



2014-2015 NATIONAL AJET SERVICES REVIEW

Spring 2015

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JET INVOLVEMENT IN TOURISM AND ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report contains a review of the current operations of the Association for Japan Exchange and Teaching (AJET) and the services and resources it provides the JET Programme community, as evaluated over the course of the AJET National Council term for this year (June 2014 - May 2015). This review draws on both data taken from a survey given to current JET Programme participants and an internal review of National AJET's yearly goals and activities. As a follow-up to a similar report published last year, National AJET feels that it is important to continue evaluating the impressions held by the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme community in order to evaluate the effect of various recent changes in the operations of the organisation.

This report shows that the impressions held of National AJET by JET Programme participants are generally more positive than negative, but that there is also a significant amount of indifference and unawareness of its service and operations. Furthermore, there continues to be confusion about the role of National AJET, particularly in light of recent changes, such as the lack of an official presence at Post-Arrival (Tokyo) Orientation.

Survey results also revealed areas for improvement in the services that National AJET offers, such as re-evaluation of existing services for relevancy and holding events that involve not only JET Programme participants but also the Japanese community.

Nevertheless, the AJET National Council was able to achieve all of its goals for the year, which included increased financial sustainability, renewal of the website, new community-building resources such as Facebook groups, and stronger relationships with JET Programme alumni. Furthermore, the decision was made to change secondary positions into appointed positions, separate from block representative duties, in the following 2015-2016 term. This will increase representation of the JET community on the National Council and allow more qualified candidates to have enough time to dedicate to their positions.

In this way, the AJET National Council continues to strive to provide a framework for JET Programme participants to make the most of their JET Programme experiences and successfully fulfill the goals of the Programme.

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INTRODUCTION

The 2014-2015 JET Programme year saw many changes introduced to the relationship between the Association for Japan Exchange and Teaching (AJET) and the Council of Local Authorities for International Relations (CLAIR). In particular, Tokyo Orientation in 2014 no longer included an information fair component, the AJET Centre, AJET Desk, lifestyle workshops, nor any official presence by National AJET.

As this is a significant change from years past, National AJET was interested in learning how these changes affected how JET Programme participants first encountered National AJET and its services.

Furthermore, to improve the quality of the services provided by National AJET and its reputation in the JET Programme community, the spring survey was designed to collect feedback on the types of services participants use, what they would like to see in the future, National AJET's social media presence and redesigned website, and impressions of National AJET and its Block Representatives.

Finally, the AJET National Council conducted its annual review to evaluate this year's achievements, ongoing projects, unsuccessful initiatives, and the extent to which the goals that were set at the beginning of the term have been completed.

This report presents the findings of the AJET spring survey in addition to the self-review performed by the current AJET National Council.

METHODOLOGY

The data used in this report came from a survey conducted by the Association for Japan Exchange and Teaching (AJET) over the period from March 10, 2015 to March 31, 2015. The survey was distributed to current JET Programme participants using an online survey development tool. The survey consisted of 47 questions that were all written in English, in a variety of formats including 'Yes' or 'No', multiple choice, free response, and rating agreement on a scale of 1-9. For questions using this scale, respondents chose numbers between 1-9, with 1 indicating strong disagreement with the statement, 5 indicating neither agreement nor disagreement, and 9 indicating strong agreement.

The topics covered in the survey included participants' first encounters with and impressions of National AJET; National AJET's services, website and social media presence; and the National AJET blocks.

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
- AJET: The Association for Japan Exchange and Teaching
- JET: Japan Exchange and Teaching (Programme)

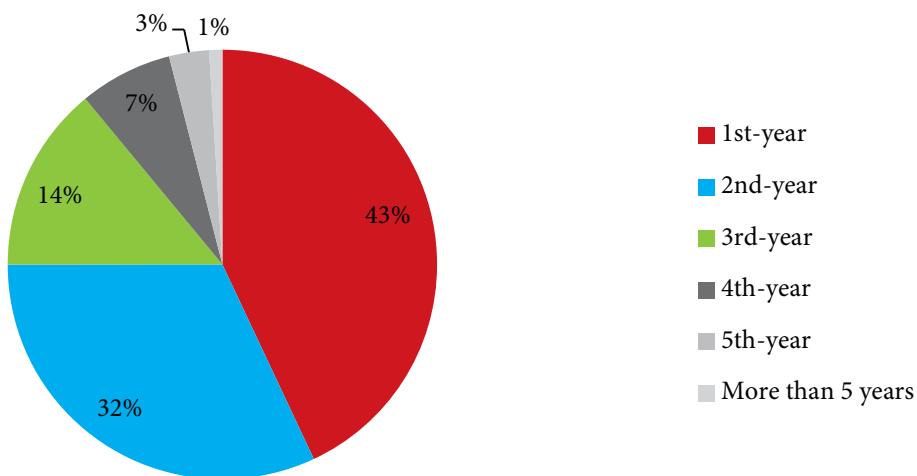
For the purposes of this report, survey percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

SURVEY SAMPLE

These surveys collected responses from a total of 1,122 JET Programme participants, representing approximately 25% of the total current JET Programme population in Japan.

The largest proportion of respondents identified themselves as being in their first year on the JET Programme (43%), with second- and third-year participants the next most populous groups (32% and 14%, respectively). The graphs below show the complete breakdown of respondents by year on the JET Programme.

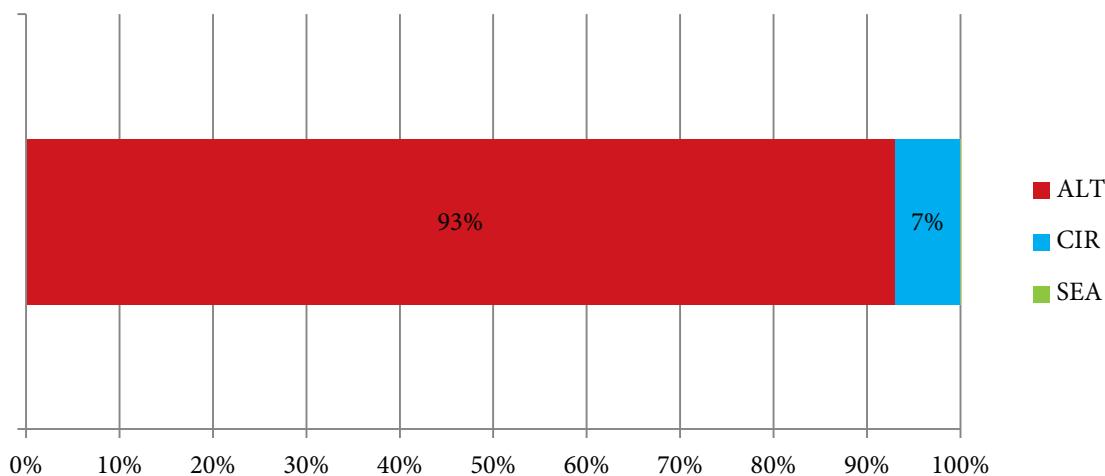
Year on JET (Current Participants)



Note: Although the maximum tenure for the JET Programme is currently five years, 'More than 5 years' is used to denote JET participants who have a combined total of more than five years over two or more separate appointments.

The majority of respondents (93%) were Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs), with Coordinators for International Relations (CIRs) accounting for 7% of respondents. The remaining survey respondents were Sports Exchange Advisors (SEAs), although at a total sample size of 1 person among two surveys, they represent less than 1% of the total respondents. These figures closely mirror the demographics of the JET Programme population as a whole, in which 91% are ALTs, 8% are CIRs, and 0.25% are SEAs. The graphs below shows the breakdown of respondents by job type.

