



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Winter 2016

MIC • MOFA • MEXT • CLAIR • AJET



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

REPORT CONTRIBUTORS

SURVEY AND REPORT COORDINATOR

David Kreutz
Project Manager

REPORT CONTRIBUTORS

Nick Lavin
Vice Chair

David Winter
Treasurer

Merran Eby
Block 2 Representative

CJ Fischer
Block 11 Representative

Lillian Hart
Direct of Public Relations

Ariel Kane
*Director of Professional and
Educational Development*

TRANSLATION LEADER

Kathryn Cwynar
*Translation and Interpreting
Coordinator*

TRANSLATION ASSISTANCE

Nick Lavin
Vice Chair

Maki Watters

Yuka Saraie

LAYOUT AND DESIGN

David Kreutz
Project Manager

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report examines, analyses, and addresses community engagement and integration of current JET Programme participants by compiling data from a survey on how they are currently involved in their communities, how they would like to be involved in their communities, what assistance they received from their contracting organisations upon arrival, and what difficulties they experienced living in their communities. For the purposes of this survey, a JET Programme participant's community is their primary area of residence and work.

The survey for this report was open to responses from the entire current JET Programme community between November 10, 2016 and November 28, 2016. Approximately 15% of the current JET population responded.

A majority of JET Programme participants report that English information is available in their communities. However, the amount and quality varied significantly between rural, urban, and suburban placements.

Participants reported receiving significant assistance from their contracting organisations in areas such as housing and banking, but expressed a desire for greater assistance with medical services. This was also the area in which the greatest number of difficulties was encountered.

Participants expressed a strong interest in being connected with a local host family by their contracting organisation for purposes of both support and cultural exchange.

Participants indicated a high rate of participation in community activities, but wanted more information about other opportunities. In particular, they expressed a desire to take part in more events related to experiencing Japanese culture, and to be more active participants at events such as local festivals.

Overall, the survey suggests that JET Programme participants are eager and willing to become more actively engaged in their communities. Improved communication between participants and their contracting organisations could help remove barriers to such participation, as well as improving the overall experience for all parties involved.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
METHODOLOGY	2
SURVEY SAMPLE	3
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION	4
Community Information	4
Contracting Organisation and Community Support	7
Dealing with Difficulties	11
Host Families	14
Community Involvement	15
CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS	17
QUESTIONS	20

INTRODUCTION

A JET Programme participant's integration and engagement within their community serves to not only help them adjust to life and work in Japan, but also provides a significant opportunity to further the JET Programme's goals of cultural exchange. It can be difficult to integrate and engage within a new community, particularly for foreign residents. Understanding and resolving those difficulties is beneficial to all parties involved.

The goal of the Winter 2016 Survey was to identify difficulties encountered by JET Programme participants within their communities, offer clarification of expectations between JET Programme participants and their contracting organisations, and discover areas that could offer more community engagement in the future. In doing so, AJET National Council hopes to remove barriers and increase engagement between participants and their communities, foster greater cultural exchange, resolve misunderstandings between JETs and their contracting organisations, and create an improved experience for all parties involved in the JET Programme.

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 November 10, 2016 to November 28, 2016. The survey was distributed to current JET Programme participants using an online survey development tool. The survey consisted of 49 questions that were written in English and translated into Japanese where required. Questions were written in a variety of formats including ‘Yes’ or ‘No’, multiple choice, free response, rating on a 5-point scale (Very Poor, Poor, OK, Good, Very Good), and rating agreement on a scale of 1-5. For questions using this last method, respondents chose numbers between 1-5, with 1 indicating strong agreement with the statement, 3 indicating neither agreement nor disagreement and 5 indicating strong disagreement. The topics covered in the survey included demographic data on respondents, community demographics for respondents, questions relating to JET Programme participant integration within their communities and feedback on AJET services. For the purposes of this report, survey percentages have been rounded to the nearest first decimal point.

SURVEY SAMPLE

This survey collected responses from a total of 719 JET Programme participants, which is equivalent to approximately 15% of the total current JET Programme population in Japan. Of these respondents, 683 (95%) identified themselves as JET Programme Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) and 36 (5%) as JET Programme Coordinators for International Relations (CIRs). There were no responses from any of the six SEAs. These results are similar to overall JET Programme participants: 91.6% are ALTs, 8.3% are CIRs, and less than 0.1% are SEAs.

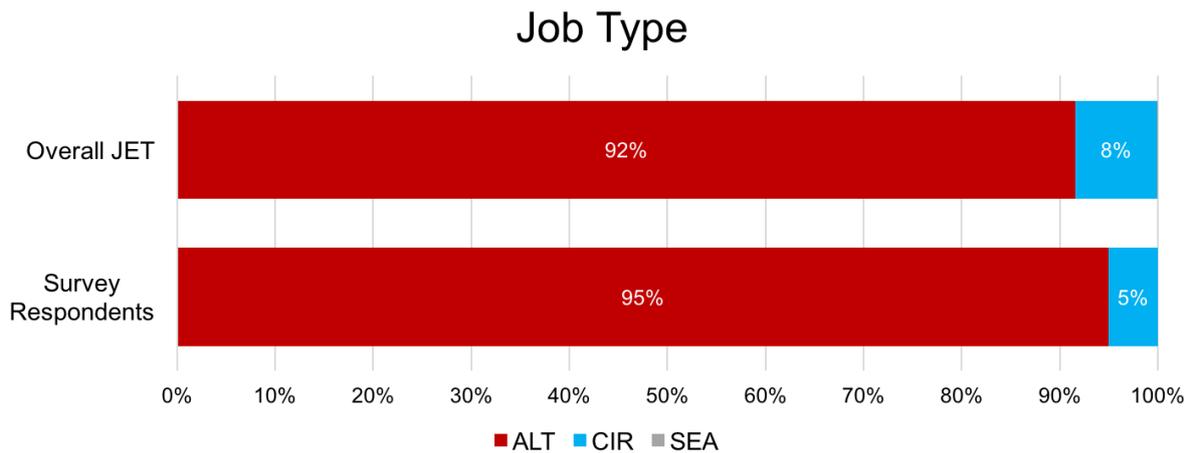


Chart 1

The largest proportion of respondents indicated they are in their first year on the Programme (42%), with second and third year participants the next most populous groups (28% and 16% respectively). Compared to overall JET Programme participants by year, first year respondent numbers were slightly higher than expected, but overall the results are comparable to that of the entire JET Programme participant population.

