

May 15th, 2024

Research Center for Youth Education,
National Institution for Youth Education

Survey on Experiential Activities of Youth (FY2022 Survey)
--Decreasing Experiential Activities, How They Spend Their After-school hours and
Weekends--

The National Institute for Youth Education has been conducting a nationwide survey on the actual conditions of young people's experiences in nature, daily life, habits, and their awareness of independence since the fiscal year 2006. We have recently compiled the results of the latest survey (conducted in the fiscal year 2022) and would like to report them to you.

Key findings of the Survey:

1. While parents wish for their children to spend their after-school hours and weekends actively, there is a tendency for young people to prefer spending their time relaxing at home.
2. Both in households with an annual income below 2 million yen and those with an annual income above 12 million yen, there is a tendency for young people to have low satisfaction with how they spend their after-school hours and weekends.
3. Young people are not experiencing as many activities as they or their parents would like.
4. Compared to 2019, experiential activities for youth have decreased following the COVID-19 pandemic.
5. About 40% of young people aspire to be like a famous person, which is the most common response. However, the percentage of those who do not have an adult they want to emulate increases with grade level, reaching around 30% among high school students.

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Summary of Discussion

The Examination of "Independence" and Its Relationship with Experiences in This Survey

**Hiroshi OYAMA, Researcher
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Reflecting on the concept of "independence" as it has been understood since the 2006 survey, we examined the relationship between independence and experiences based on the characteristics of "independence" in this survey. The features of "independence" in this survey include the following four items: "I have anxiety about my future," which asks about one's image of the future; "I have thought about or researched why rules exist," "I have questioned or discussed unreasonable rules," and "I believe I can change society with my own power," which relate to the perspective of social participation through proactive approaches to the surrounding environment. The result of the analysis of the relationship between these items and the abundance of experiences showed that while the abundance of experiences was shown to lead to a better approach to the surrounding environment, it may not lead to a reduction in anxiety about the future. The impact of future anxiety on the independence of young people and the factors related to alleviating anxiety remain subjects for future investigation.

Factors Related to Mental Health in Youth: Focusing on After-School and Weekend Activities

**Kosuke YANO, Researcher
Research Center for Youth Education**

The relationship between after-school and weekend activities and mental health was investigated for elementary, middle, and high school students, considering the effects of each activity, as well as factors such as gender and economic status. The analysis revealed the following associations with higher levels of mental health:

- For elementary and middle school students: "watching TV or listening to music" and "attending extracurricular classes."
- For elementary and high school students: "engaging in volunteer activities."
- For high school students: "having a part-time job."

Additionally, regardless of age, activities such as "resting or sleeping," "studying," "playing with friends," "exercising or playing sports," "doing housework or taking care of family," and "engaging in outdoor activities like camping or hiking" were associated with higher mental health levels.

Moreover, satisfaction with after-school and weekend activities was related to mental health. Therefore, not only engaging in the aforementioned activities but also being satisfied with them is considered an important factor.

The Role of the Community as Seen Through Children's After-School and Weekend Activities

**Fuyuko KANEFUJI, Professor
Department of Human Sciences, Bunkyo University**

This section aims to elucidate the actual state of children's after-school and weekend experiential activities and to identify which types of these activities contribute to the development of children's independent behavior habits. The analysis revealed that the desired after-school and weekend activities for children showed considerable similarity regardless of their school age. Particularly high were children's desires to participate in nature experiences such as mountain, river, and sea activities, and stargazing and bird watching, as well as social experiences such as local festivals, volunteering, and job experiences.

Analyzing the relationship between the content of experiential activities and children's independent behavior habits indicated that for elementary and middle school students, all five types of experiences—nature, social, cultural arts, exchange, and exploratory learning—were effective in fostering independent behavior habits. For high school students, a significant correlation was found particularly with social, cultural arts, exchange, and exploratory learning experiences. Since these activities can be realized through collaboration and cooperation with the community, there is a need for further promotion and expansion of opportunities for such experiences.

*Please note that the full discussion is available on p. 118- of the report.

Overview of the Survey

In the 2022 survey, the actual conditions of youth experiences with nature, life habits like early to bed, early to rise, and breakfast habits were examined. The data from 2022 was compared with data spanning 17 years from 2005 to 2022 and 10 years from 2012 to 2022, adjusted to the start year of each survey item.

Additionally, the survey analyzed parents' participation in events organized by public institutions, children's nature activities with family or friends, attitudes towards nature activities, parenting practices, and parents' own experiences with nature. The relationship between indicators of youth autonomous behavioral habits ("independence," "positivity," "cooperativeness") and experiential activities like nature experiences, life experiences, and cultural and artistic experiences were also analyzed. Similarly, the relationship between "independence," "positivity," "cooperativeness" and indicators of fatigue and mental health was examined.

Furthermore, the survey looked at the relationship between how youth spend their time after school and on holidays, indicators of fatigue and mental health, and household income. It also focused on parental behavior and the home environment to analyze the relationship between youth experiences, parents' childhood nature experiences, parenting practices, household income, and education expenses.

(1) Purpose of the Survey

This nationwide survey was conducted to understand the actual conditions of experiential activities for youth and awareness of independence to provide basic data that will assist in planning and managing projects conducted by youth education stakeholders,

(2) Survey Content

1. Youth Survey

- Actual conditions of nature, life, and social experiences, and household chores
- Out-of-school experiential activities and cultural and artistic experiences over a year
- Actual conditions of life habits and daily life

- Autonomous behavioral habits, awareness of social participation, and future self-awareness
- How to spend after school and on holidays
- Usage trends and awareness of smartphones and SNS (Social Networking Service)
- Role models and subjective economic status, etc.

2. Parent Survey

- Participation in events organized by public institutions and reasons for non-participation
- Attitudes towards children's nature activities
- Actual conditions of parents' parenting and educational practices
- Parents' nature experiences
- Children's after-school and holiday activities
- Household income and children's education expenses, etc.

(3) Survey Subjects

- Parents of 1st to 3rd-grade students at public elementary schools nationwide
- 4th to 6th-grade students and their parents at public elementary schools nationwide
- 2nd-year (8th grade) students at public junior high schools nationwide
- 2nd-year (11th grade) students at public full-time high schools nationwide

(4) Survey Implementation Period

January to March 2023

(5) Collection Numbers

配布数				回収数						
学校種別	学年	学校数 ^①	在籍児童・生徒数 ^②	学校数		調査票				組数 ^d
		配布数				子供用		保護者用		
				回収数 ^③	回収率 ^a	回収数 ^④	回収率 ^b	回収数 ^⑤	回収率 ^c	
小学校	1年	100	2,864	97	97.0%	***	***	2,262	79.0%	***
	2年	100	2,820	97	97.0%	***	***	2,321	82.3%	***
	3年	100	2,885	94	94.0%	***	***	2,279	79.0%	***
	4年	99	2,852	98	99.0%	2,369	83.1%	2,362	82.8%	2,309
	5年	99	3,032	96	97.0%	2,414	79.6%	2,410	79.5%	2,358
	6年	102	3,037	99	97.1%	2,413	79.5%	2,403	79.1%	2,353
中学校	2年	150	5,122	133	88.7%	3,956	77.2%	***	***	***
高等学校	2年	150	5,352	137	91.3%	4,546	84.9%	***	***	***
計		900	27,964	851	94.6%	15,698	80.9%	14,037	80.3%	

Distribution: The number of schools to which questionnaires were distributed, including one school each for 4th and 5th-grade sample schools, with a survey conducted for 6th-grade students

Collection rate a: $\textcircled{3} \div \textcircled{1} \times 100$

Collection rate b: $\textcircled{4} \div \textcircled{2} \times 100$

Collection rate c: $\textcircled{5} \div \textcircled{2} \times 100$

Group number d: The number of collected questionnaires where both child and parent questionnaires were recovered from the same household

Note: Parents answered for 1st to 3rd graders, and both students and parents answered for 4th to 6th graders. Therefore, the answers for 4th to 6th graders include responses from both children and parents. Detailed information is included in the report.

