

Chapter 2 Japanese-Language Education by Region

1. East Asia

Status of Japanese-language education in East Asia

The total number of institutions in East Asia was 6,928 (down 0.2% from the previous survey [2021]), the number of teachers was 40,350 (up 3.5%), and the number of learners was 1,737,204 (up 1.4%). Compared to the previous survey, the number of institutions showed a slight decrease, while the number of teachers and learners showed a trend toward increasing. Nevertheless, East Asia still accounts for 35.8% of institutions worldwide, 49.9% of teachers, and 43.4% of learners.

China has the largest number of institutions (3,073), followed by Korea (2,815) and Taiwan (809), maintaining the same ranking as the previous survey. The number of teachers (China: 21,743; Korea: 14,127; Taiwan: 3,343) and learners (China: 1,019,197; Korea: 555,396; Taiwan: 124,149) follow the same ranking. These three countries and regions account for 97.8% of learners in East Asia (China 58.7%, Korea 32.0%, Taiwan 7.1%), a slight increase from 97.5% in the previous survey. The number of learners in China decreased by 38,121 and in Taiwan by 19,483, while the number in Korea increased by 85,062.

Looking at the proportion of learners in East Asia by educational level, primary education accounts for a modest 0.5%, secondary education 40.9%, higher education 34.1%, and non-school education 24.6%. As in the previous survey, secondary education shows the highest proportion. Notably, non-school education increased significantly by 8.2 percentage points compared to the previous survey.

The online class implementation rate across East Asia is 21.1%, lower than the global rate (30.9%). However, three countries and regions exceed the global rate: Hong Kong (53.2%), Mongolia (50.6%), and Macao (40.0%).

The most common purpose for learning Japanese is interest in anime, manga, J-POP, fashion, etc. (45.4%). This switched places with interest in the Japanese language (42.4%), which ranked first in the previous survey. Third was advancement in education in home country (37.3%), higher than the global result of 29.8%. Work-related items, current or future work in home country (14.7%) and future work in Japan (12.6%), were each more than 10 percentage points below the global results.

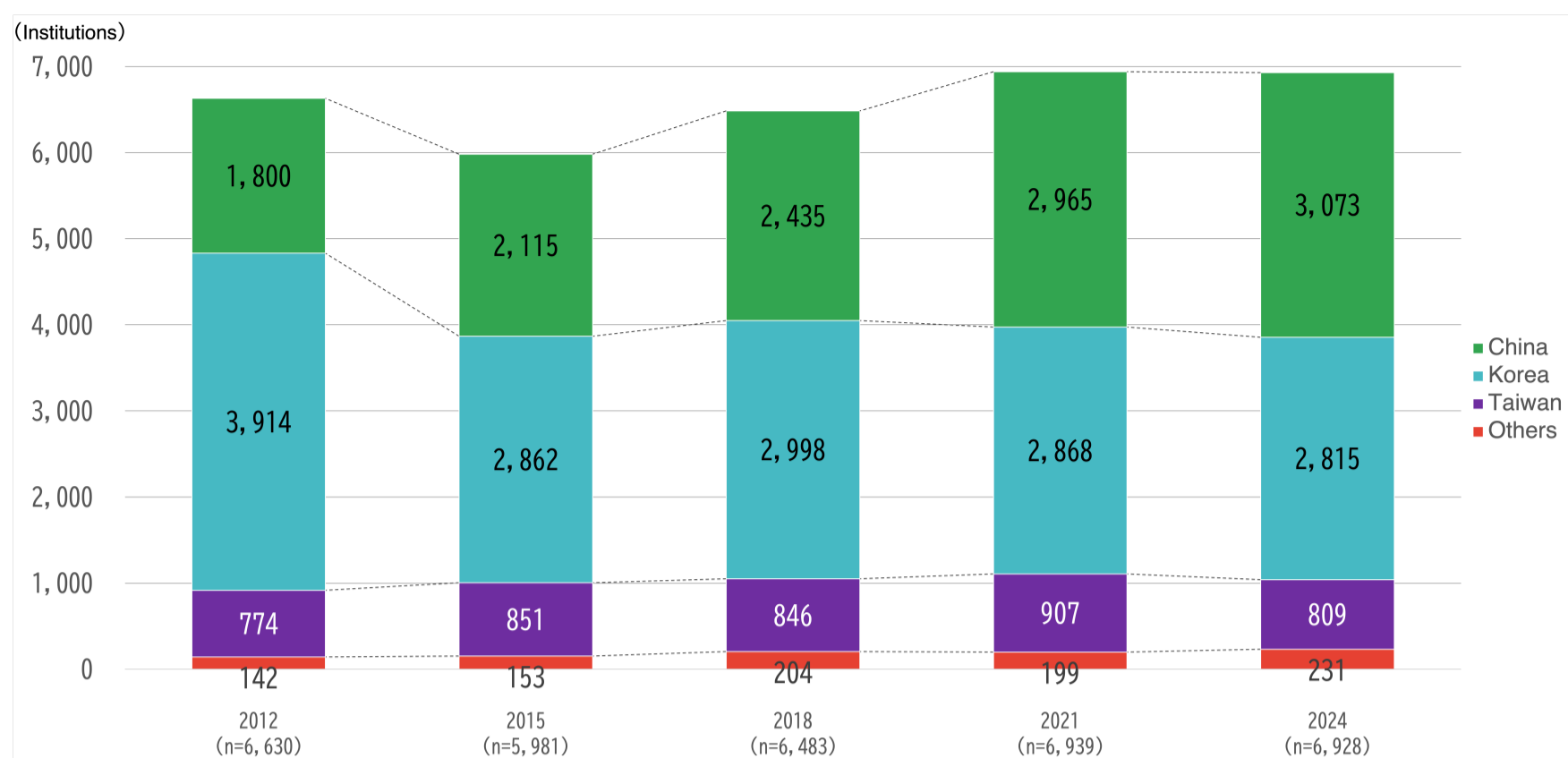
Table 2-1-1 Number of Institutions, number of Teachers, and number of Learners in East Asia

