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Opinion Exchange Meeting

16 December 2013

Life after the JET Programme



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As every year passes more and more Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme participants are leaving their appointed positions in Japan and moving on to the next chapters in their lives. With the JET Programme now surpassing its 27th year and exceeding 55,000 JET alumni, it has become imperative to examine this ever-growing community.

This report examines some of the ways that JET alumni are and will continue to contribute to Japan after their appointments end, as well as how the JET Programme has influenced the lives of JET participants and JET alumni regarding their plans for the future.

The findings of this report show that JET alumni make a large contribution to the Japanese economy via tourism, and that there is great potential for growing the number of exchange activities between JET participants and their Japanese communities if support systems are put in place or made more widely known. Membership of JET alumni associations should be encouraged, as they assist JET alumni in maintaining their ties to Japan and greatly increase the chance that JET alumni will contribute to Japan via volunteer work and charity.

In addition, this report found that social media is by far the most popular method of sharing information about Japan and keeping in contact with past JET communities. With an average of around 272 social media connections per JET participant, social media has the potential to connect Japan with overseas communities on a massive scale and spread awareness of Japan and its culture worldwide. However, despite the clear importance of social media in the lives of JET participants and alumni, there was also found to be ambiguity in terms of using social media for career advancement.

Several aspects of the JET Programme are seen as strong assets to the professional development of JET participants and alumni, and fostering these aspects could lead to stronger, lasting professional connections between Japanese communities and future global leaders and proponents of Japan. With this in mind, this report recommends that the JET Programme administration work to support JET alumni and participants' professional support networks on social media.

Furthermore, about a quarter of JET participants indicate that they are considering staying in Japan after their appointment ends, making them ideal leaders for a multi-cultural Japan. Therefore, this report also recommends that JET participants and alumni be granted more and greater professional development opportunities so that they may continue to contribute directly to the prosperity of Japan after their appointments end.



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INTRODUCTION

Based on feedback from the Spring 2013 Opinion Exchange, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), the Council of Local Authorities for International Relations (CLAIR) and the Association for Japan Exchange and Teaching (AJET) all agree that exploring the ways in which former Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme participants continue to be connected with Japan is an important initiative. The purpose of this report is to elucidate the ways in which JET Programme alumni continue to contribute to Japan, the effect that the JET Programme has had on shaping the lives of JET participants and the role that social media plays in how JET alumni stay connected with Japan. It will also examine how current JET participants plan to contribute once their appointments end. It is the goal of this report to show that JET alumni, present and future, are a valuable resource in connecting Japan to the global community and to explore possible ways in which the three ministries that support the JET Programme and CLAIR can help to facilitate lasting connections between JET participants and their Japanese communities in addition to bolstering future JET alumni's opportunities for professional growth once their appointments have finished.

This report is divided into three main sections. The first will cover ways that JET participants and alumni continue to contribute to Japan after their appointments end through supporting tourism in Japan and maintaining relationships with their Japanese communities. The second section will cover the reach of social media in promoting Japan to the global community. The final section will discuss how JET participants anticipate that the Programme will influence their career paths and value on the job market and compare it with the experiences of JET alumni.

METHODOLOGY

The data used in this report come from a survey conducted by the Association for Japan Exchange and Teaching (AJET) over the period 2–13 September 2013. This survey was distributed to JET Programme participants and alumni using an online survey development tool. The number of questions depended on the status of the respondent: 25 for JET Programme participants, 34 for those on their second or third appointment with the Programme (who were surveyed separately) and 28 for JET alumni. The formats used included 'Yes' or 'No', multiple choice and open-ended questions. This survey was implemented in English.

The survey focused on three main aspects of the JET Programme experience:

- JET Programme alumni's continued contribution to Japan
- The importance and usage of social media
- The influence of the JET Programme on future careers and fields of study

This report will follow the above divisions, providing an assessment of survey results for each section and an analysis of the responses. The results presented in this report with regard to current JET Programme participants include both participants on their first appointment with the Programme and those on their second or more. All percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

Throughout the report, the following abbreviations will be used for the common terms used in relation to the JET Programme:

- ALT: Assistant Language Teacher
- CIR: Coordinator for International Relations
- SEA: Sports Exchange Advisor
- JET: Japan Exchange and Teaching (Programme)
- AJET: The Association for Japan Exchange and Teaching

For the sake of consistency, this report will refer to current JET Programme participants as 'current JET participants' and JET Programme alumni as 'JET alumni'.

Survey Sample

Of the 1528 people who originally responded to the survey, 97 only answered the first question and did not proceed any further. As a result, the data from these 97 people has not been included in the analysis or reporting, leaving a sample size of 1431 respondents, of which 674 are current JET participants (approximately 15% of the 4,372 JET participants who make up the current JET Programme population around Japan) and 757 are JET alumni.

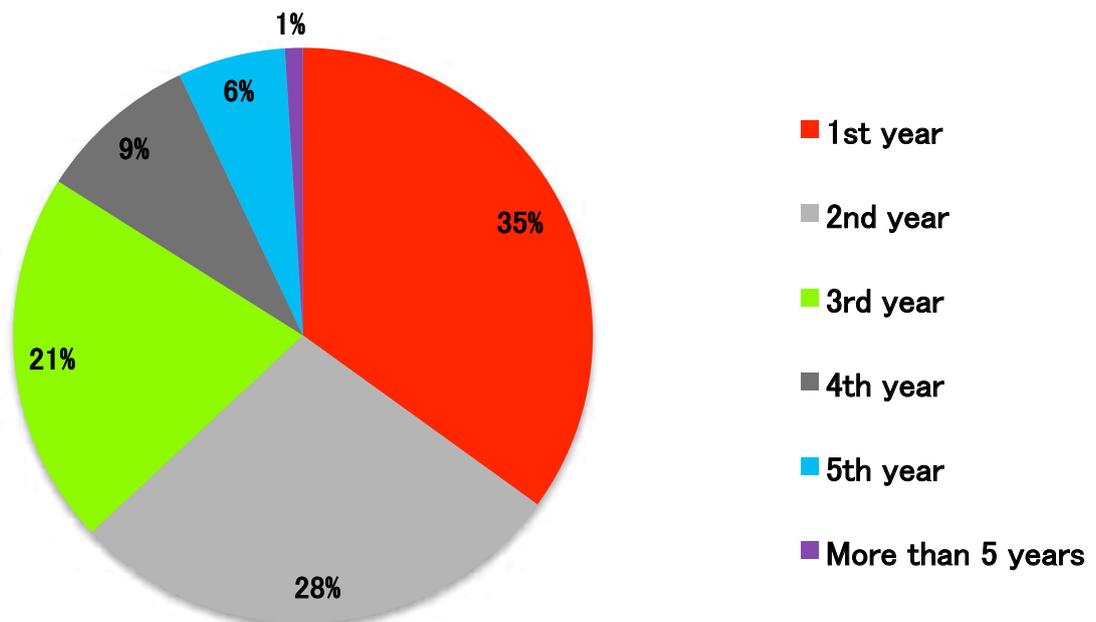
623 JET participants and 704 JET alumni identified themselves as ALTs, 49 JET participants and 53 JET alumni as CIRs and two JET participants as SEAs. Except for the two current SEAs, the proportion of ALTs compared to CIRs was essentially the same for JET participants and JET alumni. The breakdown of respondents by position on the Programme is displayed in the graph below.

Position on the JET Programme

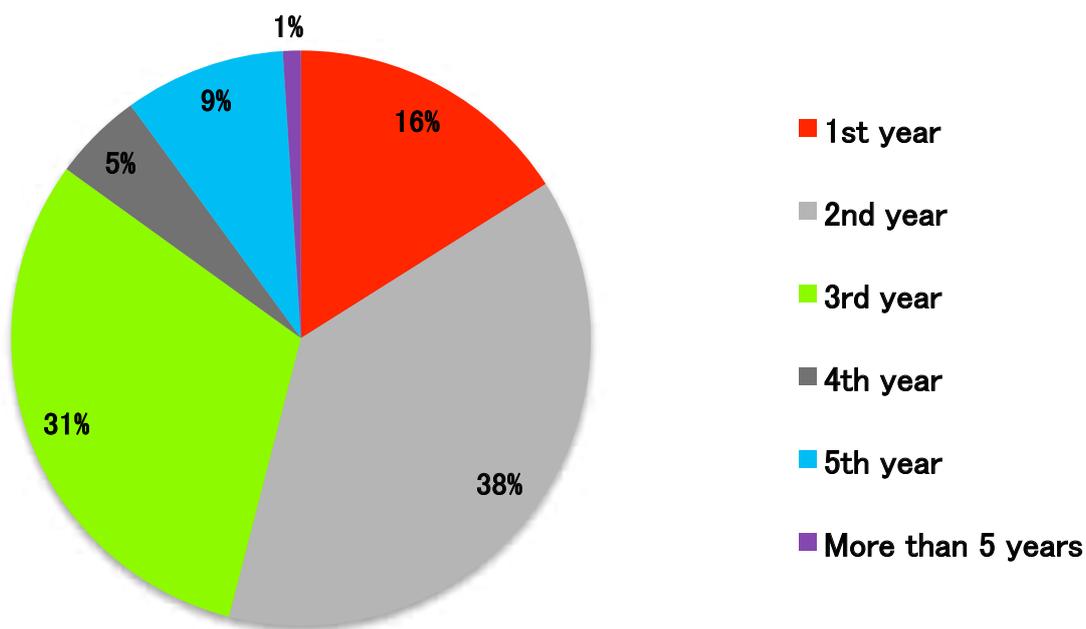


In terms of how long JET participants have been on the Programme, the largest proportion indicated they are in their first year (35% of respondents), while second and third year participants were the next most populous groups (28% and 21% respectively). As for the JET alumni, the largest group was those who stayed for two years (38%) followed by those who stayed for three years and one year (31% and 16% respectively). A full breakdown of the results is shown in the graphs below.

JET participants - year on the JET Programme



JET alumni - years on the JET Programme



Note: Although the maximum JET Programme tenure is 5 years, 'More than 5th year' and 'More than 5 years' are used to denote JET participants who have a combined total of more than 5 years over 2 or more separate appointments.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

JET Programme Alumni's Continued Contribution to Japan

The survey results show that JET alumni, as well as their family and friends, are likely to return to Japan once their appointment ends and in doing so bring revenue into Japan during these visits. The data also show that JET participants desire to make a connection with their community, and this section of the report examines the ways in which JET alumni maintain these relationships with Japan and their JET communities.

Financial Return from JET Participants and JET Alumni

Figure 1.1

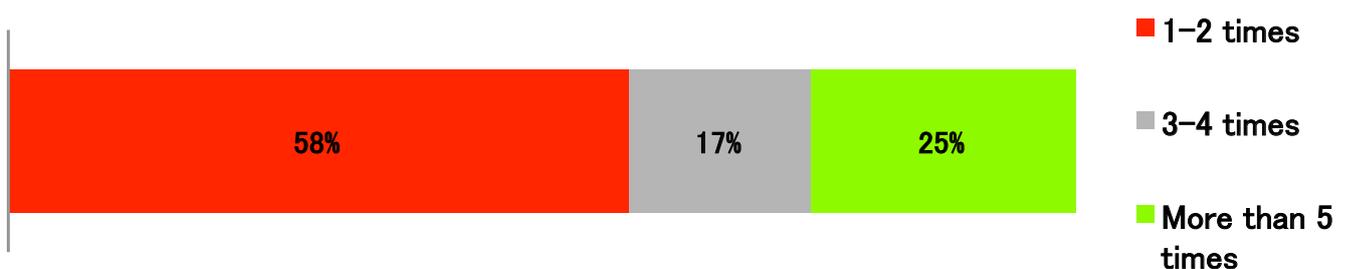
Proportion of JET alumni who have visited Japan



Figure 1.1 shows that a significant number of respondents (54%) who are no longer living in Japan have returned to Japan since their appointment ended. Of these respondents, the largest proportion (58%) has returned to Japan one or two times since their appointment ended (Figure 1.2). These results suggest that in general, JET alumni have and will return to Japan in the future and continue to make financial contributions to the Japanese economy via tourism.

Figure 1.2

Number of times JET alumni have visited Japan



In addition, 64% of alumni who returned said that they spent more than ¥100,000 on all of their combined trips back to Japan while 16% and 16% said that they spent at least ¥80,000 and ¥50,000 respectively (Figure 1.3). By combining all of these estimated spendings from the JET alumni who have returned to Japan, the amount equals a minimum of ¥28,160,000 – a significant monetary contribution to the Japanese economy.

In addition to financial contributions from JET alumni themselves, the family and friends of JET alumni must also be considered. Respondents were asked to estimate the amount of yen spent by friends and family who visited Japan since the respondent's appointment ended (Figure 1.4). The results show that a significant number (60%) of JET alumni whose family/friends have visited, estimate that these family members and friends spent at least ¥100,000 on their visit. Even if it is assumed that only one friend or family member visited per respondent in this category, this amount combined with the amount spent by the JET alumni themselves adds up to a minimum of ¥51,650,000.