Summary of Survey Results

1. Parents prefer their children to spend time actively after school and on holidays, while youth tend to prefer relaxing at home.

- The importance of experiential activities in youth education has increased ("Declaration to Promote Children's Experiential Activities," by Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (June, 2022)); and "General Principles of Child -Related Measures," by Children and Families Agency (December 2023)).
- Considering the diversification of ways to spend time outside of school, the survey focused on how time is spent after school and on holidays.

(1) Youth prefer watching TV, listening to music, playing games, and resting after school and on holidays, while parents wish their children would engage in sports and play with friends.

- Youth preferences for spending free time after school and on holidays include "watching TV and listening to music" and "using the internet for videos or SNS." The proportion choosing these options increases from 4th graders to junior high students but decreases slightly for high school students.
- The proportion choosing "playing games," "taking care of family member and doing household chores," or "attending enrichment lessons" decreases with higher grades, while "resting or sleeping" increases.
- High school students have a 10-point lower preference for "doing sports" compared to other grades (Figure 1).

- Parents of elementary school students prefer "doing sports" and "playing with friends" for their children.
- Parents' preferences for "doing sports" and "outdoor activities like camping or mountain climbing" are higher, while preferences for "watching TV, listening to music," "playing games," and "using the internet for videos or SNS" are lower compared to youths' preferences (Figure 2).

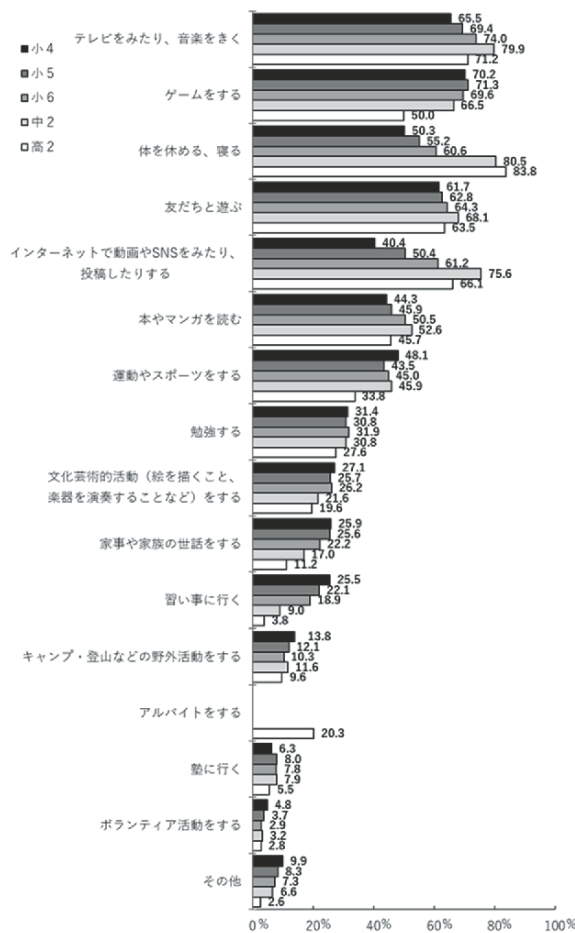


Figure 1 Students' Preference How to Spend After School and on Holidays (by grade)

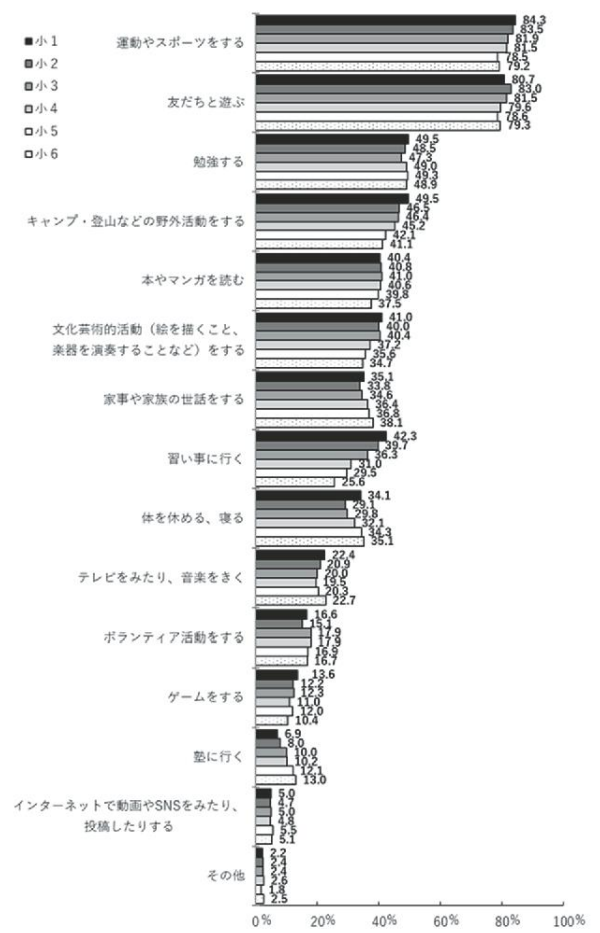


Figure 2 Parents' Preference How to Spend After School and Holidays (Parents of elementary school students, by grade)

(2) Both after-school and holiday satisfaction decrease with higher grades.

- The combined proportion of "very satisfied" and "somewhat satisfied" decreases with grades for both after-school and holiday satisfaction, with holiday satisfaction (79.0%) being higher than after-school satisfaction (68.2%).

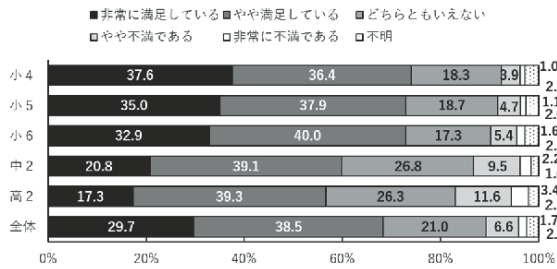


Figure 3: Satisfaction of How to Spend After School (4th-6th Grade, 8th Grade, 11th Grade)