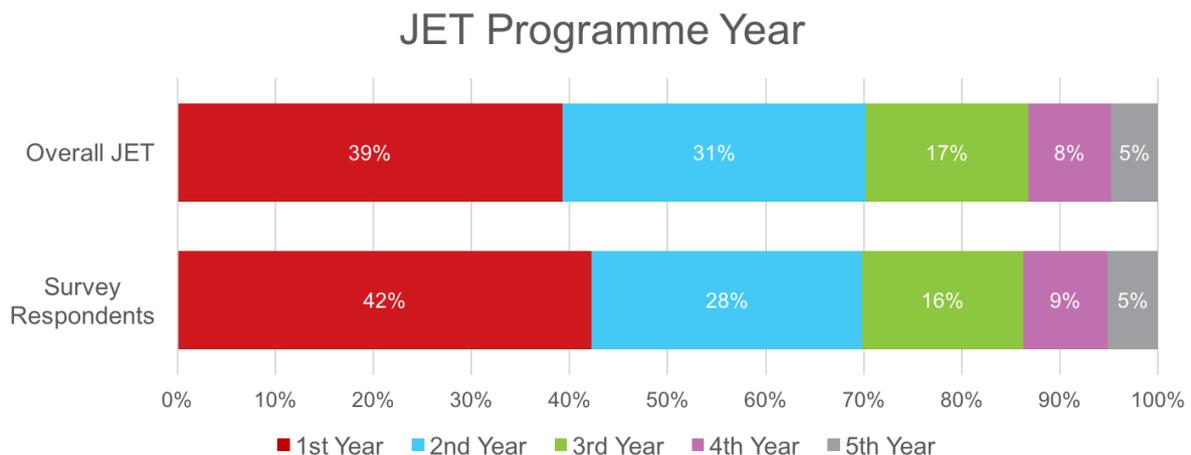


Chart 2

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

COMMUNITY INFORMATION

JET Programme participants are placed in a wide variety of communities across Japan. In this section information about those communities and the information the communities provide to foreign residents will be explored.

COMMUNITY DEMOGRAPHICS

Most JET Programme participants reside in rural or suburban communities. Only 19% report that they live in urban environments. For purposes of this report, rural communities have 50,000 or fewer residents, suburban communities have between 50,000 and 250,000, and urban communities have above 250,000. Very few JET Programme participants reside in very large cities (1,000,000 residents or above), only 7% falling into that category. These demographics are neither surprising nor interesting on their own; however, they will impact some of the areas below, and will be noted as such.

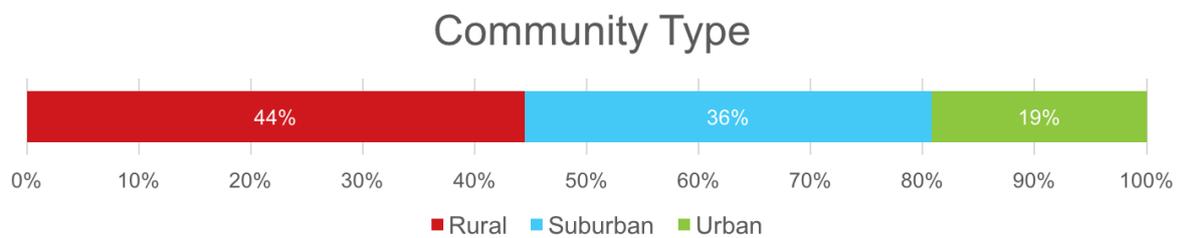


Chart 3

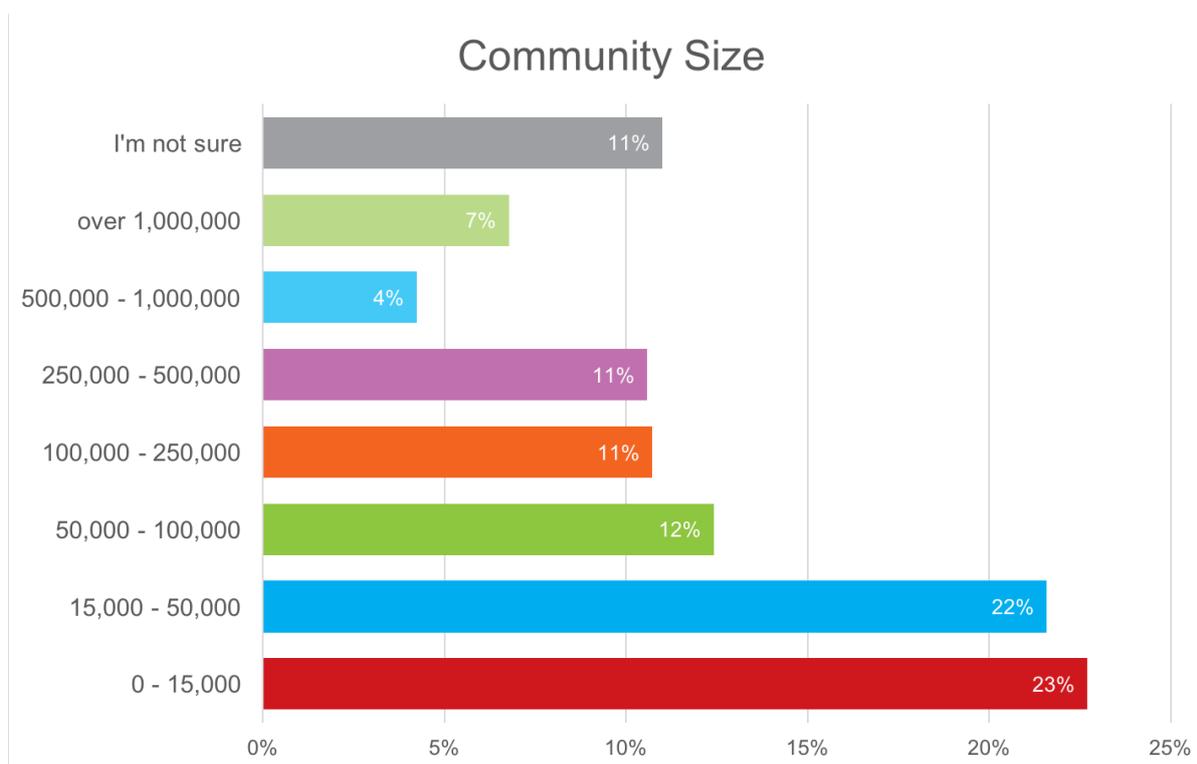


Chart 4

ENGLISH INFORMATION

At least 40% of survey participants reported that their communities provide information in English. However, the information provided is primarily geared towards tourists, with respondents reporting that 81% of communities provide tourist information in English, but only 31% provide information on residential services (such as utilities or housing laws) in English. Encouragingly, 55% of respondents reported language education as being offered by their communities.

