



To: Interested Parties

From: Edge Research

Re: Findings from 2014 US National Survey on Orca Captivity

Date: May 26, 2014

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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 1,007 US adults 18 years of age and older and was conducted May 8-11, 2014. 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. An identical survey was conducted with the same methodology June 14-17, 2012 and comparative results are provided in the summary below. Throughout this memo statistically significant changes are noted with an asterisk.

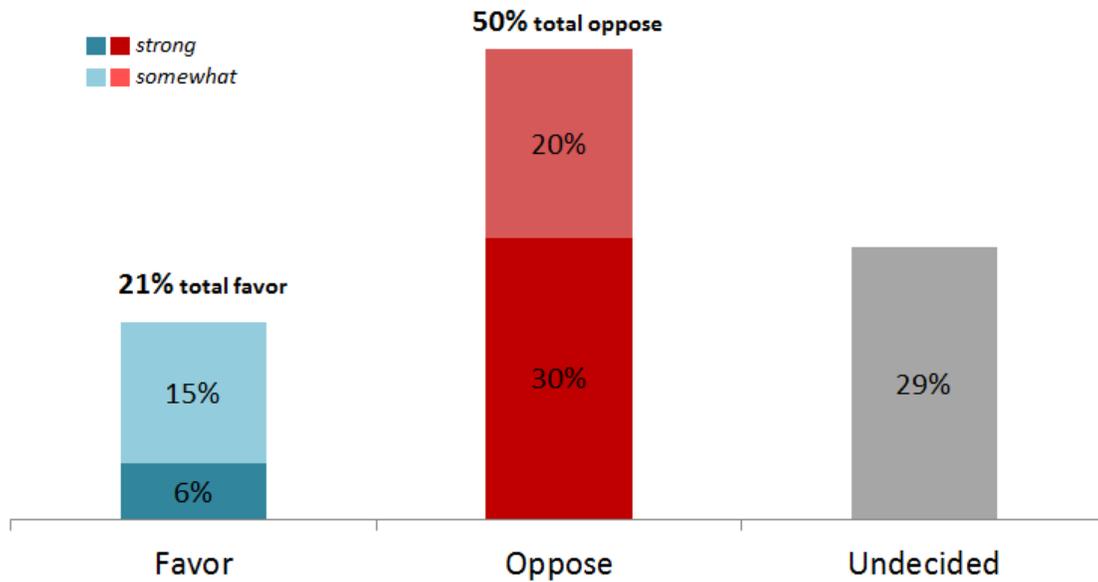
### **Key Findings**

Our just completed survey shows that the tide of American public opinion has clearly turned against the practice of keeping killer whales in captivity for public display. Opposition to orca captivity has grown in less than two years by double-digits (11%), and now half of all Americans say they are against this practice.

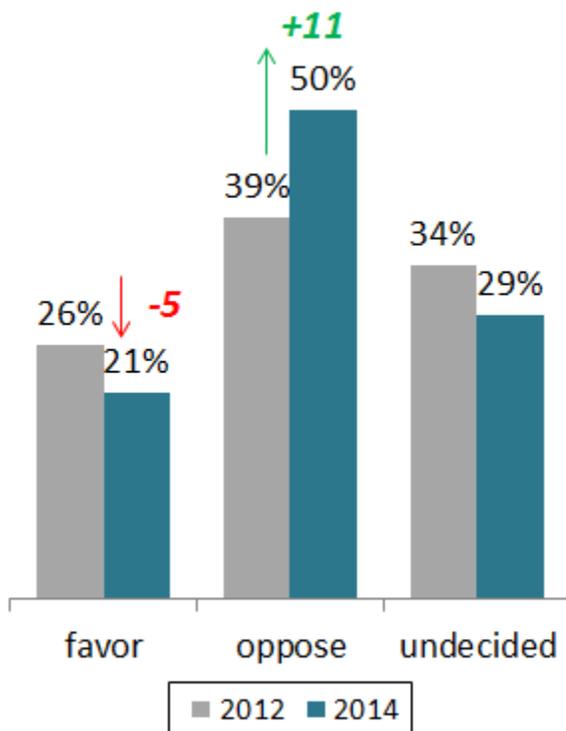
Americans are also increasingly convinced that the negative impacts to killer whales caused by removing them from their natural habitats and social groups outweigh any educational or scientific benefit. No argument tested for keeping orcas in captivity for public display was as persuasive as the reasons to end this practice.

### **Support and Opposition for Killer Whales in Captivity**

As in 2012, the new 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. In contrast, half of the public are opposed and fully 30% are strongly opposed. There is now over a 2-to-1 margin against and a 5-to-1 margin of strongly opposed to strongly in favor.