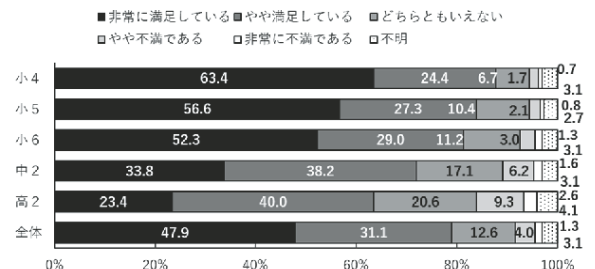
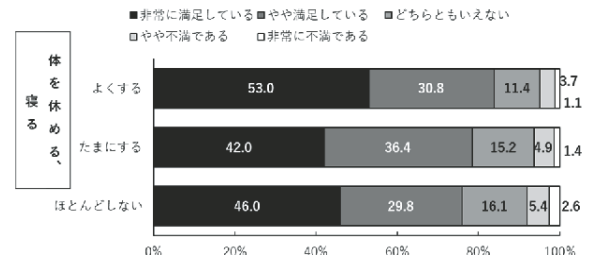
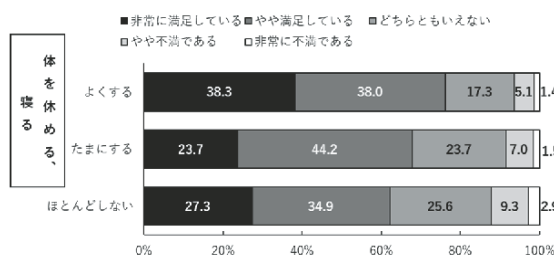


Figure 4: Satisfaction of How to Spend on Holidays (4th-6th Grade, 8th Grade, 11th Grade)

(3) Youth who frequently watch videos or use SNS are less satisfied with their after-school and holiday activities.

- Cross-tabulation of satisfaction with after-school and holiday activities with the type of activity showed that respondents who frequently "rest or sleep," "watch TV or listen to music," "read books or comics," "study," "play games," "play with friends," "attend enrichment lessons," "do sports," "do volunteer activities," "do household chores," "engage in outdoor activities like camping or mountain climbing," or "work part-time" (for high school students) tend to have higher satisfaction. In contrast, those who frequently "watch videos or use SNS" tend to have lower satisfaction.



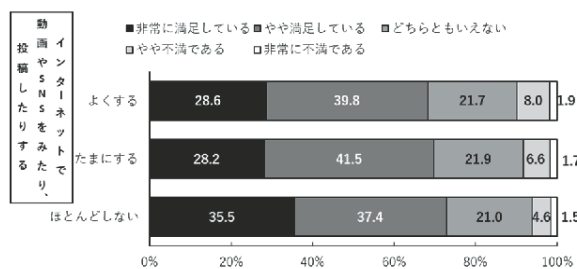


Figure 5: Relationship between How to Spend After School and its Satisfaction (4th-6th Grade, 8th Grade, 11th Grade, Excerpt)

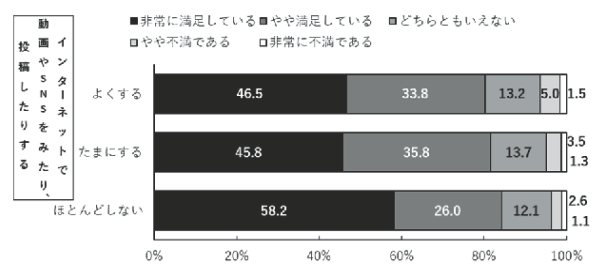


Figure 6: Relationship between How to Spend on Holidays and its Satisfaction (4th-6th Grade, 8th Grade, 11th Grade, Excerpt)

Moreover, over 80% of young people study after school, rest their bodies on holidays, and spend time sleeping. They also spend their after-school and holiday time watching TV and listening to music (Figures 7 and 8).

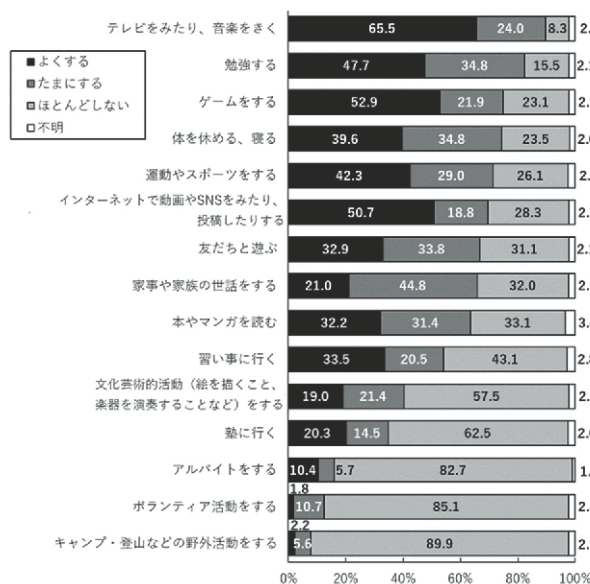


Figure 7: Details of How to Spend After School (4th-6th Grade, 8th Grade, 11th Grade)

Note: Only 11th grade students responded to the question of if they work part-time.

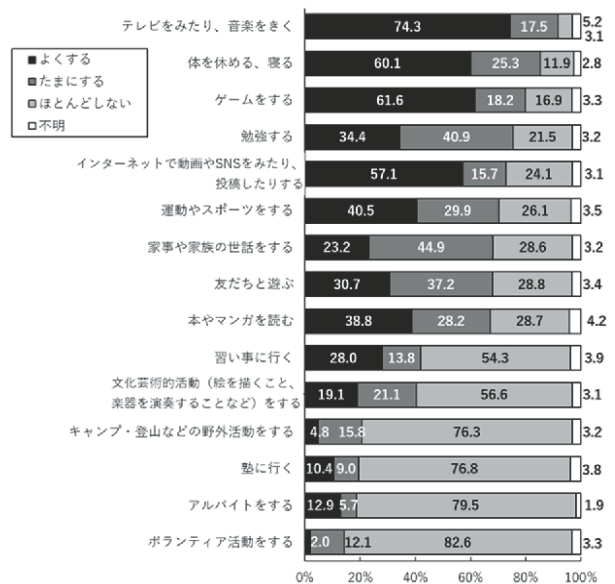


Figure 8: Details of How to Spend on Holidays (4th-6th Grade, 8th Grade, 11th Grade)

Note: Only 11th grade students responded to the question of if they work part-time

2. Among youth of both households with incomes below 2 million yen and above 12 million yen show lower satisfaction with after-school and holiday activities.

- The proportion of elementary school students who are "very satisfied" or "somewhat satisfied" with after-school activities is roughly the same

(75.4%-77.6%) for household incomes from "2 million yen to less than 4 million yen" to "10 million yen to less than 12 million yen," followed by "over 12 million yen" (70.0%) and "under 2 million yen" (69.3%).

- The proportion of satisfaction with holiday activities is roughly the same (86.4%-88.5%) for household incomes from "under 2 million yen" to "10 million yen to less than 12 million yen," with the lowest satisfaction for "over 12 million yen" (80.9%).

