

The 2021 SSF National Sports-Life Survey of Children and Young People

● Executive Summary December 2021, Japan



2021

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2021

Introduction

Since 2001, the Sasakawa Sports Foundation (SSF) has conducted its Sports-Life Survey of Ages 10 to 19 on children in Japan, with the goal of achieving “Sport for Everyone” by understanding exercise and sports participation of children during after-school periods and on holidays as well as sports environments surrounding these children. In 2009, the SSF also began conducting the Sports-Life Survey of Ages 4 to 9 on young children in order to better ascertain the factors that lead to the polarization of exercise and sports participation observed in those aged 10-19 and the turning points for such phenomenon.

From the 2017 survey, the target age groups were newly categorized into those aged 4-11 and those aged 12-21; these surveys have been conducted every two years on exercise and sports participation of preschool through university-age in Japan.

Methods

1 Population: 4-21 year olds living in Japan

2 Sample numbers: [4-11 year olds] 2,400
[12-21 year olds] 3,000

3 Locations: 225 (207 urban areas and 18 rural areas)

4 Extraction method: 2-staged stratified random sampling

5 Survey methods: Paper-based questionnaire survey by the home-visit detention method

6 Survey period: June-July 2021

7 Collected questionnaires (rate):
[4-11 year olds] 1,496 (62.3%)
[12-21 year olds] 1,663 (55.4%)

8 Survey contents:

Frequencies, time, and intensity of exercise and sports participation, sports facilities, sports teams/clubs, liking for exercise and sports, sports injuries, sports spectating, favorite athletes, sports volunteering, sleeping time, media usage time (screen time), frequencies of exercise, sports, physical play with family, etc.

9 Scope of exercise and sports:

Activities and free play after kindergarten or preschool, as well as school club activities and activities during recess periods, are included. However, lessons at kindergarten, preschool, or school are not included, nor are school events such as sports days or race tournaments.

Frequency of exercise and sports participation

4-11 year olds Exercise and sports participation frequency groups

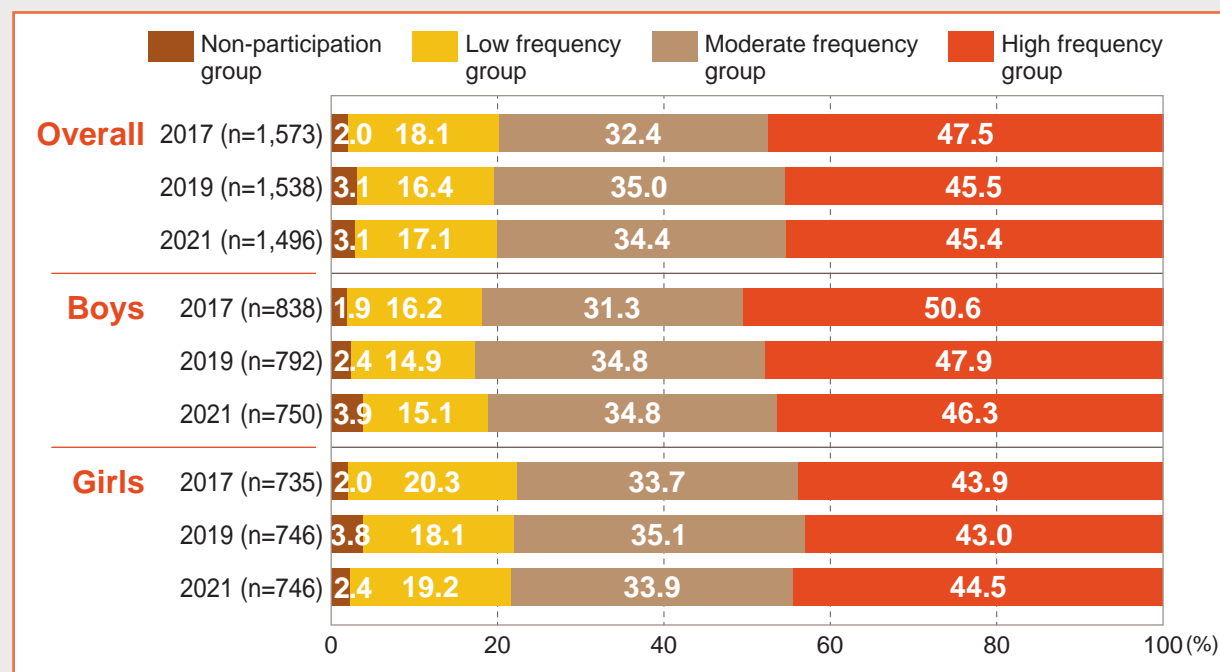
Table 1 Exercise and sports participation frequency groups

Frequency	Standards
Non-participation group	Non-participation (0 time/year)
Low frequency group	At least once a year but less than 3 times a week (1-155 times/year)
Moderate frequency group	At least 3 times a week but less than 7 times a week (156-363 times/year)
High frequency group	At least 7 times a week (364 or more times/year)

Source: 2021 Sasakawa Sports Foundation National Sports-Life Survey of Ages 4 to 11

The 4-11 year old group was divided into the 4 groups of “Non-participation group,” “Low frequency group,” “Moderate frequency group,” and “High frequency group” based on standards set from exercise and sports participation frequency over the past year (Table 1).

Fig.1 Annual trends in exercise and sports participation frequency groups (4-11 year olds : overall / by gender)



Source: 2021 Sasakawa Sports Foundation National Sports-Life Survey of Ages 4 to 11

Annual trends in exercise and sports participation frequency groups (ages 4-11) are indicated in Figure 1. At 45.4% overall, the high frequency group was the most common in the 2021 survey, followed by the moderate frequency group (34.4%), the low frequency group (17.1%), and the non-participation group (3.1%). The percentage of the high frequency group showed little change from the 2019 survey.

Regarding the percentages depending on gender, the high frequency group was 46.3% for boys, which was 1.8 points higher than 44.5% for girls. With regard to the trends since the 2017 survey, the percentage of boys in the high frequency group has decreased.