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

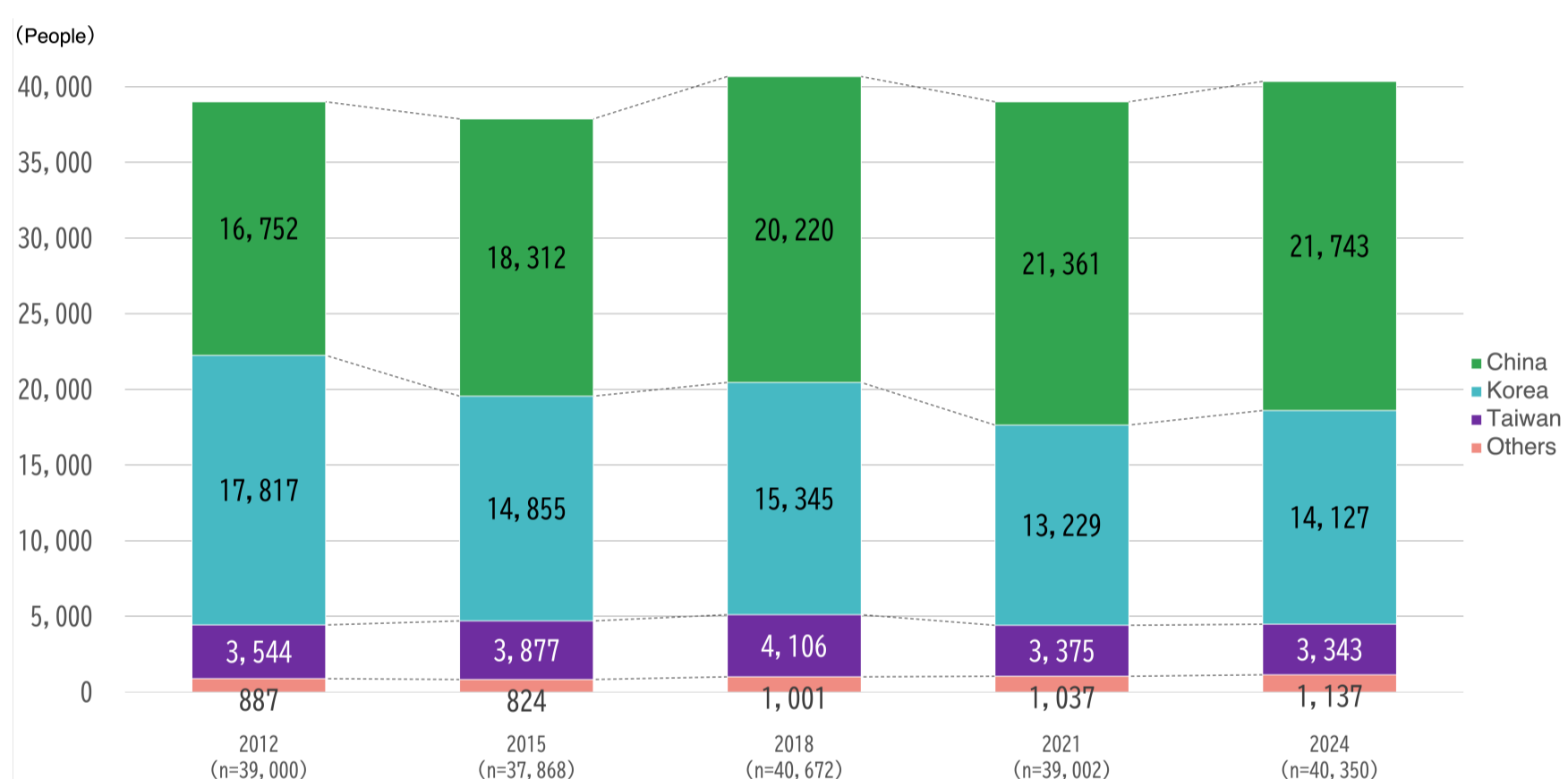
Country and Region	Number of Institutions in 2024 (institutions)	Number of Teachers in 2024 (people)	Number of Learners in 2024 (people)	Learners per 100,000 population (people)	Number of Learners in Primary education 2024 (people)	Number of Learners in Secondary education 2024 (people)	Number of Learners 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)
China	3,073	21,743	1,019,197	72.3	1,482	284,488	477,869	255,358	1,409,778,724	2,965	21,361	1,057,318
Korea	2,815	14,127	555,396	1071.6	651	385,439	51,955	117,351	51,829,136	2,868	13,229	470,334
Taiwan	809	3,343	124,149	530.5	3,018	31,669	52,161	37,301	23,400,220	907	3,375	143,632
Hong Kong	62	534	20,868	281.5	1,008	2,146	6,515	11,199	7,413,070	73	625	27,665
Mongolia	164	561	16,123	504.3	1,659	7,270	2,734	4,460	3,197,020	117	363	13,334
Macao	5	42	1,471	215.7	0	0	420	1,051	682,070	9	49	1,550
East Asia overall	6,928	40,350	1,737,204	—	7,818	711,012	591,654	426,720	—	6,939	39,002	1,713,833

*Source: *Population and Vital Statistics Report (as of 3 January 2025)*, by United Nations
Only the data of Taiwan was quoted for December 2024 figures, from the website of the Department of Statistics, Taiwan Ministry of the Interior

