

# The 2017 SSF National Sports-Life Survey of Children and Young People

● Executive Summary December 2017, Japan

# 2017



## Table of Contents

Introduction	01
Methods	01
Results	<b>01. Exercise and sports frequency</b> 02
	<b>02. Exercise and sports types</b> 04
	<b>03. Sports teams / clubs</b> 05
	<b>04. Sports spectating</b> 06
	<b>05. Liking exercise and sports</b> 08
	<b>06. Sports volunteering</b> 09
	<b>07. Media usage time (screen time)</b> 10
	<b>08. Parent's expectations towards child doing exercise and sports</b> 12
	<b>09. Exercise, sports and physical play with family</b> 14
About SSF	<b>Towards the Realization of "Sport for Everyone"</b> 15
	<b>Outline of Activities</b> 16

## Introduction

The Sasakawa Sports Foundation (SSF) aims to identify the rate of children exercising and playing sports as well as the sports environment surrounding children after school and on holidays to realize the objective of "Sport for Everyone." In order to attain these goals, the National Sports-Life Survey of Teens subjected to those aged 10-19 living in Japan, has been carried out a total of six times since 2001. We have also carried out the National Sports-Life Survey of Children Ages 4 to 9, targeting children 9 and younger, a total of 4 times since 2009 in order to look for turning points in exercise and sports in children.

In 2017, we carried out the National Sports-Life Survey of Children Ages 4 to 11 subjecting children in preschool to children in elementary school as well as the National Sports-Life Survey of Ages 12 to 21 which targeted those in junior high school, high school and university.

## Methods

### 1 Population

4-21 year olds living in Japan

### 2 Sample numbers

2,400 [4-11 year olds] and 3,000 [12-21 year olds]

### 3 Locations

225 (204 urban areas and 21 rural areas)

### 4 Extraction method

2-staged stratified random sampling

### 5 Survey methods

Questionnaire sheet left at home

### 6 Survey period

June-July 2017

### 7 Survey sample (rate)

[4-11 year olds] 1,573 (65.5%)

[12-21 year olds] 1,636 (54.5%)

### 8 Survey contents

Exercise and sports frequency, time and intensity, sports facilities, gyms, teams, clubs, liking exercise and sports, sports spectating, favorite athletes, sports volunteering, sleep time, time using media, frequency of exercise and doing sports with family, parent's attitude towards education concerning child's lifestyle, exercise and play, etc.

# Exercise and sports frequency

## ► 4-11 year olds

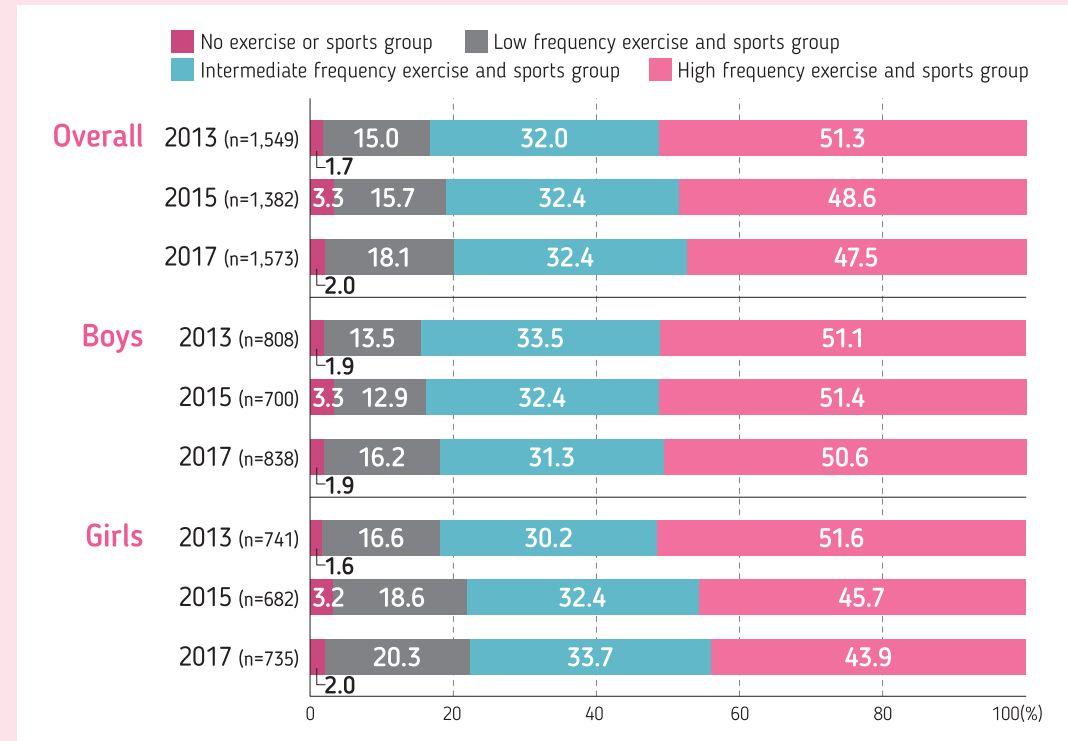
**Table 1** Exercise and sports frequency groups

Participation Group	Criteria
Non-participation group	Non-participation (0 time/year)
Low frequency group	At least once a year but less than 3 times a week (between 1-155 times/year)
Moderate frequency group	At least 3 times a week but less than 7 times a week (between 156-363 times/year)
High frequency group	At least 7 times a week (364 or more times/year)

Source: 2017 Sasakawa Sports Foundation National Sports-Life Survey of Children Ages 4 to 11

The 4-11 year old group was divided into the 4 groups of "non-participation group," "low frequency group," "moderate frequency group" and "high frequency group" based on standards set from exercise and sports frequency over the past year (Table 1).

**Fig.1** Annual trends in exercise and sports frequency groups (4-11 year olds: overall / by gender)



\*1) Created with data of 10-11 year olds from the 2013 and 2015 National Sports-Life Survey of Teens  
Source: 2017 Sasakawa Sports Foundation National Sports-Life Survey of Children Ages 4 to 11

Fig.1 shows annual trends in the exercise and sports frequency groups (4-11 year olds). The 2017 results show that the largest group was the "high frequency exercise and sports group" at **47.5%** followed by the "intermediate frequency exercise and sports group" at **32.4%**, the "low frequency exercise and sports group" at **18.1%** and the "no exercise or sports group" at **2.0%**. When looking at gender, **50.6%** of boys and **43.9%** of girls were in the "high frequency exercise and sports group" with boys **6.7points** higher than girls.

