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# IVORY DEMAND IN CHINA

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**WILDAID**

# ABOUT WILDAID

WildAid's mission is to end the illegal wildlife trade in our lifetimes by reducing demand through public awareness campaigns and providing comprehensive marine protection.

The illegal wildlife trade is estimated to be worth over \$10 billion (USD) per year and has drastically reduced many wildlife populations around the world. Just like the drug trade, law and enforcement efforts have not been able to resolve the problem. Every year, hundreds of millions of dollars are spent protecting animals in the wild, yet virtually nothing is spent on stemming the demand for wildlife parts and products. WildAid is the only organization focused on reducing the demand for these products, with the strong and simple message: when the buying stops, the killing can too.

Via public service announcements and short form documentary pieces, WildAid is partnering with Save the Elephants and The Yao Ming Foundation to educate consumers and reduce the demand for ivory products worldwide. Through our highly leveraged pro-bono media distribution outlets, our message reaches one billion people per week in China alone.

[www.wildaid.org](http://www.wildaid.org)

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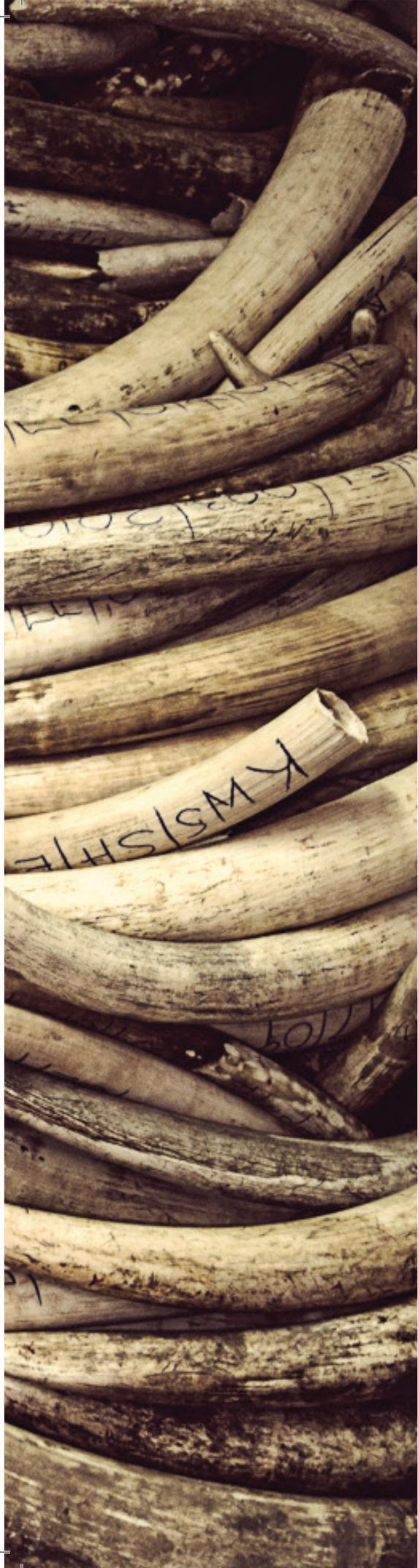


EVERY YEAR UP TO



**25,000 ELEPHANTS**  
ARE KILLED FOR THEIR IVORY





# THREATS TO ELEPHANTS

Ivory, which comes from the tusks of all African and male Asian elephants, is used for carvings, ornaments, combs, jewelry, chopsticks, stamps, and other crafts. While the use of ivory dates back hundreds of years, it was over the last century that ivory began being processed on an industrial scale to supply markets in the US, Europe, and Asia.

In 2007, African elephant populations were estimated at between 500,000-700,000, while the global Asian elephant population was estimated at around 30,000-50,000.

