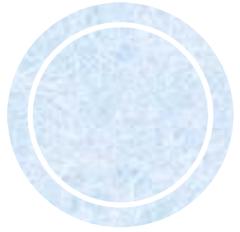


TEXAS STATE
AQUARIUM®

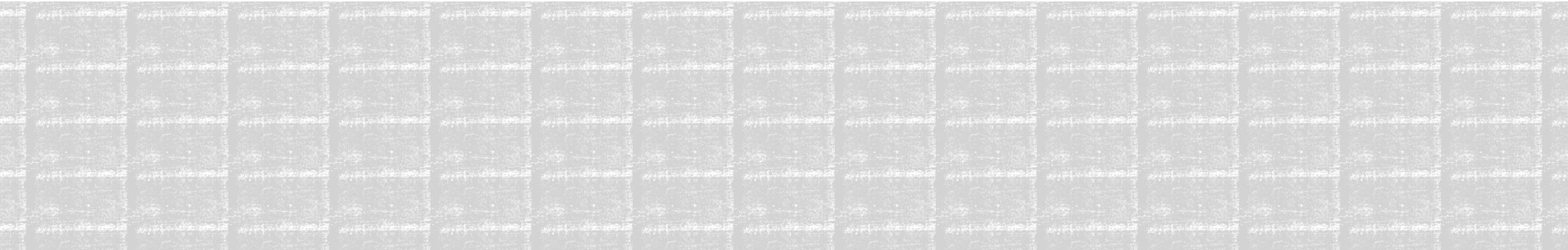
Presented on June 15, 2018

Douglas Meyer for The Ocean Project
Kelly Matis and Katie Cubina for Mystic Aquarium
Melani Baker for Seattle Aquarium
Melanie Kudra for Texas State Aquarium

FUNDED BY THE
GORDON AND BETTY
MOORE
FOUNDATION



BACKGROUND



ABOUT THE OCEAN PROJECT

- **Supporting a global network**
 - Aquariums, zoos, museums & other visitor-serving organizations & associations with an interest in advancing public engagement in ocean conservation
 - Coordinating World Oceans Day
 - Youth for the Ocean, collaboratively empowering youth worldwide
- **Providing public opinion research**
 - Conducted national level research in 1999, and then regularly between 2008 and 2014, with a core finding that visitors to aquariums and zoos expect, trust and appreciate information about how to help the animals and our environment
 - Combined since 2014 with insights from pilot projects
- **Developing public engagement approaches**
 - Innovative Solutions Grants + Program
 - Youth engagement initiatives
 - Targeted pilot projects





THIS PILOT PROJECT

- **Primary goal:** Engage the visiting public so as to (1) raise their awareness of, and (2) document their interest in supporting, science-based fisheries management
- **Secondary goal:** Engage the visiting public in a way that maintains, if not improves, (1) the quality of their experience and (2) their recognition of aquariums' role in advancing ocean conservation

IMPLEMENTATION

- **Funded by the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation** through a grant to The Ocean Project
- **Implemented in a collaborative partnership** between The Ocean Project, Mystic Aquarium, Seattle Aquarium, & Texas State Aquarium in the spring of 2018
 - Crafted a common message
 - Created site-specific approaches
 - Analyzed and compared results



COMMON MESSAGES

Four key points developed in keeping with prior research findings

- 1. Begin with news of a local species that is recovering**
 - *“For many years, we here at (AQUARIUM) have been concerned about the future of (LOCAL EXAMPLE) but recently we’ve started to see their numbers recovering...”*
- 2. Add the carryover benefits**
 - *“This isn’t just good news for the (LOCAL EXAMPLE), but also for (CARRYOVER ECOSYSTEM AND/OR ECONOMIC BENEFITS)”*
- 3. Connect this success with national policy (While giving the visitor a supporting role)**
 - *“This turnaround has been made possible by people like you, who began making sustainable seafood choices, and also because we as a country began managing our fisheries in a way that is science-based...”*
- 4. Relay urgency, and ask for a show of support ("Together we can...")**
 - *“Congress is now ready to review how we manage our national fisheries. Here at (AQUARIUM), our message is stay with science. We’re hoping you will join us in relaying that message by signing a comment card”*

Mystic Aquarium's PSA

UNIQUE APPROACHES

▪ Mystic Aquarium

- Created and aired a **1.5 minute video PSA** in their marine theater prior to the start of each sea lion show. During the test period, April 19-21, the video was introduced by a trainer, so as to draw the visitors' attention to it, and then as guests exited a volunteer asked if they would like to sign a comment card.

▪ Seattle Aquarium

- Incorporated this messaging into a **10 minute dive show** during the last two weekends of April and the first weekend of May, with visitors asked to consider signing a comment card.

▪ Texas State Aquarium

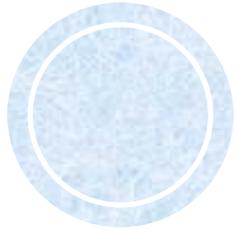
- As part of the Party for the Planet celebration on April 21, as well as on Endangered Species Day on May 19, aquarium staff **served up the messaging along with red snapper samples**, and asked guests to consider signing the comment cards.



EVALUATION METHODS

- **Tracked response rates for the comment cards**
- **Informally collected qualitative staff feedback**
 - Delivering the message and making the ask
 - Visitor response to conservation ask and exit survey
- **Conducted quantitative visitor exit surveys, comparing responses from engaged and unengaged visitors on:**
 - Thoughts on seafood sustainability
 - Perceptions of current fisheries policy
 - Opinions on the role of aquariums in conservation
 - Overall experience



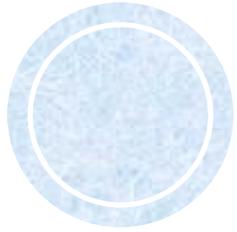


FINDINGS: SUMMARY

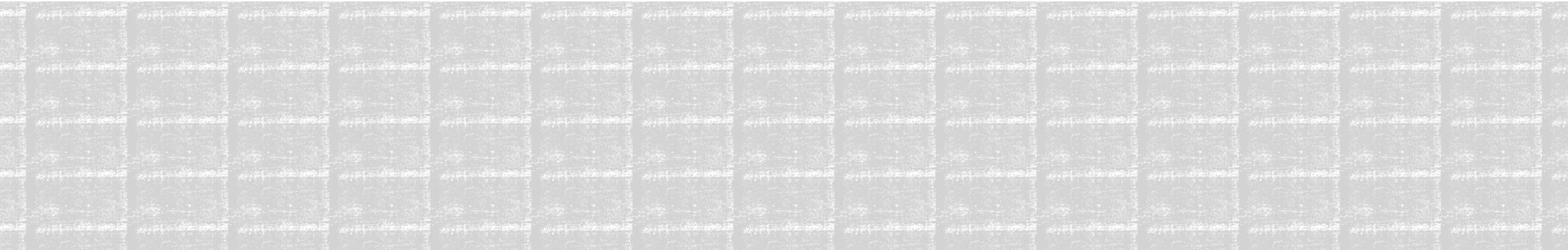
FINDINGS: SUMMARY

- **These pilots support the hypotheses that aquariums can effectively engage visitors on this issue** of science-based fisheries management while maintaining if not improving both the quality of the experience and recognition of an aquarium's role in advancing ocean conservation
- **Each of the approaches had strengths and weaknesses**
 - The video PSA was most effective overall, with the best reach
 - The diver presentation had the best message retention
 - The seafood sampling the best rate of card completion





FINDINGS: CARD COMPLETION



MYSTIC AQUARIUM

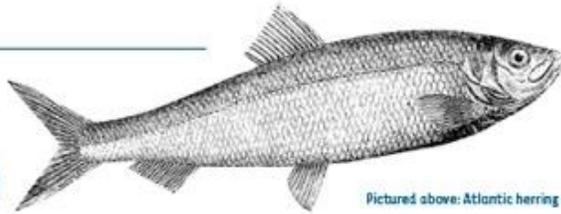
Dear Members of Congress,

Because our nation has been a leader in science-based fisheries management, species such as the Atlantic herring are now recovering.