■ 12-21 year olds **Exercise and sports participation levels**

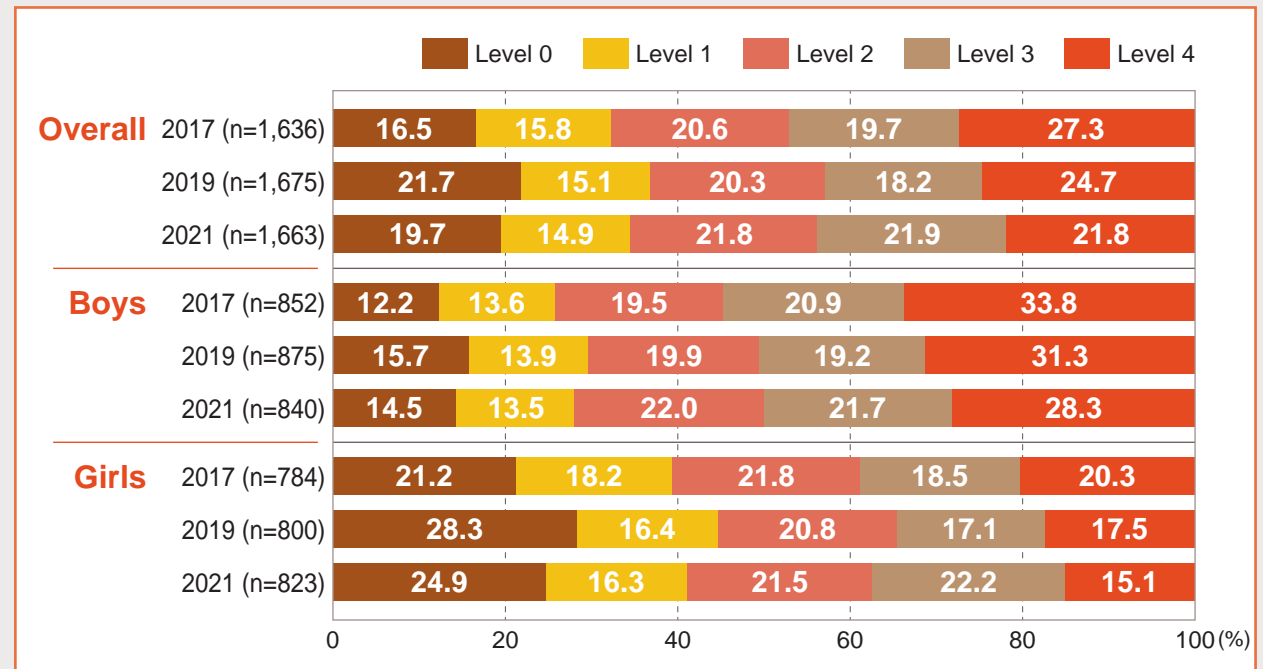
Table 2 Exercise and sports participation levels

Level	Standards
0	Non-participation (0 time/year)
1	At least once a year but less than once a week (1-51 times/year)
2	At least once a week but less than 5 times a week (52-259 times/year)
3	At least 5 times a week (260 times or more/year)
4	At least 5 times a week (260 times or more/year) with a duration of 120 minutes, and with more than moderate intensity

Source: 2021 Sasakawa Sports Foundation National Sports-Life Survey of Ages 12 to 21

The 12-21 year old group was classified into 5 levels from level 0 to level 4 based on standards set from exercise and sports participation frequency, time and intensity over the past year (**Table 2**).

Fig.2 Annual trends in exercise and sports participation levels (12-21 year olds : overall / by gender)



Source: 2021 Sasakawa Sports Foundation National Sports-Life Survey of Ages 12 to 21

Annual trends in exercise and sports participation levels (ages 12-21) are indicated in **Figure 2**. The overall rates in the 2021 survey were **19.7%** for Level 0, **14.9%** for Level 1, **21.8%** for Level 2, **21.9%** for Level 3, and **21.8%** for Level 4. With regard to the annual trends, Level 4, which indicates the group of high frequency and high intensity, was on a downward trend.

Regarding the rates depending on gender, Level 4 was the highest for boys (**28.3%**), while Level 0 was the highest for girls (**24.9%**). Annual trends showed that Level 4 has continued to decrease since the 2017 survey for both boys and girls, while Level 0 has decreased since the 2019 survey.

Exercise and sports type

Table 3 Exercise and sport types often carried out over the past year (multiple answers were allowed.)

4-11 year olds (n=1,449)			12-21 year olds (n=1,336)		
Rank	Type of exercise / sport	Percentage (%)	Rank	Type of exercise / sport	Percentage (%)
1	Tag	57.3	1	Jogging/running	23.2
2	Bicycle riding	30.3	2	Soccer	20.9
3	Jump rope (including long jump rope)	30.2	3	Badminton	19.7
4	Dodgeball	29.2	4	Muscle training	19.5
5	Swimming	27.3	5	Basketball	16.4
6	Swings	26.8	6	Volleyball	16.3
7	Soccer	22.5	7	Walking	16.1
8	Iron bar	21.3	8	Table tennis	11.9
9	Hide-and-peek	19.8	9	Tag	11.7
10	Race	17.1	10	Baseball	10.9
11	Badminton	9.9	11	Jump rope (including long jump rope)	9.8
12	Gymnastics (light gymnastics, morning radio calisthenics, etc.)	8.6	12	Catch	8.7
13	Basketball	8.2	13	Soft tennis	6.7
14	Catch	7.9	14	Dodgeball	6.0
15	Walking	7.3	14	Swimming	6.0
16	Baseball	6.1	16	Track & Field	5.9
17	Kickboard	5.9	17	Cycling	5.8
18	Trampoline	5.7	18	Tennis	5.5
19	Jogging/running	4.3	18	Gymnastics (light gymnastics, morning radio calisthenics, etc.)	5.5
20	Cycling	4.0	20	Swings	5.3
			20	Bowling	5.3

Table 3 indicates the top twenty exercise or sports activities carried out often (on many occasions) in the past year.

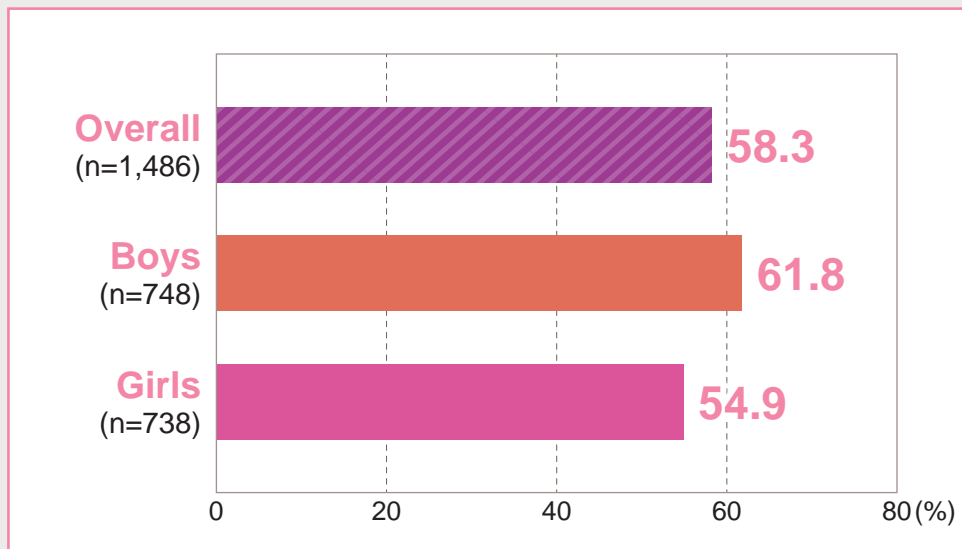
For the 4-11 year old group, “tag” was the highest at **57.3%**, followed by “bicycle riding” at **30.3%**, “jump rope (including long jump rope)” at **30.2%**, “dodgeball” at **29.2%**, and “swimming” at **27.3%**.