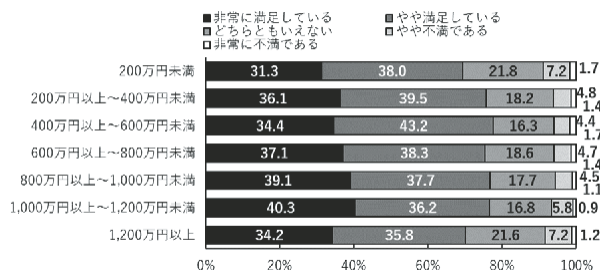


Figure 9: Satisfaction on How to Spend After School by Annual Income of the Households (4th-6th Grade)

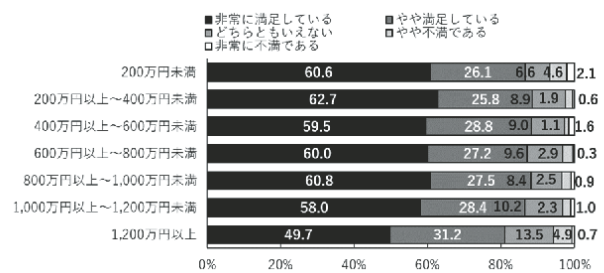


Figure 10: Satisfaction on How to Spend Holidays by Annual Income of the Households (4th-6th Grade)

3. Youth are not able to experience as much as their parents or themselves would like.

- Comparison of "actual experiences" and "desired experiences" outside of school over the year to examine whether youth can engage in their desired experiences.
- Parents' responses about "desired experiences" for their children were compared with the actual experiences of youth (Figure 11 and 12).

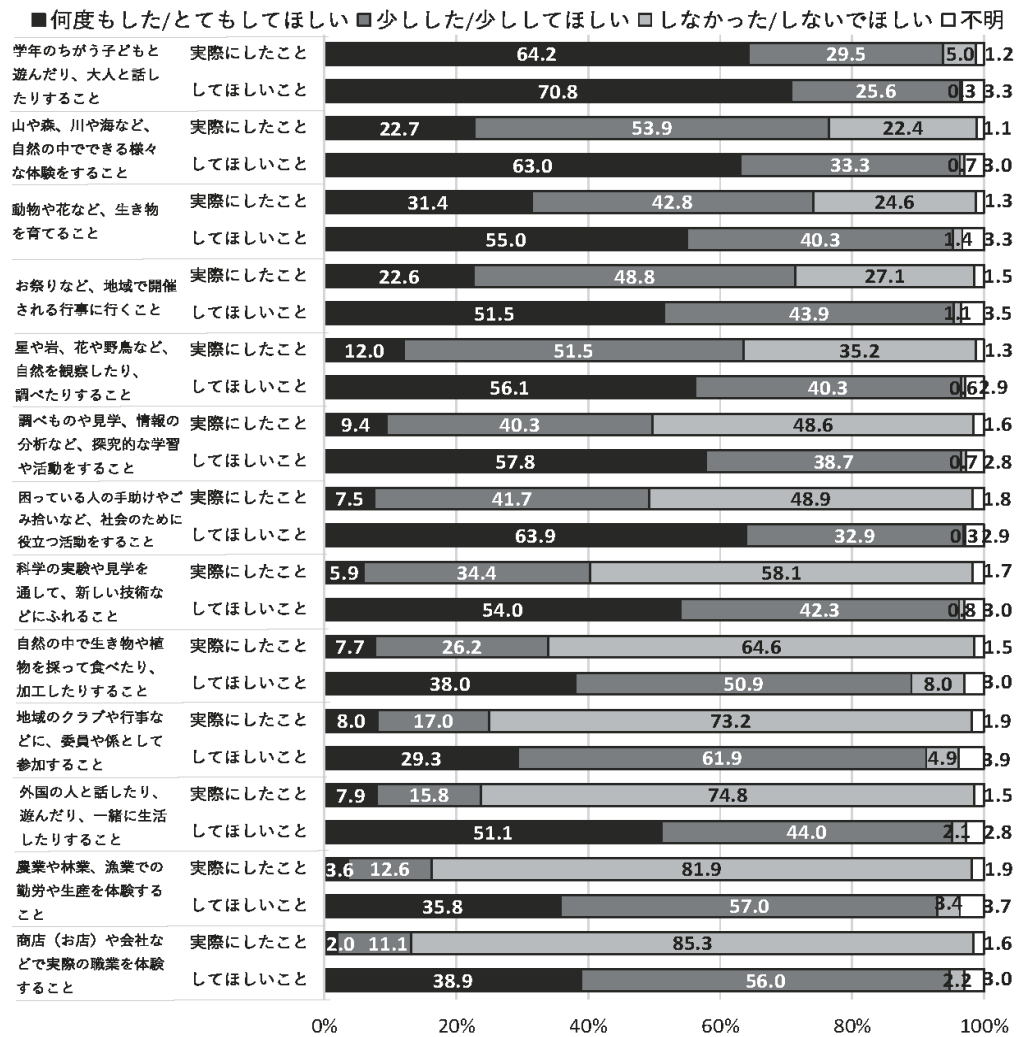


Figure 11: Comparison of "actual experiences" and "desired experiences" outside of school over the year by Parent/Guardian of elementary school students

