

The State of Sports Life Among Japanese Age 20 and Above

日本の満20岁以上人群的运动健身现状
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I Introduction

Sasakawa Sports Foundation (SSF), whose mission is the formation of a society where each member of the nation becomes happy by enjoying sport that suits their own way of life (Sport for Everyone), has conducted a biennial survey on sports participation in the nation called the "National Sports - Life Survey" since 1992. The purpose of this survey is to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the participation in sports and physical activities of people in Japan. This report describes the changes in the rates of participation in sports and physical activities over the previous eighteen years and the results of comparisons with countries in Europe, based on data obtained in the latest survey, the tenth of its kind.

II Methods

People surveyed

2,000 Japanese men and women aged 20 years old and higher.

Method

Household drop-off survey method with a questionnaire.

Matters surveyed

(1) Participation in sports and physical activities

The state of participation in sports and physical activities, and the actual sports and physical activities participated (the five main sports and physical activities), and frequency, duration, intensity of the sports and physical activities performed.

(2) Sports clubs

Sports club membership and types of clubs.

(3) Other

Facilities for sports and physical activities, watching of sports, sports volunteering activities, attitudes towards participation in sports and physical activities, lifestyle and health, and personal characteristics.

Survey period

May - June 2010.

Definition of words

Definition of the levels of participation in sports and physical activities:

This survey focuses on the aspects of frequency, duration, and intensity of sports and physical activities in order to obtain an accurate understanding of participation in sports and physical activities. Table 1 shows the criteria that determine the levels. People who exercise quite strenuously or more intensively twice or more a week for over 30 minutes each time are defined as being at Level 4, "Active sports participants."

Table 1 Levels of participation in sports and physical activities

Level 0	No participation in sports and physical activity at all over the last twelve months
Level 1	Less than twice a week (1 to 103 times/year)
Level 2	More than twice a week (104 or more times year)
Level 3	More than twice a week with a duration of more than 30 minutes
Level 4 "Active sports participants"	More than twice a week, duration of more than 30 minutes, and with more than moderate intensity

III Results

(1) Participation in sports and physical activities

More than 75% of the people surveyed did sports or physical activities in the previous one year, and people categorized as Level 0 accounted for only 24% (Figure 1). Nearly half of the people did sports or physical activities at least twice a week, which indicates that active exercise has taken root. Active sports participants accounted for 18.4% of the people surveyed, meaning that about 20% of adults do sports quite strenuously and frequently. Based on the adult population of Japan of 103,824,522 as of March 31, 2009, the number of people who did sports or physical activities at least once in the last one year was estimated to be 78.8 million (75.9%); at least once a week, to be 61.3 million (59.0%); and twice or more a week, to be 51 million (49.1%).

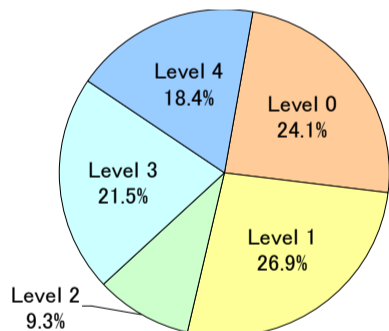


Figure 1 Rates of participation in sports and physical activities (n=2,000)

(2) Changes in rates of participation in sports and physical activities

The figure below shows changes in the rates of participation in sports and physical activities in the last eighteen years (Figure 2). Active sports participants, who accounted for 6.6% of the people surveyed in the 1992 survey, rose steadily to 18.4%, an approximately three-fold rise, in the latest survey. The percentage of people who did sports or physical activities twice or more a week, who accounted for 16.1% in the 1992 survey, rose greatly in the latest survey to 49.1%.

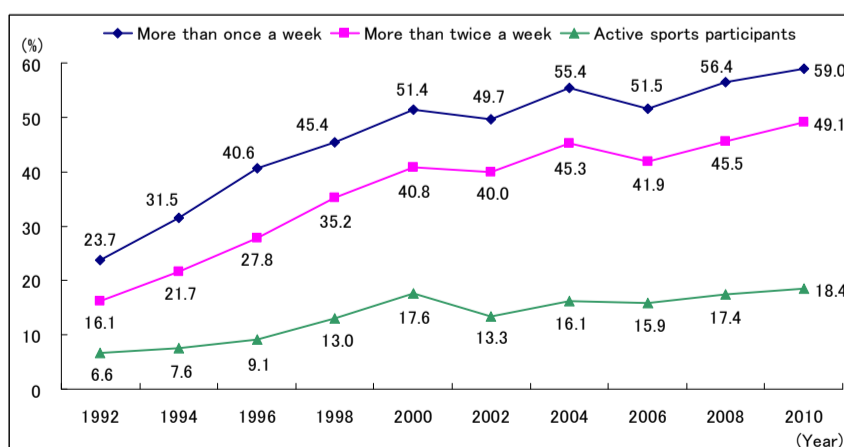


Figure 2 Changes in the proportion of Active sports participants (1992 - 2010)

(3) Rates of participation in sports and physical activities by type: a rise in physical activities and exercise, and a decrease in sports

Table 2 shows the rates of people who did sports or physical activities at least once a week regularly by type of sport or activity. The results of the survey, which has been taken biennially for eighteen years from 1992 to 2010, show that the rate of people who did sports or physical activities at least once a week and the rate for twice or more a week are increasing in Japan. When looking at the changes in the rates of people who did sports or physical activities at least once a week by the type of sport or activity, in the fourteen years from 1996 to 2010, the types of sports and activities whose rate increased were only a few, and included walking, strolling, weight training and yoga. This suggests that the increase in the number of people who do solitary physical activities is the main reason for the increase in the rates of doing sports and physical activities in Japan in 1996 - 2010 (Figure 3).

