

The 2023 SSF National Sports-Life Survey of Children and Young People

● Executive Summary December 2023, Japan

2023



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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:** Leaving method
- 6) Survey period:** June-July 2023
- 7) Collected questionnaires (rate):** [4-11 year olds] 1,350 (56.3%)
[12-21 year olds] 1,495 (49.8%)
- 8) Survey contents:** Frequencies, time, and intensity of exercise and sports participation, sports facilities, sports teams/clubs, liking for exercise and sports participation, sports spectating, favorite athletes, sports volunteering, status of physical activities of daily living, sleeping time, media usage time (screen time), and frequencies of exercise, sports, and 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.

Frequencies of exercise and sports participation

■ 4-11 year olds

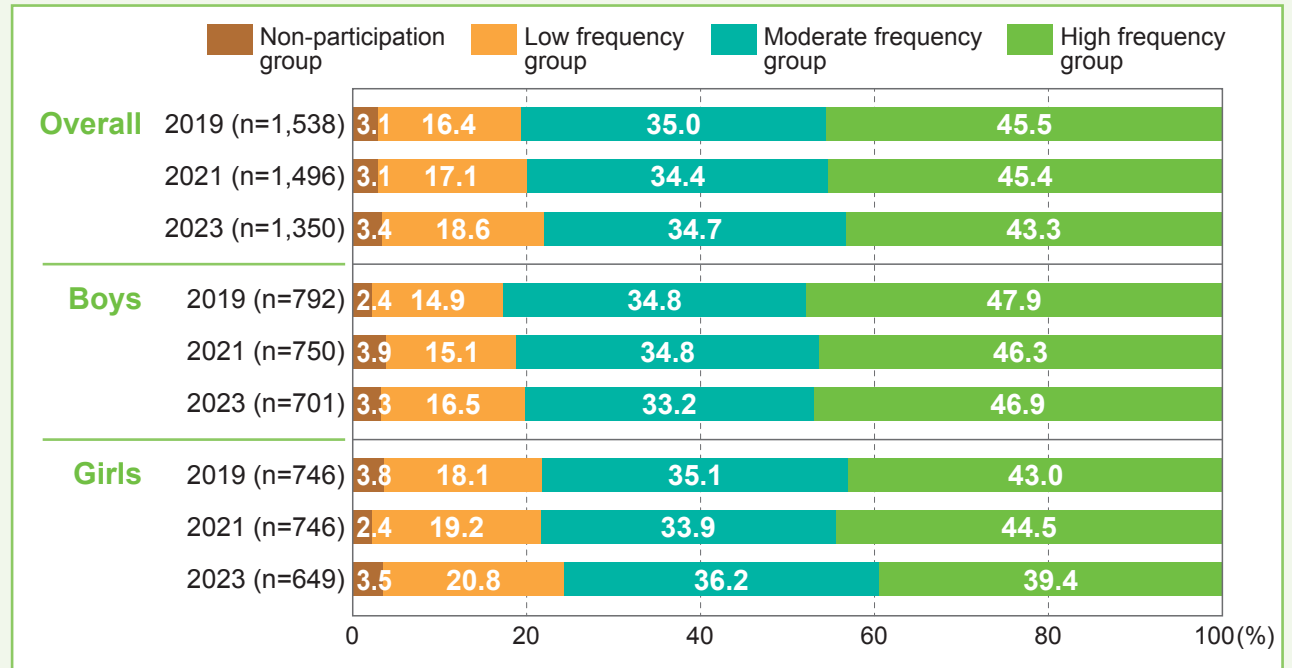
[Table 1] Exercise and sports participation frequency groups (4-11 year olds)

Frequency	Standards
Non-participation group	Non-participation for the past year (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: 2023 Sasakawa Sports Foundation National Sports-Life Survey of Ages 4 to 11

The 4-11 year old group was divided into 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)



Source: 2023 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 43.3% overall, the high frequency group was the most common in the 2023 survey, followed by the moderate frequency group (34.7%), the low frequency group (18.6%), and the non-participation group (3.4%). The percentage of the high frequency group showed a decrease of 2.1 points from the 2021 survey.

Regarding the percentages by gender, the high frequency group was 46.9% for boys, which was 7.5 points higher than 39.4% for girls. The percentage of the high frequency group for boys was little changed from the 2021 survey, whereas the percentage for girls decreased by 5.1 points. Since 2019, the trend continues with a higher percentage of the high frequency group for boys than for girls.

■ 12-21 year olds

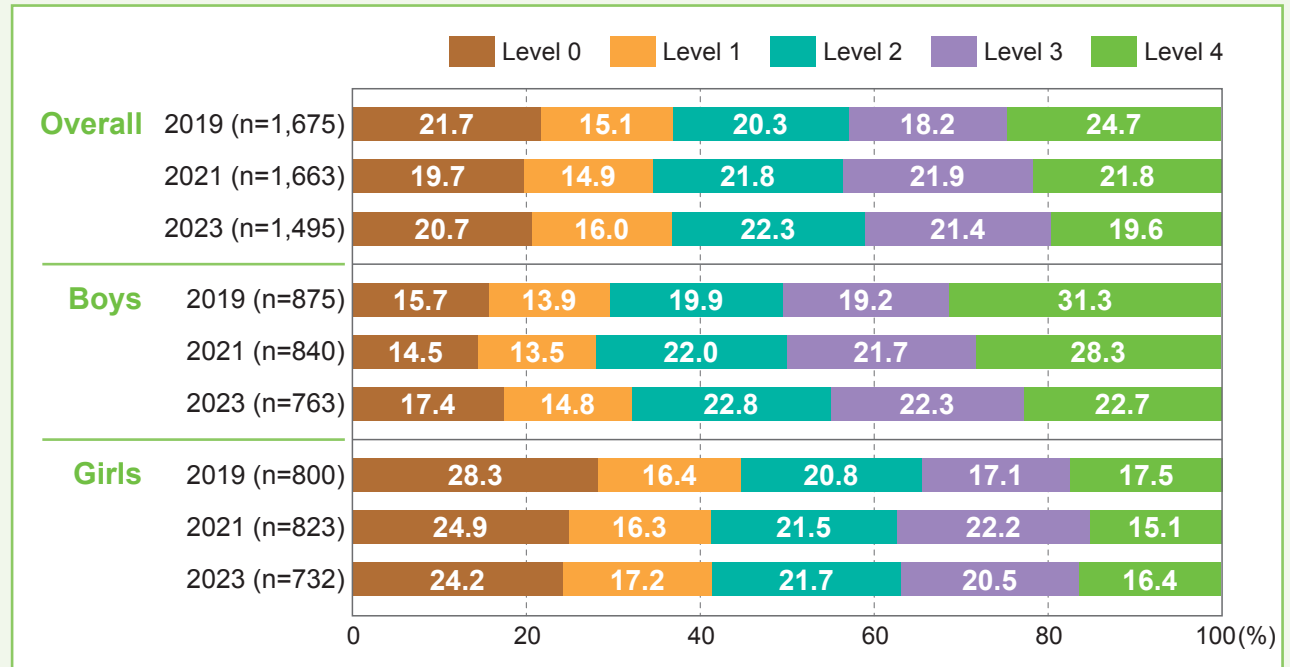
[Table 2] Exercise and sports participation levels (12-21 year olds)