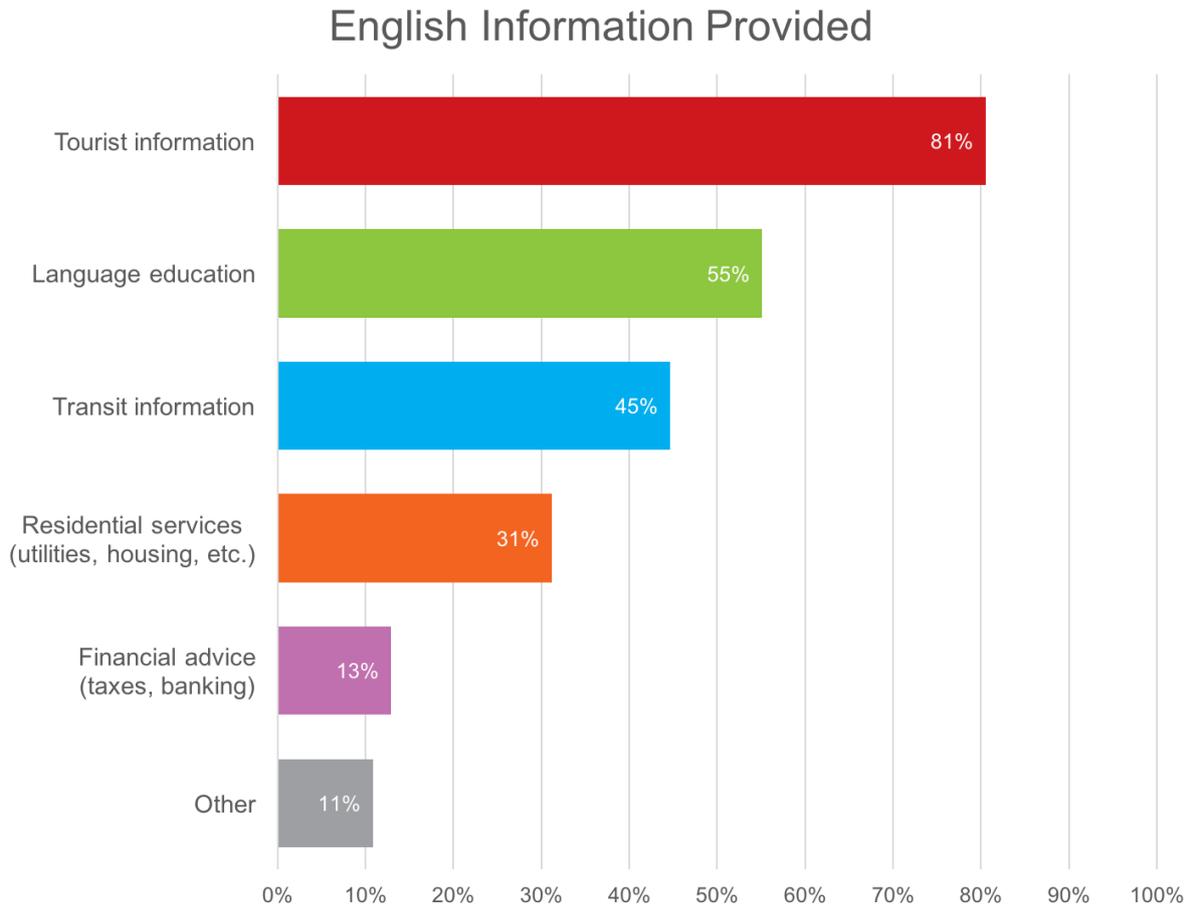


Chart 5

Overall, 64% of respondents rated the English information provided by their communities as OK, Good, or Very Good.

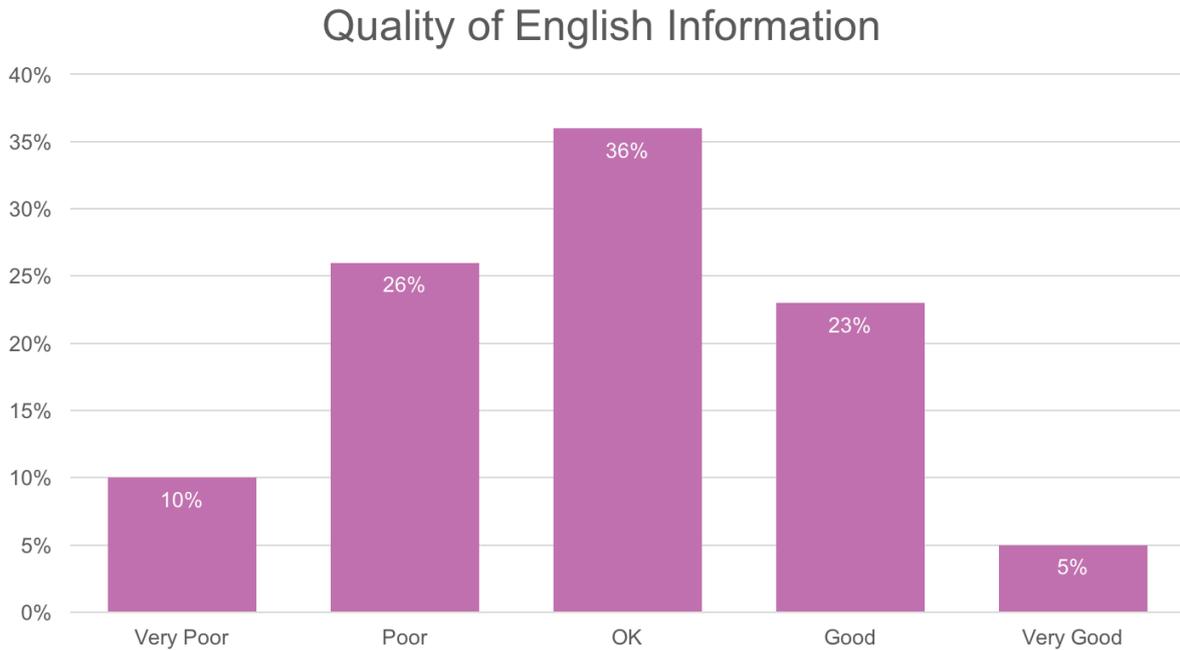


Chart 6

However, there is a significant difference between rural, suburban, and urban respondents. While only 13% of urban respondents rated the English information provided as poor or very poor, 30% of suburban respondents rated English information as poor or very poor and 55% of rural respondents rated English information as poor or very poor.

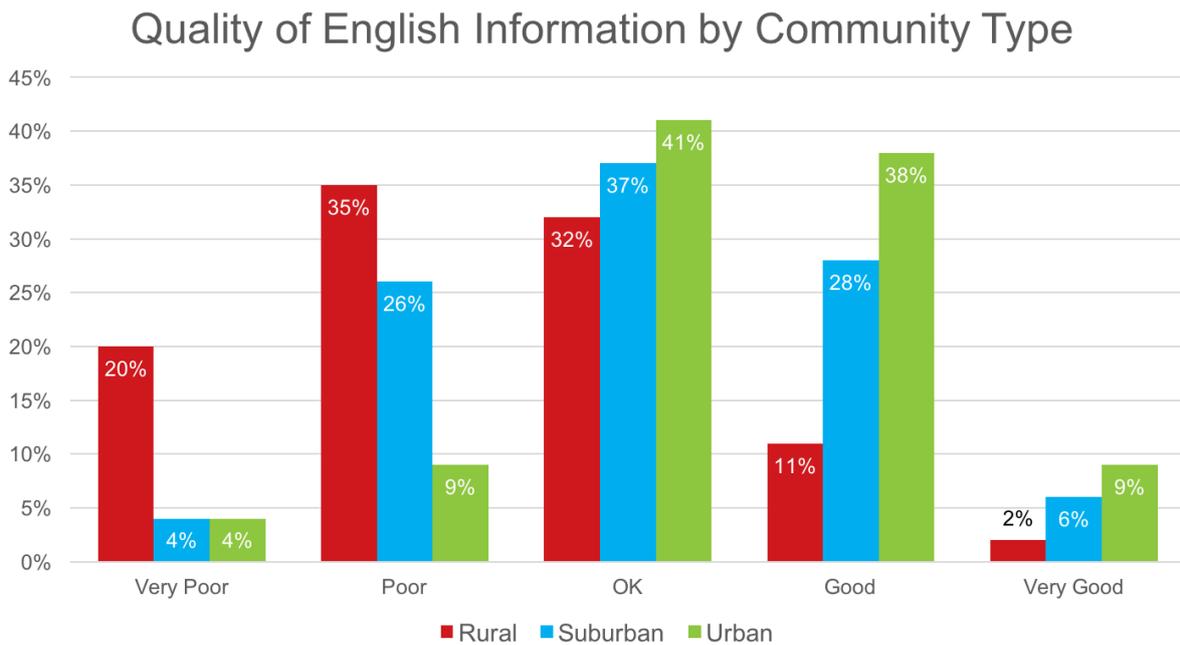


Chart 7

CONTRACTING ORGANISATION AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Contracting organisations (COs) serve as the first point of community integration for JET Programme participants upon their arrival to their placements. In this section the support provided to participants upon arrival will be examined.