In 1976, the African elephant was listed under Appendix II of the UN Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), designed to control and limit trade, while in 1975 the Asian elephant was listed on CITES Appendix I, prohibiting international trade. However, the CITES regulatory system was subject to widespread abuse and African elephant populations fell from more than 1.2 million to roughly 600,000 by 1989. During the 1980's, a decade referred to as the "Ivory Wars", at least 700,000 elephants were slaughtered throughout Africa as legal trade enabled large-scale laundering of ivory from poached elephants.<sup>1</sup>

In response to this poaching epidemic, CITES banned the international trade in elephant ivory in 1989, but ivory sales inside countries continued to be legal in many cases. The 1989 international ivory ban was initially a huge success; drastically cutting ivory prices and almost eliminating markets in the US and Europe. Poaching was greatly reduced and elephant populations started to recover.

However, by 2008, new markets in Asia had emerged as Asian business links to Africa increased and economies grew rapidly, creating a new class of potential ivory consumers. These rising markets caused poaching to increase dramatically in West, Central, and East Africa and have steadily worsened ever since.

In addition, CITES allowed 'one-off' sales of ivory from natural mortality, culls and seizures. The first 'one-off' sale occurred in 1999 from Botswana, Namibia, and Zimbabwe and the ivory was exclusively sold to Japan. The second sale, which included South Africa, occurred in 2009 as ivory was sold to both China and Japan.<sup>2</sup> These 'one-off' sales allowed China to purchase 62 tons of ivory at the CITES-approved sale.<sup>3</sup>

1. Walsh, Bryan. "African Nations Move to 'Downlist' the Elephant" *Time Magazine Online*, 2010

2. "Experts report highest elephant poaching and ivory smuggling rates in a decade", [www.Traffic.org](http://www.Traffic.org). 2012

3. Gabriel, G. G., Hua, N., and Wang, J. "Making a Killing: A 2011 Survey of Ivory Markets in China." *International Fund for Animal Welfare*. 2012



## IVORY TRADE IN CHINA

China has emerged as the largest market for legal and illegal ivory with Thailand serving as another important destination.<sup>4</sup> Legal ivory factories and retailers in China are supposed to have a license, known as a “Certificate of Ivory Products Collection.” The State Administration of Forestry and the State Administration for Industry and Commerce created a system in 2004, which requires ivory products legally produced and sold to be accompanied with a Certificate of Ivory Products Collection. Since the introduction of the system in 2004, the government had, by November 2011, approved a total of 172 processing factories and retail outlets.<sup>5</sup>

Unfortunately, within the legal channels of the ivory trade, there are many ways to easily acquire and sell ivory illegally. In 2011, the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) investigated 158 ivory retail shops and carving factories in China

discovering widespread abuse of regulations. They found only 57 of them had ivory trade licenses, and even licensed ones had illegal operations. Among licensed facilities, 59.6% were laundering illegal ivory in some way.<sup>6</sup> Unlicensed and non-compliant ivory facilities outnumbered legal ones—nearly six to one. For consumers, old legal ivory can be indistinguishable from “new” ivory smuggled in from Africa. Most retailer’s shops did not have identification cards matching the ivory products, and in 14 of the licensed shops, they discouraged customers from taking the identification cards so they could be used repeatedly to represent numerous ivory items, providing a cover of legality to illegal ivory.

The Chinese government has banned all online ivory trade. However, according to IFAW, the total number of ivory items auctioned on record in mainland China in

2011 has more than doubled from a year ago and total sale volume has increased by 170% from 2010. The wholesale price of ivory has tripled since 2006.

Poor regulation of government stockpiles in Africa has led to corruption as new ivory entered domestic markets as ‘pre-convention’ or ‘one-off’ sales ivory. Increased demand from a stimulated growing class of wealthy Chinese consumers has helped fuel these domestic markets. Over the last few years, tens of thousands of African elephants have been slaughtered to feed illegal ivory markets in Asia. In 2012, poaching and illegal ivory seizures reached record highs since the international ban in 1989.