Position on the JET Programme (Current Participants)



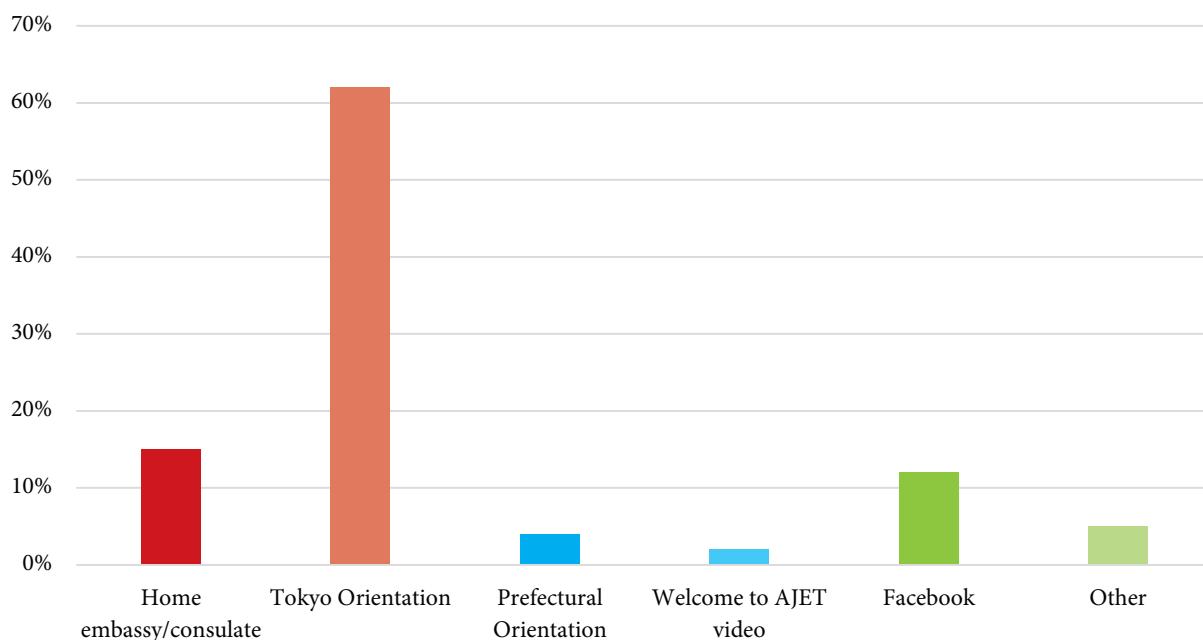
Note: While the sample size for ALTs and current JET Programme participants as a whole are statistically representative, there is not a representative sample size for CIRs or SEAs. Therefore, while job type may be used in the report to clarify observations and inferences, it should not be considered representative of JET Programme participants in these positions unless additional research is performed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH NATIONAL AJET

When asked how they had first heard about National AJET, the greatest number of respondents (62%) answered at Post-Arrival Orientation (hereafter referred to as ‘Tokyo Orientation’), followed by flyers and information provided by home embassies and consulates (15%), and through Facebook (12%). The number of years respondents have spent on the JET Programme correlated with the likelihood that participants had first encountered National AJET at Tokyo Orientation, with 79% of 5th-year JET Programme participants and 86% of second-time participants with more than 5 years on the Programme indicating this. In comparison, only 42% of first-year JET Programme participants who reported first hearing about National AJET during Tokyo Orientation.

First Encounters with National AJET



This is perhaps unsurprising, as National AJET no longer has an official presence at the Tokyo Orientation as of 2014, compared with a large and active presence in the past. However, the fact that as many as 42% of first-year JET Programme participants still learned about National AJET at Tokyo Orientation is encouraging. The orientation in Tokyo remained the primary method for JET Programme participants to learn about National AJET across all years, by a margin that ranged from 19% for first-years to 68% for fifth-years.

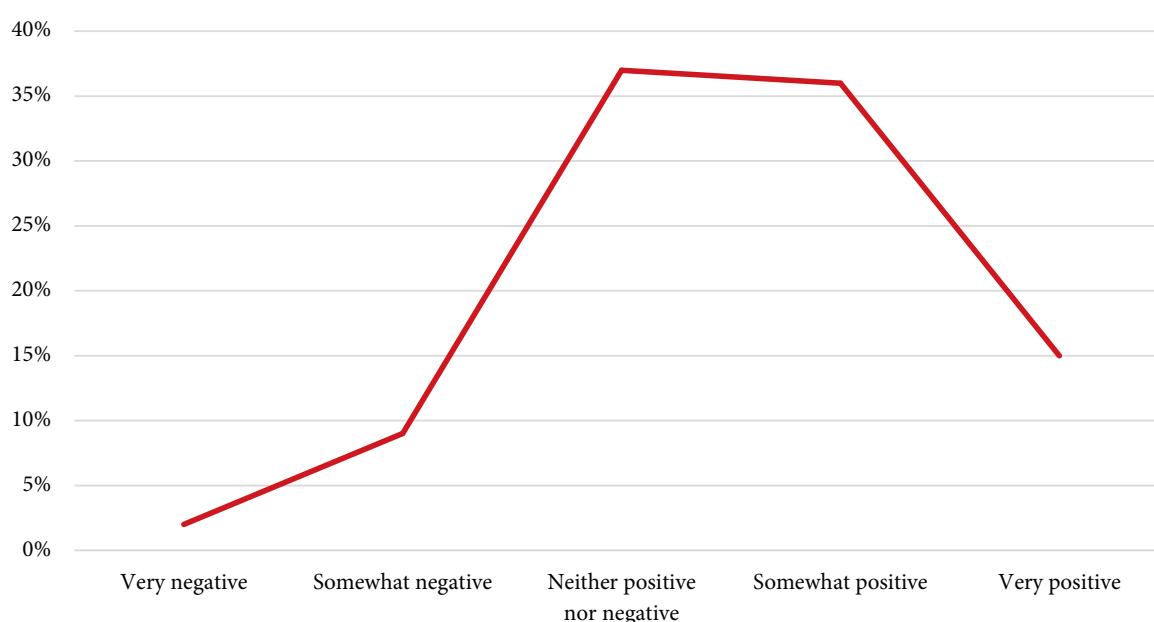
Aside from Tokyo Orientation, another area to explore is information and flyers given by embassies and consulates in participants’ home countries. National AJET does provide information to a few consulates, and would be interested in expanding this cooperative effort to reach more incoming JET Programme participants before they arrive in Tokyo.

One of the lowest responses given regarding where participants first learned about National AJET was at their prefectural orientations (4%). This could certainly be improved through more communication with prefectural advisors and those in charge of these orientations. Efforts such as this could also further improve the connection between National AJET and its prefectural chapters.

IMPRESSIONS OF NATIONAL AJET

Owing to the fact that the National AJET council changes on a yearly basis and takes on many different projects, impressions of the organisation in the community are important to gauge and be aware of. When asked about their overall impression of National AJET, the majority of respondents (51%) answered in the positive, indicating either “Very positive” (15%) or “Somewhat positive” (36%). The largest single response was “Neither positive or negative” at 37%. In comparison, only 11% answered “Somewhat negative” or “Very negative”. Overall, this is encouraging for National AJET, but with a large amount of neutral and negative impressions in the community, it is worth exploring ways to create a more favourable impression.

Current Impression of National AJET



When asked if their impression of National AJET had changed over their years on the Programme, the majority of respondents who had previous opinions of National AJET indicated that their opinion had not changed (46%), followed by a positive change in opinion at 19%. This is double the number of respondents who indicated their opinion had changed negatively (8%), which is a positive result. A quarter of participants surveyed were either in their first year or indicated having no previous impression of National AJET.

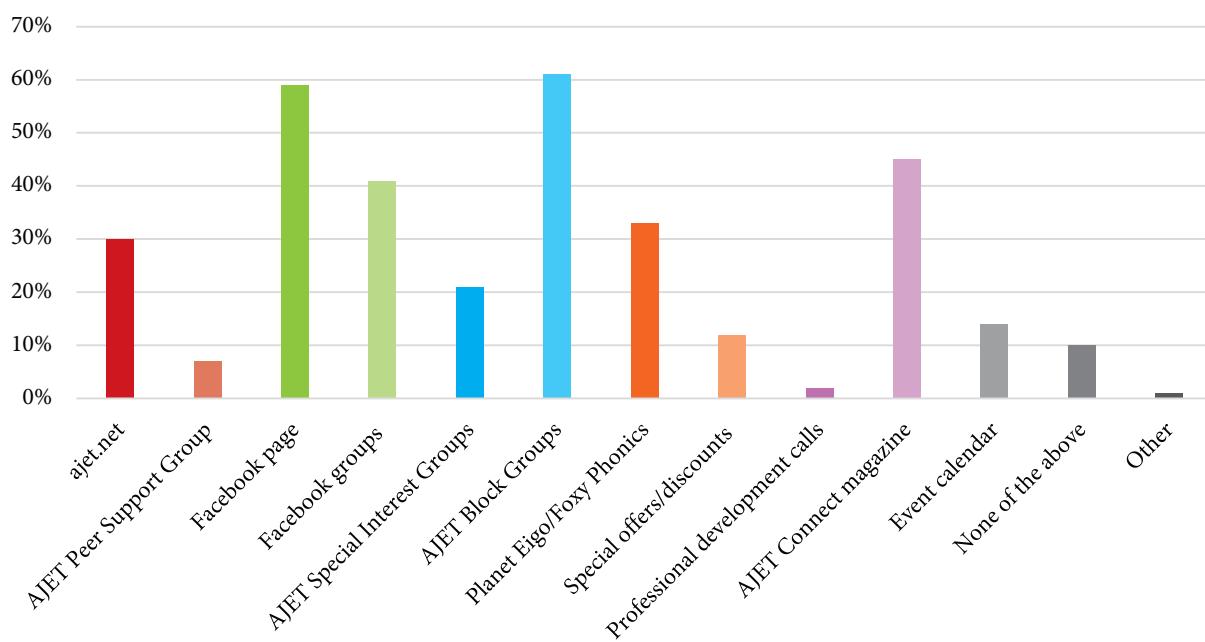
In the remaining 1% of responses, comments from survey participants indicated that they were unclear about the role of National AJET, with some noting that recent changes in the role National AJET serves led to uncertainty. Others simply did not know what the purpose of the organisation was. This suggests that National AJET could put more effort into making its purpose and goals clear to the JET Programme community as a whole, particularly after recent changes such as the discontinuation of National AJET services at Tokyo Orientation, and the transfer of responsibility for the After JET Conference career fair and speakers from National AJET to CLAIR.

