

8. Western Europe

Status of Japanese-language education in Western Europe

The number of institutions across Western Europe reached 1,146 (an 8.0% increase compared to the previous survey in 2021), the number of teachers reached 3,416 (a 16.0% increase), and the number of learners reached 97,075 (an 8.4% increase), all showing growth compared to the previous survey. It should be noted that in San Marino, Japanese-language education was confirmed in the previous survey but could not be confirmed in this survey.

Numbers of institutions and teachers, in descending order, were France (285 institutions, 960 teachers), the United Kingdom (219 institutions, 635 teachers), Germany (188 institutions, 602 teachers), Spain (140 institutions, 385 teachers), and Switzerland (72 institutions, 230 teachers). The number of learners was highest in France (31,381), followed by Germany (17,440), the United Kingdom (14,646), Spain (9,536), and Italy (7,117). In particular, in non-school education, the number of institutions (up 10.6% from the previous survey), the number of teachers (up 19.4%), and the number of learners (up 42.1%) all increased significantly, resulting in an overall increase for the region as a whole.

Looking at the changes by country since the previous survey, the number of institutions increased in 8 countries, remained the same in 3 countries, and decreased in 11 countries. The number of teachers increased in 11 countries, remained the same in 2 countries, and decreased in 9 countries. The number of learners increased in 12 countries and decreased in 10 countries.

The proportion of learners by educational level is 2.0% for primary education, 16.8% for secondary education, 37.0% for higher education, and 44.2% for non-school education. Compared to the previous survey, non-school education increased by more than 10 percentage points.

The online class implementation rate stands at 42.6% across the entire region, higher than the global rate of 30.9%.

Looking at the purposes for learning Japanese, similar to the previous survey, the top reasons were interest in anime, manga, J-POP, fashion, etc. (85.5%), interest in the Japanese language (80.1%), and interest in history, literature, arts, etc. (77.1%)

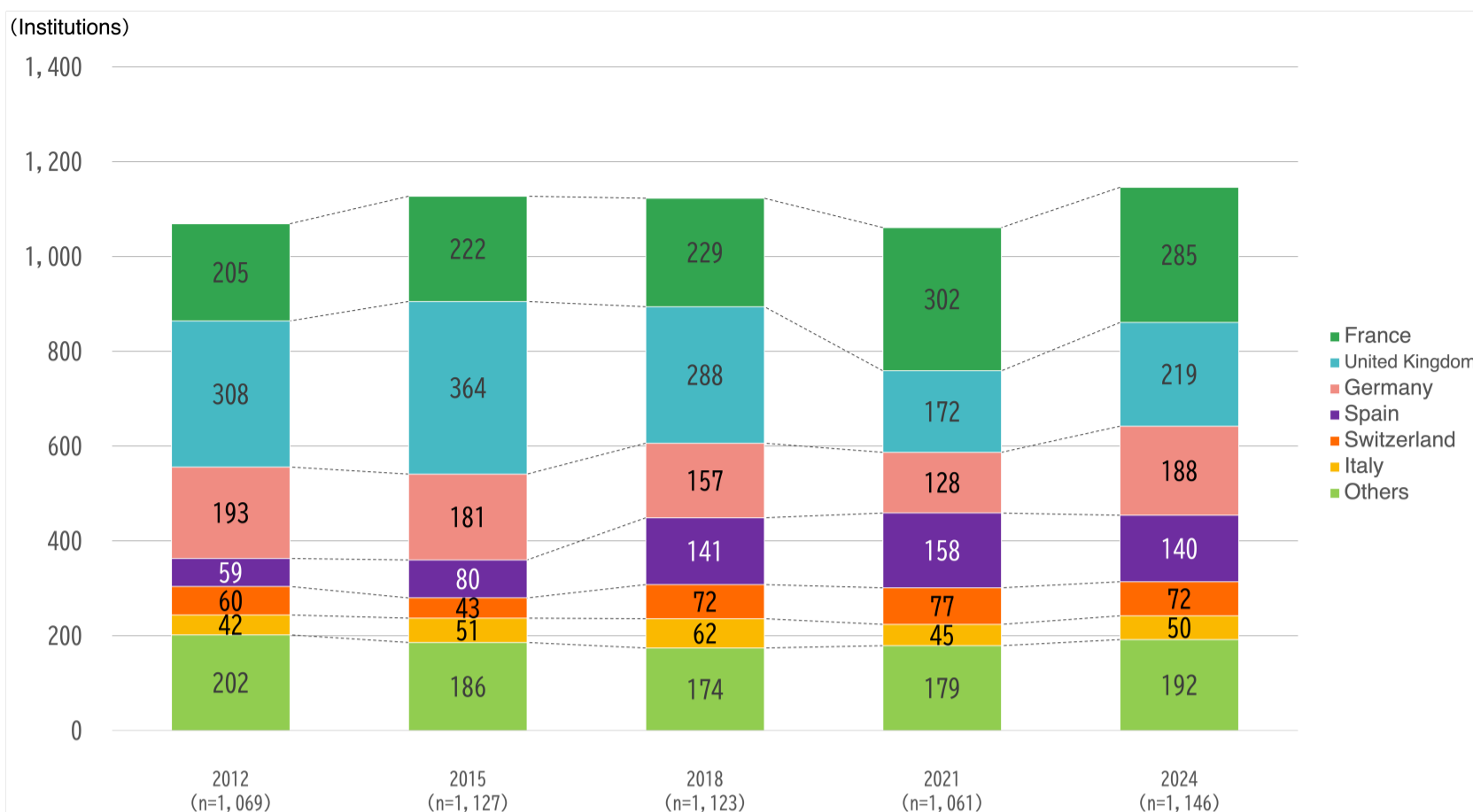
Table 2-8-1 Number of Institutions, number of Teachers, and number of Learners in Western Europe