ARRIVAL ASSISTANCE

When asked which community-related services and information JET Programme participants were provided with by their CO, 96% of survey respondents reported having received assistance with housing and banking. Other areas where a majority of respondents reported having received assistance from their CO included mobile phone service (80%), payment of utilities (73%), and internet service (61%).

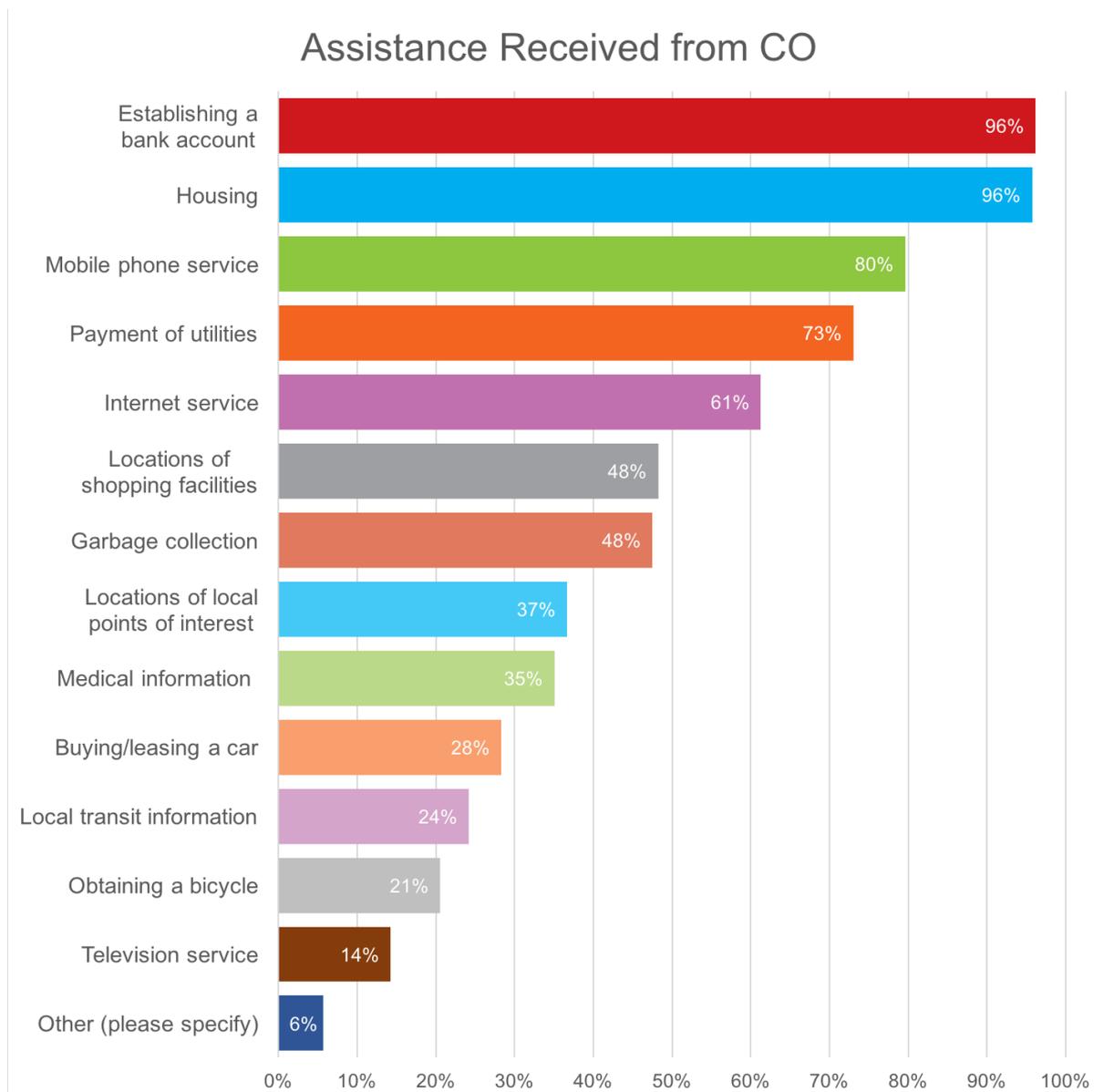


Chart 8

Survey respondents were also asked about which areas they would have liked to receive more assistance with from their CO upon arrival. Medical information and support was a significant request across all groups, with 59% of respondents indicating they would have liked to have received assistance in that area. The next closest area was internet service at 38%.