One respondent framed it as such: “To tell the truth, I know National AJET exists but in a big brother away at college kind of way. I don’t pay much attention unless there is something I need to find out or do, like this survey. Still, it is comforting to know that there is a group of people working to make sure JETs are represented and that we don’t become disenchanted with the JET experience too easily.” This follows the general impression of National AJET being neutral yet helpful as indicated by the responses.

NATIONAL AJET SERVICES

Next, JET Programme participants were surveyed about which services provided by National AJET they had made use of in the past. The most common responses were the AJET Block Groups (61%), National AJET Facebook page (59%), AJET Connect magazine (45%), and Facebook groups for things such as job listings (41%). Any services offered on Facebook (including Connect magazine) saw consistently more usage than other services, possibly because respondents are already using Facebook, versus the National AJET website. In fact, one respondent stated, “It’s about the only part of AJET that actually contacts me on a regular basis. If it weren’t for my facebook group for my AJET block group [sic] I wouldn’t know about any of the things AJET does.”

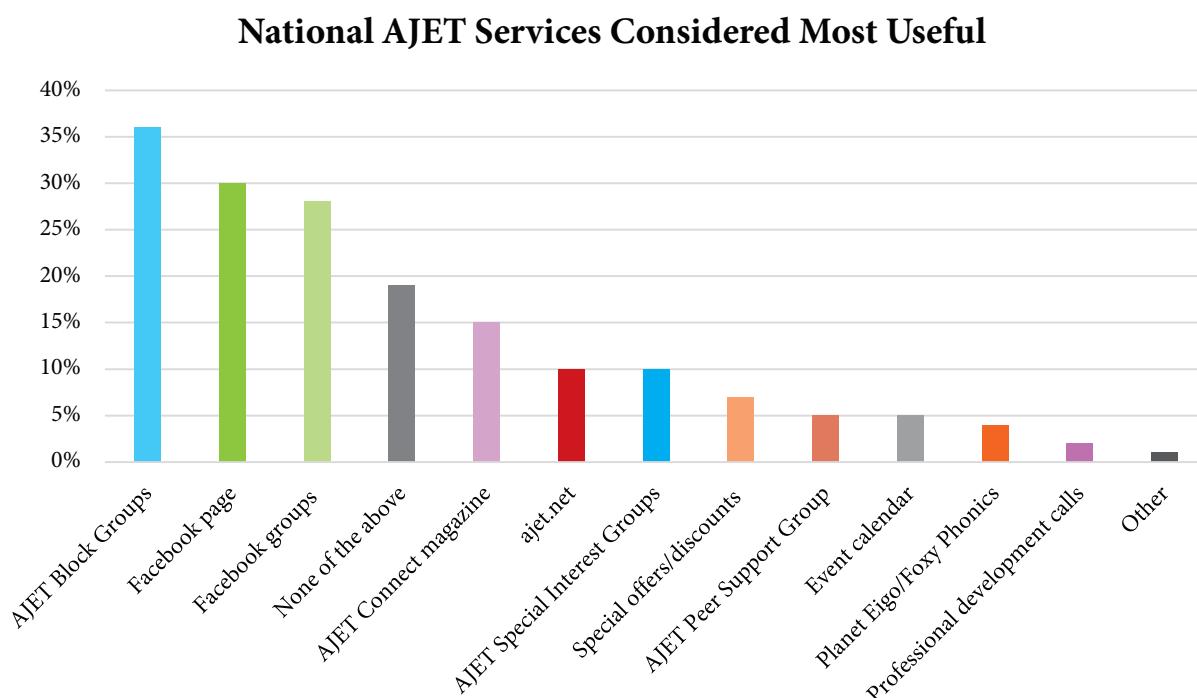
National AJET Services Used By JET Programme Participants



Services which were not as commonly used included professional development calls (2%), the AJET Peer Support Group (7%), and special offers or discounts for JETs (12%). Only 11% of respondents indicated “None of the above” when asked which National AJET services they had used. This indicates that almost 90% of respondents have used National AJET services of some sort in the past.

When asked to choose what had prevented them from using National AJET services in the past, the majority of respondents indicated that they did not know about them (61%), while many also indicated that they were not relevant to them (50%). Only 20% actually indicated that the services did not seem useful, and 11% had not used the services because they were inconvenient.

After indicating their usage of services, respondents were asked which services they felt were the most useful. Respondents were allowed to select multiple options, the most commonly chosen being AJET Block Groups (36%), the National AJET Facebook page (30%), Facebook groups for things such as job listings (28%), and AJET Connect magazine (15%). This follows the trend of those services which respondents had indicated using in the past. Similarly, the services least commonly selected by respondents as being useful were professional development calls (2%), the Japan events calendar (5%), the AJET Peer Support Group (5%), and special offers or discounts for JETs (7%).

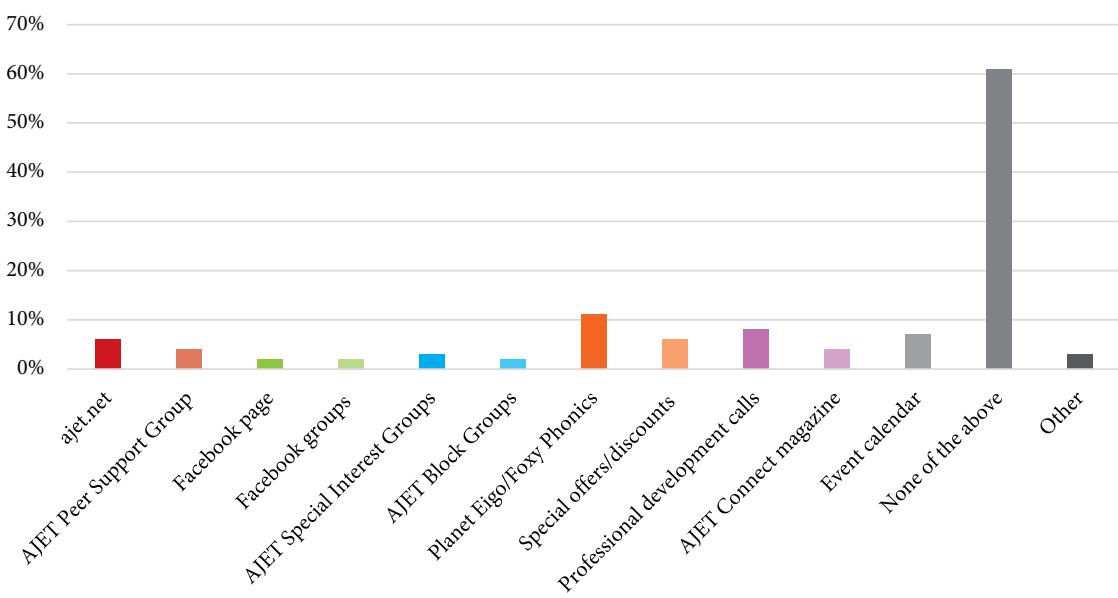


When asked why these services were useful to them, commonly repeated themes included: connecting with other participants, getting updates on events and opportunities, help in lesson planning, getting answers for questions from those with more experience or in similar situations, and that the information was convenient and easily accessible.

