

# **Tohoku University International Student Survey 2020**



# Tohoku University International Student Survey 2020

2021.3

## Survey Goals

This survey is used to ascertain trends among Tohoku University's international students to better support their research and education, and to improve the admission system and international exchange programs.

## Executive Organization

Institute for Excellence in Higher Education (IEHE), Global Learning Center

## Eligibility

Students enrolled at Tohoku University at the time of the survey as undergraduate students, graduate students, exchange students, and research students. 2,103 (number of enrolled international students as of November 1, 2016)

## Survey Period/Method/Collection Rate

The survey was conducted from November 5 to December 18, 2020 via an online questionnaire in Japanese and English.

The survey questions were divided into the following categories: Basic Information, Financial Situation, Academic Life, Support for International Students, Well-being and Relationships, and Desired Career after Graduation. Answers to free-comment sections were accepted in both Japanese and English.

There were 651 respondents, for a response rate of about 31.0%.

## 1. Basic Information on Respondents

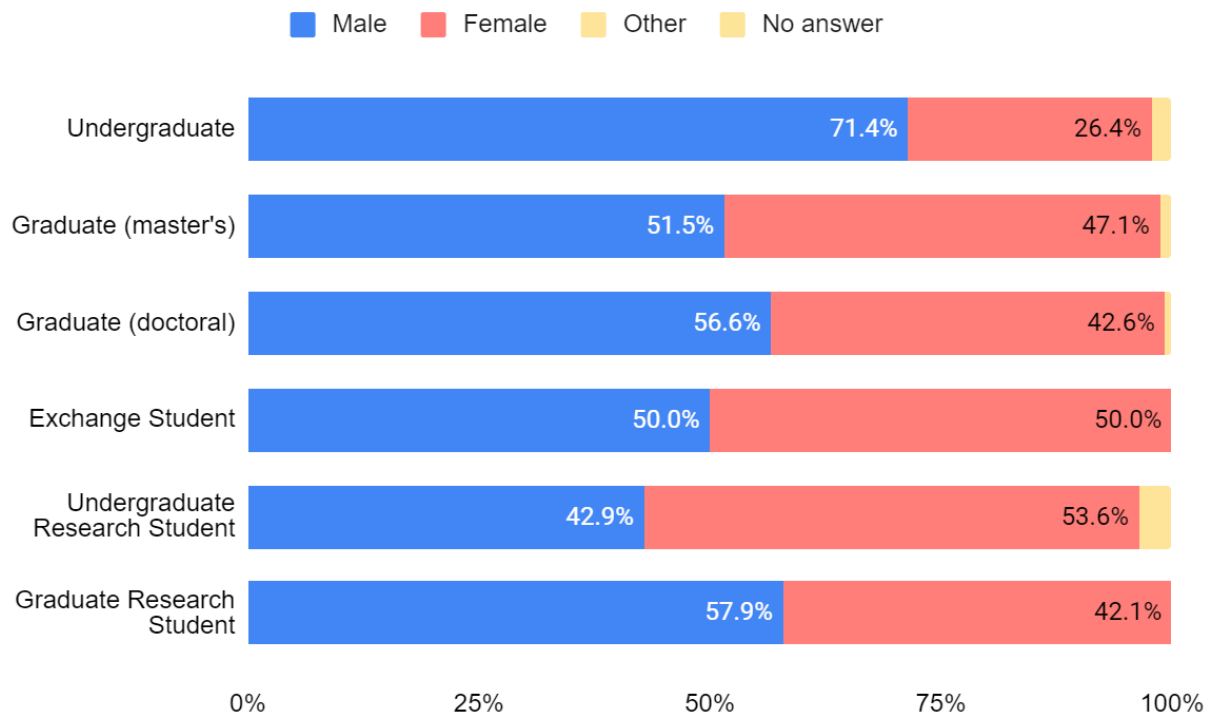
1. Faculty/Graduate School/Research Institute etc.

	Undergraduate	Graduate (master's)	Graduate (doctoral)	Exchange Student	Undergraduate Research Student	Graduate Research Student	Other	Overall
Faculty/Graduate School of Arts and Letters	1	10	4	1	8	2	1	27
Faculty/Graduate School of Education	0	7	1	0	4	1	0	13
School/Graduate School of Law	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	4
Faculty of Economics/Graduate School of Economics and Management	1	34	16	0	3	1	0	55
Faculty/Graduate School of Science	24	27	34	0	2	3	0	90

Faculty/Graduate School of Medicine	0	5	16	0	1	1	0	<b>23</b>
School/Graduate School of Dentistry	2	1	22	0	0	0	0	<b>25</b>
Faculty/Graduate School of Pharmaceutical Sciences	1	4	3	0	1	3	0	<b>12</b>
School/Graduate School of Engineering	45	45	61	4	2	0	0	<b>157</b>
Faculty of Agriculture/Graduate School of Agricultural Science	14	14	16	0	2	3	0	<b>49</b>
Graduate School of International Cultural Studies	0	29	20	0	3	1	0	<b>53</b>
Graduate School of Information Sciences	0	20	27	0	0	0	0	<b>47</b>
Graduate School of Life Sciences	0	8	18	0	1	2	0	<b>29</b>
Graduate School of Environmental Studies	0	12	21	0	0	1	0	<b>34</b>
Graduate School of Biomedical Engineering	0	4	8	0	0	0	0	<b>12</b>
Other	3	4	4	7	1	1	1	<b>9</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>227</b>	<b>272</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>651</b>

- The response rate for graduate (master's and doctoral) students was about 30%. The response rate was comparatively high for undergraduate students at 44.6%, and low for research students at 17.2%.
- Differences can be seen in the response rates at faculties (undergraduate schools), graduate schools, and research institutes. In science-related undergraduate/graduate schools and research institutes, the response rate was close to 30%. In humanities-related undergraduate/graduate schools, the rates were 7-25%, with the exception of the Faculty of Economics and Graduate School of Economics and Management at 35.5%.
- Most of the undergraduate respondents belong to degree programs taught in English in the School of Engineering, Faculty of Science, or Faculty of Agriculture.

## 2. Gender



n=649, Category "Other" omitted

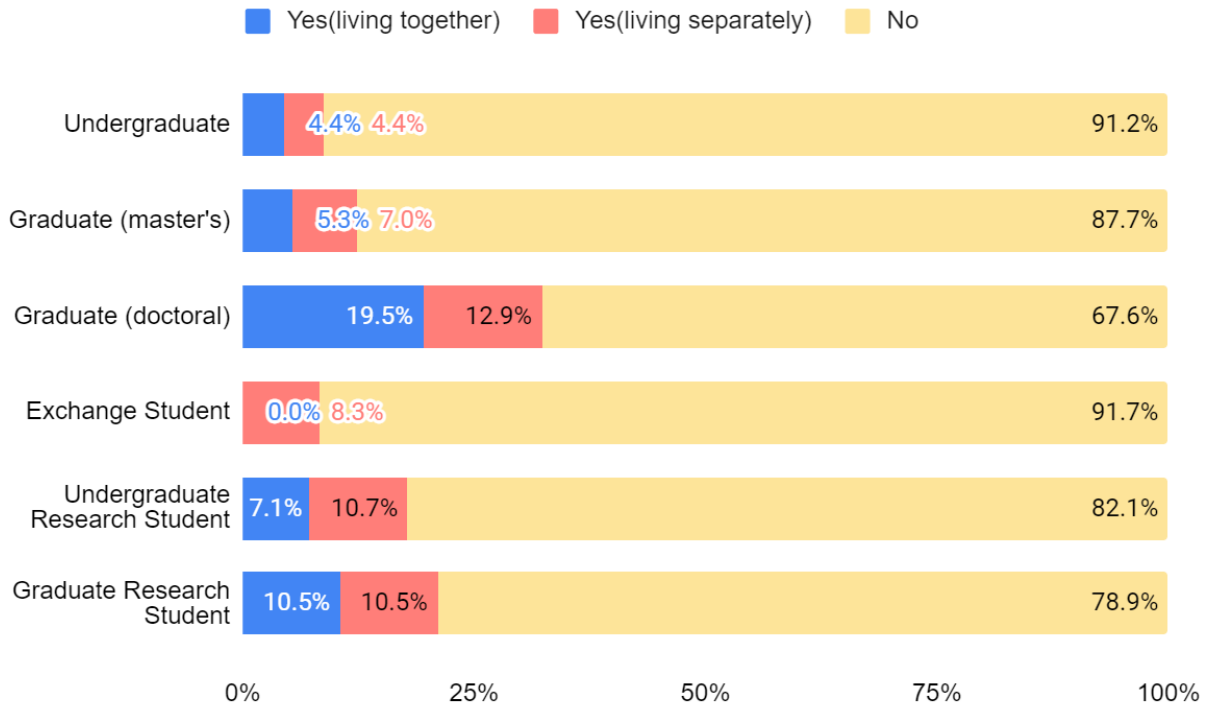
### 3. Home Region

		Undergraduate	Graduate (master's)	Graduate (doctoral)	Exchange Student	Undergraduate Research Student	Graduate Research Student	Other	Overall
Home Region	East Asia	34	156	140	3	23	10	2	<b>368</b>
	South East Asia	47	30	58	1	4	3	0	<b>143</b>
	South Asia	5	6	21	0	0	1	0	<b>33</b>
	North America	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	<b>3</b>
	Central/South America	0	10	14	0	1	1	0	<b>26</b>
	Europe	2	16	13	7	0	1	0	<b>39</b>
	Middle East	3	1	6	0	0	1	0	<b>11</b>
	Africa	0	6	14	1	0	2	0	<b>23</b>
	Oceania	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	<b>2</b>
	Other	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	<b>3</b>

n=651

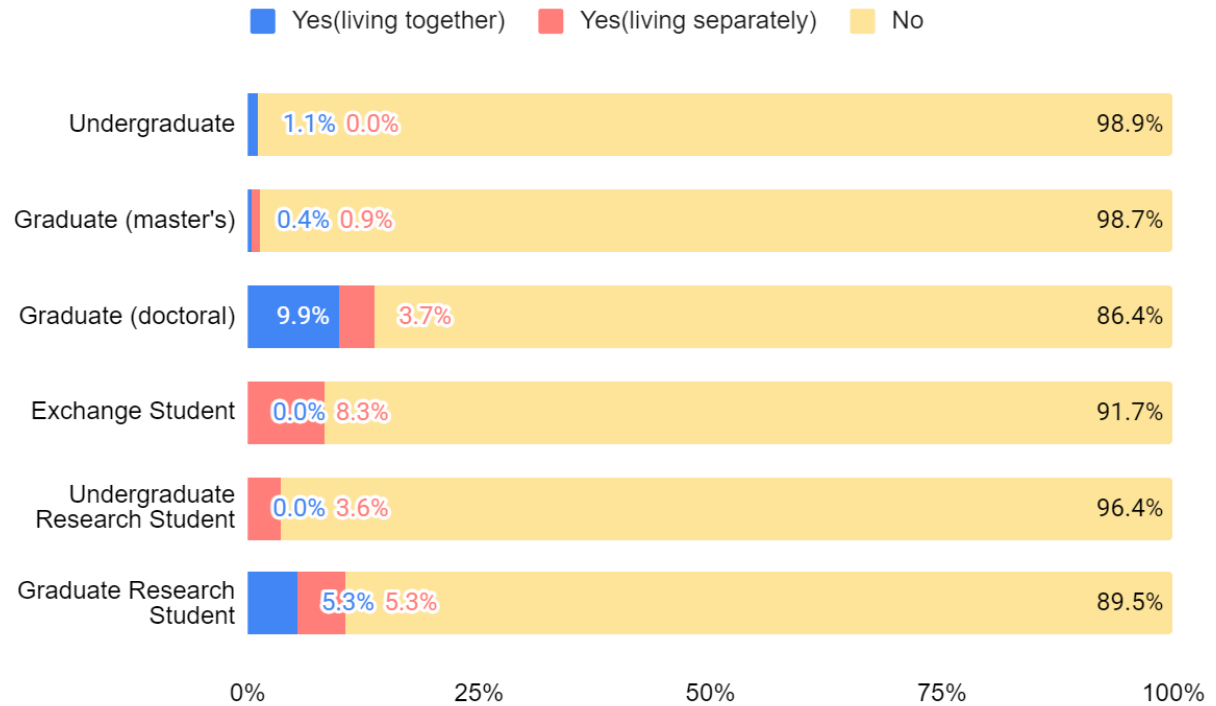
- By region, the largest number of the university's international students (about 90%) are from Asia, followed in order by Europe, Africa, Central/South Americas, Middle East, North America, and Oceania (as of November 1, 2020). The respondents' regions more or less reflect the makeup of the university's international student body.