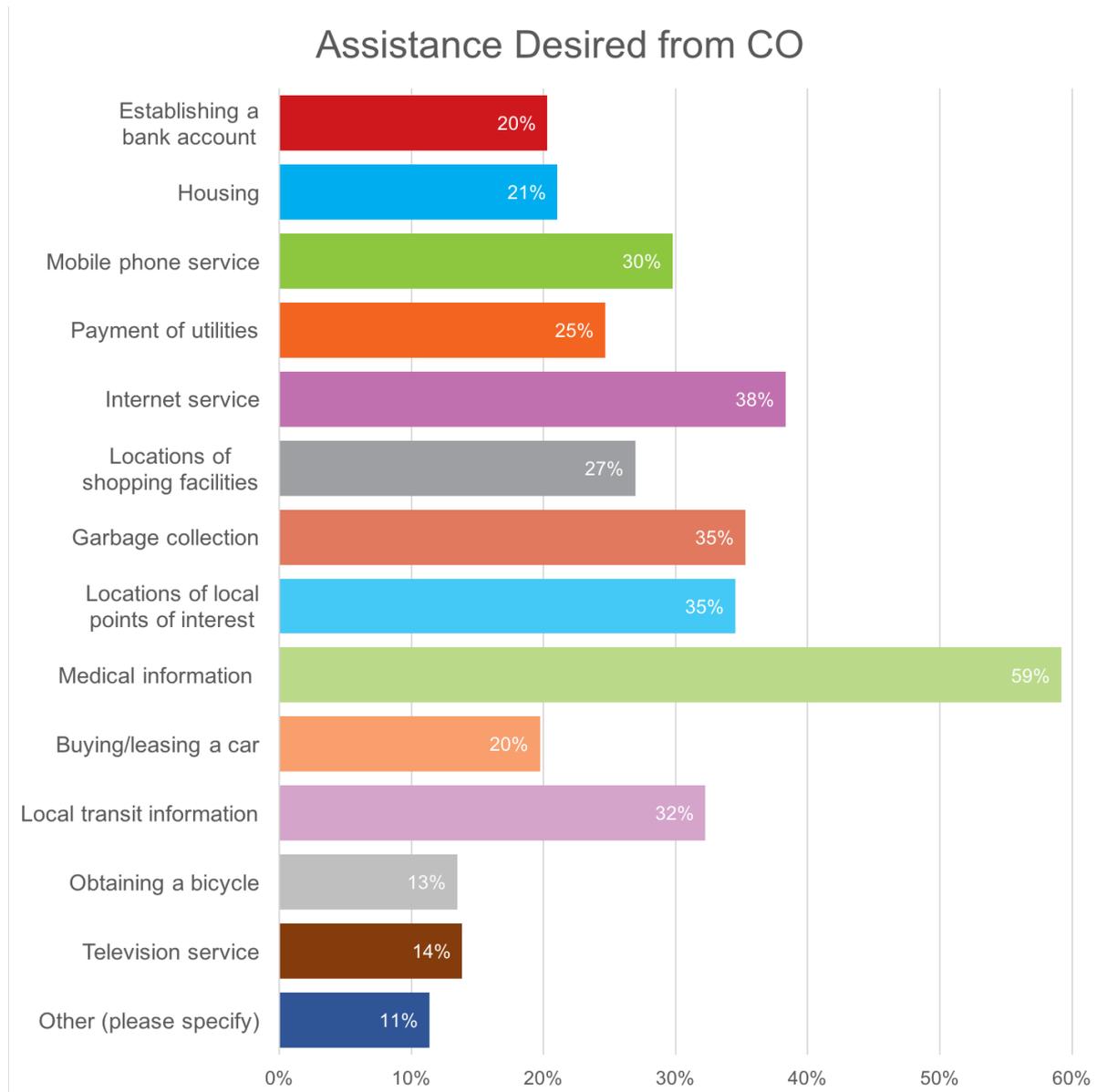


Chart 9

Two areas stand out when looking at rural, suburban and urban respondents separately: garbage collection and mobile phone service. Assistance from the CO with understanding garbage service was requested by 47% of rural respondents, compared with 27% of suburban and urban respondents. Meanwhile, 41% of urban respondents indicated a need for greater assistance from their CO regarding mobile phone service, compared with 28% of suburban and rural respondents.

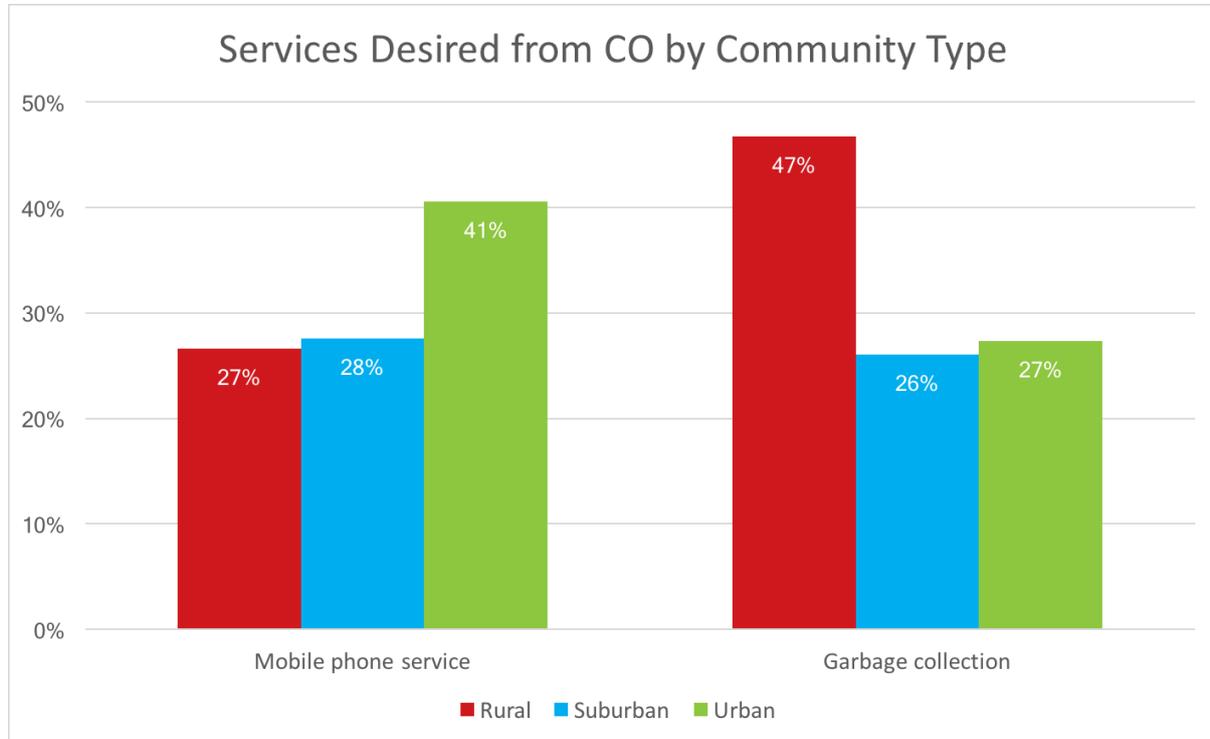


Chart 10

In addition to the question related to Chart 9, respondents were given the opportunity to provide short answer responses to the following question:

What information or services would you like to see offered to foreign residents by your community?

More information in English, largely related to the areas listed in Charts 8 and 9, was the primary request raised. Roughly 300 of 389 responses indicated a desire for greater access to such information. Within those responses, English information about trash and recycling procedures was noted by the most respondents. English information about emergency procedures and announcements was also listed, which was an item not included in the categories provided to respondents during the survey.

The next issue of interest, listed by about 60 of 379 respondents, was help with and information on being more involved with community activities (a topic covered more in depth in the third section of this report) and local volunteer opportunities.

Finally, about 40 of 379 respondents expressed interest in local Japanese courses and Japanese conversation class opportunities. As a majority of respondents in the overall survey indicated that their communities offer such opportunities, it suggests that these opportunities exist, but that the information is not easy to access or understand for many JET Programme participants.

DEALING WITH DIFFICULTIES

Contracting organisations (COs) serve as the first point of community integration for JET Programme participants upon their arrival to their placements. In this section the support provided to participants upon arrival will be examined.

DIFFICULTIES EXPERIENCED

Survey respondents were also asked about difficulties they have experienced while living in Japan. Many raised concerns related to arrival in Japan, similar to questions discussed above, with medical, housing, and internet and phone being the largest areas of difficulty for survey respondents.

