

Fujisawa: An interview survey on residents with ties to foreign countries (report summary)

March 2024

1. Survey overview

An interview survey was given between September and November 2023 to city residents with ties to foreign countries and Japanese city residents in their social circles (persons/businesses providing support, local residents, etc.) for the purpose of comprehending their needs.

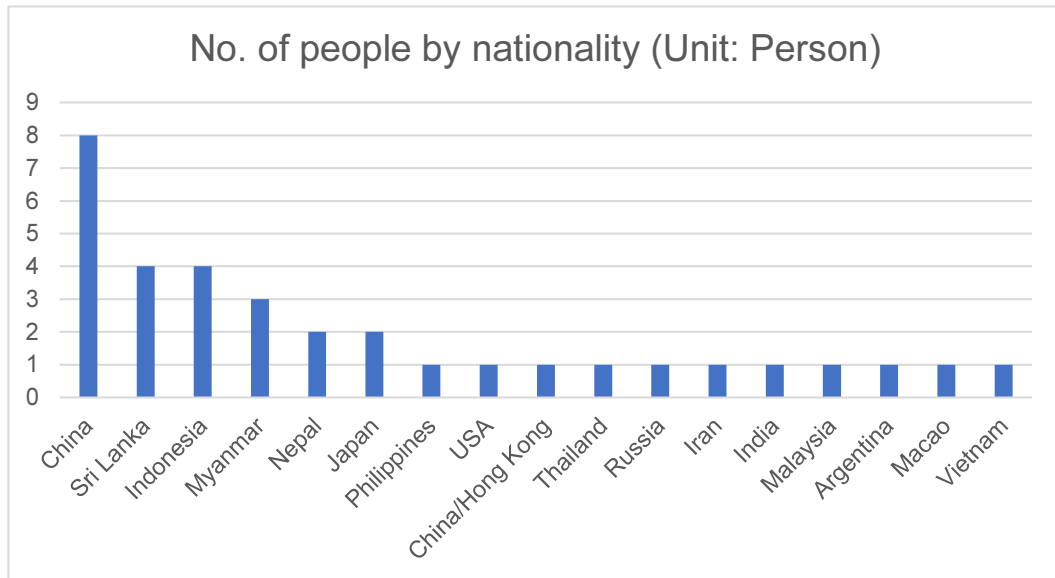
Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ① Residents living in the city with ties to foreign countries (including persons with Japanese nationality who are of foreign national origin) ② Japanese city residents in the aforementioned residents' social circles (persons/businesses providing support, local residents, etc.)
Breakdown	<p style="text-align: center;">①City residents with ties to foreign countries Total: 11 groups (34 people)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fujisawa City Non-Japanese Residents Committee: 1 group (4 people) Japanese-language classes in the city: 4 groups (11 people) Companies, etc. in the city: 2 groups (8 people) Non-Japanese communities: 2 groups (6 people) Universities in the city: 2 groups (5 people)
	<p style="text-align: center;">②Japanese city residents Total: 12 groups (18 people)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Groups associated with friendship organizations: 1 group (2 people) Japanese-language classes in the city: 4 groups (5 people) Companies, etc. in the city: 2 groups (5 people) Local Groups: 3 groups (4 people) Universities in the city: 2 groups (2 people)
Language used	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fundamentally, interviews given to residents with ties to foreign countries were conducted in Japanese. • With participants able to converse in English, interviews were conducted accordingly in English. • Some interviews were conducted using an interpreter for the participant's native language.