#### 4. Spouse/Partner



n=649, Category "Other" omitted

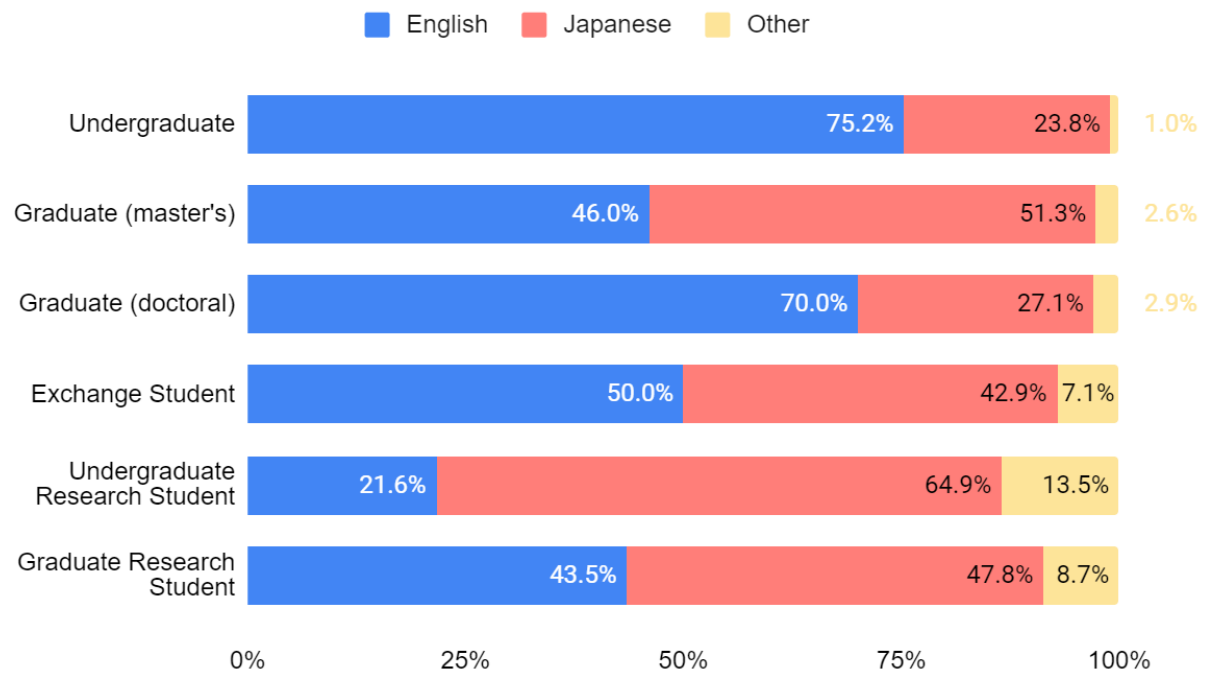
## 5. Children



n=649, Category "Other" omitted

- Overall, 20.6% of international students have a spouse/partner, the highest rate being found among graduate (doctoral) students at 32.4%.
- Overall, 6.9% of international students have children, the highest rate being found among graduate (doctoral) students at 13.6%.

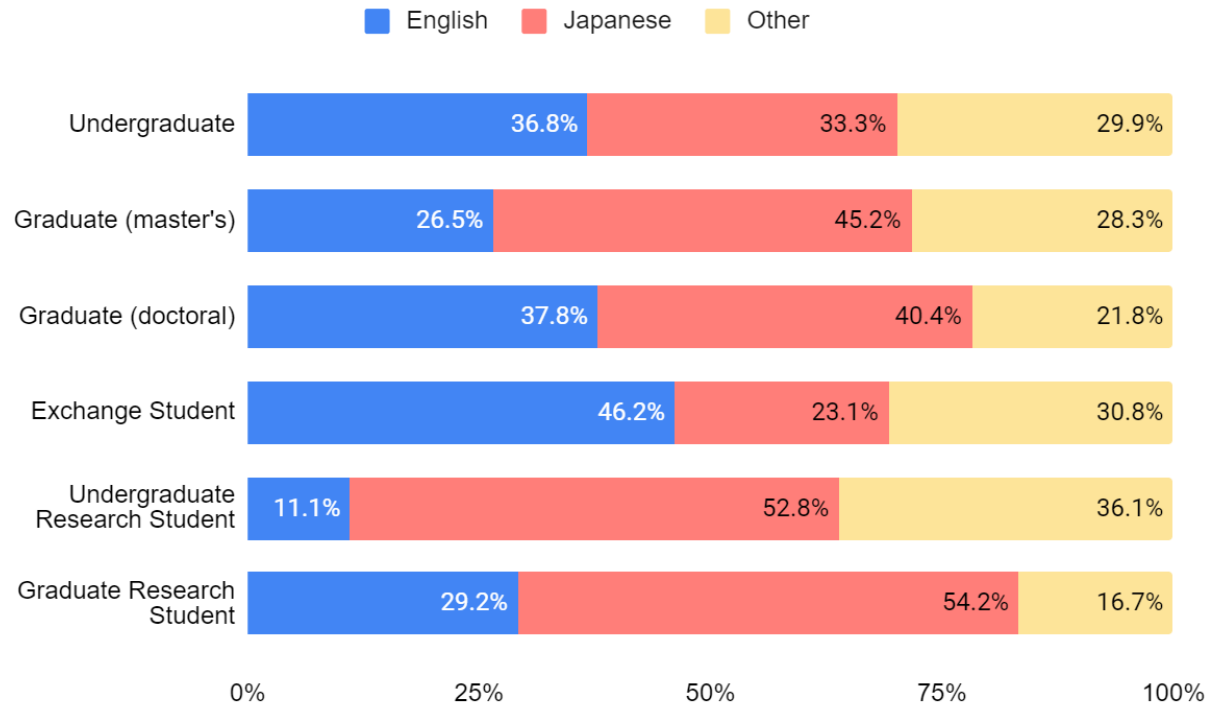
## 6. Language Most Used for University Life