Overall, the report findings suggest that JET alumni generate valuable tourism revenue in addition to serving as powerful public diplomacy, cultural, and business assets to Japan. This report shows that 44% of all JET alumni reported spending at least ¥100,000 on their domestic travel during/

after their JET Programme tenure plus any visits back to Japan after leaving the Programme. In addition, 29% of respondents say their friends or family spend at least ¥100,000 on their visits to Japan. These percentages were consistent regardless of the length of time the JET alumni spent on the Programme. If this survey sample is taken as representative of the broader community of 55,000 JET alumni, the extrapolated amount of tourism revenue JET alumni bring to Japan can be quantified at ¥4.24 billion, at a low estimate. The following deduces this logic.

- 44% of 55,000 alumni spend at least ¥100,000 on their total visits = ¥2.64 billion
- 29% of 55,000 alumni bring one family member or friend who spends at least ¥100,000 on their visit = ¥1.60 billion
- Total spent by JET alumni and their family member or friend = ¥4.24 billion

Figure 1.3

Total JPY spent by JET alumni on return trips to Japan

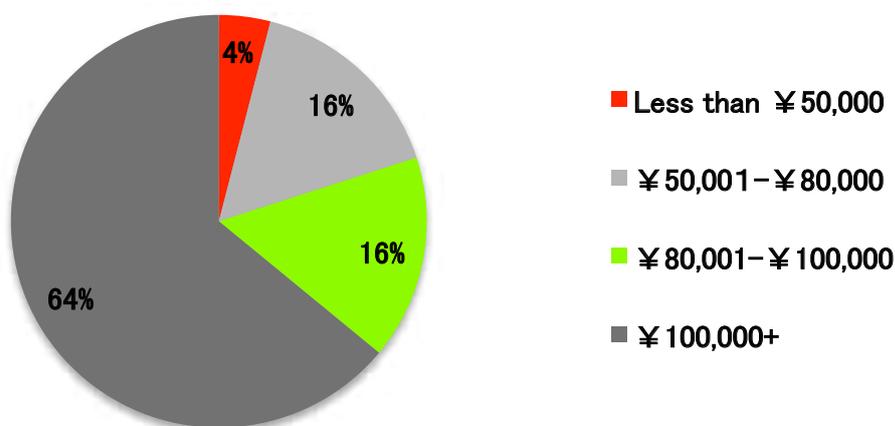
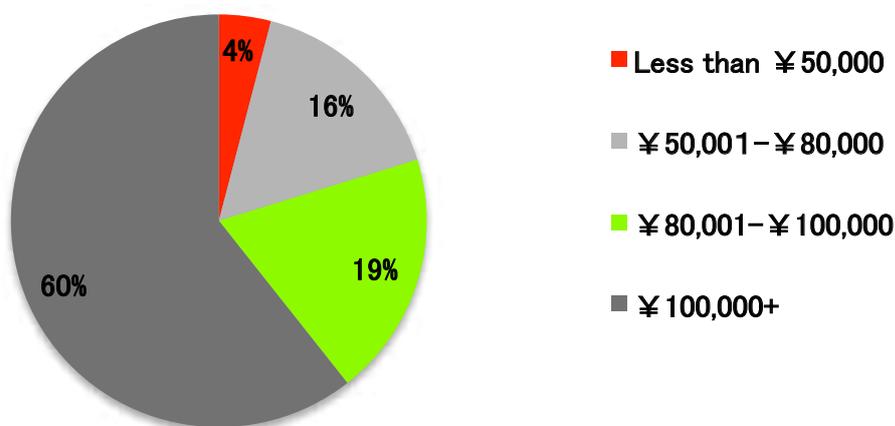


Figure 1.4

Total JPY spent by friends and family of JET alumni on trips to Japan



Clearly the results indicate that JET alumni are highly likely to return to Japan after their appointment ends, and it is not surprising that friends and family members of JET alumni have also come to Japan and spent a considerable amount of money while in Japan because of their ties to the JET

alumni. According to JETwit.com's 'JET-Tourists Tally Project'¹, based on 347 respondents, over 2,000 tourists were brought to Japan by JET alumni. These tourists stayed in Japan for a combined total of over 22,500 days and generated an estimated ¥225,740,000 of tourism revenue for Japan. On this basis, the estimated tourism revenue per JET alumni respondent was ¥650,548. As such, the 'JET-Tourists Tally Project' suggests that at a minimum, JET alumni generate the equivalent of one-fifth to one-sixth of their salary for the Japanese economy.

This data broadly supports the findings of this report: that JET alumni generate a significant return on investment for the Japanese economy in terms of tourism revenue. However, more research would be needed to know which specific areas of Japan most benefited from this boost in tourism and if any of these visitors maintained the ties that they made while in Japan.

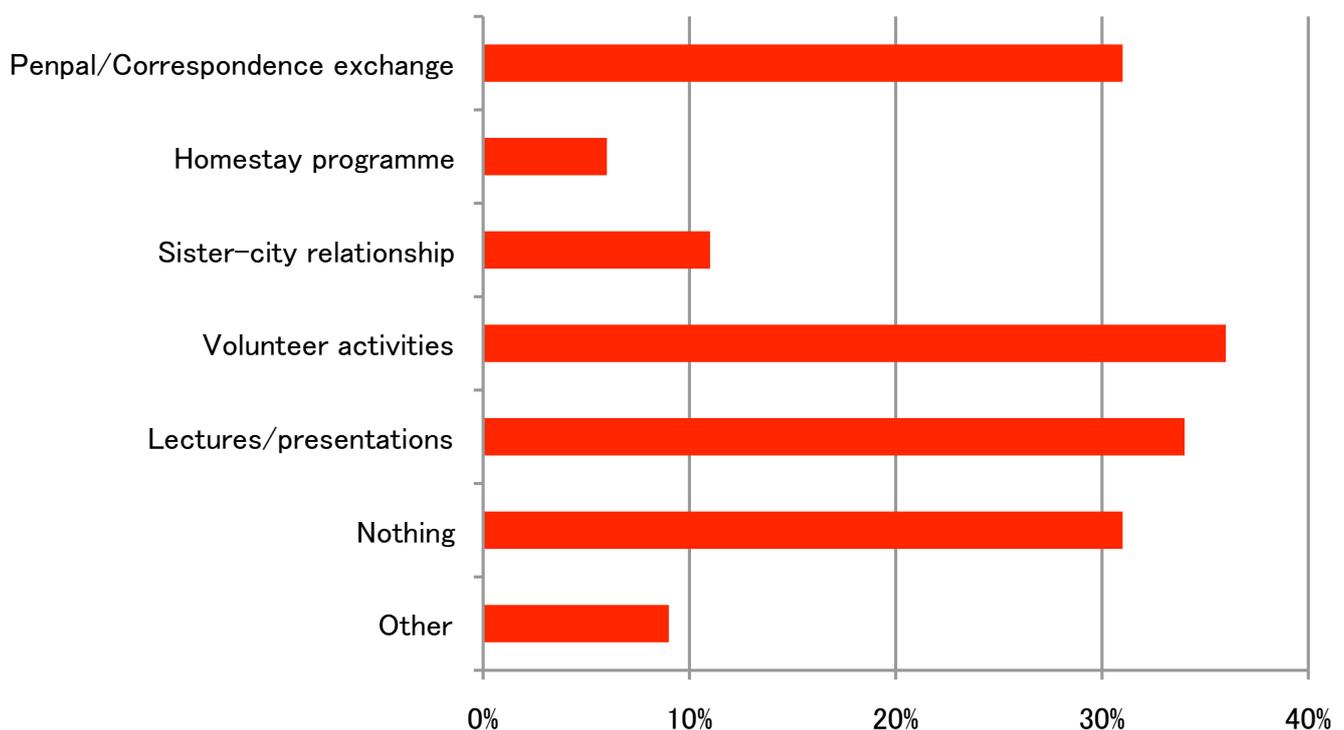
Maintaining Relationships with Japan and Former Communities

The data suggest that JET participants are forming lasting relationships in their communities, but that these relationships can be difficult to initially establish and maintain. JET participants and JET alumni each answered several questions in order to help analyse the relationship-building process and what happens to those relationships once a JET participant's appointment ends.

Of the JET participants surveyed, 70% indicated that they are doing something now, or plan to do something, to connect their Japanese community to their home country. The results show that volunteer activities (selected by 36% of respondents), lectures/presentations (34%), and pen pal/correspondence exchange (31%) are the top three ways that JET participants maintain these ties. Other ways that JET participants create ties between their communities in Japan and their home countries are shown in Figure 1.5 below.

Figure 1.5

Activities connecting Japanese community and home country



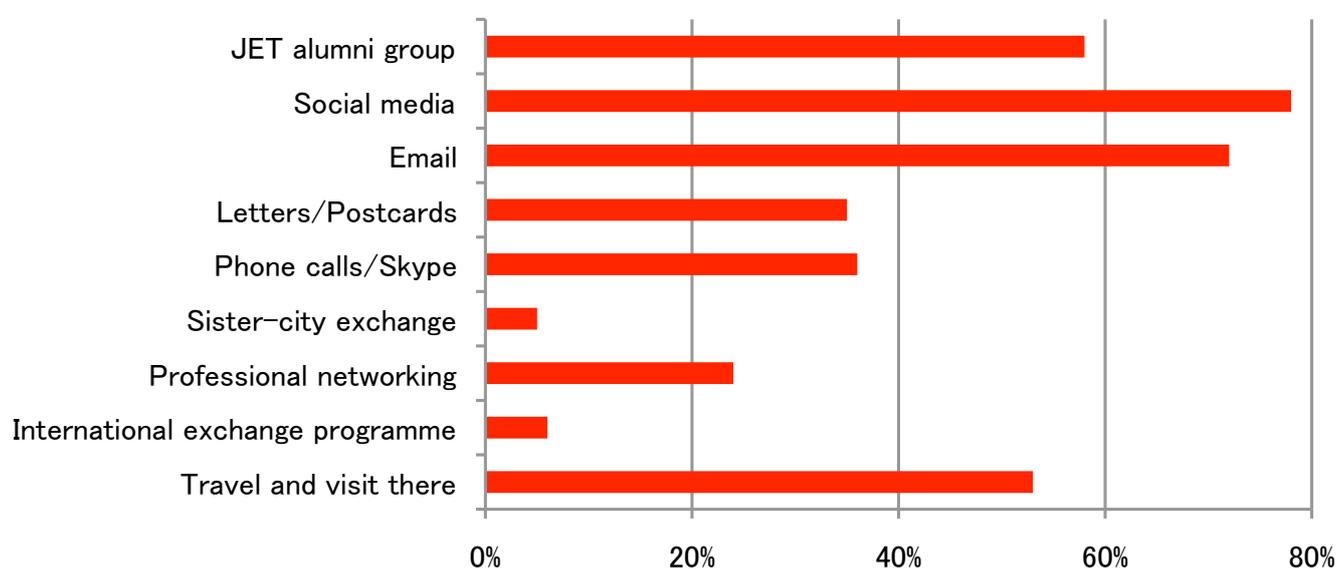
While these data seem encouraging, only 35% of respondents say that they plan to continue these activities after their JET appointment ends while 38% say that they are unsure if they will continue these activities or not. This suggests that there is an opportunity waiting to be seized in this area. It is possible that with appropriate support, awareness and/or incentives that this 38% of JET participants can be encouraged to form relationships that will extend beyond the end of their JET appointment and in doing so, benefit Japan by more than doubling the grassroots connections that connect Japan to the wider world.

¹ <http://jetwit.com/wordpress/2010/12/08/project-how-much-tourism-revenue-has-jet-generated-for-japan>

In contrast to the perspectives of current JET participants, when JET alumni were asked if they maintain ties with Japan or their JET community, 98% replied affirmatively. That is, nearly all former JET participants maintain some kind of ties. Social media (nominated by 78% of respondents), email (72%), and JET alumni groups (58%) were the top methods by which these ties are maintained. Sister-city exchange and international exchange ranked relatively low with 5% and 6% of respondents indicating that they use these methods respectively. Since these are two activities that involve cooperation with outside parties compared with other types of activities that can be conducted by an individual without much cost or time commitment, these results indicate that JET alumni are more likely to be engaged with their communities in an independent fashion. It is possible that cost, time, convenience, and lack of awareness of potential opportunities are major factors hindering the growth of sister-city exchange programmes and other more in-depth grassroots exchange. If systems were put in place or established systems were better publicised, the low percentage of JET alumni currently involved in in-depth international exchange activities may increase. A full breakdown of responses regarding how JET alumni maintain ties with Japan or with their past JET communities is shown in Figure 1.6 below.