On the other hand, the rates for so-called 'competitive sports', such as tennis and soccer, and outdoor sports either declined or remained unchanged. The results also revealed that in many sports and activities the difference in participation rates by gender had not narrowed (high for men, low for women), and there is also a difference in rates by age (high for older people and low for younger people).

Table 2 Rates of participation in sports and physical activities by type, and the estimated number of participants (subjects: at least once a week)

Ranking	2002 (n=2,267)			Ranking	2006 (n=1,867)			Ranking	2010 (n=2,000)		
	Type of Sport	Rate of Participation (%)	Estimated No. of participants (10,000 people)		Type of Sport	Rate of Participation (%)	Estimated No. of participants (10,000 people)		Type of Sport	Rate of Participation (%)	Estimated No. of participants (10,000 people)
1	Strolling	19.2	1,932	1	Strolling	19.8	2,032	1	Strolling	22.7	2,357
2	Walking	11.6	1,168	2	Walking	14.2	1,457	2	Walking	17.8	1,848
3	Calisthenics and light exercises	10.6	1,067	3	Calisthenics and light exercises	10.8	1,108	3	Calisthenics and light exercises	13.4	1,391
4	Weight training	5.2	523	4	Weight training	5.1	523	4	Weight training	8.4	872
5	Cycling	2.6	262	5	Jogging and Running	2.9	297	5	Jogging and Running	4.2	436
6	Swimming	2.3	231	6	Cycling	2.5	256	6	Cycling	3.6	374
7	Golf practice on a driving range	2.2	221	8	Swimming	2.5	256	7	Yoga	2.2	228
8	Jogging and Running	2.1	211	9	Golf practice on a driving range	2.3	236	8	Swimming	2.1	218
9	Playing catch	1.4	141	10	Yoga	1.4	143	9	Playing catch	1.9	197
11	Table tennis	1.4	141	10	Playing catch	1.3	133	10	Golf practice on a driving range	1.8	187
11	Aqua exercise	1.3	131	11	Aerobic dancing	1.1	112	11	Aerobic dancing	1.5	156
12	Aerobic dancing	1.2	121	12	Golf on a course	1.0	102	12	Tennis	1.4	145
13	Baseball	1.1	111	13	Tennis	0.9	92	12	Volleyball	1.4	145
14	Fishing	1.0	101	13	Volleyball	0.9	92	14	Baseball	1.2	125
15	Golf on a course	0.9	91	15	Fishing	0.8	82	15	Jumping rope	1.1	114

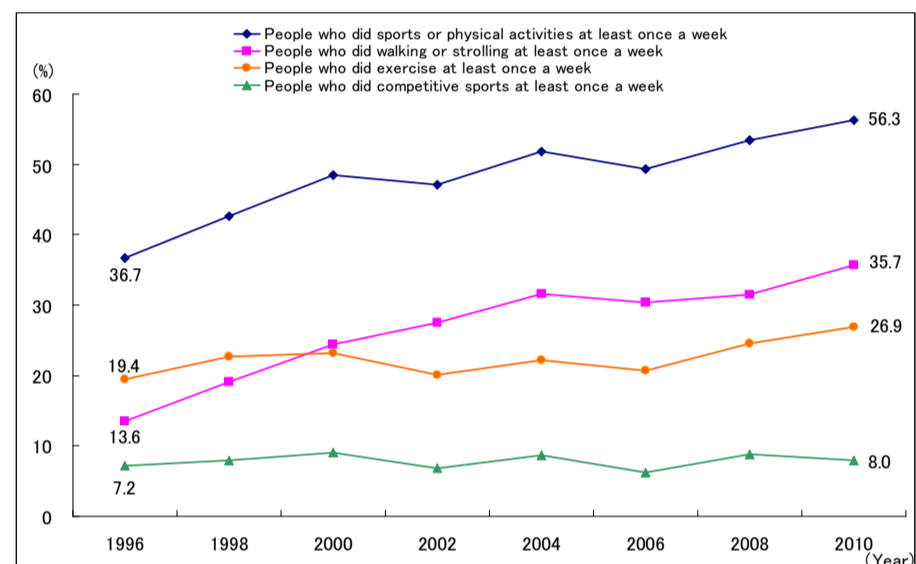


Figure 3 Changes in rates of competitive sports and physical activities participation (1996 - 2010)