Level	Standards
0	Non-participation for the past year (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: 2023 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)



Source: 2023 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 2023 survey were 20.7% for Level 0, 16.0% for Level 1, 22.3% for Level 2, 21.4% for Level 3, and 19.6% for Level 4. Level 4, which represents those who had a higher frequency with at least 120 minutes at a time and at least moderate intensity than other levels, was on a downward trend.

Regarding the rates by gender, Level 2 was the highest for boys at 22.8%, whereas Level 0 was the highest for girls at 24.2%. Annual trends show that Level 4 has continued to decrease since the 2019 survey for boys, whereas Level 0 has decreased since the 2019 survey for girls.

Exercise and sports types

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

4-11 year olds (n=1,304)			12-21 year olds (n=1,185)		
Rank	Types of exercise/sports	Percentage (%)	Rank	Types of exercise/sports	Percentage (%)
1	Tag	57.2	1	Badminton	20.3
2	Dodgeball	32.0	2	Basketball	20.2
3	Swimming	31.4	3	Jogging/running	18.5
4	Bicycle riding	29.4	4	Walking	18.3
5	Swings	28.9	5	Soccer	18.1
6	Soccer	25.4	6	Muscle training	17.1
	Jump rope (including long jump rope)	25.4	7	Volleyball	15.7
8	Hide-and-seek	17.9	8	Table tennis	13.2
9	Iron bar	17.2	9	Baseball	11.0
10	Race	14.2	10	Tag	10.4

Source: 2023 Sasakawa Sports Foundation National Sports-Life Survey of Ages 4 to 11 and National Sports-Life Survey of Ages 12 to 21

Table 3 indicates the top 10 exercise or sports activities carried out often (on many occasions) in the past year.

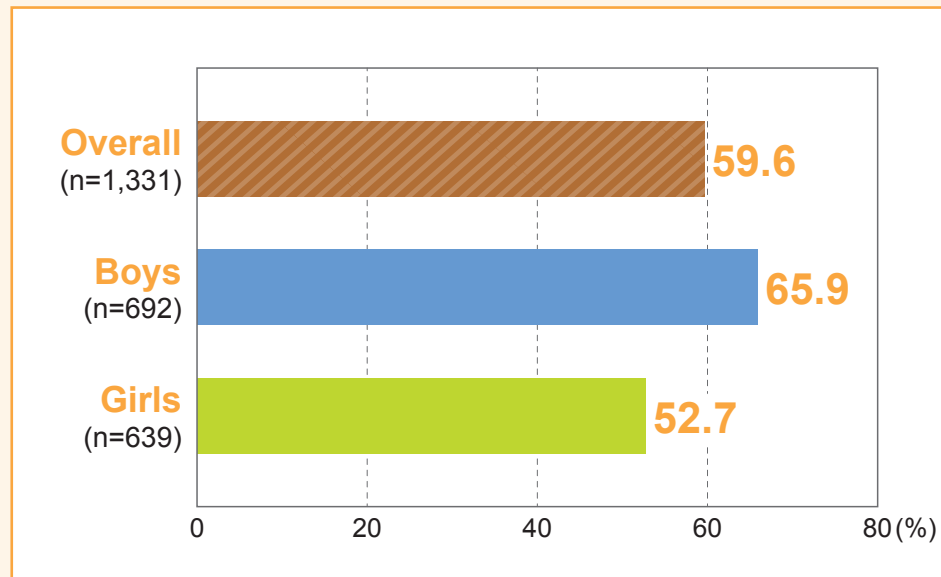
For the 4-11 year old group, “Tag” was the highest at **57.2%**, followed by “Dodgeball” at **32.0%**, “Swimming” at **31.4%**,

“Bicycle riding” at **29.4%**, and “Swings” at **28.9%**.

For the 12-21 year old group, “Badminton” was in the first place at **20.3%**, followed by “Basketball” at **20.2%**, “Jogging/running” at **18.5%**, “Walking” at **18.3%**, and “Soccer” at **18.1%**.

