

6. Central America

Status of Japanese-language education in Central America

The number of institutions across Central America reached 203 (a 12.8% increase), the number of teachers reached 848 (a 10.8% increase), and the number of learners reached 17,857 (a 1.7% increase). Compared to the previous survey (2021), all three metrics showed an increase. Furthermore, this survey confirmed the resumption of Japanese-language education in Barbados, where its implementation could not be confirmed in the previous survey. Meanwhile, no Japanese-language education programs were confirmed to be in operation in Haiti and Belize.

Mexico has the highest number of institutions, teachers, and learners, followed by Costa Rica and Honduras. Mexico accounted for a high proportion in each category: 75.4% of institutions, 78.9% of teachers, and 84.8% of learners.

Comparing the latest survey results by country, Mexico saw increases across the board: a 10.1% rise in the number of institutions, a 9.3% increase in the number of teachers, and a 4.1% growth in the number of learners. Cuba and Honduras also reported increases in all three categories.

Looking at the percentage distribution of learners by educational level, primary education accounts for 6.9%, secondary education 8.0%, higher education 15.8%, and non-school education 69.2%. While non-school education holds the largest share, it decreased by 5.6 percentage points from 74.8% in the previous survey.

The online class implementation rate in Mexico, which has the largest number of institutions, stood at 69.3%, a decrease of 23.5 percentage points from the previous survey. Across Central America as a whole, the implementation rate stands at 69.5%, the highest proportion worldwide. However, this represents a 24.4 percentage point decrease from the previous survey.

Looking at the purposes for learning Japanese, the top two items were interest in anime, manga, J-POP, fashion, etc. (74.9%) and interest in the Japanese language (73.4%), matching the global rankings. On the other hand, current or future work in home country, which ranked third in the previous survey (34.5%), fell significantly to seventh place. Similar to the previous survey, other items showed comparable or higher percentages compared to the global average, indicating that in this survey as well, Japanese is being learned for diverse purposes.