For the 12-21 year old group, “jogging/running” was in the first place at **23.2%**, followed by “soccer” at **20.9%**, “badminton” at **19.7%**, “muscle training” at **19.5%**, and “basketball” at **16.4%**.

Source: 2021 Sasakawa Sports Foundation National Sports-Life Survey of Ages 4 to 11 and National Sports-Life Survey of Ages 12 to 21

■ 4-11 year olds

Fig.3 Participation rates in sports teams/clubs (4-11 year olds : overall / by gender)



*1) Including school club activities, sports teams, private sports teams/clubs (swimming, gymnastics, etc.), regional sports teams/clubs (youth sports team, regional sports classes, etc.).

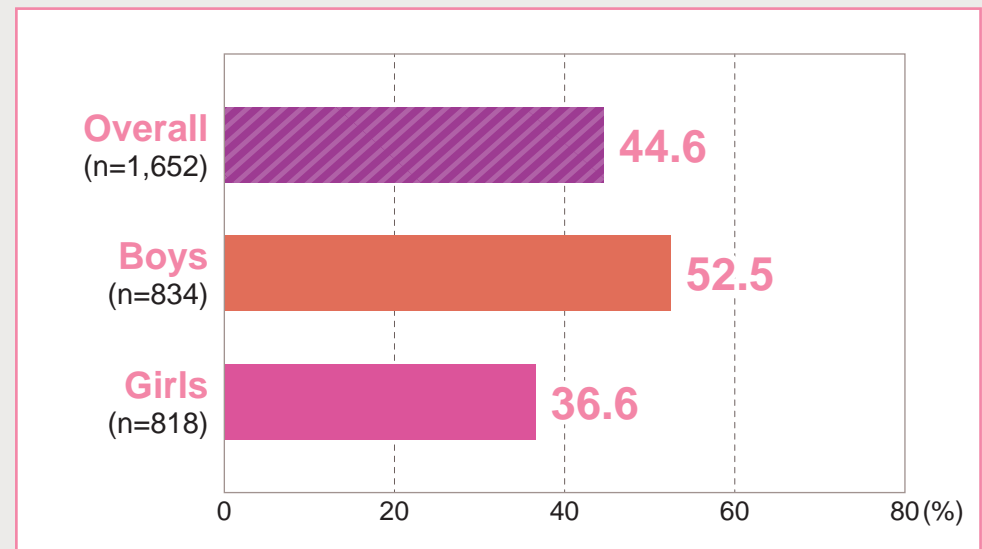
Source: 2021 Sasakawa Sports Foundation National Sports-Life Survey of Ages 4 to 11

The participation rates in sports teams/clubs for ages 4-11 are indicated in **Figure 3**.

The overall rate of participation in sports teams/clubs for ages 4-11 was **58.3%**. Regarding the rates depending on gender, boys had a participation rate of **61.8%** and girls had a participation rate of **54.9%**.

■ 12-21 year olds

Fig.4 Participation rates in sports teams/clubs (12-21 year olds : overall / by gender)



*1) Including school club activities, sports teams, private sports teams/clubs (swimming, gymnastics, etc.), regional sports teams/clubs (youth sports team, regional sports classes, etc.).

Source: 2021 Sasakawa Sports Foundation National Sports-Life Survey of Ages 12 to 21

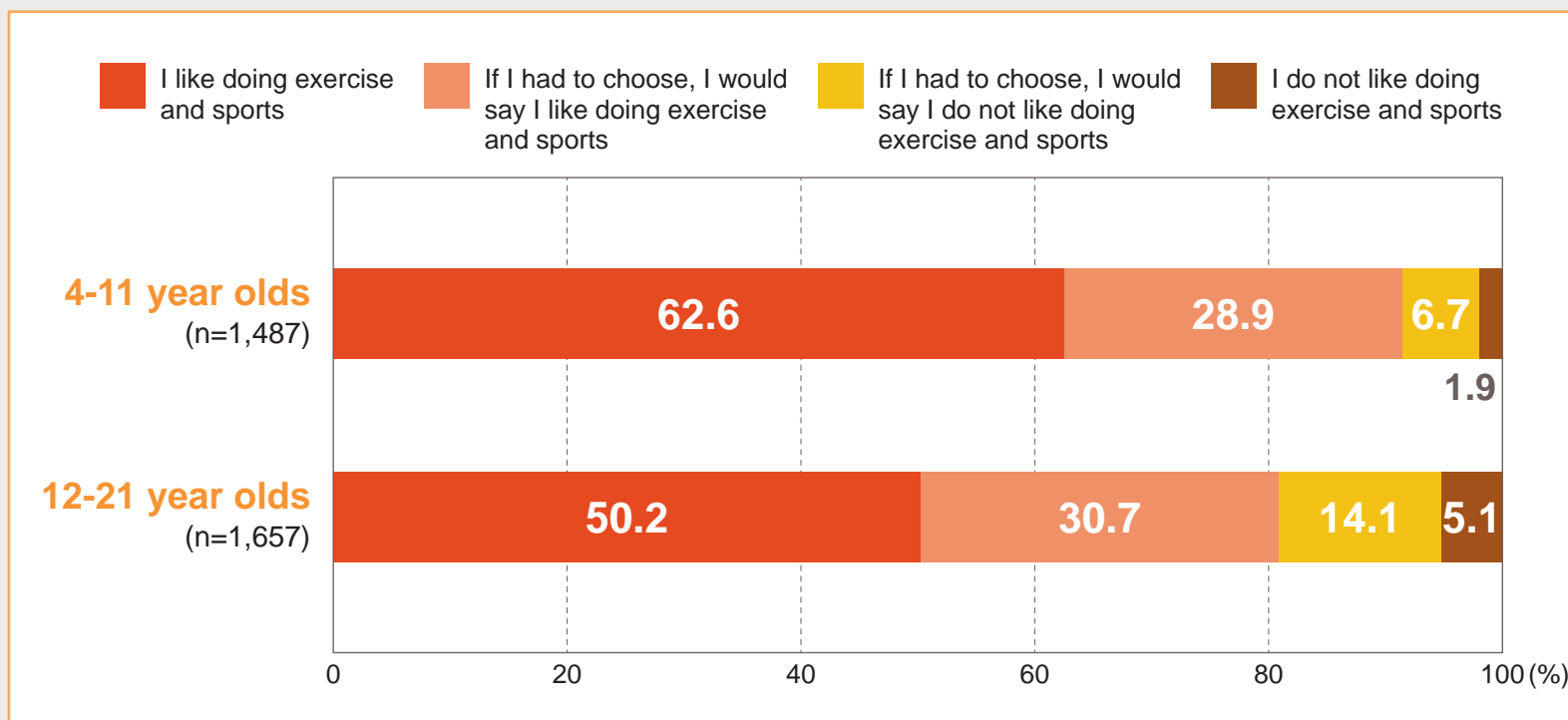
The participation rates in sports teams/clubs for ages 12-21 are indicated in **Figure 4**.