4. “Experts report highest elephant poaching and ivory smuggling rates in a decade”, [www.Traffic.org](http://www.Traffic.org). 2012

5. Gabriel, G. G., Hua, N., and Wang, J. “Making a Killing: A 2011 Survey of Ivory Markets in China.” International Fund for Animal Welfare. 2012

6. Ibid.

# 2012 CHINA SURVEY

The demand for wildlife products, particularly rhino horn and ivory, in Asia has increased in recent years. In November 2012, WildAid worked with Horizonkey Research Consultancy Group to interview 961 urban residents in Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou to better understand awareness of elephant conservation status,

the consumption of ivory in China, and what might be done to deter consumption and poaching.

WildAid and HorizonKey also conducted in-depth interviews with select focus group members to learn more about pre-existing attitudes, knowledge, and perceptions on ivory and its trade. The focus group participants

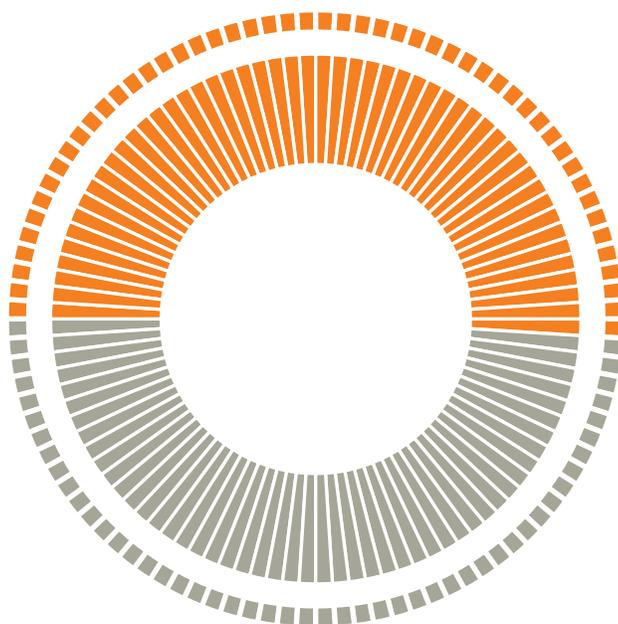
included media professionals, government officials of deputy department director level and above, customs officials responsible for law enforcement and legal action, and a high-income group with annual household income above 2 million RMB.

## SURVEY KEY FINDINGS

1. **More than half of the participants (over 50%) in the study do not think elephant poaching is common.**

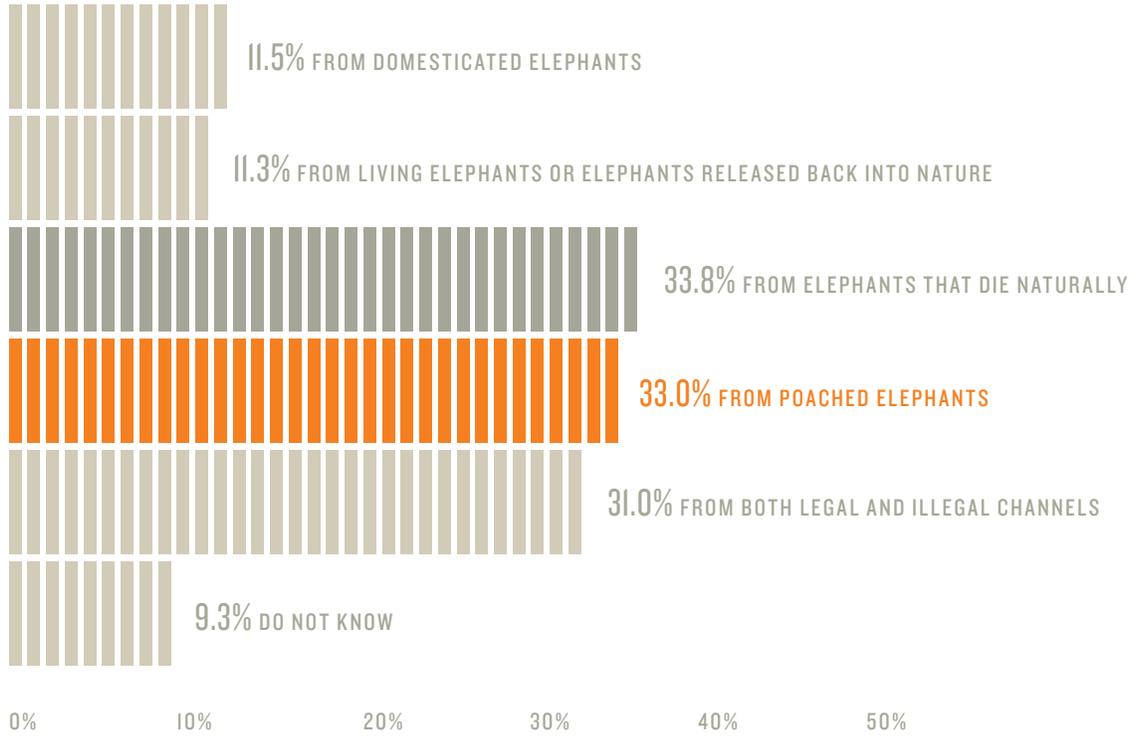
An estimated 25,000 elephants were slaughtered in 2012, and poaching has reached epidemic levels in West, Central, and East Africa.