So please stay the course and keep our national fisheries policies strong, both for the future of Atlantic herring and the health of our ocean.

Sign _____ Date _____

State _____



Pictured above: Atlantic herring

- Total attendance during test period: 17,383
- Attendance at show/screening: **10,356**
- Total comment cards signed: **1,303**
- Percentage asked who signed a card: 12.6%
- **Additional:** The test period was the three day weekend of April 19-21, noting that the aquarium also showed the film and collected comment cards both before and after that time. **Attendance and card counts confirm that this approach had the greatest reach.**



SEATTLE AQUARIUM

- Total attendance during test period: 19,860
 - Attendance at 19 diver presentations: 1,080
 - Comment cards signed: 62
 - Percentage asked who signed a card: 5.75%
-
- **Additional:** The test period consisted of six weekend days, including April 21, 22, 28 and 29, as well as May 6 and 12. **Exit surveys suggest this approach yielded the best information retention.**

Dear Members of Congress,

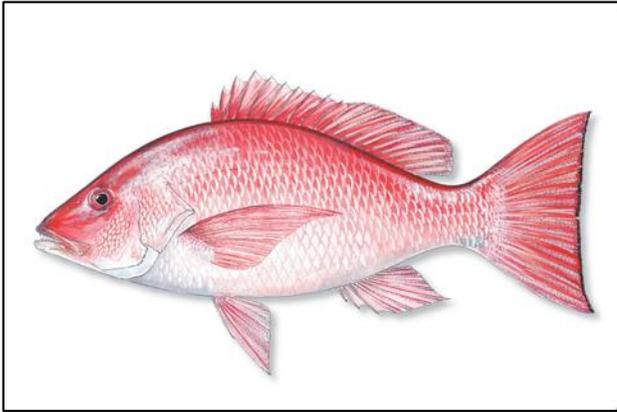
Because our nation has been a leader in science-based fisheries management, species such as the canary rockfish are now recovering.

So please stay the course and keep our national fisheries policies strong, both for the future of canary rockfish and the health of our ocean.

Sign: _____

Date: _____





Dear Members of Congress,

Because our nation has been a leader in sustainable fisheries management, species such as red snapper in the Gulf of Mexico are now recovering.

So please stay the course and keep our national fisheries policy strong, both for the future of red snapper and the health of our ocean.

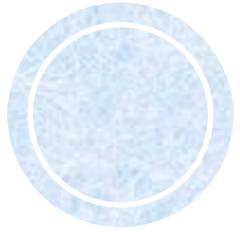
Sign:
Date:



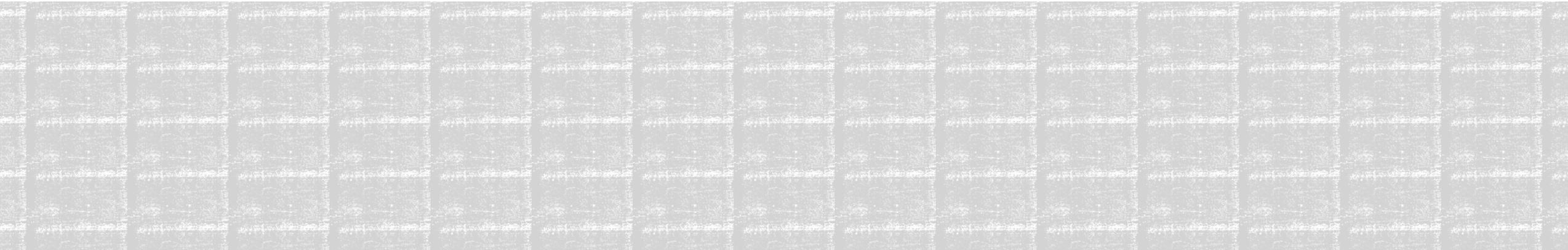
**TEXAS STATE
AQUARIUM.**

TEXAS STATE AQUARIUM

- Total attendance during test period: 5,469
- Samples served over two days: 830
- Comment cards signed: 514
- Percentage asked who signed a card: **62%**
- **Additional:** On the first test day, April 21, visitors were served large red snapper tacos, whereas on the second test day, May 19, they were served smaller samples on crackers. Based on initial results, aquarium staff also adapted their script and added some signage on day two. **Card count confirms this approach had the highest card completion rate.**



FINDINGS: STAFF FEEDBACK



STAFF FEEDBACK



MYSTIC
AQUARIUM

- **Comment cards were appreciated by visitors.** "Several (visitors) thanked us for the signature-collection effort. Some seemed genuinely heartened to be part of 'something bigger' just by signing their names."
- **Substantially more cards were completed with a wall-display method (853) than with a tabling method (450).** "The thought is that with the wall, visitors could clearly see that they needed only to sign their name; in contrast, with the clipboards, there was more resistance to the unknown, since (the specific ask) wasn't immediately visible."
- **There was resistance to completing the exit survey.** "In general only one out of every four people approached was willing to complete the survey; at busier times or late in the day, however, the decline ratio ballooned to as high as one in ten. The project period occurred during very busy days at the Aquarium: the thought is that the guests had been harried all day and so were resistant to committing their time to a survey."
- **Consider a Spanish-language version of the survey and the cards,** which could be offered in the future

STAFF FEEDBACK

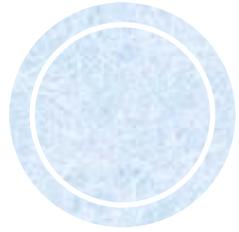


- **"It felt good to share a conservation success story" (and) "overall, we felt a very positive response from the visitors,"** more so than many other conservation messages that we deliver during these dives shows/we had the audience's attention while delivering the message, and there would be several nods and other positive body language from the crowd...so often our conservation topics are problems that need to be addressed, and this was refreshing to focus on a success story to get people engaged"
- **"We were surprised by how many people were willing to sign comment cards during their visit."** We do not typically do an 'ask' of our visitors, and we were pleased to see their response."
- **Estimated that about two thirds to three fourths of the people asked agreed to take the survey...**"it was 'pretty smooth,' easier to catch folks when there wasn't an alternative place to go (besides the exit), and might have been easier if " two of us were stationed at the same time."
- **"A few visitors...**upon seeing the early questions tried to hand the survey back, stating that they do not eat fish (but were encouraged to complete it nonetheless)...indicated that they accidentally missed answering the final question...would go into some detail talking about a particular question, and while "it was great to hear" their opinions, it slowed down collection"

