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# South Bay Japanese American Community Needs Assessment

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April 2017



Little Tokyo Service Center



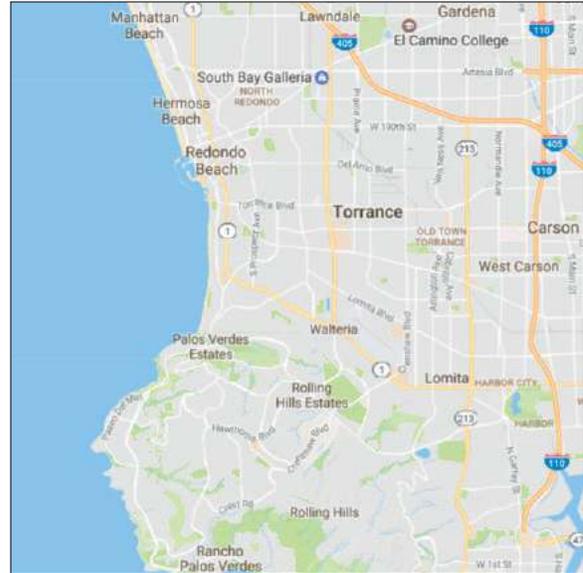
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# South Bay Japanese American Community Needs Assessment



## 1. Background and Purpose

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The South Bay Japanese American Community Needs Assessment is a study conducted by the Little Tokyo Service Center (LTSC) to survey and identify the greatest needs facing the Japanese American and Japanese immigrant communities in the South Bay suburbs of Los Angeles, centered around the cities of Torrance and Gardena, and the Palos Verdes Peninsula.

The South Bay is home to the largest concentration of Japanese Americans and Japanese immigrants, collectively referred to as “Nikkei,” in the mainland United States. Within the Nikkei community, there are significant social, cultural, and language differences between the more assimilated Japanese Americans rooted in the experiences of pre-World War II immigrants, and the more recent post-World War II Japanese immigrants, consisting of naturalized American citizens, permanent U.S. residents, and short-term expatriates.

Postwar Japanese immigrants comprise a growing percentage of the Nikkei community. Nationally, according to the 2010 Census, 43% of Japanese in America were postwar immigrants (Toyota 2012).<sup>1</sup> The percentage of postwar immigrants as part of the larger Nikkei population has grown from 32% in 1980, to 34% in 1990, to 44% in 2000 (ibid).

While previous studies have largely focused on the more assimilated and established Japanese American communities, less data is available about postwar Japanese immigrants and their needs. This study provides data and insight into the different needs of assimilated Japanese Americans and postwar immigrants.

<sup>1</sup> This is the number of people who checked off “Japanese only” (meaning not multiracial) and also checked “foreign-born Japanese.” Among multiracial Japanese, 25% are foreign born.

## 2. Methodology

This study primarily consists of key informant interviews, a focus group study conducted in September 2016, and a clipboard survey conducted between June and September 2016.

The focus group study consists of eight group discussions focusing on four different needs assessment themes: seniors, parenting, civic engagement, and sports. 61 South Bay Japanese American and Japanese community leaders and residents participated, 31 English-speaking, 30 Japanese-speaking. Discussions were conducted separately by language. There were seven to ten participants in each focus group.

Focus group participants were selected in an attempt to include a broad range of community perspectives that would represent the diversity of needs and interests in the South Bay Nikkei community. Participants were identified through an informal survey of key community leaders and stakeholders with South Bay Nikkei cultural, prefectural, religious, social, and youth sports organizations.

The clipboard survey was conducted between June 25, 2016 and September 30, 2016. The survey collected 319 responses. The survey is based on responses collected from: (1) an online survey conducted using e-mail lists provided by LTSC, the Gardena Valley Japanese Cultural Institute (GVJCI), and other South Bay Nikkei community groups; and (2) an in-person clipboard survey conducted at two South Bay Japanese community festivals, the GVJCI Carnival Matsuri held on June 25-26, 2016 in Gardena, and the Bridge USA Natsu Matsuri held on July 10, 2016 in Torrance.