The overall rate of participation in sports teams/clubs for ages 12-21 was **44.6%**.

Regarding the rates depending on gender, boys had a participation rate of **52.5%** and girls had a participation rate of **36.6%**.

Liking for exercise and sports participation

Fig.5 Liking for exercise and sports participation



Source: 2021 Sasakawa Sports Foundation National Sports-Life Survey of Ages 4-11 and National Sports-Life Survey of Ages 12 to 21

The rates of liking and disliking for exercise and sports participation are indicated in **Figure 5**.

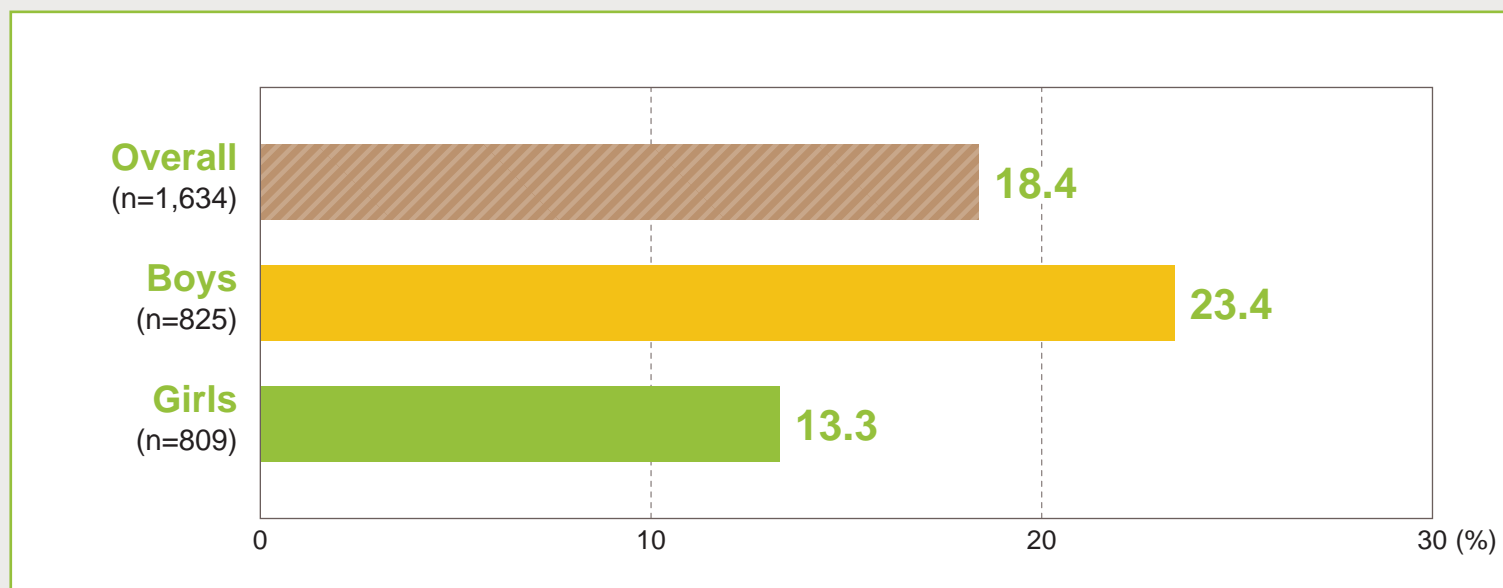
For ages 4-11, "I like doing exercise and sports" was **62.6%**, "If I had to choose, I would say I like doing exercise and sports" was **28.9%**, "If I had to choose, I would say I do not like doing exercise and sports" was **6.7%**, and "I do not like doing exercise and sports" was **1.9%**.

For ages 12-21, "I like doing exercise and sports" was **50.2%**, "If I had to choose, I would say I like doing exercise and sports" was **30.7%**, "If I had to choose, I would say I do not like doing exercise and sports" was **14.1%**, and "I do not like doing exercise and sports" was **5.1%**.

1 Rates of live sports viewing at the venue

■ 12-21 year olds

Fig.6 Rates of live sports viewing at the venue (12-21 year olds : overall / by gender)



Source: 2021 Sasakawa Sports Foundation National Sports-Life Survey of Ages 12 to 21

The rates of live sports viewing at the venue for ages 12-21 are indicated in **Figure 6**.

Overall, **18.4%** of survey participants watched a sports match at a gymnasium, stadium, or other facility in the past year. This rate of the 2021 survey decreased by 18.8 points from 37.2% in the 2019 survey. This situation is assumed to be affected by the decrease in direct spectating opportunities

at the venue caused by the spread of COVID-19. Regarding the rates depending on gender, **23.4%** of boys and **13.3%** of girls watched a sporting event, with boys exceeding girls by 10.1 points. The tendency for boys to watch more sporting events than girls has not changed since the 2001 survey, when the survey was first conducted.

Sports spectating

2 Types of sports viewed live at the venue

■ 12-21 year olds

Table 4 Types of sports viewed live at the venue
(12-21 year olds : overall / by gender) (multiple answers were allowed.)

(%)

Rank	Type of sports	Overall (n=1,634)	Boys (n=825)	Girls (n=809)
1	Professional baseball (Nippon Professional Baseball)	5.4	7.5	3.2
2	High school baseball	3.5	4.6	2.3
3	Soccer (high school, university, JFL, etc.)	2.6	3.8	1.4
4	Japan Professional Football League (J1, J2, and J3 League)	2.3	3.5	1.1
5	Basketball (high school, university, Women's Japan Basketball League, etc.)	1.9	1.6	2.2
	I have not watched a sports match at the venue live	81.6	76.6	86.7

Source: 2021 Sasakawa Sports Foundation National Sports-Life Survey of Ages 12 to 21

Table 4 indicates the types of sports that were viewed live at the venue by the 12-21 age group.