Most striking in the 2014 survey is the significant\* shift in opinion and consolidation of opposition toward captive display of killer whales. While a 39% plurality opposed in 2012, this grew to 50%. Fewer Americans are on the fence about the issue, and there was a 5-point decline in overall support for the practice.

Across demographic groups, Americans fall into similar patterns with only small numbers in support of keeping killer whales in captivity, and a majority or plurality opposed.

There is also evidence to suggest that public opinion may have been influenced by increasing attention in the media to the issues surrounding the keeping of killer whales in captivity, as well as exposure to whales in their natural habitat. While there was almost no change in the

percentage of Americans who have visited a zoo, aquarium or marine mammal theme park with live whales on exhibit (from 35% to 36%), there was an increase in the percentage who have seen whales in the natural environment (from 17% to 24%) and in the percentage who learned about

them through media such as IMAX films, news coverage, websites and documentaries (from 67% to 73%).

### Americans Continue to Be 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 tell me 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.*

|   | % 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   | 57%                        | 25%                            | 82%                         |
| Killer whales have a large range in the wild and confinement in relatively small pools causes boredom, stress, more illness and shorter lifespans   | 53%                        | 27%                            | 80%                         |
| Killer whales have been known to injure and even kill human trainers when kept in captivity   | 43%                        | 29%                            | 72%                         |
| 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   | 34%                        | 31%                            | 65%                         |
| 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 | 17%                        | 38%                            | 55%                         |

Today a majority (57%) 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 a "convincing" reason**. A majority (53%) now also says 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 (80% total "convincing").

Compared to 2012, Americans' concern about the ramifications of captivity increased. Most significant is the change in concern about killer whales injuring and even killing trainers when kept in captivity, which grew from 66% convincing in 2012 to 72% convincing today. Concern for the animals themselves grew in intensity as well. The impacts of captivity on the ability to engage in natural behaviors went up 5 points from 52% very convincing to 57%. And, concern about negative impacts of confinement grew from 50% very convincing to 53%.

## Fewer Americans Believe the Justifications Given for Captive Display

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

|  | % 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                          | 22%                        | 34%                            | 56%                         |
| It benefits science and our understanding of killer whales to study them in captivity  | 17%                        | 35%                            | 52%                         |
| Breeding killer whales in captivity will help preserve them for future generations   | 16%                        | 34%                            | 50%                         |
| 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 | 19%                        | 35%                            | 54%                         |
| Captivity protects killer whales from threats that exist in the wild such as pollution and getting entangled in fishing gear                       | 16%                        | 28%                            | 44%                         |

As in 2012, there is no reason tested to keep killer whales in captivity that holds as much sway as the top reasons to end the practice. Even the most persuasive pro-display arguments in the survey carry strong sway with only a fifth or fewer of the public. Although it continues to be the case that educational value is the most convincing reason to keep killer whales in captivity, this and other arguments have lost traction in the last two years.

| Total % saying "convincing"  | 2014 | 2012 | Change |
|--|------|------|--------|
| There is educational value for people in being able to see these animals up close and hear a professional talk about them                          | 56%  | 68%  | -12    |
| It benefits science and our understanding of killer whales to study them in captivity  | 52%  | 63%  | -11    |
| Breeding killer whales in captivity will help preserve them for future generations   | 50%  | 60%  | -10    |
| 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 | 54%  | 58%  | -4     |
| Captivity protects killer whales from threats that exist in the wild such as pollution and getting entangled in fishing gear                       | 44%  | 46%  | -2     |

Although one of the main reasons cited as justification by institutions who display killer whales, support for captive display based on educational value has declined significantly\* by 12 percentage points from 68% to 56%. Americans also appear to be questioning the scientific value, with only 52% saying this is a reason to keep captive killer whales, down 11 points\* from 2012. As well, there was a significant\* drop of 10 points in those who believe captive

breeding will help preserve killer whales for future generations.

**Note on Methodology**

*This memo presents the findings of a telephone survey conducted by CARAVAN® Survey among two national probability samples: randomly selected landline telephone numbers and randomly selected mobile (cell) telephone numbers. The combined sample consists of 1,007 adults (18 years old and older) living in the continental United States. Of the 1,007 interviews, 607 were from the landline sample and 400 from the cell phone sample. Interviewing for this CARAVAN® Survey was completed on May 8-11, 2014. The margin of error for the sample as a whole is +/- 3.1 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. Statistically significant changes are noted with an asterisk and are t-tested for significance at the 95% confidence level.*