## ► 12-21 year olds

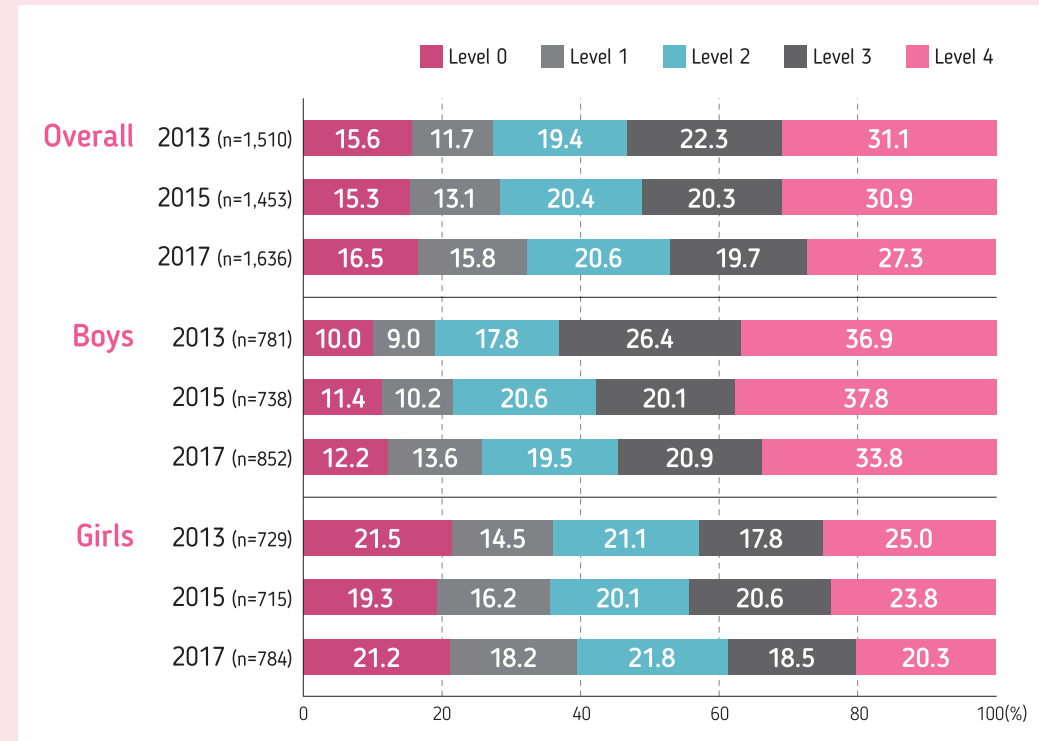
**Table 2** Exercise and sports level

Level	Criteria
<b>0</b>	Non-participation (0 time/year)
<b>1</b>	At least once during the year but less than once a week (1-51 times/year)
<b>2</b>	At least once a week but less than 5 times a week (52-259 times/year)
<b>3</b>	At least 5 times a week (260 times or more/year)
<b>4</b>	At least 5 times a week (260 times or more/year) with a duration of 120 minutes, and with more than moderate intensity

Source: 2017 Sasakawa Sports Foundation National Sports-Life Survey of Ages 12 to 21

The 12-21 year olds were classified into 5 levels from level 0 to level 4 based on standards set from exercise and sports frequency, time and intensity over the past year (Table 2).

**Fig.2** Annual trends in exercise and sports level (12-21 year olds: overall / by gender)



\*1) Created with data of 12-19 year olds from the 2013 and 2015 National Sports-Life Survey of Teens  
Source: 2017 Sasakawa Sports Foundation National Sports-Life Survey of Ages 12 to 21

Fig.2 shows annual trends in exercise and sports level (12-21 year olds). The 2017 results show level 0 at **16.5%**, level 1 at **15.8%**, level 2 at **20.6%**, level 3 at **19.7%** and level 4 at **27.3%** overall.

When looking at gender, level 4 was the highest for boys with **33.8%** followed by level 3 at **20.9%**. The highest for girls was level 2 at **21.8%** followed by level 0 at **21.2%**.

# Exercise and sports types

## ► 4-11 year olds / 12-21 year olds

**Table 3** Exercise and sports types often carried out over the past year (multiple answers)

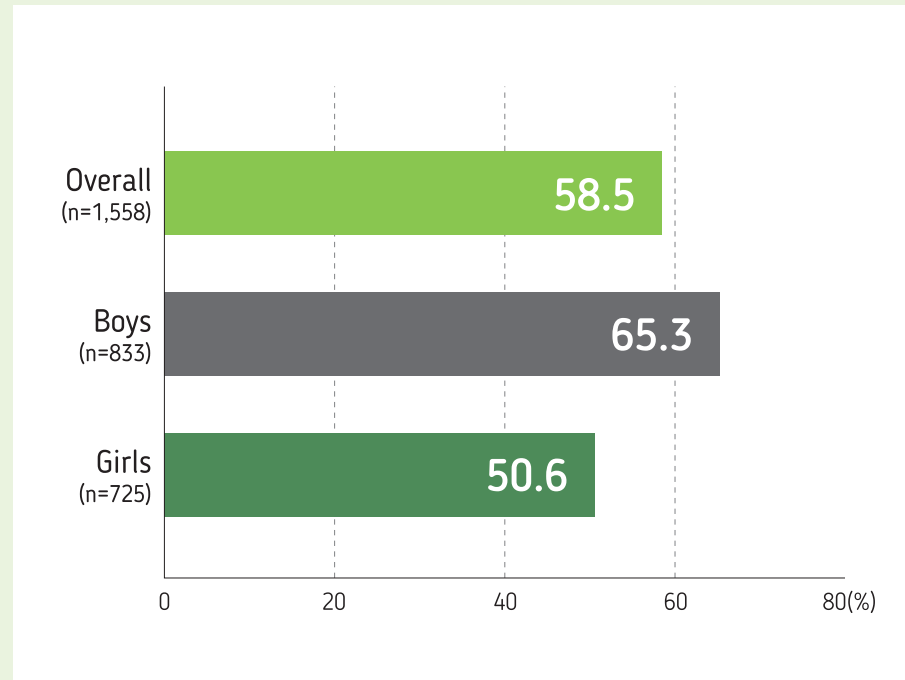
4-11 year olds (n=1,542)			12-21 year olds (n=1,366)		
Rank	Type of exercise / sport	%	Rank	Type of exercise / sport	%
1	Playing tag	47.3	1	Basketball	21.9
2	Swimming	34.2	2	Jogging/running	20.7
3	Bicycle riding	30.4	3	Soccer	20.4
	Dodgeball	30.4	4	Badminton	18.7
5	Swings	25.4	5	Muscle training	18.2
6	Soccer	24.3	6	Volleyball	15.6
7	Jump rope (including long jump rope)	22.2	7	Table tennis	14.4
8	Hide-and-peek	16.6	8	Baseball	13.7
9	Iron bar	16.2	9	Playing tag	13.3
10	Race	13.7	10	Walking	12.8
11	Badminton	9.5	11	Swimming	10.6
12	Baseball	9.1	12	Dodgeball	10.0
13	Basketball	8.9	13	Bowling	9.1
14	Catch	8.0	14	Soft tennis	8.5
15	Table tennis	5.4	15	Jump rope (including long jump rope)	7.8
16	Gymnastics (light gymnastics, morning radio calisthenics, etc.)	5.3	16	Catch	7.5
17	Scooter	5.2	17	Cycling	6.4
18	Unicycle	4.2	18	Tennis	6.2
19	Volleyball	3.8	19	Track & Field	5.0
20	Hip hop dance	3.5	20	Skiing	4.9
	Track & Field	3.5		Gymnastics (light gymnastics, morning radio calisthenics, etc.)	4.9

\*1) Types of exercise and sports carried out often: Type of exercise and/or sport carried out the most frequently among the exercises and sports carried out over the past year

Source: 2017 Sasakawa Sports Foundation National Sports-Life Survey of Children Ages 4 to 11 and National Sports-Life Survey of Ages 12 to 21

**Table 3** shows the top 20 types of exercises and sports carried out most frequently over the past year (highest number of times carried out). For 4-11 year olds, "playing tag" was the highest at **47.3%** followed by "swimming" at **34.2%** and "bicycle riding" and "dodgeball" both at **30.4%**. For 12-21 year olds, "basketball" was the highest at **21.9%** followed by "jogging/running" at **20.7%** and "soccer" at **20.4%**.

