

To: Interested Parties  
From: Edge Research  
Re: Findings from US National Survey on Orca Captivity  
Date: July 18, 2012 (UPDATED)

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This memo summarizes the findings from five questions designed by Edge Research and placed on the ORC CARAVAN® national omnibus survey. The survey reached a national representative sample of US adults 18 years of age and older and was conducted June 14-17, 2012. The margin of error for the sample as a whole is +/- 3.1 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. Margins of error for subgroups of the sample vary and are larger.

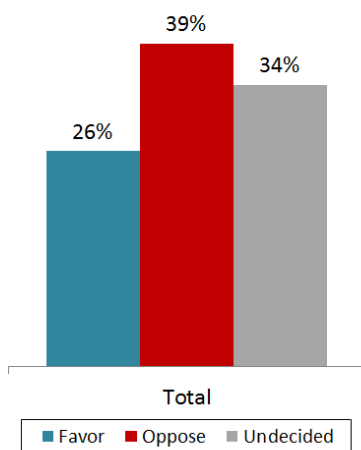
### Key Findings

Our recent survey results show that Americans lean against the practice of keeping killer whales in captivity for public display. Although many are undecided on this issue, more are opposed than in favor and this holds true across demographics and geography.

The vast majority of Americans also say that if zoos, aquaria and marine mammal theme parks were to end the practice of keeping killer whales, it would make no difference in their desire or decision to visit. Although the public does recognize some educational value in seeing killer whales close-up, the data shows that concern over the impacts of removing these animals from their natural habitat and keeping them in captivity outweighs this value.

### Support and Opposition for Killer Whales in Captivity

#### Attitudes Toward Orca Captivity



The survey measured opinions about keeping killer whales in captivity prior to offering any information about the pros or cons of this practice.

Respondents were simply asked, “As you may know, some zoos, aquariums and marine mammal theme parks keep killer whales (also called orcas) in captivity for display to the public. Do you favor or oppose the practice of keeping killer whales in captivity for display to the public?”

Overall, support for the practice of keeping killer whales in captivity for public display is low and weak. While 26% of the public are in favor, 39% are opposed and 34% are undecided. More telling of the tide of public opinion is that strong opposition to this practice is triple that of strong support with

24% strongly opposed and only 8% strongly in favor.

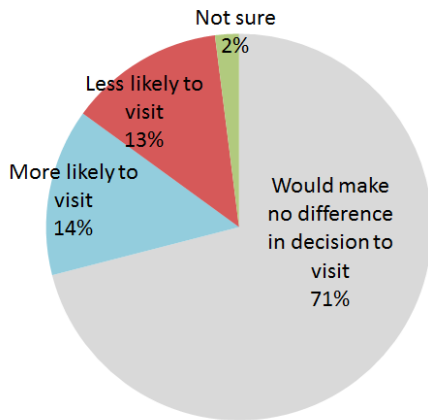
Across demographic groups, Americans fall into similar patterns with a small number in support of keeping killer whales in captivity, a plurality opposed, and about a third undecided. Again, percentages who strongly oppose the practice run double to triple the percentages who strongly favor it.

	Favor	Oppose	Undecided
Men	32%	34%	34%
Women	21%	45%	34%
18-34	26%	39%	35%
35-44	32%	36%	31%
45-54	26%	38%	36%
55-64	23%	43%	34%
65+	26%	42%	32%
Northeast	23%	50%	27%
Midwest	26%	38%	36%
South	28%	34%	38%
West	26%	41%	32%

Respondents were asked whether they have seen any type of live whales in captivity; seen them in the natural environment or learned about them through some other media that does not include live viewing. Clearly, Americans have an interest in these marine mammals with 77% reporting that they proactively sought to learn about whales either through institutions that keep them, whale watching or viewing films, television programs or other media about them. Interestingly, those who have seen whales in the wild are more likely to be opposed to keeping killer whales in captivity with 41% against, 31% in favor and 28% undecided. Further, those who have seen whales in captivity at a zoo, aquarium or theme park are equally likely to oppose the practice as they are to favor it (31% respectively).

### Are Whales an Attraction?

Suppose zoos, aquariums and marine mammal theme parks in the United States that currently keep killer whales were to **stop** keeping killer whales in captivity. Would this make you more or less likely to visit these places, or would it make no difference?



Just over a third of the public reports having visited a zoo, aquarium or marine mammal theme park with live whales on exhibit in the last five years, compared to 17% who say they have seen whales in the wild either from a boat or through shore-based whale watching. By far the most common way to “see” and learn about these marine mammals is through museum exhibits, IMAX films, news, television programming and online sources (67%).