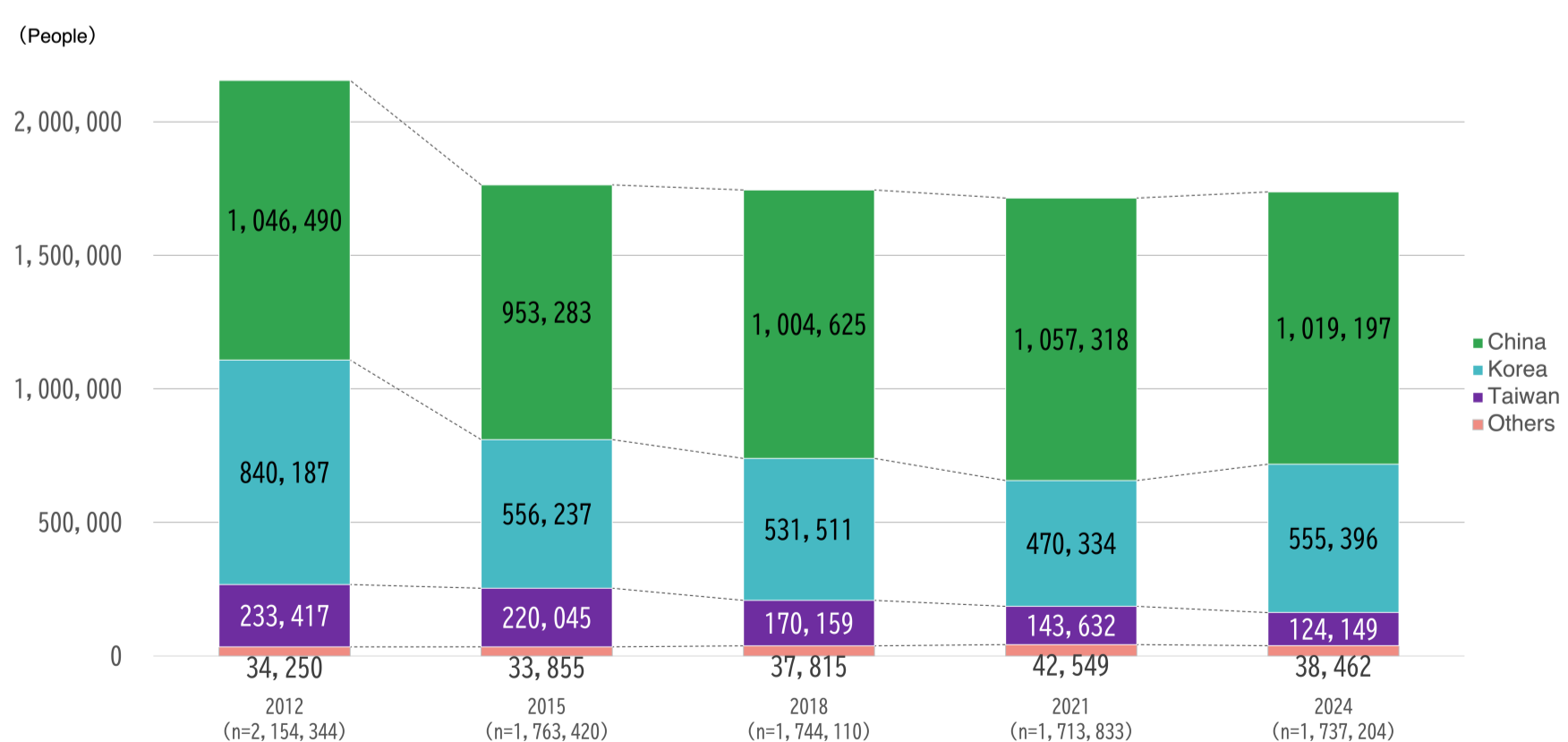
Graph 2-1-1 Number of Institutions in East Asia