■ 4-11 year olds

[Fig.3] Participation rates in sports teams/clubs (4-11 year olds)



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

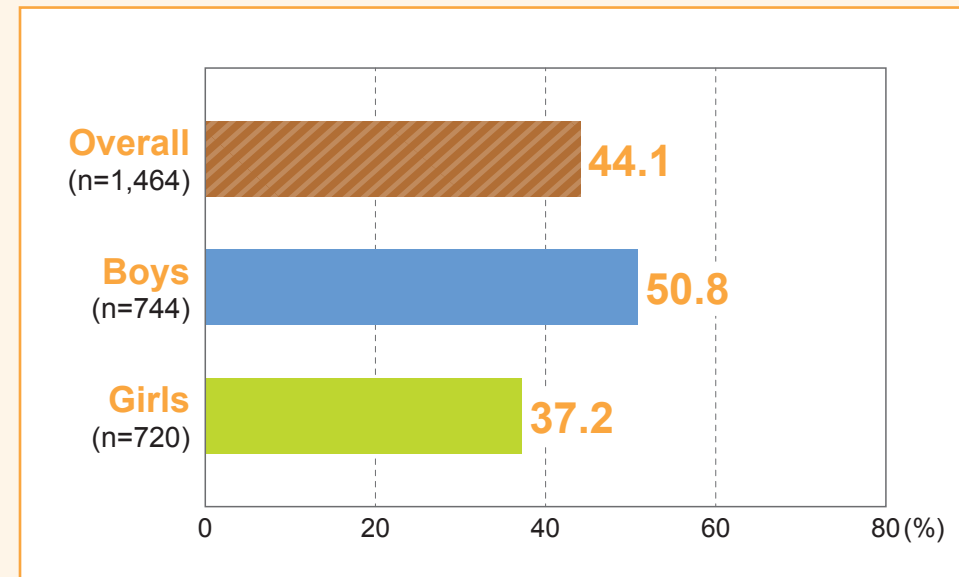
Source: 2023 Sasakawa Sports Foundation National Sports-Life Survey of Ages 4 to 11

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 **59.6%**. Regarding the rates by gender, boys had a participation rate of **65.9%** and girls had a participation rate of **52.7%**.

■ 12-21 year olds

[Fig.4] Participation rates in sports teams/clubs (12-21 year olds)



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

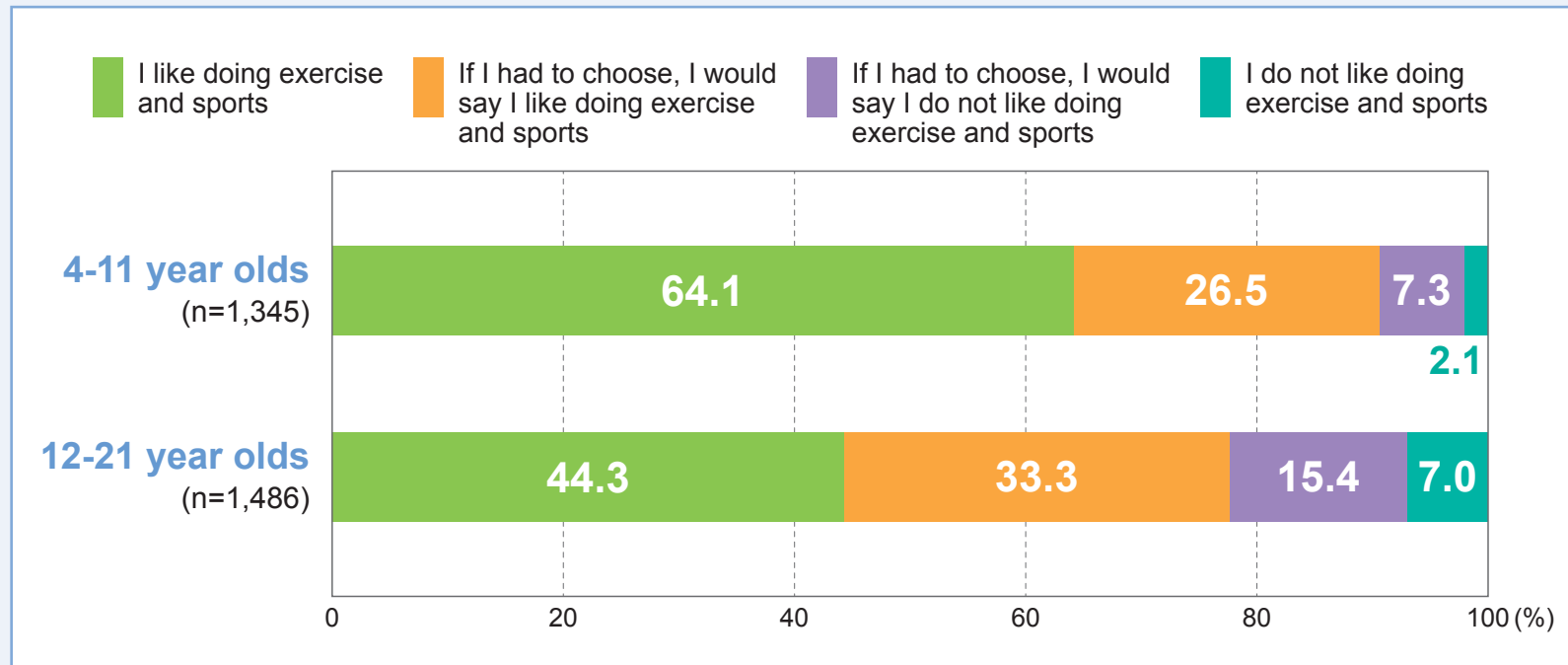
Source: 2023 Sasakawa Sports Foundation National Sports-Life Survey of Ages 12 to 21

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

The overall rate of participation in sports teams/clubs for ages 12-21 was **44.1%**. For boys, the participation rate was **50.8%**, which was 13.6 points higher than **37.2%** for girls.