n=649, Category "Other" omitted, multiple answers allowed

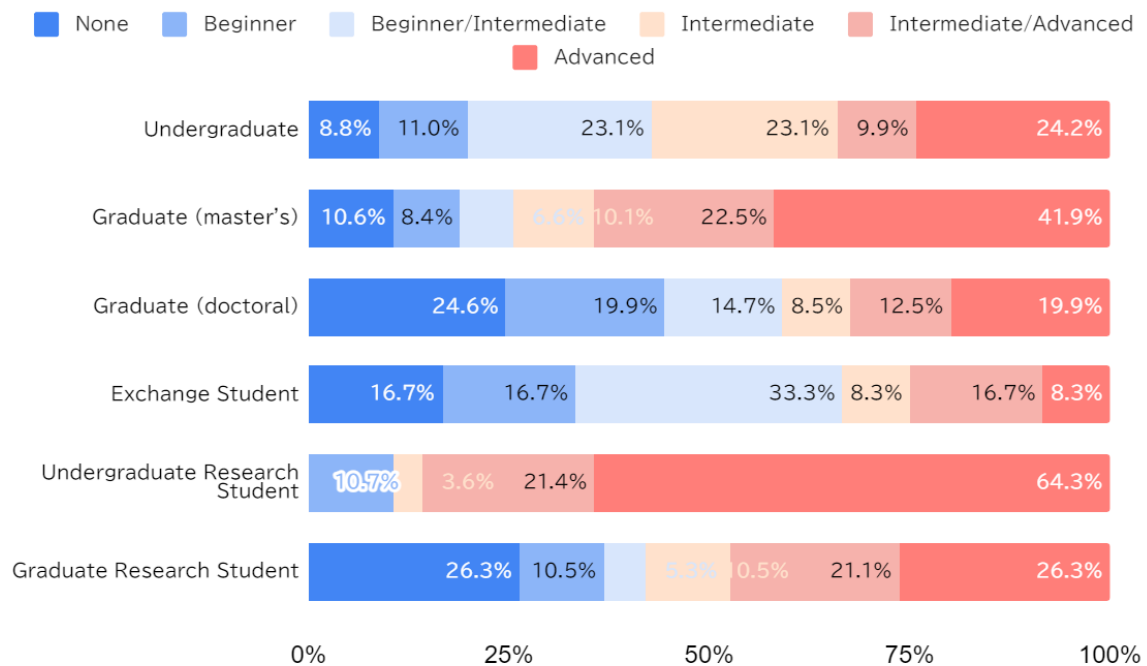


## 7. Language Most Used in Daily Life



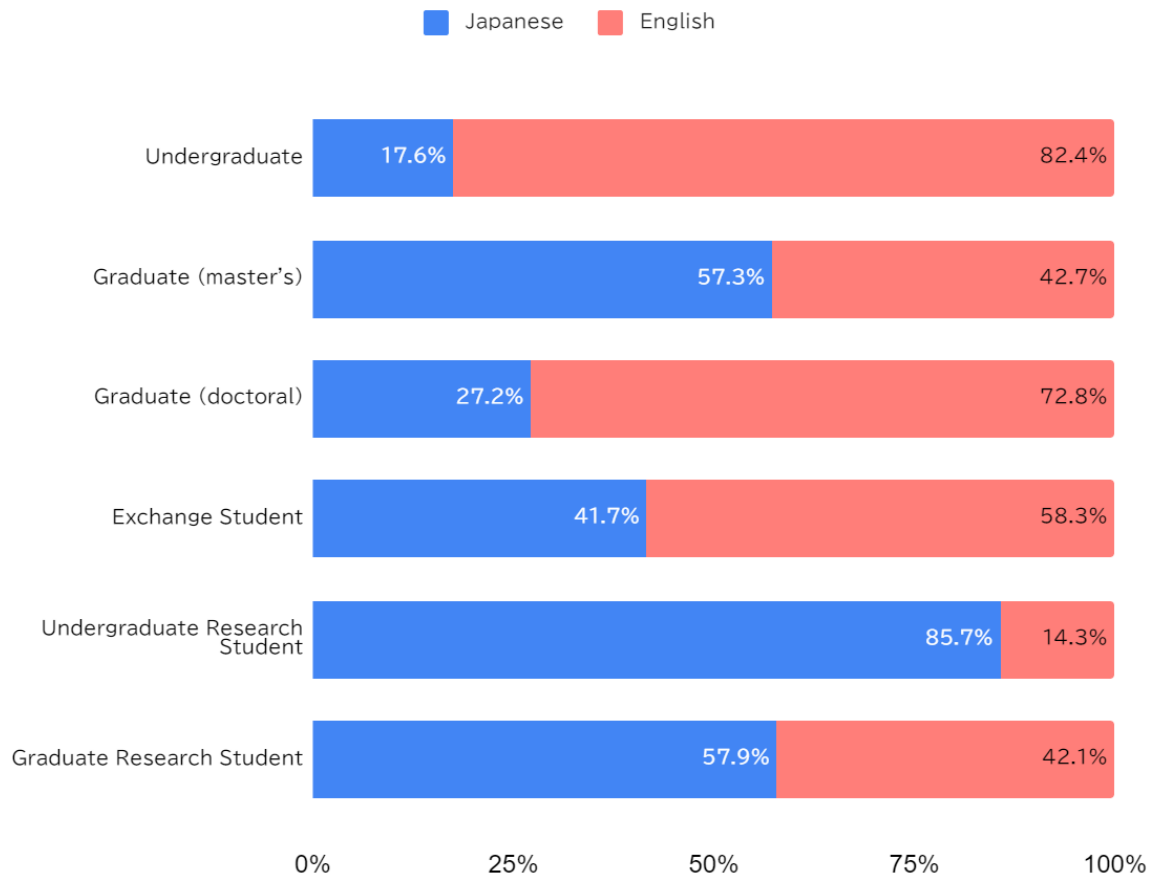
n=649, Category "Other" omitted

## 8. Japanese Proficiency



n=649, Category "Other" omitted

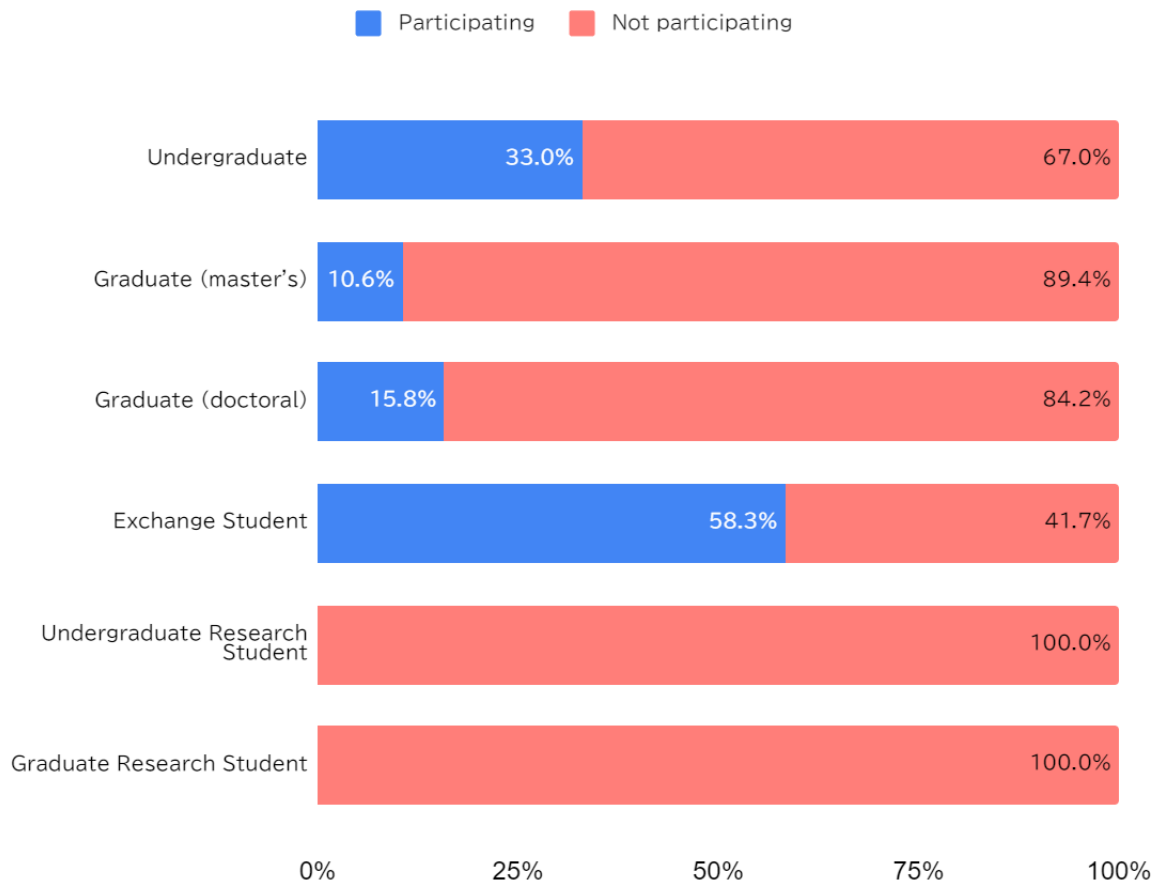
## 9. Language Used in Course/Program



n=649, Category "Other" omitted

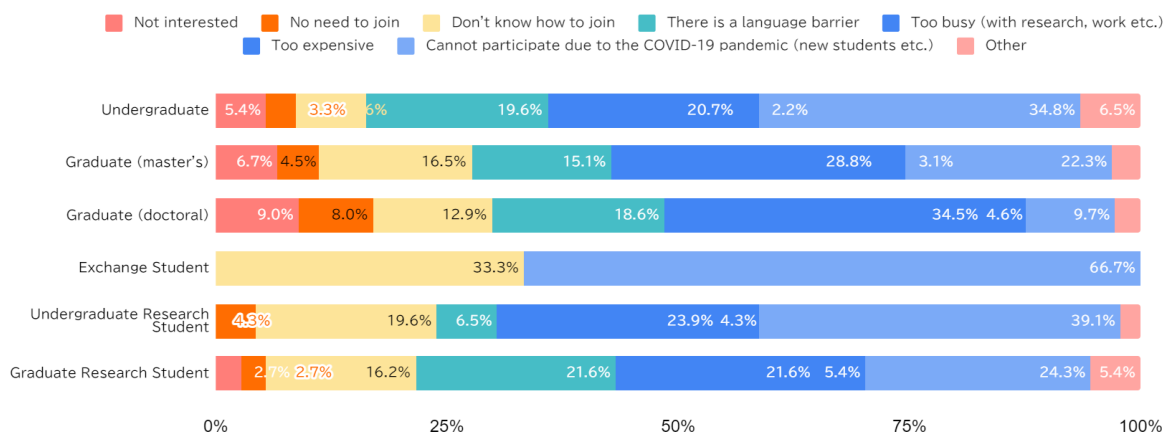
- At the university, over 70% of undergraduate and graduate (doctoral) students indicated that they use English, while 65% of research students indicated that they use Japanese. In daily life, most international students, with the exception of exchange students and undergraduate students, indicated that they use Japanese more than English.
- Over 60% of exchange students and graduate (doctoral) students reported their Japanese proficiency to be "Beginner" level or lower. In contrast, 64.3% of research students and 41.9% of graduate (master's) students reported their Japanese proficiency to be "Advanced" level.
- Graduate (master's) students and undergraduate research students took a relatively high proportion of their classes in Japanese, while graduate (doctoral) students and exchange students took a high proportion of their classes in English.

## 10. Participation in Extracurricular Activities



n=649, Category "Other" omitted

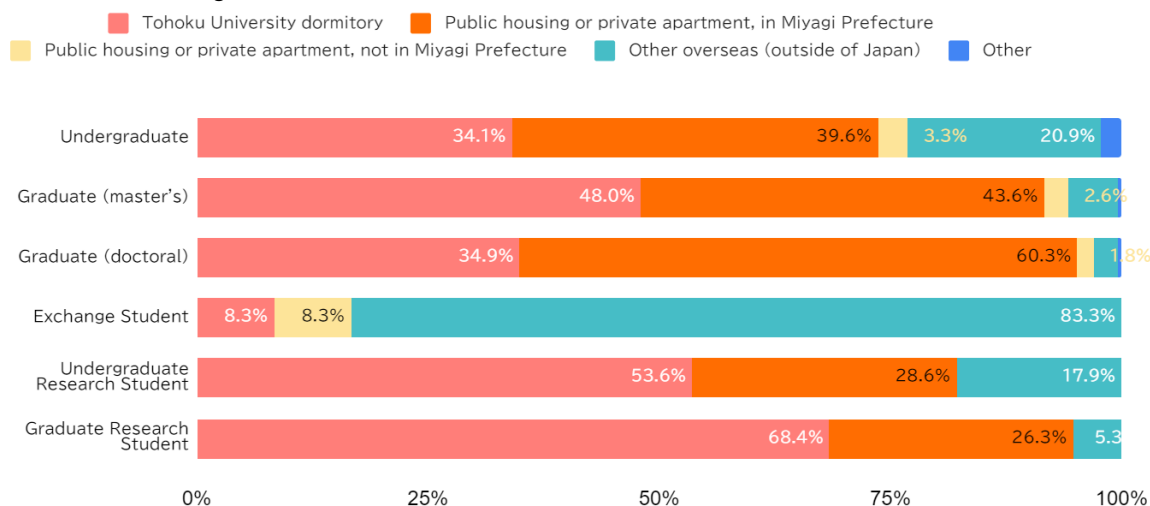
## 11. Reasons for not Participating in Extracurricular Activities



n=537, excluding "Other" category, only people who answered "not participating" to Q9, multiple answers accepted

- Overall, 84.0% of surveyed students do not participate in clubs/circles. However, over half of the exchange students do participate. As reasons for not participating, 34.5% of graduate (master's/doctoral) students chose "too busy," while about 30% of students from all categories chose "don't know how to join" and/or "there is a language barrier."
- Many undergraduate, exchange, and undergraduate research students, chose "cannot participate due to the COVID-19 pandemic." The higher the year, the more the students chose "too busy (with research, work etc.)" as the reason for not participating.

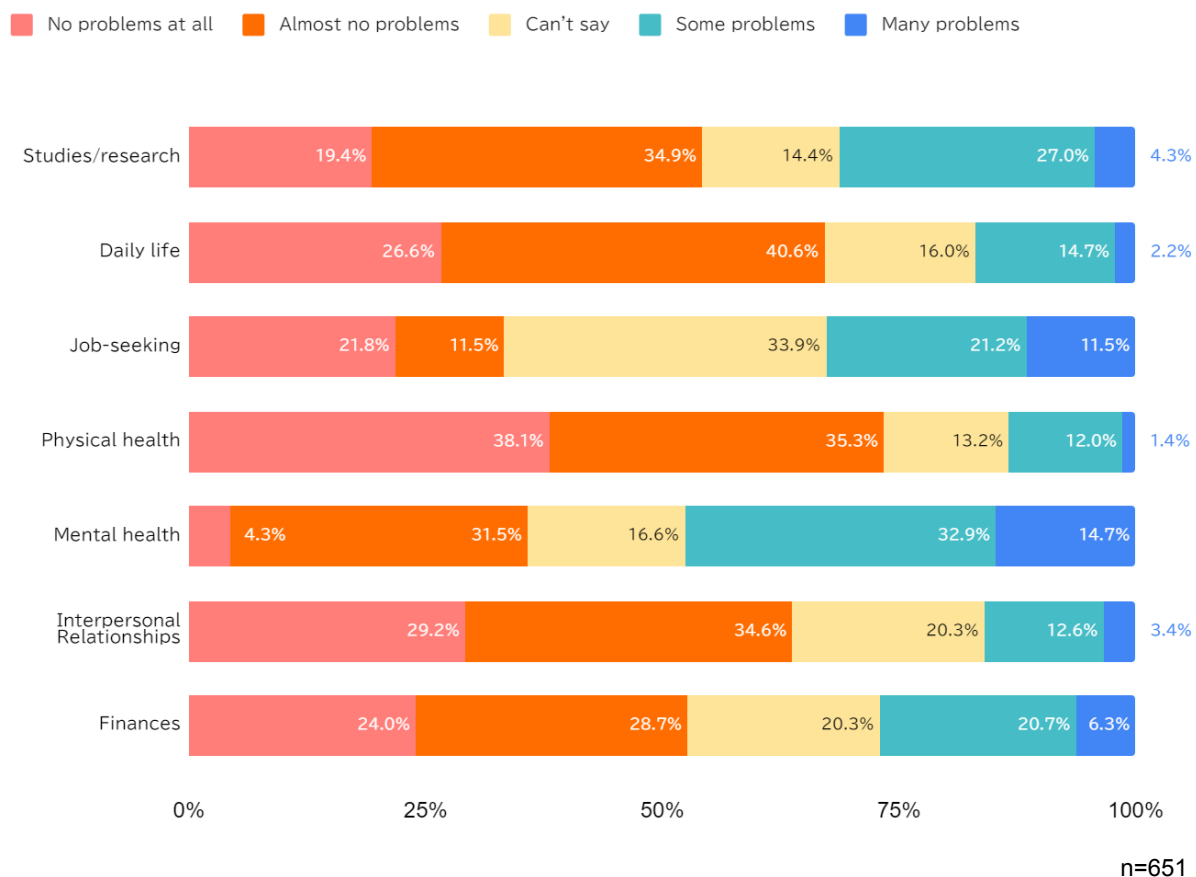
## 12. Current Housing Situation



n=649, Category "Other" omitted

- Among respondents overall, 47.9% live in public housing or private apartments, while 40.9% live in Tohoku University dormitories.
- Among exchange students, 83.3% responded that they are living outside of Japan.

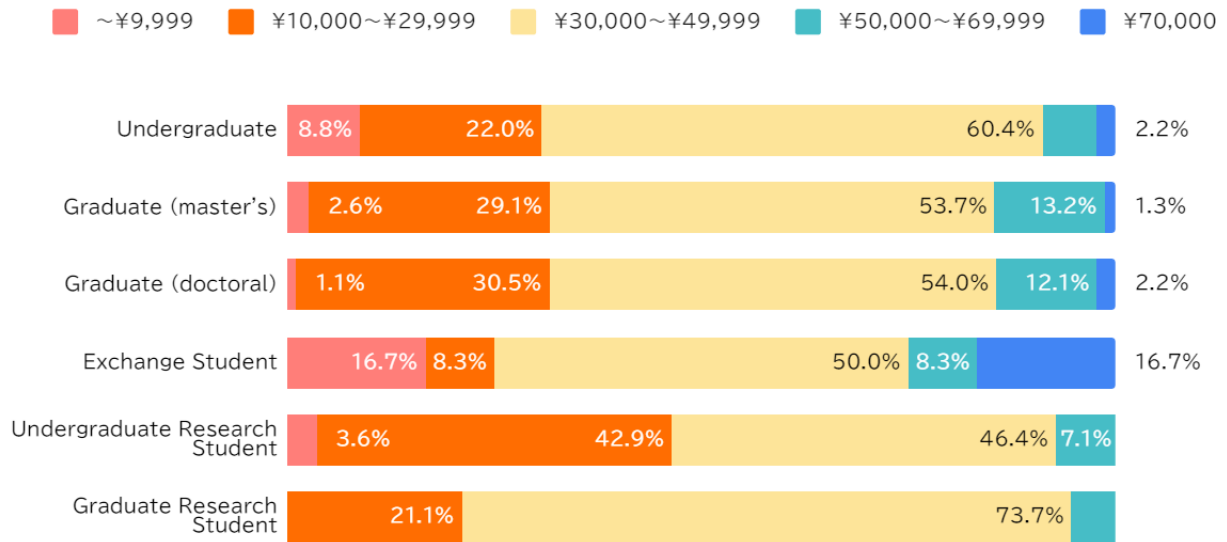
### 13. Things that are worried about



- The responses "no problems at all" and "almost no problems" were the most common for the categories of "physical health" (73.4%), "daily life" (67.2%), and "interpersonal relationships" (63.8%).
- The proportion of respondents answering "some problems" and "many problems" were highest for the categories of "mental health" (47.6%), "job-seeking" (32.7%), and "studies/research" (31.3%). This raises concern over the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on various facets of student life.

## 2. Financial Situation

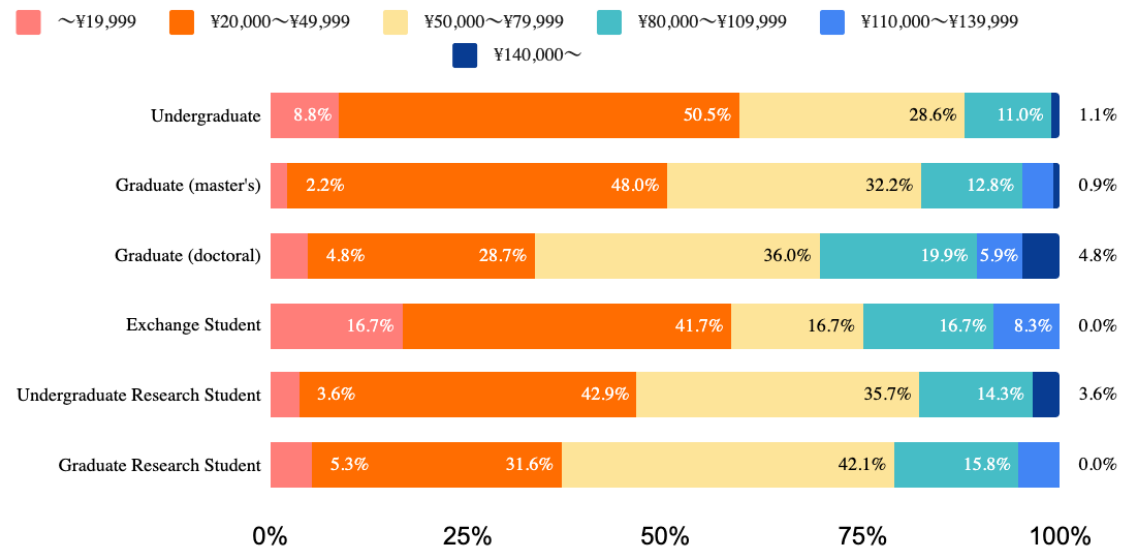
### 1. Housing Expenses



n=649, Category "Other" omitted

- Over 80% of respondents have a monthly income of JPY 50,000 or less.
- Among students from all categories, the majority responded their monthly income is JPY 30,000–49,999.