Graph 2-1-2 Number of Teachers in East Asia



Graph 2-1-3 Number of Learners in East Asia



Graph 2-1-4 Percentages of Learners by educational stage in East Asia

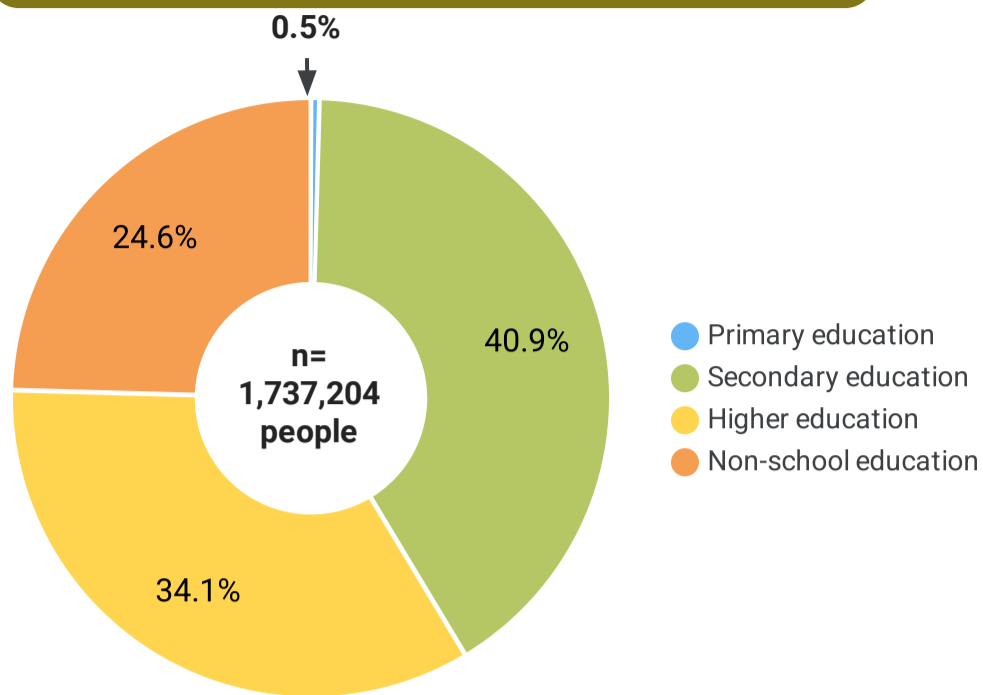
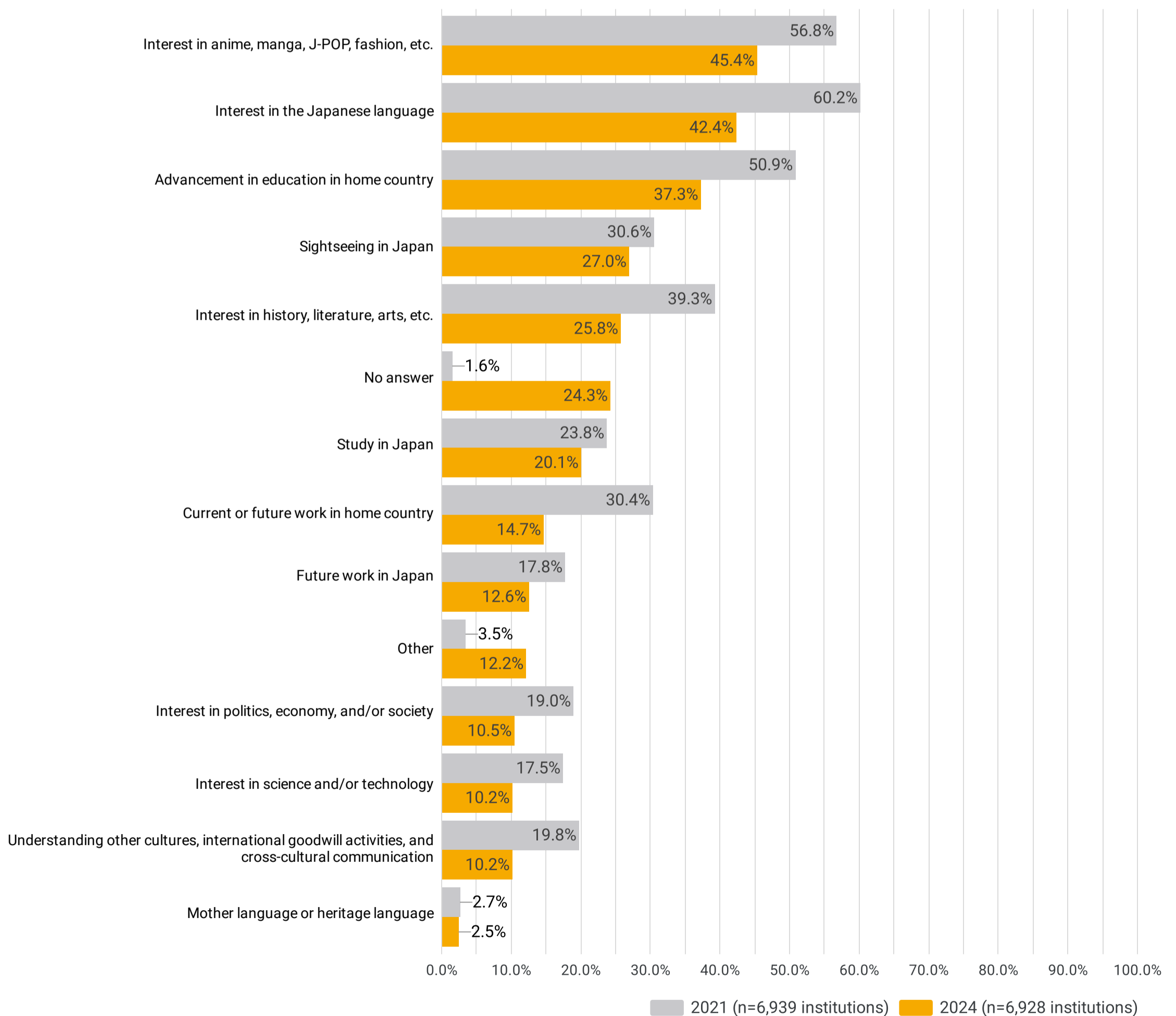


