

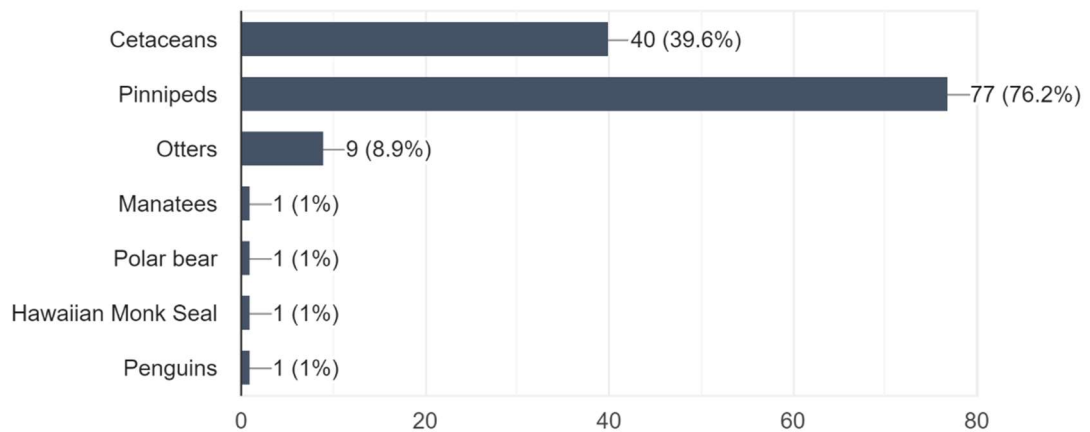
Marine Mammal Training Survey – A Quantitative Perspective

This survey's aim was to get a simple snapshot of how much time marine mammal keepers and trainers dedicate to train and enrich the animals in their care. This was mainly a quantitative survey that mostly ignored qualitative measures. However, modern facilities aiming to achieve exceptional animal welfare should also consider qualitative data.

Question 1

Which species group do you work with?

101 responses

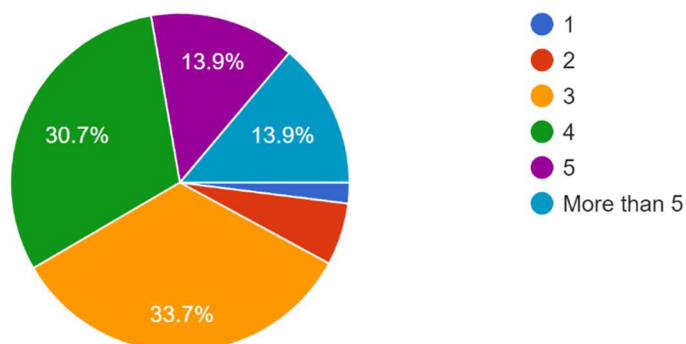


The majority of participants in this survey work with pinnipeds and/or cetaceans.

Question 2

How many training sessions per day do the animals in your care get on average?

101 responses

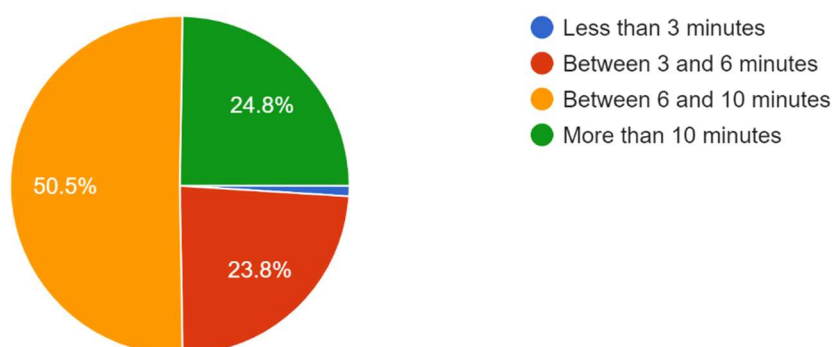


Most marine mammal professionals offer their animals three or four training sessions per day. 92.2% of respondents offer their animals three or more training sessions per day.

Question 3

What is the average training session duration?