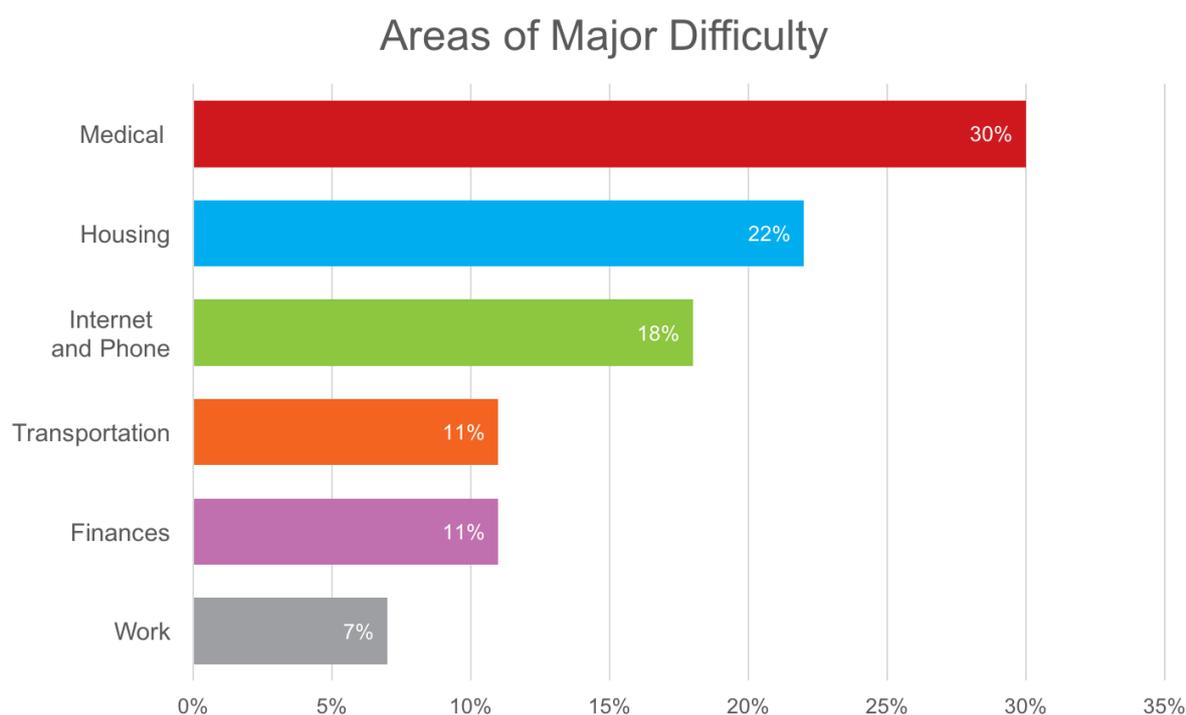


Chart 11

Medical difficulties were listed by 30% of respondents. Issues raised included difficulty locating appropriate medical facilities, difficulty scheduling appointments, lack of information on how to fill prescriptions, and a desire for information on English speaking doctors in the area and help with translation when obtaining medical help.

Housing difficulties were listed by 22% of respondents. Issues raised included being uninformed about necessary immediate costs for housing upon arrival, having to obtain housing on one's own with minimal or no assistance from the CO, concerns about the conditions or safety of housing provided, and difficulties with repairs related to housing.

Internet and phone-related difficulties were listed by 18% of respondents. Issues raised included long delays in receiving home internet service, often due to lack of assistance by the CO or a need for fluent Japanese to navigate the process, as well as similar concerns related to mobile phone service.

SOURCES OF SUPPORT

A large majority of respondents, 84%, reported utilising fellow JET Programme participants for support when dealing with difficulties. Three more sources of support were indicated by over 50% of representatives: their supervisor (60%), Japanese co-workers (53%) and Japanese friends (53%).

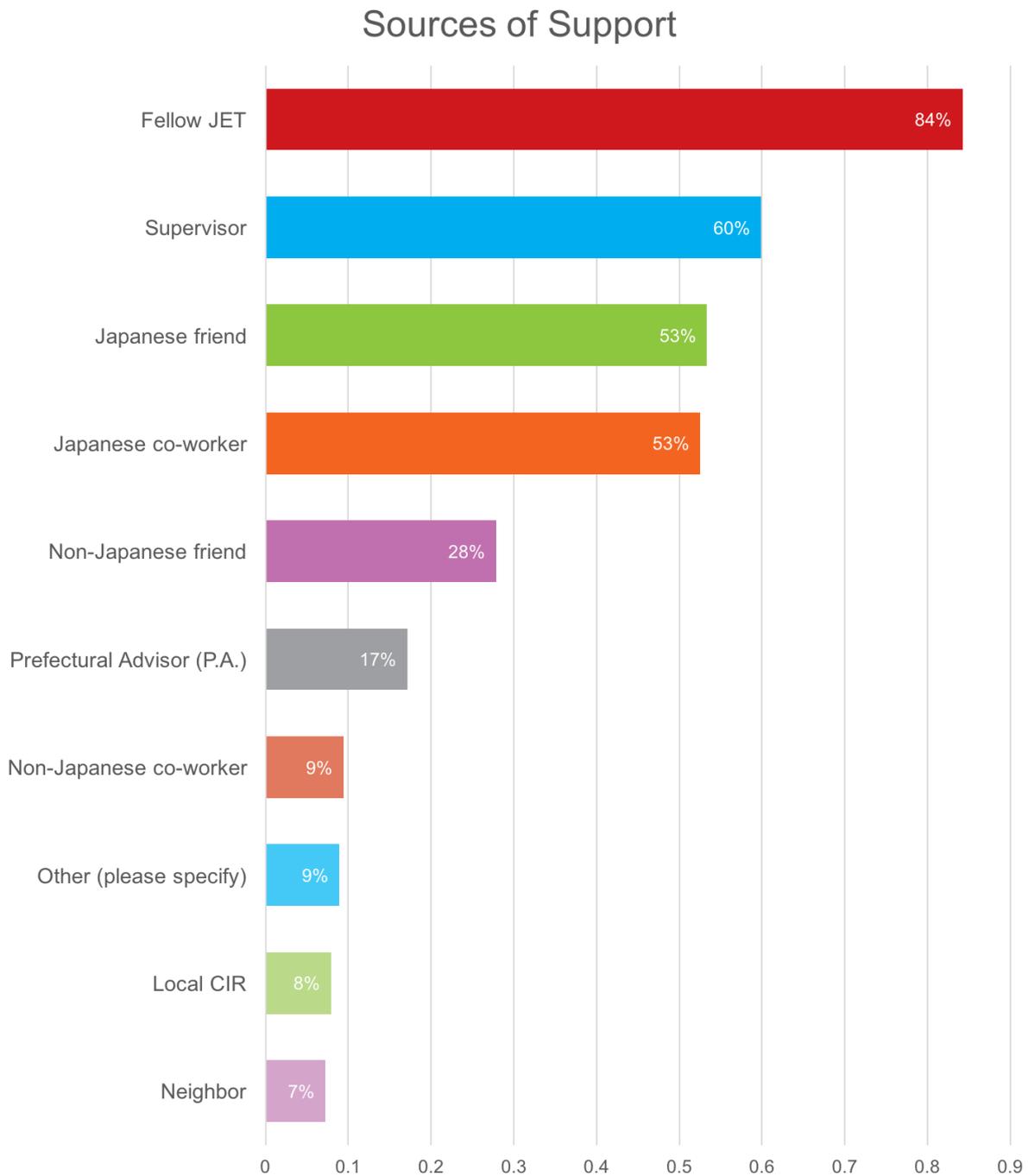


Chart 12

When asked to name their primary source of support, a fellow JET Programme participant was indicated by 43% of respondents, and their supervisor was indicated by 22%.