Examples of specific reasons offered to explain what made services useful included, “It kept me connected and informed me of things that I likely wouldn’t have successfully found on my own” and “[it] helps me stay connected to other JETs and lets me know what’s happening in the JET community on a prefectural & national level”. These responses would suggest that JET Programme participants most highly value services which are easy to access, keep them updated on opportunities, and connect them to others for support.

Services which were reported to be not as useful were the AJET publications Planet Eigo and Foxy Phonics (11%), professional development calls (8%), and the Japan events calendar (7%). Interestingly, 61% of respondents selected “None of the above” when asked which services they felt were not useful, possibly suggesting that, even if JET Programme participants do not use a particular service, they may still believe it to be useful for others.

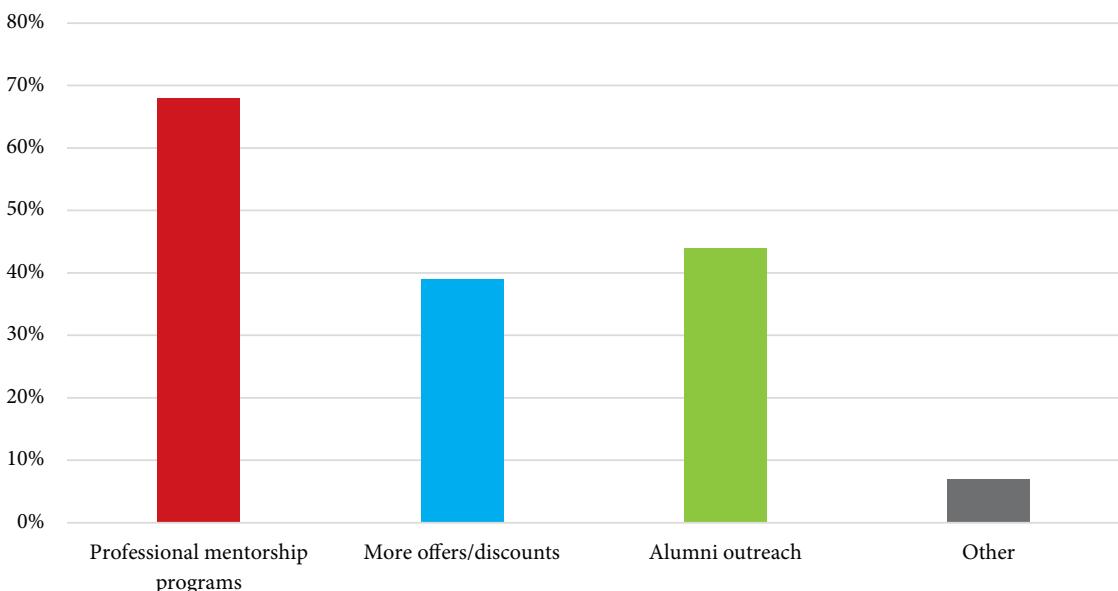
National AJET Services Considered Least Useful



When asked why these services were not useful, respondents typically answered they had not known about them, they were not relevant, offers and events for large cities are harder or more expensive to access, or simply that they had not used them. Ensuring ample promotion of the correct services to the correct participants could address some of these issues, as well as providing services to those living outside the main cities.

National AJET presented three potential services they are considering offering in the future, and asked respondents which they would like to see. The most selected was professional mentorship programmes (68%), followed by expanded alumni outreach (44%), and more offers or discounts for JET Programme participants (39%). The last is particularly interesting, as only 7% of respondents had indicated offers and discounts as being useful, with 11% saying that they had taken advantage of offers and discounts arranged by National AJET. This could suggest that those offers which were available were not of interest to the majority of JET Programme participants, or that there was not sufficient publicity to make participants aware of them.

Services Desired By JET Programme Participants

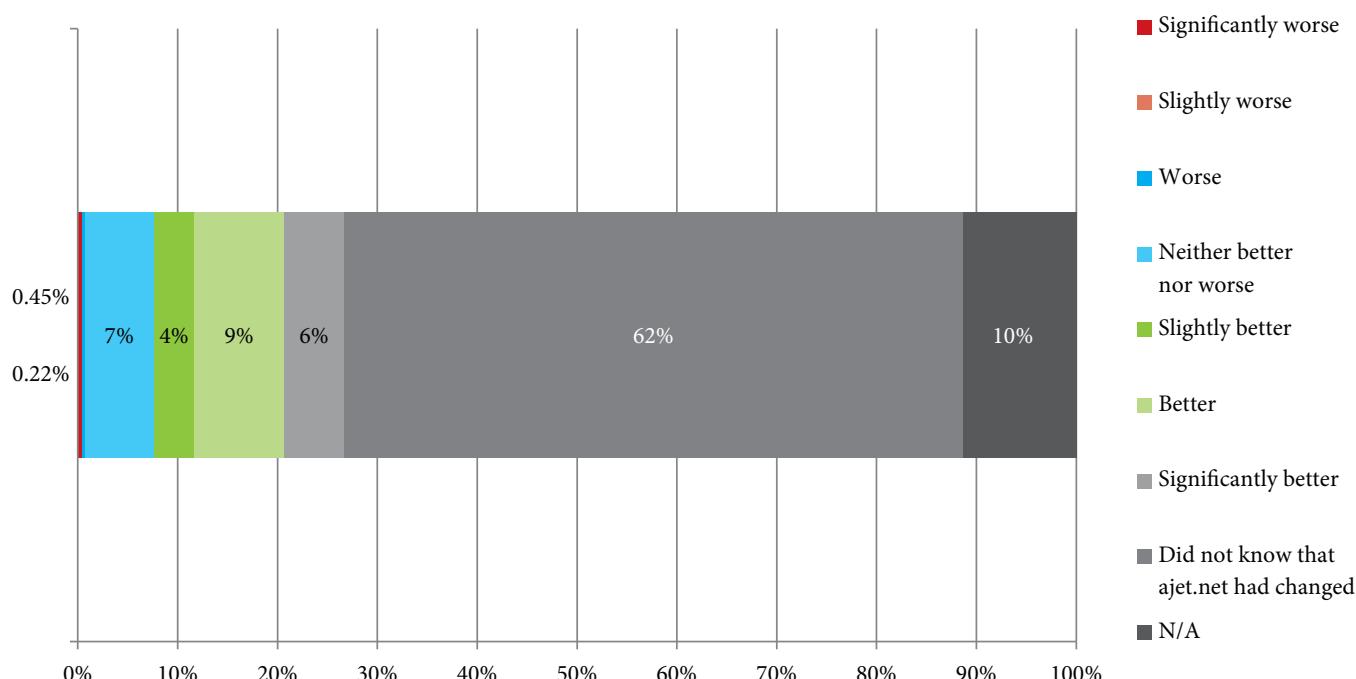


Respondents were also given the chance to write in their own suggestions for services that National AJET could offer. Common suggestions included: language courses, professional development in fields outside of teaching, grants and scholarships, ways to provide feedback on the JET Programme directly, job-related resources for life after the JET Programme, opportunities for involvement with the Japanese community, and National AJET presence at Tokyo Orientation.

AJET WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA

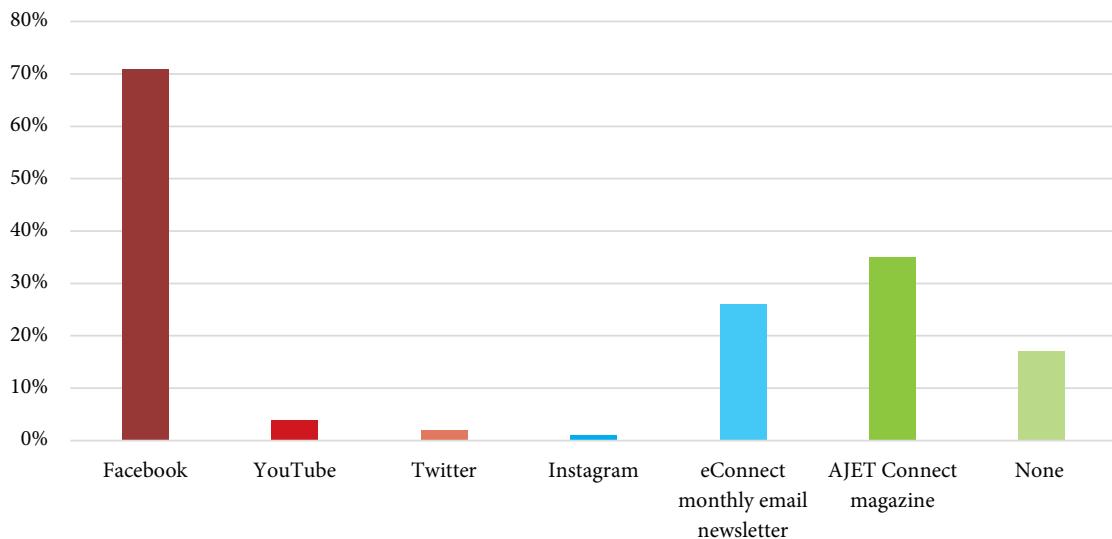
At the end of 2014, National AJET launched a redesign of their main website. Respondents were asked how they rated the new website over the old design. Over half of respondents (62%) did not know that the website had changed. This could be due to not having accessed the website prior to December 2014, or to having never accessed the website at all. For those who noted the change, 30% indicated that it was slightly better, better, or significantly better. A small number of respondents (7%) felt it was neither better nor worse than before, and even fewer indicated it was worse (0.22%) or significantly worse (0.45%).