Figure 1.6

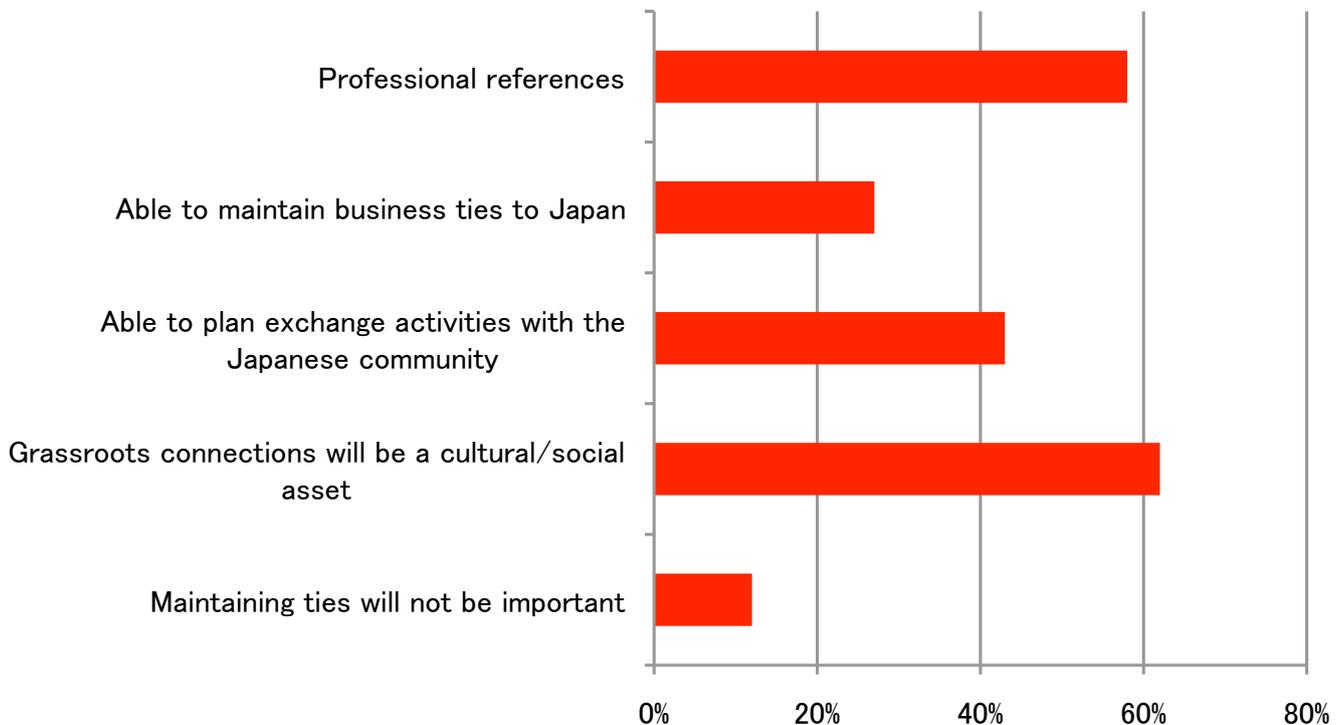
Methods JET alumni use to maintain ties with Japan and their JET community



From a professional perspective, a significant portion of JET participants (43%) believe that maintaining ties with their local Japanese community will be important in their future career or field of study. In terms of how the JET Programme experience is seen as an asset, the majority of JET participants feel that their grassroots connections will be a cultural/social asset (62% of respondents) and that professional references will also be an important factor (58%). Many respondents (43%) also stated that planning exchange activities will be important to their future careers or fields of study. This is similar to the percentage of JET participants who intend to continue exchange activities (35%) and those who are as of yet undecided (38%), as noted earlier. This suggests that JET participants have the desire to continue exchange activities but may not yet be aware of or have the appropriate resources to do so. Other reasons why JET participants say that maintaining ties with Japan and their JET community is important to their future career or field of study are shown in Figure 1.7 below.

Figure 1.7

How maintaining ties is perceived as important to a JET participant's future



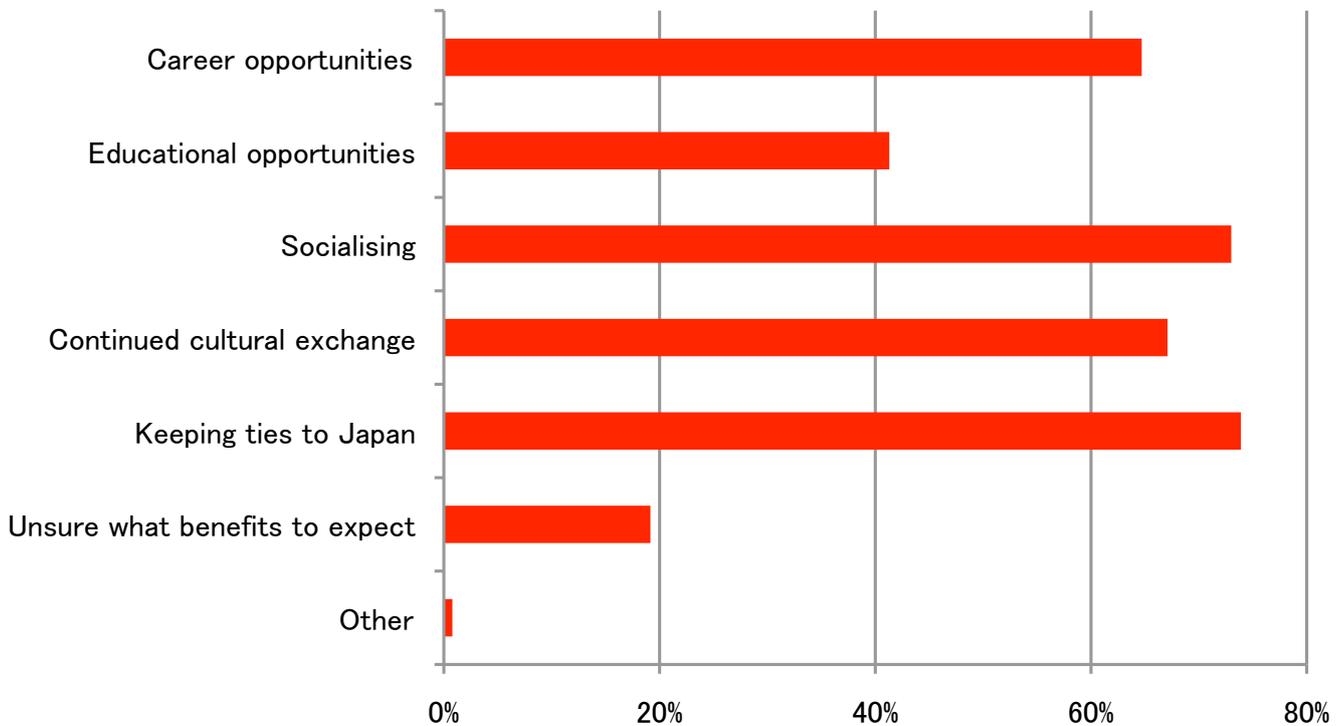
Almost all (96%) of the JET alumni who stayed for two years or less maintain ties with Japan and their former JET community; most commonly on a weekly (30% of respondents) or monthly (20%) basis. Similarly, almost all (98%) of the JET alumni who stayed for three years or more maintain ties with Japan and their JET community mainly on a weekly (34% of these respondents) or daily (22%) basis. These results show that JET participants who stay at least three years typically maintain more frequent daily and weekly contact with Japan and their JET community than those who stay for two years or less. Although there is a significant contrast between current JET participants' perceptions and the actual experiences of JET alumni, these results nevertheless indicate that JET participants are likely to maintain some kind of relationship with Japan or their JET community after their JET appointment ends.

When JET participants were asked if they intend to join a JET alumni association after their appointment ends, two thirds (66%) replied affirmatively while 26% were undecided. JET participants anticipate 'keeping ties to Japan', 'socialising', and 'continued cultural exchange' to be the primary benefits of joining a JET alumni association. A full breakdown of the anticipated benefits is shown in Figure 1.8.

There is a significant discrepancy between JET participants who plan to maintain exchange activities once they leave Japan (35% of respondents) and JET participants who intend to join a JET alumni association (66%), even though joining a JET alumni association would inherently assume maintaining ties with Japan and the JET community. This large difference (31%) suggests that having an established organisation is more attractive to JET participants seeking to maintain ties with Japan and the JET community than having to make an independent effort. This difference also suggests that JET participants may simply not be aware of the full spectrum of benefits that they can obtain from joining a JET alumni association.

Figure 1.8

Anticipated benefits of JET alumni association membership

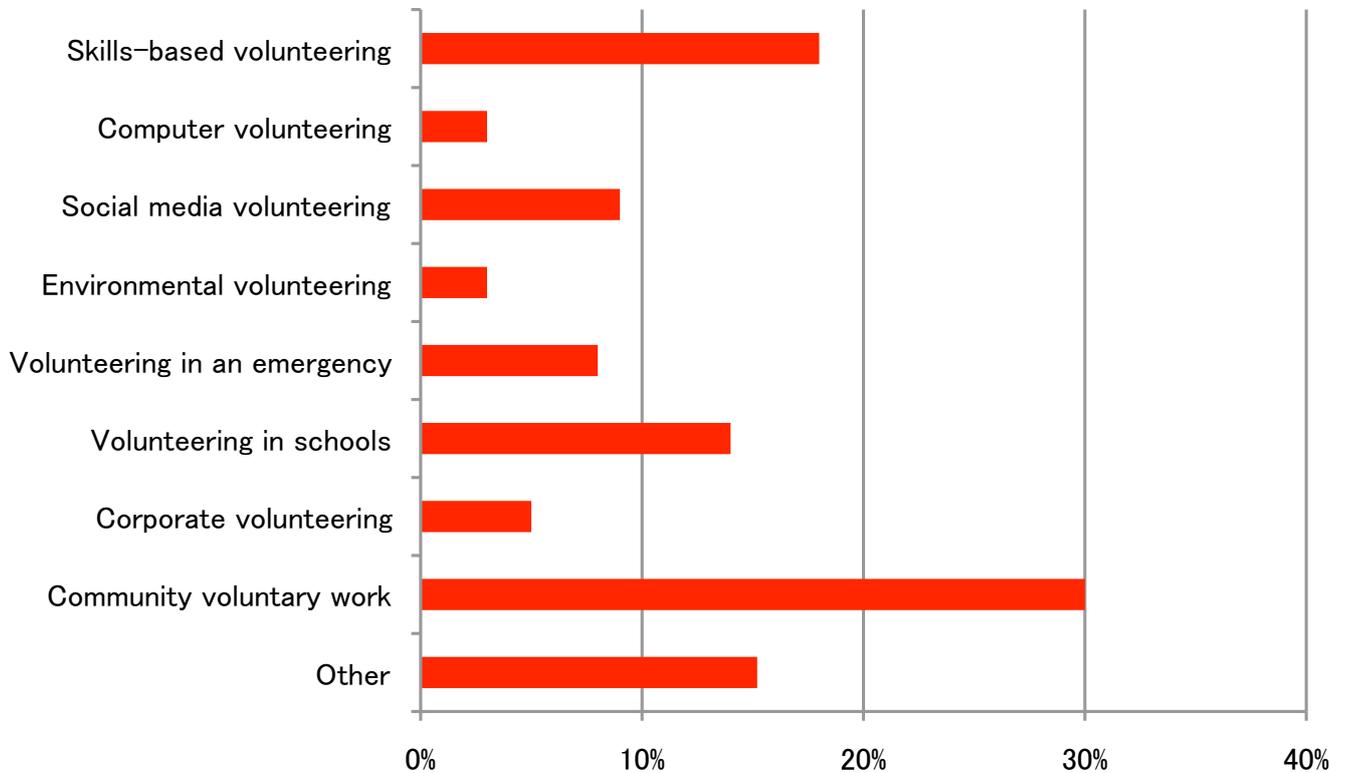


Of the JET alumni surveyed, nearly half (48%) reported having done volunteer or charity work to support Japan since their appointment ended. Of those respondents, partaking in community volunteer work (50% of these respondents) and skills-based volunteer work (30%) are the most common activities. An additional 14% of JET alumni mentioned organising fundraisers or giving monetary donations as some ‘other’ form of volunteering or charity work they were involved with, indicating that financial contributions are also a popular method of supporting Japan.

A number of JET participants also indicated unique ways that they volunteered, such as “dancing with the Nebuta float in a London parade”, organising student fundraising to support tsunami relief efforts, and asking for donations to Japanese charities in lieu of wedding gifts. Furthermore, two thirds (66%) indicated that their volunteer and charity work was not specifically in response to the Great East Japan Earthquake, which suggests that relationships between JET alumni and their Japanese communities are not sparked by or established upon temporal, external factors such as emergencies and sympathy, but rather that the relationship is genuine and therefore more in-depth and potentially longer lasting in nature. However, there is still a majority (52%) of JET alumni that do not partake in volunteer or charity work to support Japan. Whether this is due to personal choice or a lack of knowledge of volunteer options is unknown. The full breakdown of JET alumni’s volunteer activities can be seen below in Figure 1.9.

Figure 1.9

Volunteer and charity work performed by JET alumni



Another factor to note is that among JET alumni who are involved in a JET alumni association, over half (59%) report having done volunteer or charity work to support Japan. This significant gap (11%) in volunteer and charity work between JET alumni involved in a JET alumni association and those who are not suggests that those who join a JET alumni association are more likely to get involved with volunteer and charity work. JET alumni associations partake in activities such as chaperoning exchange programmes, volunteering at events, student letter exchanges, translation work and writing articles about Japan. All of these activities exemplify JET alumni's continuing contribution to Japan. Therefore it is highly recommended that added support be given to JET alumni associations' activities as they are a powerful vehicle for maintaining international exchange and therefore fulfilling the JET Programme's purpose.