Overall, “professional baseball” had the highest viewing rate at **5.4%**, followed by “high school baseball” at **3.5%**, “soccer (high school, university, JFL, etc.)” at **2.6%**, “Japan Professional Football

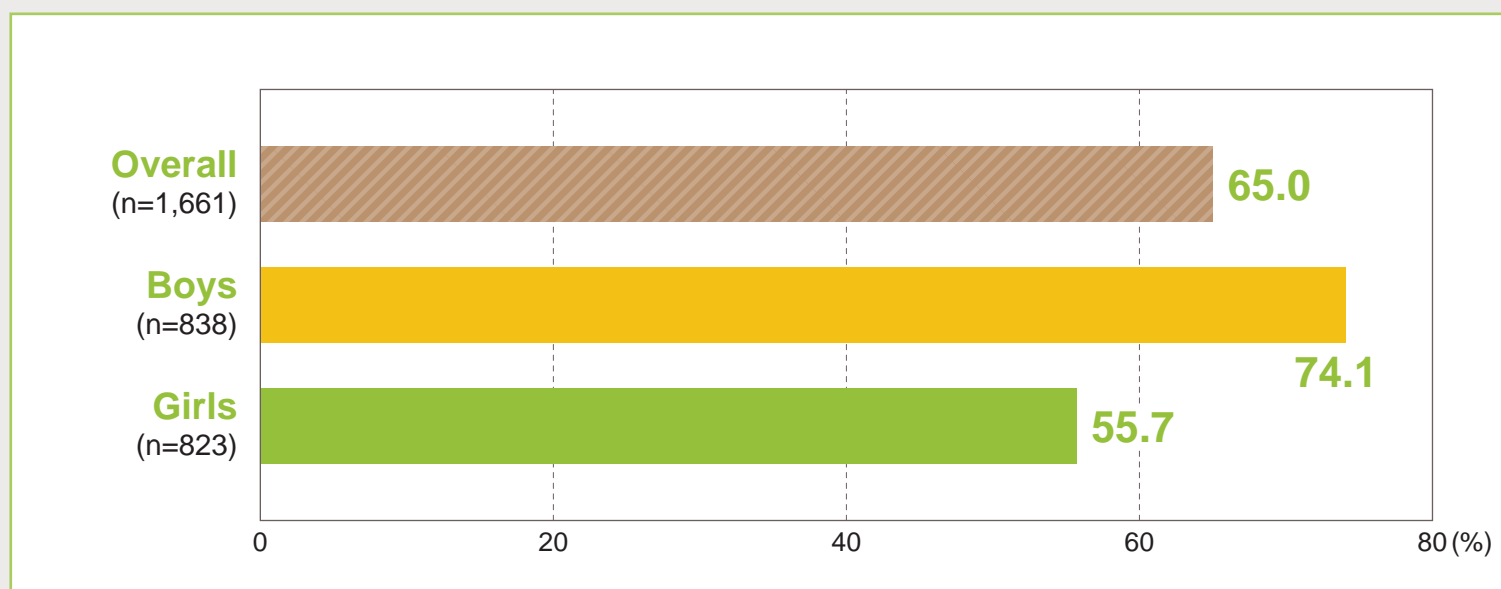
League” at **2.3%**, and “basketball” at **1.9%**.

For both boys and girls, “professional baseball” had the highest viewing rate (**7.5%** for boys and **3.2%** for girls), followed by “high school baseball” (**4.6%** for boys and **2.3%** for girls).

3 Rates of sports viewing via media

■ 12-21 year olds

Fig.7 Rates of sports viewing via media (12-21 year olds : overall / by gender)



1*) Including sports viewing through media such as television, smartphones, tablets, PCs, etc.
Source: 2021 Sasakawa Sports Foundation National Sports-Life Survey of Ages 12 to 21

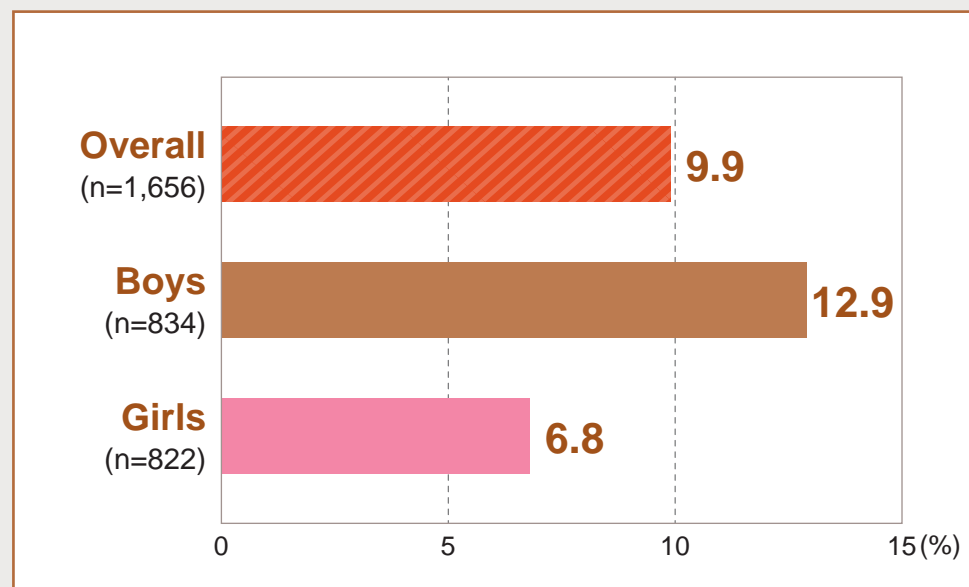
The rates of sports viewing through media for ages 12-21 are indicated in **Figure 7**. Overall, **65.0%** of survey participants watched a sports match using a television, smartphone, or other form of media in the past year.

Regarding the rates depending on gender, **74.1%** of boys and **55.7%** of girls watched a sporting event, with boys outnumbering girls by 18.4 points. This trend has not changed since the survey was first conducted in 2013.

Sports volunteering

■ 12-21 year olds

Fig.8 Sports volunteering rates
(12-21 year olds : overall / by gender)



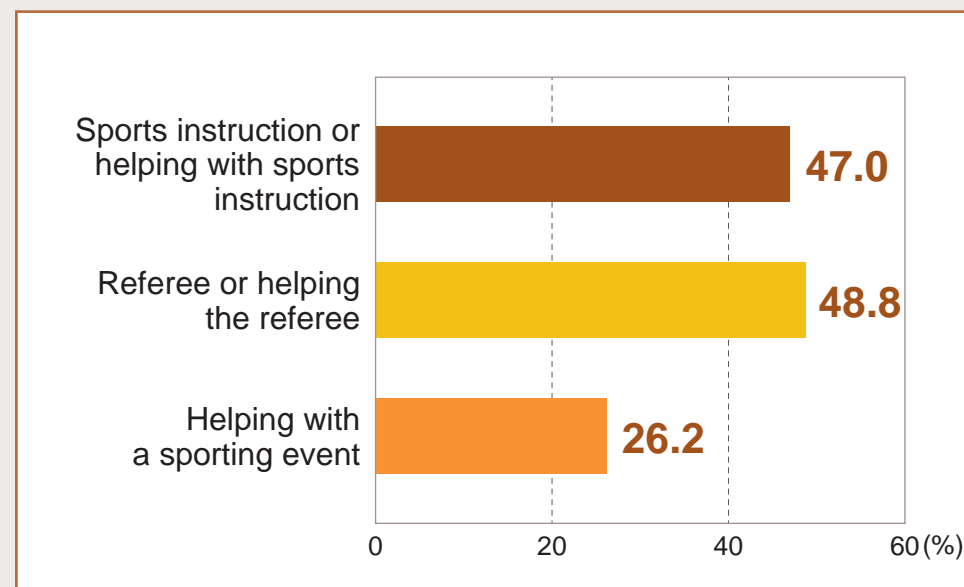
Source: 2021 Sasakawa Sports Foundation National Sports-Life Survey of Ages 12 to 21

Figure 8 indicates the sports volunteering rates for ages 12-21.