**50% DO NOT THINK  
ELEPHANT POACHING IS COMMON**



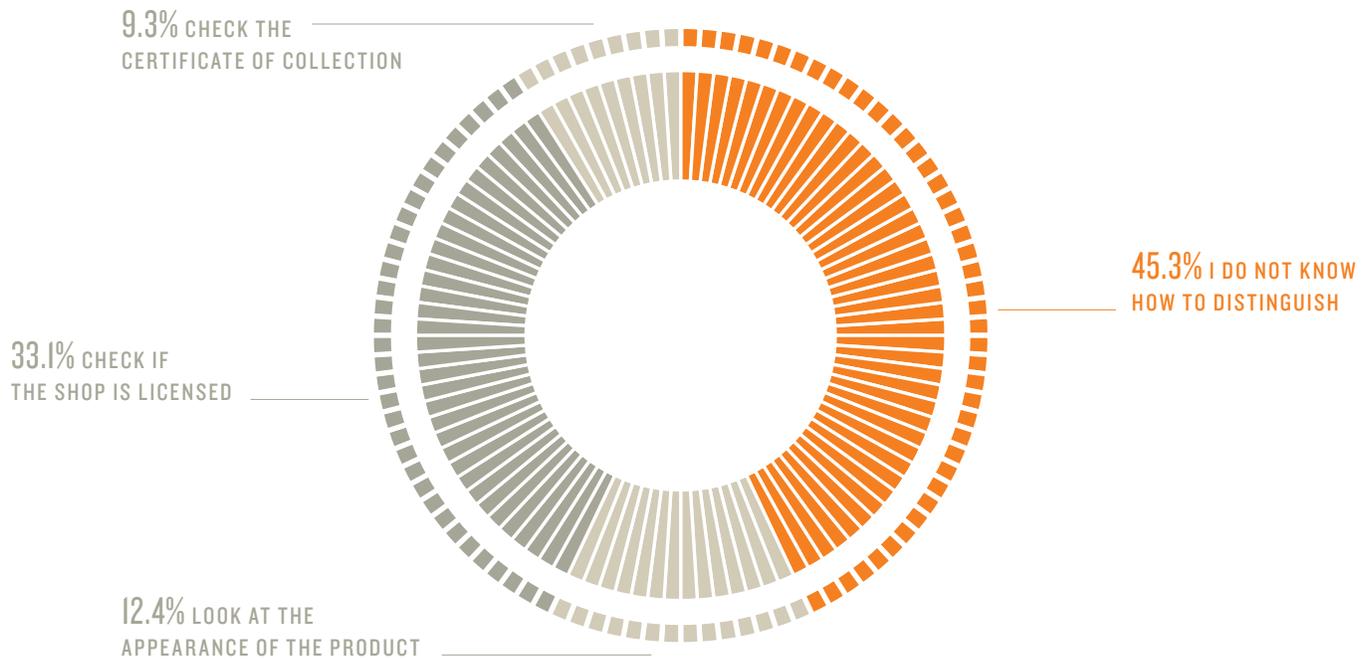
**2. Only 33% of all participants believe elephants are poached for their tusks.**

Where does ivory come from? Ivory in fact comes from both legal and illegal channels.