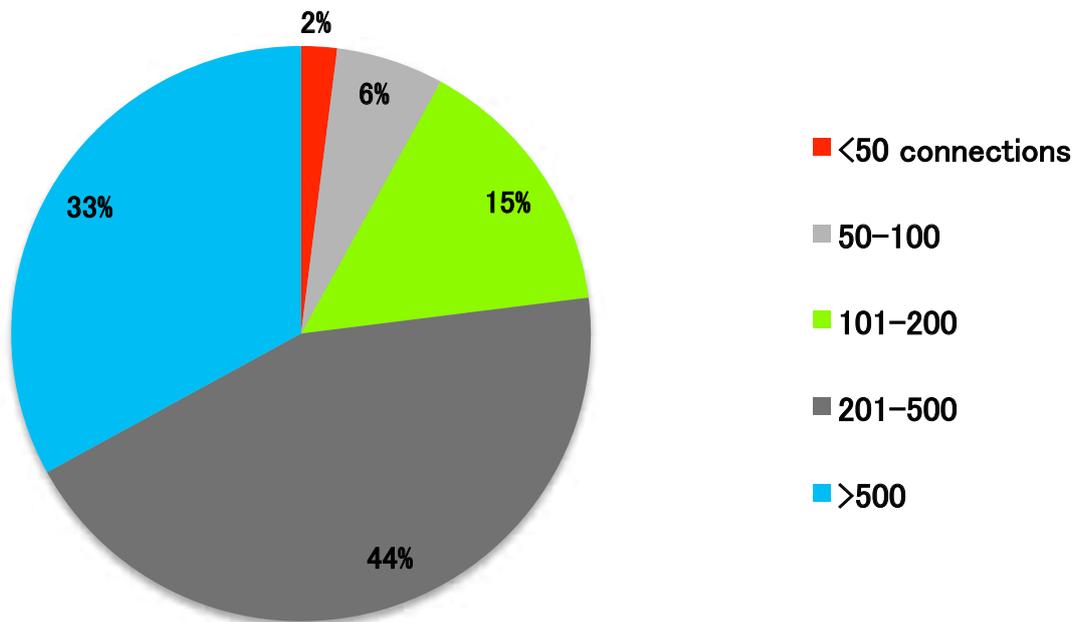
Importance and Usage of Social Media

The following section analyses the potential of social media in regards to sharing information about Japan. It examines the difference in usage based on the role of the JET participant and compares the expectations of JET participants with the experiences of JET alumni in relation to professional networking via social media. Since the survey upon which this report is based was promoted primarily on social media, it is possible that the data are not completely representative of the general JET participant and alumni populations. To account for this possible bias, average figures have been calculated based on the lower end of any ranges used, such as in Figure 2.1 below.

Social Media Reach

Figure 2.1

JET participants' connections on social media



In the survey, the vast majority of respondents (91%) indicated sharing their experience about Japan via social media in some way. Figure 2.1 above illustrates the total number of connections each respondent estimates having on social media. Assuming that each respondent had the minimum number of connections in their bracket and assuming that none of them had any connections in common, the estimated number of people potentially reached by this survey sample would amount to 177,799 people, meaning an average of 272 people being reached per respondent. Even allowing for overlap in these contact lists, this is still an incredible reach.

Figure 2.2

JET participants - frequency of social media communication about Japan

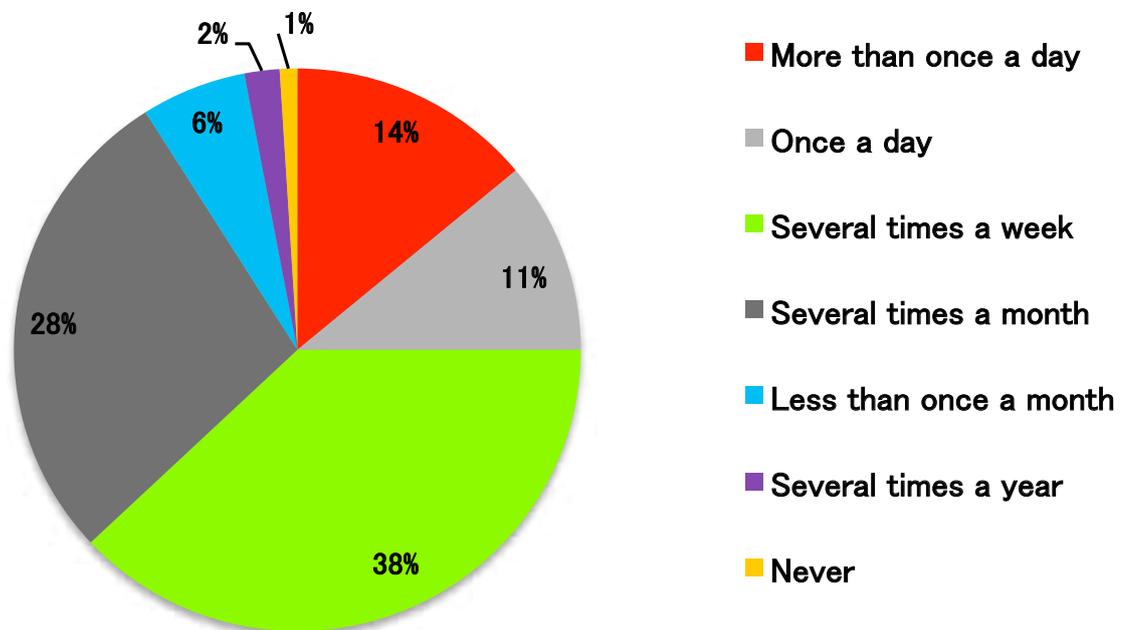


Figure 2.2 above shows that the largest proportion of JET participants (38%) mentions Japan on social media several times a week with the aforementioned 272 average contacts.

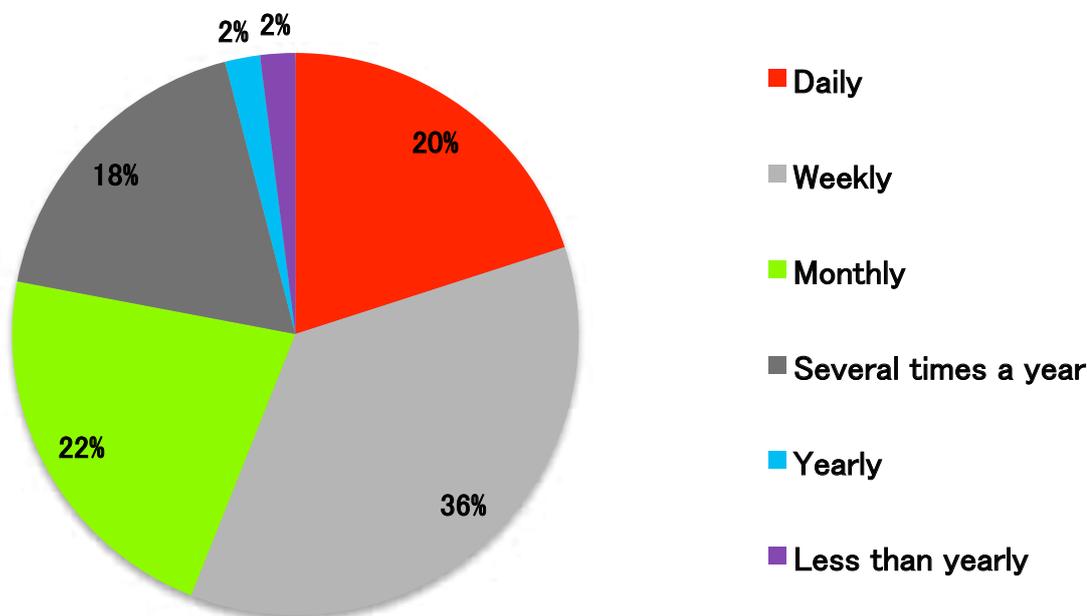
The following outlines how the above information can be extrapolated to the current JET Programme population in Japan.

- 91% of 4,372 JET participants with an average of 272 connections each, use social media to share information about Japan = an estimated reach of over 1 million people around the world.
- 38% of 4,372 JET participants with an average of 272 connections each, mention Japan on social media several times a week = an estimated reach of over 450,000 people hearing about Japan each week.

When asked if they maintained ties with their past JET community, 97% of JET alumni answered positively. Of these respondents, the majority (79%) mentioned social media as a way of maintaining ties. Figure 2.3 below shows how frequently the JET alumni respondents typically use social media for networking.

Figure 2.3

JET alumni - frequency of networking via social media



The proportion of JET alumni who use social media weekly is similar to that of JET participants: 36% as compared with 38%, respectively. Assuming that the respondents' number of connections has not decreased since they were on the JET Programme, the reach of their social media usage also remain similar.

Purpose of Social Media

Figure 2.4 on the following page illustrates the different forms of social media that JET participants mentioned using for the purpose of sharing information about Japan. These results are broken down based on their role on the JET Programme. Facebook was clearly the most popular medium among JET participants who use social media with a usage rate of almost 100% regardless of job type. These numbers strongly suggest that ALTs and CIRs see Facebook as a good way of sharing their experiences including those related to Japan.

Note that due to the very small sample size, the responses from SEAs have been left out of the graphs in this section, with comments included in the text where appropriate.

Figure 2.4

JET participants - social media used to share information about Japan

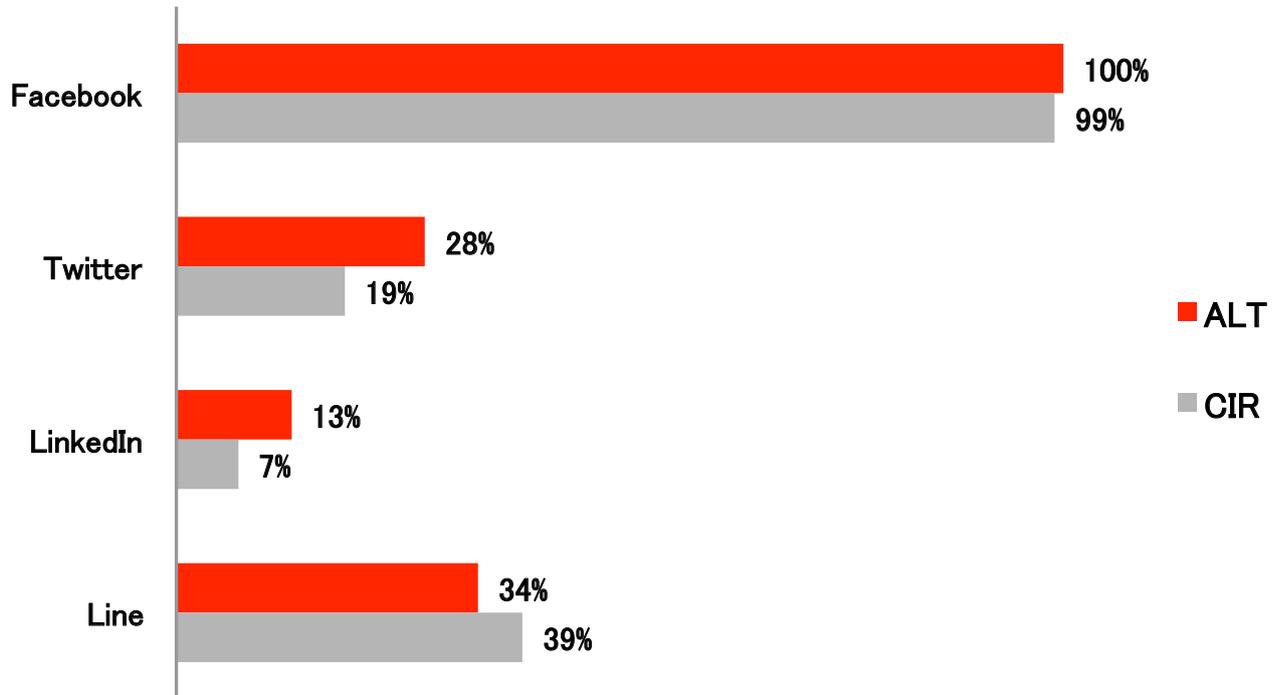
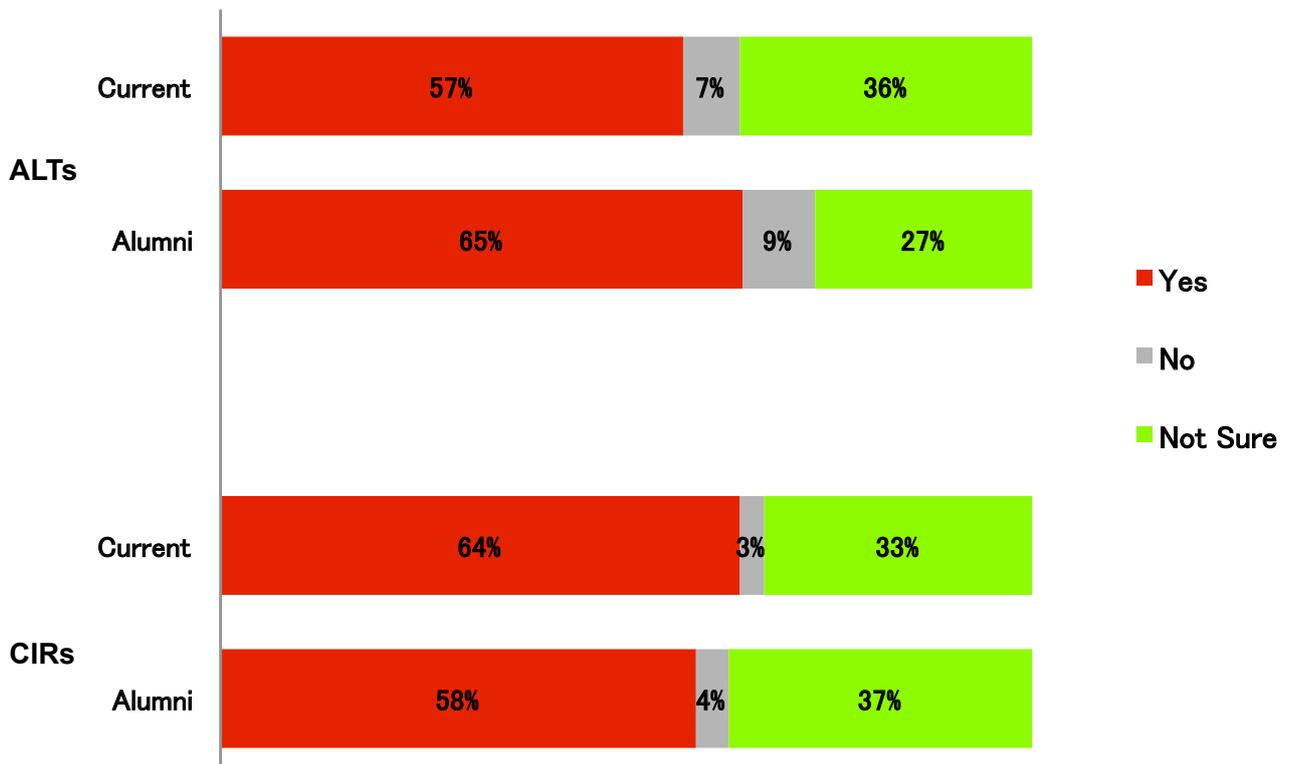