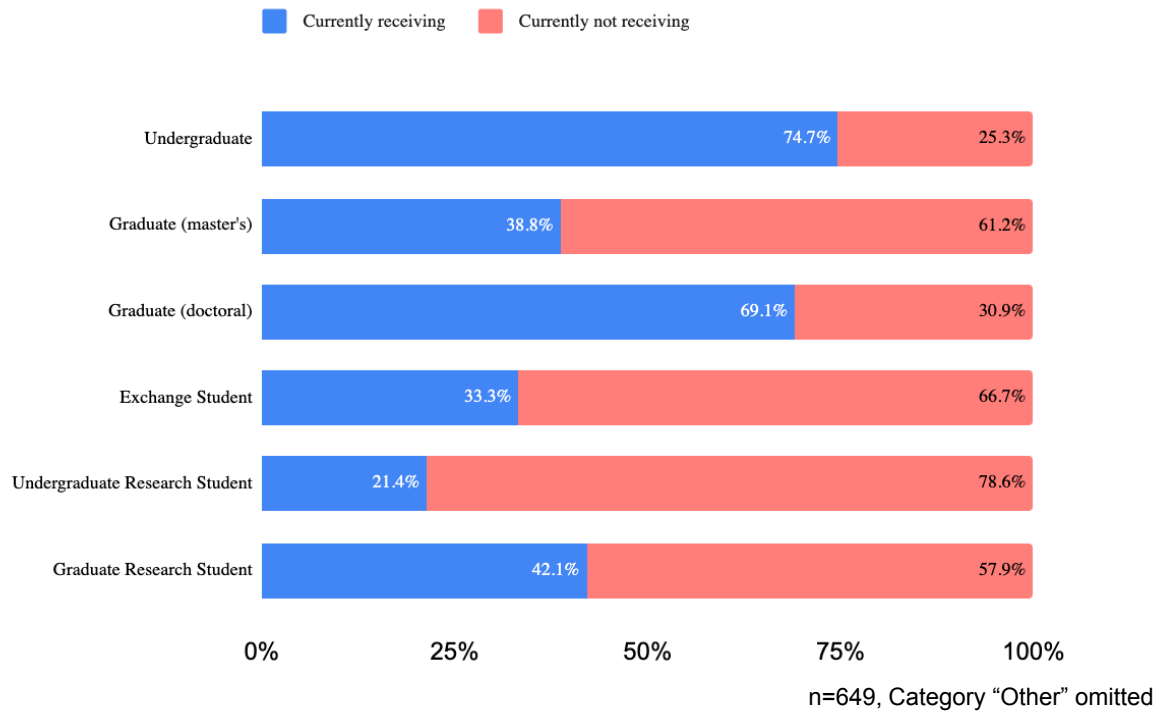
### 2. Living Expenses



n=649, Category "Other" omitted

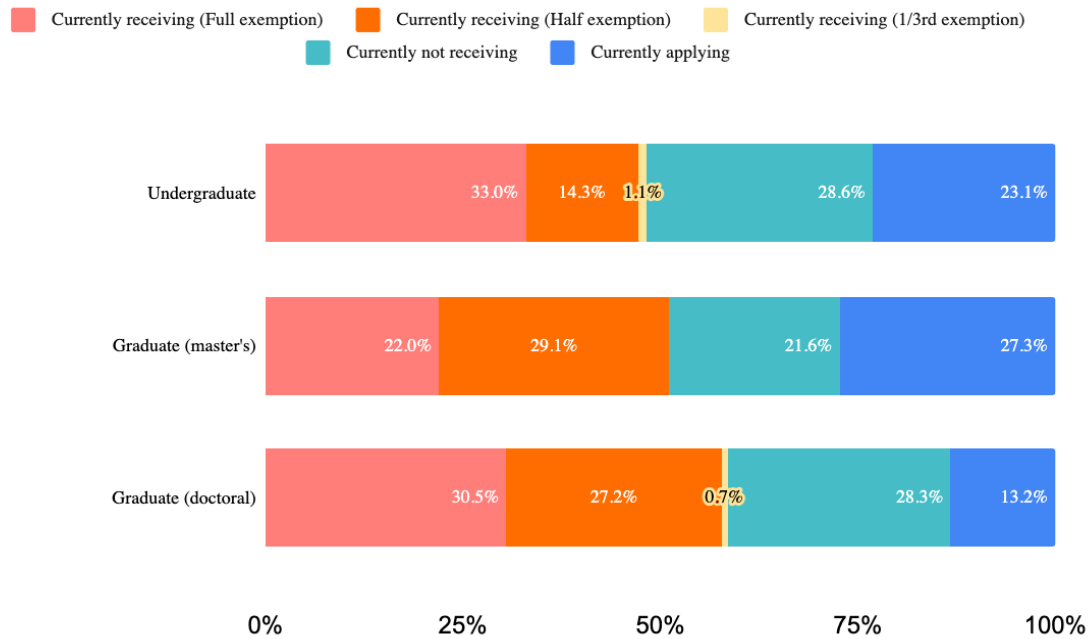
- Over 3/4 of respondents have a monthly income of JPY 80,000 or less.

### 3. Scholarship Receiving



- Overall, 55.8% of respondents are currently receiving scholarships.
- Undergraduate and graduate (doctoral) students have a high rate of scholarship receipt at about 70%, while the rate for research students is just 21.4%.

#### 4. Tuition Exemption

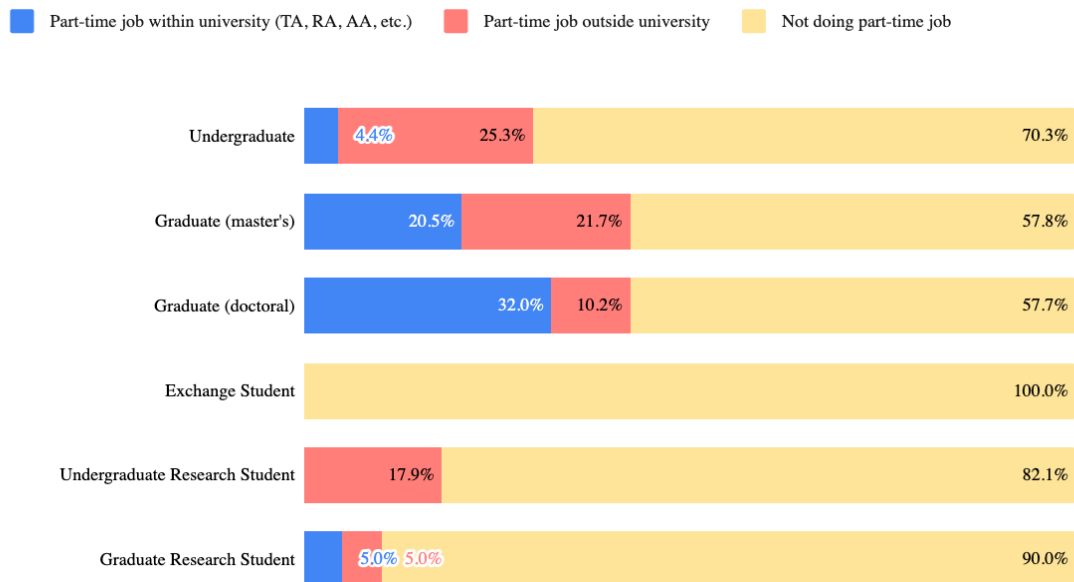


n=590, Categories "Exchange Student", "Undergraduate Research Student", "Graduate Research Student", and "Other" omitted

- A total of 54% of undergraduate and graduate (master's and doctoral) students are receiving tuition waivers; 26% of students receive no waivers.
- Of those receiving tuition waivers, graduate (doctoral) students receive them at the highest rate (58.5%). In contrast, undergraduate students receive them at the lowest rate (48.4%).



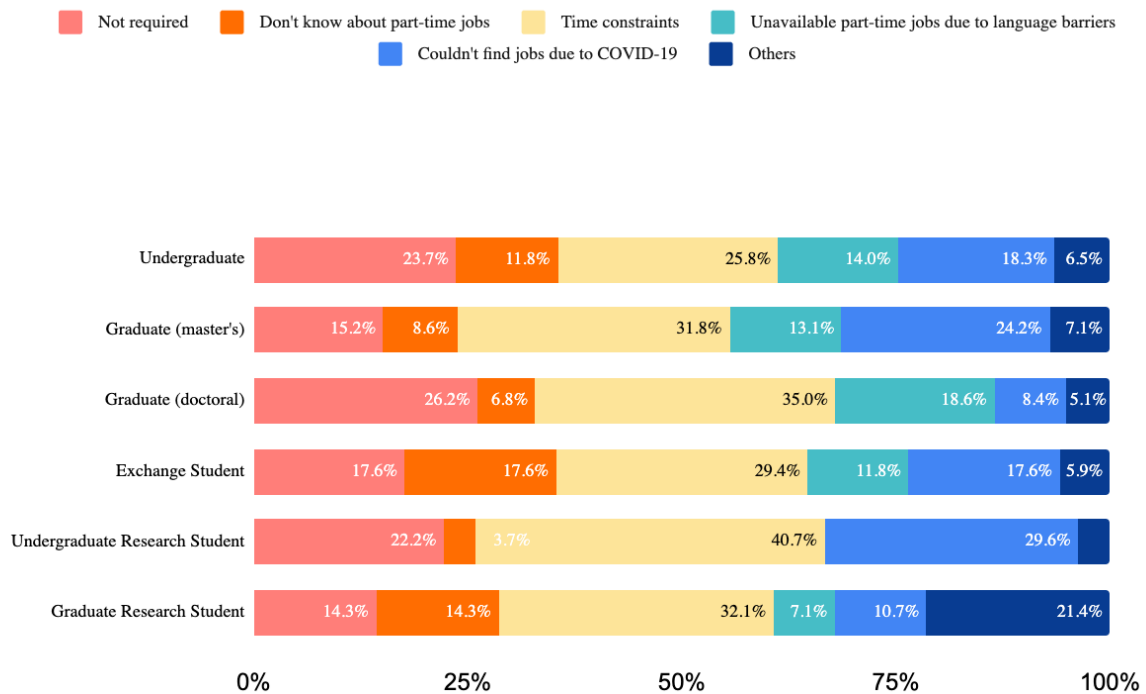
## 5. Current Part-time Job (including on-campus jobs such as TA, RA, AA)



n=649, "Other" category omitted, multiple answers allowed

- Among all categories of students, over half answered that they do not perform part-time work.
- Among undergraduate, graduate (master's and doctoral) students, the proportion of those working part-time as TAs, RAs, and AAs increases with each stage of higher education.

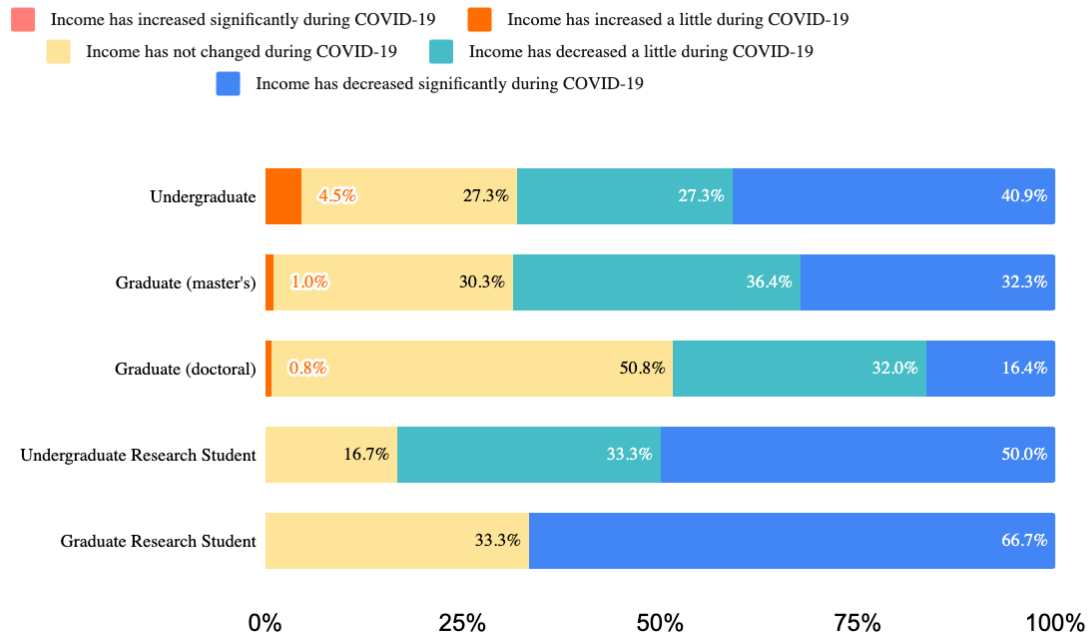
## 6. Reasons for Not Working Part-time



n=395, Category "Other" omitted, only students who answered "Not doing part-time job", multiple answers allowed

- The most common reason overall for not working part-time is "I don't have enough time to work," followed by "it's not necessary," and finally "I couldn't get a job due to the COVID-19 pandemic."