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

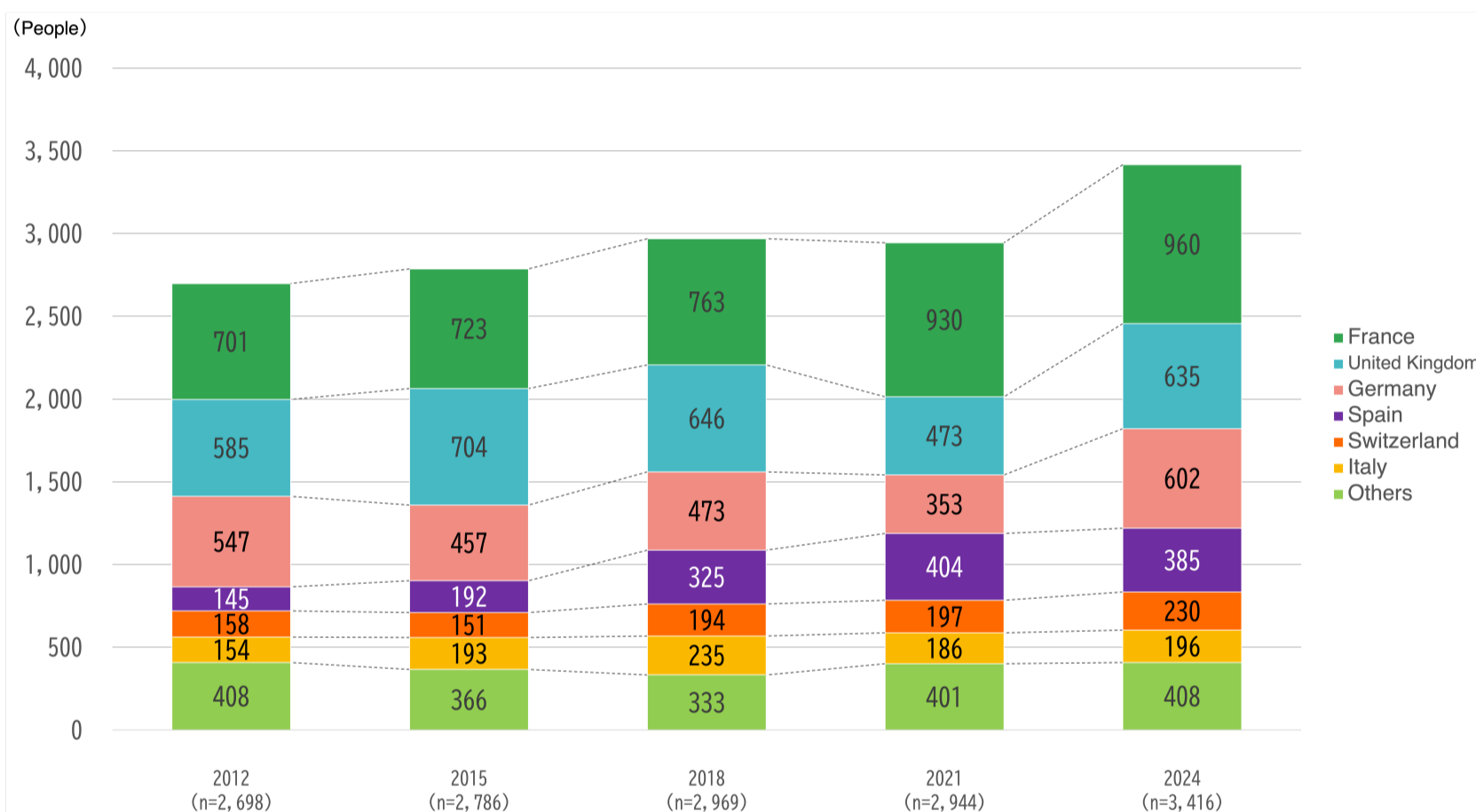
Country and Region	Number of Institutions in 2024 (institutions)	Number of Teachers in 2024 (people)	Number of Learners in 2024 (people)	Learners per 100,000 population (people)	Number of Learners in Primary education 2024 (people)	Number of Learners in Secondary education 2024 (people)	Number of Learners 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)
France	285	960	31,381	48.8	813	5,573	10,309	14,686	64,300,821	302	930	29,569
Germany	188	602	17,440	21.7	80	2,002	5,964	9,394	80,219,695	128	353	11,687
United Kingdom	219	635	14,646	23.1	1,017	3,281	6,273	4,075	63,379,787	172	473	14,631
Spain	140	385	9,536	20.1	2	251	1,715	7,568	47,400,798	158	404	9,383
Italy	50	196	7,117	12.0	0	584	5,374	1,159	59,433,744	45	186	8,387
Ireland	47	76	4,396	92.3	0	3,736	560	100	4,761,865	35	48	3,084