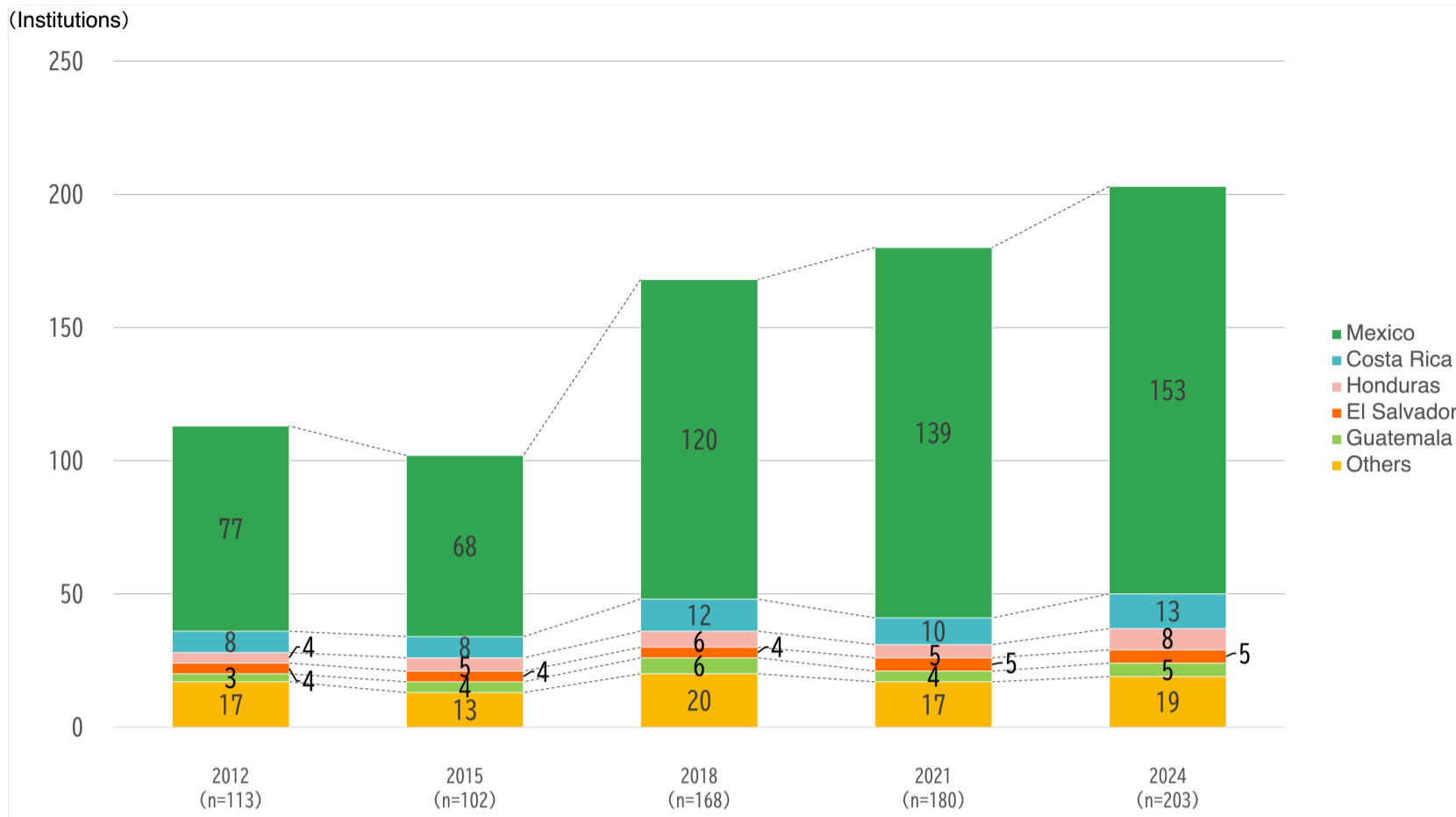
Table 2-6-1 Number of Institutions, number of Teachers, and number of Learners in Central America

(Listed in order of the number of Learners in 2024)