## 7. Impact of the COVID-19 on Part-time Jobs

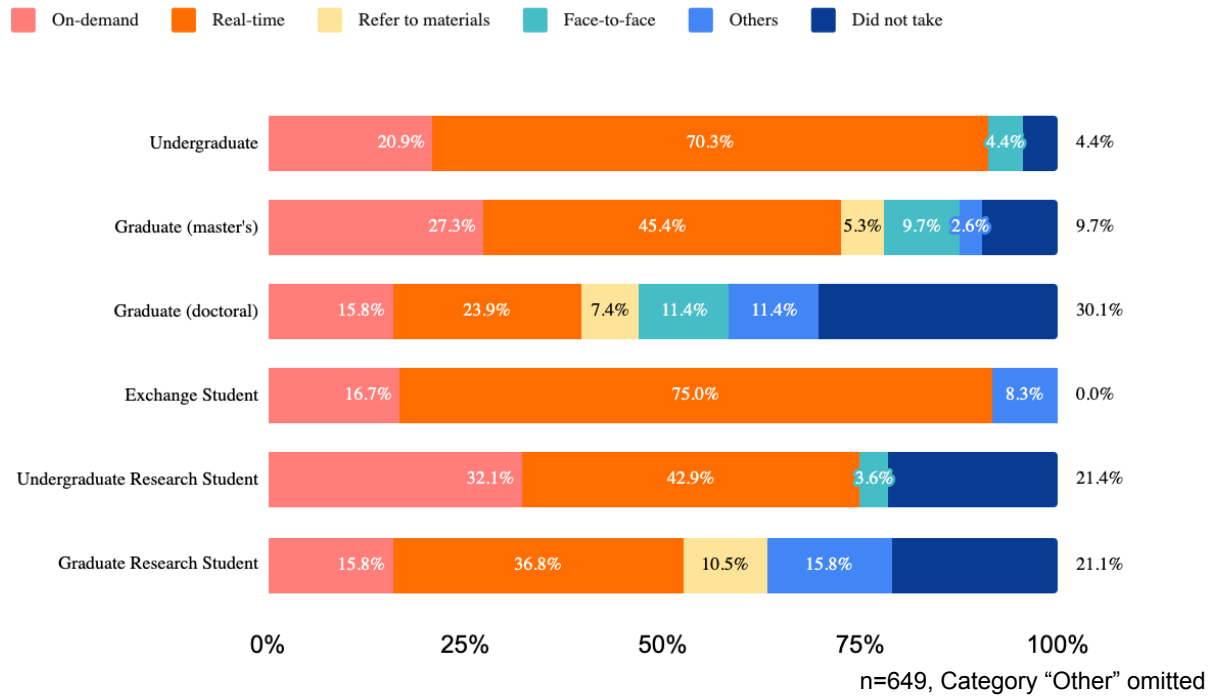


n=252, Categories "Exchange Student" and "Other" omitted, only students who answered that they were engaged in a part-time job

- Regarding the impact of COVID-19 on income, the most common answers for students in all categories are "decreased somewhat" or "decreased greatly" compared to before the pandemic; conspicuously, these responses total 83.3% among research students in particular.
- Compared to students from other categories, the number of graduate (doctoral) students who responded that their income "has not changed" is the greatest. Given this, it seems that the presence/absence of on-campus part-time jobs, such as TA or RA work, affects income stability.

### 3. Learning / Research Environment for 2020 Academic Year

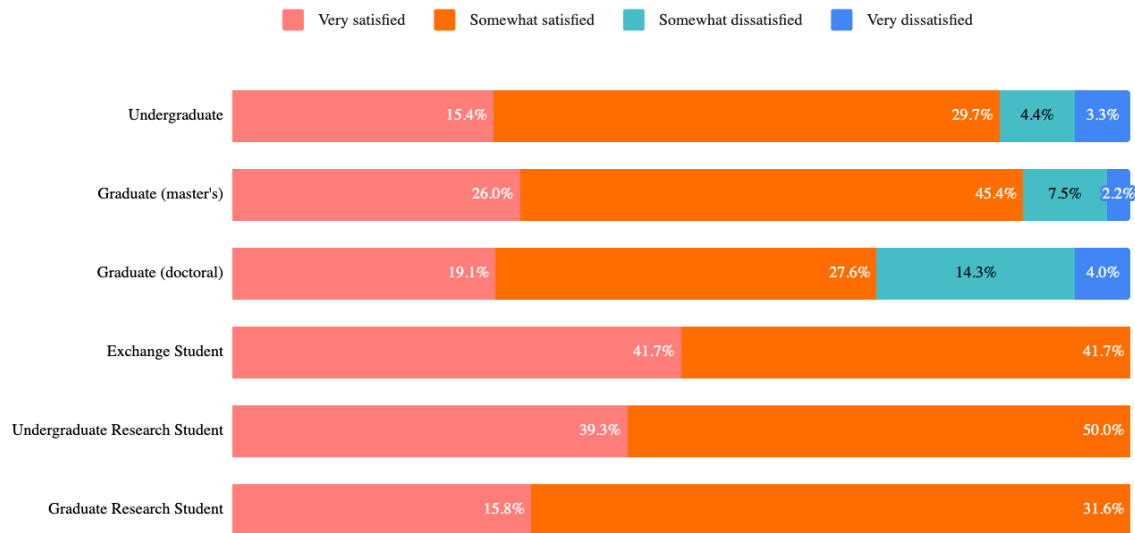
#### 1. Class Style



- The most common answers for class format are, in descending order, "real-time," "on-demand," and "in-person."
- Over 70% of undergraduate and exchange students answered "real-time," while "via materials" is almost completely absent.
- The proportion of students who responded "not enrolled in any classes" is almost the same among graduate (doctoral), undergraduate, and graduate research students.

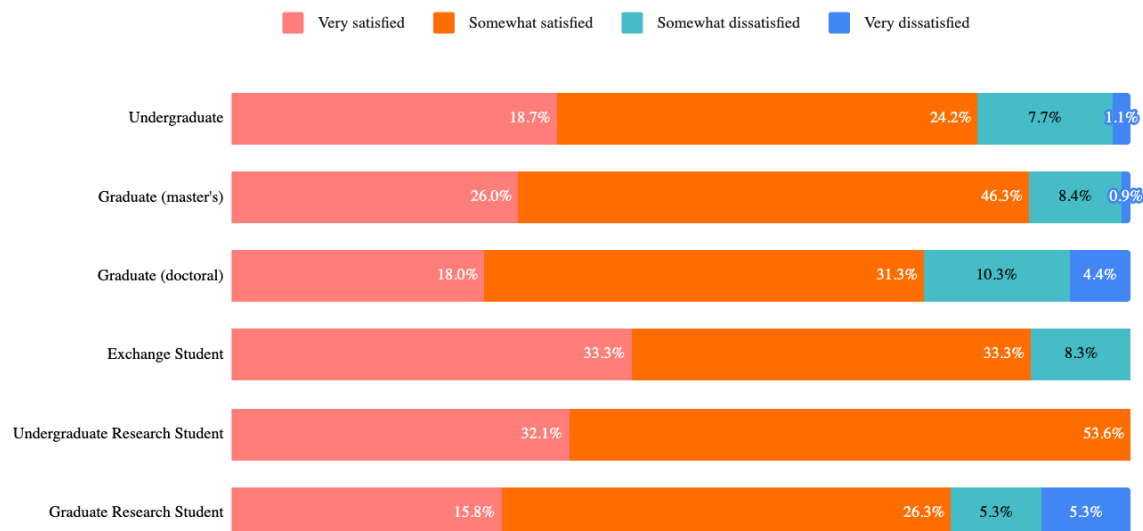
## 2. Class Satisfaction

### <Contents of Specialized Classes offered in Japanese>



n=453, Category "Other" and answer "Not applicable" omitted

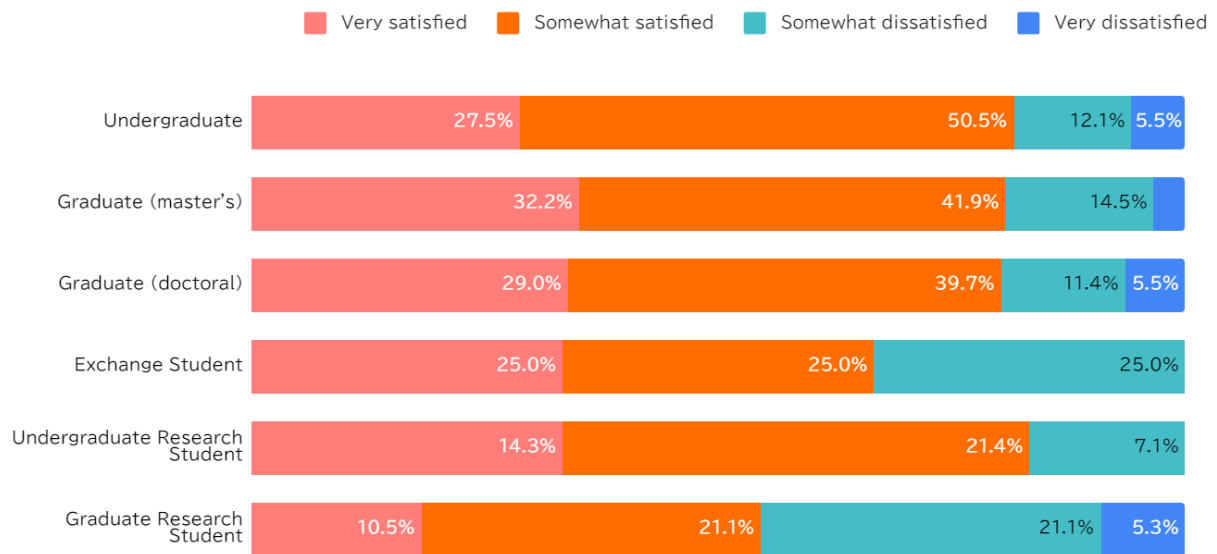
### 3. <Number of Specialized Classes offered in Japanese>



n=449, Category "Other" and answer "Not applicable" omitted

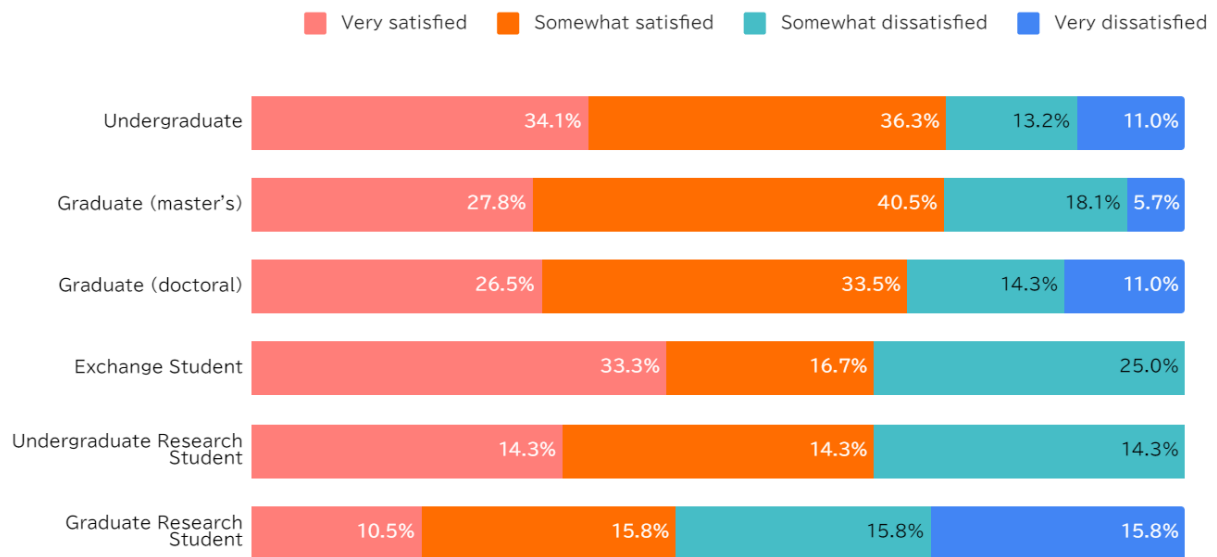
- Levels of satisfaction are comparatively high overall, but a certain amount of dissatisfaction is apparent regarding the content/number of specialized classes conducted in Japanese.
- Respondents selecting "somewhat dissatisfied" or "very dissatisfied" are most numerous among, in decreasing order, graduate (doctoral), graduate (master's), and undergraduate students. Compared to other student categories a high proportion of graduate research students are "very dissatisfied" with the number of specialized classes taught in Japanese