Table 2-1-2 Online class implementation ratio in East Asia

Country and Region	Number of Institutions in each Country and Region	Online class implementation (institutions)	Online class implementation (%)
Korea	2,815	206	7.3
Taiwan	809	218	26.9
China	3,073	921	30.0
Hong Kong	62	33	53.2
Macao	5	2	40.0
Mongolia	164	83	50.6
East Asia overall	6,928	1,463	21.1

Graph 2-1-5 Objectives of Japanese-language learning in East Asia



Trends in each country and region

[Korea]

In primary education, signs of recovery were seen in Japanese-language education, which had declined due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. It was confirmed that Japanese-language education is conducted not only through after-school activities but also as part of Global Citizenship Education.

Secondary education accounts for approximately 70% of Japanese-language education in Korea. The number of institutions decreased compared to the previous survey (2021), but the number of learners showed a trend toward increasing. Various factors may account for the increase in learners, but the most significant is the rise in high school students wishing to study Japanese. This is not simply due to the popularity of Japanese; another factor appears to be the significant decline in students choosing Chinese, which had previously competed with Japanese for the top position among the eight foreign languages offered as second languages. However, in junior high schools, there is also a growing tendency for students to choose other subjects such as information technology instead of a second foreign language, and future developments require close monitoring.

In higher education, the numbers of institutions, teachers, and learners all decreased compared to the previous survey. Specific factors contributing to the decline include the removal of Japanese-language instruction from curricula in departments other than Japanese-language programs, such as tourism management, aviation services, and food service management. Other factors include a decrease in the number of institutions due to declining birthrates and the change of second foreign language courses from required to elective status.

In non-school education, many cram schools closed during the COVID-19 pandemic, but Japanese-language education has resumed at numerous institutions. The significant increase in learners to 50,019 (up 74.3%) can be attributed in part to responses obtained from major online education institutions in this survey.

[Taiwan]

The number of teachers and learners in Taiwan had already been declining since the previous survey (2021), and this survey also showed decreases in institutions, teachers, and learners.

The number of Japanese-language learners in primary and lower secondary education remains low, and in public schools, Japanese is often offered as part of club activities. In some private schools, it is introduced as a required subject. In upper secondary education, Japanese has the highest enrollment among second foreign languages and holds an important position. Specifically, Japanese-language education is offered in multiple formats, including elective courses, Advanced Placement (AP) programs that allow high school students to take university-level courses, and after-school club activities. However, enrollment has been declining in recent years. This trend is thought to stem from social factors such as changes in the school system and declining birthrates, rather than a decline in the popularity of Japanese itself.

The tendency for third-year high school students who have finished university entrance exams to enroll in the second semester continues. Among changes to the school system, the implementation of the Development of National Languages Act mandated compulsory education in national languages such as Taiwanese and Hakka (the language primarily used by the Hakka people, who are Han Chinese), thereby limiting opportunities to study second foreign languages, including Japanese. Furthermore, revisions to the curriculum guidelines for regular high schools (108 Curriculum Guidelines) allow second foreign language credits to be set within a range of 0 to 6. As a result, schools may choose not to offer the course at all (0 credits), leading to situations where offering second foreign languages, including Japanese, has become difficult. Additionally, policies to strengthen English education have limited opportunities to learn foreign languages other than English, which is also contributing to the decline in Japanese-language course enrollment.