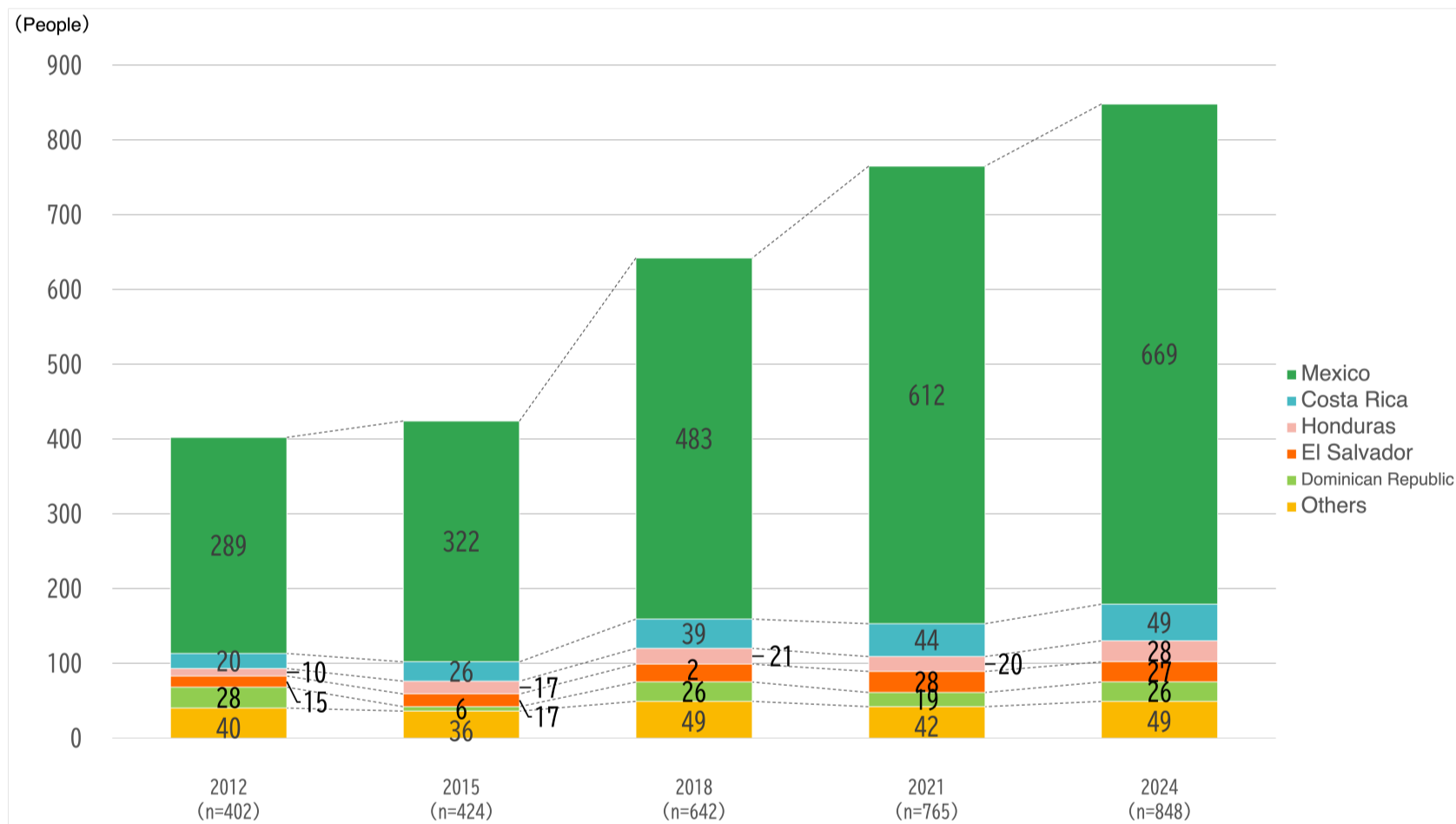
Country and Region	Number of Institutions in 2024 (institutions)	Number of Teachers in 2024 (people)	Number of Learners in 2024 (people)	Learners per 100,000 population (people)	Number of Learners in Primary education 2024 (people)	Number of Learners in Secondary education 2024 (people)	Number of Learners in Higher education 2024 (people)	Number of Learners in Non-school education 2024 (people)	Population* (people)	Number of Institutions in 2021 (institutions)	Number of Teachers in 2021 (people)	Number of Learners in 2021 (people)
Mexico	153	669	15,151	12.0	1,205	1,348	2,126	10,472	126,014,024	139	612	14,552
Costa Rica	13	49	786	15.6	0	0	217	569	5,044,197	10	44	829
Honduras	8	28	407	4.9	35	40	43	289	8,303,771	5	20	355
El Salvador	5	27	281	4.9	0	0	44	237	5,744,113	5	28	387
Guatemala	5	14	280	1.9	0	0	35	245	14,901,286	4	12	414
Jamaica	3	5	219	8.1	0	0	159	60	2,697,983	3	5	213
Dominican Republic	3	26	151	1.4	0	0	0	151	10,760,028	3	19	175
Trinidad and Tobago	1	5	149	11.2	0	0	73	76	1,332,901	1	2	150
Panama	3	6	139	4.1	0	30	25	84	3,405,813	3	6	140
Cuba	4	9	123	1.1	0	0	29	94	11,167,325	1	2	28
Commonwealth of Puerto Rico	1	2	76	2.3	0	0	51	25	3,285,874	2	2	139
Nicaragua	2	5	63	1.2	0	0	0	63	5,142,098	2	7	62
Barbados	2	3	32	11.5	0	16	16	0	277,821	0	0	0
Haiti	0	0	0	—	0	0	0	0	8,373,750	1	4	108
Belize	0	0	0	—	0	0	0	0	397,484	1	2	10
Central America overall	203	848	17,857	—	1,240	1,434	2,818	12,365	—	180	765	17,562