Overall, **9.9%** of subjects participated in sports volunteering in the past year. This rate decreased by 2.6 points from 12.5% in the 2019 survey, which results in the lowest rate since the 2005 survey, when the survey on the sports volunteering began. This is assumed to be influenced by a decrease in opportunities for sports volunteering due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Regarding the rates depending on gender, **12.9%** of boys and **6.8%** of girls

Fig.9 Sports volunteer activities (12-21 year olds)
(n=164 : Multiple answers were allowed.)



Source: 2021 Sasakawa Sports Foundation National Sports-Life Survey of Ages 12 to 21

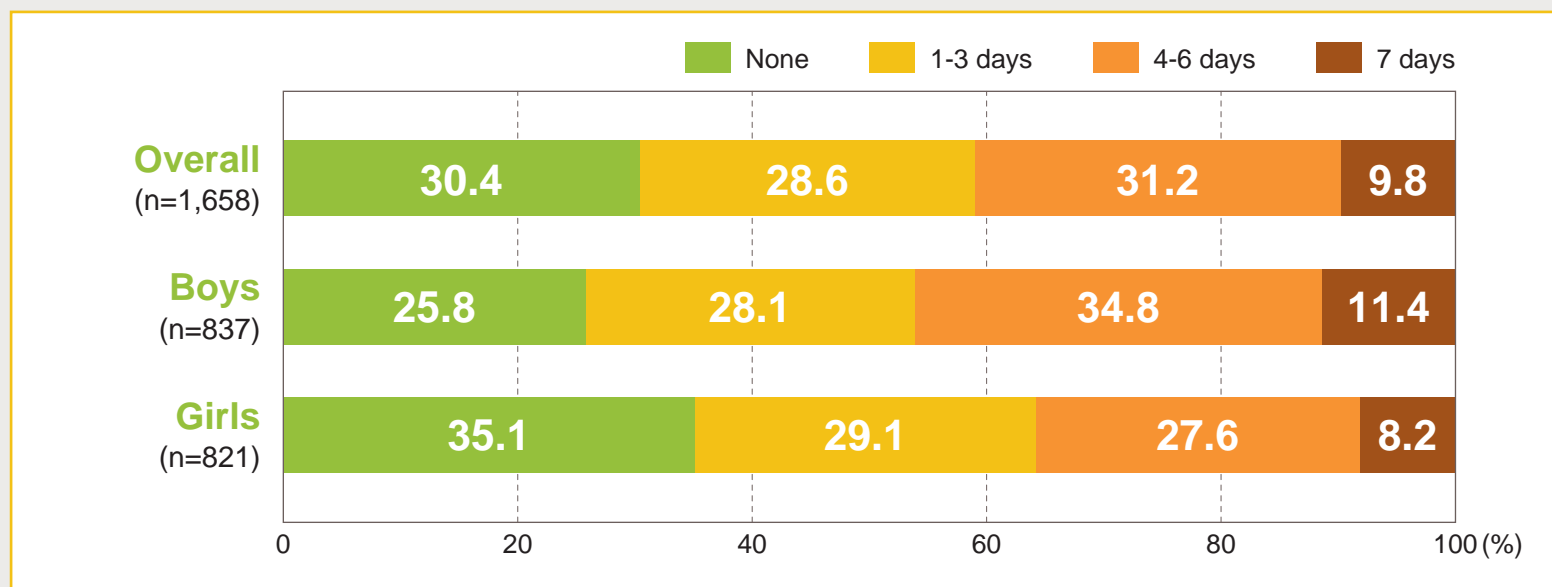
participated in sports volunteering, with the rate of volunteering being 6.1 points higher for boys than that for girls. This trend has not changed since the 2005 survey.

When asked about the type of sports volunteer activities they participated in, most subjects responded with “referee or helping the referee (**48.8%**)”, followed by “sports instruction or helping with sports instruction” (**47.0%**), and “helping with a sporting event (**26.2%**)”, as indicated in **Figure 9**.

Status of physical activities of daily living

■ 12-21 year olds

Fig.10 Number of days at least 60 min/day of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity in the past week (12-21 year olds : overall / by gender)



1*) Number of days in the last 7 days doing physical activity equivalent in intensity to heart pounding or large increases in heart rate for a total of at least 60 minutes per day.

Source: 2021 Sasakawa Sports Foundation National Sports-Life Survey of Ages 12 to 21

Figure 10 shows the number of days in the last 7 days that respondents engaged in moderate-to-vigorous physical activity for at least 60 minutes a day. Moderate-to-vigorous physical activity refers to activities equivalent in intensity to heart pounding or large increases in heart rate, which includes sports, playing with friends, walking or biking to school, etc.

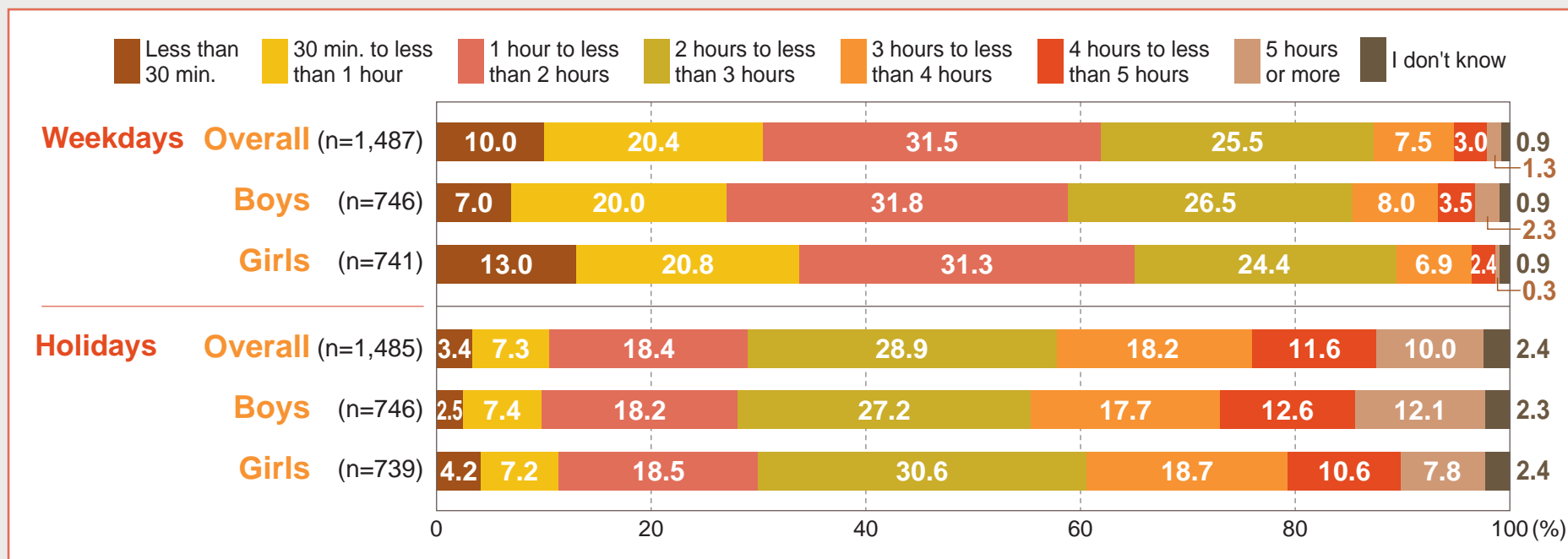
Overall, **31.2%** of the respondents selected “4-6 days,”