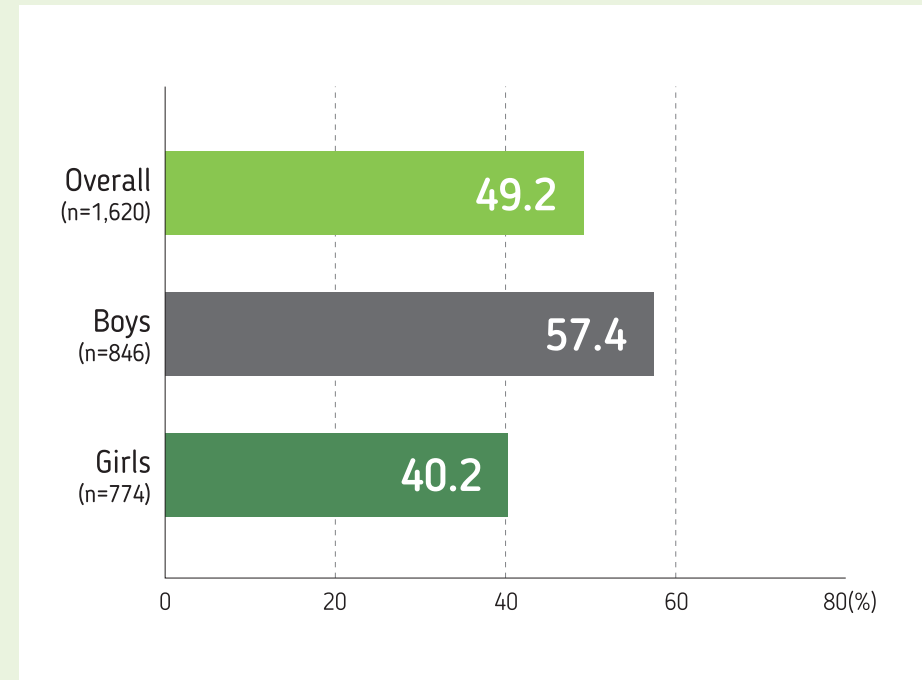
## ► 4-11 year olds

**Fig.3** Participation rate in sports teams / clubs  
(4-11 year olds: overall / by gender)

\*1) Including school club activities, sports teams, private sports teams/clubs (swimming, gymnastics, etc.), regional sports teams/clubs (youth sports team, regional sports classes, etc.)  
Source: 2017 Sasakawa Sports Foundation National Sports-Life Survey of Children Ages 4 to 11

**Fig.3** shows participation rate in sports teams/clubs of 4-11 year olds. The participation rate in sports teams/clubs of 4-11 year olds was **58.5%**. When looking at gender, the rate was **65.3%** for boys and **50.6%** for girls.

## ► 12-21 year olds

**Fig.4** Participation rate in sports teams / clubs  
(12-21 year olds: overall / by gender)

\*1) Including school club activities, sports teams, private sports teams/clubs (swimming, gymnastics, etc.), regional sports teams/clubs (youth sports team, regional sports classes, etc.)  
Source: 2017 Sasakawa Sports Foundation National Sports-Life Survey of Ages 12 to 21

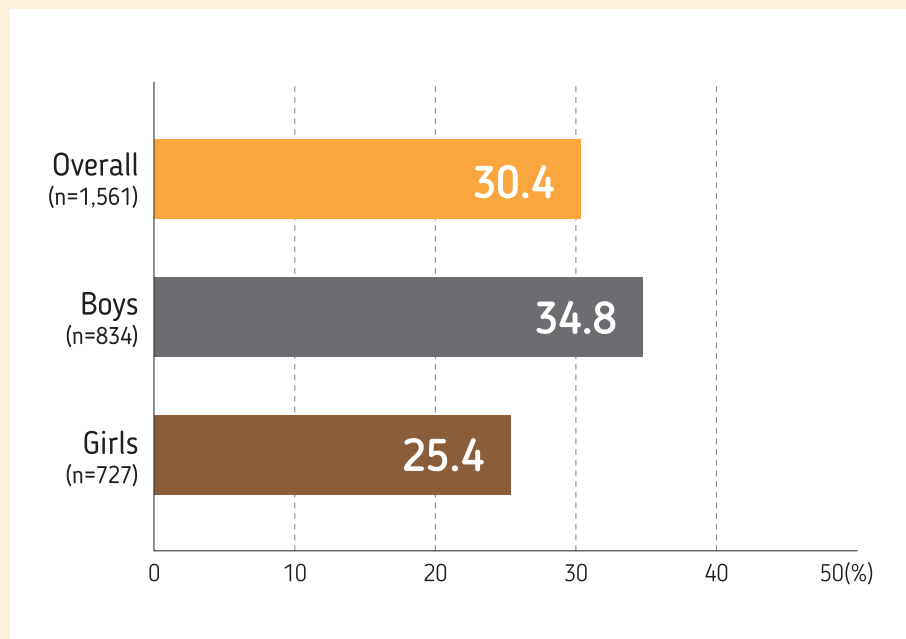
**Fig.4** shows participation rate in sports teams/clubs of 12-21 year olds. The participation rate in sports teams/clubs of 12-21 year olds was **49.2%**. When looking at gender, the rate was **57.4%** for boys and **40.2%** for girls.

## Sports spectating

## 1 Rate of live viewing of sports at the venue

## ► 4-11 year olds

**Fig.5** Rate of live viewing of sports at the venue  
(4-11 year olds: overall / by gender)

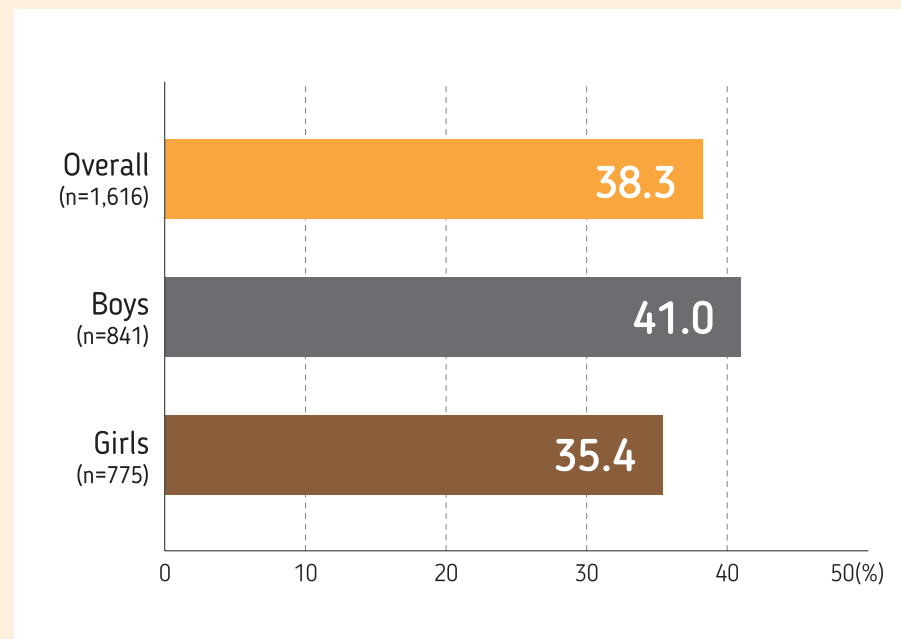


Source: 2017 Sasakawa Sports Foundation National Sports-Life Survey of Children Ages 4 to 11

**Fig.5** shows the rate of live viewing of sports at the venue for 4-11 year olds. The proportion of those who viewed sports at a place such as a gymnasium or stadium over the past year was **30.4%** on the whole. When looking at gender, the rate was **34.8%** for boys and **25.4%** for girls.