Switzerland	72	230	2,573	29.4	10	124	935	1,504	8,738,791	77	197	2,791
Finland	20	35	1,719	31.1	0	211	890	618	5,533,793	15	28	1,584
Austria	17	44	1,564	17.4	0	43	655	866	8,969,068	8	22	880
Belgium	19	42	1,559	14.2	0	0	689	870	11,000,638	12	38	1,196
Sweden	15	33	1,181	12.5	0	234	848	99	9,482,855	18	45	1,471
Netherlands	19	53	1,178	7.1	0	0	722	456	16,655,799	22	69	1,599
Portugal	12	33	637	6.2	0	0	228	409	10,343,066	11	27	663
Greece	11	30	614	5.7	0	0	0	614	10,816,286	12	25	568
Denmark	13	27	549	9.9	18	130	275	126	5,560,628	18	42	897
Norway	8	19	516	10.4	0	102	398	16	4,979,955	14	35	667
Iceland	2	7	209	66.2	0	34	75	100	315,556	3	9	145
Luxembourg	6	6	163	31.8	0	29	0	134	512,353	7	7	228
Cyprus	1	1	50	5.4	0	0	0	50	923,381	1	1	45
Malta	1	1	32	6.2	0	0	0	32	519,562	1	1	34
Monaco	1	1	15	40.2	0	0	0	15	37,308	1	3	7
San Marino	0	0	0	—	0	0	0	0	30,652	1	1	14
Western Europe overall	1,146	3,416	97,075	—	1,940	16,334	35,910	42,891	—	1,061	2,944	89,530