101 responses

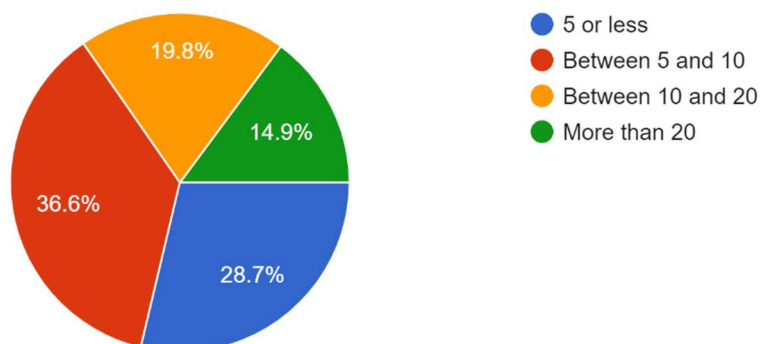


Training sessions with an average length of less than 3 minutes are incredibly rare. Half of the facilities train their marine mammals for an average duration of 6-10 minutes per session, with a quarter reporting average duration of more than 10 minutes and another quarter reporting 3-6 minutes of average duration.

Question 4

How many marine mammals do you have in your department?

101 responses

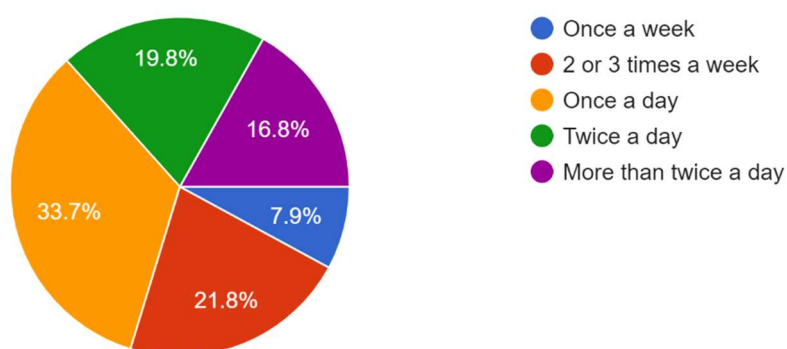


There is a fairly even spread of number of animals held at each facility, with a slight tilt towards five to ten animals (36.6%) and five or less animals (28.7%). 85.1% of the facilities hold twenty or less individuals.

Question 5

How often do the animals receive enrichment (exclude permanent fixtures that are part of their habitat)?

101 responses

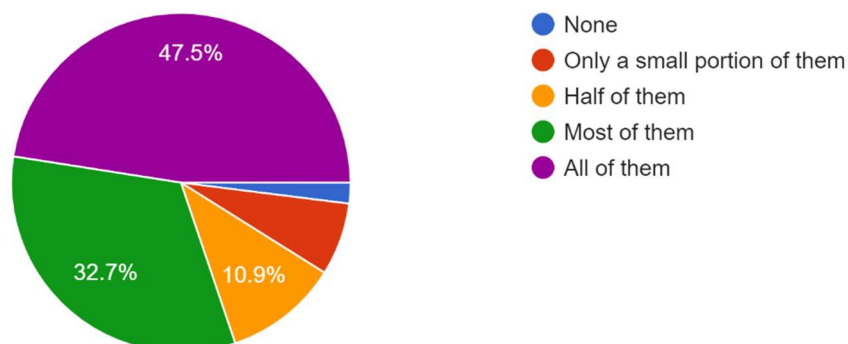


70.3% of the participants report that the animals in their care receive enrichment at least once a day.

Question 6

How many animals do important medical behaviours voluntarily?

101 responses

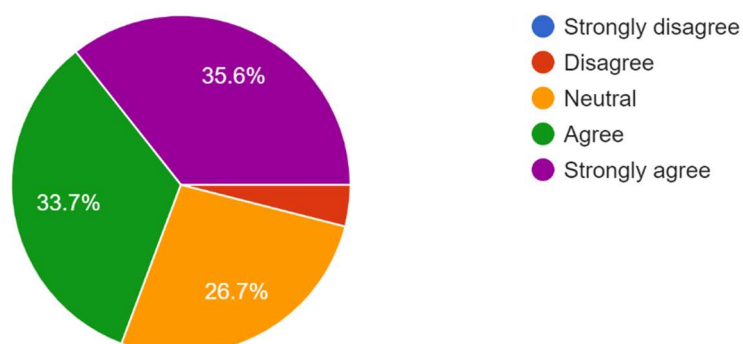


Modern facilities tend to have a strong focus on voluntary medical behaviours. This survey reports that in 91.1% of the facilities at least half of the animals participate in voluntary medical behaviours. Importantly, nearly half of the facilities (47.5%) have all of their animals doing these behaviours voluntarily.