## ► 12-21 year olds

**Fig.6** Rate of live viewing of sports at the venue  
(12-21 year olds: overall / by gender)



Source: 2017 Sasakawa Sports Foundation National Sports-Life Survey of Ages 12 to 21

**Fig.6** shows the rate of live viewing of sports at the venue for 12-21 year olds. The proportion of those who viewed sports at a place such as a gymnasium or stadium over the past years was **38.3%** on the whole. When looking at gender, the rate was **41.0%** for boys and **35.4%** for girls.



## 2 Types of sports viewed live at the venue

### ► 4-11 year olds

**Table 4** Types of sports viewed live at the venue by 4-11 year olds (overall / by gender: multiple answers) (%)

Rank	Type of sport	Overall (n=1,561)	Boys (n=834)	Girls (n=727)
1	Professional baseball (NPB)	11.7	14.7	8.3
2	J League (J1, J2 and J3)	6.4	8.5	4.0
3	Professional golf	2.4	2.6	2.1
	Professional basketball ( B League, ) BJ League )	2.4	2.6	2.1
5	High school baseball	2.3	2.8	1.8
	Basketball ( high school, university, ) NBL, WJBL, etc. )	2.3	2.3	2.3
	I have not viewed sports live	69.6	65.2	74.6

Source: 2017 Sasakawa Sports Foundation National Sports-Life Survey of Children Ages 4 to 11

**Table 4** shows the types of sports viewed live at the venue by 4-11 year olds. The highest for 4-11 year olds was "professional baseball (NPB)" at **11.7%** following by "J League (J1, J2 and J3)" at **6.4%** and then "professional golf" and "professional basketball (B League, BJ League)" at **2.4%** each. When looking at gender, the highest rate for both boys and girls was "professional baseball (NPB)" (**14.7%** for boys and **8.3%** for girls).

### ► 12-21 year olds

**Table 5** Types of sports viewed live at the venue by 12-21 year olds (overall / by gender: multiple answers) (%)

Rank	Type of sport	Overall (n=1,616)	Boys (n=841)	Girls (n=775)
1	Professional baseball (NPB)	12.9	16.2	9.4
2	High school baseball	10.0	11.3	8.5
3	J League (J1, J2 and J3)	6.5	9.5	3.2
4	Soccer (high school, university, JFL, etc.)	5.2	6.3	4.0
5	Basketball ( high school, university, ) NBL, WJBL, etc. )	3.9	2.7	5.2
	I have not viewed sports live	61.7	59.0	64.6

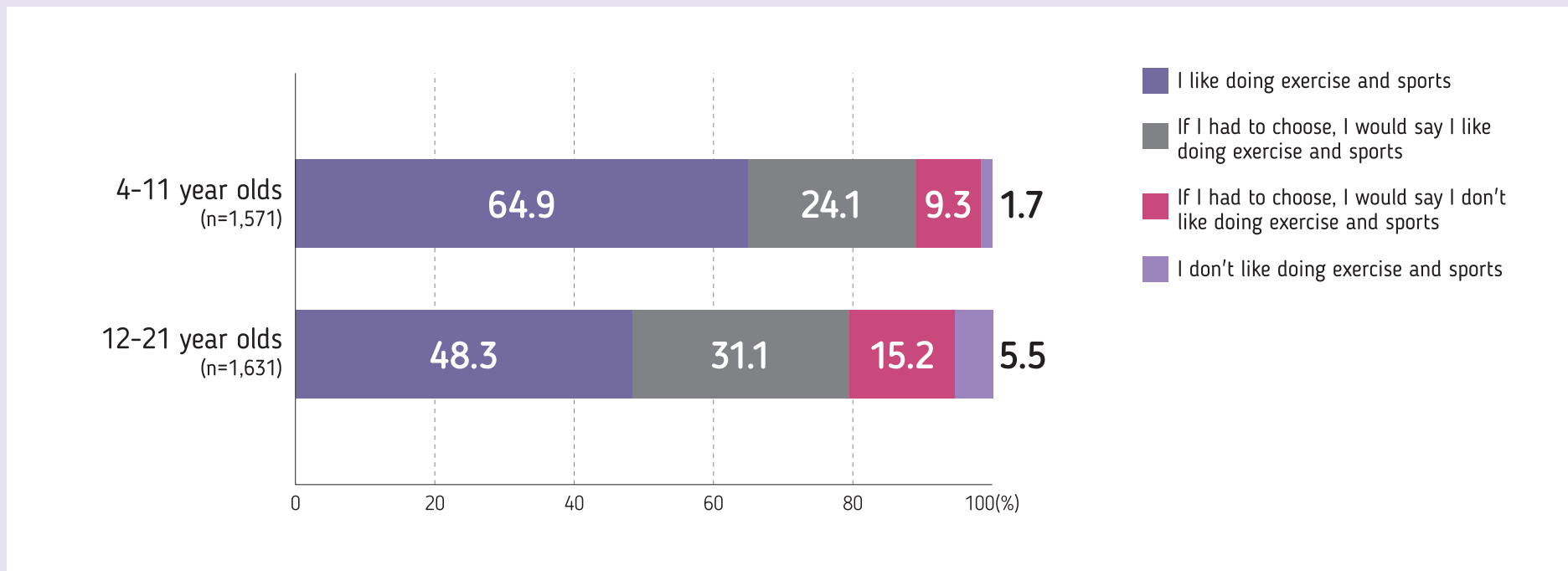
Source: 2017 Sasakawa Sports Foundation National Sports-Life Survey of Ages 12 to 21

**Table 5** shows the types of sports viewed live at the venue by 12-21 year olds. The highest for 12-21 year olds was "professional baseball (NPB)" at **12.9%** following by "high school baseball" at **10.0%** and "J League (J1, J2 and J3)" at **6.5%**. When looking at gender, the highest rate for both boys and girls was "professional baseball (NPB)" (**16.2%** for boys and **9.4%** for girls) followed by "high school baseball" (**11.3%** for boys and **8.5%** for girls).