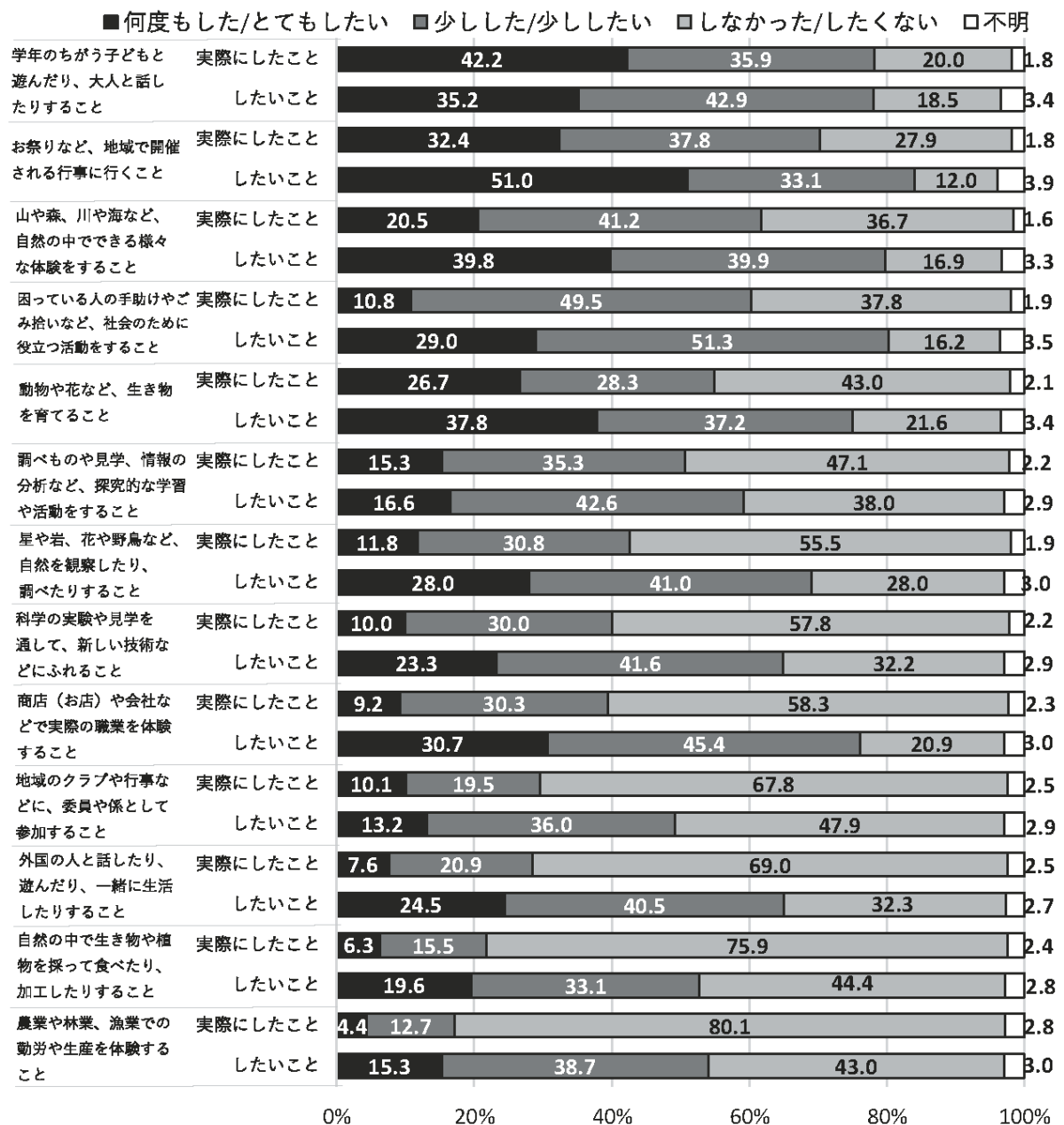


Figure 12: Comparison of "actual activities" and "desired activities" outside of school over the year by 8th and 11th grade students

The proportion of elementary school parents who responded that they "very much want" or "somewhat want" their children to engage in certain activities was over 90% for 12 out of 13 items, while the proportion who answered "do not want" was less than 10% for each question. The percentage of elementary school parents who wanted their children to experience certain activities was higher than the percentage of middle and high school students who actually did those activities, indicating that the

students did not have as many experiences as their parents wished. Particularly for middle and high school students, there was a significant gap between the desire to experience activities such as "working and producing in agriculture, forestry, or fisheries," "experiencing actual jobs in stores or companies," and "interacting, playing, or living together with foreign people," and the actual participation in these activities.

4. Compared to the first year of the Reiwa era (2019), youth experiential activities have decreased following the COVID-19 pandemic.

(1) Throughout the 2010s, there was a slight decline in children's experiences with nature, and this decline further continued into the fourth year of the Reiwa era following the COVID-19 pandemic. [Nature Experiences]

We compared the total scores of nature experiences over the ten years from 2012 (Heisei 24) to 2022 (Reiwa 4) (Figure 13). Throughout the 2010s, starting from 2012, there was a declining trend in the proportions of "many" and "somewhat many" nature experiences. In 2022, after the COVID-19 pandemic, the combined proportion of "many" and "somewhat many" was 33.8%, a decrease from 38.7% in the first year of the Reiwa era (2019). The percentages of respondents who answered "many times" or "a few times" for nature experiences such as "swimming in the sea or river," "catching insects like butterflies, dragonflies, or grasshoppers," "collecting shells or fishing in the sea or river," "camping," "climbing a large tree," and "climbing a high mountain without using a ropeway or lift" showed a slight decrease from 2012 to 2019, but these activities further decreased in 2022 (Figures 14-17).

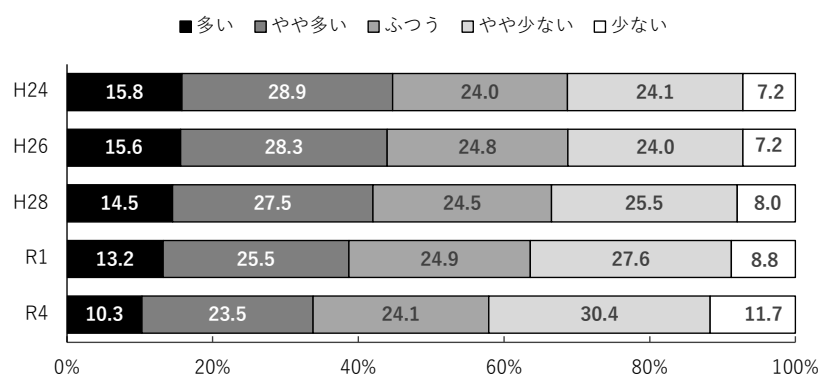


Figure 13: Changes of Nature Experience (4th-6th, 8th & 11th grade)

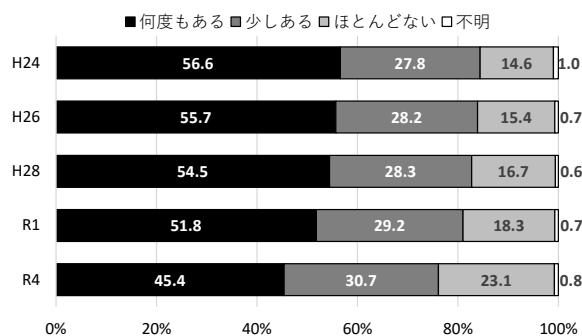


Figure 14: Swimming in the sea or river (4th-6th, 8th, & 11th grade)

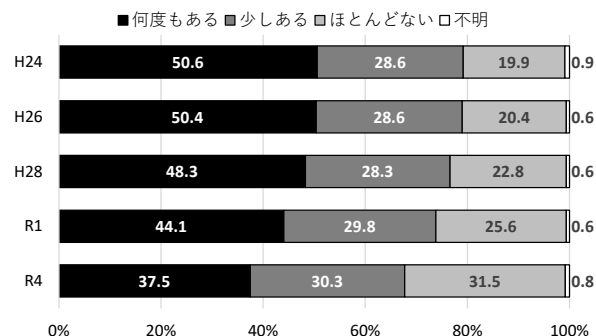


Figure 15: Catching insects like butterflies, dragonflies, or grasshoppers (4th-6th, 8th, & 11th grade)

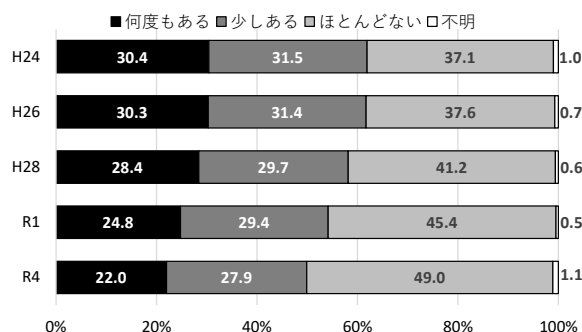


Figure 16: Climbing a large tree (4th-6th, 8th, & 11th grade)

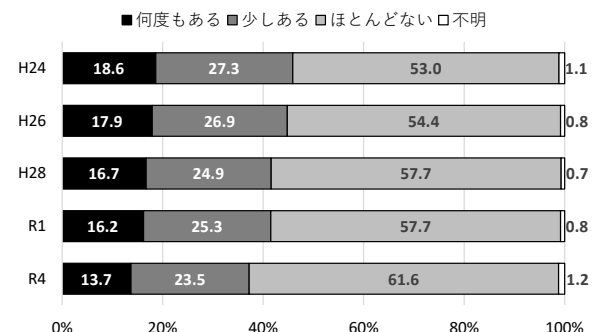


Figure 17: Climbing a high mountain without using a ropeway or lift (4th-6th, 8th, & 11th grade)

The responses to the 9 items regarding nature experiences (please refer to [Reference]) were quantified as follows: 'many times' = 1 point, 'a little' = 2 points, 'hardly any' = 3 points. These scores were then averaged, and the totals were divided by the number of items to create the following five categories:

'Many': 1.0 points or more, but less than 1.4 points. 'Somewhat many': 1.4 points or more, but less than 1.8 points. 'Average': 1.8 points or more, but less than 2.2 points. 'Somewhat few': 2.2 points or more, but less than 2.6 points. 'Few': 2.6 points or more, up to and including 3.0 points.