2. Survey results for residents with ties to foreign countries

(1) Participants' attributes and basic information

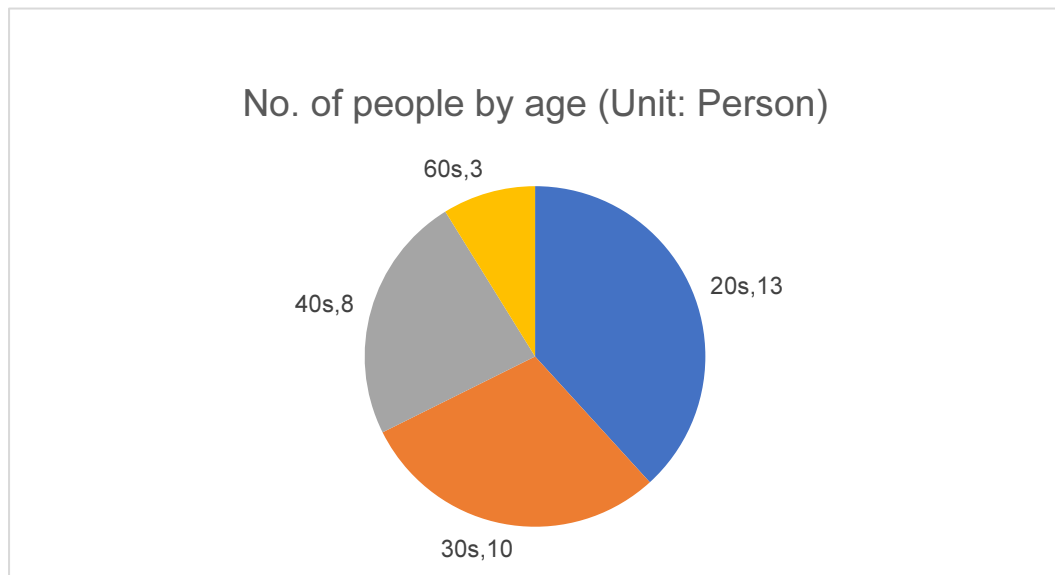
■ Nationalities

Nationalities spanned 17 countries and regions, primarily China and other Asian countries.



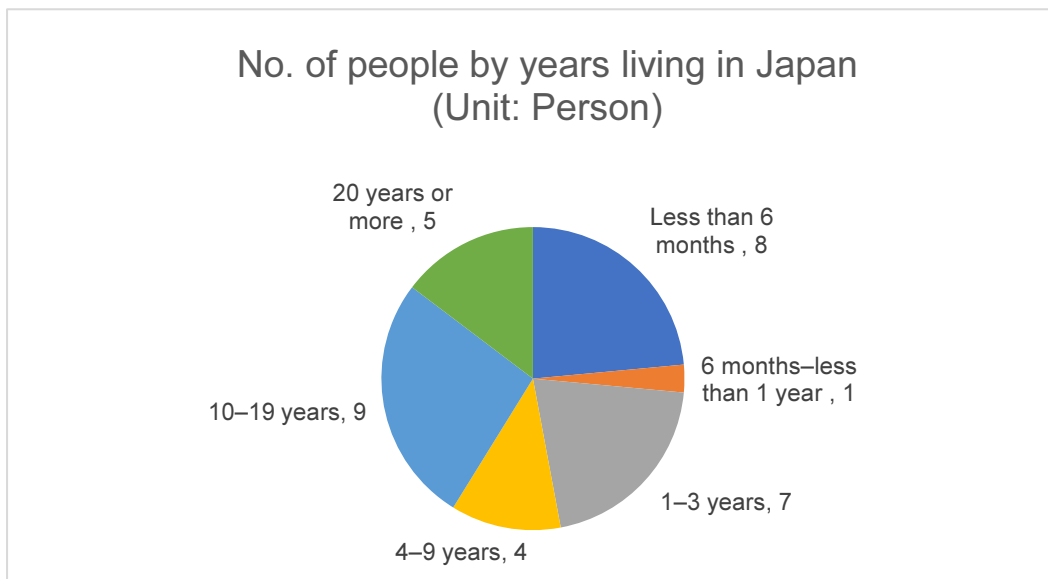
■ Ages

Ages ranged from persons in their 20s to 60s, with the majority in their 20s and 30s.



■Years living in Japan

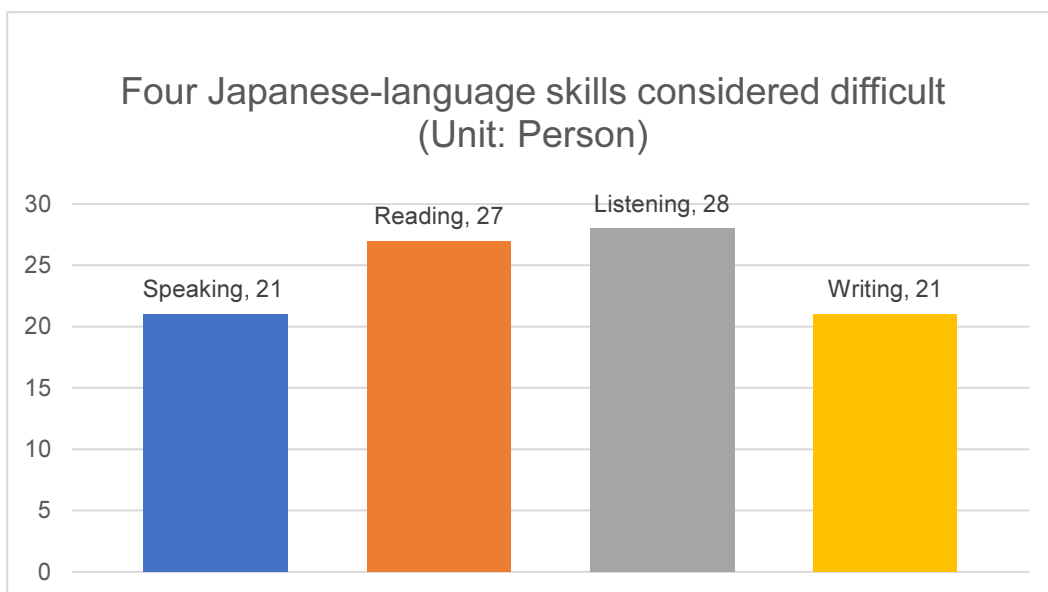
The number of years participants have lived in Japan ranged widely from less than 6 months to over 20 years. Approximately half have lived in Japan for less than 3 years.