Question 7

Would you like your manager/director to give you more time to train the animals?

101 responses

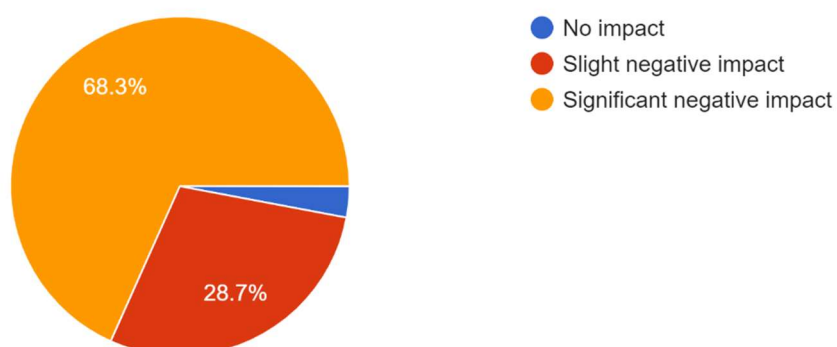


69.3% of the participants would like to have more time to train, while 30.7% consider that they have enough time to dedicate to animal training.

Question 8

From an animal welfare perspective, what would be the impact of having less time for training?

101 responses

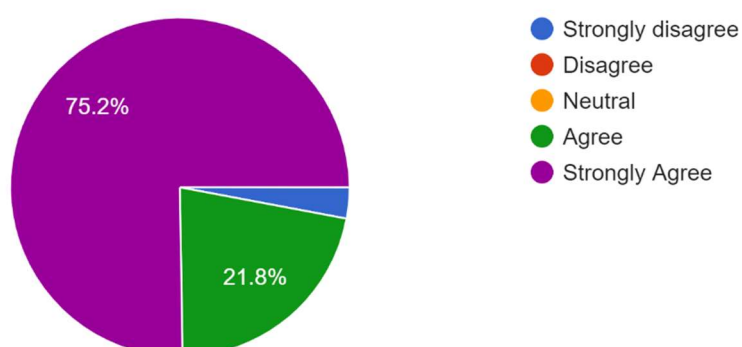


97% of the participants think that a reduction in training time would result in a negative impact on animal welfare.

Question 9

Having time for training and to research training or enrichment ideas is important.

101 responses

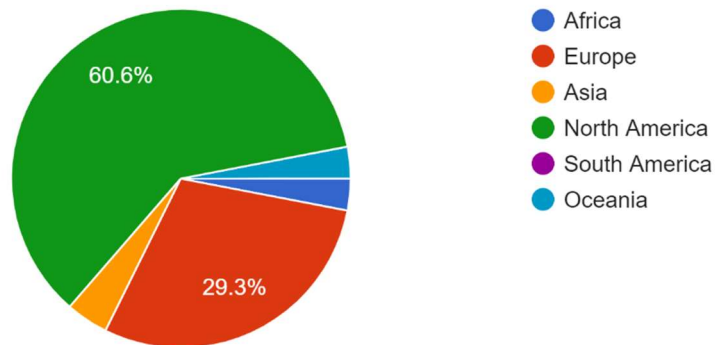


97% of the marine mammal professions surveyed consider that having time to research training and enrichment ideas is an important part of their job.

Question 10

In which continent do you work?

99 responses



Most of the respondents to this survey were from North America (60.6%) and Europe (29.3%) with only 10.1% of representation from other regions of the world.

This survey was prepared by Jose Gomes, animal keeper at Melbourne Zoo – Zoos Victoria in order to gain an understanding of what is currently common practice (from a quantitative perspective) in marine mammal facilities around the world. Questions, comments and general feedback can be sent to jgomes@zoo.org.au

Thank you to everyone that took a few minutes to participate in this survey.

I hope you found this information helpful.

Jose Gomes.