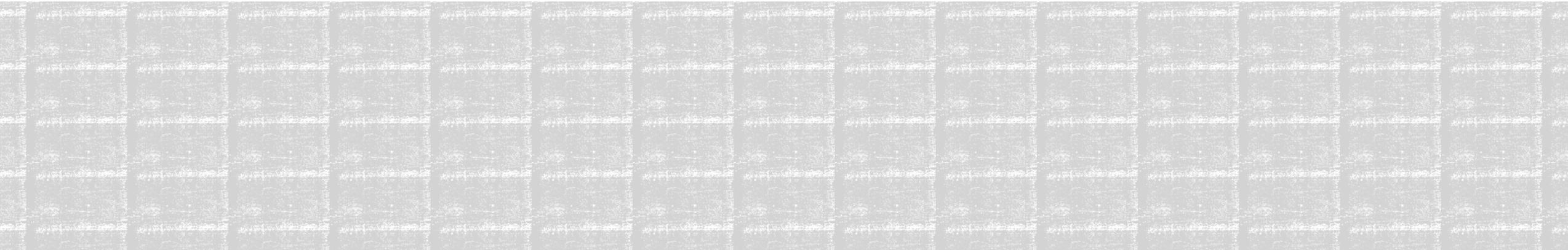
STAFF FEEDBACK



- **The first time was a challenge to deliver the messaging while serving the samples** "The second time we augmented (the serving) with a large graphic and a rack card. Even though we moved from a big free taco to snapper on a cracker, it seemed we had more time to engage with the key points. Part of this was due to the particular staff who worked the (event and how) the crackers were much less distracting"
- **Many of those who received samples were in family groups**, and it was often just one adult per family group who would go to complete a card, so staff believed response rate could have been even higher on day two, and that proved to be true (noting one staff member) "is very persuasive and knows how to motivate folks"
- **"Most people were happy to participate in the survey. In fact, we had couples both want to complete the survey (even though only one had been selected), and finally (had to) let anyone interested do so.** On day one, we did the surveys just outside the (exit) door. This time we stayed just inside the doors, as we knew we would hit (our goal)"
- **"I am kind of kicking myself because we didn't include Spanish!** Most of our exhibits are done in both Spanish and English."



FINDINGS: VISITOR EXIT SURVEY



ABOUT THE EXIT SURVEY

- Adult visitors selected at random intervals as they neared the exits
- Visitors asked to complete a three-minute survey on an iPad
- Some resistance to the initial request, especially during busy times
- Nonetheless large samples (Mystic: 290/Seattle: 406*/Texas: 317)
- 100% survey completion (i.e. everyone who started it finished it!)
- Much higher question completion when using SurveyMonkey (Mystic and Seattle) as opposed to iSurvey (Texas State) software
- Tests for statistical significance were not run for results from Texas State given the nature of the sample, and the slightly different approaches applied on days one and two
- High overall confidence in the findings

* Statistically significant sample of visitors (95% +/- 5)



FINAL QUESTION FOR SEGMENTATION

MYSTIC AQUARIUM: During your visit today, did you watch a short video on Atlantic herring before the California Sea Lion show?

YES=100

NO=132

UNSURE/SKIPPED=58

Note: These were especially crowded days at the aquarium, likely leading to the high number of unsure/skipped

SEATTLE AQUARIUM: During your visit today, did you hear about the canary rockfish from a staff member?

YES=88

NO=217

UNSURE/SKIPPED=101

Note: Some visitors may not have remembered the specific fish story, with staff adding that others missed this question on the survey

TEXAS STATE AQUARIUM: During your visit today, did you try the red snapper sample?

YES=108

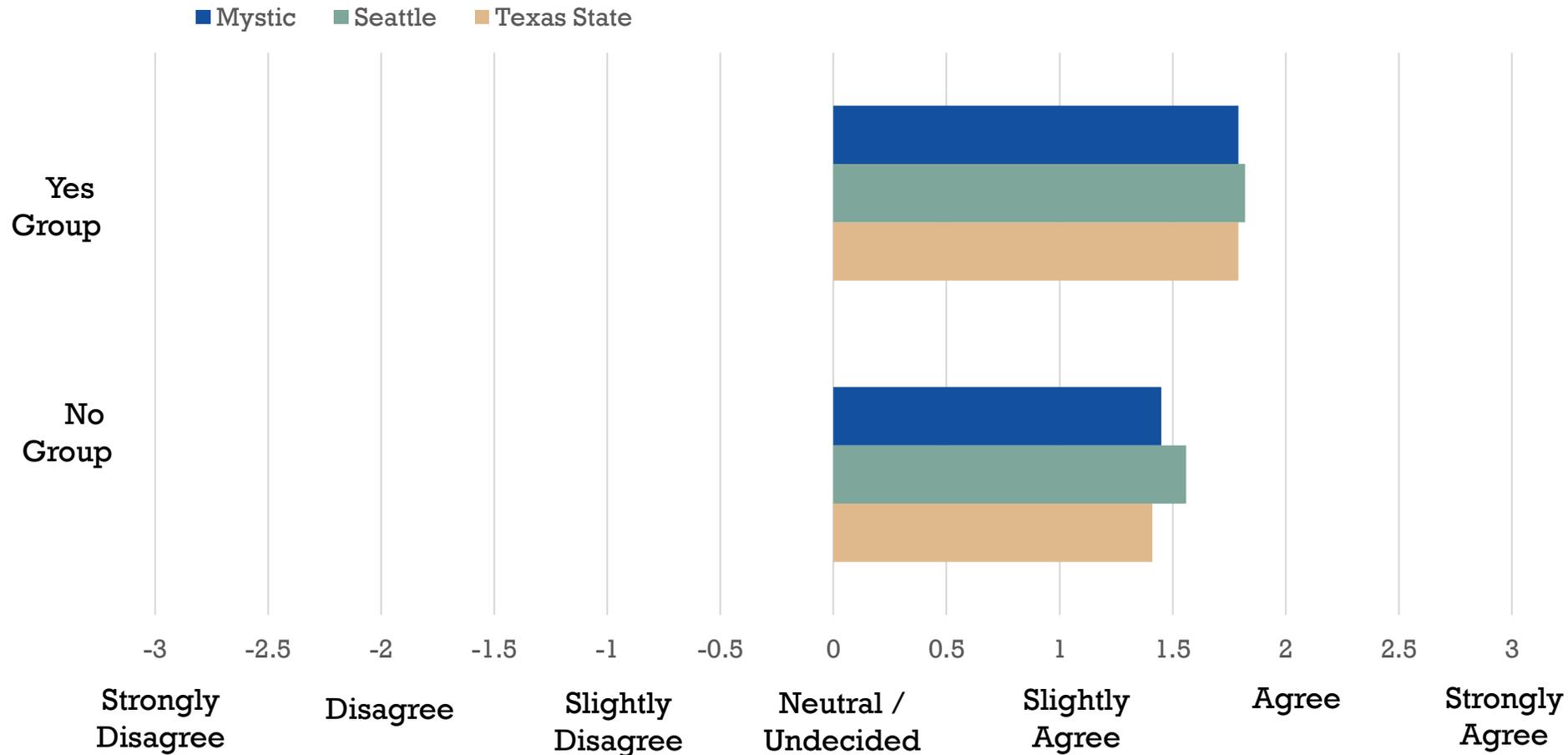
NO=188

UNSURE/SKIPPED=23

Note: A lower level of disqualified visitors, but many more skipped questions, likely reflects survey software used and language preferences