(2) Children's life experiences have decreased from the first year of the Reiwa era to the fourth year of the Reiwa era. [Life Experiences]

The percentages of respondents who answered "many times" or "a few times" for life experiences such as "peeling fruit or cutting vegetables with a knife," and "carrying or playing with small children" remained similar from

2012 (Heisei 24) to 2019 (Reiwa 1), but decreased in 2022 (Reiwa 4) (Figures 18 and 19). Other life experiences also showed a decrease from 2019 to 2022 (Figures 20 and 21).

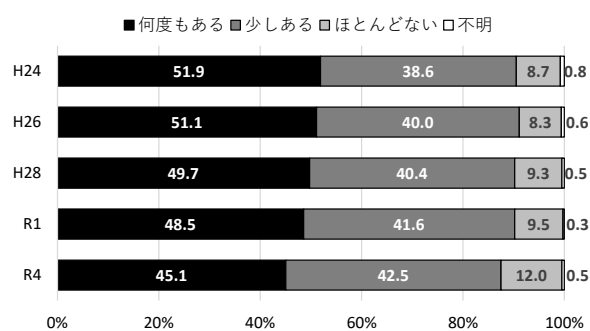


Figure 18: peeling fruit or cutting vegetables with a knife (4th-6th, 8th, & 11th grade)

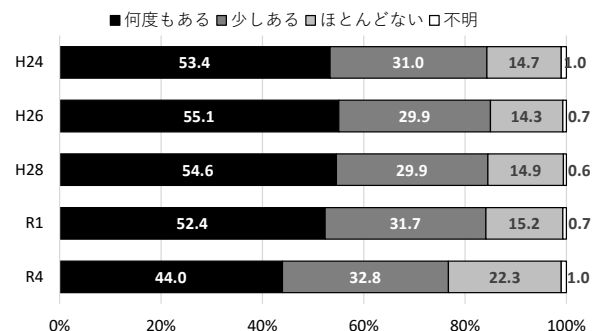


Figure 19: Carrying or playing with small children (4th-6th, 8th, & 11th grade)

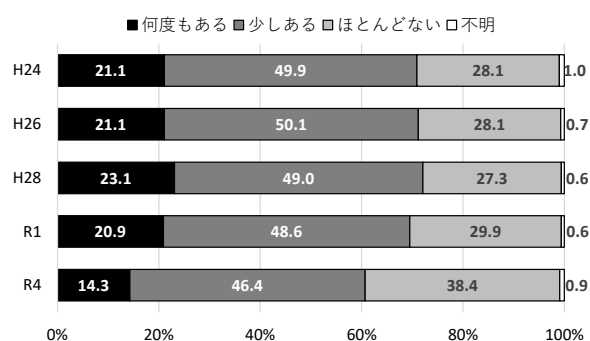


Figure 20: Picking up trash on streets and parks (4th-6th, 8th, & 11th grade)

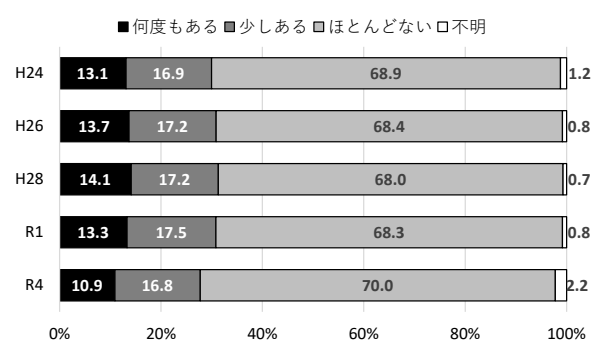


Figure 21: Changing diapers and feeding milk to a baby (4th-6th, 8th, & 11th grade)

Moreover, (according to the parent responses), the proportion of elementary school students who had Cultural and Artistic Experiences "many times" or "a few times" decreased in 2022 (Reiwa 4) compared to 2019 (Reiwa 1). In contrast, for middle and high school students, these experiences increased in 2022 compared to 2019. Besides the difference in opportunities for cultural and artistic experiences between elementary school students and middle/high school students, there may also be a difference in perceptions between parents and the youth themselves (Figures 22-24).

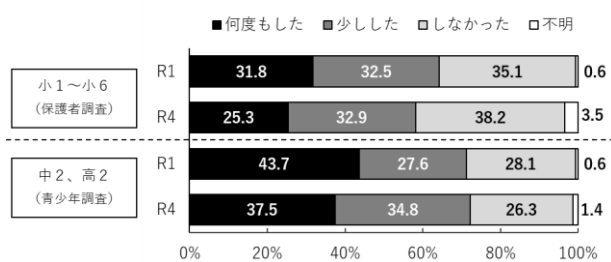


Figure 22: Having watched or listened to works or activities related to culture and the arts through television, DVDs, the internet, etc. (experience) (parent of elementary school students, 8th and 11th grade students)

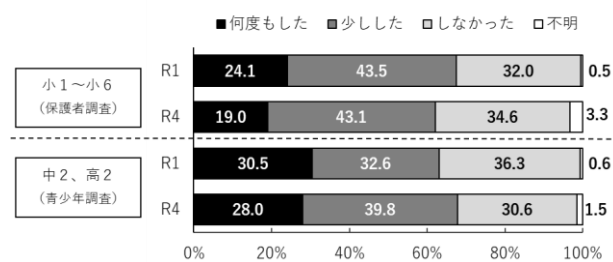


Figure 23: Having directly seen or heard works or activities related to culture and the arts at places such as movie theaters, art galleries, museums, theaters, etc. (experience) (parent of elementary school students, 8th and 11th grade students)

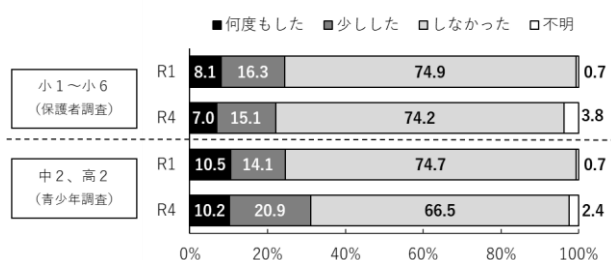


Figure 24: Having created or performed works related to culture and the art (experience) (parent of elementary school students, 8th and 11th grade students)

(3) The participation rate of elementary school students in events related to nature experience activities conducted by public institutions and private organizations was 36.7%, a significant decrease from 50.0% in the first year of the Reiwa era. [Participation in Events Conducted by Public Organizations, etc.]

The participation rate of children in nature experience activities conducted by public institutions over a year was 36.7% (Figure 25). The proportion of respondents who answered that they "did not participate" in such events increased from 42.4% in 2016 (Heisei 28) and 46.8% in 2019 (Reiwa 1) to 55.2% in 2022 (Reiwa 4) (Figure 25). The participation rate in events held by public facilities such as children's centers and community centers, local groups such as children's clubs and youth sports clubs, community associations such as PTAs, neighborhood associations, and community associations, as well as sports clubs and tutoring schools, particularly decreased from 2019 to 2022.