Japanese-language education in Taiwan is primarily centered on higher education, with approximately 40% of Japanese-language learners identified in this survey enrolled at higher education institutions. It is noteworthy that the number of students studying Japanese outside of Japanese-language majors is approximately 2.7 times that of students studying for such majors, suggesting that Japanese is recognized as an important skill in general education courses and specialized fields such as business and tourism. The primary learning objectives include studying and working in Japan, but interest in Japanese pop culture is also considered a motivating factor. However, compared to the previous survey, the number of learners in higher education decreased significantly from approximately 62,000 to approximately 52,000. This decline is likely due not only to declining birthrates, but also to the rise of Korean pop culture, which has increased interest in learning Korean and led to a relative decrease in Japanese-language learners. Furthermore, due to the rapid development of Taiwan's IT industry, students increasingly choose science and engineering fields over humanities when entering university, which is leading to a decline in the number of students enrolled in Japanese-language programs. Therefore, the change in the number of Japanese-language learners is not a temporary phenomenon; rather, it marks a fundamental turning point stemming from transformations in social structure.

Meanwhile, in non-school education, both the number of institutions and learners increased compared to the previous survey. This is thought to be due to the gradual resumption of in-person classes following the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the number of learners has not exceeded levels from the 2018 survey, which may be related to an increase in individual learners using apps and other tools rather than attending educational institutions. While many Japanese-language classes offered by universities as part of their lifelong education (extension education) programs have remained suspended since the previous survey, a recovery trend is observed at Senior Learning Centers established nationwide under government policy.

[China]

Although the number of learners is generally declining, China remains the only country worldwide to exceed one million learners, as in the previous survey (2021), and ranked first again in this survey. The number of institutions in China ranked second after Indonesia.

The numbers of institutions, teachers, and learners in primary education all decreased, with the decline in learners being particularly significant. However, since the number of learners in primary education was originally small, even a slight decrease appears as a large proportional change.

In secondary education as well, the numbers of institutions, teachers, and learners all declined. The 2018 survey and the previous survey both showed a trend toward increases in these figures; this trend peaked in the previous survey and has begun to decline in the most recent survey. It is attributed to the gradual increase in the difficulty of Japanese as a foreign language subject in university entrance examinations. In the past, many students chose Japanese because it was easier to score well in than English, but this perception has been changing in recent years. This has led to a decrease in the number of students choosing Japanese, which is believed to be affecting decisions regarding the continuation and establishment of Japanese-language classes.

In higher education, as in primary and secondary education, declines were observed in the number of institutions, teachers, and learners. The number of learners decreased not only among Japanese-language majors, but also among non-majors. One reason is that studying Japanese increasingly fails to lead to employment opportunities as Japanese companies withdraw and Chinese companies grow, thereby diminishing the benefits of learning Japanese. Furthermore, amid the proliferation of generative AI and a growing emphasis on science-related subjects, the number of applicants to language-related departments is declining, while the number of students wishing to transfer to other faculties is increasing. Consequently, language departments are closing one after another, which is believed to be significantly impacting the decrease in both institutions and learners.

Unlike school education, non-school education showed significant increases in institutions, teachers, and learners. One factor behind this is the growing number of people needing to learn Japanese due to increased migration to Japan. Additionally, the previous survey was conducted immediately after restrictions on cram schools and similar institutions were tightened due to the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in temporarily lower figures. This survey indicates that the activities of such educational institutions have recovered to a certain extent. Furthermore, as language education at formal institutions such as universities continues to decline, the expansion of learning opportunities to non-school education is also thought to be contributing to the increase in non-school institutions and learners.

[Hong Kong]

The numbers of institutions, teachers, and learners all decreased. One reason for this is the growing number of people learning independently through digital means without enrolling at any institution, driven by the proliferation of free language apps and video content. Moreover, in some cases, multiple junior high schools jointly conduct Japanese-language classes, which could potentially contribute to a decrease in the number of institutions in secondary education. However, regarding secondary education, starting in 2025, in place of the Cambridge International Education (CIE) Japanese-language exam, the Japanese-Language Proficiency Test (JLPT) will be adopted for the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE), Hong Kong's university entrance examination. Consequently, an increase in the number of students learning Japanese in secondary education and taking the JLPT is anticipated.

[Mongolia]

Compared to the previous survey (2021), the number of institutions, teachers, and learners all show an increasing trend. While the number of institutions and learners in primary education decreased, the proportion of these at all educational levels is small, so the overall impact is minimal. In secondary education, both teachers and learners increased significantly, while higher education showed no major changes. In non-school education, significant increases were observed in institutions, teachers, and learners. This is due to the increase in placement institutions sending workers to Japan, particularly because many learners aim to work in Japan as technical intern trainees.