Figure 2.5

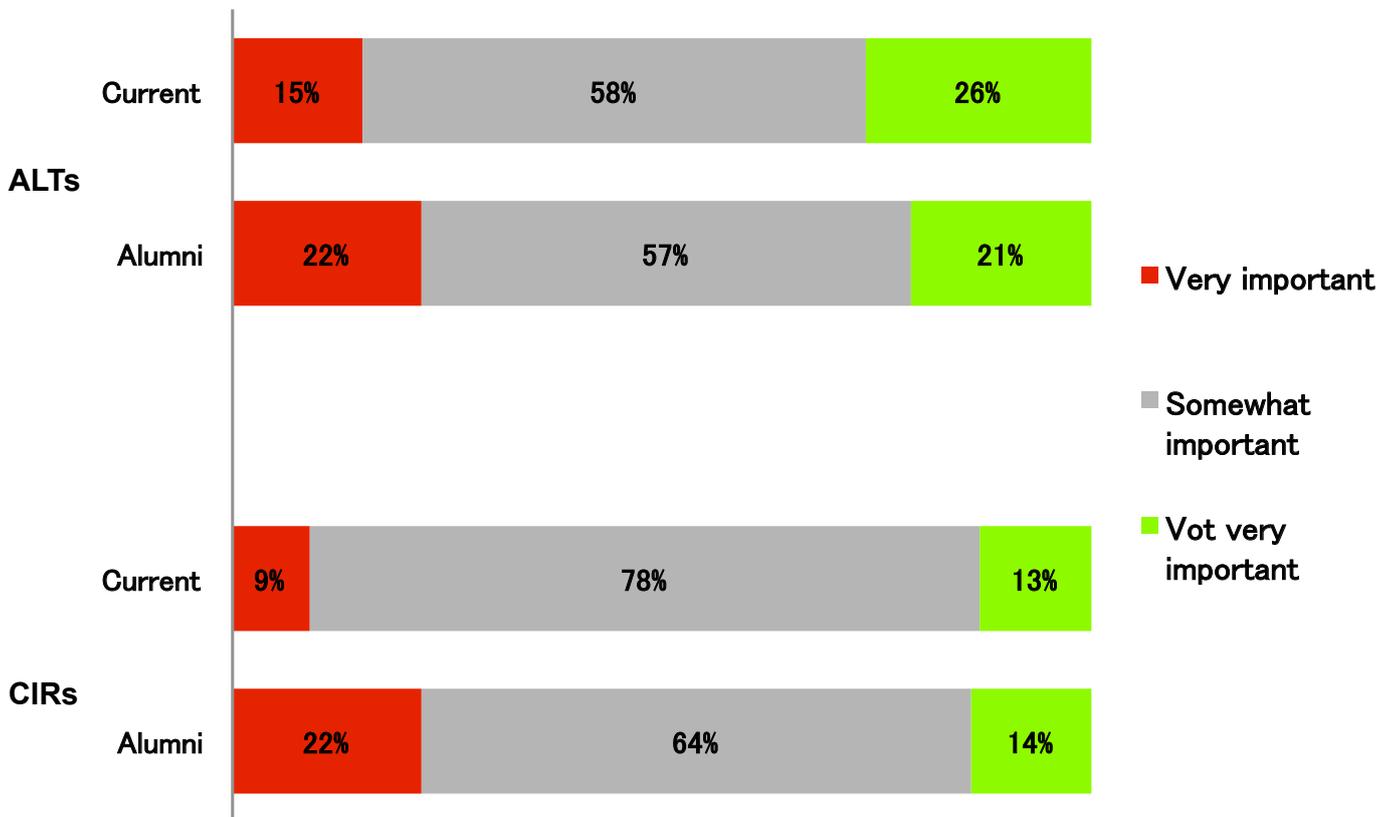
Do social media networks help facilitate the search for career and educational opportunities?



The survey also explored the importance of social media in finding professional and educational opportunities. Figure 2.5 on the previous page indicates that large proportions of both current JET participants (58% of total respondents, regardless of job type) and JET alumni (64% of total respondents) find that networking through social media makes searching for a job or applying to continued education easier. These proportions are also similar when looking at the results according to the respondents' role on the JET Programme, both for JET participants and JET alumni. However, when asked if networking via social media for job or school applications is important, the respondents generally showed a degree of ambivalence, with the majority of respondents in each category indicating it is 'somewhat important', as illustrated by the figure below. Both of the SEAs who responded were not sure that social media helped with locating career and educational opportunities, but they thought it was somewhat important for networking purposes.

Figure 2.6

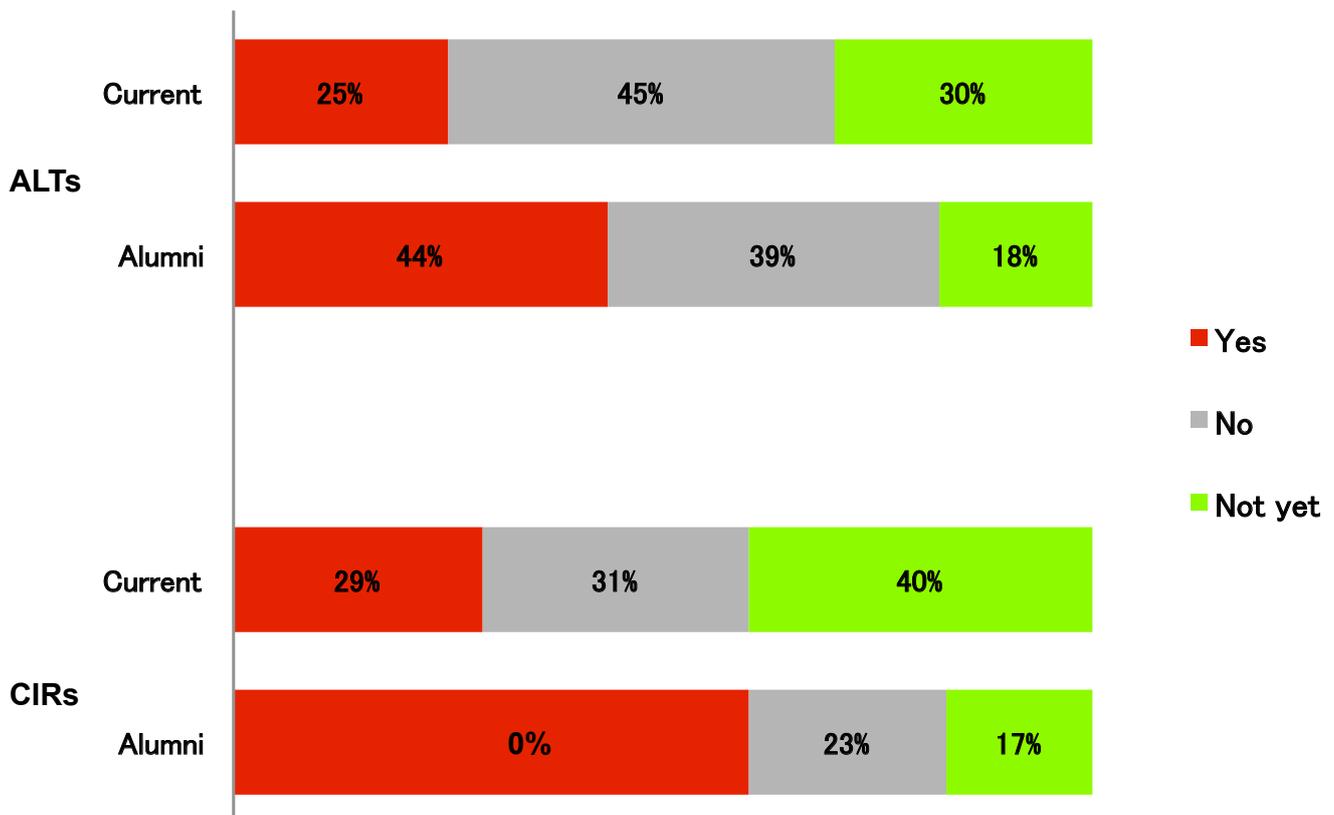
Importance of networking via social media for job/school applications



Regardless of respondents' role on the JET Programme, the majority of current JET participants think that social media is at least somewhat important for the purpose of professional networking, with a similar response also given by JET alumni. These findings indicate that searching for professional and educational development opportunities is only a secondary purpose of social media usage for both current JET participants and JET alumni.

Figure 2.7

Have you ever searched for job or continuing educational opportunities on social media networks?

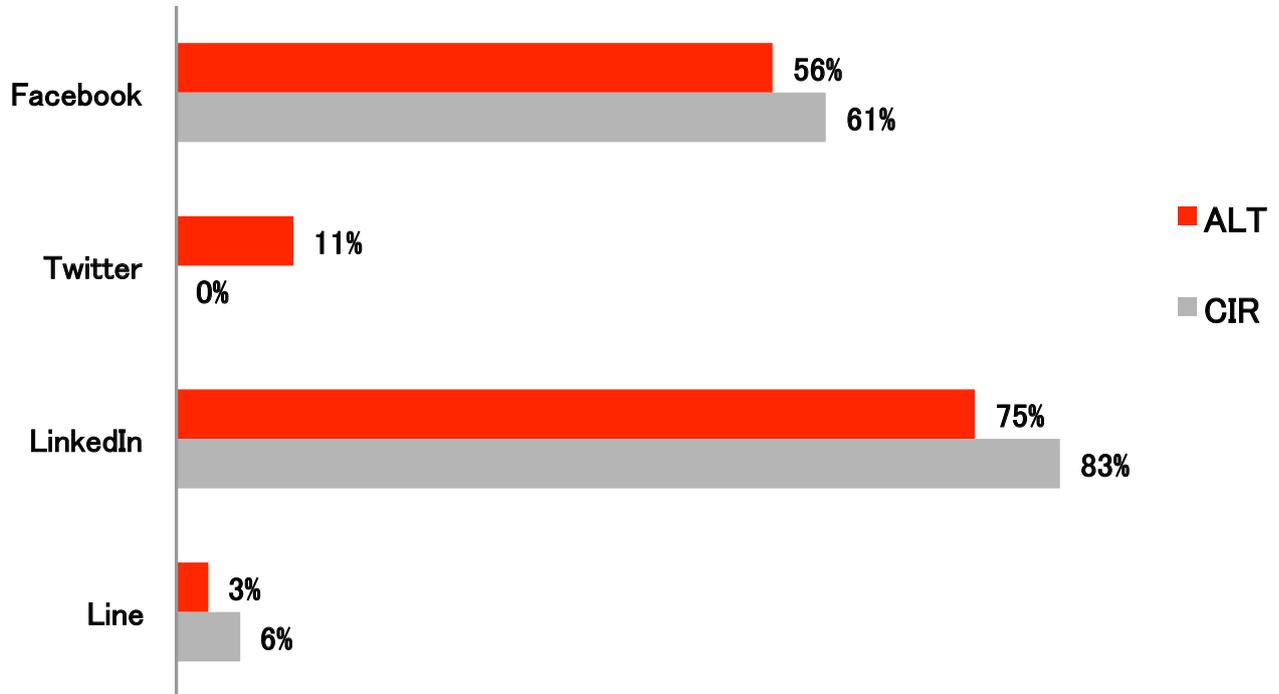


Overall, more JET alumni (45% of all respondents) have searched for professional or educational opportunities on social media than current JET participants (25% of all respondents). This large difference (20%) in social media use for professional or educational opportunities between JET participants and JET alumni could be attributed to the fact that JET alumni are more likely to be entering the job market and this specific use of social media may better fit their needs, compared with JET participants currently on the Programme.

Comparing the proportion of ALTs and CIRs who have used social media in this capacity suggests a possible emphasis on professional development for the JET alumni CIRs in particular. It also indicates that there is room for improvement in preparing JET Programme participants, especially CIRs, for utilising social media when searching for professional and educational advancement opportunities once their appointments are finished.