#### 4. <Contents of Specialized Classes offered in English>



n=560, Category "Other" and answer "Not applicable" omitted

#### 5. <Number of Specialized Classes offered in English>

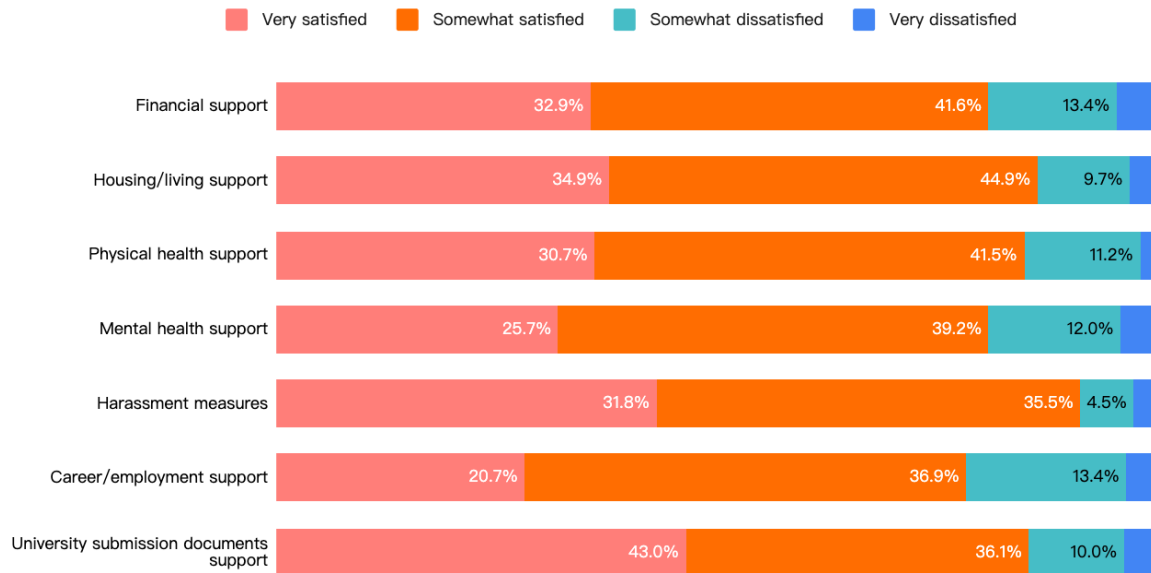


n=559, Category "Other" and answer "Not applicable" omitted

- There is not much difference in satisfaction levels among years, but fully 10% of undergraduate, graduate (doctoral), and graduate research students indicated they are "very dissatisfied" with the number of classes.

## 4. University Life and Support

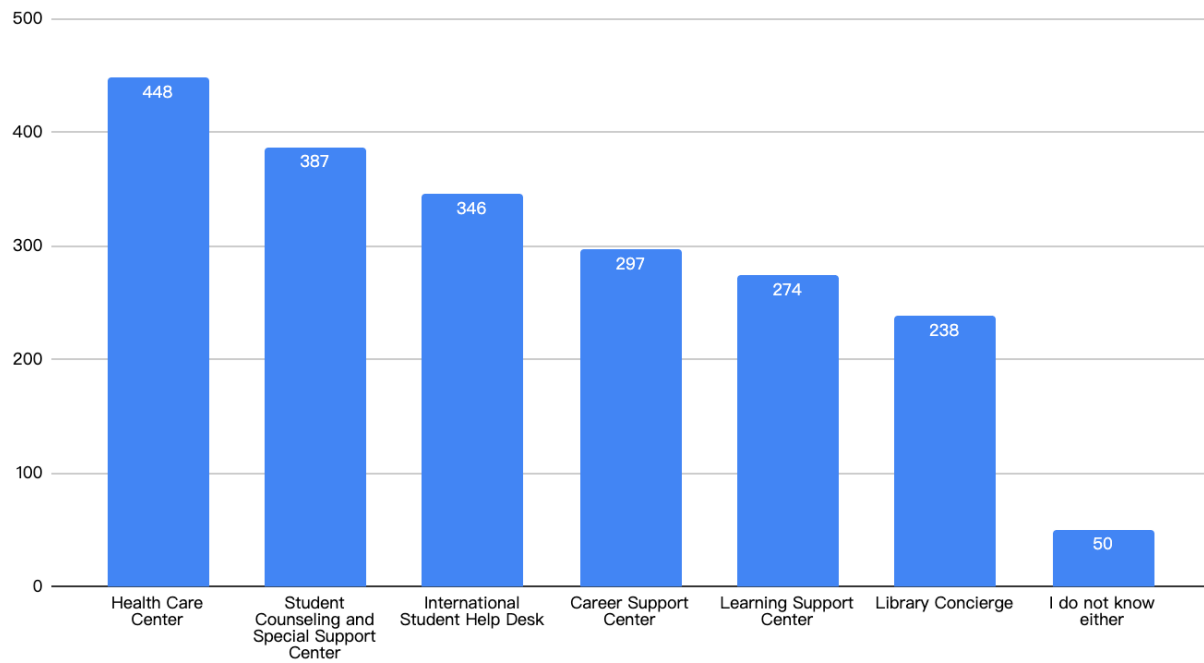
### 1. Satisfaction with Support Provided by University



Answer "Not applicable" omitted

- 80% of students answered that they are "very satisfied" or "somewhat satisfied" with "housing/daily life support" and "assistance with university forms."
- Top items with which students are "somewhat dissatisfied" or "very dissatisfied" are "financial support" (17.7%), "career/job-seeking support" (16%), and "mental health support" (15.4%).

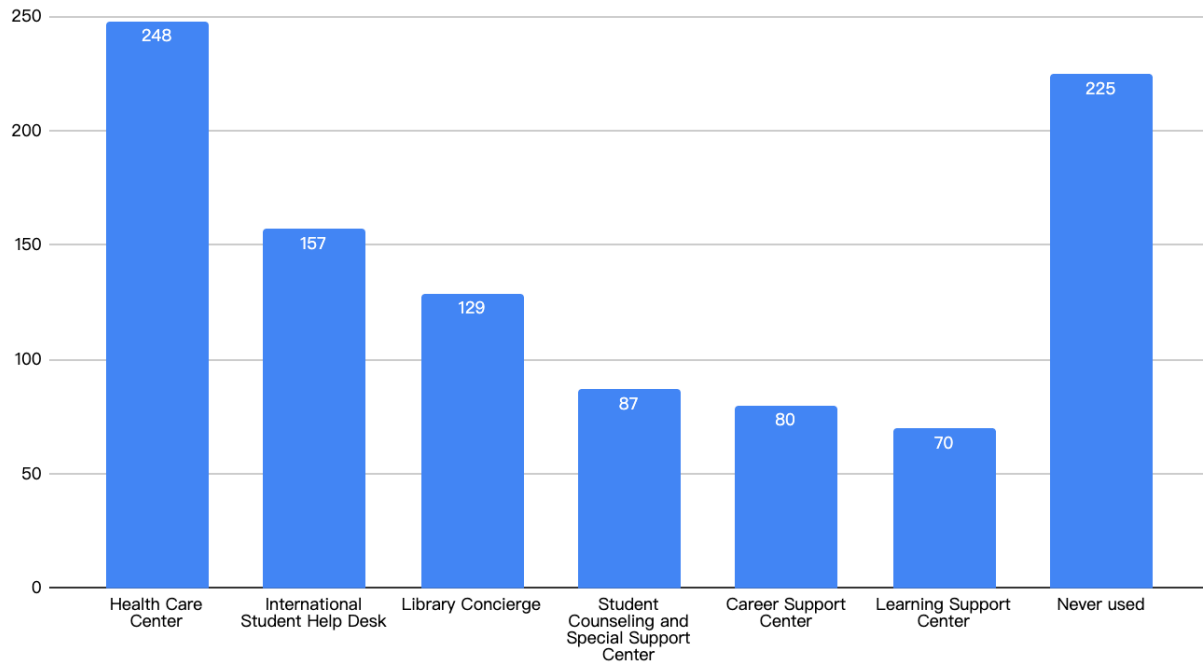
## 2. Services that Students Know



n=651, multiple answers allowed



### 3. Services that Students Have Used

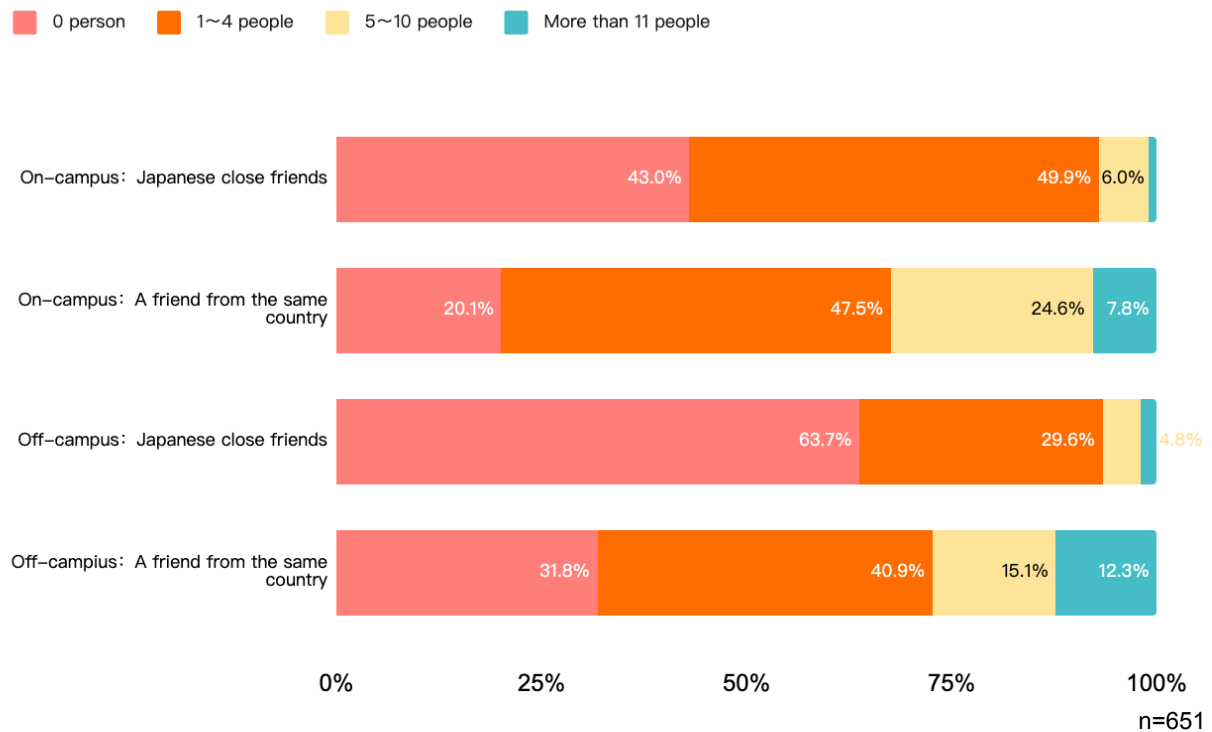


n=651, multiple answers allowed

- When asked about student support services that they both know about and have used, the highest proportion selected the "Student Health Care Center."
- About 60% of respondents know about the "Center for Counseling and Disability Services" and "International Student Help Desk," but less than half know about the "Center for Career Support," "Center for Learning Support," or "Library Concierge."
- About 20% of respondents indicated they have used the "International Student Help Desk" or "Library Concierge," while less than 15% overall have used the "Center for Counseling and Disability Services," "Center for Career Support," or "Center for Learning Support."
- About 30% responded that they have not used any student services.

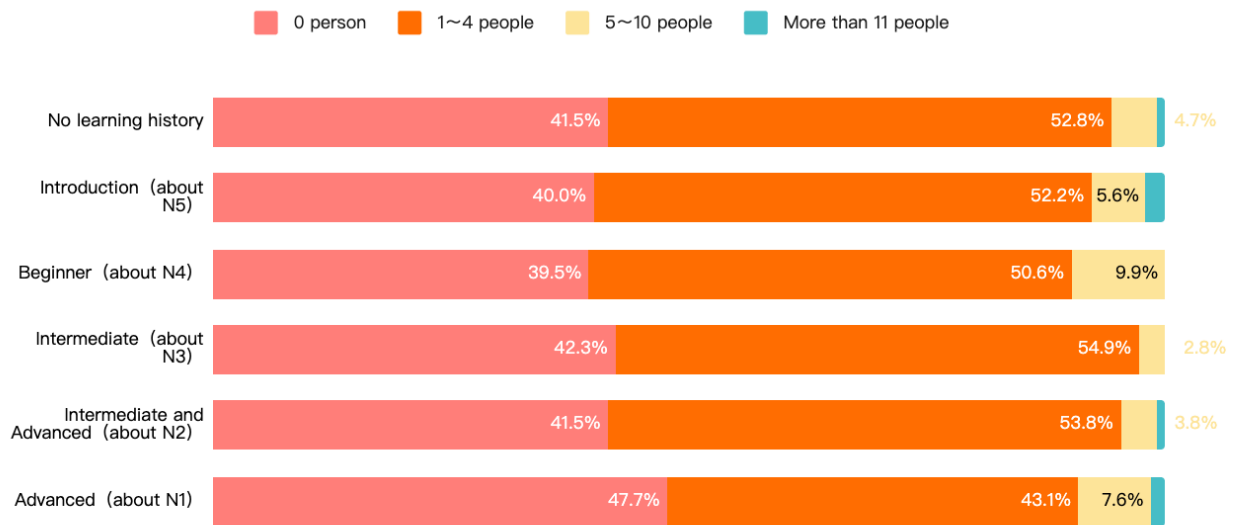
## 5. Physical and Mental Health / Human Relations

### 1. Number of Friends



- Overall, 43% have no (0) close Japanese friends on campus, while 92.9% have 4 or fewer. Even fewer have close Japanese friends off campus, with 63.7% having 0, and 93.3% having 4 or fewer.
- Isolation among international students is a concern, as 20% reported having no (0) close friends from their home countries.