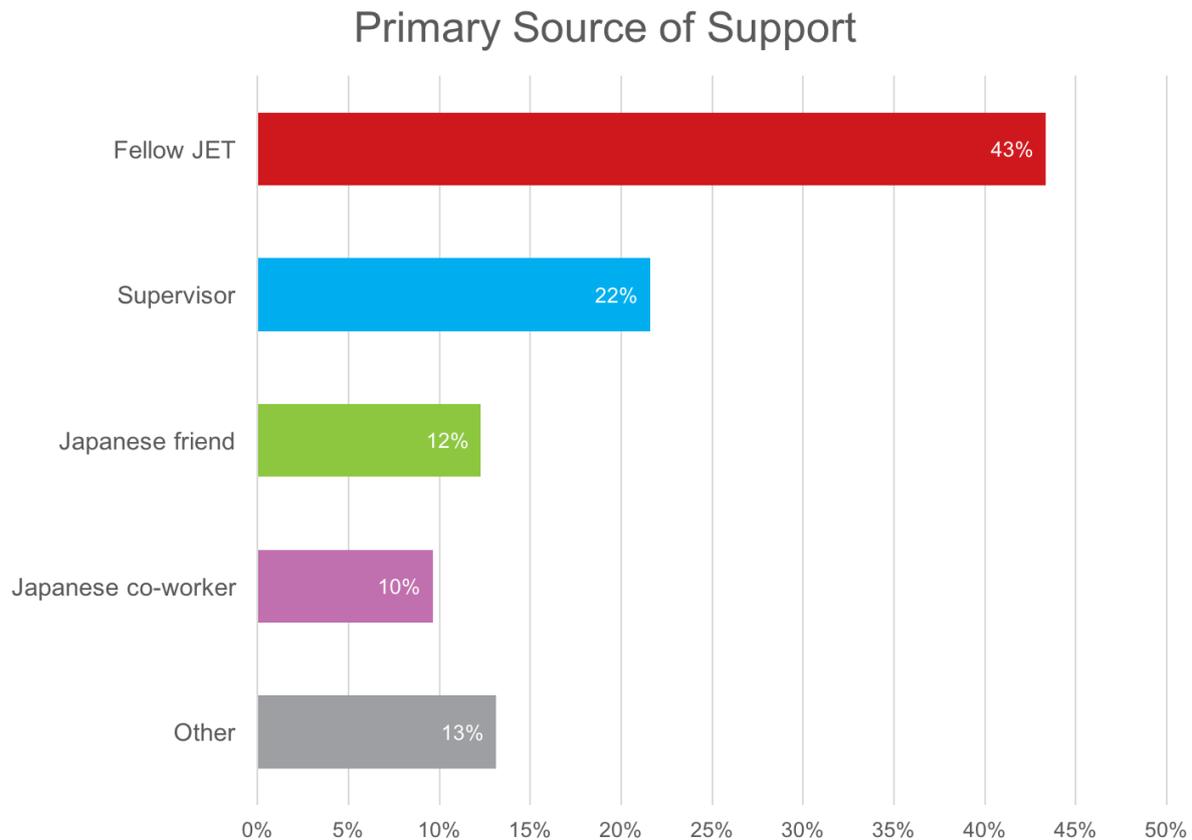


Chart 13

Notably, only 17% of respondents listed a PA as a source of support, and less than 2% listed a P.A. as their primary source of support. This may indicate that participants are not experiencing problems sufficient to warrant engaging with their P.A., a lack of awareness of what support the P.A. can provide, or a combination of both factors.

HOST FAMILIES

Host families can provide a unique and helpful link to the community. In this section the utilisation of host families by JET Programme participants will be explored.

HOST FAMILY CONNECTIONS

Among survey respondents, 9% reported being connected with a host family by their contracting organisation (CO). There was not a significant difference in this number between rural, suburban, and urban respondents.

However, when asked if they would be interested in being connected with a host family, 55% of respondents said yes, and another 25% said they were unsure.

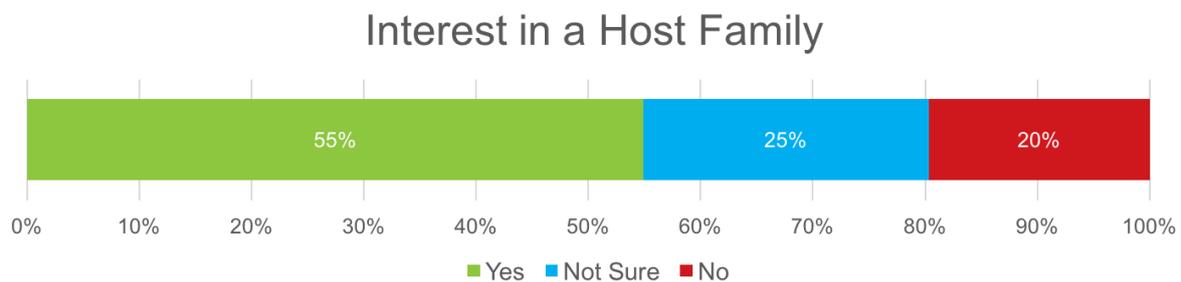


Chart 14

When asked whether they would prefer a host family connected with their work, only 12% said yes, 31% said no, and 57% indicated no preference.

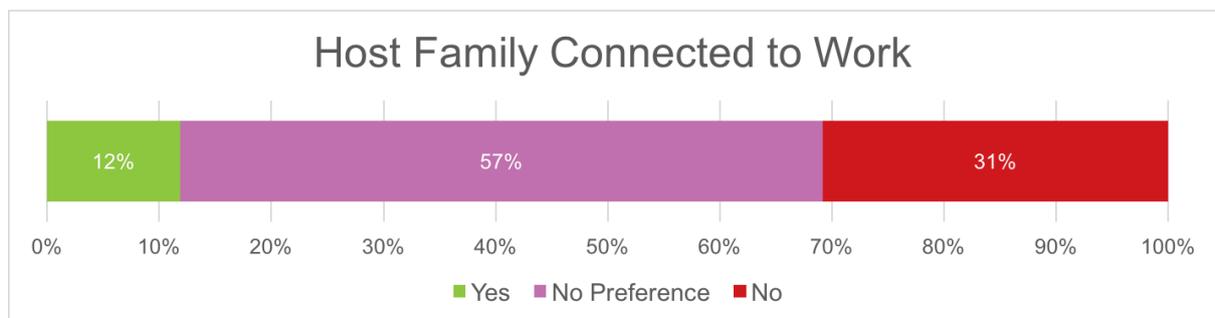


Chart 15

HOST FAMILY SUPPORT

Only 60 respondents (9% of total respondents) indicated they had been placed with a host family. When asked what support and benefits they have received from their host family, a few areas that stood out included: regular meals and socialisation opportunities within the community, local tourism, information and assistance with daily life in the community, language learning and translation, medical assistance, and general support. Some respondents indicated that they also lived with their host family for a short time upon arrival before locating their own residence.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Involvement in community activities such as local festivals, cultural events, etc., can provide a significant opportunity for community integration. The next section will cover JET Programme participants' involvement in community activities both through their CO and on their own.

CURRENT PARTICIPATION

Survey respondents indicate that 48% participate in community activities through their contracting organisation. Additionally, 74% of respondents participate in community activities on their own.

