

# Chapter 2

Information in preparation  
for children attending  
preschool

# 1. How to get information about the child's preschool

People who have lived in Japan for many years have some knowledge and impressions of Japanese child-care and the child-education system, namely, nursery schools and kindergartens. They might take the system for granted, but for foreign parents, it is not the case, as they might be perplexed when they want to put their children in preschool. Here is the report on how multi-cultural parents obtain information about their children's preschool structure and details.

## 1. How to obtain the above mentioned information: (Figure 2-1)

68.7% of parents get information from "City-halls and ward-halls." Parents also obtain information from "Friends from the same country," (19.9%), "Japanese friends," (19.5%), "Directly from preschool," (14.3%), yet few parents get information from "brochures and handbooks" or "Volunteer groups and other institutions."

## 2. The duration of residence and how to obtain information on the preschool (Figure 2-1)

In this survey, we divided the respondents into four groups according to duration of residence. Many respondents, who have resided in Japan for less than three years, are not used to the Japanese language. 82.6% of respondents who have resided for more than twenty years, have resided in Japan for generations. Considering the respondents' diversity, which has significant connection to the duration of residence, we analyzed the information sources classified by the four groups of length of residence. For every group, "Visiting city-halls or ward-halls" is the most common way to get information on preschool entrance, and more people visit city-halls or ward-halls in proportion to the duration of residence, from 64.6% (0 to less than 3 years' residence), to 72.4% (more than 20 years' residence). Many respondents who resided less than 3 years obtained information from their "Friend from the same country," but the longer the duration of residence, the less parents obtained information from the source. Respondents of any duration of residence obtained information from their "Japanese friends." Many parents who resided in Japan for more than twenty years obtained information "Directly from preschool." Respondents who have resided in Japan relatively for a short term tend to use "Brochure and guidebook," and more respondents who resided in Japan for less than 3 years use "Volunteer groups or international associations," compared to other parents who resided for a longer period.

Also, we classified parents who resided in Japan for less than 3 years into three groups according to yearly duration. (The data is not illustrated in the figure 2-1.) Respondents who resided in Japan for less than one year obtained information from various sources, such as "Friends from the same country," (44.2%), "Japanese friend," (41.2%) and "Visiting nursery school or kindergarten," (29.4%) Also, they obtained information from "Volunteer groups and international associations," (10.3%).

## 3. Respondents' Japanese language ability and how they obtain preschool information (Figure 2-2)

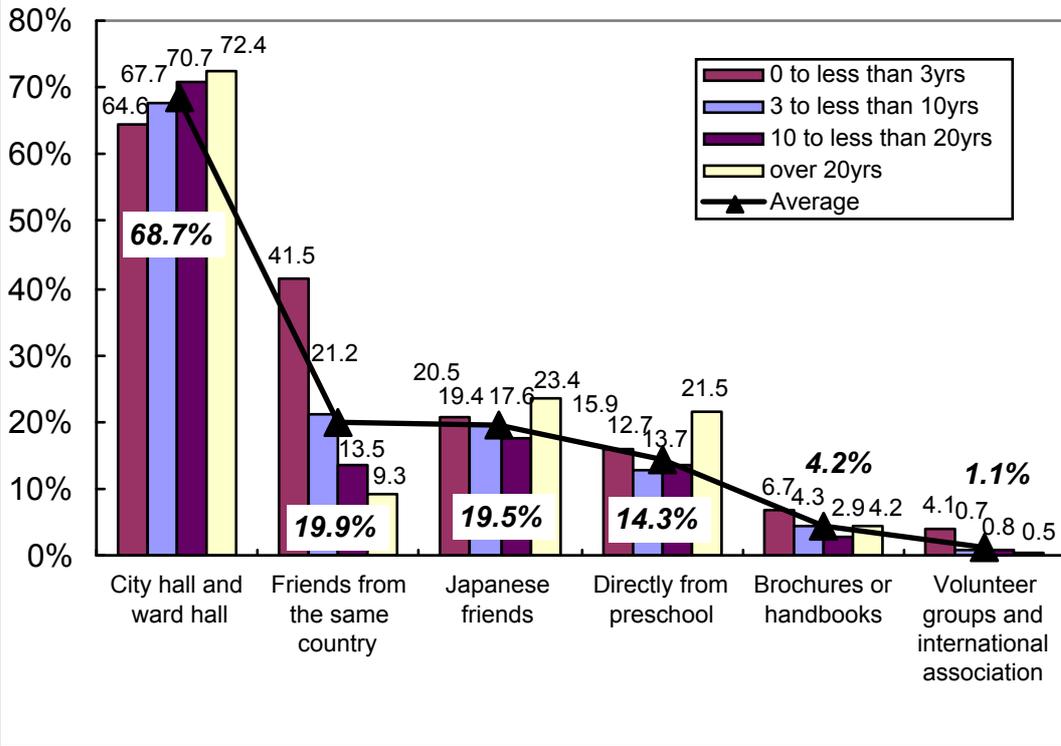
Generally speaking, the longer foreigners stay in Japan, the better Japanese they speak. However, it all depends on each individual. We examined the method of obtaining information, classified by the duration of residence of the respondents who resided in Japan for less than twenty years. The more fluent their Japanese became, the more parents obtained information from "City-halls or ward-halls" and "Japanese friends." On the contrary, the less fluent their Japanese was, the more parents obtained