*Source: *Population and Vital Statistics Report (as of 3 January 2025)*, by United Nations

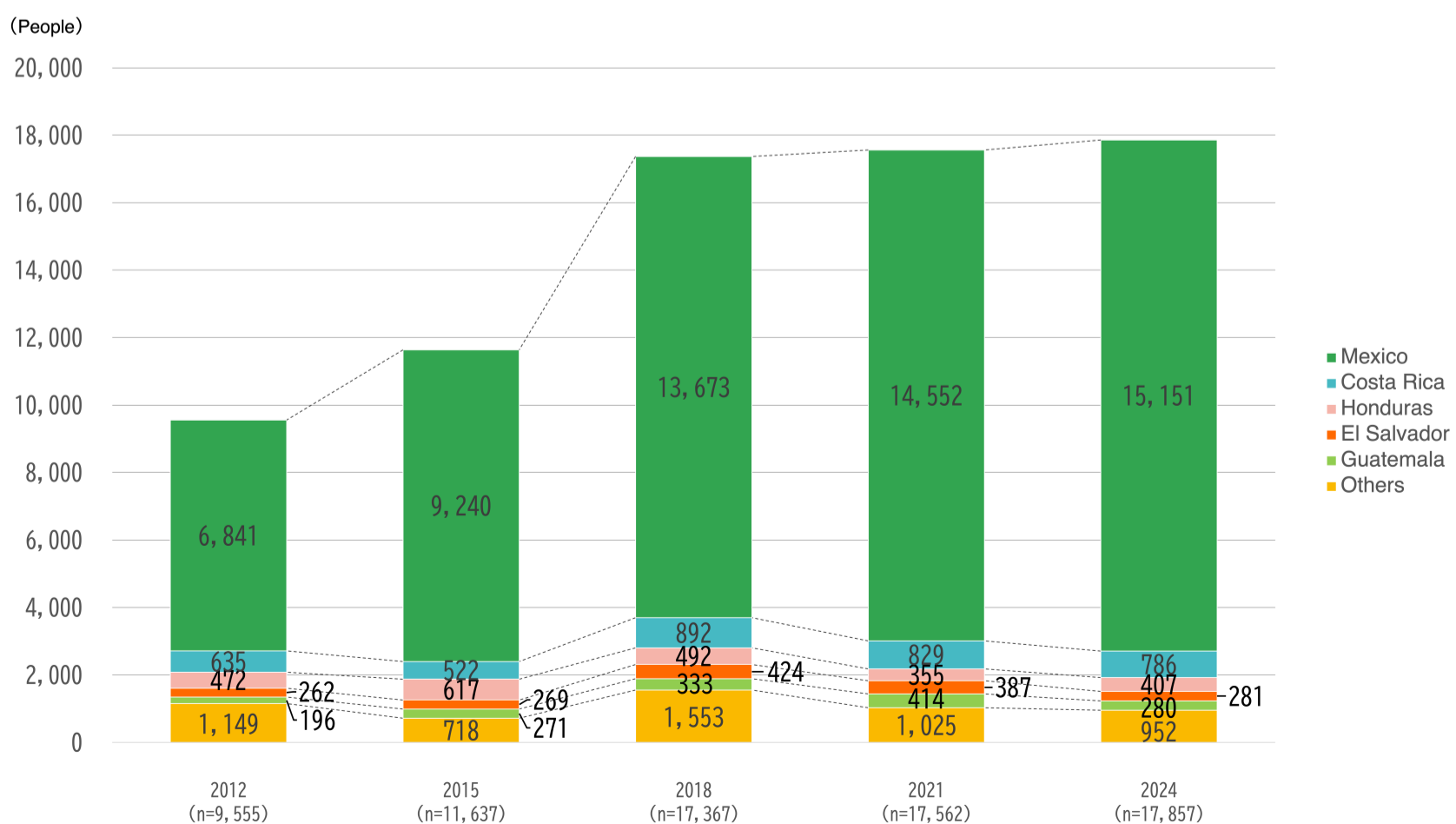
Graph 2-6-1 Number of Institutions in Central America