(2) Language

■Four Japanese-language skills considered difficult

· Of the 4 Japanese-language skills of speaking (at hospitals and city hall), reading (letters from the city and schools), listening (TV, videos, and telephone), and writing (city and school submission forms), most participants (28) commented on the difficulty of "listening."



■Japanese-language skills considered difficult (specifics)

- Overall, participants noted the difficulty of kanji characters and technical terms.
- Participants noted that when listening, they have difficulty understanding for reasons including the speed of the Japanese person's speech and use of honorific expressions. They also mentioned the difficulty of having conversations when unable to see the other person's face, such as on the telephone, and when the other person doesn't recognize the participant is a foreigner. As for reading, most comments pointed out the difficulty of kanji characters and technical terms.
- It is important for Japanese speakers to comprehend that there are residents who feel using Japanese is difficult, as well as specific difficulties and measures that are welcomed. Given this, it is also important for Japanese people to learn how to use easy-to-understand Japanese.

A sample of comments

The letters I usually receive are about taxes, benefits, and children, and I can't understand them. Since I make mistakes even if I do research or ask my foreign friends, I take the time to go to city hall. (Russia, 10–19 years)
Hiragana and katakana characters are fine, but kanji is hard. The questionnaire handed out for this interview has a lot of kanji, but there are furigana characters, so it's easy to read. (Indonesia, Less than 6 months)
The hardest to understand is talking on the phone or an intercom. It seems like people are in a hurry and tend to talk fast. (Macao, 4–9 years) *11 participants noted the difficulty of listening comprehension when on the telephone.
I sometimes watch things like YouTube and cooking programs in Japanese, but they're difficult. When there are Japanese captions, it's easy to understand. (China, 1–3 years)
Around the time my child had just started 1st grade, there were lots of words I didn't understand, like "kunren" (drills) and "kyushoku toban" (school lunch duty). I wasn't able to keep up. My child learned every day, but even now there are many words I don't understand. (Sri Lanka, 10–19 years)

*The information in parentheses () at the end of every section indicates the person's nationality and years living in Japan.

■Circumstances/desire to study Japanese

- Many said they want opportunities to converse with Japanese people. In this context, they didn't necessarily want a chance to study, but expressed the desire for casual opportunities, such as enjoying a light meal or shared interests. A course of action can be considered that deftly integrates this with the needs of Japanese people interested in international exchange.
- The need for learning Japanese was also raised by advanced speakers who are proficient enough not to have issues with daily living.

A sample of comments

I think it'd be wonderful to study by talking and reading manga with Japanese people, but I worry about communication. (China, Less than 6 months)