While efforts were made to survey and capture a broad range of South Bay Nikkei perspectives, this study's methodology was not based on a randomized sample designed to capture demographically proportional responses. As such, this study's findings should be viewed as a snapshot of the South Bay Nikkei community's needs, and not a statistically rigorous analysis. Nonetheless, this study provides useful information on the South Bay Nikkei community in general, and on the different needs of Japanese Americans and postwar Japanese immigrants in particular.

## 3. Data Analysis

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### 3.1. Demographic Data

#### 3.1.1. The Nikkei Population in the South Bay

According to 2010 Decennial Census data, Los Angeles County is home to 138,983 ethnic Japanese, the largest population of Japanese in the mainland United States.

Torrance, the largest city in the South Bay, also has the largest population of Nikkei. 12.7% of the population is of Japanese ancestry, and the Nikkei population increased by 15.5% since 2000, nearly three times higher than the city's overall growth rate of 5.43%. In Gardena,

which has long been a prominent center of the Japanese American community since before World War II, the Nikkei population decreased by 11.6%. However, people of Japanese ancestry continue to be substantial at 11.2% of the population. The cities of the Palos Verdes Peninsula also saw declines in the Nikkei population from 2000 to 2010, but Lomita saw a significant increase of 34.0%, as did Redondo Beach and Manhattan Beach with 25.1% and 26.4% growth respectively. Other Asian ethnic groups such as Korean Americans and Chinese Americans increased both on the Peninsula and in the Beach cities since 2000.

2010 Population Data of Select South Bay Cities

	<b>Total Population</b>	<b>Japanese American</b>	<b>% of Total Population</b>	<b>% Change Since 2000</b>
<b>City of Torrance</b>	<b>145,438</b>	<b>18,532</b>	<b>12.7%</b>	<b>15.5%</b>
<b>City of Gardena</b>	<b>58,829</b>	<b>6,584</b>	<b>11.2%</b>	<b>-11.6%</b>
<b>Palos Verdes Peninsula</b>	<b>65,008</b>	<b>4,856</b>	<b>7.5%</b>	<b>-3.5%</b>
Palos Verdes Estates	13,438	634	4.7%	-6.9%
Rancho Palos Verdes	41,643	3,577	8.6%	-2.8%
Rolling Hills Estates	8,067	645	8.0%	-3.7%
Rolling Hills	1,860	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>City of Lomita</b>	<b>20,256</b>	<b>937</b>	<b>4.6%</b>	<b>34.0%</b>
<b>City of Redondo Beach</b>	<b>66,748</b>	<b>2,658</b>	<b>4.0%</b>	<b>25.1%</b>
<b>City of Manhattan Beach</b>	<b>35,135</b>	<b>1,111</b>	<b>3.2%</b>	<b>26.4%</b>
<b>City of Hermosa Beach</b>	<b>19,506</b>	<b>362</b>	<b>1.9%</b>	<b>0.8%</b>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau Decennial Census 2000 and 2010

**3.1.2. Citizenship and Naturalization of Japanese in the South Bay**

The Japanese American community has the distinction of being the only Asian American ethnic group with an American-born majority (*A Community of Contrasts*, Asian Americans Advancing Justice – Los Angeles, 2013, p. 12). However, immigration and language are still significant issues since 30% of people of Japanese ancestry in Los Angeles County are foreign-born<sup>2</sup>, and with 22% of the community reporting limited English proficiency (American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2006-2010).

According to data from the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) provided by the Consulate General of Japan in Los Angeles, many foreign-born Japanese are concentrated in the South Bay. As of October 2015, the cities of Torrance, Gardena, and the Palos Verdes Peninsula are home to over 17,554 registered Japanese citizens, of whom 6,785 (39%) are U.S. permanent residents, or green card holders, and 10,769 (61%) are residents living in the U.S. for more than three months on various types of visas.

Japan does not allow dual citizenships, and the majority of community members born in Japan tend to retain their Japanese citizenship. During the 1980s, about 33% became naturalized citizens, and in the 1990s, the naturalization rate dropped to about 14% (Toyota

<sup>2</sup> “Foreign-born” includes not only those born in Japan, but also Nikkei born in South American countries such as Peru, who have their own networks in the South Bay.

