

FY2017 Report on the Tennis Environment in Japan

Summary of the Research Findings

March 2018

Japan Tennis Association

This is summary translation into English of the 38-page Japanese language report entitled “tenisu kankyotou jittai chousa houkokusho” (テニス環境等実態調査報告書), which was published by the Japan Tennis Association in March 2018 as a toto-sponsored project. This report features the following three topics:

1. The changes in the number of tennis courts
2. The survey on indoor program activities among designated administrators of public sports facilities
3. Two case studies of afterschool programs utilizing TENNIS PLAY & STAY at elementary schools

(1) There are 6,454 tennis court facilities, decreasing by 30% over the last 19 years; however public indoor courts are on the increase

As of 2015, the number of tennis court facilities in Japan* was 6,454. Since there were 9,702 tennis court facilities in 1996, the 2015 figure represents a decrease of 33.5% over the last 19 years. Comparing the data for public and private facilities, the decrease in private facilities has been significant – in fact, there are only half the number that existed in 1996. At the same time, between outdoor and indoor facilities, public indoor facilities have been on the increase while the number of private indoor facilities remains more or less unchanged (though the percentage of indoor facilities among the total is meager). The total number of indoor tennis facilities has increased from 462 to 520.

In terms of the actual number of tennis courts, in 2015 there were 26,307, a 31.5% decrease from the 1996 total of 38,423. Similar to the number of facilities, there has been a significant decrease in the number of courts at private facilities. Between outdoor and indoor courts, the total number of courts at indoor facilities remains mostly unchanged, although the number of courts at private indoor facilities has dropped.

Though the number of courts per facility has increased slightly from 3.96 in 1996 to 4.08 in 2015, a downward trend in the number of courts per facility is observed at all places other than public outdoor facilities.

* Data is sourced from the MEXT Sports Agency's "Physical Education and Sports Facilities Survey" report. The data pinpoints tennis courts at public and private sports facilities, while excluding school facilities.

(2) There is a need for greater recognition of TENNIS PLAY & STAY among designated administrators of public sports facilities

The Japan Tennis Association's "Survey on the Penetration of TENNIS PLAY & STAY" (2017) obtained responses from 130 organizations licensed to be designated administrators of local-government public sports facilities. Of them, 79 (60.8%) had actually been managing public sports facilities as designated administrators. Of these 79 organizations, 75 (94.9%) answered that had gymnasiums (including smaller gyms, gym rooms, and arenas) among the facilities they managed. The average number of facilities managed per administrator was 4.6.

Out of the 75 organizations, almost nine in ten (88.0%) answered that there had been use of gymnasiums for the purpose of playing tennis. The average number of facilities among these organizations was 3.2. Soft tennis (83.3%), tennis (excluding soft tennis) (62.1%), and bound tennis (42.4%) were given as the main sports that were played.

Of the organizations answering that there had been use of their gymnasiums for playing tennis, 19.5% responded that there had been use of red, orange or green balls. Those answering that they did not have an understanding of whether such usage took place accounted for 46.3%. When asked about the offering of tennis-related lessons and clinics, about six in ten (62.1%) answered that they had organized (or co-organized) such offerings. About half (46.3%) cited "tennis (excluding soft tennis)" as the subject of the lessons or clinics.

Only about two in ten (22.7%) of the designated administrators managing gymnasiums were aware of

“TENNIS PLAY & STAY.” When asked about their interest in offering clinics, those answering that they had interest accounted for 44.0%, a higher figure than the awareness rate. This indicates the need for initiatives that further the understanding and awareness of TENNIS PLAY & STAY among the designated administrators of public sports facilities – i.e., those in the position to actually offer tennis lessons and clinics.

(3) Initiatives to incorporate TENNIS PLAY & STAY into elementary schools: Two cases of elementary school afterschool activities that uses TENNIS PLAY & STAY

Yokohama Municipal Shirahata Elementary School has been offering afterschool tennis lessons free of charge to first-graders once a week since 2014. The project utilizes TENNIS PLAY & STAY to improve physical fitness, through cooperation with the GODAI Hakuraku Indoor Tennis School. It boasts a high participation rate of about 70% over the four years. Results of the study to verify the effectiveness of the project suggest that, after six months, the participants’ physical capabilities have increased significantly. There are several factors that account for this high rate of participation and ability to sustain the project. Firstly, the program features tennis, which is a popular sport that is made highly enjoyable by the game-oriented focus of TENNIS PLAY & STAY. In addition, not only is the project systematically consistent with the school’s instructional guidelines, but it has also proactively sought to bring together the elementary school, parents and guardians, as well as a local tennis school for the sake of using TENNIS PLAY & STAY as a vehicle for improving the physical and mental health of children.

In 2015, the city of Matsue in Shimane Prefecture partnered with the Shimane Prefecture Tennis Association to offer “Afterschool Mini Tennis Activities of the Children’s Square” at Matsue Municipal Nogi Elementary School and three other elementary schools. As of 2017, the program had been expanded to include 20 schools. Children as well as parents and guardians alike have taken well to the approach, which offers tennis as an afterschool free-play option rather than a competitive sport. According to the results of a survey among the Children’s Square staff members, 75% answered that the program “has been very meaningful” and all responded that they would like to participate the following year as well. There are several factors that have driven the success of this undertaking. They include government planning and financial support, the availability of elementary school facilities for the afterschool activities of the Children’s Square, and the supply of instructors by the Shimane Prefecture Tennis Association. An effective combination of venues, funding, instructors, and planning capability, as well as the use of TENNIS PLAY & STAY program, were important factors that have contributed to make it a successful initiative.