Figure 2.8

JET participants - social media usage for job/ continuing education opportunities

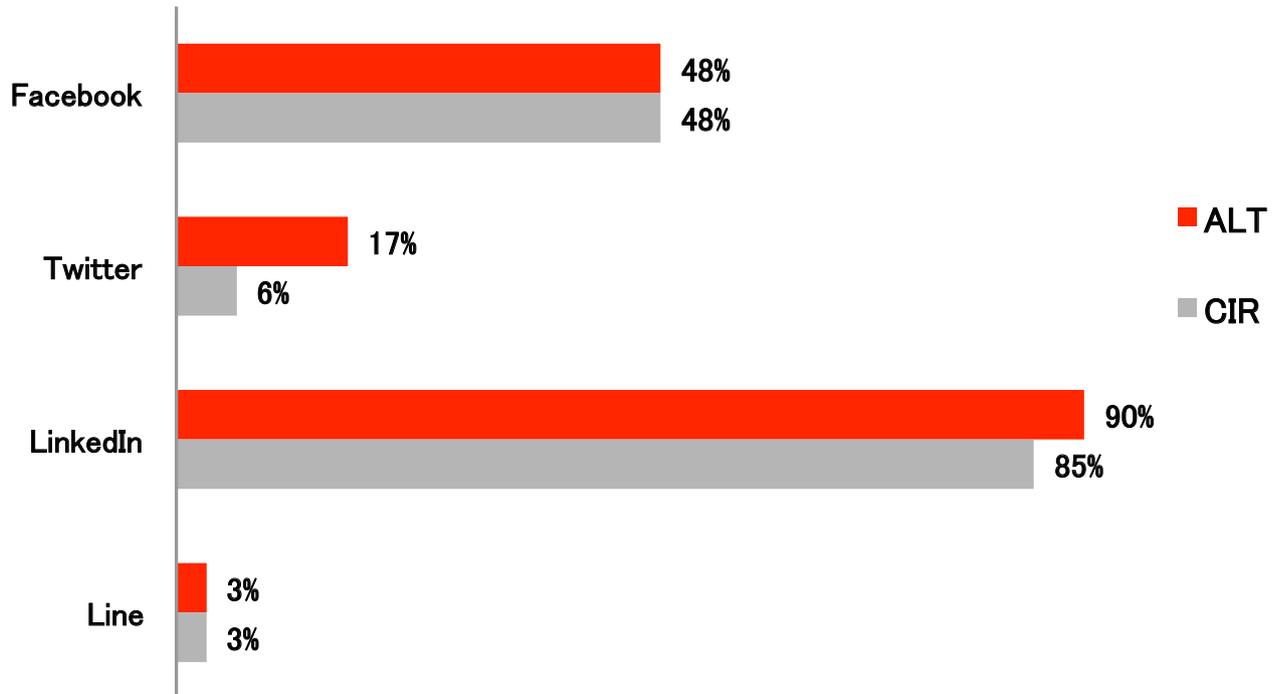


When asked what form of social media current JET participants used to look for job or educational opportunities, a large portion of ALTs (75%) mentioned LinkedIn, an online professional social network; Facebook was the second most utilised resource (used by 56% of ALTs). A clear majority of the current CIRs (83%) indicated LinkedIn as a key resource for job and educational opportunities.

As shown in the figure on the following page, these results are also similar in relation to JET alumni CIRs, with 85% making use of LinkedIn. However, for JET alumni ALT's, the results saw a 15% increase in the proportion of respondents using LinkedIn compared to current JET participants. Despite the ambivalence shown about the role and importance of social media in career development, as mentioned earlier, it is clear that both current JET participants and JET alumni use certain social media for specific purposes. CIRs in particular show a focus on professional development through utilising LinkedIn – an avenue that could potentially be explored for providing professional support to JET participants and JET alumni when they transition out of the JET Programme and into careers once their appointments are finished.

Figure 2.9

JET alumni - social media usage for job/continuing education opportunities



As a final note, the majority of JET participants (71%) and alumni (77%) who used social media for networking found it to be useful. These findings indicate that social media is a good way to find as well as advertise job and educational opportunities, particularly in relation to JET Programme participants.

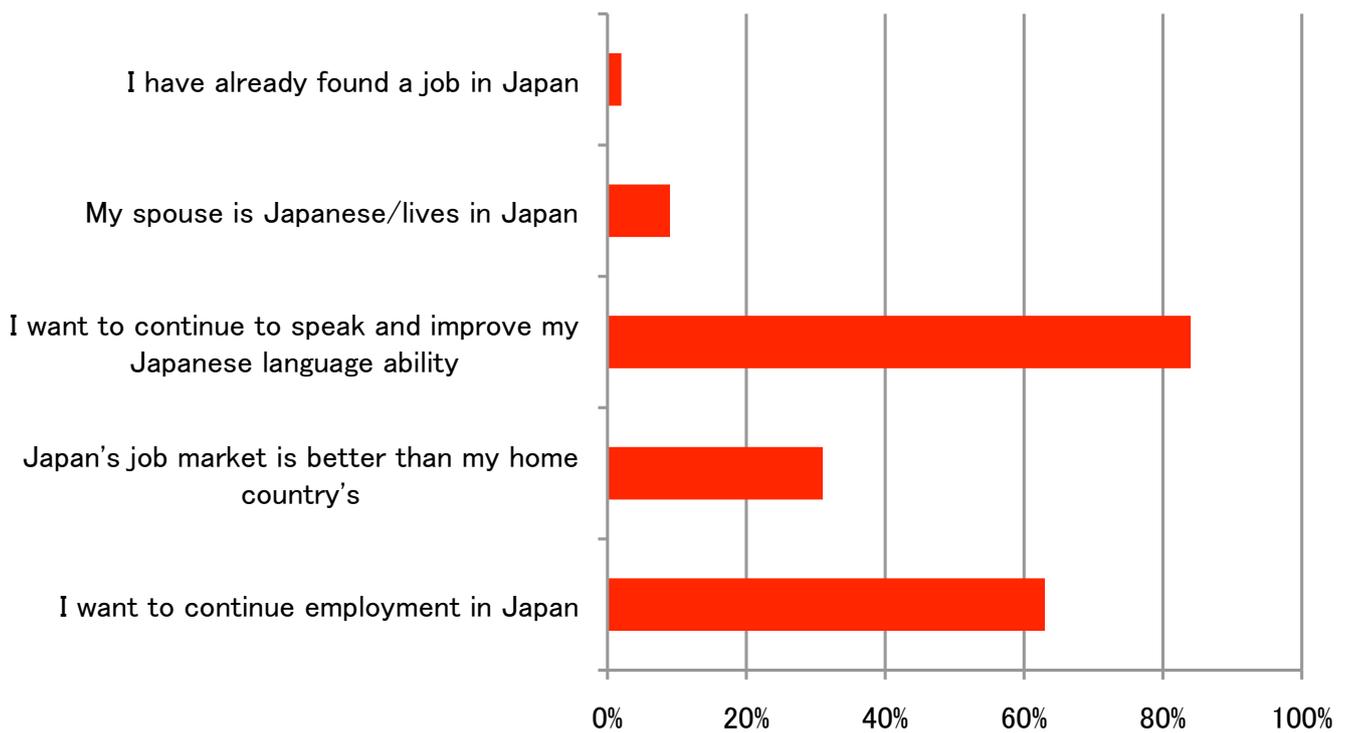
The JET Programme’s Influence on Future Careers and Fields of Education

This section investigates the influence that the JET Programme has on JET participants’ career interests, including the reasons they may choose to stay in Japan after completing their JET Programme appointment. This section also compares JET participants’ and JET alumni’s careers or primary fields of study before and after their JET appointments to see how they may be influenced by their JET Programme experience. In addition, the unique educational and career changes of CIRs during and after their JET appointments are also explored. Finally, this section of the report considers the JET Programme as an asset to professional development and examines how the connections that JET participants maintain with their Japanese community may impact their professional development.

JET Participants’ Plans after Completing their Appointment

Figure 3.1

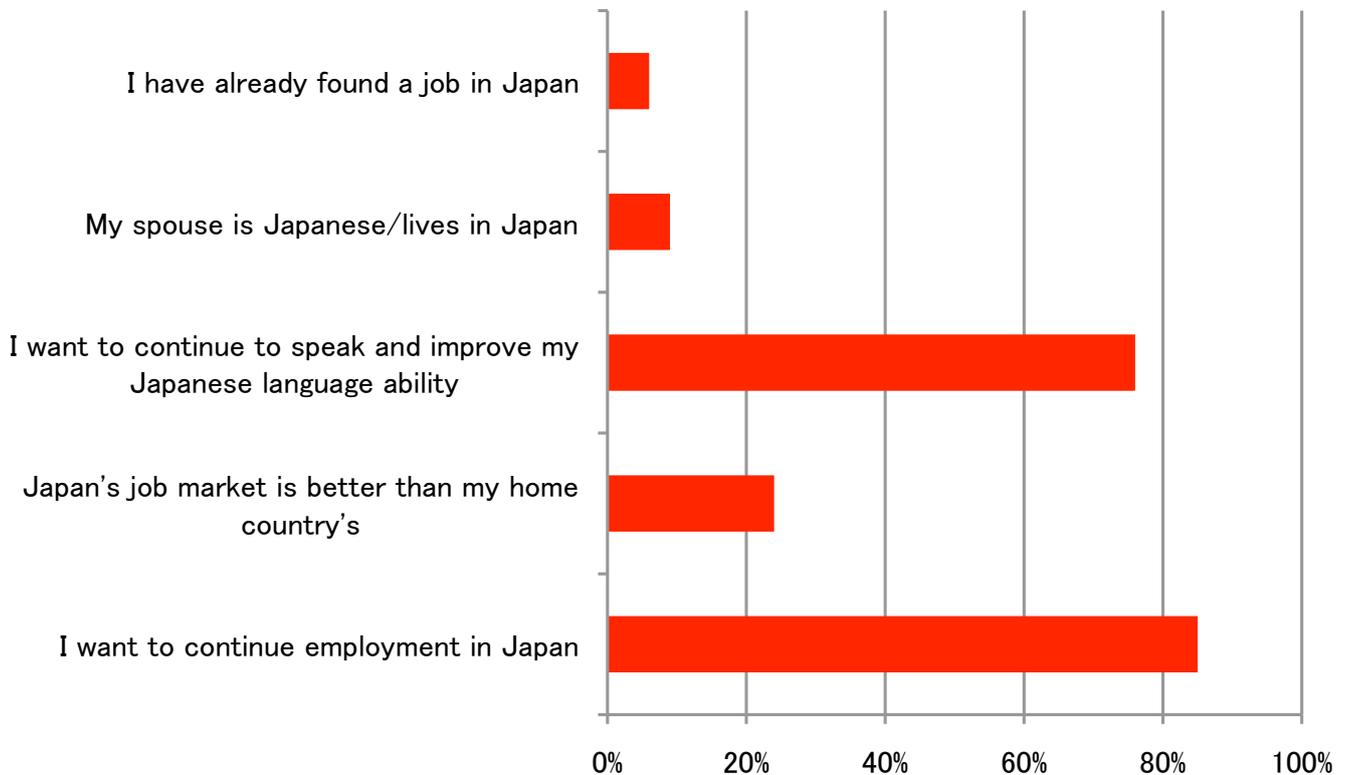
JET participants' reasons for considering staying in Japan



When current JET participants were asked if they would consider staying and working in Japan after their JET appointment ended, around one quarter (24% of respondents) responded positively, saying they did intend to stay, while the largest proportion (45%) responded as being unsure about their plans. This shows that the majority of JET participants are at least considering the possibility of staying and working in Japan once their appointment ends. When asked about why they might stay in Japan, the most common reason (reported by 83% of respondents) was to continue to speak and improve their Japanese language ability. It is possible that JET participants feel that language acquisition is a desirable skill and it therefore acts as a strong motivator for staying in Japan. Therefore, it is believed that greater support for CIRs and ALTs to improve their language ability would mean a greater international community capable of working smoothly with Japan.