2012). In contrast, the rate of naturalization among Chinese immigrants was 88% and 58% for the 1980s and 1990s respectively. The naturalization rate of Japanese immigrants is low compared to other immigrants from Asia overall (p.14).

#### Japanese Nationals in the South Bay as of October 2015

	Total Japanese Citizens				U.S. Permanent Residents				Long-Term Stay			
	Total	+/-	Male	Female	Total	+/-	Male	Female	Total	+/-	Male	Female
<b>Torrance</b>	<b>10,854</b>	0.3%	5,163	5,691	<b>4,256</b>	4.8%	1,857	2,399	<b>6,598</b>	-2.4%	3,306	3,292
<b>Gardena</b>	<b>2,052</b>	0.9%	931	1,121	<b>1,288</b>	3.8%	548	740	<b>764</b>	-3.7%	383	381
<b>Palos Verdes Peninsula</b>	<b>4,648</b>	-5.5%	2264	2384	<b>1241</b>	7.8%	523	718	<b>3407</b>	-9.6%	1741	1666
Rancho Palos Verdes	3,457	-5.3%	1,700	1,757	852	8.5%	371	481	2,605	-9.1%	1,329	1,276
Palos Verdes Estates	412	0.5%	193	219	188	6.8%	78	110	224	-4.3%	115	109
Rolling Hills Estates	779	-9.5%	371	408	201	5.8%	74	127	578	-13.9%	297	281
Rolling Hills	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
<b>Lomita</b>	<b>409</b>	1.7%	172	237	<b>248</b>	5.5%	104	144	<b>161</b>	-3.6%	68	93
<b>Redondo Beach</b>	<b>1,513</b>	0.9%	715	798	<b>650</b>	8.5%	256	394	<b>863</b>	-4.1%	459	404
<b>Manhattan Beach</b>	<b>159</b>	0.6%	59	100	<b>107</b>	1.9%	37	70	<b>52</b>	-1.9%	22	30
<b>Hermosa Beach</b>	<b>97</b>	-4.9%	40	57	<b>53</b>	1.9%	22	31	<b>44</b>	-12.0%	18	26

Source: Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs Annual Report of Statistics on Japanese Nationals Overseas (2016)

Data from MOFA's Annual Report of Statistics on Japanese Nationals Overseas show that the number Japanese citizens residing in the City of Torrance exceeds the number of Japanese citizens living in the City of Los Angeles (10,492). Of those in Torrance, 39% are U.S. permanent residents. The Palos Verdes Peninsula is home to the second largest group of Japanese citizens in the South Bay, of which 27% are U.S. permanent residents. Gardena has the third largest population of Japanese citizens in the South Bay, of which 63% are U.S. permanent residents.

The numbers from the Annual Report of Statistics on Japanese Nationals Overseas is approximate since it relies on self-reporting and some people do not report promptly after they are naturalized. However, this information indicates that the largest number of Japanese citizens reside in the South Bay, especially in the City of Torrance. In addition, the majority of Japanese citizens on the Palos Verdes Peninsula are non-immigrant expatriates, presumably here for business, while Gardena has the largest percentage of Japanese citizens who are long-term U.S. permanent residents.

It should also be noted that despite the decrease in non-immigrant Japanese nationals in every city in the South Bay, the number of permanent residents continues to grow. Furthermore, in every city in the South Bay, while the ratio of Japanese men to women living in the U.S. on visas is nearly even, there are more women among the those who have permanent resident status, presumably due to international marriages between Japanese women and an American spouse.

### 3.1.3. Nikkei Seniors in the South Bay

According to 2010 Census data, 19% of the Nikkei community is 65 years of age or older, a higher proportion than any other major racial or ethnic group (A Community of Contrast, Asian Americans Advancing Justice – Los Angeles, 2013, Appendix B, p. 30). In the South Bay cities, Nikkei seniors are concentrated in Gardena and parts of Torrance. In particular, 34% of the Nikkei population in Gardena is over 65 years old. Young families tend to live in Torrance, the Palos Verdes Peninsula, and the Beach cities. In contrast, most of the other Asian ethnic groups who live in the South Bay cities tend to be relatively young families.