information from "Friends from the same country."

#### **4. Others:**

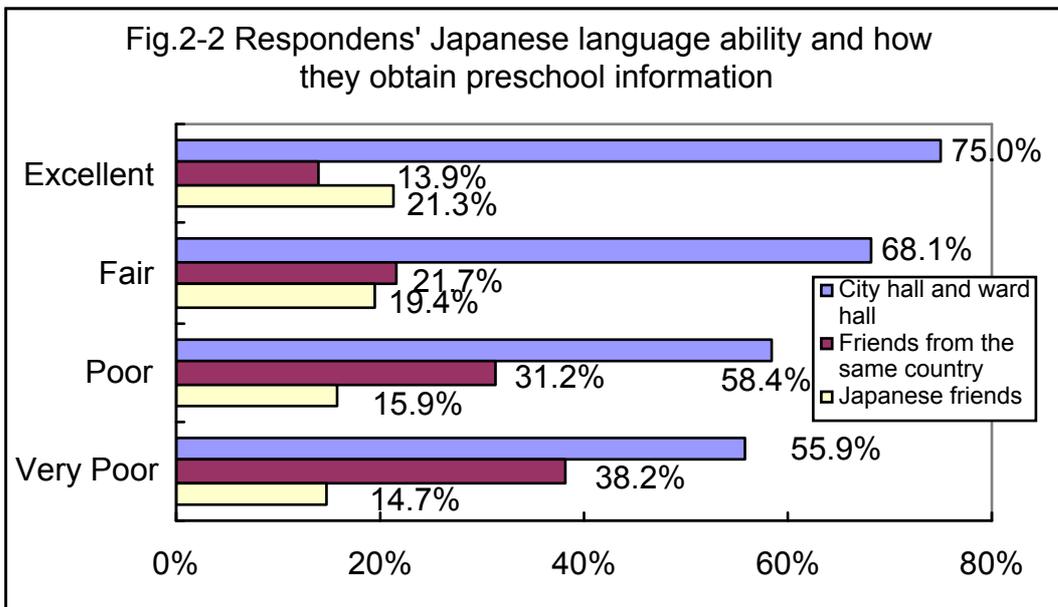
Some answered that they obtained information from their "Japanese spouse" (day-care center, 4-years old, boy / mother, 33-years old / Philippine / 4 years), "Relatives or People from the same country who lived in Japan for many years" (day-care center, 0-year old, girl / mother, 38 years old / Thai / 2 years). Also, a student (day-care center, 2-years old, girl / mother, 30-years old / South Korea / 0 year,) went to "a preschool near university, where many foreign children attend" in order to obtain information directly.

Fig. 2-1 The duration of residence and how to obtain information on the preschool



N=1841

Fig.2-2 Respondens' Japanese language ability and how they obtain preschool information



N=1596

## 2. Parental problems of children attending preschool

### 1. Parental problems of children attending preschool: (Figure 2-3)

The biggest problem for working parents and their children attending preschool is: If you are not working, your children cannot attend preschool; whereas if your children do not attend preschool, you cannot get a job. This might be a problem for Japanese mothers as well. However, foreign parents who are new to this condition might also find it very difficult to accept. Many parents answered, "My child had to wait for a long time to attend preschool," and "Parents have to prepare many things." Some answered, "It was difficult to obtain necessary information because I don't understand Japanese," and this problem is assumed to be related to parents' Japanese language ability and the duration of residence in Japan. 31.4% of respondents said they had "no particular problems."

### 2. Problems resulting from children attending preschool and the duration of residence: (Table 2-1)

Compared to other respondents who resided in Japan longer, many parents who resided for less than 3 years answered, "It was difficult to obtain necessary information because I don't understand Japanese," and "It was difficult to prepare documents required to apply for preschool." Many respondents who resided in Japan from 3 to less than 10 years find "the situation of working parents and children's attending preschool" a big problem.