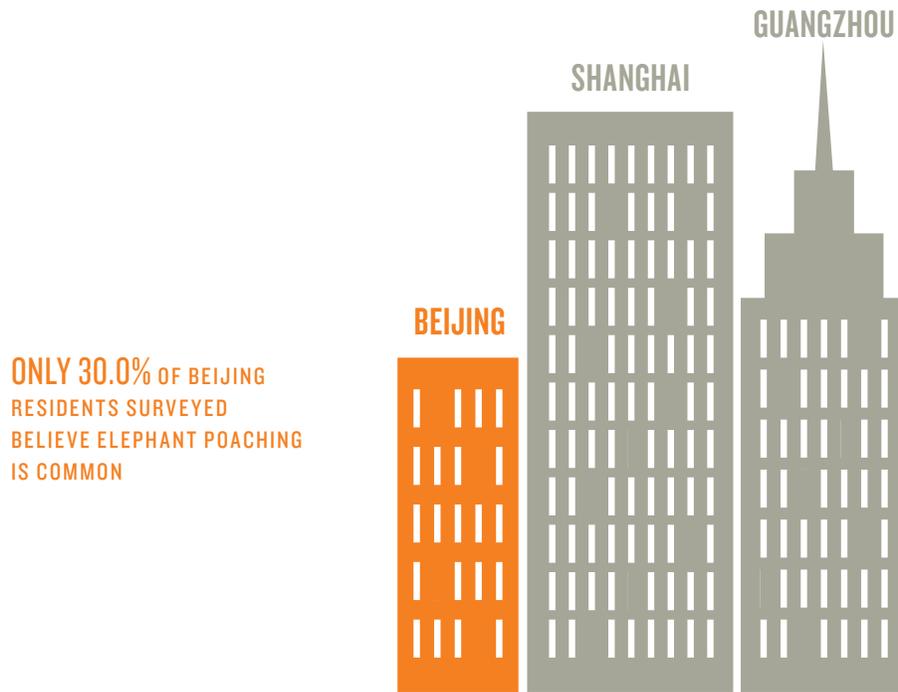
**3. Over 45% of interviewees said they could not distinguish legal ivory from ivory obtained illegally.**

How can one distinguish legal ivory products from illegal products?



4. **The city of Beijing appears to be less informed regarding elephant poaching and the ivory trade, when compared to the other cities surveyed.**

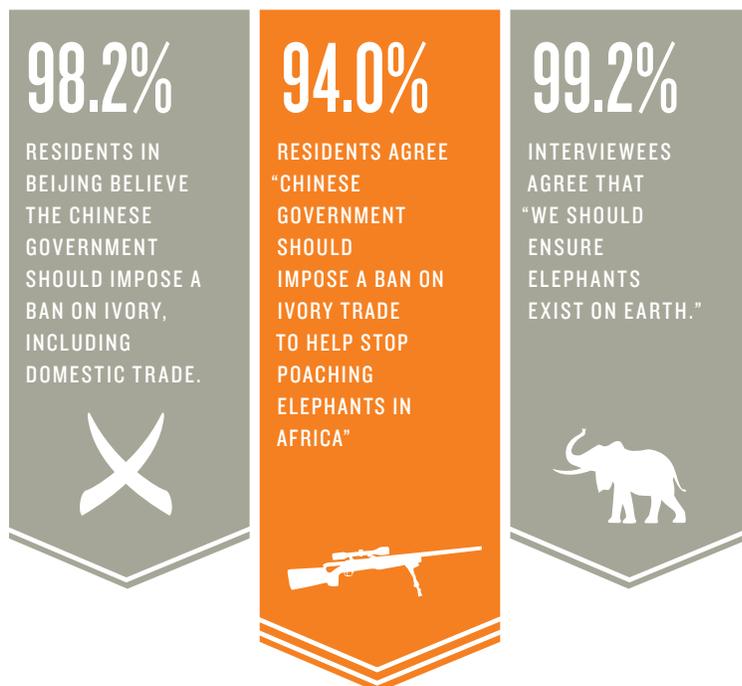
Only 30% of Beijing residents surveyed believe elephant poaching is common, compared to 50% amongst all three cities. Additionally, in Beijing, 49% of participants believe ivory is obtained from natural elephant mortality.