# Liking exercise and sports

## ► 4-11 year olds / 12-21 year olds

**Fig.7** Liking exercise and sports



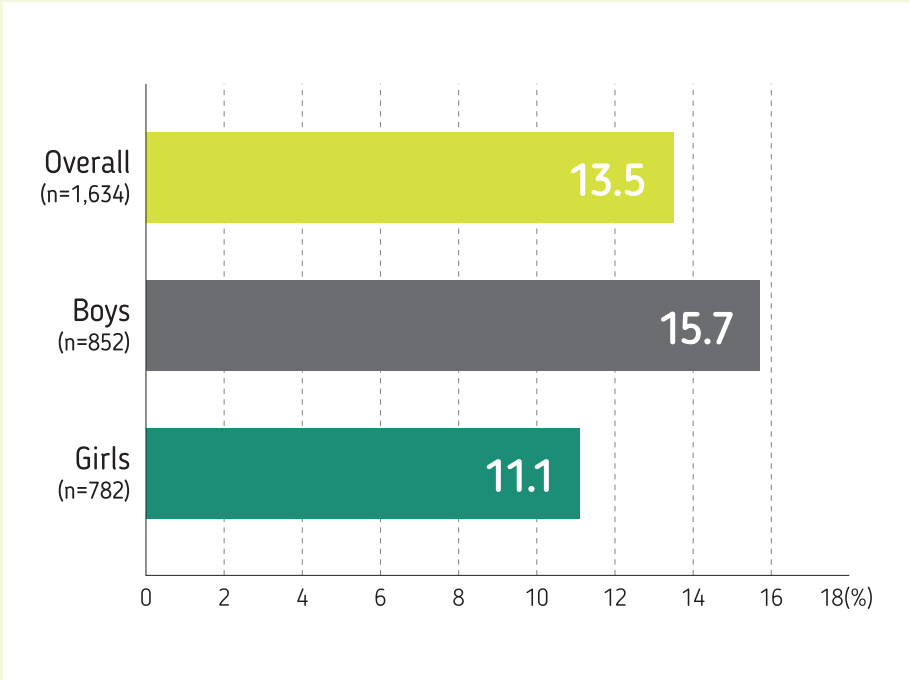
Source: 2017 Sasakawa Sports Foundation National Sports-Life Survey of Children 4-11, National Sports-Life Survey of Ages 12 to 21

**Fig.7** shows the proportion of liking exercise and sports. For 4-11 year olds, **64.9%** said that "they like doing exercise and sports," **24.1%** said that "if they had to choose, they would say they like doing exercise and sports," **9.3%** said that "if they had to choose, they would say they don't like doing exercise and sports" and **1.7%** said "they don't like doing exercise and sports".

For 12-21 year olds, **48.3%** said that "they like doing exercise and sports," **31.1%** said that "if they had to choose, they would say they like doing exercise and sports," **15.2%** said that "if they had to choose, they would say they don't like doing exercise and sports" and **5.5%** said "they don't like doing exercise and sports".

## ► 12-21 year olds

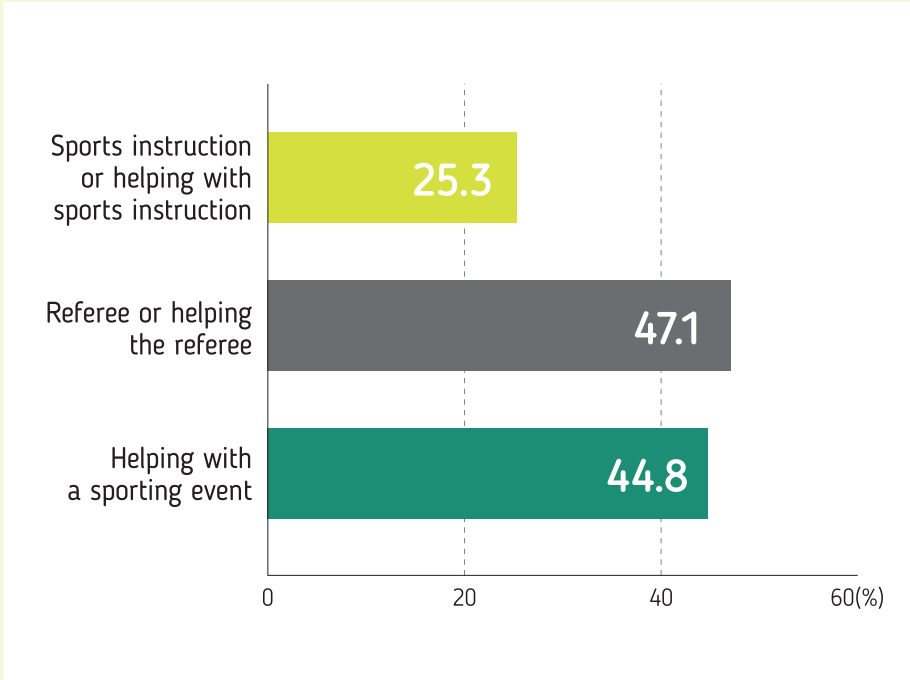
**Fig.8** Sports volunteer rate (12-21 year olds: overall / by gender)



Source: 2017 Sasakawa Sports Foundation National Sports-Life Survey of Ages 12 to 21

**Fig.8** shows the sports volunteer rate for 12-21 year olds. **13.5%** of participants carried out sports volunteer activities on the whole over the past year. When looking at gender, the sports volunteer rate was higher in boys at **15.7%** than in girls at **11.1%**.

**Fig.9** Sports volunteer activities (12-21 year olds)(n=221: Multiple answers)



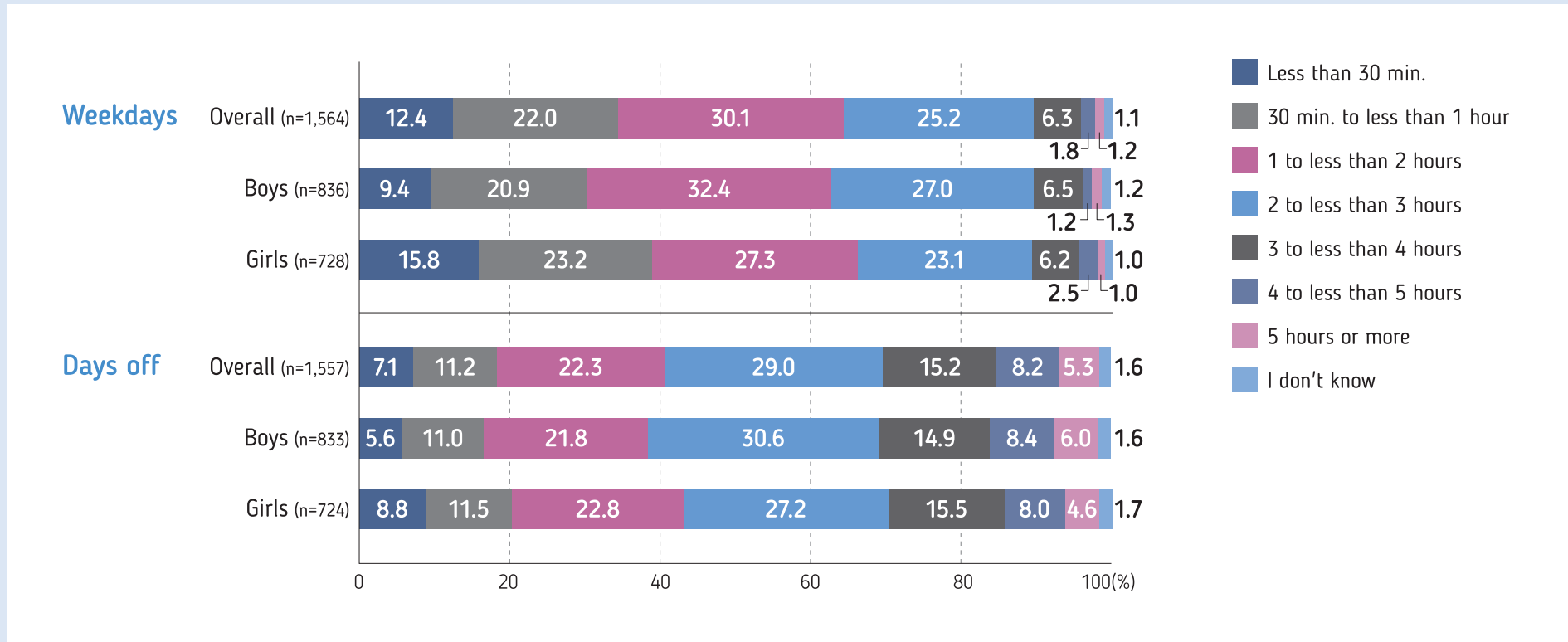
Source: 2017 Sasakawa Sports Foundation National Sports-Life Survey of Ages 12 to 21

When asked about what type of sports volunteer activities they carried out, **47.1%** responded "referee or helping the referee," **44.8%** said "helping with a sporting event" and **25.3%** said "sports instruction or helping with sports instruction" (**Fig.9**).