THOUGHTS ON SUSTAINABLE SEAFOOD

I worry about the future availability of seafood from the ocean



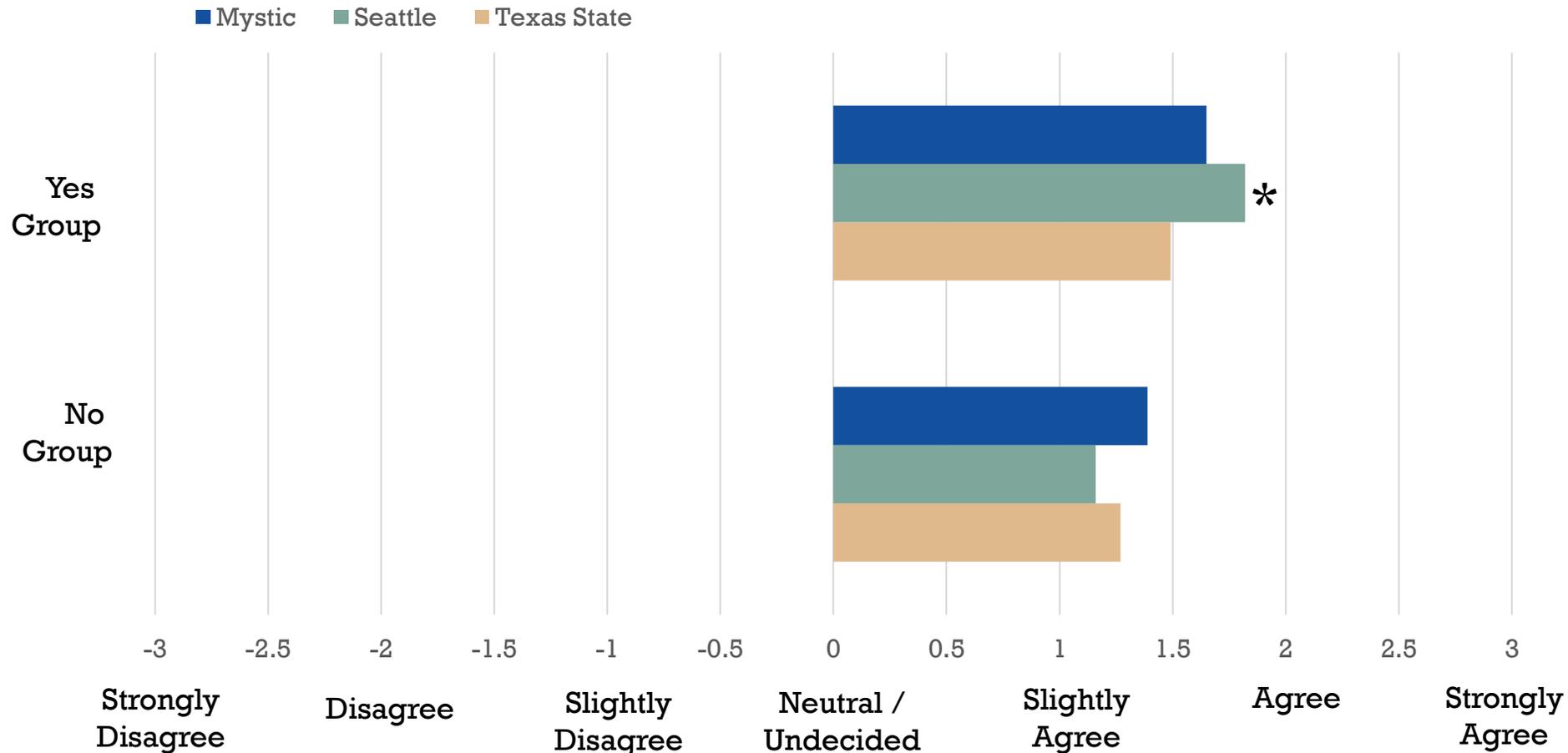
Hypothesis:
Exposure to the messaging would be associated with a slight increase in agreement

Result:
Hypothesis supported, noting that results also may suggest a higher baseline interest in conservation issues among those who attend shows and interact with staff

Note:
A comparison of these results with a prior national survey adds further support to the idea of visits, and perhaps especially presentations and talks as a prime engagement opportunity

THOUGHTS ON SUSTAINABLE SEAFOOD

I am familiar with the concept of sustainable seafood



* The higher likelihood to agree was statistically significant

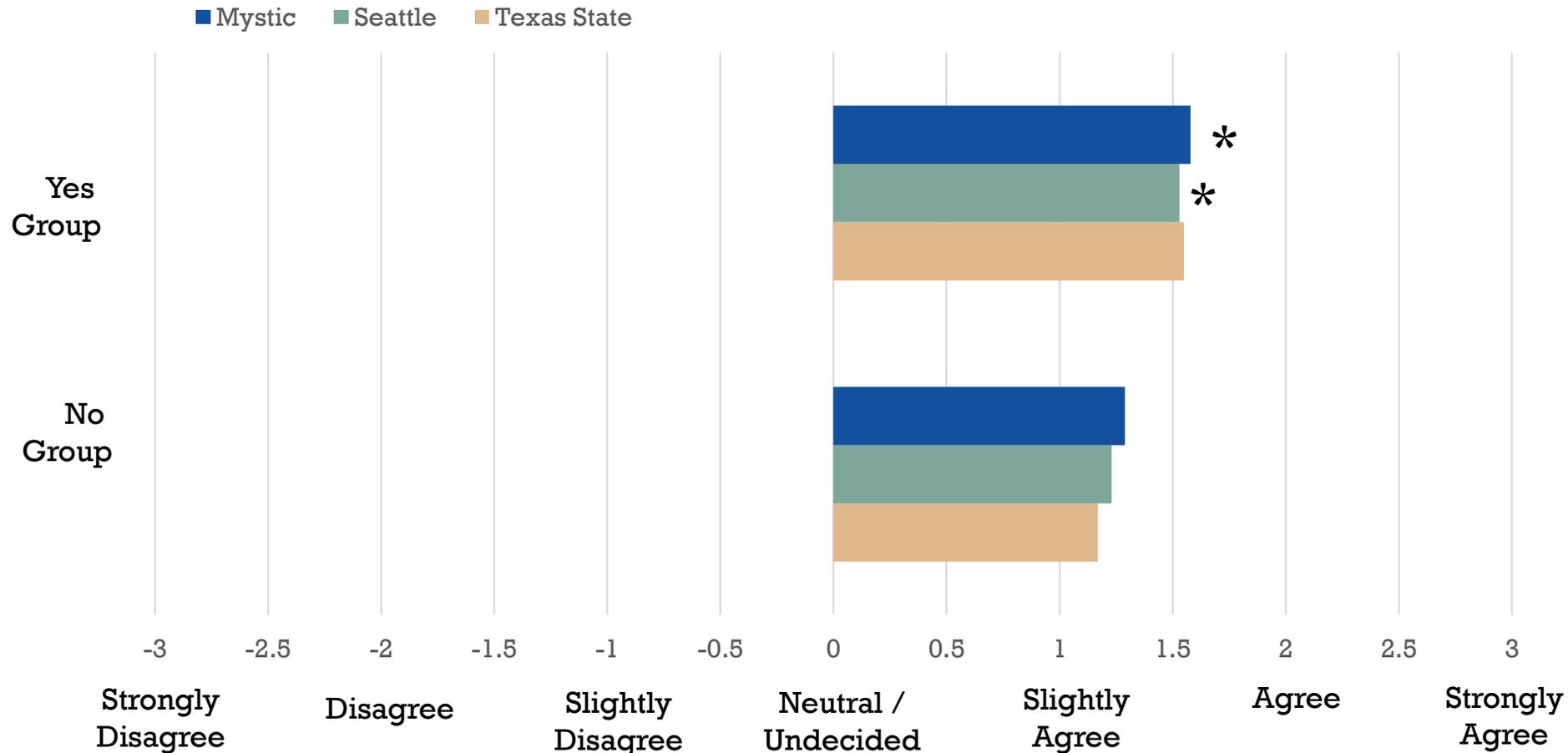
Hypothesis:
Exposure to the messaging would be associated with a slight increase in agreement

