

## 5. North America

### Status of Japanese-language education in North America

Institutions in North America totaled 1,296 (down 5.5% from the previous survey in 2021), teachers totaled 4,419 (down 5.5%), and learners totaled 152,419 (down 15.2%). All figures declined from the previous survey. In this survey, while institutions, teachers, and learners increased in Canada, all three categories decreased in the United States of America, leading to an overall decline across the region.

The ratio of learners by educational level is 7.8% for primary education, 38.9% for secondary education, 41.3% for higher education, and 12.0% for non-school education. While there are slight fluctuations, the overall trend remains unchanged from the previous survey. Furthermore, the United States of America

accounts for 89.1% of institutions, 85.5% of teachers, and 88.0% of learners. The online class implementation rate was 40.4% in Canada and 40.3% in the United States of America.

The primary purposes for learning Japanese were interest in anime, manga, J-POP, fashion, etc. (92.2%), interest in the Japanese language (76.9%), and interest in history, literature, arts, etc. (76.8%), with all three exceeding 70% of responses. This trend is consistent with the previous survey.

Table 2-5-1 Number of Institutions, number of Teachers, and number of Learners in North America

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

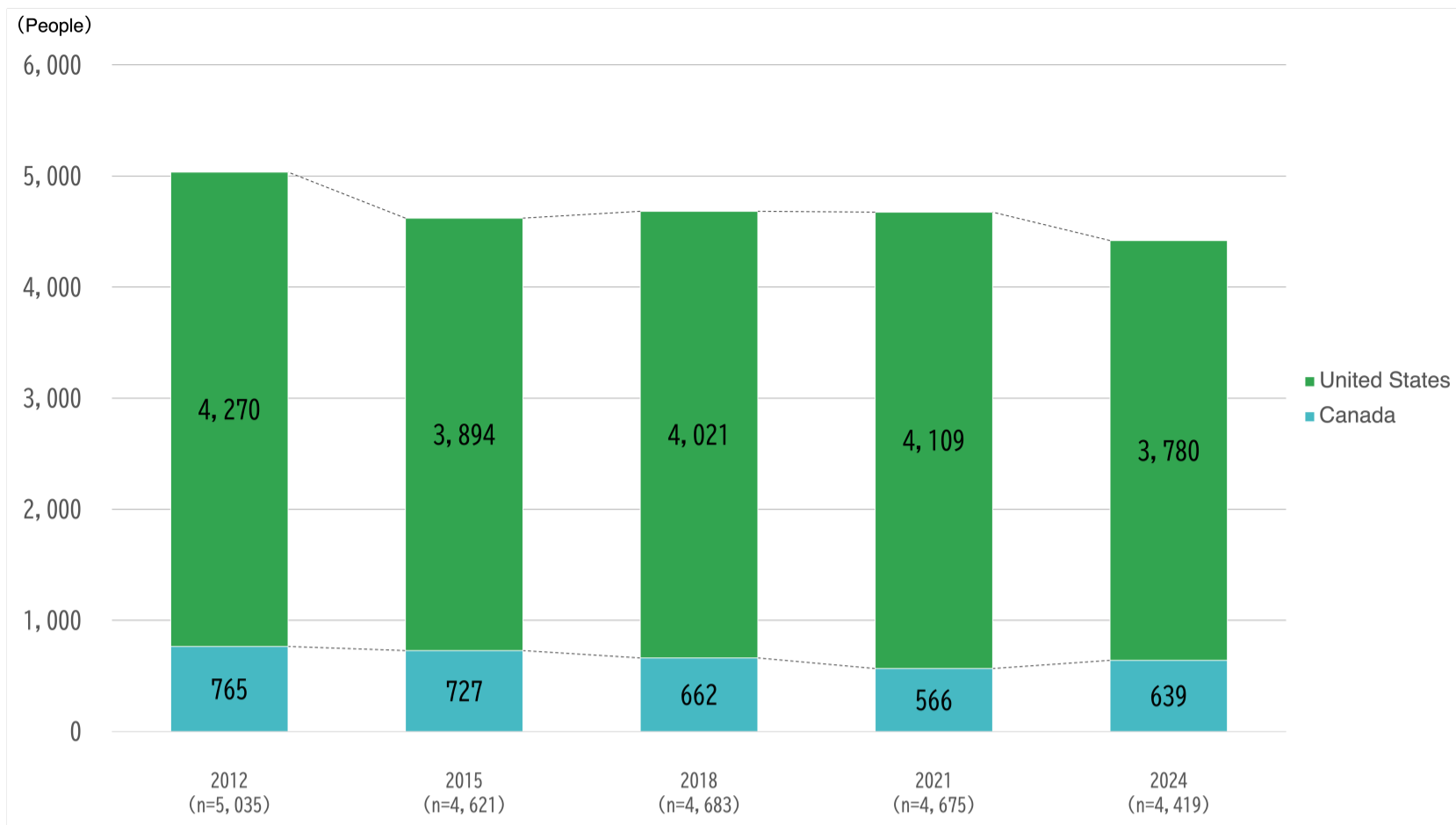
Country and Region	Number of Institutions in 2024 (institutions)	Number of Teachers in 2024 (people)	Number of Learners in 2024 (people)	Learners per 100,000 population (people)	Number of Learners in Primary education 2024 (people)	Number of Learners in Secondary education 2024 (people)	Number of Learners 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)
United States	1,155	3,780	134,096	40.5	11,849	54,383	54,701	13,163	331,449,281	1,241	4,109	161,402
Canada	141	639	18,323	49.5	82	4,852	8,188	5,201	36,991,980	131	566	18,293
North America overall	1,296	4,419	152,419	—	11,931	59,235	62,889	18,364	—	1,372	4,675	179,695