# Media usage time (screen time)

## ▶ 4-11 year olds

**Fig.10** Media usage time (4-11 year olds: overall / by gender)



\*1) Number of hours per day watching TV or DVD, using computer, video games (including TV, computer and cellular device games, etc.) or using smart phone per day outside of school class (including kindergarten and pre-school)

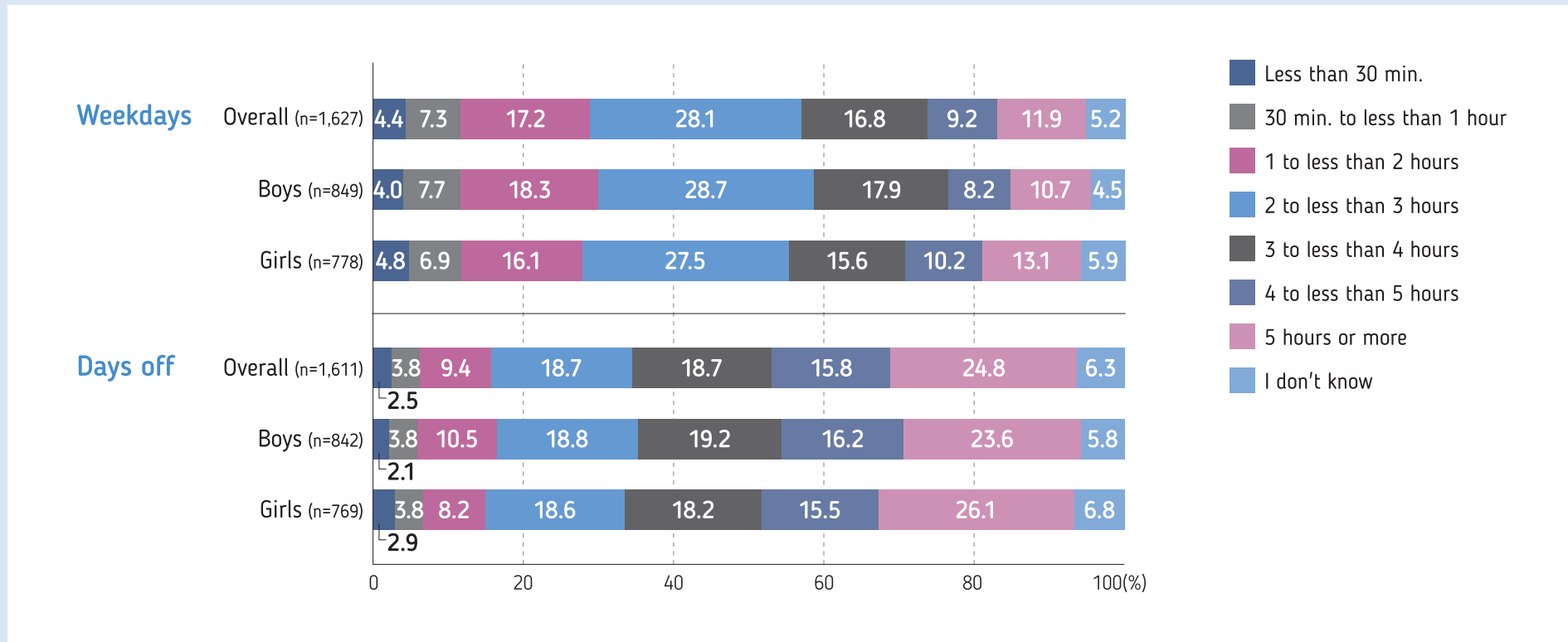
Source: 2017 Sasakawa Sports Foundation National Sports-Life Survey of Children Ages 4 to 11

**Fig.10** shows media usage time (screen time) on weekdays and holidays for 4-11 year olds. Media usage time per day for weekdays outside of school class (including kindergarten and pre-school) was highest for "1 to less than 2 hours"

at **30.1%** followed by "2 to less than 3 hours" a day at **25.2%**. On holidays, the highest was "2 to less than 3 hours" at **29.0%** followed by "1 to less than 2 hours" a day at **22.3%**.

► 12-21 year olds

**Fig.11** Media usage time (12-21 year olds: overall / by gender)



\*1) Number of hours per day watching TV or DVD, using computer, video games (including TV, computer and cellular device games, etc.) or using smart phone per day outside of school and/or work  
Source: 2017 Sasakawa Sports Foundation National Sports-Life Survey of Ages 12 to 21

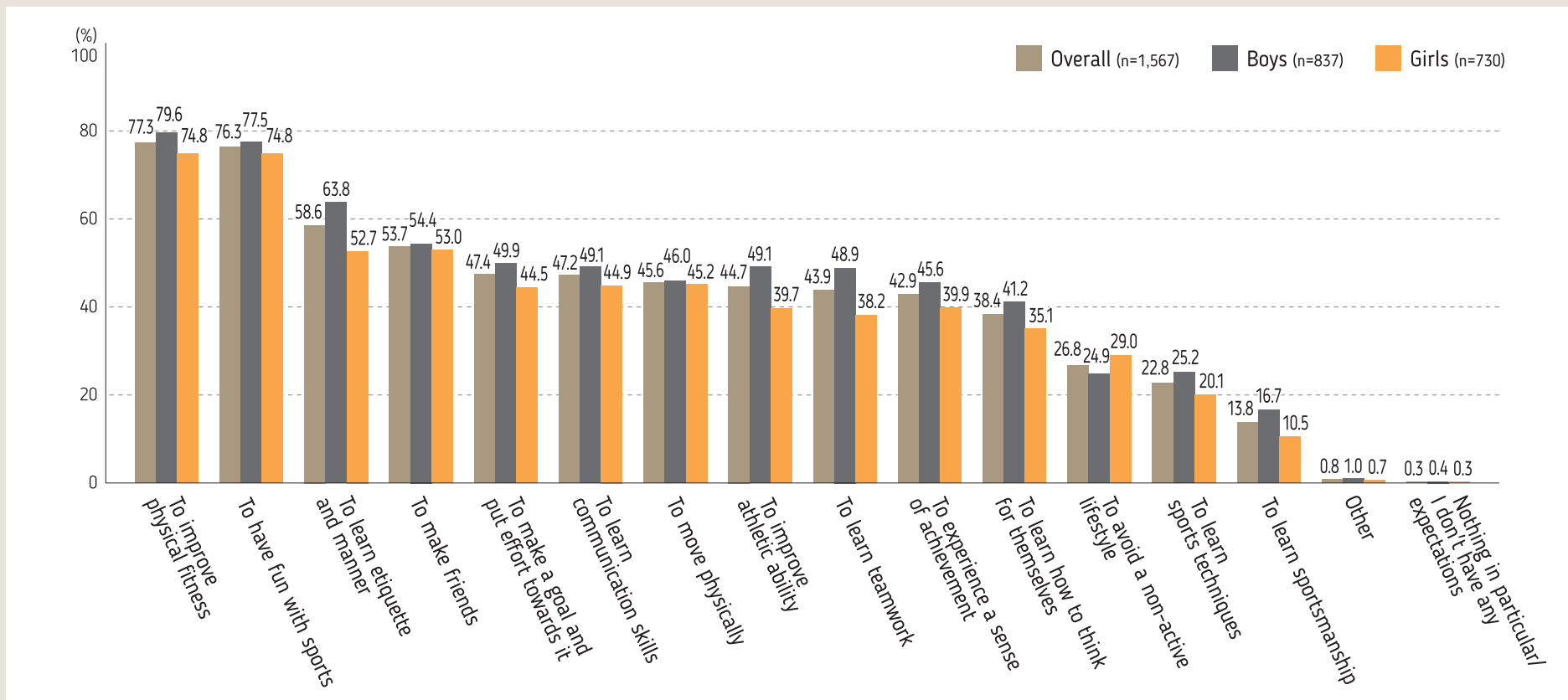
**Fig.11** shows media usage time (screen time) on weekdays and holidays for 12-21 year olds. Media usage time per day for weekdays outside of school and work was highest for "2 to less than 3 hours" a day at **28.1%** followed by "1 to