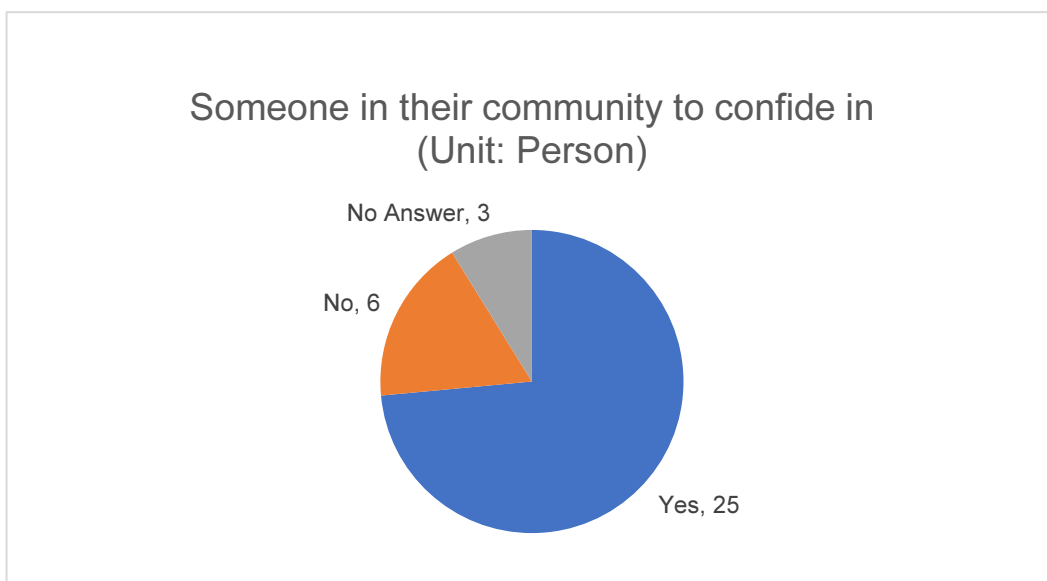
It doesn't have to be a place to study, but it'd be nice if there were chances to speak in English while enjoying beverages. (Sri Lanka, 10–19 years)

I haven't studied, but it'd be good if there was a chance. My native language, Russian, has many words, and I'd also like to be able to use more beautiful Japanese language and the kind of words not ordinarily spoken. (Russia, 10–19 years)

(3) Community relationships

■Someone in their neighborhood to confide in

- There were 25 participants who had someone they could confide in when having difficulties.



■Neighborhood relationships (specifics)

- Most of the respondents had someone in their neighborhood they could confide in. They relied on these social circle relationships, such as those created through their children, a Japanese class, or university. On the other hand, in cases where someone does not belong to a particular community, conceivably they have no one to talk to and may be isolated. Presumably, a framework enabling a person such as a newcomer to grasp various community information would be effective.

A sample of comments

The person I'm close to that I can talk to is my Japanese class teacher. (China, 1–3 years)
I can confide in the mother of my child's friend. She's Japanese. When there's something I don't understand about school, she explains it and will repeat something when I don't get it. She's kind. (Vietnam, 4–9 years)
It'd be great if there was someone I could talk to. When I had a problem, I talked to the teacher of my Japanese class, but there was no one I could ask about things I didn't know about, like when getting forms from city hall for the visa renewal process. It was distressing. (China, 1–3 years)

- Many expressed the desire to communicate with neighbors. In addition, many said they felt the Japanese people in their community were avoiding them and seemed to be shy. Therefore, it is important to develop awareness of exchange among Japanese residents, create opportunities for that kind of communication, and match people with Japanese residents in need of exchange.

A sample of comments

My only interaction with Japanese neighbors is saying hello. It seems like they imagine I don't understand Japanese because I'm foreign. I really want to become friends, but it seems many Japanese are shy. (Philippines, 4–9 years)
This isn't in my neighborhood, but a certain Japanese person immediately goes into their house when they see me. It's like they don't think well of foreigners. (Nepal, 10–19 years)
The Japanese in my neighborhood don't want to talk. There are nice people, but there are also those who won't look me in the eye. I don't have many chances to talk to parents at school, either. There are a lot of people from the same country as me, so maybe they think I already have friends. (Sri Lanka, 10–19 years)

(4) Raising children

- Many stated they had difficulty understanding various information and procedures for matters such as taking entrance exams. At places such as city contact points where various procedures are carried out, careful attention should be paid to the way information is presented and explained so that measures can be taken that engage residents with ties to foreign countries.

A sample of comments

When I couldn't understand Japanese, it was necessary for me to check many times when going through the process of taking entrance exams. Also, foreigners with children all have a difficult time with things like letters from places such as schools. It's so difficult, I could cry. I wish there was a place where I could consult with someone directly. It'd be good to have gatherings where there are multilingual people and people with the same experiences who could help each other. (China, 20 years or more)

Right now, I'm dealing with preschool application information for my three-year old, looking for information, applications, notifications, etc. Everything is in Japanese and I'm having trouble. I asked the city, but didn't get a response. At first, I missed the deadline and the next year I wasn't able to get my child in the preschool I wanted. I'd like notifications telling me when to submit the forms, even if they're in Japanese. (India, 1-3 years)

(5) Multicultural coexistence

■ Communication and understanding one another

- Participants expressed the desire for interaction and commented on matters to bear in mind.