Figure 3.2

Current CIRs' reasons for considering staying in Japan

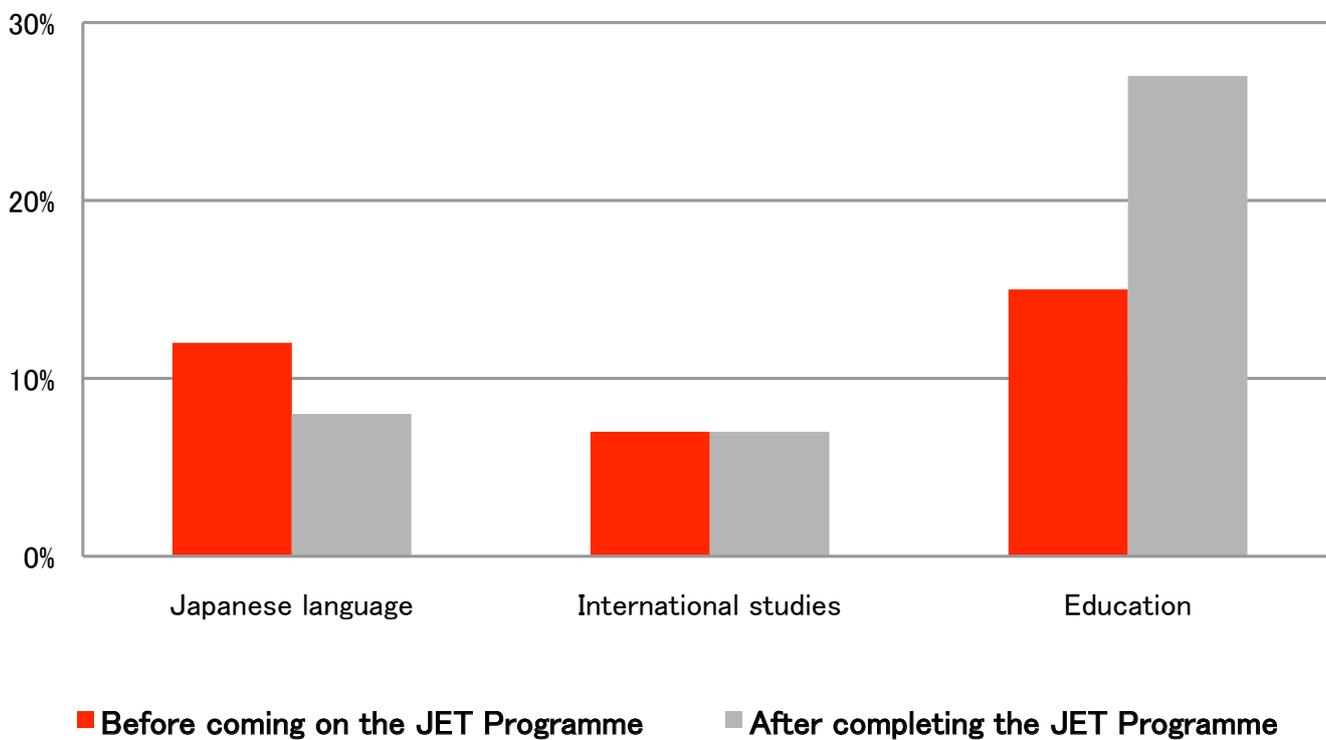


In contrast to the results for the overall survey population (discussed above) Figure 3.2 shows that for current *CIRs*, the most common reason for potentially staying in Japan is a desire to continue employment in Japan (selected by 85% of respondents). This represents an excellent opportunity for growing internationalisation in the Japanese workplace. By supporting JET participants who would like to stay and work in Japan, Japanese people may have the opportunity to work in a more international setting, becoming more familiar with foreigners and gaining cross-cultural experience on a professional level, which may be beneficial to Japanese society as a whole as it works to better integrate itself within the broader global community

Intended Career Paths or Fields of Study

Figure 3.3

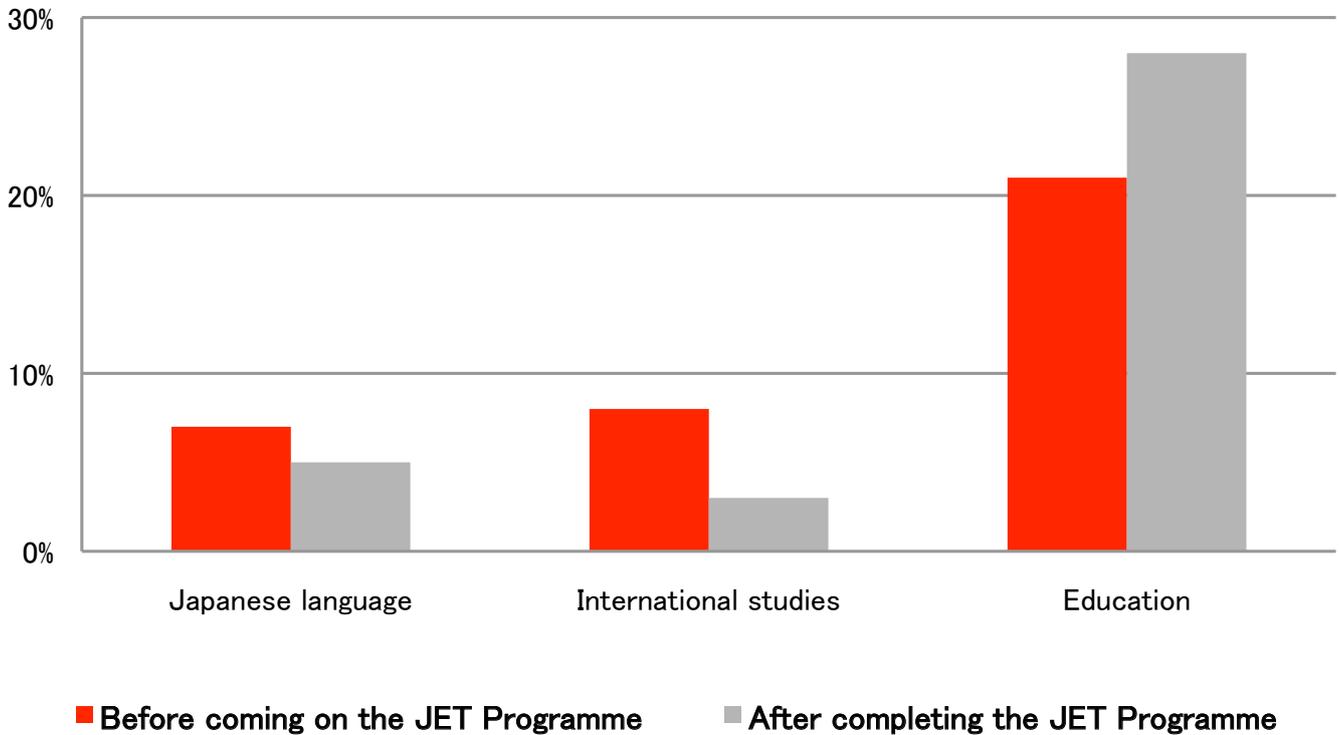
JET participants' intended career/field of study before and after the JET Programme



In terms of the different careers or fields of study that JET participants may choose before and after their JET appointment, there were some interesting results. According to the data, the number of JET participants planning to enter the field of education after they complete their time on the Programme (27% of respondents) is significantly higher than the number who had an existing background in education before joining the Programme (14%). These data suggest that JET participants' experience on the JET Programme may have a direct impact on their career and educational ambitions: encouraging them to pursue a career or course of study in education once they have left the Programme, even if it may not have been their background prior to coming to Japan.

Figure 3.4

JET alumni's career/field of study before and after the JET Programme

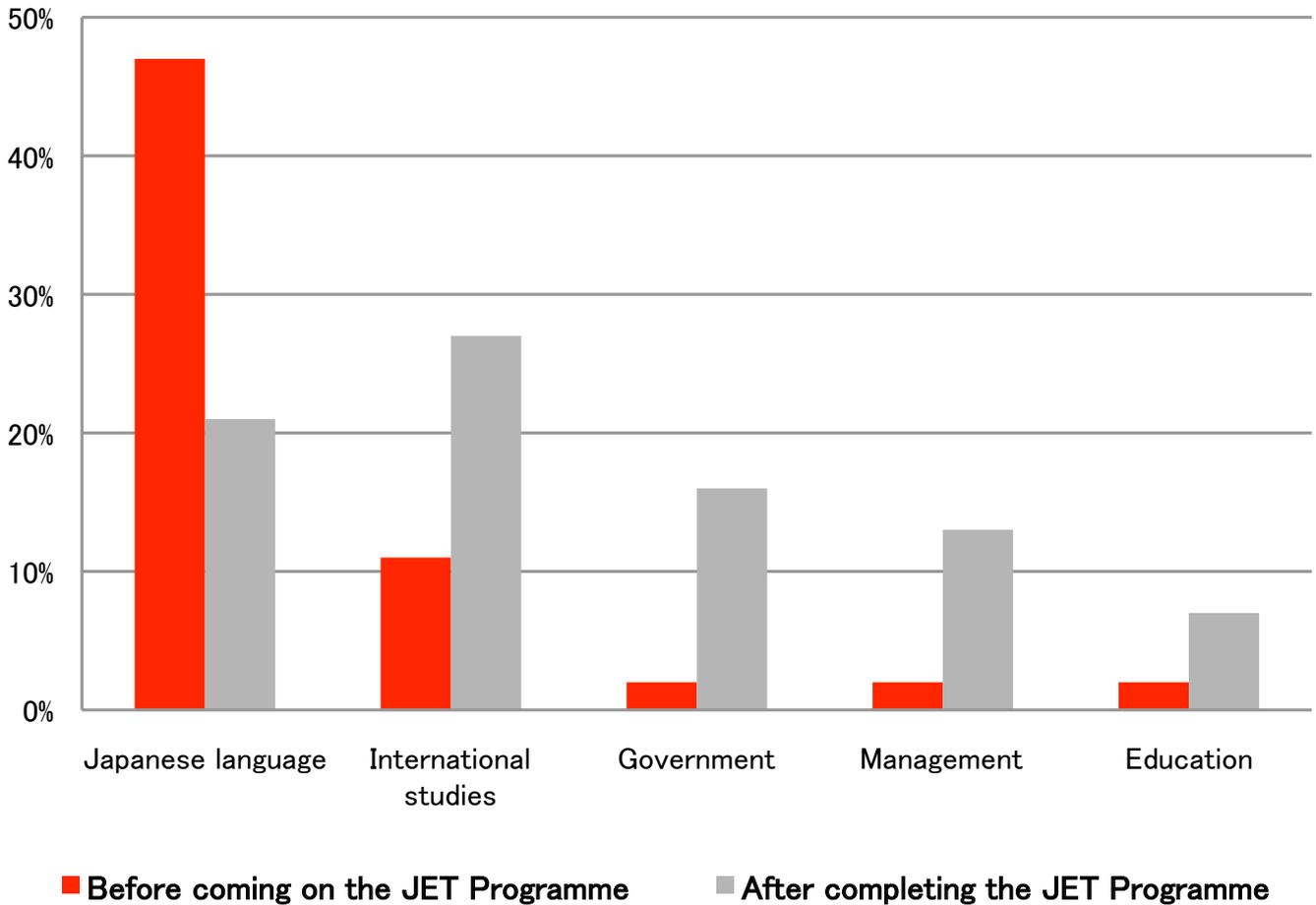


Furthermore, as shown in Figure 3.4 above, the proportion of JET alumni who came from a background in education before joining the programme was around 20%, while 27% are now involved in a career or study path in education. This reinforces the findings from current JET participants, described above, that the JET Programme increases participants' interest in education as a professional field. This idea is also supported by the fact that slightly more than half (51%) of the JET alumni who changed their career/study plans over the course of their time on the JET Programme believe that this change was a **direct** result of their experience on the programme.

It is also important to note that around half (52%) of JET alumni now pursuing education stated that they did not originally intend to pursue it as a career (prior to coming on the Programme). This indicates that investing in professional development in education for JET participants may further increase the likelihood that they pursue education as a professional field. This could strengthen grassroots internationalisation outside of Japan when JET alumni bring knowledge and awareness of Japan back to the classrooms of their home countries.

Figure 3.5

Current CIRs' intended career/field of study before and after the JET Programme



The data for CIRs in particular showed some interesting trends regarding their career and educational choices. The most popular field of study for CIRs prior to joining the JET Programme was Japanese language study (47% of respondents). Although there appears to be a sudden drop in interest in this field (to 20% of respondents) after CIRs' appointments end, this is likely to indicate that a significant percentage of CIRs achieve their Japanese language goals during their time on the Programme and therefore do not feel a need to further their studies or pursue a career in this field once their appointments have finished.