Graph 2-6-2 Number of Teachers in Central America



Graph 2-6-3 Number of Learners in Central America



Graph 2-6-4 Percentages of Learners by educational stage in Central America

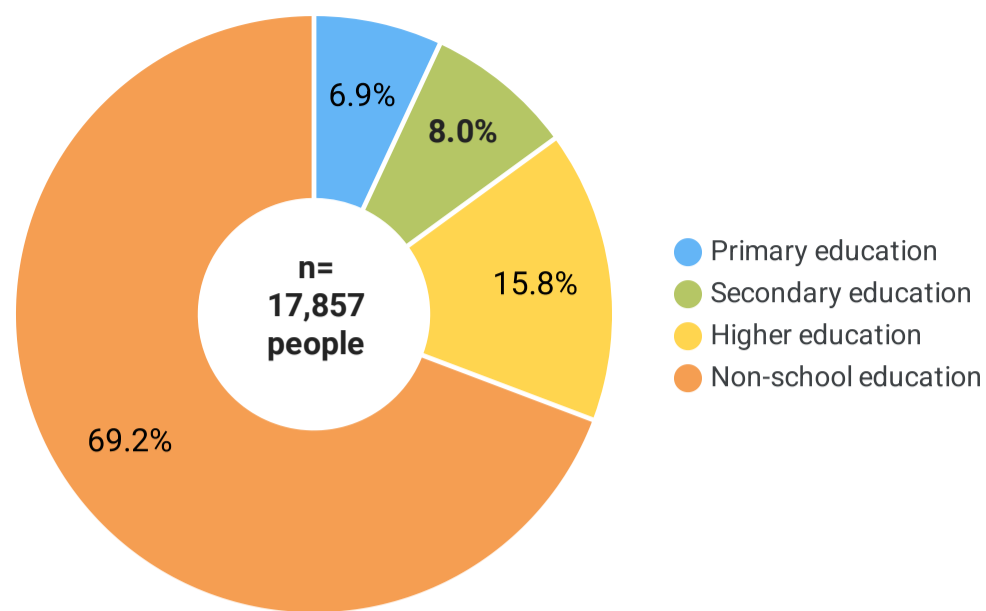
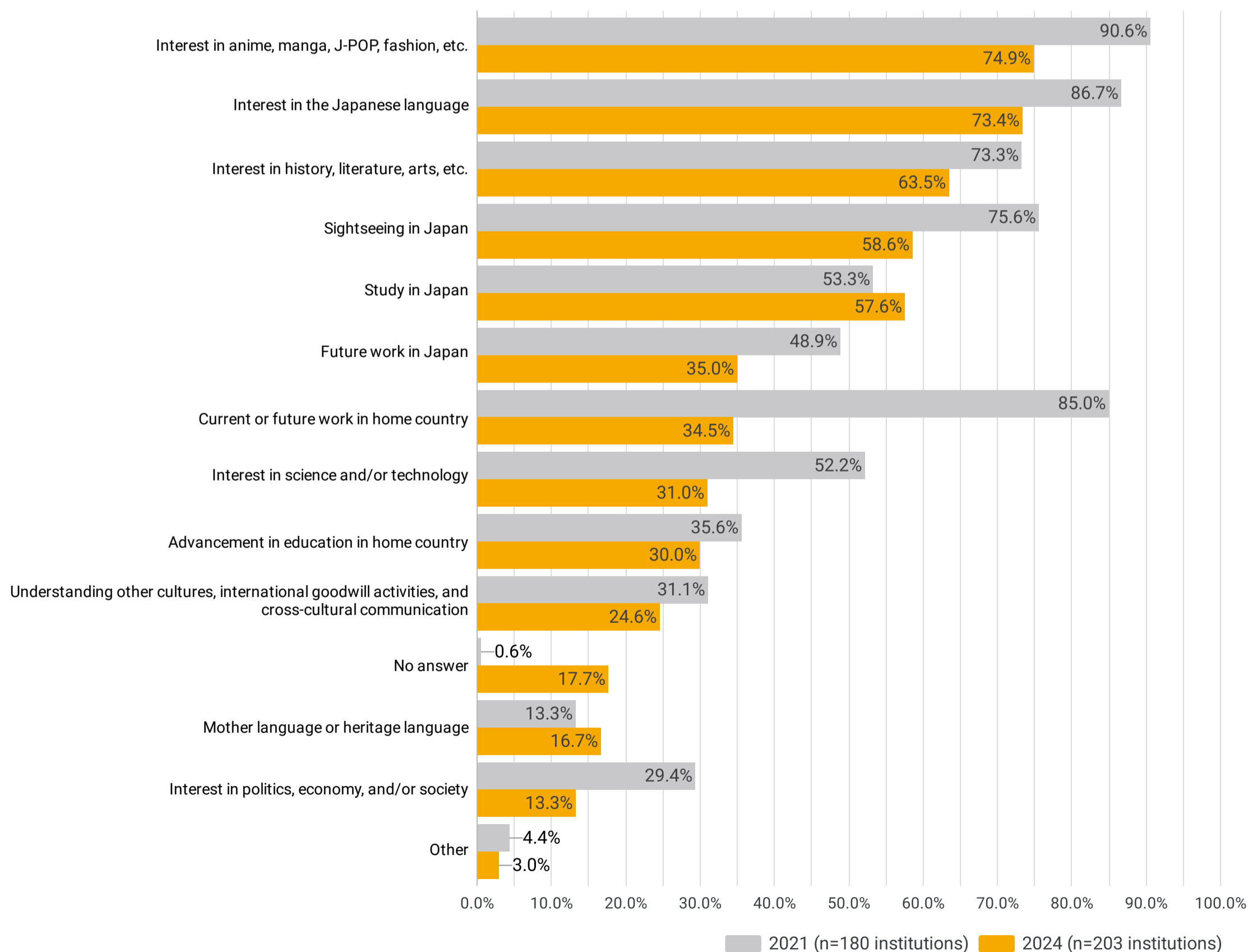