### 3.2. Social Services Requests

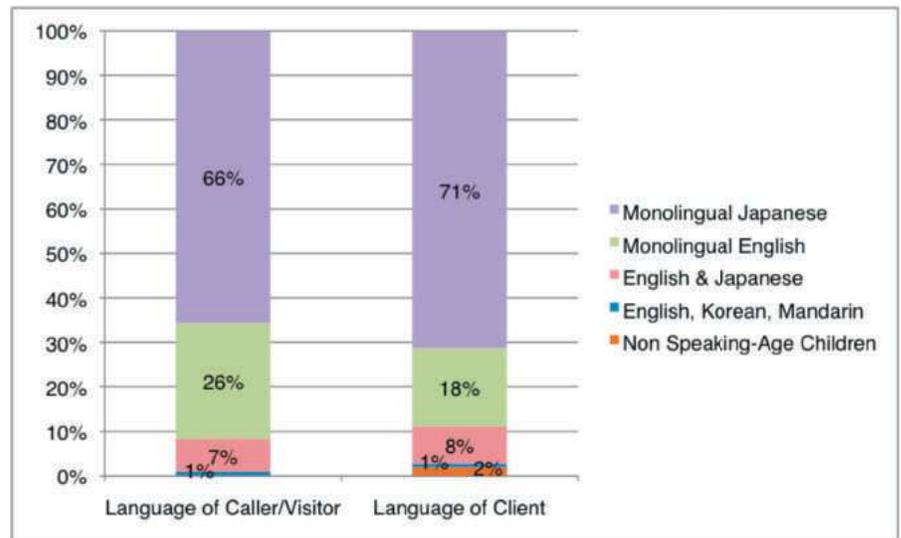
While specific social services needs are discussed later in this report, data from services provided by LTSC in the South Bay present a snapshot that sheds light on segments of the community seeking information and supportive services.

In 2016, LTSC opened a satellite office in the South Bay.<sup>3</sup> According to intake sheet data from the limited drop-in hours in the first several months, two-thirds of all calls and visits were from monolingual Japanese-speakers. An even higher percentage (71%) of the actual clients, the subject of the inquiry in need of services, were monolingual Japanese-speakers. Also, 77% of inquiries were from or regarding clients over the age of 60<sup>4</sup>. The top three types of inquiries were regarding government benefits, health insurance, and counseling.

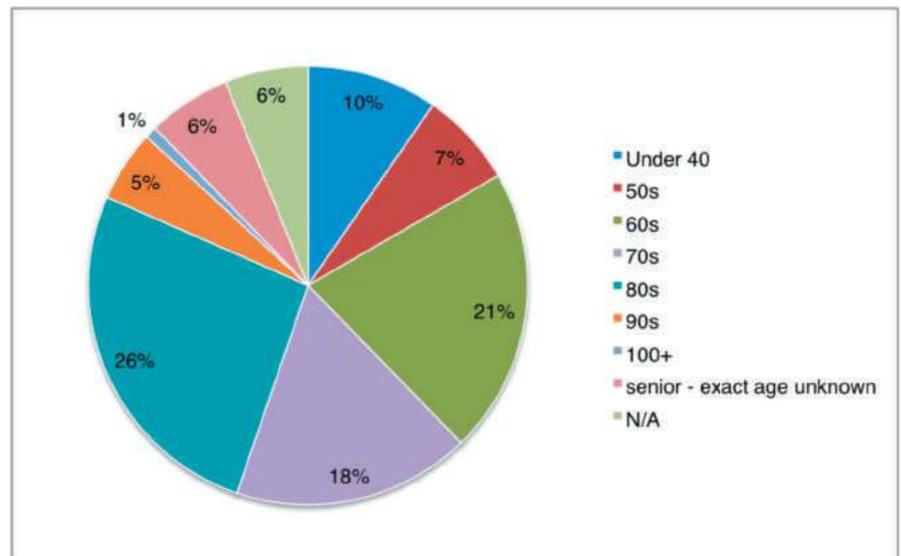
### 3.3. Gaps in Data

Since the Census does not differentiate decennial data by

Languages of People Seeking Social Services from LTSC South Bay



Ages of People Seeking Social Services from LTSC South Bay



<sup>3</sup> LTSC has provided bilingual services in the South Bay for more than 20 years, by visiting clients in their homes or facilitating group sessions at churches and temples. The data discussed here do not include existing/ongoing cases or support groups.