followed by “None” at **30.4%**, “1-3 days” at **28.6%**, and “7 days” at **9.8%**. The results depending on gender showed that the highest percentage for boys was **34.8%** for “4-6 days,” while the highest percentage for girls was **35.1%** for “None,” indicating a difference in the status of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity of boys and girls.

Media usage time (screen time)

4-11 year olds

Fig.11 Media usage time (4-11 year olds : overall / by gender)



*1) Number of hours watching TV or DVD, using computer, video games (including TV, computer, and cellular device games, etc.) or using smart phone per day outside of school class (including kindergarten and pre-school).

Source: 2021 Sasakawa Sports Foundation National Sports-Life Survey of Ages 4 to 11

Figure 11 indicates the media usage time (screen time) on weekdays and holidays for the 4-11 age group.

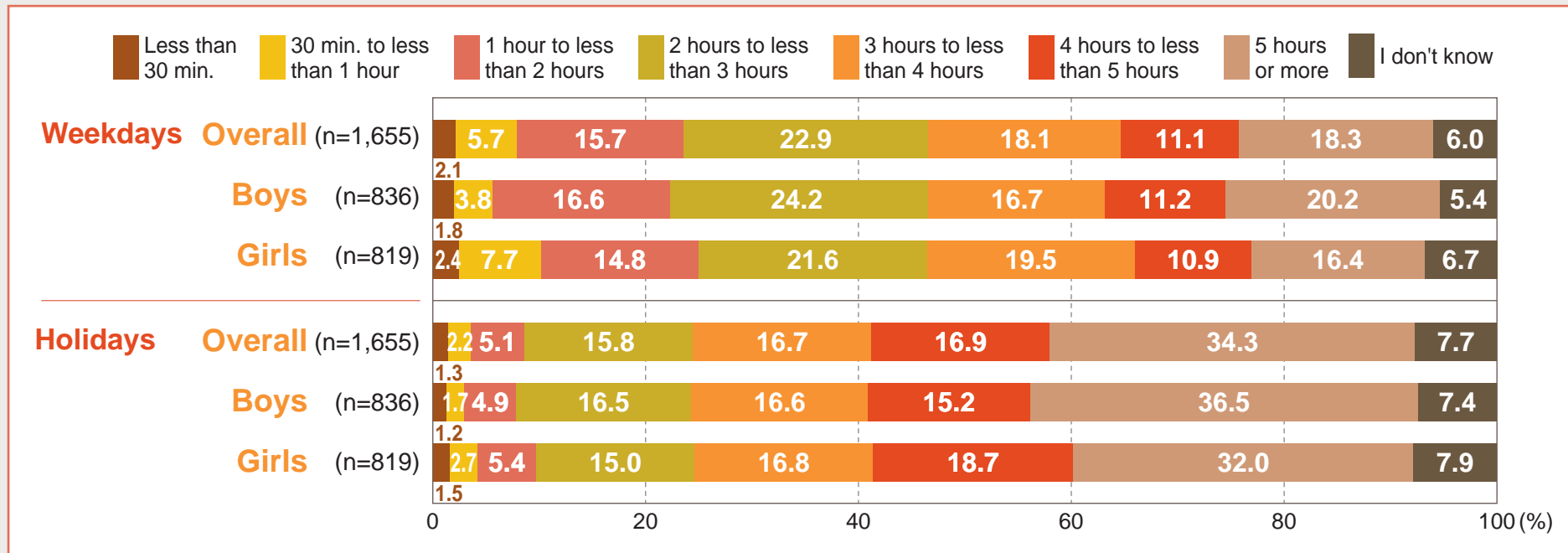
Regarding the media usage time per day (outside of lessons at kindergarten, preschool, or school), the highest reported answer for weekdays was “1 hour to less than 2 hours” (31.5%), followed by “2 hours to less than 3 hours” (25.5%). For holidays, the most frequent response

was “2 hours to less than 3 hours” (28.9%), followed by “1 hour to less than 2 hours” (18.4%).

The rates of media usage time less than 2 hours on holidays were lower than those on weekdays, whereas the opposite was true in the rates of that more than 3 hours.

12-21 year olds

Fig.12 Media usage time (12-21 year olds : overall / by gender)



*1) Number of hours watching TV or DVD, using computer, video games (including TV, computer, and cellular device games, etc.) or using smart phone per day outside of school and/or work.

Source: 2021 Sasakawa Sports Foundation National Sports-Life Survey of Ages 12 to 21

Figure 12 indicates the media usage time (screen time) on weekdays and holidays for the 12-21 age group.