Table 2-6-2 Online class implementation ratio in Central America

Country and Region	Number of Institutions in each Country and Region	Online class implementation (institutions)	Online class implementation (%)
El Salvador	5	3	60.0
Cuba	4	0	0.0
Guatemala	5	4	80.0
Costa Rica	13	9	69.2
Jamaica	3	3	100.0
Dominican Republic	3	1	33.3
Trinidad and Tobago	1	1	100.0
Nicaragua	2	2	100.0
Panama	3	3	100.0
Barbados	2	1	50.0
Commonwealth of Puerto Rico	1	1	100.0
Honduras	8	7	87.5
Mexico	153	106	69.3
Central America overall	203	141	69.5

Graph 2-6-5 Objectives of Japanese-language learning in Central America



Trends in each country and region

[Mexico]

Mexico, which has the largest scale of Japanese-language education in Central America, showed a trend toward increases in the number of institutions, teachers, and learners. Mexico City remains the location with the highest number of Japanese-language educational institutions in Mexico, as in the previous survey (2021). However, the number of Japanese-language educational institutions in the state of Aguascalientes increased, making it the state with the second-highest number. This state is located in the Bajío region (*), where many Japanese companies have established operations. Learning motivation tends to be high not only for interest in the Japanese language, but also for current or future work in home country. Furthermore, the number of learners has also increased significantly in the southern state of Chiapas and in Baja California. Of the 32 states in Mexico, the number where Japanese-language education has been confirmed increased from 26 in the previous survey to 28 in this survey, with the addition of Durango and Zacatecas.