less than 2 hours" at **17.2%**. On holidays, the highest was "5 hours or more" at **24.8%** showing an increase in the percentage of those who use media for a long time on holidays compared to weekdays.

# Parent's expectations towards child doing exercise and sports

## ► 4-11 year olds

**Fig.12** Parent's expectations towards child doing exercise and sports (4-11 year olds) (overall / by gender of child: multiple answers)



Source: 2017 Sasakawa Sports Foundation National Sports-Life Survey of Children Ages 4 to 11

**Fig.12** and **Fig.13** show parent's expectations towards child doing exercise and sports.

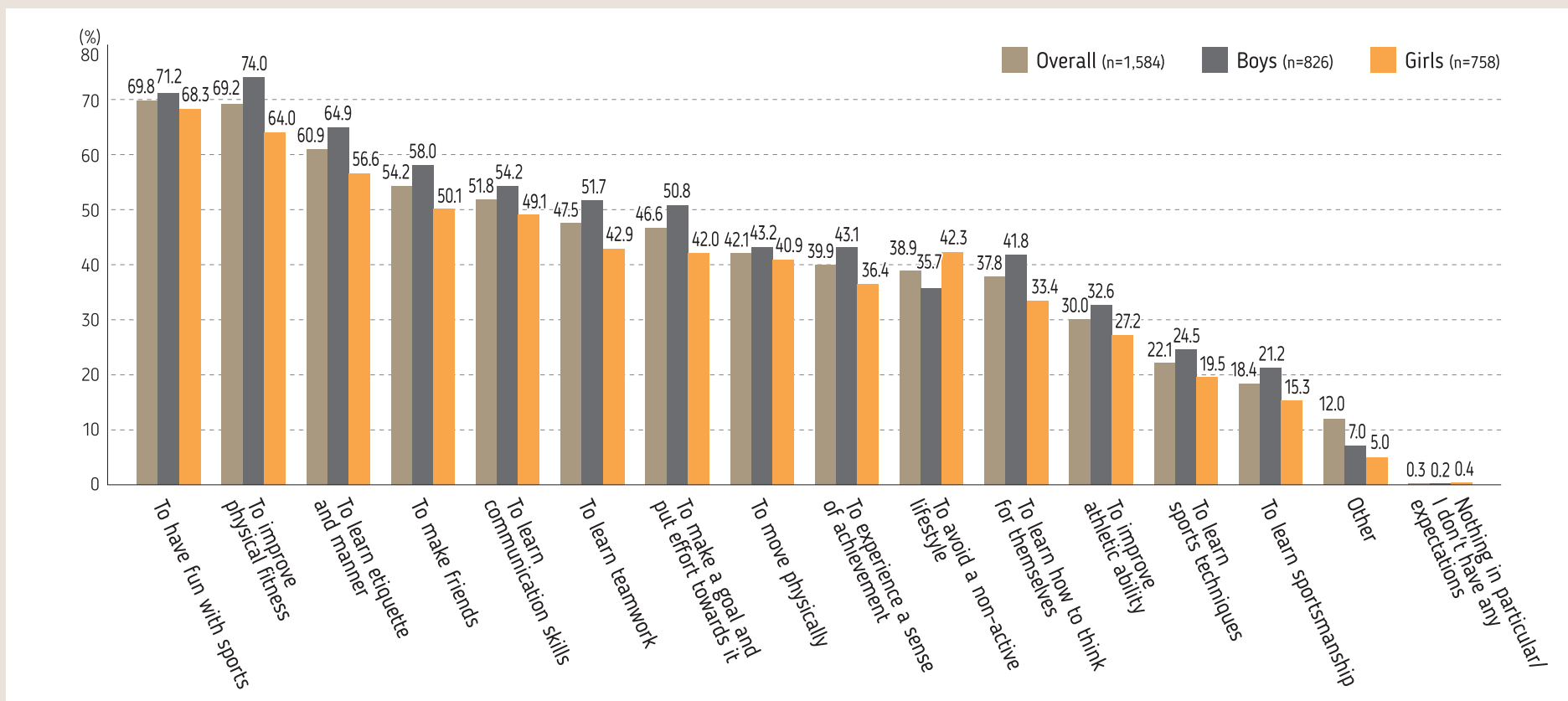
Parents were asked "What are your expectations towards your child doing (starting) exercise and/or sports?"

For 4-11 year olds, the most common response overall was "to improve physical fitness" at **77.3%** which was followed by "to have fun with sports" at **76.3%**, "to learn etiquette and manner" at **58.6%** and "to make friends" at **53.7%**.