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

Graph 2-8-1 Number of Institutions in Western Europe



Graph 2-8-2 Number of Teachers in Western Europe



Graph 2-8-3 Number of Learners in Western Europe



Graph 2-8-4 Percentages of Learners by educational stage in Western Europe

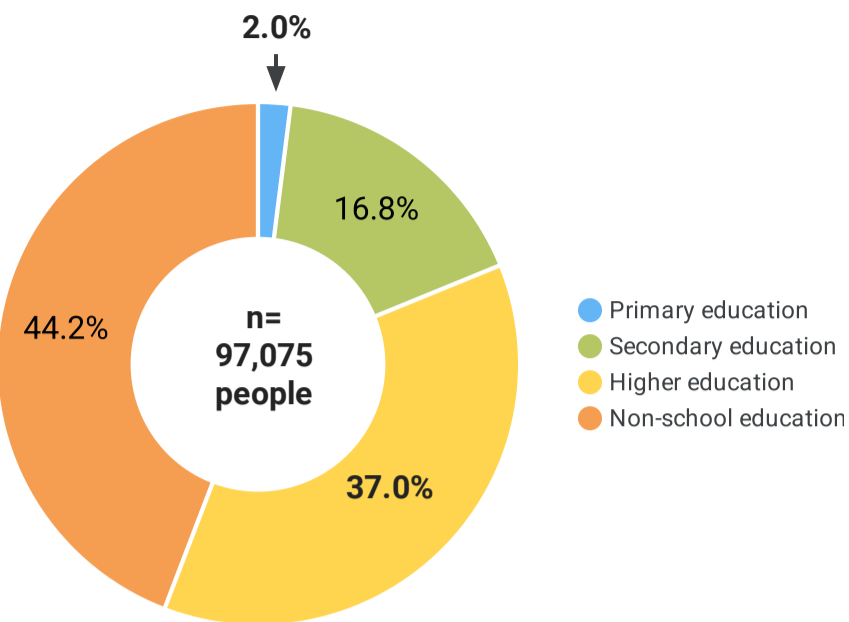
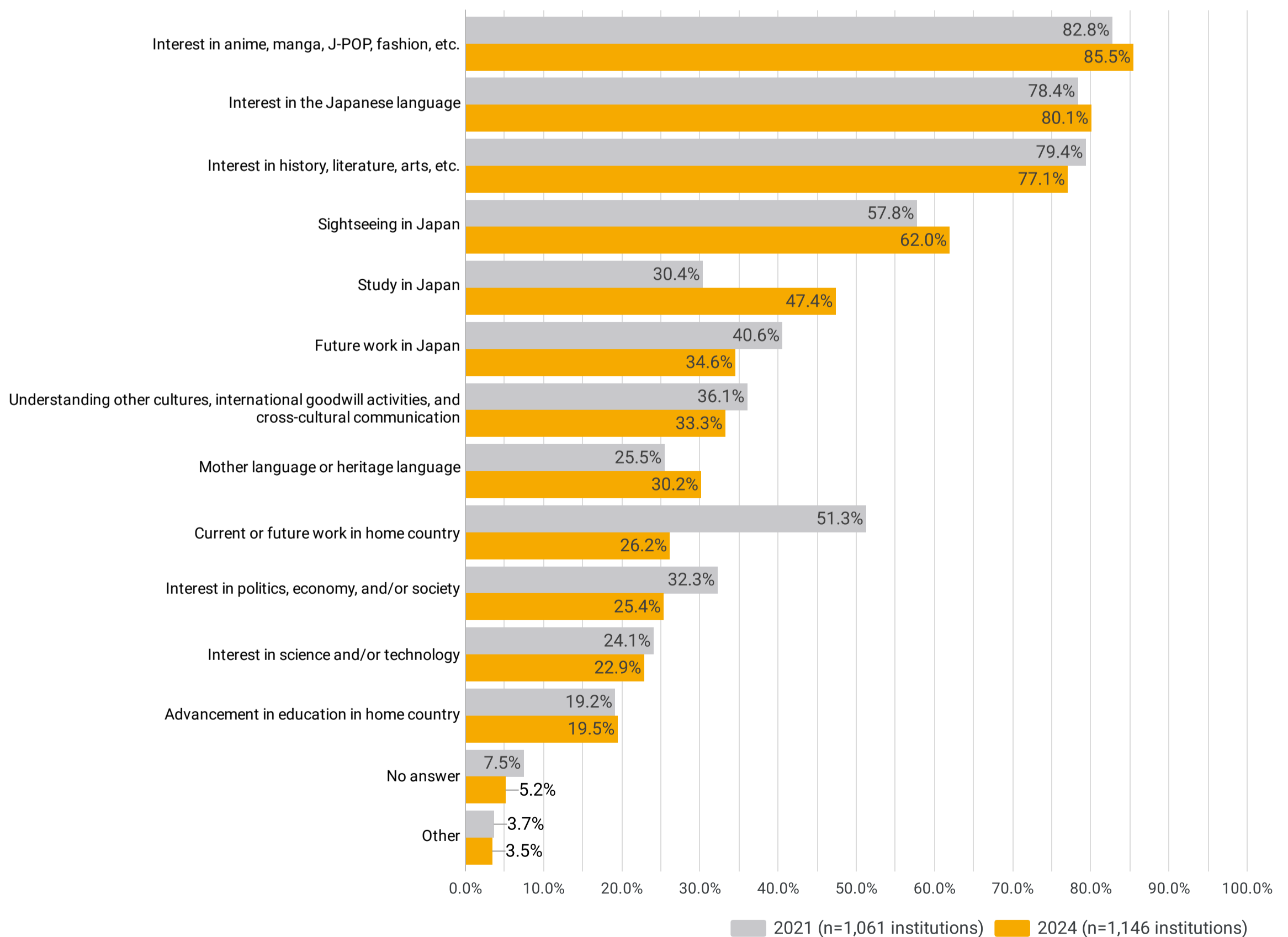