More part-time workers who resided in Japan from 3 to less than 10 years agreed that the above situation is a problem. Also, it is assumed that this is because the ratio of part-time workers is bigger than that of other respondents who resided in Japan for shorter or longer time. Many respondents who resided for over a decade answered that they had "No particular problems. However, we found that Japanese language ability is not directly connected to this. As you can see in "2-1. How to get information about the child's preschool," there are other contributing considerations. For example, many of these parents are supported by their family elders.

When "It took parental time for children to attend preschool," it was difficult for parents who wanted to work. It was a major problem for any parents. However, the longer the duration of residence, the less parents found it a problem. The duration of residence did not make a big difference in the responses about other troubles.

### 3. Other parental problems of child attending preschool:

Many respondents answered they did not have difficulty because they consulted their spouses. One of them answered, "Because my husband is Japanese, I had no particular problems." (day-care center, 3-years old, girl / mother, 32-year old / Thai / 11 years) However, many respondents wrote about the problems in free-description answers. The following are representative answers.

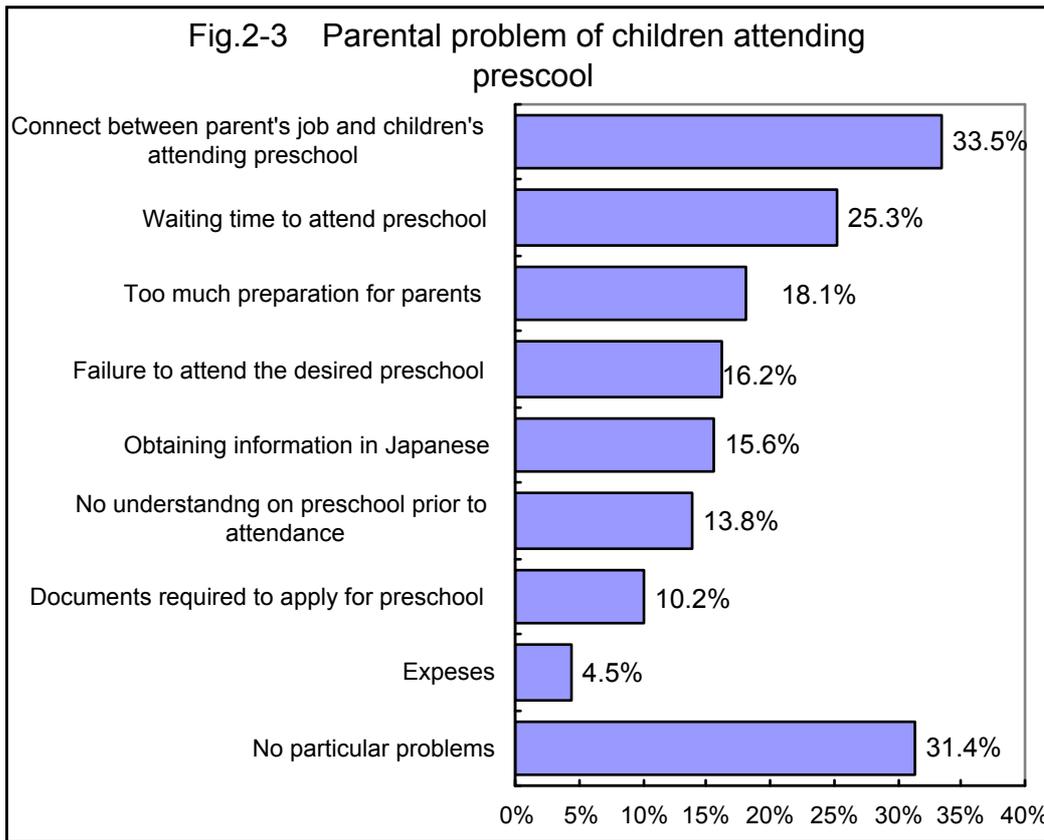
**Conditions to attend preschool:** We should note the following comment. "I didn't know that there were many specific conditions to apply for preschool. I heard the explanation on specific conditions later. There was no staff who explained it in detail unless asked." (day-care center, 1-year old, boy / mother, 32-year old / South Korea / 0 year) "The first condition for a child to attend preschool is parent's job, and learning the resident language was the second. So I wasn't able to apply for preschool for a year. I wanted to learn Japanese as soon as possible, and I wanted to get used to the daily life in Japan. (omission) I wanted to have detailed information on the conditions of attending preschool." (day-care center, 3-years old, boy / mother, 34-year old / South Korea / 2 years) It will be necessary that each preschool present its

requirements clearly.