# Parent's expectations towards child doing exercise and sports

► 12-21 year olds

**Fig.13** Parent's expectations towards child doing exercise and sports (12-21 year olds) (overall / by gender of child: multiple answers)



Source: 2017 Sasakawa Sports Foundation National Sports-Life Survey of Ages 12 to 21

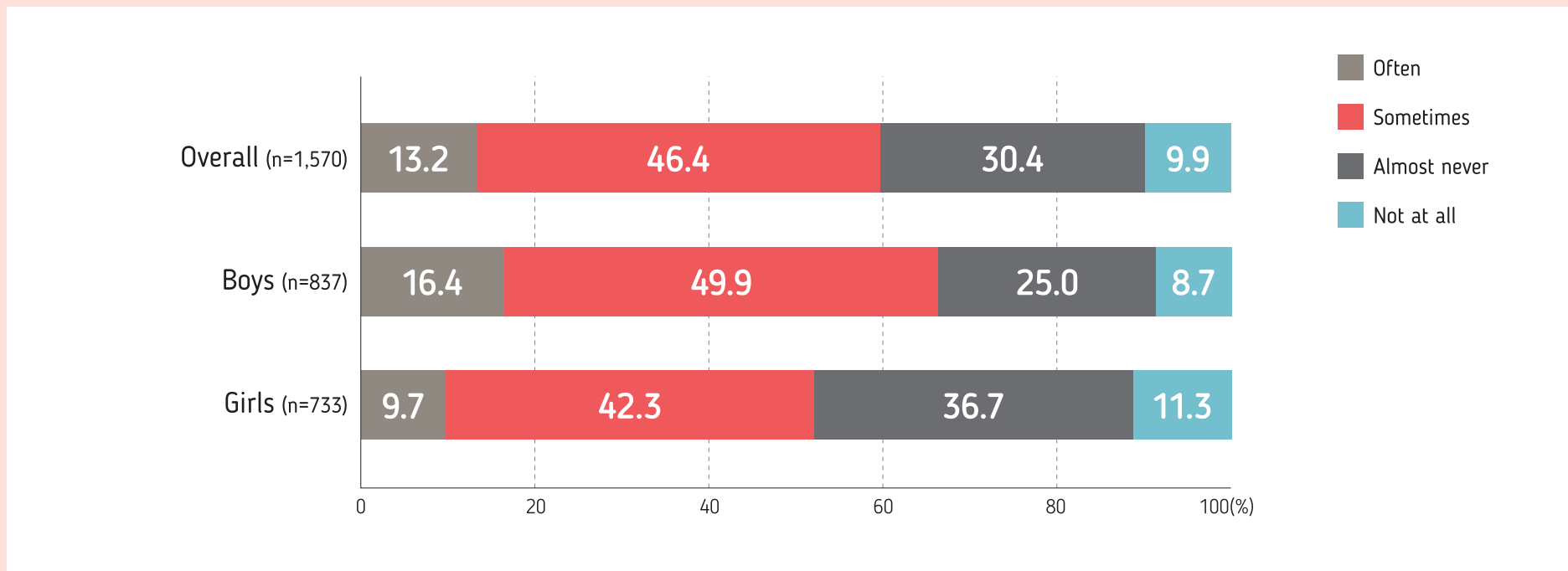
For 12-21 year olds, the most common response overall was "to have fun with sports" at **69.8%** which was followed by "to improve physical fitness" at **69.2%**,

"to learn etiquette and manner" at **60.9%**, "to make friends" at **54.2%** and "to learn communication skills" at **51.8%**.

# Exercise, sports and physical play with family

## ► 4-11 year olds

**Fig.14** Exercise, sports and physical play with family (4-11 year olds) (overall / by gender of child)



\*1) Exercise and sports: Including physical playing

\*2) Family: Excluding brothers and sisters

Source: 2017 Sasakawa Sports Foundation National Sports-Life Survey of Children Ages 4 to 11

**Fig.14** shows the exercise, sports and physical play with family (4-11 year olds). Parents of respondents 4-11 year olds were asked the question "Does the child asked to do the survey, regularly do exercise, sports or physical playing with family including you?"

Overall, **13.2%** answered "often," **46.4%** answered "sometimes," **30.4%** answered "almost never" and **9.9%** answered "not at all" showing that **60%** of

children 4-11 year olds carry out exercise, sports or physical playing with their family.

When looking at the gender of the child, the proportion combining "often" and "sometimes" was **66.3%** for boys and **52.0%** for girls with boys being **14.3points** higher than girls.



## About SSF Towards the Realization of "Sport for Everyone"

The Sasakawa Sports Foundation (SSF) was established in March 1991.

Since the establishment, SSF has implemented a wide range of activities such as survey research, grant programs, and international cultural exchange in order to promote the enjoyment of sports by "anyone, anytime, anywhere."

As Japan has faced the declining birthrate and the aging society, the public awareness about the importance of sports and healthy lifestyles has increased. Despite this fact, over the past ten years, the number of people who are unaccustomed to playing sports has remained steady at five out of ten. SSF believes that it is our responsibility to change this shocking statistic while helping create a healthy, dynamic environment for everyone, the mission of SSF.

The first decade of the 21st century has now gone and we have begun to see a push toward new sports policies by the government. SSF celebrated its 20th anniversary amid the ongoing changes, and has decided to enhance the research function, which compiles and analyzes a wide variety of survey data. We are thus able to proactively propose governmental policy on local and national levels and propose programs to sports organizations. In addition, we are also able to develop and implement programs that embody our vision of sports in the future.

SSF will continue promoting the firm establishment of "Sport for Everyone," a philosophy that aims to create a happier, healthier society, with the ultimate goal of enriching the athletic lives of each individual and creating an environment in which people can continue enjoying sports in their own ways.

**Kazutoshi Watanabe, President**  
Sasakawa Sports Foundation



### **1 Research and surveys**

The Institute of Sports Policy, established in SSF carries out fact-finding surveys, case studies and empirical research in the three fields of "sports policy," "community-building through sports" and "promotion of sports among children and youth."

The institute gathers and analyses quantitative data and advanced cases in the country as well as overseas, which are essential for the national government and local governments to draft sports policy and for various organizations to plan sports promotion programs. SSF proactively makes proposals for policies to governments and for plans to sports organizations, based on evidence obtained from the research and survey.

### **2 Research grants and human resource development**

#### **Research grants**

The Sasakawa sports research grants program aims to support prominent research in the fields of the humanities and social science that contributes to the promotion of sports in the country.

Under this program, SSF aims to encourage debate on sports policy in Japan, and to nurture young researchers who will carry the future of the next generation.

#### **Sport Policy for Japan**

SSF contributes to foster leaders who will direct the future of the promotion of sports in the country by supervising the program called "Sport Policy for Japan." This program provides students who are studying sports with exchanging ideas each other and publishing their research results.

### **3 Collaboration with local governments**

SSF promotes a nationwide sport program, which aims to encourage people to participate in sports and physical activities, called Challenge Day. In this program, municipal communities with similar size of populations compete over the percentage of their residents who did some kind of sports and physical activities for a minimum of fifteen minutes on the last Wednesday of May. Through Challenge Day, SSF is able to forge closer links with local governments and other organizations, and to verify that sports are beneficial in building local communities and promoting relationships between people of different generations, and to propose a system in which individual residents can enjoy sports in their communities.

Furthermore, in collaboration with local governments who participate in Challenge Day and with other local governments nationwide, SSF draws up sports promotion plans for local communities and offers the results of its surveys and research.

### **4 Public relations**

SSF disseminates the information about its initiatives as described above, and releases the latest sports information in the country and overseas that is beneficial for sports policy research, using its official website, social media, at symposiums, seminars, and international conferences.

As part of its public relations activities, SSF publishes the results of the National Sport and Lifestyle Survey, which is biannually conducted to understand the state of participation and involvement in sports by Japanese, by means of a report called the SSF National Sports-Life Survey. SSF also brings out and extensively distributes Sport White Paper, in which the latest data in the country and overseas is printed.



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**Date** 31 Dec. 2017  
**Produced by** Kazutoshi Watanabe  
**Published by** Sasakawa Sports Foundation  
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**Printed by** Nihon Publicity Co.,Ltd.  
**Cover Designed by** Junko Fukuchi

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**SPORT FOR**  
**every**  
**one**

2017

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