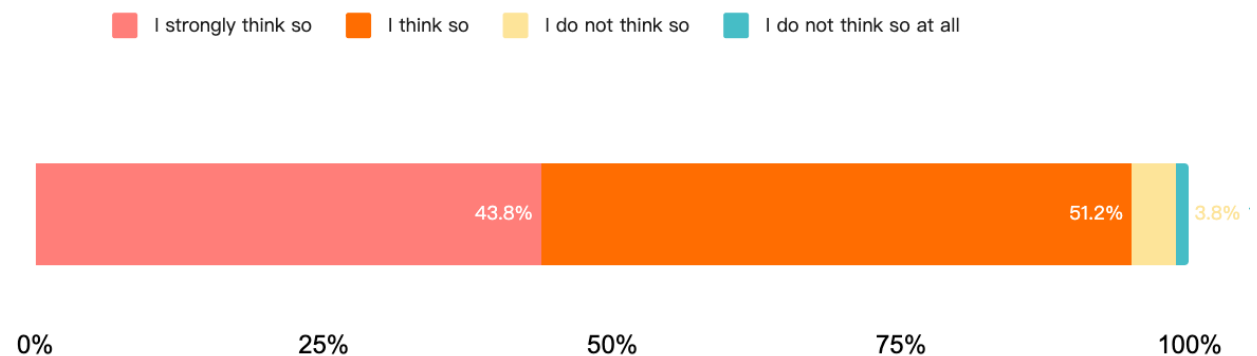
## 2. Number of Friends by Japanese Level (on-campus: Japanese)



n=651

- While there are no large differences in the number of close on-campus friends among levels of Japanese language attainment, even among "advanced" learners nearly half reported no (0) friends. This indicates that Japanese fluency alone does not guarantee students will make Japanese friends.

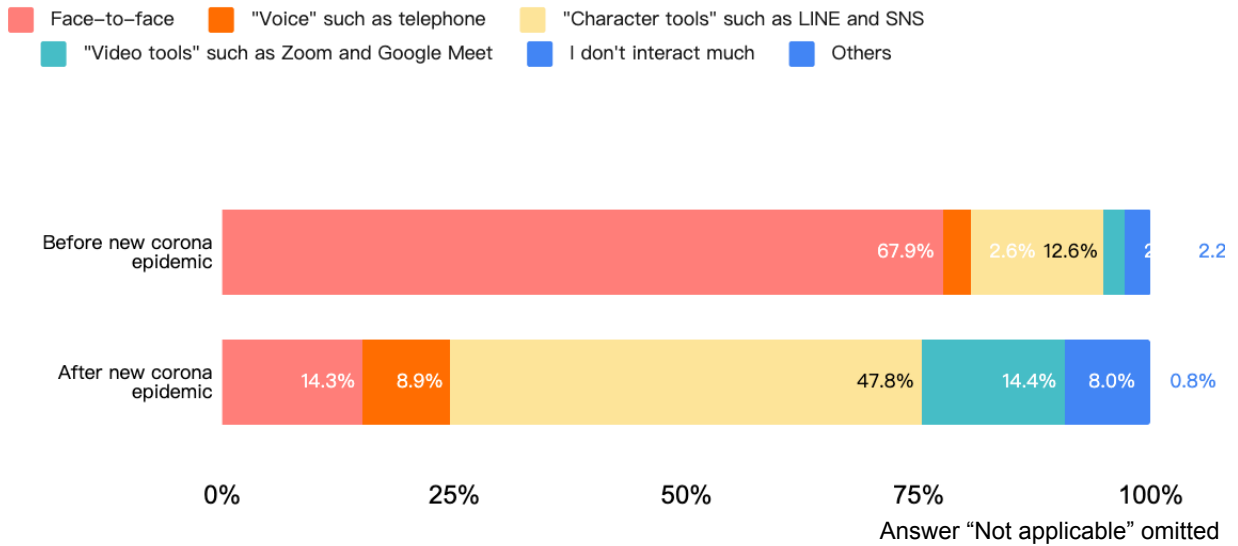
## 3. Thoughts on Interaction with Japanese Students



n=651

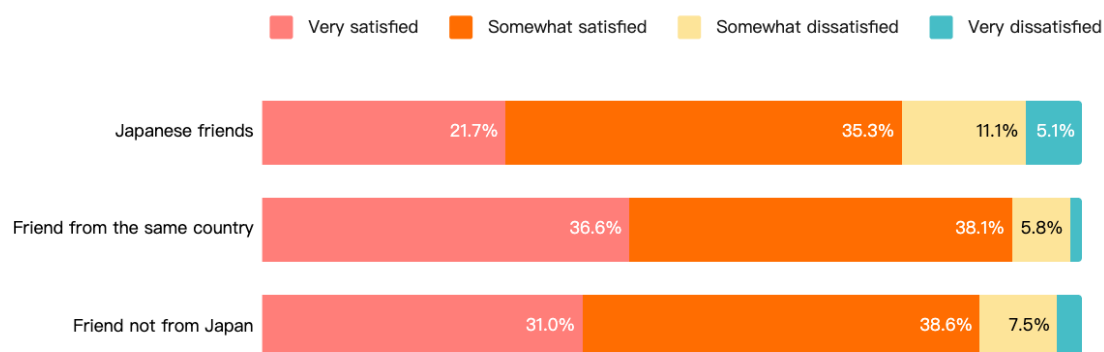
- 95% of the respondents answered that they would like to interact with Japanese students.

#### 4. Primary Methods of Interacting with Friends at Tohoku University



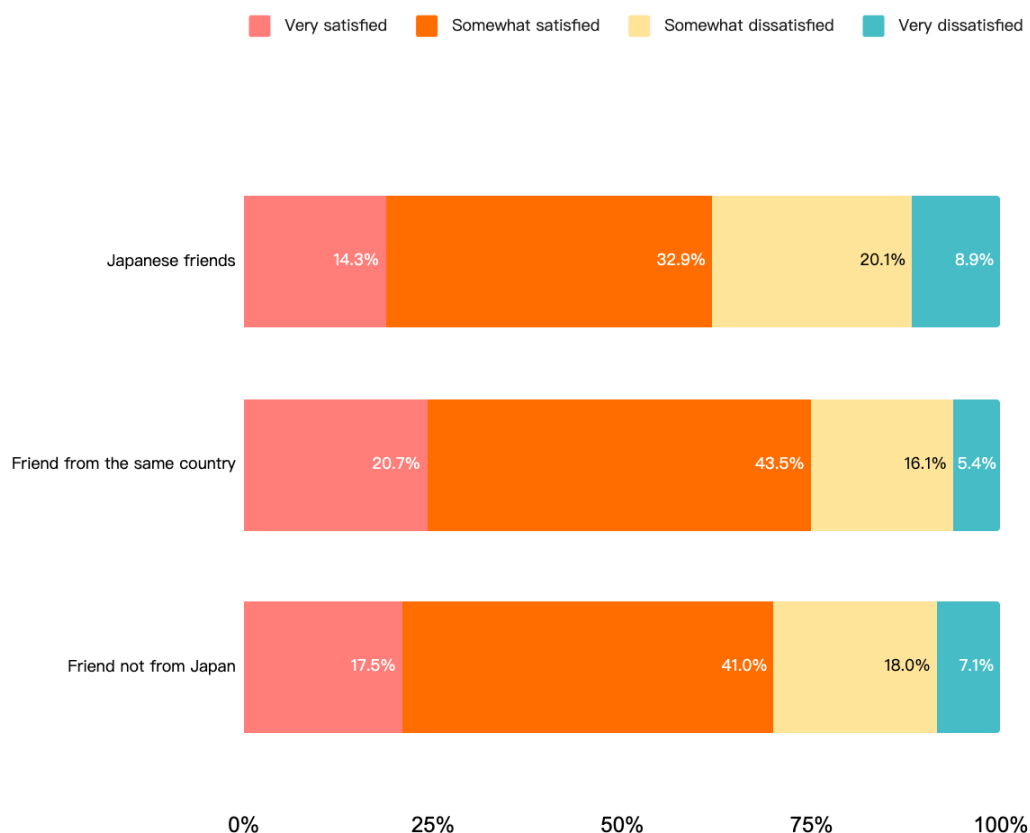
- Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, in-person interactions have been decreasing while interactions using text-based SNS or videoconferencing tools such as Zoom have been increasing.
- The number of people who responded that they have had "little/no interaction" with others has been sharply increasing since the start of the pandemic.

## 5. Satisfaction with Opportunities Available for Interaction with Friends On-Campus <Before Covid-19>



Answer "Not applicable" omitted

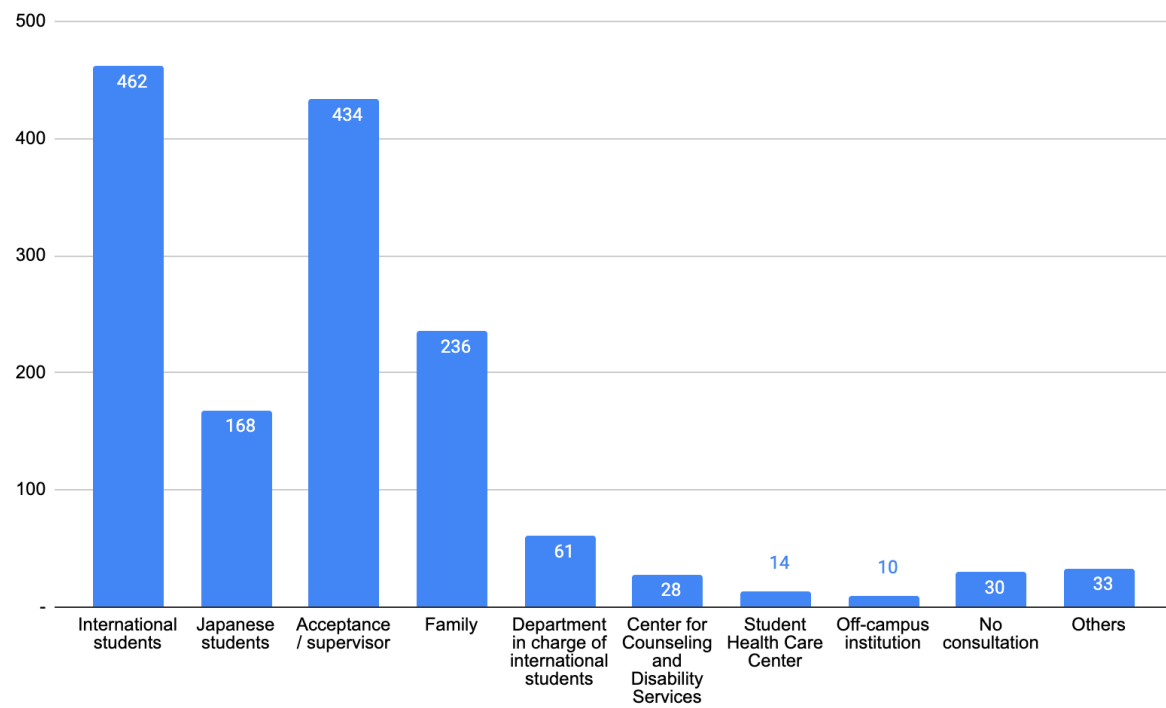
## <After Covid-19>



Answer "Not applicable" omitted

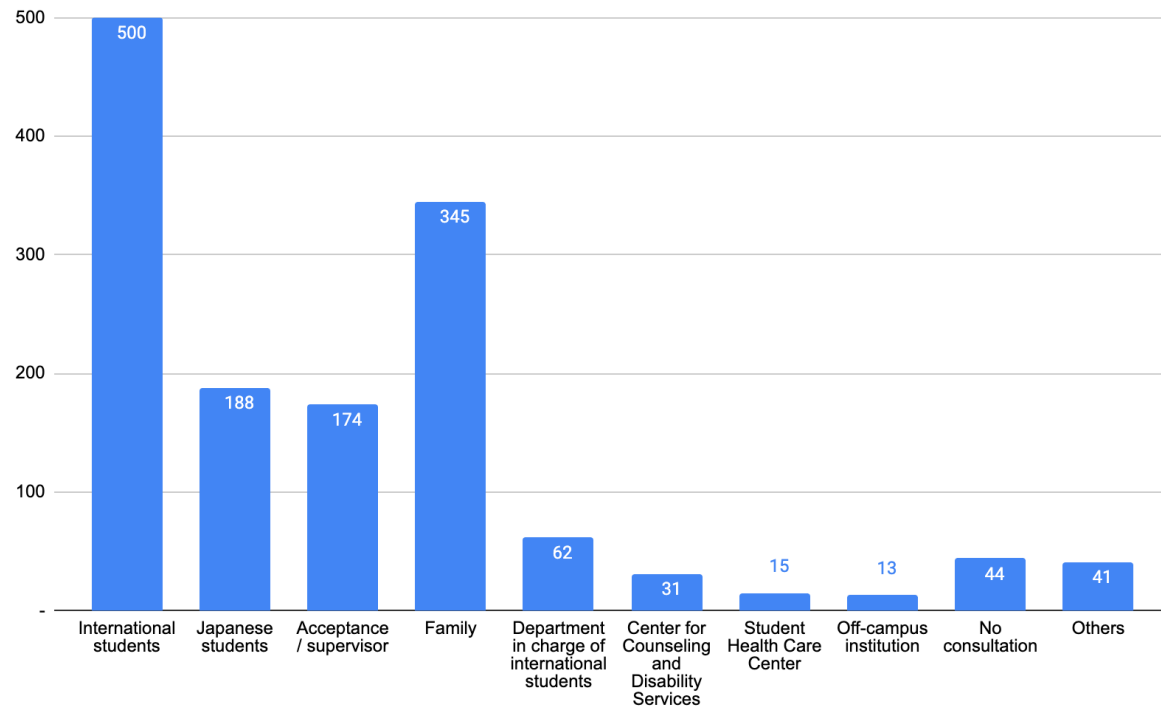
- Compared to pre-COVID-19, dissatisfaction with opportunities for interaction with on-campus friends has been increasing in all categories of friendship since the start of the pandemic: Japanese friends, friends from the students' home countries, and friends from countries other than Japan/home countries.