**Document preparation and application deadline:**

"There are too many documents to prepare."(day-care center, 3-years old, boy / mother, 32-year old / South Korea / 0 year) "It was difficult to fill in the application forms." (day-care center, 5-years old, boy / mother, 38-year old / Brazil, 8 years) It appears some nursery schools prepare application forms in different languages, and enlist the aid of persons who understand foreign languages, or who are familiar with the procedure. Still, there are many things they could do to improve the situation. One parent wrote, "I was in a bind, as I came to Japan after the application deadline." (kindergarten, girl / mother, 34-year old / South Korea / 7 years)

**Others :** About children's belongings needed for preschool life, "I was confused as I didn't know what to prepare." (day-care center, 5-years old, boy /34-year old / South Korea / 5 years) "Siblings cannot attend the same nursery school." (day-care center, 4-years old, boy / 24-years old / Philippine /5 years)



N=1955

**Table 2-1 Problems resulting from children attending preschool and the duration**

	0 to less than 3 yrs	3 to less than 10 yrs	10 to less than 20 yrs	over 20 yrs
I don't understand Japanese and it was difficult to obtain information	40.2%	20.6%	5.6%	1.0%
It was difficult to prepare documents required to apply for preschool	18.5%	12.1%	6.2%	6.3%
I wasn't able to put my child in the preschool I preferred	18.5%	15.3%	18.9%	19.2%
I had to wait for a long time for my child to attend preschool	32.3%	26.3%	24.1%	25.0%
The connection between my work and my child's attending preschool	33.9%	39.5%	30.1%	22.6%
I was worried as I wasn't familiar with preschool life	12.7%	17.6%	11.8%	9.6%
Parents had to prepare too many things	20.1%	20.0%	14.4%	24.5%
It was expensive	5.8%	3.8%	4.1%	7.2%
I had no particular problems	25.9%	29.6%	38.3%	37.5%

N=1841

### 3. Information parents wanted before children's attending preschool

#### 1. Information parents wanted before children's attending preschool and the duration of residence : (Figure 2-4)

What parents needed most: "Information provided in their native language by the ward-office about child-rearing" 35.7%, and "list of the day-care center, kindergartens, and elementary schools" 31.4%, "Manuals in native language regarding hospitals, health department, health check" 28.2%. The duration of residence made a big difference in what kind of information parents needed. The shorter the duration of residence is, the more people wanted "Information in their native language provided by city-halls," and 54.4% of parents who resided in Japan for less than 3 years. Yet 30.9% of parents who resided in Japan for 10 to 20 years needed the information. Similarly, information in native language was still needed such as "Information in native language regarding hospitals and so on" and "Interpretation services about child-rearing," although the longer the duration of residence in Japan, the less services were needed. On the other hand, every parent wanted "Lists of the day-care center, kindergartens, and elementary schools." Only 7.0% of parents who resided in Japan for over 20 years wanted "Home-visit services by a specialist on child-care," but about 13% of parents who resided for less than 20 years wanted it.

#### 2. Children's birth-order and information parents needed before children's attending preschool:

In general, we assume that it is more difficult for parents to obtain information they need before their children attend preschool for their oldest child than for their younger children. We examined how parents needed each information classified by the birth-order of the children and compared the result. We compared the cases of the oldest children and other children on each item. However, we did not find a big difference between the two, although parents wanted each information more for their oldest child.