Results:
Hypothesis supported, noting that results also suggest a higher baseline interest in conservation issues among those who interact with staff

Note: Again supports the idea of visits, and perhaps especially presentations and talks as a prime engagement opportunity

THOUGHTS ON SUSTAINABLE SEAFOOD

My seafood purchases...impact fish populations in the ocean



Hypothesis:
Exposure to the messaging would be associated with a slight increase in agreement

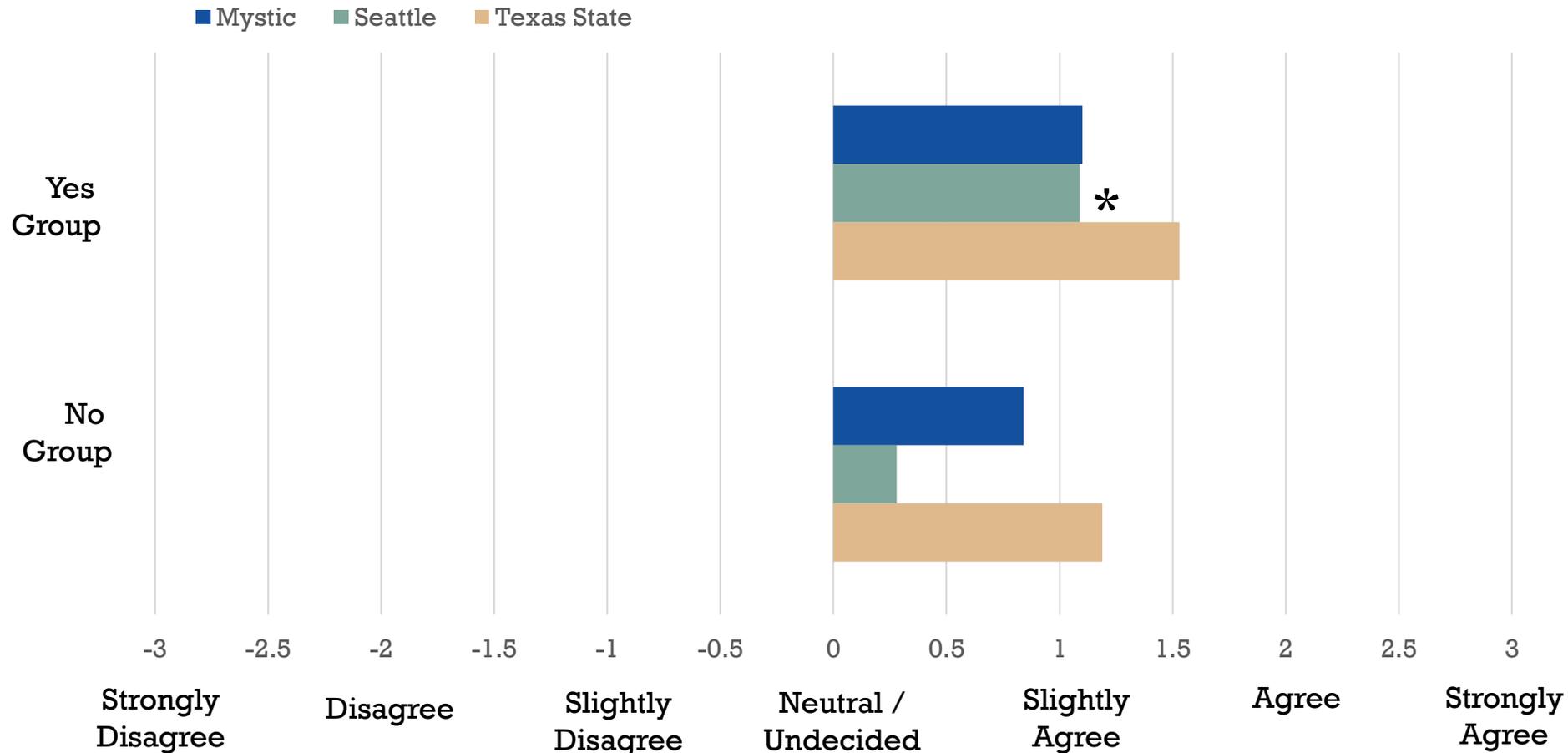
Result:
Hypothesis strongly supported.

Note:
Aligns with earlier findings that being asked to help correlates with a stronger belief that the actions will have an impact.

* The higher likelihood to agree was statistically significant

PERCEPTIONS OF FISHERIES POLICY

The US is starting to see the recovery of some...overfished species



* The higher likelihood to agree was statistically significant

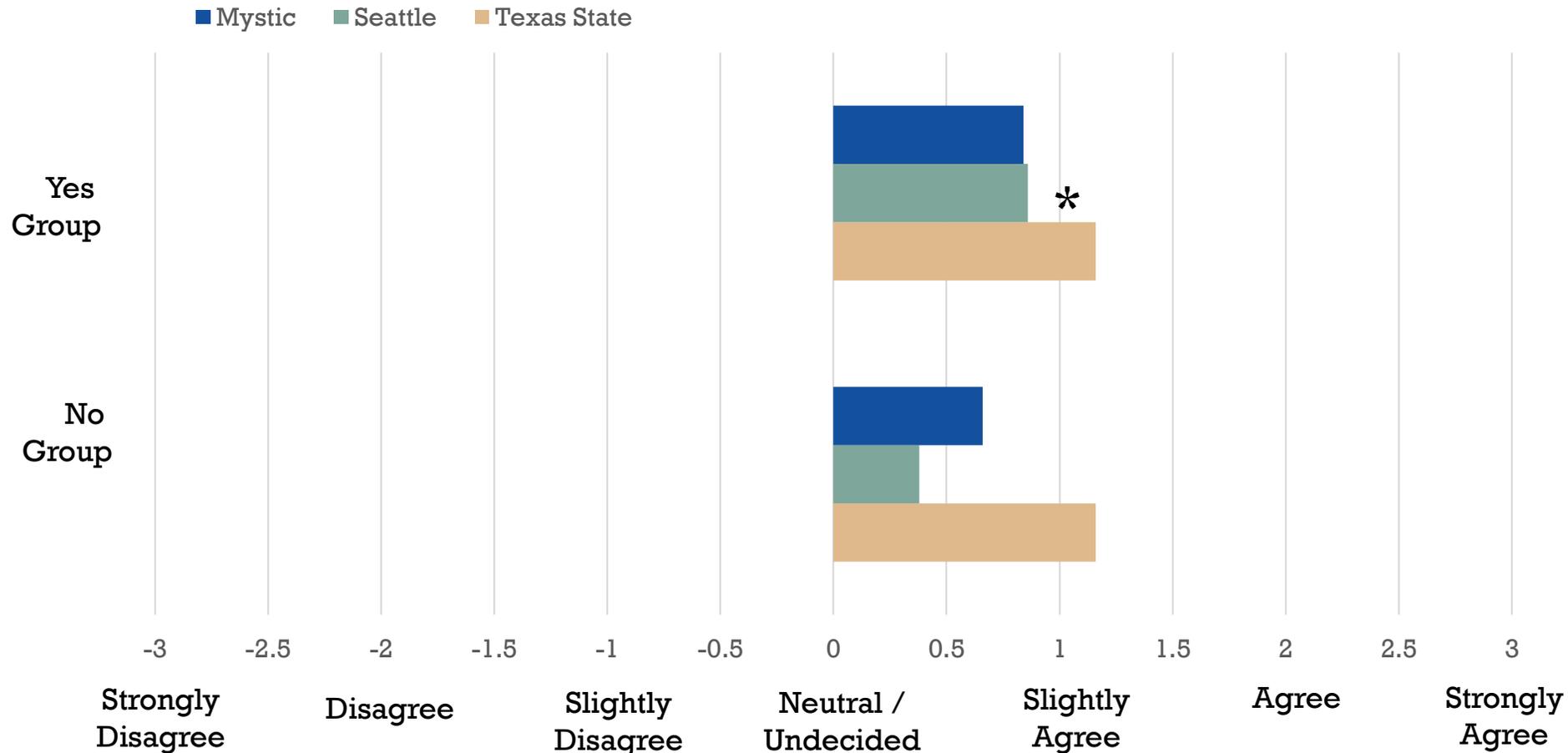
Hypothesis:
Exposure to the messaging would be associated with a slight increase in agreement