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

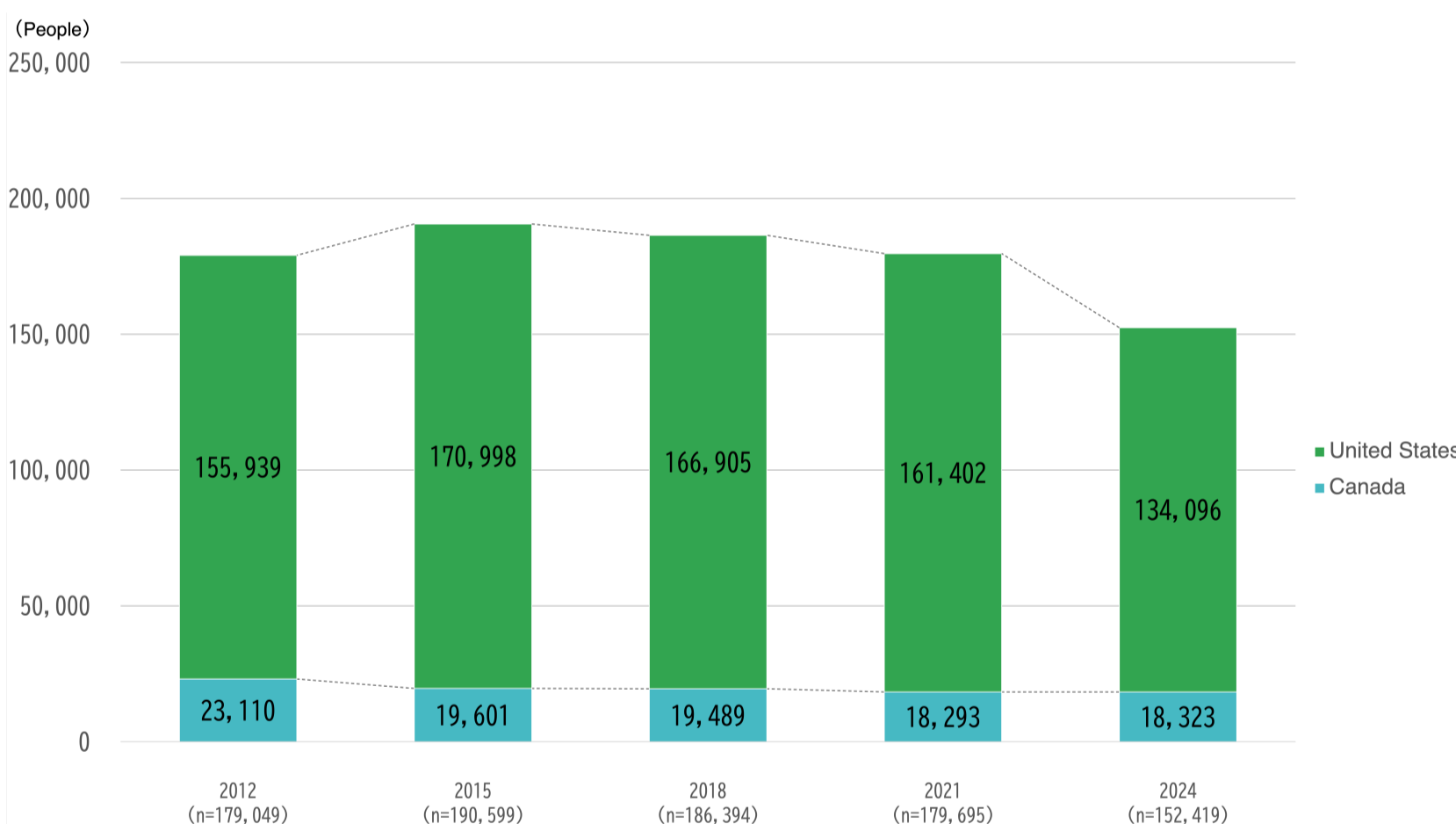
Graph 2-5-1 Number of Institutions in North America