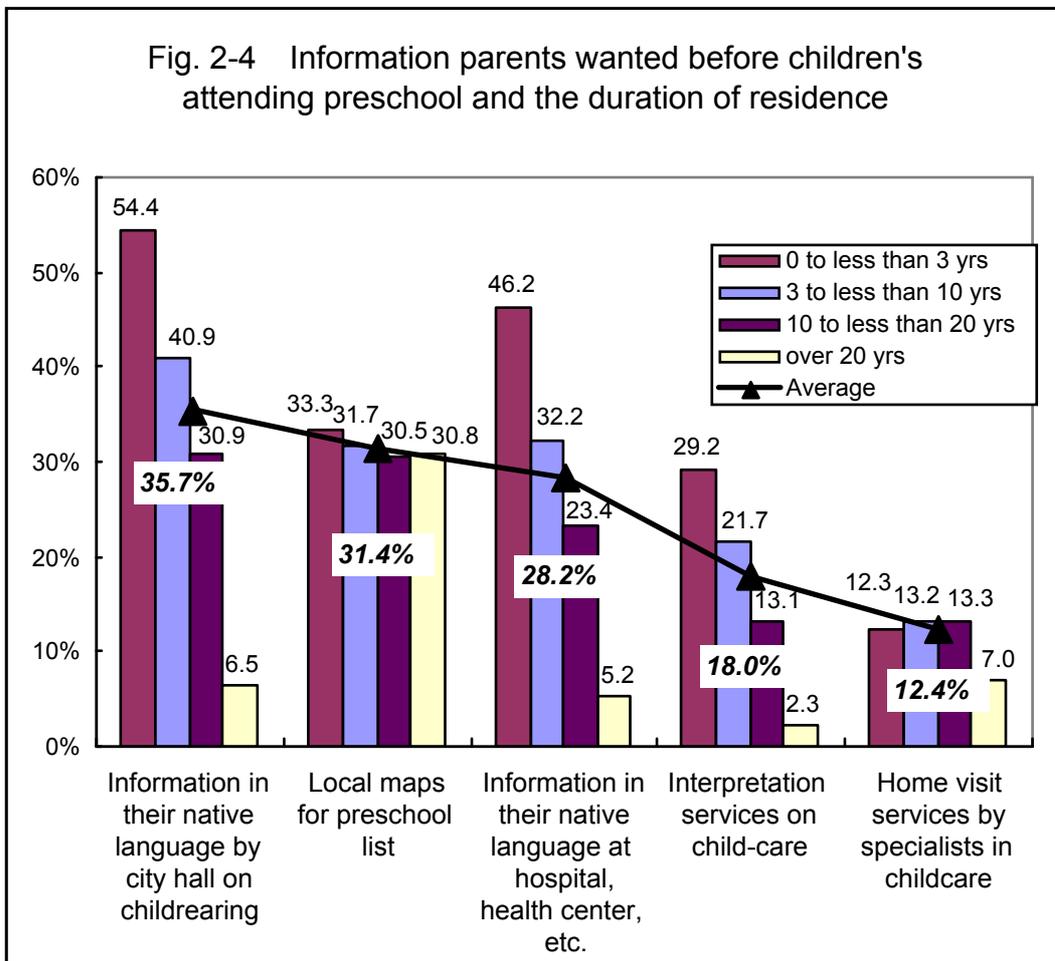
The ratio of parents who wanted "List of preschool," was smaller by approximately 10%, but overall, the result of comparison indicated to us that the birth-order did not make a big difference on information parents needed before children attended preschool. Among the respondents whose duration of residence was relatively short, many parents (35% of respondents who resided in Japan for less than 1 year, and 24% of respondents who resided for less than 3 years) have younger children. This might be related to the aforementioned finding.

#### 3. Other information parents wanted before their children attended preschool: Necessary information was unavailable:

"I obtained information that I really needed at the ward-hall, but I was in trouble as the staff didn't understand my language." (day-care center, 5-years old, girl / mother, 36-year old / France/ 1 year) "I wanted to know when I can go in the ward-hall to find someone who speaks my language. "These are reasonable comments, however, it might be difficult to meet all these requests right away. One parent wrote, "I want to be informed exactly when my child can attend preschool. When there is an opening?" (day-care center, 3-years old, boy / mother, 35-years old / South Korea / 7 years) It will be necessary to provide accurate information in different languages on Japanese status-quo on child-care system, and to give satisfactory explanations to multi-cultural parents.

**Parents need to be informed of preschool activities:**

"I don't know what goes on in preschool." (day-care center, 4-years old, girl / mother, 29-year old / Japan / 3 years) and "I wish they had an open-house, so that I could observe a class firsthand." (day-care center, 5-years old, boy / mother, 34-year old / North Korea / 34 years) are typical opinions by parents. "I want to know what kind of activities day-care centers provide for my child and which ones I should be cautious about." (day-care center, 5-years old, boy / mother, 33-year old / Brazil / 2 years) Some parents suggested, "How about presenting educational policies or nursing schedules on the internet?" (day-care center, 2-years old, girl / mother, 30-year old / South Korea / 0 years) Also, appropriate reaction should be required in response to the following demands, such as "I want the city-hall to provide us with Portuguese manuals on kindergartens and nursery schools." (day-care center, 4-years old, girl / mother, 29-year old / Japan / 3 years) and "I want to know the nursing policy or educational policy toward foreign preschoolers." (day-care center, 2-years old, girl / father, 35-year old / South Korea / 0 year).



N=1842