Table 2-8-2 Online class implementation ratio in Western Europe

Country and Region	Number of Institutions in each Country and Region	Online class implementation (institutions)	Online class implementation (%)
Iceland	2	0	0.0
Ireland	47	5	10.6
Italy	50	25	50.0
United Kingdom	219	77	35.2
Austria	17	11	64.7
Netherlands	19	9	47.4
Cyprus	1	1	100.0
Greece	11	9	81.8
Switzerland	72	39	54.2
Sweden	15	11	73.3
Spain	140	82	58.6
Denmark	13	1	7.7
Germany	188	89	47.3
Norway	8	4	50.0
Finland	20	13	65.0
France	285	97	34.0
Belgium	19	4	21.1
Portugal	12	9	75.0
Malta	1	1	100.0
Monaco	1	1	100.0
Luxembourg	6	0	0.0
Western Europe overall	1,146	488	42.6

Graph 2-8-5 Online class implementation ratio in Western Europe



Trends in each country and region

[Ireland]

Overall, the number of institutions, teachers, and learners is on the rise.

Much of Japanese-language education in Ireland is concentrated at the secondary education level. This stems from Japanese being designated as a target language for enhanced foreign language education at the secondary level by Ireland's Department of Education and Skills (now the Department of Education and Youth) in 2000. In addition to government support, the continued offering of Japanese-language courses by Post-Primary Languages Ireland (PPLI), an organization under the Irish Department of Education that supports and promotes language education in secondary schools, and the hosting of Japanese-language contests by the Japanese Language Teachers of Ireland (JLTI) also contribute to the advancement of Japanese-language education.

Compared to other languages, few institutions have adopted Japanese into their curricula. However, since 2022, foreign language options in secondary education have expanded (Chinese, Polish, Lithuanian, and Portuguese were added to the existing options of French, German, Spanish, Italian, Russian, and Japanese). Even in this context, Japanese remains a chosen subject. In 2024, a total of 337 students took Japanese as a subject in the Leaving Certificate Examination. At the Higher Level examination, approximately 30% of students achieved the highest grade (H1). Considering that only about 15% of students taking the exam in French, Spanish, or German achieve an H1 grade, it is clear that Japanese-language examinees are performing exceptionally well. This suggests the presence of enthusiastic Japanese-language learners in Ireland.