## 6. Who Students Consult with Regarding Academic Troubles and Difficulties



n=651, Multiple answers allowed

## 7. Who Students Consult with Regarding Personal Troubles and Difficulties

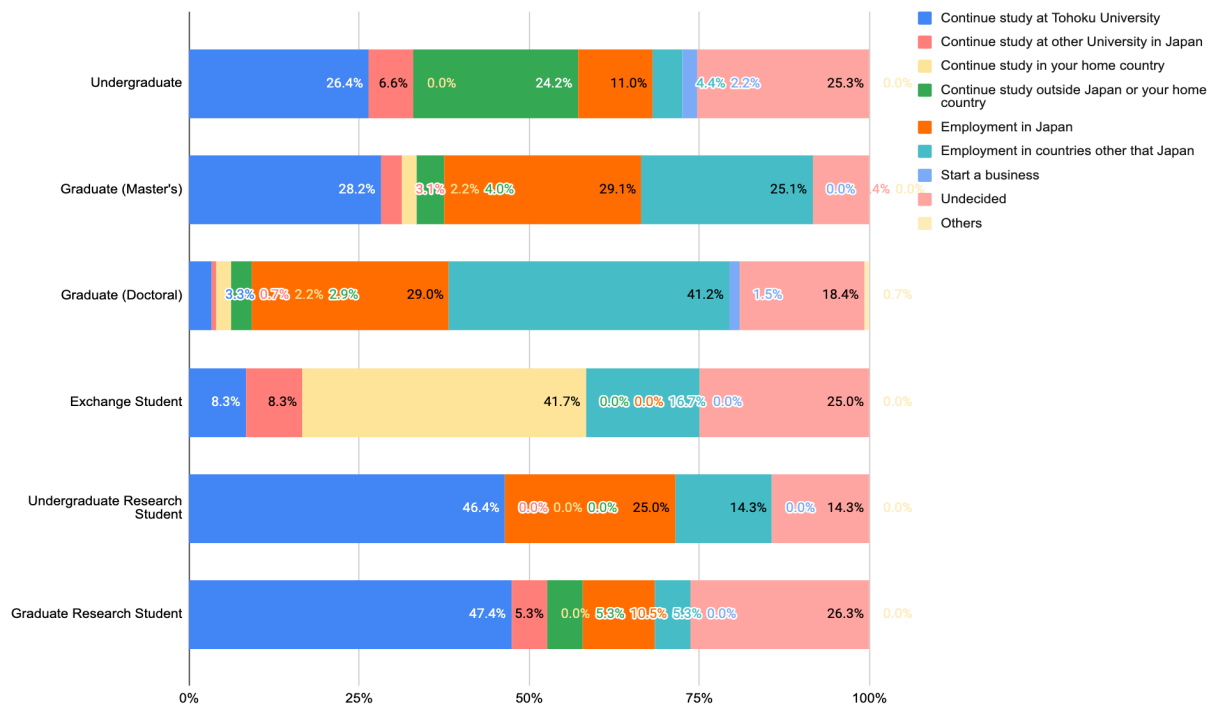


n=651, Multiple answers allowed

- Most respondents indicated that they consult with other students about studies/student life.
- Others answered that they consult with their "instructor/academic advisor" on anxieties or concerns related to studies, and "family" regarding anxieties/concerns related to everyday life.

## 6. Plans After Graduation

### 1. Plans After Graduation

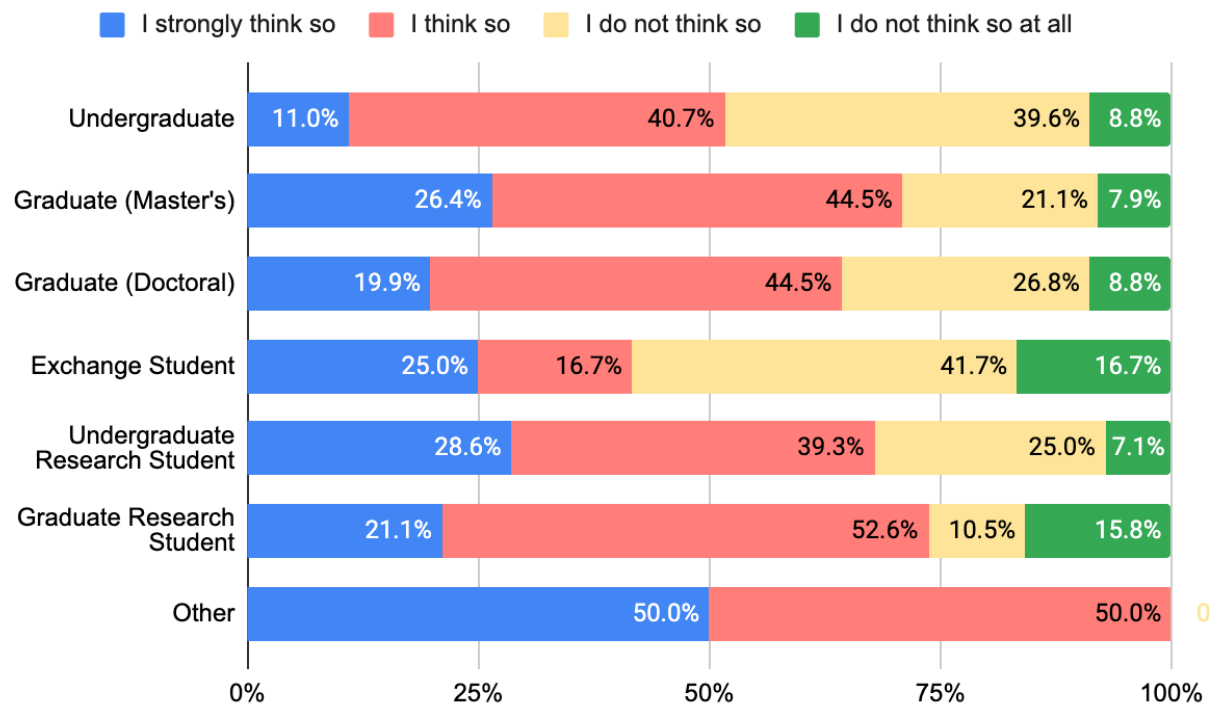


n=649, Category "Other" omitted

- Overall "work in home country or other country" was the most chosen answer (27.6%), followed by "work in Japan" (25.2%), and "continue education at Tohoku University" (18.6%).
- Undergraduate students were almost evenly divided between wanting to "continue education at Tohoku University" (26.4%) and "continue education in a country other than Japan or home country" (24.2%).
- Of graduate (master's/doctoral) students, 1/3 answered that they wish to "work in Japan."



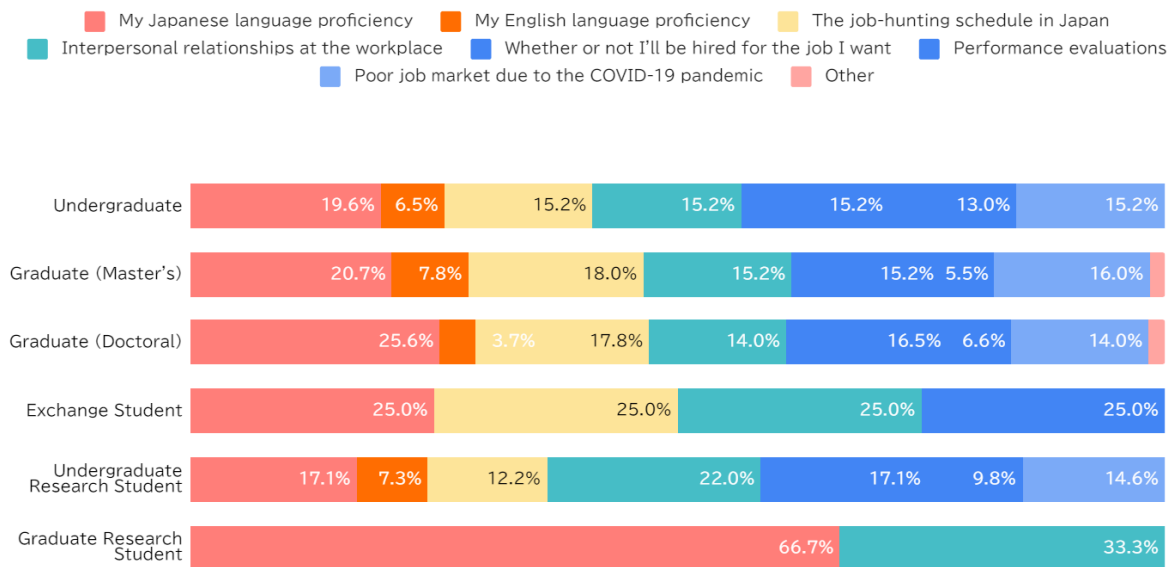
## 2. The Effect of Covid-19 on Student's Future Career Plans



n=649, Category "Other" omitted

- Excluding exchange students, over half of students in all categories indicated that the COVID-19 pandemic will have some impact on their desired careers.

### 3. Worries Regarding Finding Employment(In the case of pursuing work in Japan)



n=182, Category "Other" omitted

- When those who wish to work in Japan were asked about their anxieties regarding employment, most answered "Japanese language proficiency" followed by the "job-hunting schedule in Japan."
- A certain number also answered "poor job market due to the COVID-19 pandemic."

### 4. Services Desired by Students Seeking Employment in Japan

Career Support Services	Numbers
Information on companies in Japan that hire international students	395
Seminars/explanations on the basics of job-hunting in Japan	355
Information on internships in Japan	295
Employment counseling in English	262
Social events for international students who are job hunting in Japan	250
Seminars/explanations on the basics of job-hunting outside of Japan	203
Information on internships outside of Japan	187
Online feedback sessions in English	157
Other	61
Total	2,165

n=651, Multiple answers allowed

- The most requested types of career support are, in descending order, "information on companies in Japan that hire international students," "seminars/explanations on the basics of job-hunting in Japan," and "information on internships in Japan."

### **Additional Comments from Respondents**

#### **[Regarding Classes held in Japanese/English (Both within and outside a student's major)]**

- The number of specialized classes taught in English should be increased to provide more options.
- Language barrier seems to be a real problem at Tohoku university. I find it hard to make friends with Japanese people.
- I think that even when the classes are held in Japanese, they should at least provide the slides or handouts in English.
- Courses taught in Japanese seem to be interesting, but it is difficult to join because of the language barrier.

#### **[Matters Outside the Classroom (Staff guidance/Tutors/Library, etc.)]**

- Interactions with Japanese students are limited in the lab.
- In the lab, it feels like there is a wall between Japanese and non-Japanese individuals.
- In regards to library facilities, it would be great to have more English books.
- It would be great if email from the university was also in English, even just the titles, especially when it is really important.
- Bilingual (Japanese and English) should be implemented in every form of information at Tohoku University.

#### **[Satisfaction with Student Services]**

- Career seminars in both Japanese and English will be helpful.
- Career seminars with companies that are interested in hiring English speakers will be helpful.
- Official announcements should be bilingual.
- Health care service in English.
- Quick housing support is necessary.
- It would be helpful to have support services regarding scholarships and tuition exemption.

#### **[Interacting with Friends After the Covid-19 Pandemic]**

- Since the pandemic started, there have been fewer opportunities to meet friends.
- I have no Japanese friends at all so far.
- It's difficult to meet Japanese people outside of the lab. I don't haven't made any new Japanese friends since the COVID-19 pandemic began.
- Events to meet and interact with Japanese students were canceled due to COVID-19.

#### **[The Effect of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Students' Desires towards their Future Careers]**

- Since the covid-19 pandemic began, I have lost some of my passion regarding my studies. So it's harder to be ambitious regarding my future career.
- Travel restrictions and cancellation of various plans.
- I don't worry too much since I still have some time before starting job-search.
- I think job opportunities would be less due to COVID-19 with the drop in economy.
- My career plan after graduating from PhD is to work in academia, so the influence of the pandemic would be limited.
- COVID-19 made me rethink my future plan.

#### **[Concerns due to the Covid-19 Pandemic]**

- My period of stay at the UH has been extended for one year, but I worry about what to do after.
- After the COVID-19, my parents' financial situation became worse. I would appreciate it if there were more financial support.
- It is a problem that I cannot do a part-time job.
- I worry if I can finish my research by the expected time period.
- After the pandemic, the classes of the lab have become online, and the interpersonal relationship has been weakened.

- I am having mental health issues since I cannot go back to my home country, and I cannot communicate well with other international students.
- I cannot enter Japan.
- I cannot return to my home country.