Liking for exercise and sports participation

[Fig.5] Liking for exercise and sports participation



Source: 2023 Sasakawa Sports Foundation National Sports-Life Survey of Ages 4 to 11 and National Sports-Life Survey of Ages 12 to 21

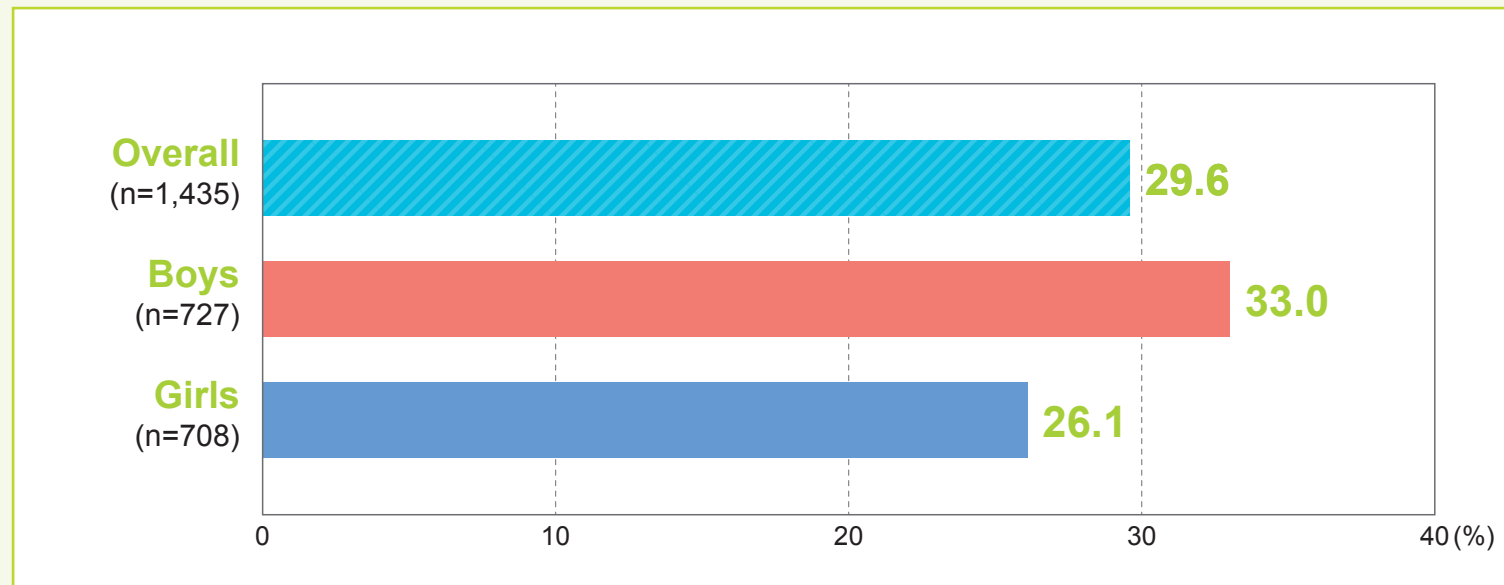
The rates of liking and disliking for exercise and sports participation are indicated in **Figure 5**.

For ages 4-11, “I like doing exercise and sports” was **64.1%**; “If I had to choose, I would say I like doing exercise and sports” was **26.5%**; “If I had to choose, I would say I do not like doing exercise and sports” was **7.3%**; and “I do not like doing exercise and sports” was **2.1%**.

For ages 12-21, “I like doing exercise and sports” was **44.3%**, followed by “If I had to choose, I would say I like doing exercise and sports” at **33.3%**, “If I had to choose, I would say I do not like doing exercise and sports” at **15.4%**, and “I do not like doing exercise and sports” at **7.0%**.

■ 12-21 year olds

【Fig.6】 Rates of live sports viewing at the venue (12-21 year olds)



Source: 2023 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 shown in **Figure 6**.

Overall, **29.6%** of survey respondents watched a sports match at a gymnasium, stadium, or other facilities in the past year. This rate increased by 11.2 points from 18.4% in the 2021 survey.

In terms of the rates by gender, **33.0%** of boys and **26.1%** of girls watched a sporting event, with boys exceeding girls by 6.9 points. This tendency of boys with a higher rate of live sports viewing at the venue than girls has remained unchanged since the first survey of this item in 2001.

Sports spectating

■ 12-21 year olds

[Table 4] Types of sports viewed live at the venue (12-21 year olds) (multiple answers were allowed.)

(%)

Rank	Types of sports	Overall (n=1,435)	Boys (n=727)	Girls (n=708)
1	Professional baseball (Nippon Professional Baseball)	10.9	12.5	9.2
2	High school baseball	4.9	5.1	4.7
3	Japan Professional Football League (J1, J2, and J3 Leagues)	4.5	7.0	2.0
4	Soccer (high school, university, JFL, etc.)	3.2	3.7	2.7
5	Professional basketball (B.LEAGUE)	2.7	2.9	2.5
	I have not watched a sports match at the venue live	70.4	67.0	73.9

Source: 2023 Sasakawa Sports Foundation National Sports-Life Survey of Ages 12 to 21

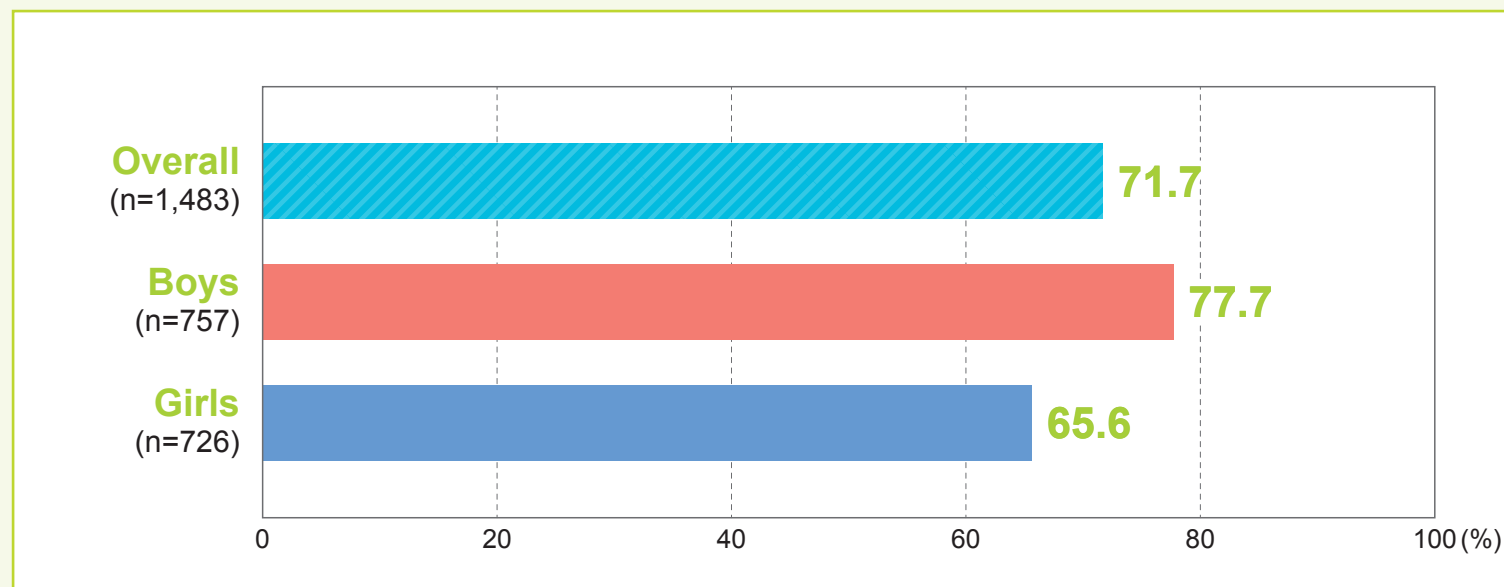
Table 4 reveals the types of sports that were viewed live at the venue by the 12-21 age group.