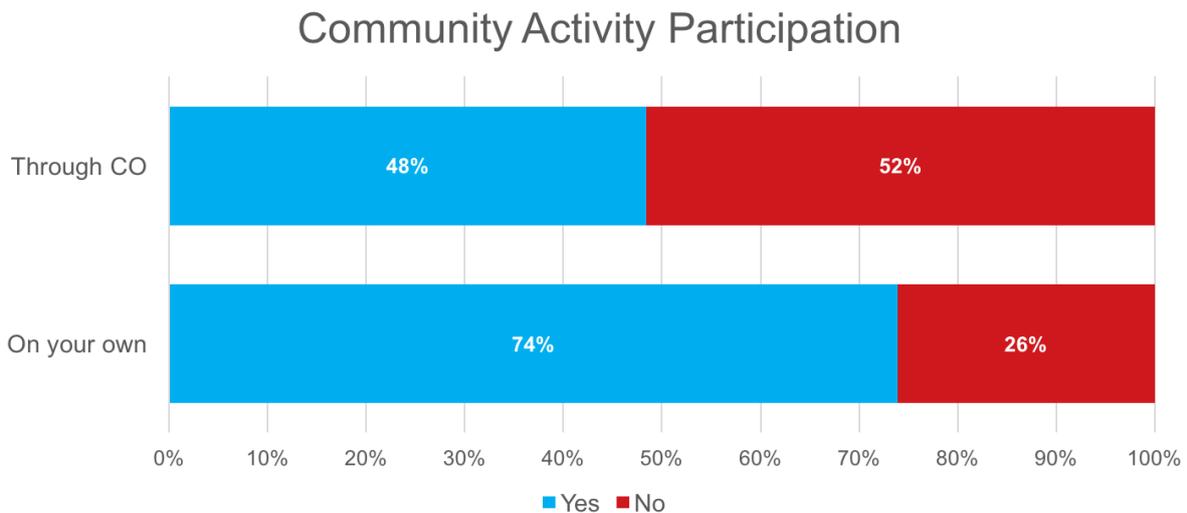


Chart 16

English-related activities such as English camps, speech contests, *eikaiwa*, and English classes for residents were cited by a large majority of respondents as activities they participate in through their CO. Additional activities through COs included local festivals, sports events such as races and school sports days, and holiday parties such as Christmas or Halloween.

Outside of events organised by their COs, participation was similarly high in local festivals, sporting events, and holiday parties. Additionally, volunteering within the community was mentioned by multiple respondents.

FURTHER PARTICIPATION

When asked about the type of community activities they would like to participate in, 355 respondents (50%) provided examples. Listed below are the top three areas from those responses.

108 of 355 respondents expressed interest in Japanese cultural activities, including: taiko, calligraphy, ikebana, tea ceremony, martial arts, and fine arts.

73 of 355 respondents expressed interest in local festivals, with many indicating that they wanted to be active participants in planning, preparation, or volunteering during the event.

53 of 355 respondents expressed interest in volunteer opportunities within their community. Examples provided included volunteer translation for local businesses, working with animals, working with senior citizens, city tourism outreach, and local beautification efforts.

OBSERVATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, JET Programme participants are involved and connected in their communities, but there are also many opportunities to further improve engagement.

OBSERVATIONS

Overall JET Programme participants receive significant help on arrival from their contracting organisations in areas such as housing, banking, mobile phone service, and utilities payments. Tokyo JETs still reported some difficulties related to housing, particularly not being able to take over from their predecessor. Greater support was requested relating to using Japanese medical services, obtaining home internet service, handling garbage and recycling, finding out about local points of interest in their community and using public transit.

Related to the above, information for foreign residents can be very limited, particularly in rural areas. Medical information in general was strongly desired, as well as information on handling garbage in rural placements. Assistance with obtaining mobile phone service was strongly desired in urban placements.

Language can be a barrier in many ways. However most JET Programme participants recognise that learning Japanese is their responsibility. While CLAIR already provides an online course for Japanese language study, there is a noted desire for in-person classes and conversational opportunities within their communities.

Internet and mobile phones serve as an important tool for all aspects of life in today's society, particularly among younger people. Significant delays in obtaining such connections hinder JET Programme participants' ability to communicate both inside and outside of Japan, may increase their sense of isolation in a new and foreign environment, and can limit their ability to do work as effectively.

JET Programme participants primarily rely on each other for support, however supervisors, Japanese co-workers and Japanese friends are also highly utilized for support. However Prefectural Assistants are seldom utilized. This could be a possible area for follow up.

JET Programme participants have a strong interest in being connected with host families, though few expressed interest in host families directly connected to their work.

JET Programme participants are highly interested in being involved in community and cultural activities in and around their placements. Many survey respondents expressed a strong desire for opportunities to participate in traditional Japanese activities as well as to be more active participants in local events such as festivals. The desire for information from contracting organisations about possible opportunities for greater involvement is strong among JET Programme participants.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the information gathered from this survey, the observations, as well as personal observations and experience of its members, The AJET National Council would like to offer the following recommendations:

The AJET National Council recommends encouraging contracting organisations to provide more information and assistance to arriving JET Programme participants in the following areas:

- Utilisation of medical services
- Acquisition of home internet service in a reasonably quick manner
- Acquisition of mobile phone service (particularly in urban placements)
- Proper handling of garbage and recycling (particularly in rural placements)
- Utilisation local public transit, particularly bus services
- Opportunities for Japanese language study such as classes and conversation groups
- Local points of interest

The AJET National Council recommends encouraging contracting organisations to provide JET Programme participants with ongoing information about local community involvement opportunities such as cultural events, festivals, classes and organisations.

The AJET National Council recommends further exploration as to the causes for the lack of utilisation of Prefectural Advisors by JET Programme participants.

The AJET National Council recommends contracting organisations consider ways to utilise JET Programme participants for translation and improvement of English resources in their community, particularly in rural placements. While not all participants are fluent enough in Japanese to serve as full-time translators, even proofreading translated information can help improve the quality of information available. Participants can also provide valuable feedback on what information would be most useful to foreign residents and visitors in their communities.

The AJET National Council recommends that MIC, MOFA, MEXT and CLAIR consider ways to provide more information to JET Programme participants regarding utilisation of Japanese medical services. It would be valuable to have a session during orientation which provides an overview of how to access and utilise medical services in Japan, as these procedures may be different than those in the home countries of JET Programme participants. However, as most will not have immediate need of medical services upon arrival in Japan, a written or online guide with information that they can reference as needed would also be a valuable resource. A collaboration between the ministries and The AJET National Council recommends would be worth considering here to ensure that the information provided matches the expectations and needs of participants.

Finally, The AJET National Council recommends that MIC, MOFA, MEXT and CLAIR, along with The AJET National Council explore ways to encourage and support contracting organisations in providing official host families for interested JET Programme participants. Ideally, these would be families where at least one member has moderate to strong English ability, however any willing family, however, would provide a valuable resource for participants. Host families may be able to help address many of the concerns participants currently express, such as obtaining local information about garbage, mobile phones, or medical services. Host families may also be able to provide information about involvement in local cultural activities. In addition, host families could help foster cultural exchange by providing their assigned JET Programme participant with a more intimate look into daily life in Japan, as well as providing an opportunity for the host family to learn about cultural differences from the. Fostering such cultural exchange and close ties with members of the community aligns well with the overall mission of the JET Programme.

QUESTIONS

QUESTION 1:

Have host families been utilised more broadly in the past? If so, are there any reasons for a decline in their use today? If not, are there any specific reasons you are aware of why they are not utilised more broadly?

QUESTION 2:

Is it possible that JETs could get special leave as time to fulfill the "E" in JET by "Exchanging" with our communities in their festivals, events and traditions as well with communities all around Japan with their festivals, events and traditions? One submission from a JET online states that time sitting in the office for both winter and summer vacation can be used better by traveling around Japan, learning more about different places, exchanging with the communities through various events.

