

Japan support for whaling outweighs opposition, poll finds

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The Nisshin Maru, part of Japan's research whaling fleet, in Miyagi prefecture in 2011. More Japanese people support the country's controversial whale hunt than oppose it, a survey carried out on behalf of animal rights activists showed Tuesday.

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Of 1,200 people questioned for the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), 26.8 percent said the country should continue its hunt against 18.5 percent who opposed it. The remainder expressed no opinion.

Japan hunts whales using a loophole in a global moratorium. It kills the mammals for "scientific research" even though the meat is later sold openly in shops and restaurants.

Tokyo says the whale hunt is deeply embedded in Japanese culture and wants to resume [commercial whaling](#).

[Environmentalists](#) routinely condemn the hunt and maintain it does not have the support of Japanese people.

In a press release, IFAW tried to put a positive gloss on the survey, which questioned people aged 15-79 nationwide over a 13-day period in October.

"The good people of Japan are taking whalemeat off the menu," said Patrick Ramage, director of IFAW's global whale programme, citing the 88.8 percent of respondents who said they had not bought whalemeat in the last year.

The survey did not provide results for how many people had actually consumed the meat over the period.

Japan's Fisheries Agency is to sell whalemeat by mail order, the Mainichi Shimbun reported earlier this month. It said the move is aimed at boosting consumption after demand fell as prices rose.

IFAW opposes all commercial and scientific whaling and advocates whale-watching programmes that it says generate around \$2.1 billion

annually for [coastal communities](#).

Japan's [whaling fleet](#) is expected to set sail for the [Southern Ocean](#) around Antarctica in the next few weeks.

Tokyo will not disclose the exact date of the departure, citing fears of attacks by militant conservationist group [Sea Shepherd](#) which habitually pursues the ships.

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