Overall, “Professional baseball (Nippon Professional Baseball)” had the highest viewing rate at **10.9%**, followed by “High school baseball” at **4.9%**, “Japan Professional Football League (J1, J2, and J3 Leagues)” at **4.5%**, “Soccer (high school, university, JFL, etc.)”

at **3.2%**, and “Professional basketball (B.LEAGUE)” at **2.7%**. For both boys and girls, “Professional baseball (Nippon Professional Baseball)” had the highest viewing rate, **12.5%** for boys and **9.2%** for girls, followed by “Japan Professional Football League (J1, J2, and J3 Leagues)” at **7.0%** for boys and “High school baseball” at **4.7%** for girls.

■ 12-21 year olds

【Fig.7】 Rates of sports viewing via media (12-21 year olds)



*1) Includes sports viewing through media such as television, smartphones, tablets, PCs, etc.

Source: 2023 Sasakawa Sports Foundation National Sports-Life Survey of Ages 12 to 21

The rates of sports viewing via media for ages 12-21 are indicated in **Figure 7**.

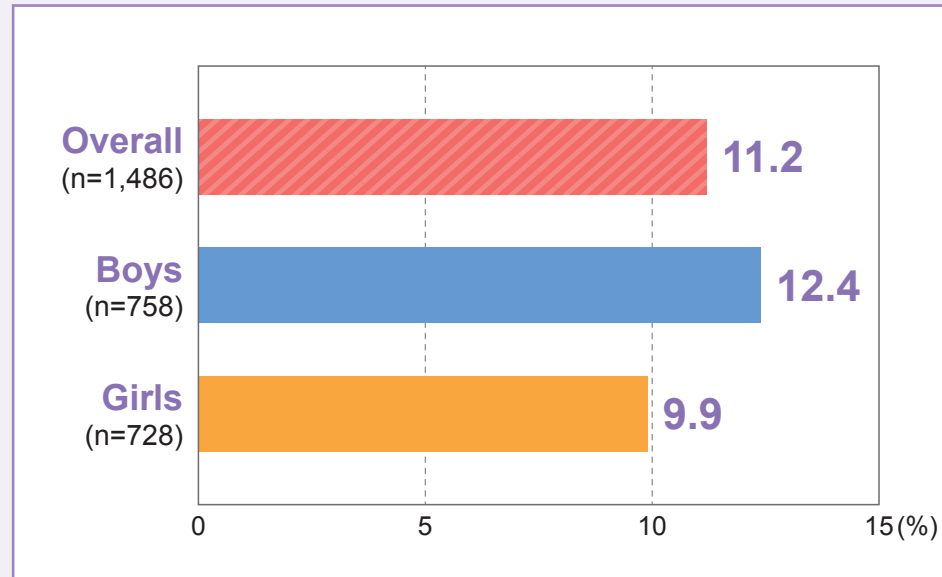
Overall, **71.7%** of survey respondents watched a sports match using a television, smartphone, or other forms of

media in the past year. Regarding the rates by gender, **77.7%** of boys and **65.6%** of girls watched a sports match, with boys outnumbering girls by 12.1 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)

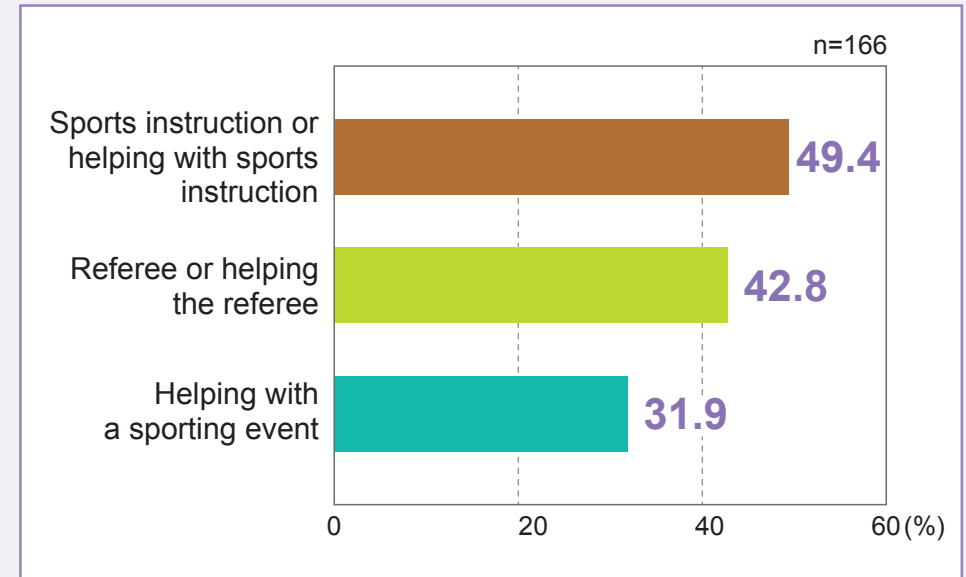


Source: 2023 Sasakawa Sports Foundation National Sports-Life Survey of Ages 12 to 21

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

Overall, **11.2%** of survey respondents participated in sports volunteering in the past year. In terms of the rates by gender, **12.4%** of boys participated in sports volunteering, which was 2.5 points higher than **9.9%** for girls. The trend of the rate for boys outnumbering the rate for girls has continued since the first survey in 2005.