The number of learners in primary education saw a significant increase. Factors include an increase in the number of learners in Guanajuato, which had previously provided Japanese-language education, as well as an institution in Chiapas that opened a kindergarten in 2020 and a primary school in 2022 with Japanese as a compulsory subject, and the establishment of a new institution offering Japanese-language education in Zacatecas. Furthermore, four out of the five institutions providing Japanese-language education have designated Japanese as a compulsory subject.

In secondary education, an increase in the number of institutions and a corresponding rise in the number of learners were observed. Japanese-language education is positioned as either a required subject or an extracurricular activity, but at university-affiliated high schools, it is often offered as an extracurricular activity. However, while the number of teachers has decreased, this is partly due to the tendency for employment and salaries of Japanese-language teachers to become unstable.

In higher education, the number of institutions and the number of learners increased slightly. In Mexico, the only university offering a major in Japanese is the San Juan de los Lagos campus of the University of Guadalajara. Additionally, the Department of International Languages at the University of Sciences and Arts of Chiapas began offering Japanese as one of its required second foreign languages in 2023. At many other universities, Japanese-language education is conducted within the university's foreign language learning center, accepting learners both from within the university and from outside. For students enrolled at such universities, some grant credit for courses taken at the centers. Furthermore, in response to growing interest in Japanese among children, a Japanese-language course for primary and secondary education students has been established at a university-affiliated facility, enabling both Mexican children and Japanese-Mexican children to study Japanese. However, the number of teachers in higher education has decreased. Similar to secondary education, this is largely due to unstable employment and salaries for Japanese-language teachers, and the resulting teacher shortage has become a significant challenge.

The largest number of learners in Mexico are enrolled in non-school education institutions. However, this survey

found that following the COVID-19 pandemic, there was significant fluctuation as some institutions closed while others opened, resulting in a slight increase in the number of institutions and a slight decrease in the number of learners. While many institutions teaching exclusively online have opened, and some have learners from outside the state or country, others are gradually shifting to in-person instruction.

*The Bajío region is defined as the six states under the jurisdiction of the Consulate-General of Japan in León: Guanajuato, Aguascalientes, Jalisco, Querétaro, San Luis Potosí, and Zacatecas.

[Other Countries and Regions]

In Cuba, the number of learners in non-school education showed signs of recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Many young people begin learning Japanese out of an interest in anime and manga. Given the limited number of Japanese-language educational institutions in Cuba, it is estimated that a certain number of people study the language independently. With the establishment of diplomatic relations with Korea in 2024, it is expected that Korean-language education institutions will increase in the future. Furthermore, the Confucius Institute's efforts to promote the Chinese language are also notable.

In Costa Rica, the resumption of Japanese-language education in higher education has been confirmed. To work as a teacher at a higher education institution, one must hold a master's degree in one's specialized field. However, since Costa Rica lacks programs offering master's degrees in Japanese studies or teaching methodology, securing qualified teachers is difficult. Therefore, Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers are dispatched as Japanese-language teachers to the University of Costa Rica and the National University, which provide Japanese-language education. However, the number of applicants is declining, making the continued dispatch of Japanese-language teachers a challenge. In non-school education, the number of learners is decreasing, and while the number of institutions remains unchanged, the number of language schools offering Japanese-language courses through online classes is increasing.

Barbados had not been confirmed as providing Japanese-language education since the 2012 survey, but this survey confirmed the resumption of Japanese-language education at one secondary education institution and one higher education institution. Prime Minister Mia Mottley has set a goal for citizens to become bilingual or multilingual by 2030. Among the many foreign languages, she has expressed strong interest in Japanese-language education, raising expectations for its further promotion.

In Haiti and Belize, the temporary suspension of operations at institutions that had been providing Japanese-language education in the previous survey (2021) was confirmed.

In Honduras, Japanese-language education in non-school settings is thriving. The popularity of Japanese pop culture, such as anime and manga, is steadily on the rise. While learning Japanese does not directly relate to economic benefits such as employment, it is becoming established as one of the foreign languages chosen for broadening one's cultural horizons.