Ratings of the New Website vs. the Previous Website



When asked if the redesign would make them more likely to visit the website, the wide majority (83%) indicated it had no change on their usage. However, 16% of respondents said that they would be more likely to visit, and only 1% said they were less likely. Over a course of 5 months after the renewal, the website has attracted 91,480 page visits and currently receives an average of 18,296 visits per month. Although this is actually fewer than in the past, it is thought that this is due a fewer number of navigational clicks overall due to a streamlined interface that uses drop-down menus instead of individual links, rather than a decrease in overall website usage.

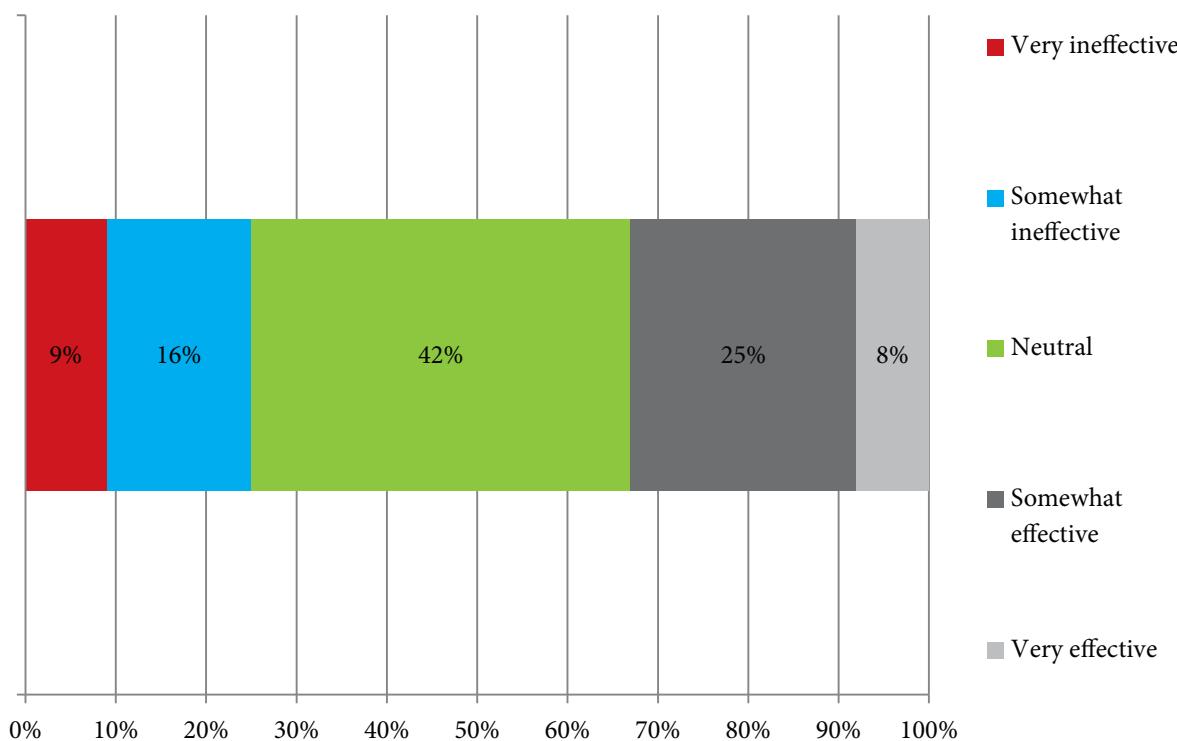
National AJET Social Media Followed by JET Programme Participants



National AJET also maintains several social media accounts. Respondents were asked which they followed, with Facebook remaining the most-selected option (72%). Other services followed by respondents included AJET Connect magazine (35%) and eConnect News emails (26%). National AJET's newer social media accounts were less likely to be followed by respondents, with only 4% following the YouTube account, 2% following the Twitter, and about 1% following Instagram, which is the newest. Overall, the majority of respondents do follow National AJET through one or more of its social networks, with only 17% indicating they do not follow any of the services mentioned.

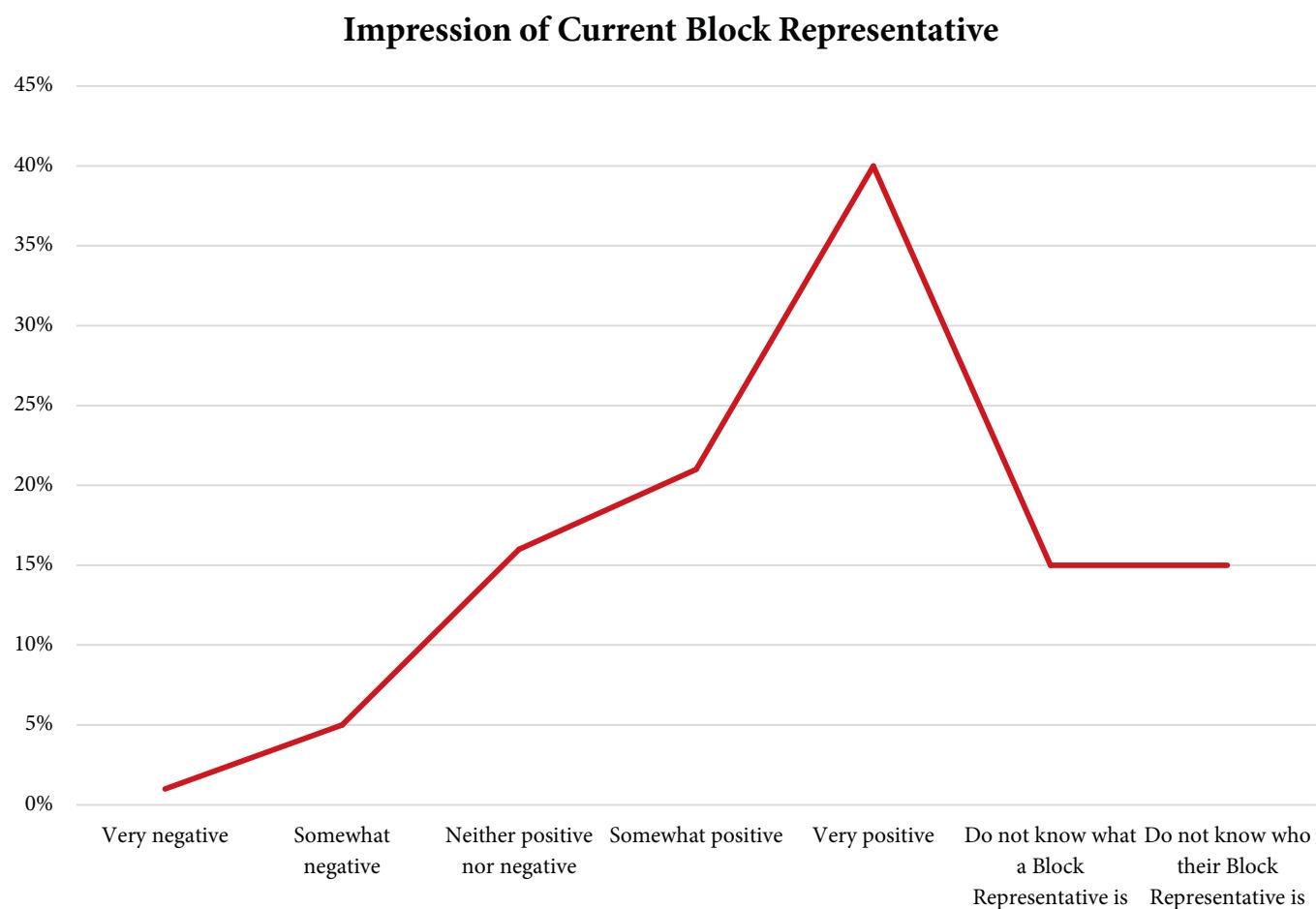
Regarding the effectiveness and reach of National AJET's social media, most respondents (42%) indicated "Neutral - I see it occasionally". A large number, however, rated it as either somewhat effective (25%) or very effective (8%), suggesting that most respondents did have some interaction with National AJET on social media on a regular basis. Among those who did not interact with National AJET as much, 17% rated it as somewhat ineffective.