[Fig.9] Sports volunteer activities (12-21 year olds) (multiple answers were allowed.)



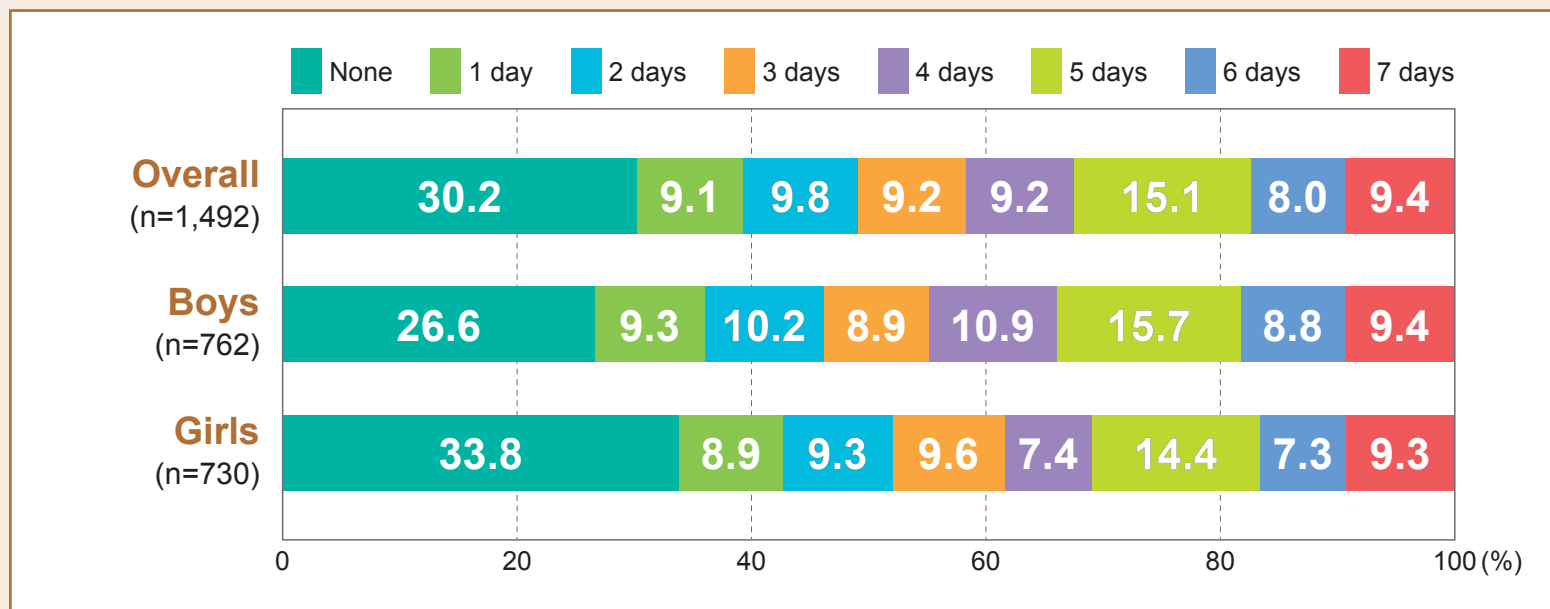
Source: 2023 Sasakawa Sports Foundation National Sports-Life Survey of Ages 12 to 21

The 12-21 age group was also asked about the types of sports volunteer activities they participated in.

As indicated in **Figure 9**, “Sports instruction or helping with sports instruction” was the highest participated volunteer activity at **49.4%**. Then, it was followed by “Referee or helping the referee” at **42.8%** and “Helping with a sporting event” at **31.9%**.

■ 12-21 year olds

[Fig.10] Number of days with at least 60 min/day of moderate-to-vigorous physical activities in the past 7 days (12-21 year olds)



*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: 2023 Sasakawa Sports Foundation National Sports-Life Survey of Ages 12 to 21

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

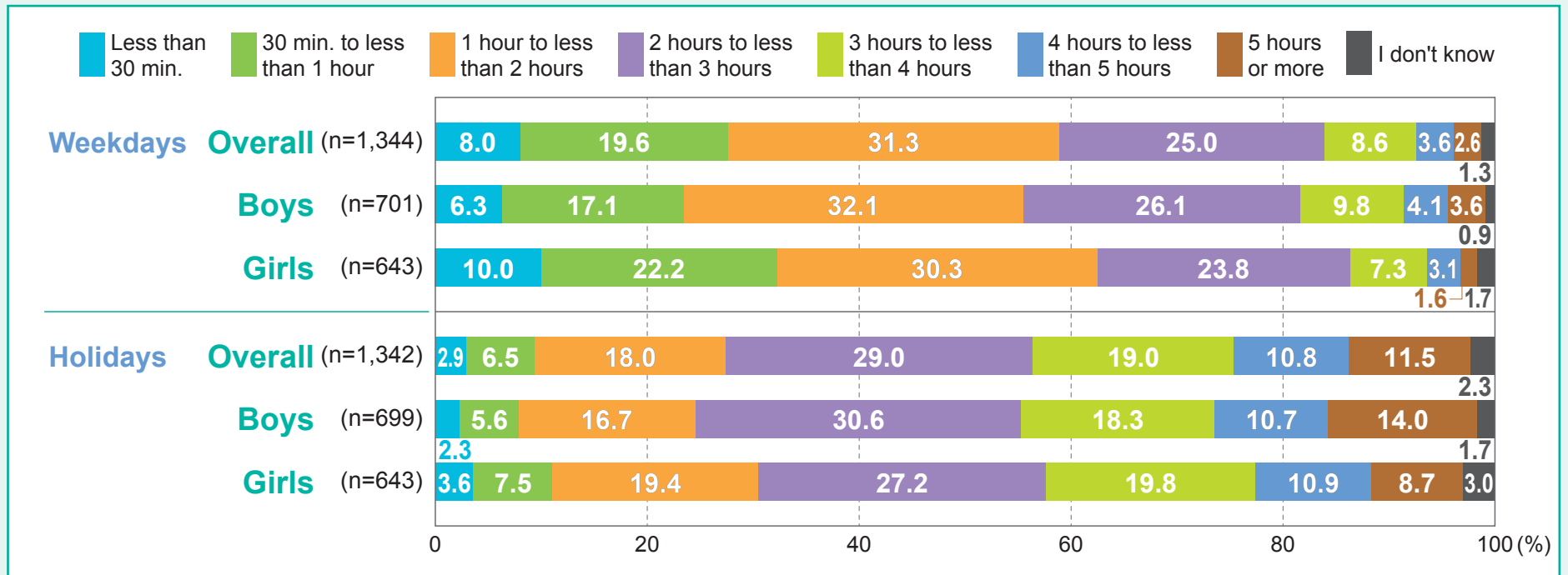
Overall, **30.2%** of survey respondents answered “None”, followed by