When parents who responded that their children did not participate in nature experience activities conducted by public institutions outside of school over the past year were asked to select reasons, the most common reasons were "the child is not interested" (27.7%), "the time burden on parents is too great" (24.9%), and "unaware of such groups or events" (23.7%) (Figure 26). These reasons were also the top choices in the first year of the Reiwa era, but "the child is not interested" decreased from 34.3% in 2019, while "unaware of such groups or events" increased from 16.8% in 2019. Additionally, the response "no particular reason" decreased to 16.4% from 21.8% in 2019, and "other" increased to 22.8% from 12.6% in 2019, indicating that the reasons for not participating in events conducted by public institutions are becoming more diverse.

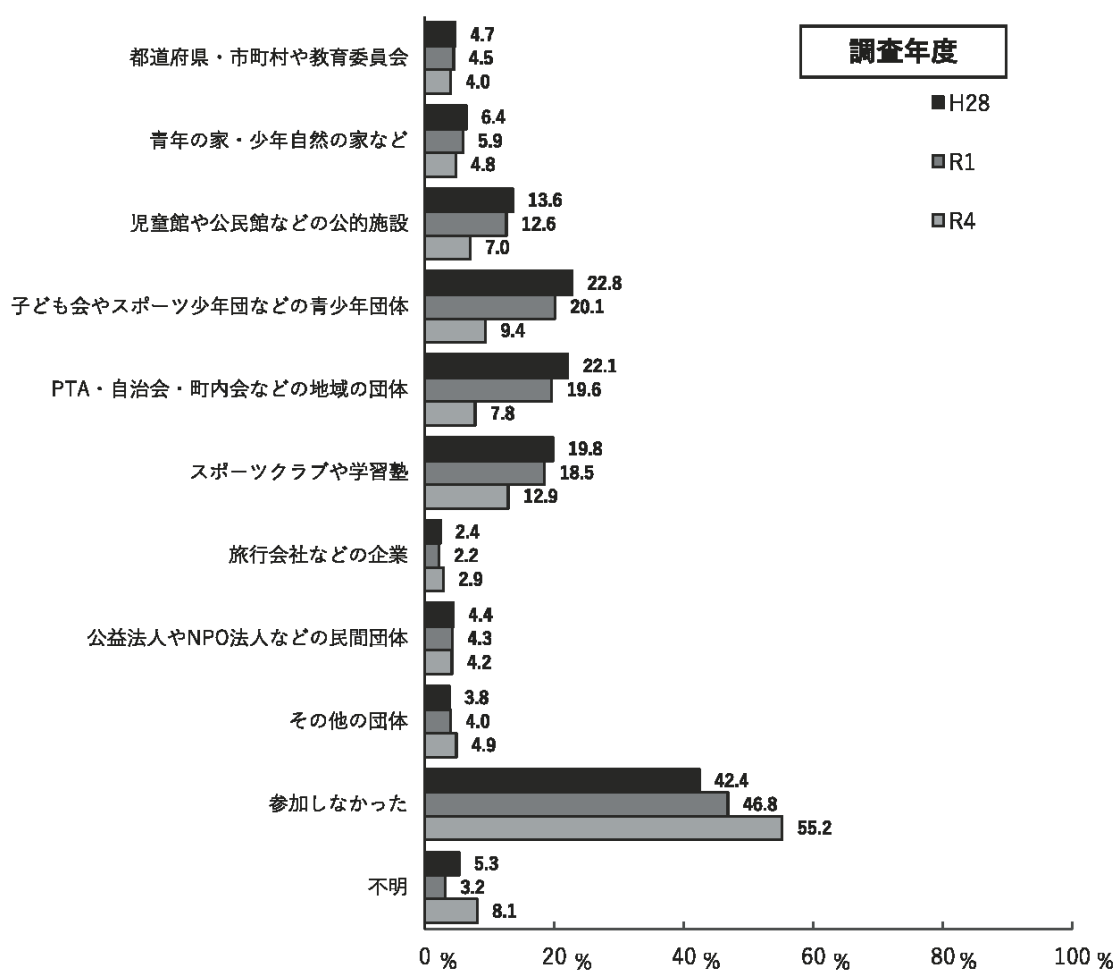


Figure25: Participation in events conducted by public institutions (Parent/Guardian of elementary school students)

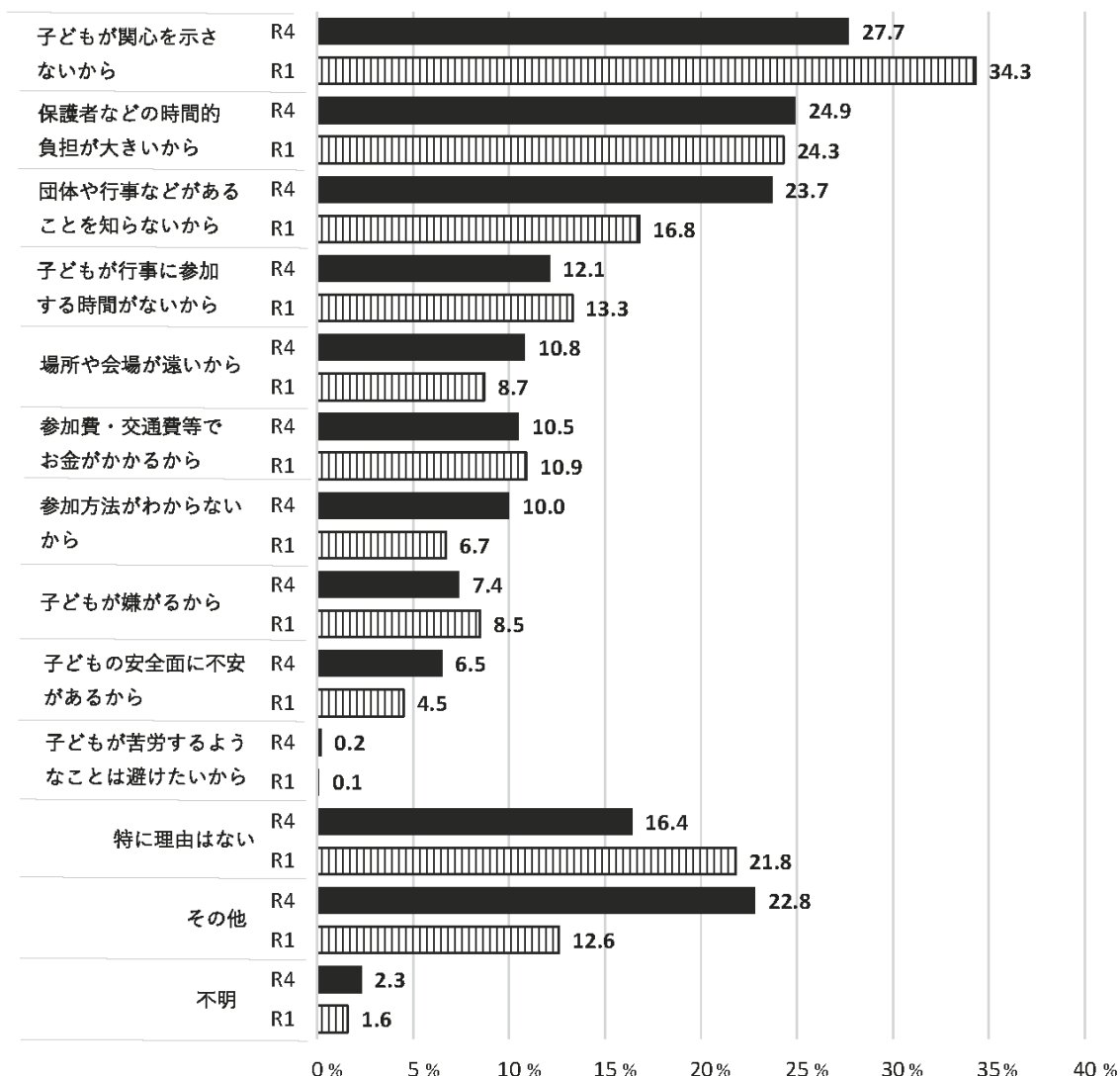


Figure26: Reasons of not participating in events conducted by public institutions (Parent/Guardian of elementary school students)