5. **94% of all residents agree that the “Chinese government should impose a ban on ivory trade to help stop poaching elephants in Africa.”**

Nearly all (98.2%) of residents in Beijing believe the Chinese government should impose a ban on ivory, including domestic trade.

Nearly all (99.2%) of interviewees agree that “we should ensure elephants exist on earth.”



## FOCUS GROUP MAJOR FINDINGS

1. Consumers cannot distinguish a tusk obtained through poaching from a tusk obtained after the natural death of an elephant.

*“One is the tusk left after the natural death of elephant, which is not sold now, and the other is called bloody tusk, which might be extracted from a living elephant. The bloody tusk is a little hotter than the tusk left after the natural death of elephant. Many people are unwilling to buy the tusk left after the natural death of elephant, which is infelicitous, and is less hot when it is carved. The colour and the texture might be bad. But I cannot distinguish them so far.”*

—Male Ivory Consumer, Beijing

2. The prices of small and simple ivory jewelry pieces are approximately a couple hundred to a couple thousand RMB Yuan, while the prices of complete and exquisite large ivory pendants are upwards of 200,000 RMB Yuan. Interviewees were less concerned about the certification of cheaper ivory products than the large and costly pieces. They also exhibited a general “trust” for the authenticity of pieces purchased at large-scale shopping malls.

*“I would certainly care about the certificate if I buy a large ivory product, or if I buy an ivory collection because it is expensive. But there is no need to care about the certificate if I buy an ivory bracelet.”*

—Female Ivory Consumer, Beijing

*“The ivory product I bought has no certificate, because I bought from a large-scale shopping mall in Guangzhou. It might be reassuring, I think. Since it is sold in a large-scale shopping mall, it must be legal.”*

—Male Ivory Consumer, Shanghai

3. Circles and acquaintances play important roles in the Chinese ivory trade.

*“Some friends in my circle would bring some ivory products for me, and later, some other people also prefer these products, so we exchange with each other.”*

—Female Ivory Consumer, Beijing

4. A major reason for purchasing ivory: private gift giving to friends, loved ones, and peers.

*“I once bought ivory products as gifts, and the price of the cheaper ones might be more than 30,000 RMB yuan. In one year of the pig, I bought an ivory product just because a family member happened to be born that year.”*

—Female Ivory Consumer, Beijing

*“In addition to personal use, I also buy ivory products for friends as gifts. I just gave two gifts when I asked someone for help, because I knew he loved ivory. I have a friend who is specially engaged in the selling of jade ivory and the like in Guanyuan jewelry market. But he does not sell at the counter; he only sells to friends privately.”*

—Female Ivory Consumer, Beijing

5. There is a large distinction between new and old ivory and those containing identity certificates. However, ivory is still consumed without asking for certification.

*“Since the 1990s, ivory, like gold, is just a kind of value reflection. You can buy old ivory, but there is no need to buy new ivory. Furthermore, it is risky for you to buy new ivory. If you buy it, you have no way to resell it. If you resell it, you commit a crime.”*

—Male Ivory Consumer, Shanghai



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