“5 days” at **15.1%**. Those who engaged in moderate-to-vigorous physical activities 5 or more days a week were **32.5%**. The results by gender showed that “None” was the highest percentages for both boys and girls, at **26.6%** and **33.8%** respectively, with girls outnumbering boys by 7.2 points. Regarding the rates of “5 or more days a week”, boys showed **33.9%** and girls **31.0%**, with little gender difference.

Media usage time (screen time)

■ 4-11 year olds

[Fig.11] Media usage time (4-11 year olds)



*1) Number of hours watching TV or DVD, using PCs, video games (including TV, PCs, cellular device games, etc.) or using smartphone per day outside of school class (including kindergarten and preschool).

Source: 2023 Sasakawa Sports Foundation National Sports-Life Survey of Ages 4 to 11

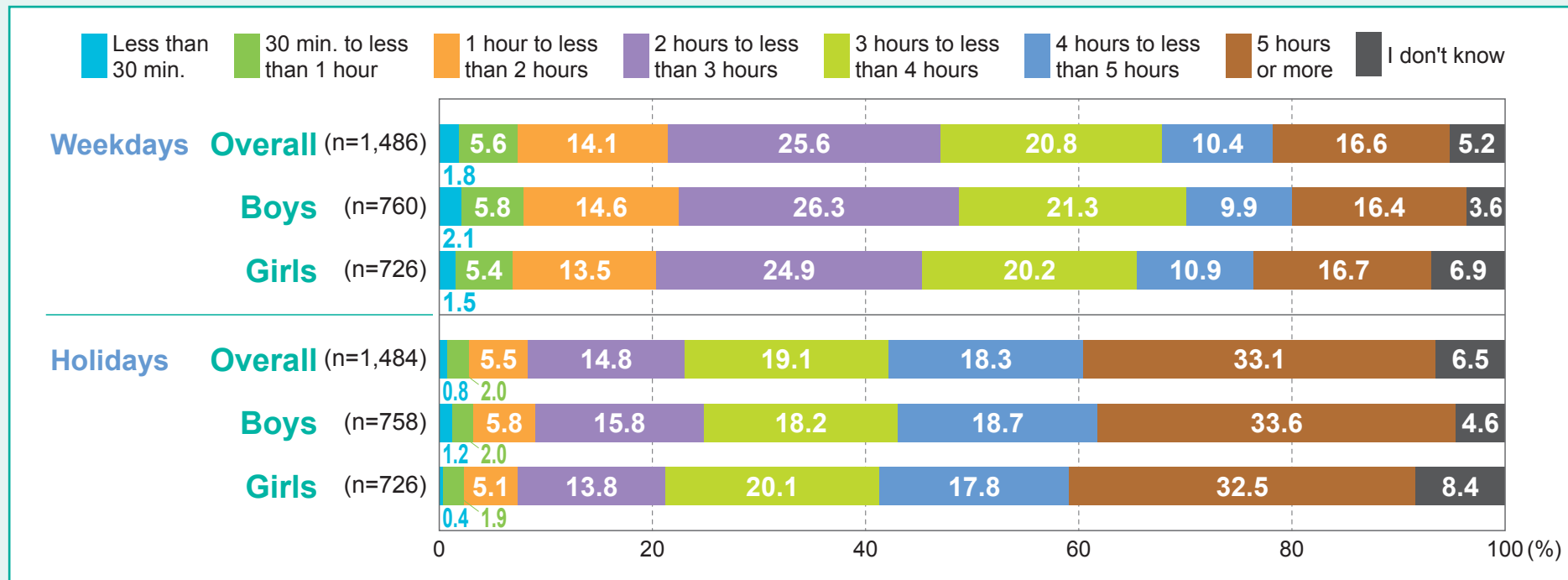
Figure 11 indicates the media usage time (screen time) for the 4-11 age group on weekdays and holidays.

In terms of 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” at **31.3%**, followed by “2 hours

to less than 3 hours” at **25.0%**. For holidays, the most frequent response was “2 hours to less than 3 hours” at **29.0%**, followed by “3 hours to less than 4 hours” at **19.0%**. The rates of media usage time less than 2 hours on holidays were lower than the rates on weekdays, whereas the opposite was true in the rates of media usage time more than 3 hours.