Result:
Hypothesis strongly supported, most strikingly at Seattle

Note:
Regional differences seem to be at play, with, for example, extensive media coverage and active recreational anglers in Texas perhaps providing for a higher baseline awareness, while media coverage of ongoing problems with salmon contributing to lower baseline awareness in Seattle.

PERCEPTIONS OF FISHERIES POLICY

The US is using a science-based approach to fisheries management



* The higher likelihood to agree was statistically significant

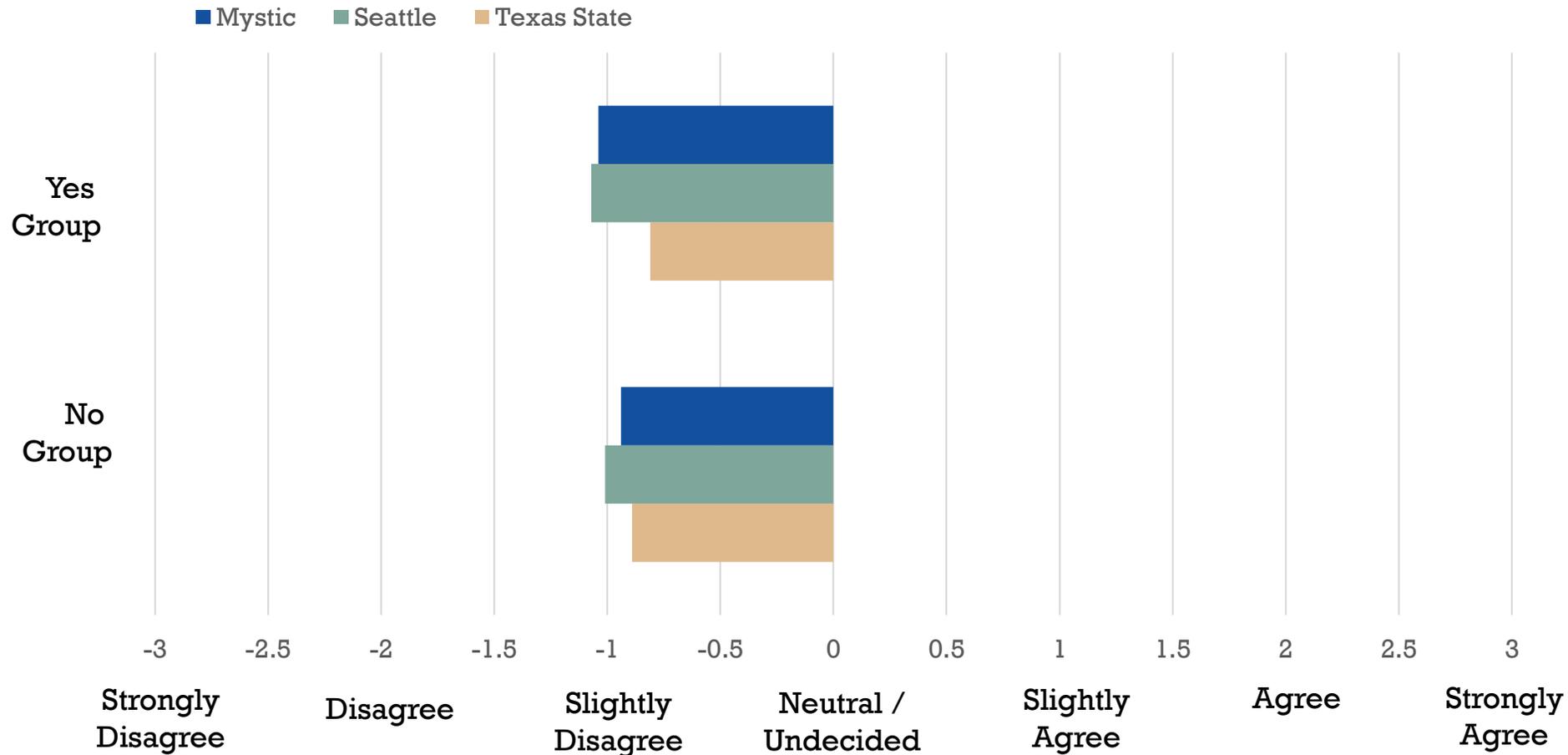
Hypothesis:
Exposure to the messaging would be associated with a slight increase in agreement

Result:
Hypothesis supported, strongly supported at Mystic and Seattle, yet no discernable impact at Texas State.

Note:
The lack of discernable impact at Texas State may be related to the difficulties reported by staff in conveying the full messaging while serving the samples, adding that there was a high percentage of respondents at that site who simply skipped the policy questions.

PERCEPTIONS OF FISHERIES POLICY

The US should weaken its fisheries management policies



Hypothesis:

Exposure to the messaging either would not impact, or would be associated with a very slight decrease in agreement.

Results:

Inconclusive, with a very slight decrease in agreement among those who received the messaging at Mystic and Seattle, but a slight increase in Texas.

Note:

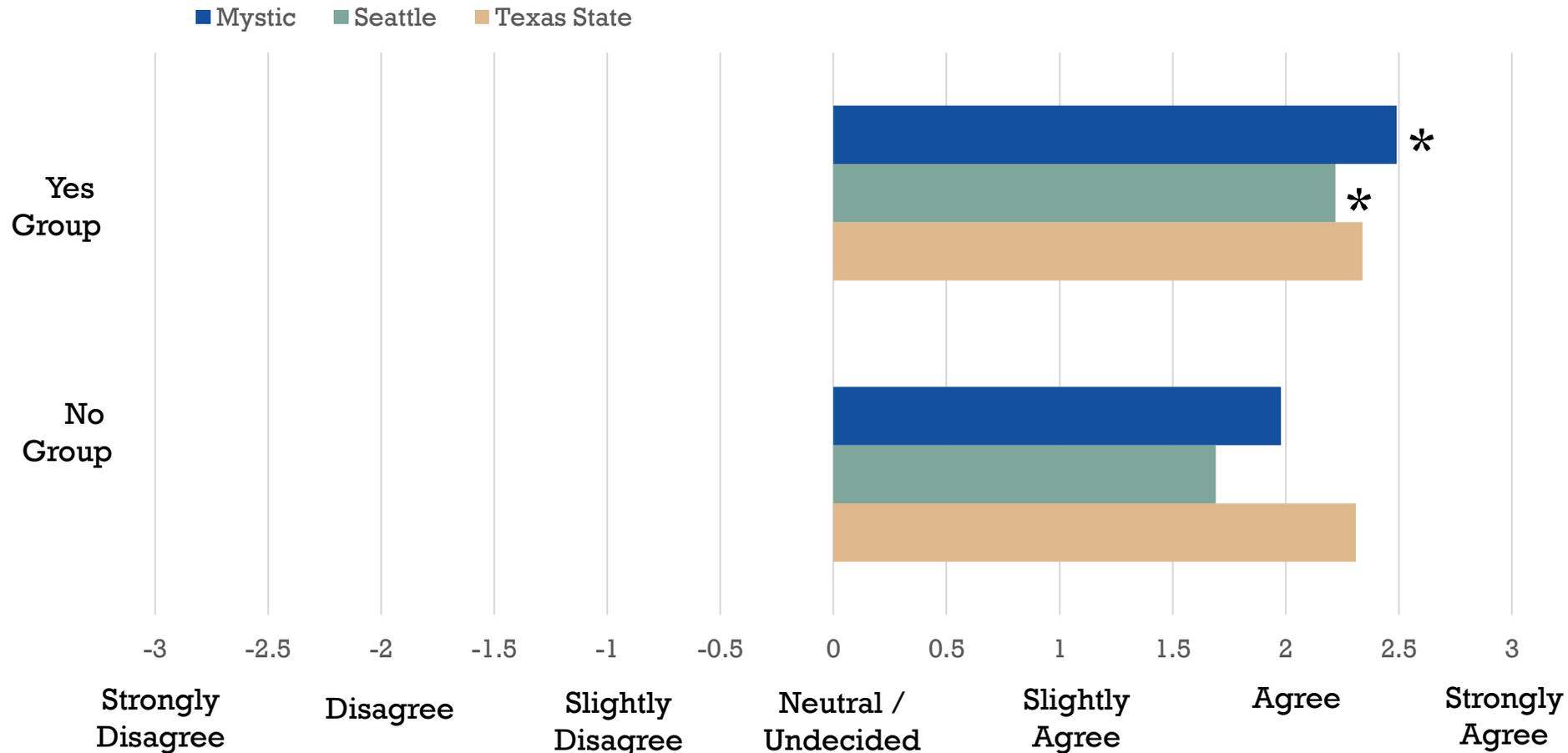
A high percentage of respondents at Texas State skipped this question.

Note:

An overall suggestion that the visiting public as a whole does not want to see these policies weakened.

AQUARIUMS AND CONSERVATION

The ___ Aquarium is helping to conserve our ocean & ocean animals



* The higher likelihood to agree was statistically significant

Hypothesis:

Exposure to the messaging would be associated with a slight increase in agreement from an already high baseline.

Result:

Hypothesis supported, strongly at Mystic and Seattle; inconclusive for Texas State.

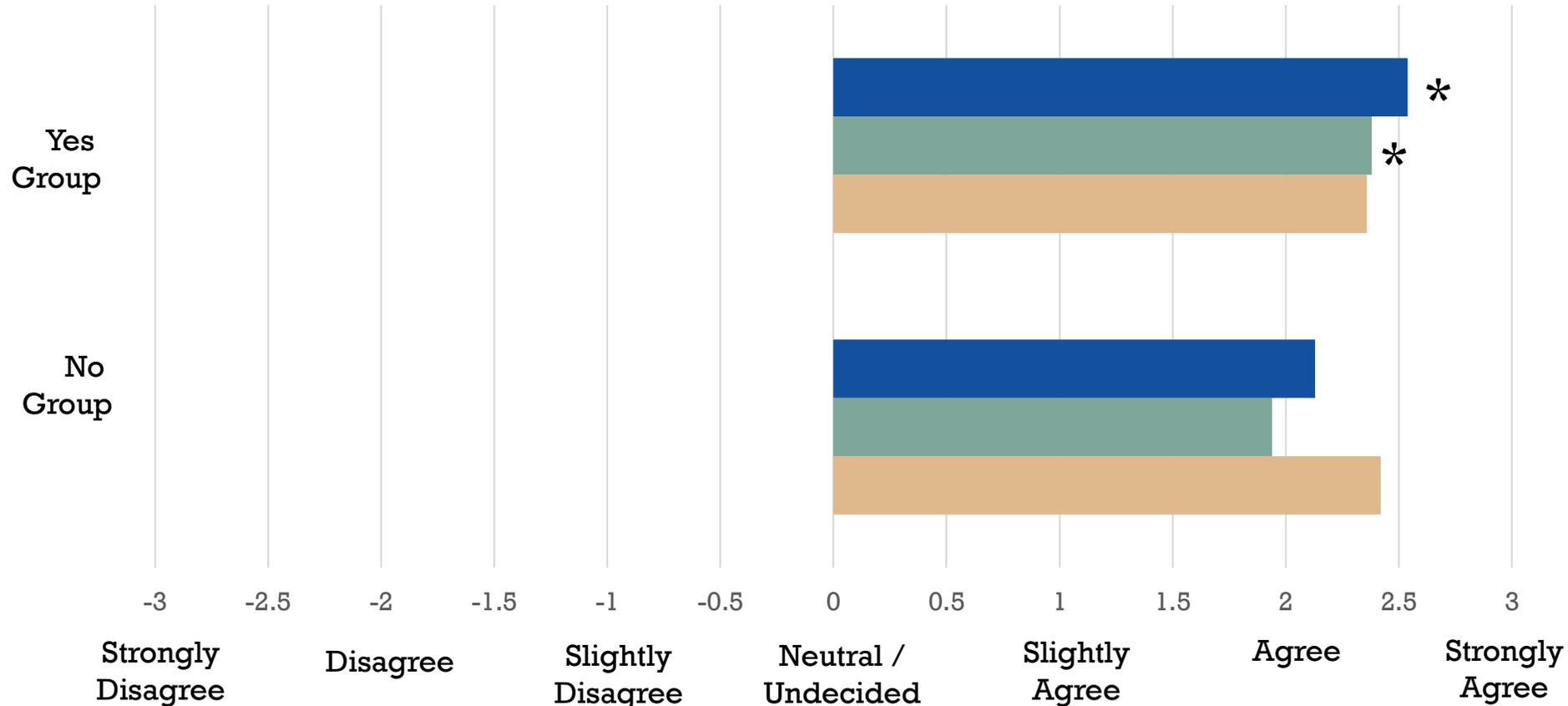
Note:

The lack of discernable impact at Texas State again may be related to the difficulties reported by staff in conveying the full messaging while serving the samples, and a high amount of other conservation activities also in play.