On the other hand, the shortage of Japanese-language teachers has become an issue, and various improvement measures are being explored. For example, PPLI employs and dispatches teachers to schools that offer Japanese as a regular subject, enabling it to provide Japanese-language instruction at multiple schools nationwide.

In higher education, both the number of teachers and the number of learners are increasing. Trinity College Dublin (TCD), University College Cork (UCC), the Bachelor of Arts in Applied Languages program at the University of Limerick (UL), the BA in Applied Language and Translation Studies program at Dublin City University (DCU), University College Dublin (UCD), and other higher education institutions have undertaken various initiatives related to Japanese-language education, such as hosting lectures on Japanese studies and implementing Japanese language and culture programs.

In primary education, Japanese has been designated as one of the languages for potential future introduction at the primary education level under the modern foreign language module (Say Yes to Languages) implemented by the Irish government. Consequently, future developments in Japanese-language learning at the primary education level are anticipated.

[Italy]

The number of institutions and teachers increased slightly from the previous survey (2021), but the number of learners decreased. A major characteristic of Japanese-language learning in Italy is that the majority of

learners are in higher education. While many students are enrolled in Japanese-language and Japanese studies programs at major national universities across the country, including those in Venice, Rome, and Naples, the decline in the number of learners at the higher education level has affected the overall figures.

As in the previous survey, no Japanese-language educational institutions were identified in primary education.

In secondary education, the numbers of institutions, teachers, and learners all decreased compared to the previous survey.

The number of higher education institutions and teachers showed no significant fluctuation, but as mentioned earlier, the number of learners decreased compared to the previous survey. This is partly due to the fact that in recent years, several institutions with large Japanese-language and Japanese studies programs have taken measures to limit student enrollment for instructional reasons.

Regarding Japanese-language education for the general public in non-school settings, opportunities to learn Japanese remain limited. However, driven by the popularity of contemporary Japanese culture such as anime and manga, interest in Japan is high among younger generations. This suggests potential demand exceeding the number of learners identified in this survey.

[United Kingdom]

The number of institutions did not decline at any educational level, but the number of learners decreased in all areas except non-school education. The number of teachers showed a trend toward increasing at all levels except primary education.

The number of learners in primary education is on a downward trend, but the number of institutions has not changed significantly. In rural areas, there is a shortage of Japanese-language teachers. When teachers leave their schools due to retirement or other reasons, Japanese-language classes at those schools often end. Furthermore, for the sake of school management efficiency, European languages such as French, Spanish, and German, or other languages that can secure funding support, are prioritized, which is leading to the discontinuation of Japanese-language classes. On the other hand, learners show a high level of interest in Japanese culture and the Japanese language. Even at institutions that do not provide Japanese-language education, individual learners using language apps and other tools to study Japanese have been identified.

In secondary education, while the number of learners has been declining, the number of institutions has increased. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Japanese-language classes offered as regular subjects had barely managed to continue, and many institutions found themselves unable to sustain these classes due to prolonged difficult financial conditions, leading to a significant decrease in the number of learners compared to the previous survey (2021). The number of institutions increased while the number of learners decreased, likely because existing institutions with large learner populations withdrew, while new institutions with smaller learner populations entered.

From the perspective of public examinations, the number of candidates taking foreign language examinations such as the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) and A-level examinations used for university entrance has either stopped declining or increased. For Japanese as well, the number of candidates is gradually increasing. Although the number of learners at institutions has decreased, the presence of enthusiastic learners outside institutions and learners in heritage language education is believed to be contributing to the gradual increase in the number of examinees.

In higher education, the number of learners decreased slightly, but both the number of institutions and the number of teachers increased as extracurricular activities that had been suspended during the COVID-19 pandemic resumed. On the other hand, it has also been reported that the number of international students has decreased due to changes in the government's student visa system, putting pressure on university operations. This trend is also evident in the downsizing plans for departments and programs in Japanese studies at several leading universities, raising concerns that it may lead to a reduction in Japanese-language education and Japanese studies in higher education in the future.