Perceived Effectiveness of National AJET's Social Media Presence



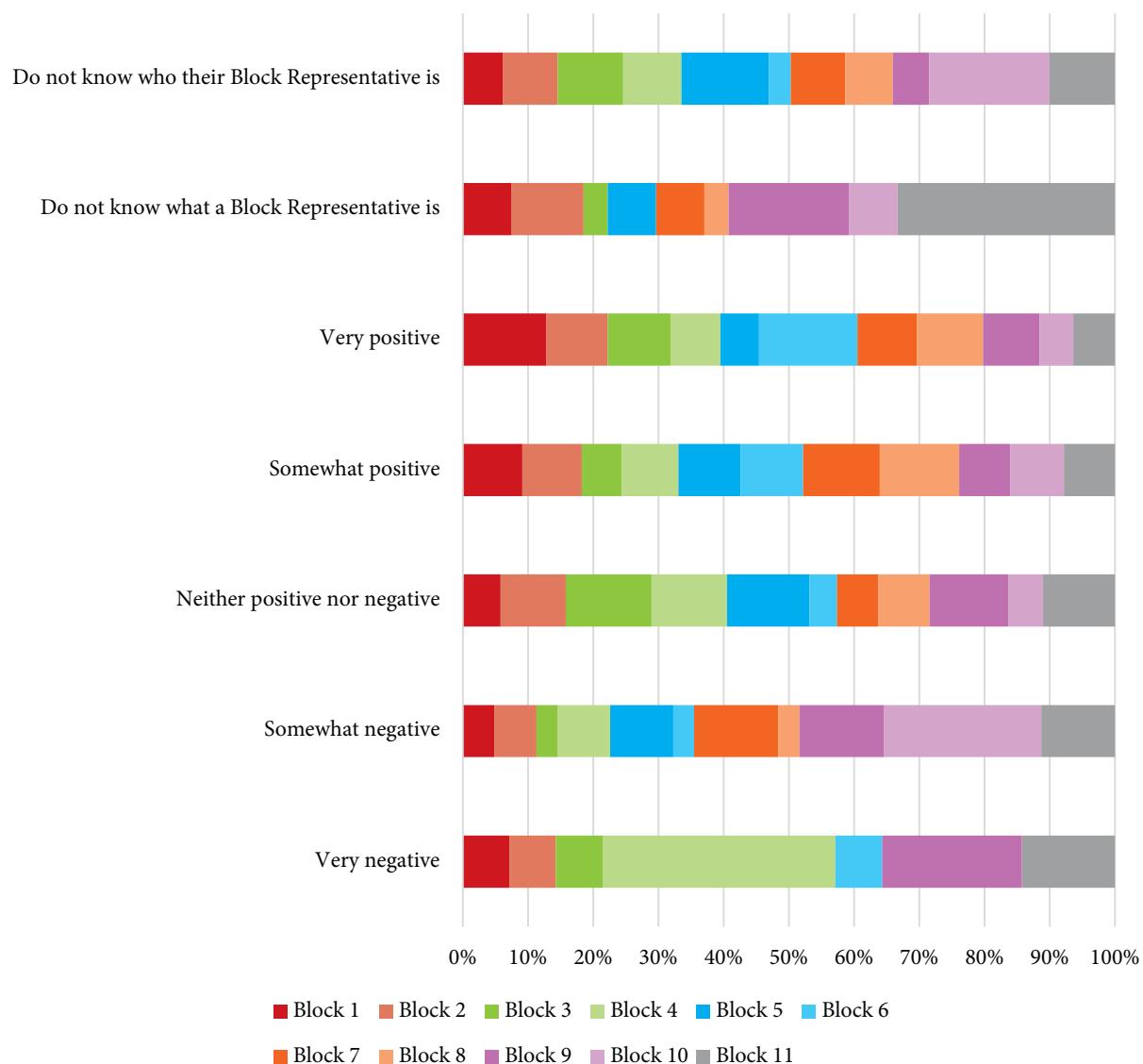
AJET BLOCKS

The last section of questions about National AJET and its services focused on Block Representatives, who are elected each year by fellow JET Programme participants in the 11 AJET blocks through online voting. Because they serve a community representative role, their impression is of particular importance. Overall, JET Programme participants surveyed felt positively about their Block Representatives, with 40% indicating their impression was “very positive” and 21% indicating “somewhat positive”. In comparison, only 5% responded “somewhat negative” and 1% “very negative”. That said, 15% of respondents indicated that they did not know who their block representatives were, and 2% did not even know what a block representative is, which suggests more can be done to increase awareness of National AJET and what it does.

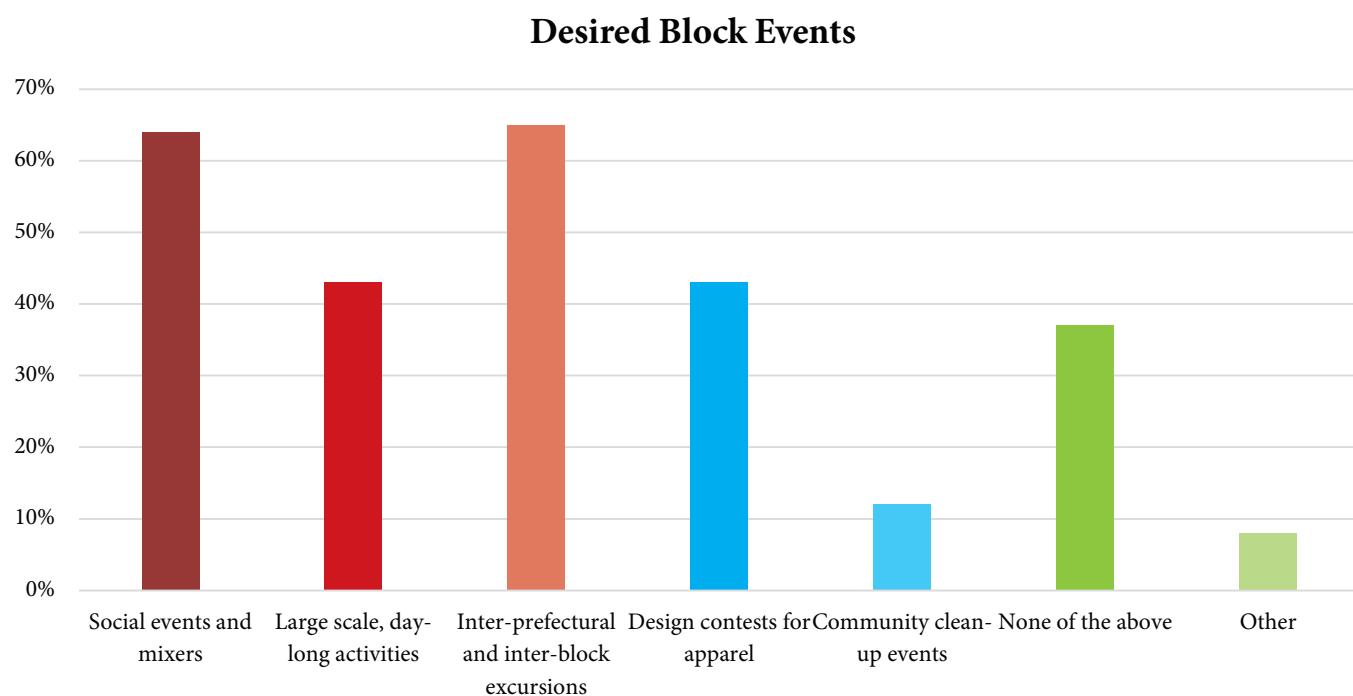


A more detailed breakdown shows large differences in perception between different Block Representatives, suggesting that multiple location-specific factors (such as the representative, his/her constituency, and the number of block events) could influence their approval ratings. The Block 6 Representative received the highest approval rating, with 83% of Block 6 constituents expressing positive impressions while only 3% expressed negative feelings. Even the lowest rated Block Representative still had more than twice as many people expressing approval than disapproval, with 40% expressing a positive impression to 15% indicating a negative one.