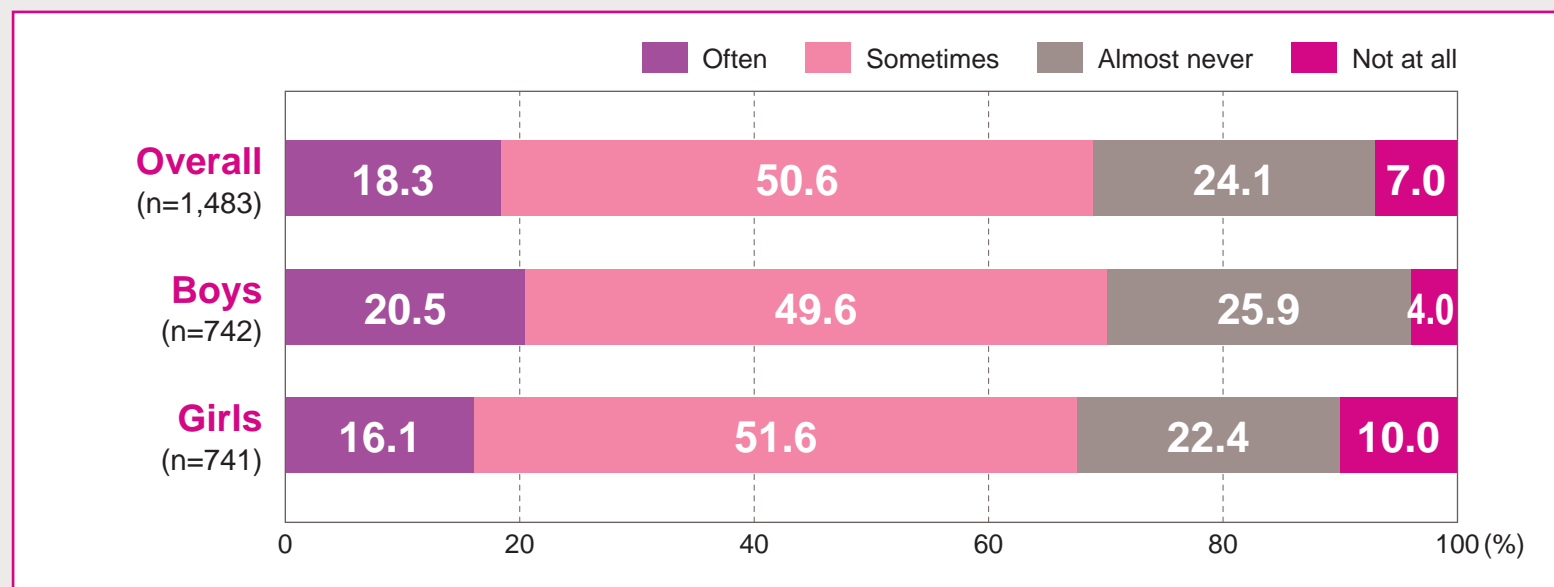
Regarding the media usage time per day (outside of work or lessons at school), the highest reported answer for weekdays was “2 hours to less

than 3 hours” (22.9%), followed by “5 hours or more” (18.3%). For holidays, the most frequent response was “5 hours or more” (34.3%); the rate of respondents who used media for longer periods of time on holidays was higher than that on weekdays.

Frequency of exercise, sports, and physical play with family

■ 4-11 year olds

Fig.13 Exercise, sports and physical play with family (4-11 year olds : overall / by gender)



1*) Family indicates parents and guardians.

Source: 2021 Sasakawa Sports Foundation National Sports-Life Survey of Ages 4 to 11

Figure 13 indicates the frequency of engaging in exercise or sports together with family for the 4-11 age group.

Parents or guardians of respondents in the 4-11 age group were asked: "Do you or another family member regularly engage in exercise, sports, or physical play together with the child participating in the survey?"

Overall, **18.3%** responded with "often," **50.6%** with "sometimes," **24.1%** with "almost never," and **7.0%** with "not at all." A total of 68.9% of children aged 4-11 engaged in exercise, sports, or physical play together with a family member "often" or "sometimes," 70.1% for boys and 67.7% for girls.

About SSF

President's message

A think tank whose every dream and action is taken with the future in mind

The activities of the Sasakawa Sports Foundation (SSF) are aimed at creating a "Sport for Everyone society" in which everyone enjoys sports in a manner that fits their own lifestyle and interests.

Sports not only have the power to maintain and improve mental and physical health, but also the mysterious ability (value) to act as a universal remedy that helps people grow and encourages the formation of society.

As we see changes in demographic movement that are unprecedented anywhere in the world, Japan faces a variety of social issues. SSF is working to utilize scientific investigation and research to convert that mysterious ability into objective and easy-to-understand data and language and develop projects and programs that help as many people as possible enjoy their lives through sports, and projects and programs that help solve social issues, among other things.

In 2019, Rugby World Cup 2019 filled Japan with excitement, and we saw an increase in interest not only in rugby, but in sports in general. Then, just as that momentum was moving forward to the Tokyo Olympics/Paralympics, and expectations were high for an increase in the number of people participating in sports, the novel coronavirus began to spread, and we were hit with the stagnation of social activity worldwide. In the "new normal" (our new lifestyle under the coronavirus peril), socio-economic activities continue to be limited, and our sports environment has also been subject to enormous restrictions. SSF's ingenuity and ability to take action toward achieving a Sport for Everyone society are now being tested.

It is also likely that our battle against changes in the global environment and the accompanying natural disasters and communicable diseases will continue as well. As we reflect on history, we see that we have faced a variety of threats in the past as well. In 2011, following the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station, there were concerns regarding the health of evacuees. These included the issue of children getting insufficient physical exercise. However, many individuals and organizations working together gradually reduced the problem.

It is impossible to completely eliminate all crises faced by the human race. What is important is to establish a mobile system that makes it possible for people to work together in such a manner at any time, and to spread that system throughout the world. SSF believes that difficulties are an opportunity to do so, and we will focus even more effort on achieving a society in which as many people as possible can enjoy the power of sports and live healthy lives.

Fortunately, we have already built a broad network of personal connections, and have a rich store of information and knowledge. We will utilize, enhance, and expand these to move forward with convincing cross-disciplinary research based on the insights of both the social sciences and the natural sciences, and return the findings to society as quickly as possible through collaboration with a variety of individuals and organizations. Let us do this to achieve a Sport for Everyone society which we aim at.

Kazutoshi Watanabe, President
Sasakawa Sports Foundation

Outline of activities

1 Research and surveys

The Institute of Sports Policy, established in SSF carries out fact-finding surveys, case studies and empirical research in the three fields of "sports policy", "community-building through sports" and "promotion of sports among children and youth".

The institute gathers and analyses quantitative data and advanced cases in the country as well as overseas, which are

essential for the national government and local governments to draft sports policy and for various organizations to plan sports promotion programs. SSF proactively makes proposals for policies to governments and for plans to sports organizations, based on evidence obtained from the research and survey.

2 Collaboration with local governments

SSF promotes a nationwide sport program, which aims to encourage people to participate in sports and physical activities, called Challenge Day. In this program, municipal communities with similar size of populations compete over the percentage of their residents who did some kind of sports and physical activities for a minimum of fifteen minutes on the last Wednesday of May. Through Challenge Day, SSF is able to forge closer links with local governments and other organizations, and to verify that

sports are beneficial in building local communities and promoting relationships between people of different generations, and to propose a system in which individual residents can enjoy sports in their communities.

Furthermore, in collaboration with local governments who participate in Challenge Day and with other local governments nationwide, SSF draws up sports promotion plans for local communities and offers the results of its surveys and research.

3 Public relations

SSF disseminates the information about its initiatives as described above, and releases the latest sports information in the country and overseas that is beneficial for sports policy research, using its official website, social media, at symposiums, seminars, and international conferences.

As part of its public relations activities, SSF publishes the results of the National Sport and Lifestyle Survey, which is

biannually conducted to understand the state of participation and involvement in sports by Japanese, by means of a report called the SSF National Sports-Life Survey. SSF also brings out and extensively distributes Sport White Paper, in which the latest data in the country and overseas is printed.

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