Note 1: Competitive sports (soccer, volleyball played with a soft ball, softball, table tennis, basketball, volleyball, futsal, baseball, karate, judo, Japanese fencing, ballroom dancing, Soft Tennis[tennis played with soft rubber ball], tennis)
Note 2: Exercise (weight training, calisthenics and light exercises, yoga, aerobic dancing, cycling, jogging and running, swimming)

(4) Comparisons with countries in Europe

Comparisons were made between the results of this survey and the results of Eurobarometer, which is a survey conducted by the European Commission on sports and physical activities participation in the 27 member states of the European Union in 2009 (Figure 4). In a comparison of the rate of people who did sports or physical activities at least once a week, Japan (59%) ranked after Sweden (72%), Finland (71%) and Denmark (64%). The rate of people who did sports or physical activities five times or more a week in Japan was 28%, which was higher than that for any of the EU countries. The rate of people who were members of a sports club in Japan was 19%, which was lower than the rates of fifteen EU countries, with a difference of more than 20 percent points between the rate of Japan and the rates of the top five countries: Germany (55%), Netherlands and Sweden (49%), Denmark (47%), and Austria (43%). The feature of Japan is that, compared with European countries, the frequency of doing sports and physical activities is about the same level as that for the top group of European countries, but the rate of people who are members of a sports club is rather low.

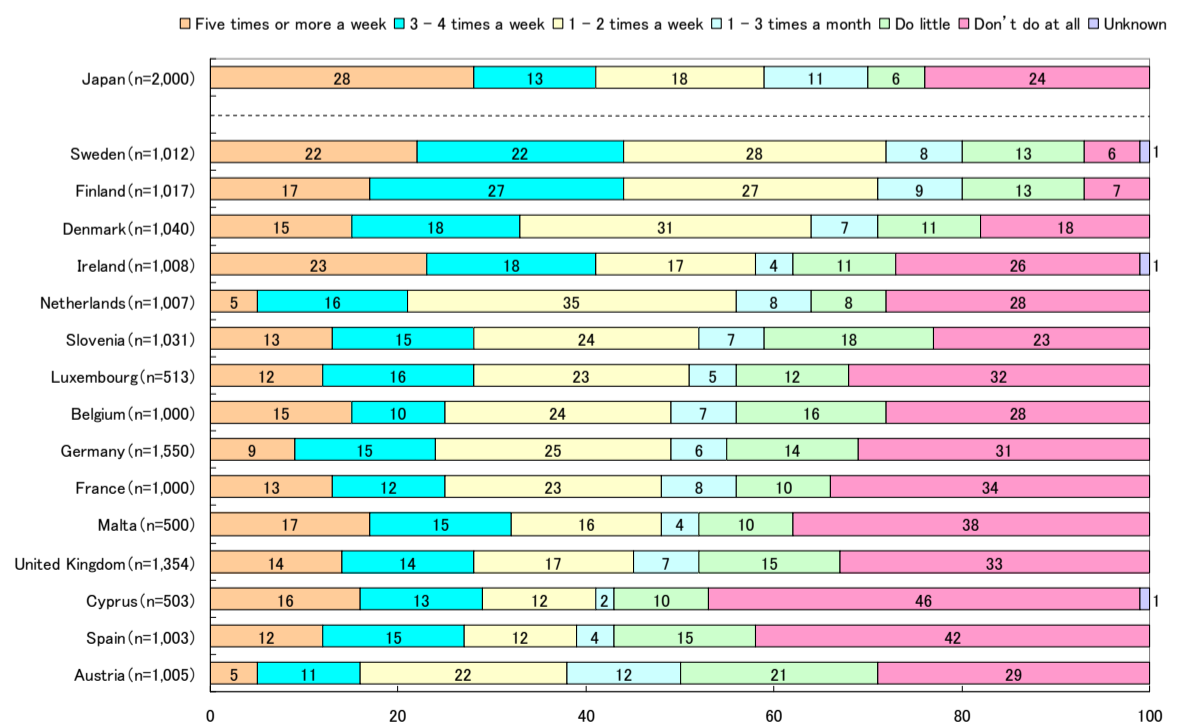


Figure 4 Comparison of sports participation with European countries (15 top countries among 27 EU countries)

IV Discussion

The government of Japan is aiming to raise the rates of adults who do sports at least once a week, and at least three times a week, to be about 65% and 30%, respectively.

The results of the latest survey showed that the number of people in Japan who do sports and physical activities is increasing because of an increase in the number of people who do physical activities and exercise, mainly walking. On the other hand, the survey revealed that, concerning participation in 'competitive sports', typically sports included in Olympic games, the numbers of people who do such sports at least once a year and at least once a week either remain unchanged or are declining. This may suggest that the sports policies of the national government and local governments, which aim to raise the rate of people who do sports and physical activities, succeeded in raising the number of people who do physical activities and exercise, but failed to raise the number of people who do 'competitive sports'. We consider that the sports promotion policy of the government of Japan should not only aim to raise the frequency but should also begin to aim at promoting participation in sports, rather than physical activities and exercise.

References

Sasakawa Sports Foundation, National Sports - Life Survey, 2002, 2006, 2010
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