A sample of comments

It's essential to know the customs of each country. For example, people say that Chinese people talk loudly, but that's because they believe it's rude if the other person can't hear you. (Hong Kong, 20 years or more)

In my own country, we know a lot about people in our community and can help each other, but perhaps because this is Japan, people don't talk much to others, maybe because they think people won't like it. It'd be nice if we could talk easily to one another. (Nepal, 10-19 years)

I wish I had more Japanese friends. I could know more about Japanese culture. (Malaysia, 1-3 years)

■Comments/requests regarding city services, etc.

A sample of comments

Consultation systems and responses from contact points	
	Having a chance to consult with foreigners who have had the same kind of hardships would be helpful. I think there are people in the city who want to cooperate with that kind of assistance. (China, 20 years or more)
	City hall is the biggest struggle. Even when I go to a counter I'm turned away because I don't have the right document. Some of them don't tell me other ways to do things. (Nepal, 10-19 years)
Ease of understanding information	
	In Fujisawa, there are truly a lot of lessons and classes for hobbies, but there is no single source of information where they're all put together. (Russia, 10-19 years)
	The way to ride buses and payment systems differ in each region. It'd be good if they were a little easier to understand. (Macao, 4-9 years / China, 4-9 years) *A comment from two different people
	I think everything is just fine now. I'd be pleased if there was information on events from the city, foreigners were also invited and information was also available in foreign languages there, but everything else is good and I'm happy. I'm also grateful for this interview. (Philippines, 4-9 years)
Multilingual support	
	I wish support was given so that we could live the same as Japanese people. For example, I'd like it if when I go to city hall there were no inconveniences when trying to accomplish something. (China, 1-3 years)
	There's a need for a system that can offer support in various languages. That's especially true for city hall. (China, Less than 6 months)

■ Things they want to do with Japanese people

A sample of comments

Cultural exchange over a meal, etc.	
	I'd like to talk to Japanese people, cook together, go to festivals together, etc. (China, 1–3 years)
	If events were held every month at city hall, there would be more chances to meet Japanese people. I want to make Japanese meals together for vegetarians. (India, 1–3 years)
	If there was something held at school, having events where food is eaten and games played would be good. Also, if held outside, something like a tea party would be nice. (Sri Lanka, 10–19 years)
Interaction through sports	
	Opportunities for interaction through sports like badminton and soccer. There's actually a chance for me to play badminton once or twice a month with my Japanese company coworkers. (China, 1–3 years)
	I want to have games as sports events. Sports like badminton, basketball, soccer, and futsal are popular. I think it'd be fun to have people from various countries on one team. (Indonesia, Less than 6 months)

3. Survey results for Japanese residents

■ Expectations of Fujisawa

- Comments were given on support for Japanese-language class activities and expanding the system of Japanese-language instruction for children.
- Regarding ease of understanding and acquiring information, respondents pointed to lack of recognition of places where information can be obtained, and lack of consideration in writing styles/information sharing, as they are difficult for residents with ties to foreign countries to understand.
- Comments were given on matters including a framework for grasping the opinions of residents with ties to foreign countries, a framework for reflecting those opinions in actual endeavors, and a volunteer system to empathize with residents with ties to foreign countries.

■Matters needed for multicultural coexistence

- Many comments stated the importance and necessity of opportunities for interaction, and interaction through sports was proposed as a specific idea.

A sample of comments

Number one is having opportunities to get to know one another. There really aren't any connections with each other. In the condominium I live in outside of the city, there are people who don't say hello to people they don't know, and that makes me feel lonely. (University in the city)

Students from China really like basketball. There are gymnasiums, but they're used by high schools and universities, so ordinary students can't really use them. There aren't any outside of school either, so I think it'd be good to have events where teams of Japanese people and foreigners can play basketball. (University in the city)

There are many families where, even if the parents understand Japanese, the children don't and are left alone, bringing negative consequences. There is a feeling of isolation after first arriving in Japan. Hopefully, they can overcome that. (Group associated with friendship organizations)

I sometimes see cases where even "easy Japanese" is difficult. Just writing things in hiragana characters doesn't make them easy to understand. Language that can be expressed in simpler words must be replaced with simpler words. That kind of perspective is needed by the Japanese. (Group associated with friendship organizations)

Volunteering shouldn't only be carried out by Japanese for residents with ties to foreign countries. It'd be nice if foreigners also become leaders of activities. For instance, isn't it more suitable for the initial assistance given when foreigners first start living in Japan to be provided by foreigners already living here, rather than Japanese people? (Japanese-language class in the city)

We would like to thank everyone for cooperating with this survey.

The results of this survey will be utilized to make Fujisawa an even better city to live in going forward.

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