Impressions of Block Representatives By Block



One of the main roles of the Block Representative is to encourage community and interaction between the prefectures in the block through the organisation of events. When asked what type of block events they would like to see organised, the most common response from survey respondents was inter-prefectural and inter-block excursions (65%), followed closely by social events and mixers (64%), indicating that JET Programme participants are most interested in events that involve social interaction with other participants. That said, 43% and 37% of respondents respectively indicated that they would like to participate in charity and fundraising events and community clean-up events, which shows that many are also interested in contributing to the community around them as a whole. In the free response section, several respondents mentioned that they felt there were too many events centred around alcohol and drinking, while they would prefer cultural or sightseeing events instead.



There were also several suggestions that requested more interaction with Japanese communities, and not only other JET Programme participants: “We need more events where we connect with the Japanese community. I’m not that interested in holding events where the purpose is to get to know other foreigners. We should be bridging the gap between us and Japanese people” wrote one participant. In keeping with one of the goals of the JET Programme, promoting grassroots internationalisation, this is an area where National AJET can consider increasing its initiatives.

AJET INTERNAL PROJECTS REVIEW

The following section is based on information collected from AJET National Council members and relates to goals set at the beginning of the council term and projects/achievements that have been completed during the year.

2014-2015 AJET NATIONAL COUNCIL GOALS

At the start of the 2014-2015 AJET National Council term, the Council developed the following seven overarching goals to guide its direction throughout the year. Below is an assessment of how the Council has performed in relation to each of these goals.

1. Increase financial transparency and sustainability

This goal has been reached through the following financial measures:

- A tightened accounting system, with physical proof of need for reimbursement provided by every council member and detailed annotations added to each financial transaction to aid future treasurers in writing financial reports
 - Cessation of income streams such as advertising, sponsorships, and publications income and research conducted into more sustainable means of funding such as grants and member donations.
 - Expenditure that consisted entirely of funding key AJET services such as the AJET Peer Support Group (PSG), ajet.net website, SurveyMonkey online programme for surveys and elections, Xero online accounting system, and Campaign Monitor online programme used for the eConnect newsletter
 - National Council members no longer reimbursed for travel and accommodation expenses for in-person council meetings such as Changeover and MIC/MOFA/MEXT/CLAIR/AJET Opinion Exchanges. Significant savings to AJET budget expected to be achieved following the 2015 Changeover/OE meetings.
 - Emptying and account closure of the storage locker used for surplus stock of publications, leading to a savings to the AJET budget of 20,000 yen a month. Publications were donated to incoming 2014 JETs and current JETs, with significant numbers also donated to Boards of Education, for example the 40 copies of Planet Eigo donated to Saitama Board of Education.
2. Increase offers and discounts for JETs

This goal has been met by a complete reconstruction of the AJET partnership system. Where previously monetary payments were requested from sponsors in return for advertising in various AJET social media (e.g. Facebook, Connect magazine, ajet.net), the 2014-2015 AJET National Council abandoned this system and offered free advertising in return for greater discounts and giveaways for JETs. This new method was highly successful and 8 new partnerships were established on top of the previous 3 partnerships who continued working with National AJET under the new system. Ten giveaways from 5 companies were executed across the 11 AJET Blocks, resulting in 238 JET Programme participants winning free items this AJET year. Furthermore, 74 JET Programme participants made use of the TEFL discount exclusively available to JET (a total savings of 930,000 yen), in addition to numerous discounts up to 25% compared to previous years' discount averages of 10%.

3. Build new and better resources for JETs

This goal was met by directly recruiting JET Programme participants to write new informational articles for the National AJET website. The Director of Resources reached out to each block's Facebook group calling for submissions and ideas and later supplemented this with additional needed information. The goal was to ensure that most of the information for the National AJET website came directly from JET Programme participants outside of the council, which proved successful.

Additionally, while the existing set of resources for AJET.net before the website overhaul was useful, it was significantly dated, leading to an updating and revision of existing information such as resources related to driving and cell phones in Japan.

This goal was also reached through developing a new approach to providing resources to the JET community. Whereas the previous website hosted a static listing of a finite gathering of limited lesson plans, materials, and other teaching resources, in addition to a collection of links to some resources provided by prefectural AJET chapters, this year's council redesigned and initiated a database and repository of lesson plans, materials, resources, and URL links to AJET and non-AJET content providers throughout the internet. The database and repository will be powered by Google Drive until a more suitable option is developed. It can be easily edited and managed by successive Directors of Professional/Education Development without the aid of the web administrators, which streamlines the process of adding content submissions. There has also been a standard developed for contributors that includes Creative Commons copyleft protections for contributors and National AJET.

Furthermore, an agreement between JALT and National AJET has been reached to provide a discount on JET members' initial membership fees to join JALT, and there is an introductory package being developed to provide new participants with information, tips, and materials useful in educational classrooms. This initiative is being pursued jointly by the Director of Professional Development and the JALT domestic affairs chairperson. In addition, the AskJALT email was established through collaboration with JALT DAC to create a centralised contact point for JET Programme participants with questions about JALT and how to get involved.

A professional development partnership was also established with the Belizean International Symposium on Education to provide on-going invitations to JET Programme participants to speak at their annual 3-day conference at the beginning of January. Other successful projects include creating the AJET PRO Tips series of articles providing professional and educational development tips for JET Programme participants and the publishing of a professional journal in conjunction with Saitama City Educators providing professional publication and translation credentials for 12 JET Programme participants.

This goal was also met through the release of a redesigned AJET website. With the aim to provide resources for all stages of the JET cycle, sections were created for aspiring, current, and departing JET Programme participants. The bulk of resources created this AJET year focused on current participants and include information on daily JET life, professional development, self-study, and more. The gathering and supply of information was headed by the Director of Resources and Director of Professional and Education Development, but significant assistance was also provided by volunteer JET Programme participants. Credit has been given where due to all those involved. It is expected that these resources will continue to be improved and expanded beyond this National AJET Council.

4. Revamp website for improved accessibility

This goal was carried on from the previous AJET National Council and has been met successfully this 2014-2015 AJET year. After 7 months of work from 2 webmasters, the new ajet.net website was launched on December 15, 2014. Over 5 months, the revamped website has attracted 91,480 page visits. Currently, ajet.net receives an

average of 18,296 visits per month.

The new website gives improved accessibility through the use of easy-to-navigate and logically structured tabs. Almost all pages on the ajet.net website can be found directly from the homepage. The site is also now fully responsive, making it viewable and usable on a variety of mobile devices including tablets and smartphones.

5. Broadcast through an active and inclusive YouTube channel

This goal has been met this year with the establishment of a new National AJET YouTube channel. Created on July 23, 2014, the first video released, "Welcome to AJET", received over 3000 views. Eight videos have been released this AJET year, themes of which include English teaching, handy tips and advice. The production process of these videos actively encouraged the JET community to be involved by requesting video clips from different prefectures. As of June 1, 2015, the National AJET YouTube channel has 109 followers.

6. Recreate Tatami Timeshare for travelling JETs

The Tatami Timeshare initiative has long existed as means of encouraging inter-prefectural travel among JET Programme participants. Unfortunately, for a variety of reasons the programme had slipped into disuse. National AJET's goal this year was to recreate Tatami Timeshare in order to provide travel opportunities for participants nationwide. The new programme exists as a Google Maps database in which participants willing to host and be hosted fill out information about themselves which is curated and placed on a Google Map that shows their location within Japan. Participants are free to peruse this map and contact potential hosts in order to make travel arrangements. The new programme works mainly as a service to help connect JET Programme participants with interests in traveling and hosting travelers. It is only open to JET Programme participants, who must sign a release of liability waiver in order to join.

The reinstatement of Tatami Timeshare was initially trialed as a beta version with Hokkaido AJET, which was primarily involved with its establishment for the initial half of the AJET year. Officially launched nationwide on March 18, 2015, 187 JETs across 41 prefectures have registered for this renewed project as of May 20, 2015.