AQUARIUMS AND CONSERVATION

The ___ Aquarium is a good source of information about ways to help the ocean and ocean animals

■ Mystic ■ Seattle ■ Texas State



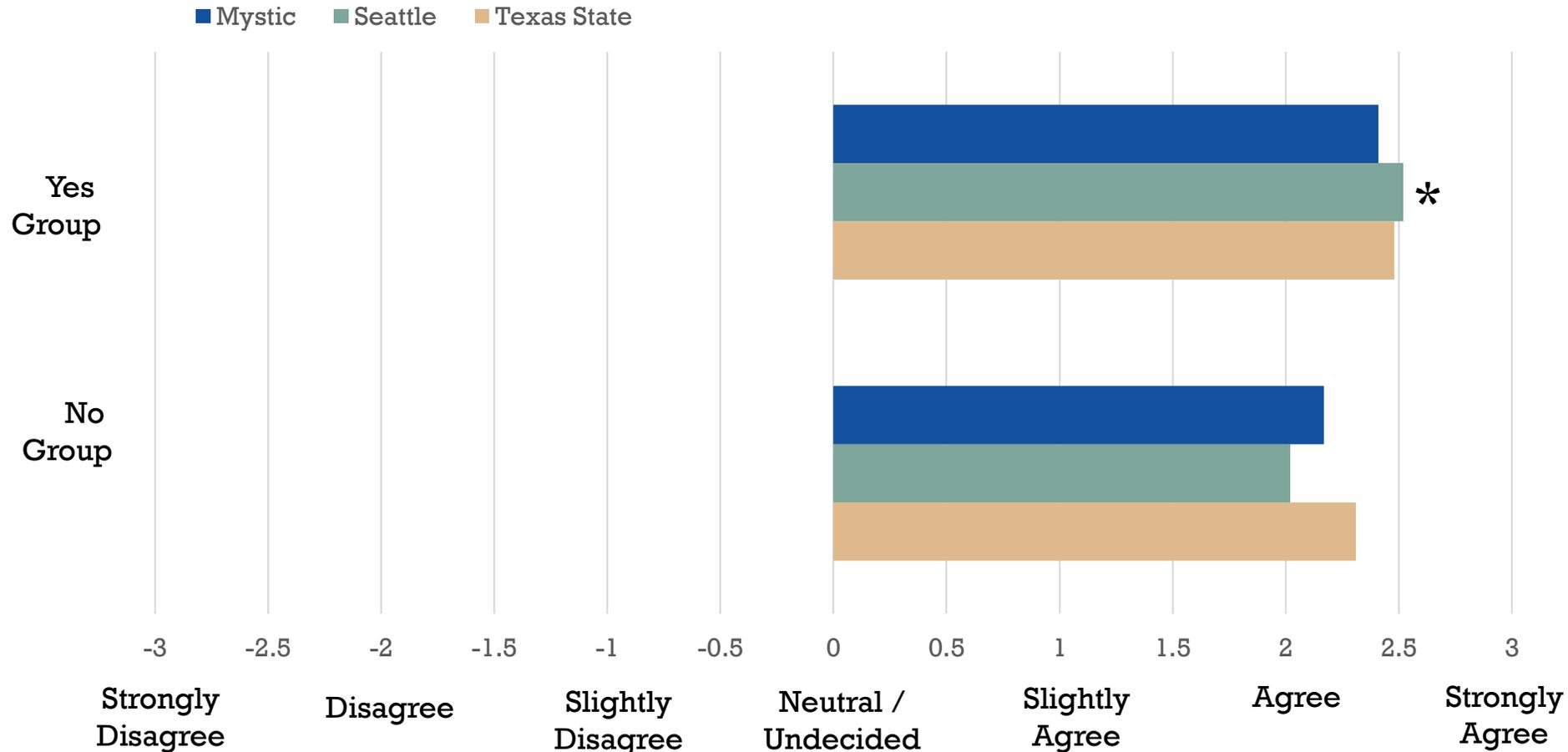
* The higher likelihood to agree was statistically significant

Hypothesis:
Exposure to the messaging would be associated with a slight increase in agreement from an already high baseline.

Result:
Hypothesis supported, strongly at Mystic and Seattle; again inconclusive for Texas State.

AQUARIUMS AND CONSERVATION

The actions of people like me, together with those of aquariums and zoos, can add up to help our ocean and ocean animals



* The higher likelihood to agree was statistically significant

Hypothesis:

Exposure to the messaging would be associated with a slight increase in agreement from an already high baseline

Result:

Hypothesis supported

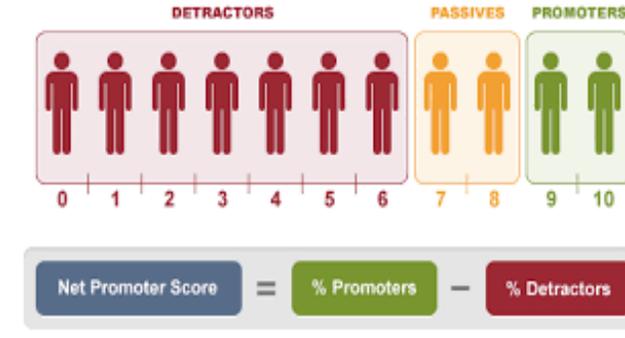
Note:

As mentioned earlier, this aligns with earlier findings that being asked to help correlates with a stronger belief that the actions will have an impact.

OVERALL EXPERIENCE

Net Promoter® Score

How likely is it that you would recommend _____ Aquarium to a friend or colleague?



Hypothesis:

Exposure to the messaging would not notably impact, or would be associated with a slight increase in already strong scores

Result:

Some suggestion of a positive impact on NPS, especially in terms of nudging 'passives' up to 'promoters'

Note:

Some of the impact shown here may be attributable to the audience attracted to, as well as the overall impact of a show or discussion

Note:

NPS can be volatile in relatively small sample sizes

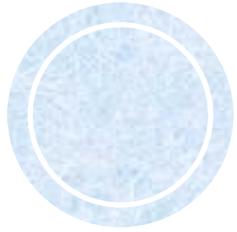


	OVERALL	YES GROUP (Received messaging)	NO GROUP (Did not receive messaging)
MYSTIC AQUARIUM	73	88	67
SEATTLE AQUARIUM	47	66	43
TEXAS STATE AQUARIUM*	82	79	84

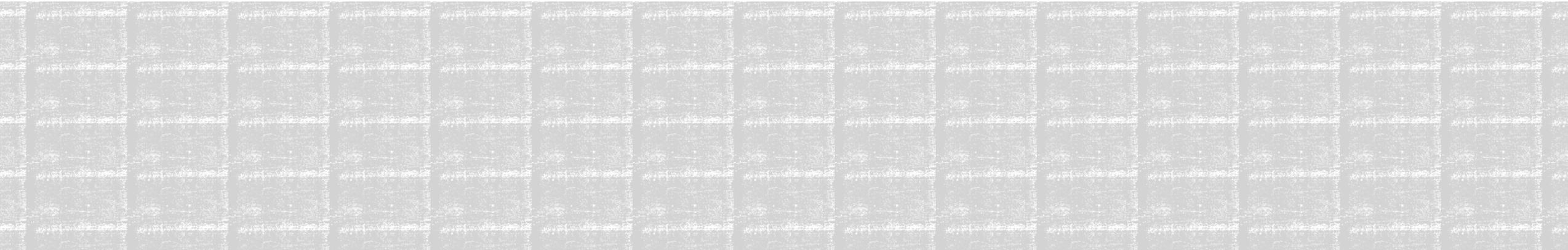
"Based on the global NPS standards, any score above 0 would be considered 'good,' (with) 50 and above being excellent while 70 and above is considered 'world class'"

– Promoter.io

* At Texas State, day one results had the yes group at 79 and no group at 87, whereas day two had the yes group at 81 and the no group at 77



RECOMMENDATIONS





RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Don't be afraid to bring visiting public into public policy!**
- **Design your public engagement based on policy goal**
- **Carefully craft your messaging**
- **Choose the most appropriate engagement approach**
- **Maximize the opportunity in scripted presentations & shows**
- **Be prepared to leverage visitor interest**

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