In non-school education, increases were seen in the number of institutions, teachers, and learners. The revival of language learning that had been temporarily suspended during the COVID-19 pandemic, combined with the growing popularity of the Japanese language and Japanese culture, has likely led to an increase in the number of people taking up Japanese-language study. This number now exceeds the results of the pre-pandemic survey (2018). Access to Japanese-language education at educational institutions is extremely limited, so those wishing to learn Japanese utilize private tutors (both in-person and online) and language apps in addition to private schools. Recent institutional survey results suggest that despite little change in the number of learners at institutions, the high demand for the Japanese-Language Proficiency Test (JLPT) in the United Kingdom is largely attributable to the presence of these individual learners.

[Spain]

A concentration of institutions, teachers, and learners is observed in the major cities of Madrid and Barcelona. On the other hand, there are regions where Japanese-language educational institutions have not been identified in major cities of several provinces, such as Santander, Logroño, and Cáceres.

In secondary education, the number of institutions offering Japanese-language courses doubled, and the number of learners also increased significantly from 21 to 251. In Catalonia in particular, the introduction of Japanese-language instruction at several public secondary education institutions in September 2023, led by the regional education authority, has contributed to the increase in the number of learners. Furthermore, Japanese-language courses in Catalonia's secondary education institutions are offered as elective subjects, allowing each institution to freely decide whether to offer them. Consequently, the number of institutions and learners may increase further in the future.

In higher education, while the number of teachers and learners decreased slightly, institutions such as the Complutense University of Madrid newly launched Japanese-language courses, resulting in an increase of three institutions.

In non-school education, while the number of learners showed a trend toward increasing, a decrease was observed in the number of institutions and teachers. This is thought to be because some institutions newly established through the introduction of online classes during the COVID-19 pandemic subsequently scaled back their operations due to factors such as declining enrollment. Furthermore, while some institutions continue to offer Japanese-language programs even with a small number of learners, many others were unable to open courses because they could not secure teachers or learners. Meanwhile, public language schools (Escuelas Oficiales de Idiomas, or EOI) across the country showed signs of opening new courses and resuming operations. Within the Madrid region in particular, Japanese-language classes have been newly launched at four schools, indicating growing interest in Japanese in adult education. This trend is likely related to the growing movement to resume in-person learning activities that had been stalled due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as rising interest in Japan, particularly for travel, across a wide range of age groups.

Moreover, based on interviews with local teachers and educational institutions, it is estimated that self-directed learning using language learning apps, online courses, and similar resources has become established and is growing. The number of registered users for the Japan Foundation's online Japanese-language learning platform, JF Japanese e-Learning Minato, is at its highest in Europe in Spain, confirming the growing trend of individual learning. Additionally, the number of teachers conducting private lessons outside of educational institutions is also increasing, further indicating a growing trend for individual learners.

[Germany]

Compared to the previous survey (2021), significant increases were observed in the number of institutions, teachers, and learners (institutions: 46.9% increase; teachers: 70.5% increase; learners: 49.2% increase).

In primary education, the number of learners is increasing, but this is due to a significant increase in learners at several institutions in particular. Therefore, the number of institutions itself increased only slightly, and no significant change was observed in the overall trend. In Germany, the population and economic conditions vary significantly from state to state. Consequently, the number of learners and institutions such as community colleges (Volkshochschulen, or VHS) also varies significantly by state, and regions where Japanese-language learning is actively pursued are unevenly distributed. The three states of Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria, and North Rhine-Westphalia account for over 60% of all institutions and over 70% of learners. This is because these three states are the most populous in Germany.

In secondary education, the number of learners has consistently shown a slight upward trend over the past decade or so (since the 2015 survey), with the exception of the previous survey, which was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The number of institutions and teachers has generally remained stable. On the other hand, there have been reports that Japanese-language classes were discontinued following the retirement of the teachers responsible for them, making it uncertain whether this stable trend can be maintained going forward. However, there is also news that a new Japanese-language course has been established by graduates of the teacher training program at the University of Cologne, and while the signs are sporadic, they are positive.