■ 12-21 year olds

[Fig.12] Media usage time (12-21 year olds)



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

Source: 2023 Sasakawa Sports Foundation National Sports-Life Survey of Ages 12 to 21

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

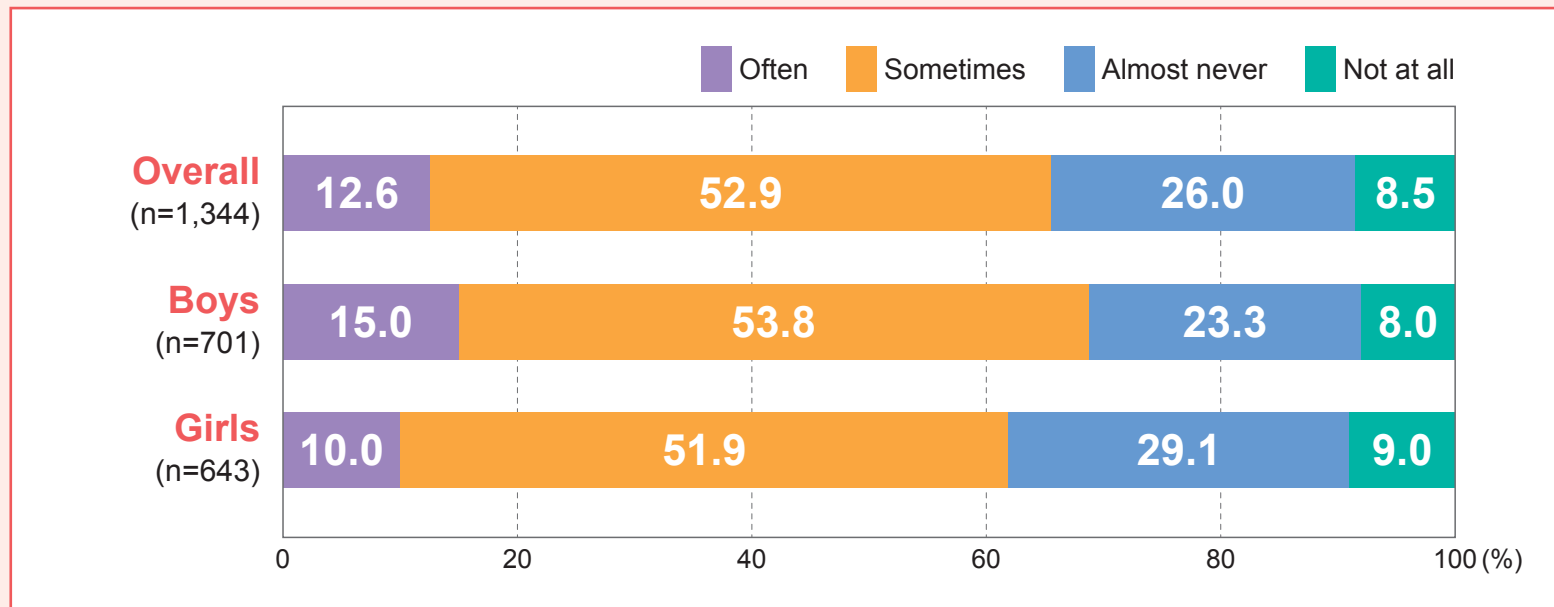
Regarding the media usage time per day (outside school or work), the highest reported answer for weekdays was “2 hours to less than 3 hours”

at 25.6%, followed by “3 hours to less than 4 hours” at 20.8%. For holidays, the most frequent response was “5 hours or more” (33.1%). These results highlight that the rate of the 12-21 age group who used media for longer periods of time on holidays was higher than the rate on weekdays.

Frequencies 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)



*1) Family indicates parents and guardians.

Source: 2023 Sasakawa Sports Foundation National Sports-Life Survey of Ages 4 to 11

Figure 13 shows the frequency of engaging in exercise, sports, or physical play together with family for the 4-11 age group. Their parents or guardians were asked: “Do you or another family member engage in exercise, sports, or physical play together with your child participating in the survey?”.

Overall, **12.6%** responded with “Often”; **52.9%** with

“Sometimes”; **26.0%** with “Almost never”; and **8.5%** with “Not at all”. A total of **65.5%** of children aged 4-11 engaged in exercise, sports, or physical play together with a family member “Often” or “Sometimes”; **68.8%** for boys and **61.9%** for girls.

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.

The role of the community in people's lives has been shrinking over the years, and kids are growing up with fewer opportunities to interact with those in different age groups. The rapid graying of the population is pushing up health- and nursing-care costs, exacerbating already strained fiscal resources. These are issues confronting not just Japan but also an increasing number of countries around the world.

We at the Sasakawa Sports Foundation (SSF) believe that one way of tackling these issues is to utilize the power of sports to build a healthier, more vibrant, and more inclusive society.

Sports can lead to better physical and mental health and can also be used as a communication tool to bridge differences in age, language, and gender. Our task at the SSF is to help provide an environment where everyone can participate in sports and expand opportunities for interpersonal contact, thereby energizing and invigorating both individuals and communities. Such initiatives can not only encourage greater "self-help" efforts toward better health but also deepen understanding of others, fostering an altruistic desire for "mutual aid" and prompting the government to enhance "public assistance."

And as people's engagement with sports and the community increases, they will experience all three facets of sports: "participate," "spectate," and "volunteer."

To achieve these goals, we undertake research activities to obtain the data needed to develop concrete, effective policy solutions. We then work with individual and organizational partners to implement those policies, actively engaging with the community to gauge their effectiveness and feeding the results back to our research team. The two pillars of our activities thus act as a feedback mechanism, enabling us to develop even better, more practical solutions confronting society.

A key component of this virtuous cycle is World Challenge Day—a day on which communities around the world encourage as many people as possible to be physically active. It provides an opportunity for not only individual participants to take up physical activity but also the host municipalities to directly engage with local residents and to promote good health and stronger community ties.

It has been thanks to our active involvement in Challenge Day that we have been able to conclude partnership agreements with a number of local governments to jointly develop and implement sports-related initiatives, and we hope to share the best, most successful practices with many more municipalities both in Japan and around the world.

It is our strong hope that our efforts to address social challenges through the power of sports will trigger similar initiatives abroad, and we intend to actively offer our insights to organizations sharing the Sports for All philosophy. At the same time, we seek to incorporate many innovative, promising practices from other countries, working closely with researchers and professionals around the globe to create a better world for all.

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 White Paper on Sport in Japan, in which the latest data in the country and overseas is printed.

SPORT FOR
every
one

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