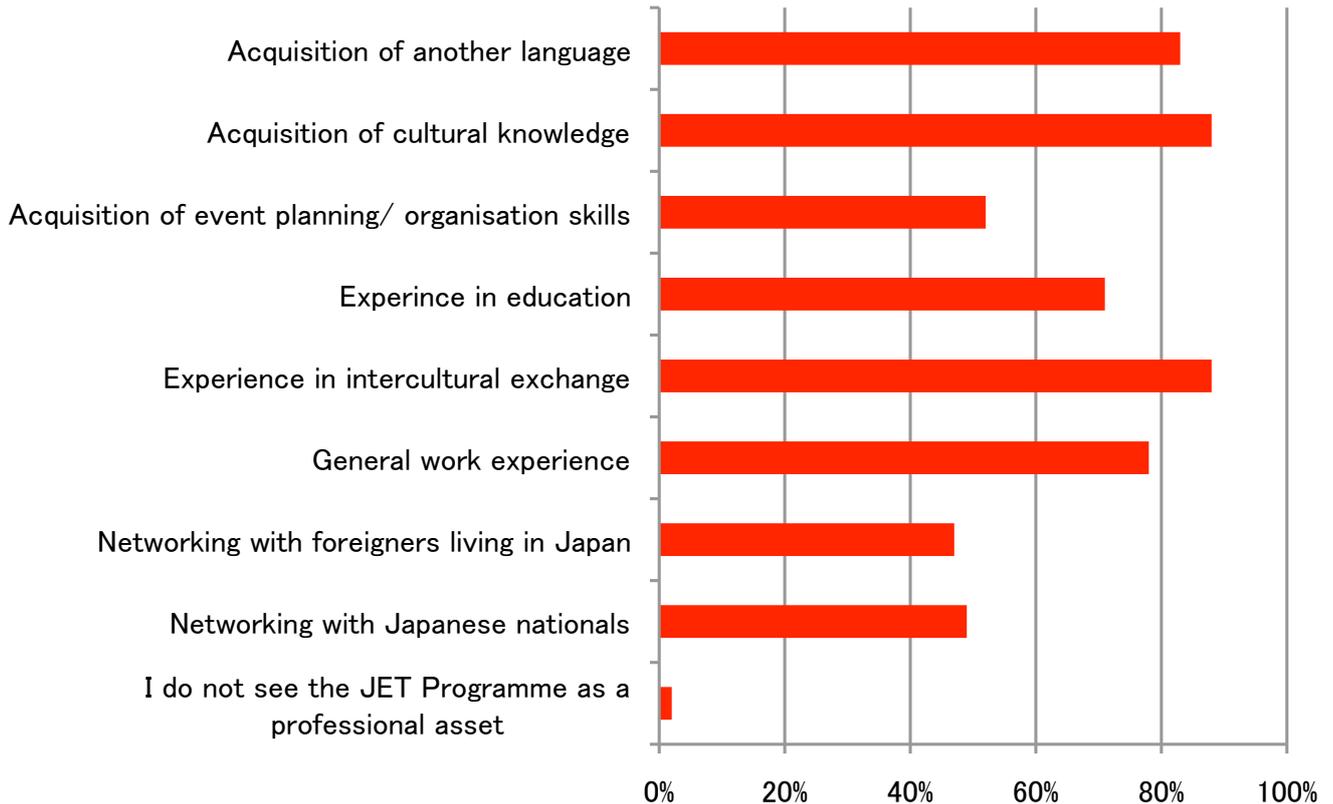
It is also important to note the significant differences in the level of interest of CIR alumni before coming on and after completing the Programme, in relation to international studies (a change of 16%) and government fields (a change of 14%). This suggests that CIR appointments on the JET Programme are well-suited to fields in social and public service. This is positive because it shows that CIRs are gaining experiences and acquiring new skills that will make them a more influential force in the global arena. Having a bilingually competent constituency can only aid Japan's international relations; future leaders will have a strong personal connection to Japan and first-hand knowledge of its customs and professional systems. It is suggested that more support be given to JET alumni in locating professional opportunities so that Japan can stay connected to these potential global leaders, who know the importance of understanding another country – more specifically, the importance of understanding Japanese, its culture in business, politics, and other international-related fields. In other words, it is in Japan's best interest to invest specifically in CIRs as potential global leaders, partners, and representatives of Japan, and to help them to put these new skills to use.

The JET Programme as an Asset to Professional Development

An overwhelming proportion of current JET participants (82%) responded that they see the JET Programme as a professional asset towards their future career/field of study. The most common benefits of the JET Programme that respondents anticipated were 'experience in intercultural exchange and communication' (89% of respondents), 'acquisition of cultural knowledge' (88%), and 'acquisition of the Japanese language' (83%). This is meaningful because it suggests that JET participants (and JET alumni) are anticipating using the Japan-related knowledge they gain from the Programme in their future careers, whatever they may be. See figure 3.6 below for a full breakdown of these results.

Figure 3.6

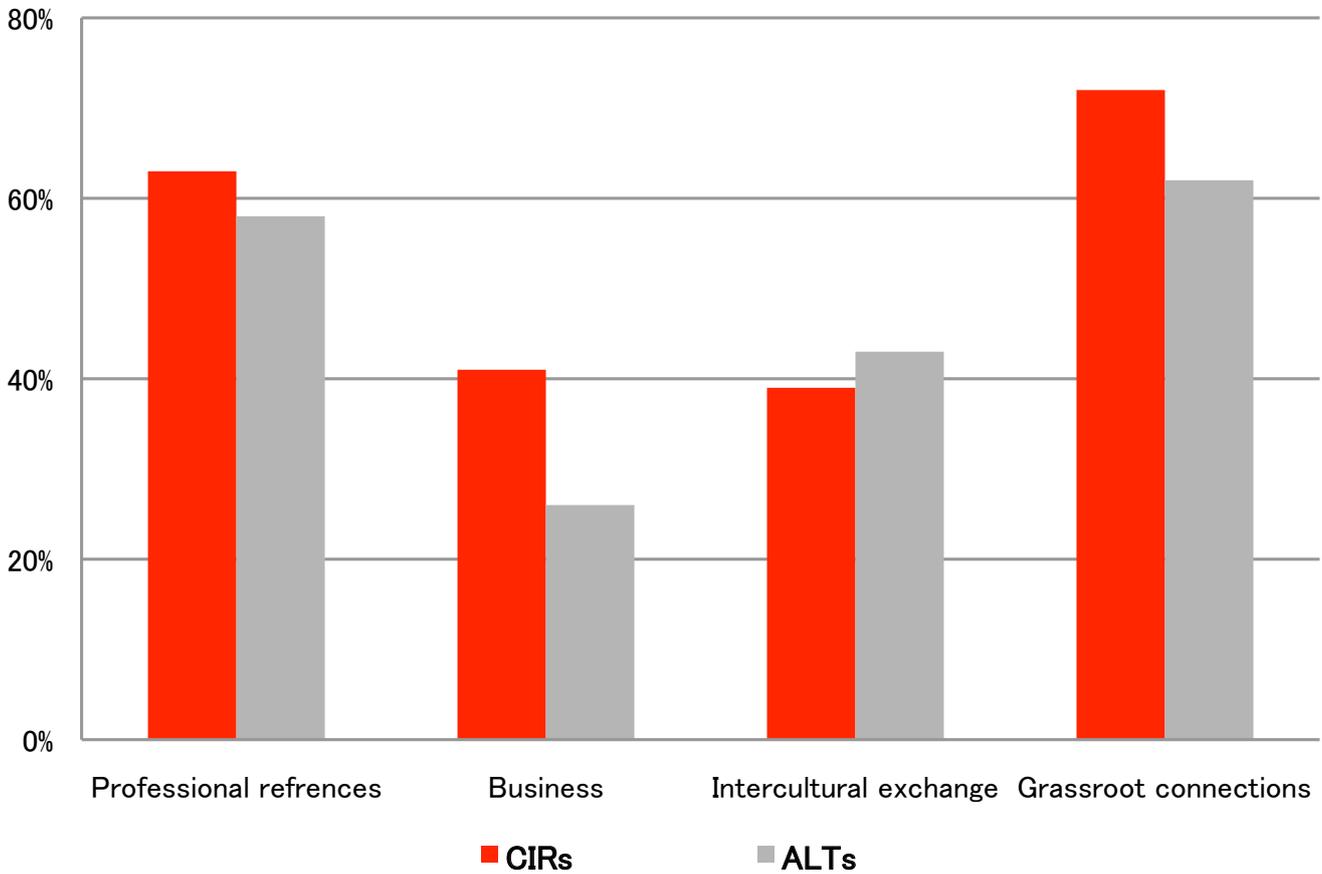
Professional assets JET Participants expect to gain while on the JET Programme



Compared to current JET participants, a much smaller proportion of JET alumni (57% of respondents) indicated they thought the JET experience would be a professional asset applicable to their future career/field of study when they *first applied* for the Programme. However, data from the JET alumni also shows that, when applying for work after their JET appointment ended, two thirds (66%) believed their time on JET was considered an asset by potential employers and admissions officials. This shows that despite the apparent difference between JET participants and JET alumni regarding their initial perceptions of the JET Programme as a professional asset, the reality of the situation is that JET alumni commonly utilise their JET Programme experience to appeal to potential employers.

Figure 3.7

How do you think maintaining ties with your current Japanese community will be important in your future career/field of study?



The data in Figure 3.7, which was discussed briefly earlier in this report (see Figure 1.7), illustrates that both CIRs and ALTs most value the personal relationships (grassroot connections) and professional references that can be gained from the JET Programme in relation to their future career or field of study. This suggests that JET participants see personal relationships and cultural exchange to be the defining aspects of the JET Programme. When encouraging current JET participants (and JET alumni) to maintain ties with their Japanese communities (which was discussed earlier as being of great benefit to both the participant and the community itself), it may be beneficial to emphasise these as key assets in relation to a participant’s ongoing professional development. If JET participants better understand the potential benefits of their personal relationships with Japanese people, they may become more invested in those relationships, which would allow them to extend beyond a JET participant’s tenure and benefit Japanese society.

In addition, as was shown earlier in this report (see Figure 1.8), ‘career opportunities’ only ranked fourth highest in terms of the benefits current JET participants anticipate from joining a JET alumni association once their appointment ends. These data indicate that JET participants see personal relationships and cultural exchange to be the key benefits of joining JET alumni associations, and may suggest that they are not fully aware of the professional development and networking opportunities that are also provided by such associations. In order to ensure that the JET Programme remains an asset to professional development for JET alumni, and to encourage alumni to maintain ties with their former communities, it is recommended that the JET Programme administration work with JET alumni associations to better promote these benefits to all JET participants and in doing so forge a critical link between the knowledge and experience gained on the JET Programme and the future career plans of JET alumni.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The major aims of this report were to determine Japan's return on investment of JET participants through tourism and maintaining relationships with Japan and the JET community after their appointment ends; to specify how social media usage relates to JET participants' professional development, networking and job searching, in addition to how it helps to maintain relationships with Japan; and to identify how the JET Programme affects the professional lives of participants.

Overall report findings suggest that JET alumni generate valuable tourism revenue in addition to serving as powerful public diplomacy, cultural, and business assets to Japan. This report shows that 44% of JET alumni report spending at least ¥100,000 on tourism in Japan. In addition, 29% of respondents say their friends or family spend at least ¥100,000 on their visits to Japan. If an estimate of 55,000 JET alumni exists and the sample survey population used can accurately represent the entire JET alumni population, the extrapolated amount of tourism revenue JET alumni brings to Japan can be quantified at ¥4.24 billion, as a conservative estimate.

As shown by survey responses, almost all JET alumni maintain some form of ties with Japan. A small percentage of respondents are involved with sister-city and international exchange programmes. However, almost half of JET alumni reported that they participate in volunteer or charity work that supports Japan. Moreover, the data show that JET alumni who join a JET alumni association are more likely to volunteer and maintain frequent ties with Japan and the JET community than those JET alumni who do not join a JET alumni association. This trend suggests that established organisational structures are more effective in engaging JET alumni to maintain relationships with Japan and the JET community, compared with individual efforts.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that MIC, MOFA, MEXT and CLAIR investigate further ways to support JET alumni associations in order to maintain and perhaps further develop JET alumni relationships with Japan and the JET community, thus helping to achieve one of the JET Programme's missions to establish goodwill relationships with foreign countries.

Additionally, this report concludes that almost all JET participants, regardless of their position, view Facebook as a good method of sharing information about Japan. Based on the data, current JET participants have the ability to reach over 1 million people and expose them to information about Japan; with over 450,000 people potentially exposed to information about Japan several times each week. However, to get a more accurate picture of the true return on investment via social media, further research would be needed to minimise several biases such as overlapping connections (that is, people) and the fact that this survey was heavily promoted via social media.

This report also shows that a secondary purpose of social media is to search for professional and educational development opportunities. According to the responses, LinkedIn is the professional social media network used most by current JET participants and alumni. However, JET alumni and CIRs tend to utilise this tool more than (current) ALTs, which is understandable given that CIRs have a more professional focus in their current roles compared to the majority of ALTs, and because JET alumni have more need for career-related services after their appointments have ended. Based on this data, this report recommends further exploration of ways social media can provide professional support to JET participants and alumni once their appointments are finished, such as a CLAIR network on LinkedIn through which JET alumni can introduce the JET Programme to potential employers and other professional connections.

Finally, this report also sought to determine how the JET Programme impacts JET participants and alumni on a professional basis. Based on the survey results, the majority of current JET participants feel the JET experience is a valuable asset to their future career or field of study and this is supported by the experience reported by JET alumni. The most popular field JET participants pursue after their JET Programme tenure is education.

In addition, the majority of JET participants nominated Japanese language, cultural knowledge, and intercultural exchange as the main reasons they think the JET Programme will be a professional asset to their future career. This trend suggests that many JET participants may intend to pursue a career that involves the use of Japanese cultural awareness and language skills which will help expand Japan's professional network in the global community. This will provide increased opportunities that will benefit Japan's international and political relations. The data also showed that current JET participants felt the JET Programme would be a greater professional asset to them than JET alumni did. This suggests that professional development opportunities need improving in order for JET participants to successfully continue maintaining beneficial ties with Japan once they leave the Programme.

Moreover, this report shows that a large majority of JET participants would consider the possibility of staying and working in Japan after the completion of their JET appointment. It could be argued that with experience living and working in Japan, JET participants are more familiar with Japanese culture than other foreigners and therefore JET alumni are ideal leaders to help spearhead Japan's goal of achieving *tabunka kyousei* (multicultural society). Based on this argument and the data findings, this report recommends that the Japanese government explore options for giving priority to JET alumni seeking careers in Japan such as by holding opinion exchanges with the JET alumni associations to help aid the development of the JET Programme. In addition, consider granting JET alumni more opportunities for permanent roles as professional, full-time educators in Japan by having greater visibility at the After JET Conference. It may also be possible to sponsor a recruitment fair so that those Japanese organisations and business who desire to hire foreigners can connect with the JET alumni population more easily.