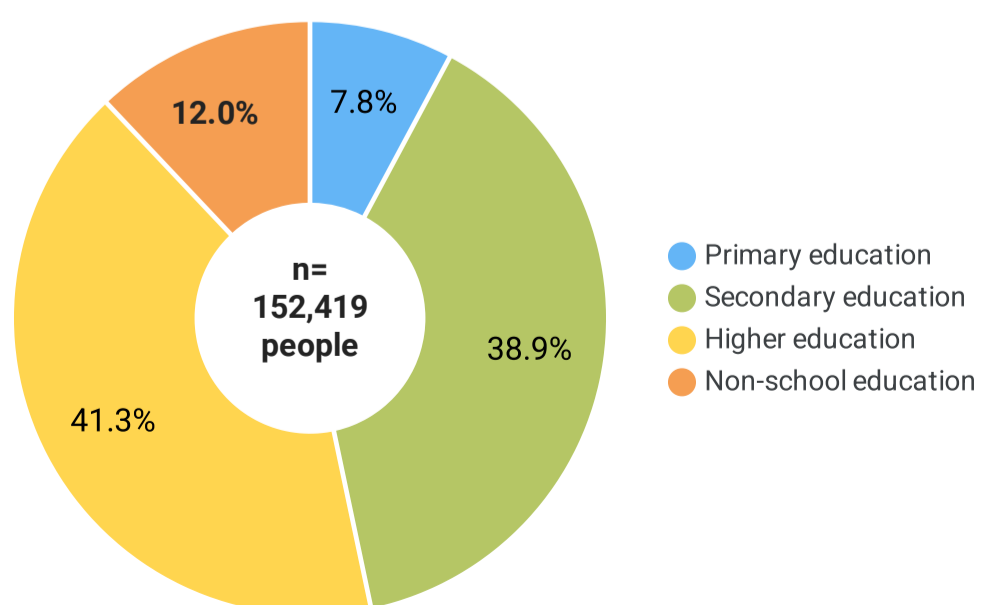
**Graph 2-5-2 Number of Teachers in North America**