When asked if it would affect their decision to visit a zoo, aquarium or marine mammal theme park if those places were to stop keeping killer whales in captivity, the vast majority of Americans (71%) say it would make no difference in their decision to visit, other factors are more important. Fourteen percent (14%) say they would be more likely to visit institutions that ended the practice of keeping killer whales in captivity, while 13% say they would be less likely to visit. A significant majority Americans among every demographic and geographic group say giving up killer whales will not impact their decision to visit.

### Americans Are Most Concerned About Impacts to the Animals in Captivity

At the end of the survey, respondents were read some different statements in support of and in opposition to the practice of keeping killer whales in captivity for public display. Half of the respondents heard the support statements first and then the opposition statements; and half of the respondents heard the opposition statements first and then the support statements in order to eliminate any order bias in their answers.

*Next are some statements about concerns related to keeping killer whales in captivity. For each one please say if you think it is a very convincing reason, somewhat convincing reason, not too convincing or not at all convincing as a reason to **end** the practice of keeping killer whales in captivity for display to the public.*

Statements In Opposition to the Practice of Keeping Killer Whales in Captivity	% saying "very convincing"	% saying "somewhat convincing"	Total % saying "convincing"
In the wild, killer whales, live, play and hunt together in family groups and they cannot engage in their natural behavior in captivity	52%	30%	82%
Killer whales have a large range in the wild and confinement in relatively small pools causes boredom, stress, more illness and shorter lifespans	50%	30%	80%
Capturing killer whales for public display removes important breeding animals from the wild, disrupts social bonds, and sometimes results in the death of animals involved in the capture process	40%	29%	69%
Killer whales have been known to injure and even kill human trainers when kept in captivity	40%	26%	66%
In the U.S., it is legal to capture killer whales for public facilities with education and conservation programs, yet these facilities have been criticized as doing little to protect killer whales in the wild and offering only limited and sometimes misleading information	16%	36%	52%

More than half (52%) of Americans say that the inability of killer whales to engage in their natural behaviors when kept in captivity is a **"very convincing"** reason to end this practice and **fully 82% say it is "convincing" reason**. As well, 50% (80% total convincing) say that the confinement to relatively small pools (compared to their large natural range) which causes boredom, stress, increased illnesses and decreased lifespans is a "very convincing" reason to stop keeping killer whales in captivity.

### **Education is the Best Reason to Keep Whales But, Does Not Seem to Outweigh Concerns**

The most convincing reason to continue the practice of keeping killer whales in captivity is the idea that there is educational value in being able to see these animals close up and hear a professional speak about them. Just over two-thirds (68%) say this is a convincing reason, although only 28% say it is "very convincing. Americans also see some benefits to science to study whales in captivity (24% very convincing, 63% total convincing) and for captive breeding to preserve killer whales for future generations (26% very convincing, 60 total convincing).

What is most striking about these results is that there is no reason to keep killer whales in captivity that holds as much sway as the top reasons to end the practice. Just examining the percentages who say each reason is "very convincing" reveals that four of the five statements tested **against** captivity garner about double the ratings of **any** of the statements in support.

Next are some statements in support of keeping killer whales in captivity. For each one please say if you think it is a very convincing reason, somewhat convincing reason, not too convincing or at all convincing as a reason to **continue** the practice of keeping killer whales in captivity for display to the public.

Statements In Support of the Practice of Keeping Killer Whales in Captivity	% saying "very convincing"	% saying "somewhat convincing"	Total % saying "convincing"
There is educational value for people in being able to see these animals up close and hear a professional talk about them	28%	39%	68%
It benefits science and our understanding of killer whales to study them in captivity	24%	39%	63%
Breeding killer whales in captivity will help preserve them for future generations	26%	33%	60%
Seeing killer whales in zoos, aquariums and marine mammal theme parks helps people make a connection so that they want to protect them in the wild	20%	39%	58%
Captivity protects killer whales from threats that exist in the wild such as pollution and getting entangled in fishing gear	16%	30%	46%

#### **Note on Methodology**

*This memo presents the findings of a telephone survey conducted by CARAVAN® Survey among two national probability samples, which, when combined, consists of 1,018 adults, 508 men and 510 women 18 years of age and older, living in the continental United States. Interviewing for this CARAVAN® Survey was completed on June 14-17, 2012. 768 interviews were from RDD landline sample and 250 interviews from cell phone sample. The margin of error for the sample as a whole is +/- 3.1 percentage points at the 95% confidence level.*

*All CARAVAN® interviews are conducted using ORC International's (ORC) computer assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) system.*