5. Role Models and Social Participation Awareness among Youth

Role Models: The most common type of adult that children aspire to be like is a famous person, accounting for about 40%. The proportion of students who do not have an adult they want to become like increases with age, reaching about 30% among high school students.

When asked, "Is there an adult that you want to be like?" 40.0% of respondents said "a famous person," followed by 37.1% saying the family members like "mother," 28.8% saying "father," and 17.7% saying

"grandparents." And 14.9% cited "school teachers," indicating that 10-20% of students see their teachers as role models (see Figure 27).

Under "others," respondents mentioned siblings, extracurricular teachers, internet personalities (e.g., YouTubers), professional athletes or fans (including "oshi," a term for a favorite celebrity or idol), friends, and seniors.

The proportion of students who answered that there is no adult they aspire to be like increased from 16.6% in the fourth grade of elementary school to 33.8% in school (see Figure 28).

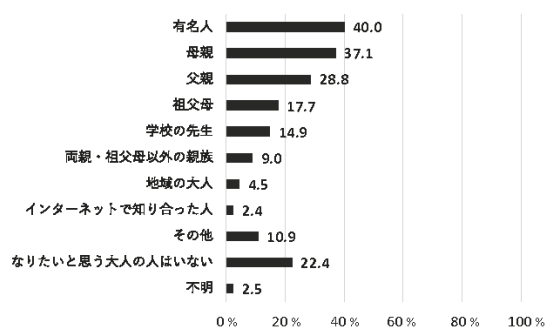


Figure 27: Adults who are role models (Grades 4-6 in elementary school, Grade 2 in middle school, Grade 2 in high school)

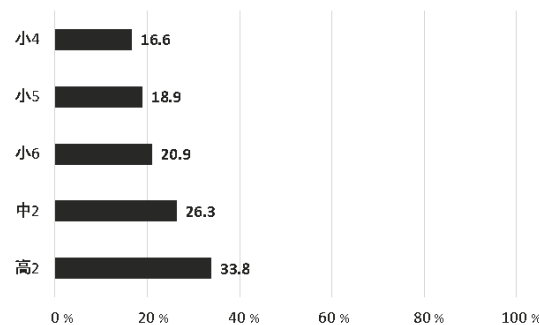


Figure 28: Responses indicating "there is no adult I want to become like" (by grade)

Furthermore, when asked about their awareness of social participation, alongside future role models, approximately 50% of young people showed that they do not investigate, think about, or discuss unreasonable rules or the meaning of rules themselves. Additionally, around 60% of young people did not believe that they could change society (Figure 29).

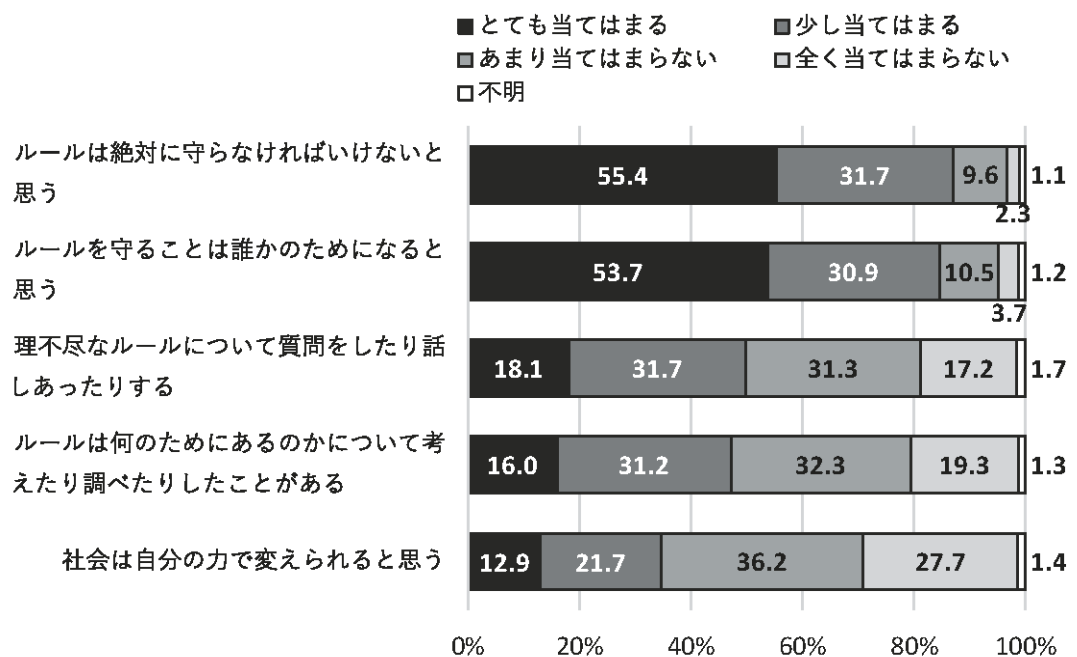


Figure 29: Actual state of awareness of social participation

Reference: Questions related to youth's natural experiences include:

- Catching insects like butterflies, dragonflies, and grasshoppers
- Collecting shells or fishing at the sea or rivers
- Climbing large trees
- Climbing high mountains without using a ropeway or lift
- Watching the sunrise or sunset
- Slowly observing a night sky full of stars
- Watching or listening to wild birds
- Swimming in the sea or rivers
- Camping

Longitudinal Comparative Surveys:

Survey Year (Abbreviation in this survey)	Title of the survey	Organization
Heisei 17 (2005) Survey (H17)	Survey on Youth's Natural Experience Activities	National Olympics Memorial Youth Center
Heisei 18 (2006) Survey (H18)		
Heisei 20 (2008) Survey (H20)	Survey on Youth Experience Activities and Independence	National Institution for Youth Education
Heisei 21 (2009) Survey (H21)		
Heisei 22 (2010) Survey (H22)		
Heisei 24 (2012) Survey (H24)	Survey on Experiential Activities of Youth	
Heisei 26 (2014) Survey (H26)		
Heisei 28 (2016) Survey (H28)	Survey on Experiential Activities of Youth	
Reiwa 1 (2019) Survey (R1)		

NOTE: Additionally, in Heisei 10 (1998), the "Survey on Children's Experience Activities" by the Youth Education Activity Research Association, commissioned by the Ministry of Education, was conducted.