Higher education enrollment, which declined due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, is gradually recovering but has not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels. Approximately half of the learners are enrolled at institutions other than Japanese-language majors that offer Japanese-language education as a foreign language subject. In this survey, most institutions responded that the possibility of course discontinuation is low. However, since the retirement of instructors responsible for Japanese-language classes directly impacts the survival of these courses, it is necessary to monitor future developments.

In non-school education, the number of institutions, teachers, and learners has shown a steady upward trend. In Germany, adult education at community colleges (Volkshochschulen, or VHS) is well developed, existing not only in large and medium-sized cities, but also in relatively small towns. According to an interview with the German VHS Japanese Language Teachers' Association, which includes VHS Japanese-language instructors as members, VHS institutions require no specific qualifications to become a Japanese-language teacher. This makes it relatively easy to establish Japanese-language courses. In addition, Japanese is one of the most popular foreign language courses offered. This trend is reflected in the current survey results, with the number of learners increasing to approximately twice that of the previous survey and the number of institutions growing to about 1.2 times that of the survey two cycles prior (2018).

[France]

Compared to the previous survey (2021), there has been no significant change in the total number of institutions or teachers. However, the number of learners increased by approximately 6%, exceeding 30,000. The primary motivation for learning, as in the previous survey, was interest in Japanese culture, including anime and manga. This cultural interest is particularly supporting the increase in learners in non-school education. Meanwhile, in school education, the number of learners decreased, primarily due to reforms in the secondary education system.

By educational level, the number of institutions in primary education shows little change, while the number of learners is trending slightly upward. A characteristic feature of learners' motivation is that, in addition to interest in Japanese culture, many cite Japanese as their native language or heritage language.

In secondary education, the number of institutions has decreased only slightly since the previous survey, but the number of learners has decreased by approximately 24% and the number of teachers by approximately 20%. The

2021 baccalauréat reform, which made third foreign languages including Japanese an elective subject and eliminated oral examination assessments, is believed to have impacted the number of Japanese-language learners in secondary education. Notably, responses indicated a decrease in Japanese-language learners, particularly at the high school level, and some pointed to a decline in motivation to study. In recent years, due to heightened interest in Korean culture among younger generations, some responses indicate a decrease in students choosing Japanese and an increase in those choosing Korean. This raises concerns that the motivation for learning Japanese, which has been supported by cultural interest, is gradually declining.

In higher education, the numbers of institutions, teachers, and learners confirmed in this survey all decreased compared to the previous survey. However, learners at this level study with a broader range of motivations than learners at other educational levels, including interest in Japanese culture and the Japanese language, as well as study in Japan and seeking employment in Japan. However, it is anticipated that the decline in learners at the secondary education level will also impact the number of learners in higher education, necessitating close monitoring of future trends.

In non-school education, the number of institutions increased compared to the previous survey, and the number of learners also rose significantly, increasing by approximately 6,000. The high level of cultural interest, including sightseeing in Japan, supports motivation for learning. This survey reveals that Japanese-language courses are being offered throughout France by private language schools and nonprofit organizations.

[Switzerland]

Switzerland shows a general trend of declining numbers of institutions and learners.

The number of learners in primary education was zero in the previous survey (2021), but has recovered to ten in this survey. These are learners enrolled in extracurricular classes at international schools, and it is believed that they have returned as classes resumed following the end of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The number of learners in secondary education decreased by approximately 30% compared to the previous survey. The significant decline in extracurricular learners in German-speaking secondary education, coupled with an increase in learners shifting from in-person learning to online private lessons following the COVID-19 pandemic, has been compounded by budget cuts at individual schools.

In higher education, Japanese-language learning has remained consistently popular, largely unaffected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The number of learners in non-school education decreased by approximately 10% compared to the previous survey, likely because learners did not return after the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, the systematic consolidation of cultural centers operated by major corporations that had widely offered Japanese-language courses throughout Switzerland since the previous survey has also contributed to the decrease in the number of institutions and learners. It is believed that a considerable number of individual learners are studying Japanese through online classes and private lessons.