**Graph 2-5-3 Number of Learners in North America**



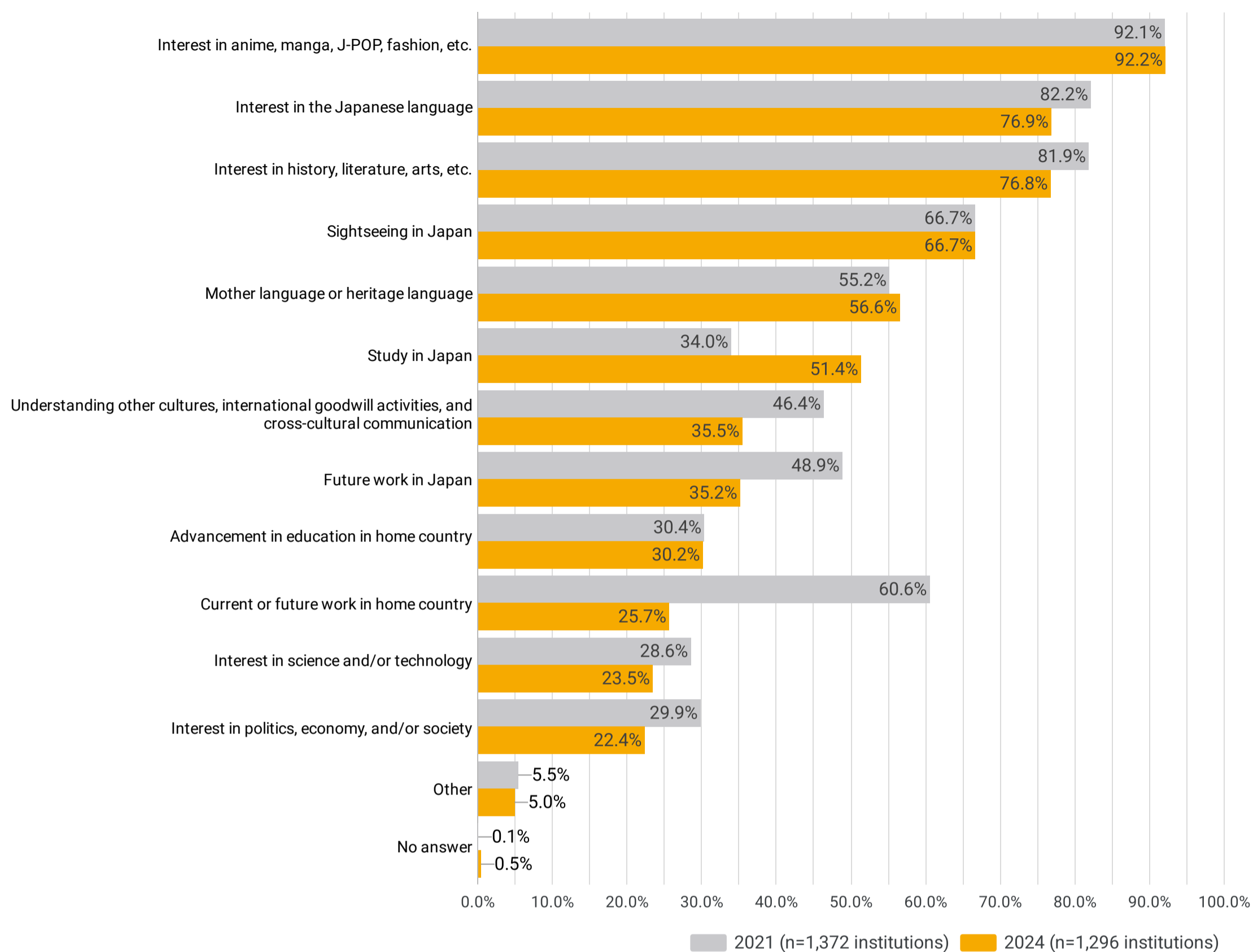
**Graph 2-5-4 Percentages of Learners by educational stage in North America**



**Table 2-5-2 Online class implementation ratio in North America**

Country and Region	Number of Institutions in each Country and Region	Online class implementation (institutions)	Online class implementation (%)
Canada	141	57	40.4
United States	1,155	465	40.3
North America overall	1,296	522	40.3

Graph 2-5-5 Objectives of Japanese-language learning in North America



### Trends in each country and region

#### [Canada]

Canada showed a slight increase in the total number of institutions, teachers, and learners across all educational levels. However, when viewed by educational level, there are distinct patterns of increase and decrease for each survey item.

A characteristic of foreign language education in Canada is that demand is primarily influenced by the native languages of incoming immigrants. Additionally, interest in learning Indigenous languages and cultures has grown in recent years, resulting in relatively low demand for Japanese. Furthermore, while both English and French are official languages in Canada, in New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, and in Quebec (which has French as its sole official language), English is often studied as a second language. Learners of other languages, including Japanese, tend to be relatively few as a proportion of the population.

In secondary education, an increase in institutions and learners was confirmed. Regarding learners, while a declining trend had been observed since the 2018 survey, an increase was confirmed in this survey. A major factor in the increase in learners is that institutions in British Columbia that did not respond in the previous survey (2021) responded in this survey. Meanwhile, Alberta has seen little change, while other provinces continue to show a downward trend.

Furthermore, since it was announced that starting in 2026, high school foreign language credits will no longer be required for admission to major universities in British Columbia, concerns have been raised within the province about a potential decline in students choosing Japanese-language classes.

In higher education, the numbers of institutions, teachers, and learners all decreased. The number of learners decreased in all provinces except Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan. Similar to the previous survey, in addition to the decline in British Columbia, this survey shows a significant downward trend in Ontario and Alberta as well. One factor contributing to this is the reduction in funding for higher education in Canada from both provincial and federal governments. Many universities reported impacts from budget cuts, including increased minimum enrollment requirements preventing courses from opening, and reduced course offerings due to the inability to hire part-time instructors. Furthermore, to address the recent increase in temporary residents that has become an issue in Canada, restrictions on accepting international students were implemented starting in 2024. Numerous institutions offer Japanese-language courses to international students, so this policy shift significantly impacted the decline in learners.

In non-school education, the number of institutions, teachers, and learners all increased. In the previous

survey, many institutions temporarily closed or were unable to participate due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, this survey confirmed that Japanese-language education has resumed at most institutions. A notable feature of non-school education institutions in Canada is that many offer Japanese-language education as a heritage language for preschoolers and learners at the primary and secondary education levels.