7. Strengthen relationships with JETAA and JET alumni

This goal has been met primarily through the newly established position of Director of Alumni Relations, introduced this AJET year. Significant time was first dedicated to establishing working relationships with the JETAA chapters. In addition to email exchanges, the Director of Alumni Relations scheduled meetings with various JETAA chapters such as UK, Oceania and the USA. The Director of Alumni Relations also worked closely with JETwit and moderated its Jobs Google Groups.

Additionally, AJET officially partnered with JETwit to provide support for both current and alumni JET Programme participants. The most notable collaboration is the creation of the AJET Job Listings Facebook group, which, created on February 12th, reached a total of 555 members by June 2015. This Facebook group was made possible through the partnership and support of JETwit, which allowed AJET to feed directly off the JETwit Jobs Google Groups. In return, JETwit received instantaneous attention and interest from the JET community.

Other successful projects include contacting 59 JETAA branches about promoting AJET and the establishment of the DOAR position, promoting JETAA to current JET Programme Participants, holding two official networking events, establishing a series of 'Spotlight on JETAA' articles, and introducing a new Middle East JETAA chapter to AJET.

AJET NATIONAL COUNCIL ACHIEVEMENTS

In addition to goals at the organisational level, each Council member also developed their own goals for what they wanted to achieve in their respective roles. Below is a summary of some of the key achievements of the 2014-2015 AJET National Council.

NEW INITIATIVES

1. Revision of human resources procedures for maintaining AJET volunteers spreadsheet and development of a standard for using the spreadsheet to secure volunteers for projects
2. Creation of a standard for professional development audio and video self-recordings in response to low interest in professional development conference calls
3. Creation of a Thought Repository for AJET National Council members to track projects
4. Establishment of the AJET PRO Tips series
5. New partnerships with Red River Press, Cooori, Stone Bridge Press, englishbooks.com, Overseas Consulting, White Rabbit Press, WhyNot?!, Yoyo Market, Duolingo, and Ryobi tours, providing discounts and offers on English teaching materials, Japanese learning materials, professional consulting services, monthly parties, and more
6. Creation of an AJET Job Listings group on Facebook, established in collaboration with JETwit and its Google Job Groups, which was at the same time established as a new official AJET partner
7. Creation of a new American JETs group on Facebook, to help JET Programme participants from the United States collaborate information and receive information specific to Americans
8. Re-establishment of AJET Awards, with three awards given this year:
 - National AJET Excellence in Team Teaching Award: recognises extraordinary Japanese professional teachers and JET Programme participants who have made exceptional efforts through team teaching to improve the language education of their students.
 - National AJET Internationalisation Award: recognises members of the JET community who have made a positive impact towards increasing international awareness in Japan. This includes creating internationalisation events, the creation of English clubs in schools, starting sports teams or interest groups, or by otherwise devoting their time and effort to internationalisation in their local communities.
 - National AJET Goodwill Ambassador Award: seeks to recognise individuals who truly “bring” Japan home with them. Examples could include organised events, penpal efforts, starting a taiko group, art project, a gallery exhibit of pieces from Japanese artists, and more.
9. JET community building and interaction encouraged by compiling JET-related Facebook groups, JET blogs and JET vlogs, with a central database hosted on the AJET website
10. Formation of two new Special Interests Groups (SIGs): ¡Hola!JETs, for JET participants of

Latino or Hispanic descent, and Gluten-Free JETs, a support group for JET participants with celiac disease or gluten intolerance

11. Organisation of a cricket workshop for JET Programme participants in Tokyo organised by the Japan Cricket Association in collaboration with National AJET (January 2015)
12. For the first time, publicized AJET survey response rates in both percentages and raw numbers during the course of the Spring 2015 survey, to better display and encourage participation from the JET community
13. Detachment of secondary positions from the Block Representatives and their subsequent establishment as appointed positions, in preparation for the incoming 2015-2016 AJET National Council

To elaborate on the last point, the re-organisation of the AJET National Council was passed by both the Executive Council and unanimously by the other voting council members. This re-organisation entails the separation of secondary positions from the role of Block Representative. The secondary positions have become appointed positions like those of the Website Coordinators or Head of Visual Media, following the same timeline as the current set of appointed positions.

The 2015-2016 AJET National Council will therefore consist of:

- 3 Elected Executive Members
- 11 Elected Block Representatives
- 1 Elected CIR Representative
- 15 Appointed Positions

The AJET National Council agreed to this change on the principle that the change would:

- A. Allow Block Representatives to focus and strengthen their efforts solely on their duties such as updating the Block Facebook page, putting on Block events, providing useful resources to their constituents, and the general promotion of inter-prefectural relations.
- B. Widen the net of participation with regards to the number of JETs involved in National AJET. This should allow National AJET to become a bigger and better representative group for the 4500+ JET community.
- C. Ensure that those who fill the secondary positions are truly motivated, qualified and dedicated to the role that they are undertaking, thus achieving greater results for the JET community.

ONGOING PROJECTS

1. Achieved a statistically significant response rate of 25% or above on both winter and spring surveys, allowing for more accurate representation of the needs and opinions of the JET Programme community
2. Continued development and maintenance of the new iteration of Tatami Timeshare.
3. Processing of 74 applications for the Outstanding Educators Program ITTT TEFL Discount

and awarding of approximately 930,000 yen worth of discounts for TEFL certification training to the JET community between 2014 and 2015.

4. Further cricket workshops organised by AJET/JCA for JETs in Hokkaido and Kansai
5. Agreement made with Japan Cricket Association to provide sets of cricket equipment to JETs on a long-term loan basis
6. Reinstating the Japanese AJET Website
7. Continued partnerships with Shinsei Bank, STA Travel, and Tengu Natural Foods

UNSUCCESSFUL VENTURES

1. Race to the Top Charity and Volunteering Drive: An attempt to repeat this successful initiative from the previous AJET year did not fully succeed. This was partly due to complications in relation to a change in AJET National Council's operating budget structure, namely, the decision to cease all revenue incomes preventing the ability to provide cash awards as an incentive. Additionally, confusion as to what constituted volunteer or charity activities and which activities could be reported for the drive, and a lack of consistent feedback and publicity of the initiative led to confusion over its timeline, regulations, and details.
2. Providing counselling training to PAs/CIRs/JET community via an alumnus: said alumnus was interested in reaching PAs, but CLAIR changed the counselling system and PA duties to not include counseling, leading to the abortion of the project by the alumnus, barring future interest.

CONCLUSION

The results obtained in this survey have made it clear that while overall impressions of National AJET are more positive than negative and that its services are regularly used by JET Programme participants, there nonetheless remains both indifference and confusion in the JET community with regard to National AJET's activities and purpose.

From the number of respondents who expressed that they were unclear as to what the role of National AJET was, particularly in light of recent changes, in addition to significant portions of respondents who were unaware of National AJET's services and block representatives, it is clear that there is a need for National AJET to raise its profile among JET Programme participants. Survey results revealed that Tokyo Orientation remains an important first point of contact, while also indicating possible avenues to explore in the future, such as contact with embassies and prefectural AJET chapters. Social media, particularly Facebook, appears to be an effective way to disseminate information to and communicate with the community.

The survey also provided insight into how National AJET can improve the services it offers to JET Programme participants. This includes re-examining current services that are the least used (such as professional development calls and discounts) for their relevance to the needs of the community, considering increasing resources for professional development in fields outside of teaching and other such suggestions provided by survey respondents, and organising block events that involve not only other JET Programme participants but also the Japanese community.

While it is clear that there is much that National AJET can improve, the successful initiatives completed by the AJET National Council during the 2014-2015 term demonstrate the organisation's commitment to providing useful services and resources for JET Programme participants. The National Council was able to achieve all of its goals for the year, including more offers and discounts; a website renewal and increased and improved resources; and new community-building opportunities such as Facebook groups, new Special Interest Groups (SIGs), and a YouTube channel. The new Director of Alumni Relations positions also led to unprecedented collaboration with JET Programme alumni, building a strong base of relationships for the future.

This year the AJET National Council has also made important structural changes to ensure the sustainability and relevance of the organisation in the future. In addition to increasing financial transparency and moving to a more sustainable system, the decision to separate the secondary positions from block representatives in the following 2015-2016 term will not only allow each council member more time and energy to focus on their position, but also increase the number of JET Programme participants involved with the AJET National Council, allowing for better representation of the community.

The AJET National Council strives to continue increasing transparency of its operations, building resources and providing opportunities for JET Programme participants, and strengthening the connections in the community.