In recent years, interest in Japanese language, anime, manga, and other aspects of Japanese culture has been growing, particularly among younger generations. It has also been reported that many individuals are learning Japanese through language apps.

### **[United States of America]**

In the United States of America, a significant decline was observed in all survey items (number of institutions, number of teachers, and number of learners), confirming an overall contraction in Japanese-language education. Japanese-language educational institutions have been confirmed to exist in 48 of the 50 U.S. states, excluding South Dakota and North Dakota. Only eight states saw an increase in learners, and only five states saw an increase in institutions, with Japanese-language education shrinking in nearly all states. More than half of the states with increased learners are small-scale states with fewer than 1,000 Japanese-language learners, and the overall impact is limited. Furthermore, foreign language education in the United States of America, including Japanese, is primarily focused on secondary and higher education, while foreign language education at the primary level is limited to initiatives at some schools.

The numbers of institutions, teachers, and learners in primary education all decreased significantly. In primary education, since there are generally no subjects that can be chosen individually and the curriculum is organized by grade or class, the closure of a single institution incorporating Japanese into its curriculum significantly influences the reduction in both the number of teachers and the number of learners.

In secondary education as well, the number of institutions, teachers, and learners has significantly decreased. Three common factors underlie these declines in both primary and secondary education.

The first is budget cuts to school districts. School district budgets face significant constraints due to declining student enrollment, rising costs driven by inflation, and budget cuts from federal and state governments. On the other hand, when allocating limited budgets, STEM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) tend to be prioritized, while budgets for foreign language subjects, including Japanese, are often reduced or eliminated.

The second issue is teacher shortages. In secondary education, as in the previous survey (2021), over 70% of institutions had only one Japanese-language teacher on staff. It is believed that many institutions closed their Japanese-language classes after teachers retired because they could not secure replacements. However, the teacher shortage is not a problem unique to Japanese-language education; it is a common challenge across K-12 education in the United States of America. Obtaining teaching qualifications requires significant financial and time investments, yet the nature of the profession often leads to long working hours and low pay, making it a primary factor in the teacher shortage.

Third, since the pandemic, the number of students enrolling in public K-12 schools nationwide has decreased due to an increase in students choosing homeschooling or private schools. Particularly in states like Oregon, California, New York, and Hawaii, which rank high in terms of the number of institutions and learners, the decline in student enrollment has been significant. Since a portion of K-12 district and school budgets is determined based on student enrollment, it is presumed that in districts experiencing declining enrollment, budget constraints intensified, leading many institutions to close Japanese-language classes due to an inability to secure the minimum enrollment required to operate them.

Furthermore, in high schools, which constitute upper secondary education, changes in university admission requirements are also likely having an impact. While only a few states require foreign language courses for high school graduation, many universities mandate foreign language study in high school as an admission requirement. Consequently, most students considering college pursue foreign language studies. However, in recent years, some state universities have begun requiring courses in computer science or similar subjects for admission instead of foreign languages, leading to cases where foreign language study is no longer necessary for university enrollment.

Although the number of institutions, teachers, and learners also decreased in higher education, the rate of decline was relatively small compared to primary and secondary education. Budget shortages and teacher shortages are equally significant challenges in higher education, but one reason for the decline that is specific to higher education is changes in university graduation requirements. The trend of prioritizing STEM subjects is similarly evident in higher education, with efforts to remove foreign language courses from graduation requirements accelerating in recent years. Additionally, the decrease in undergraduate international students since the COVID-19 pandemic has also contributed to this situation. The number of international students coming from East Asia to the United States of America has significantly decreased, and the impact of this decline, given that East Asian students previously accounted for a certain proportion of students in Japanese-language classes, is thought to be considerable.

In non-school education, data showed a trend for increases in the number of institutions, teachers, and learners. On the other hand, the outlook for future growth remains uncertain, as evidenced by the closure of several private language schools during the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, as a learning method outside of educational institutions, self-directed learning using online platforms and apps has become commonplace in recent years, and its market size continues to expand annually. According to the results of a survey by a language learning app, the number of Japanese-language learners is increasing in the United States of America, particularly among younger generations.

Regarding the purpose for learning Japanese, the major change since the previous survey is a significant decrease in the ratio of answers for future work in Japan and current or future work in home country. On the other hand, interest in anime, manga, J-POP, fashion, etc. exceeds 90%, and with the popularity of Japanese pop culture as a foundation, interest in the Japanese language is expected to remain at a certain level going forward.