<sup>4</sup> LTSC receives funding through the Federal Older Americans Act, which defines seniors as 60 years of age and up.

immigration status, it was not possible to compare or explore city-based data for U.S. citizen versus non-naturalized Nikkei.

Anecdotal evidence also suggests that the South Bay is home for a significant number of undocumented Japanese, primarily visa overstays, who live, work and engage in community activities, and who may need social services, but they remain under the radar. Informal interviews provided some examples of how and where undocumented Nikkei gain income in the South Bay or how young women's visa and marriage with American citizens are arranged. Further study is necessary to explore the issue.

In addition, conversations with community members indicate that there may be Japanese citizens who, as treaty trader/investor visa holders, have lived in the U.S. for extended periods and raised families here without becoming legal permanent residents. This may further complicate the picture of "short-term" versus immigrant Japanese living in the South Bay.

#### **4. Focus Group Findings**

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##### **4.1. Findings of Overarching Issues in the South Bay Nikkei Community**

The overarching focus group findings indicate that the South Bay Nikkei community is dispersed, diverse, and divided. However, there are many opportunities for social and cultural integration for diverse Nikkei to congregate around organizations, programs, and resources throughout the South Bay.

The South Bay is rich in long-standing and new, and bilingual and monolingual Nikkei resources such as cultural organizations, faith-based groups, Japanese language schools, daycares and classes, small/big and local/transnational businesses, supermarkets, festivals, etc. However, a recurring theme in many interviews and focus groups was that many of the resources are not widely known or shared throughout the South Bay Nikkei community.

There is no single "center" or centralized system or function in the South Bay Nikkei community. However, there are numerous micro-communities with multiple centers, or hubs, of activities. Some have physical sites such as the Gardena Valley Japanese Cultural Institute (GVJCI), churches, or Okinawa Association of America, while some are virtual and network-based communities without physical centers, such as Sakura Chorus groups, F.O.R. (Friends of Richard), Yonsei League, Sansei Baseball, etc.

The South Bay Nikkei population is diverse, and various social, cultural and economic gaps exist based on citizenship/immigrant/visa status, the time of immigration, marriage and employment status, languages spoken, affiliations with schools and companies, etc. Some interact beyond their social circle, but others rarely go outside those boundaries.

People seem to have a complex sense of "Nikkei identity" based on their own background and status. Some pointed out a need to discuss the South Bay Nikkei identity. Another

common theme during discussions was why the South Bay Nikkei community needs to bridge gaps and unite, or why the community needs to better coordinate as Nikkei.

## 4.2. Summary of Theme-Based Focus Group Findings

### (1) Seniors

Lack of transportation, lack of social and learning opportunities, and communication and information gaps were identified as the major issues facing the South Bay seniors.

#### Transportation

- Participants shared the need for assistance with transportation, especially for medical appointments, attending classes, or other social activities.
- Publicly available local transportation is not easy for them to use. For example, Gardena Special Transit requires an arrangement 24 hours ahead. Also, its service area does not include Torrance. Public transportation in general is not on time, and connecting with other transportation is complicated. Looking up information and making arrangements requires some proficiency in English.
- Since everyone has different needs for transportation (some need a handicap-accessible vehicle, some need a language-sensitive service, some need South Bay regional transportation system, etc.) and some community organizations (e.g. Gardena Valley Baptist Church) provide their own service to members, the South Bay community would benefit from forming a taskforce with relevant community organizations to discuss this issue further.

#### Social and Learning Opportunities

- Seniors, especially Japanese-speaking seniors, shared the need to create more social (including learning) opportunities. The South Bay still lacks the “space” and “opportunity” for Nikkei seniors to socialize.
- Nijiya café is a popular hang out for Japanese-speaking seniors. According to participants, Nijiya café is clean and bright, and free wifi service is available. With just a \$1 coffee, seniors can stay as long as they want. There are also young Shin-Issei (or Japanese-speakers) constantly hanging out at the café, so when seniors have a technical problem (e.g. iPhone, iPad, internet search), they can freely ask them, and they usually help them in Japanese.
- GVJCI is another recognized place among seniors to intermingle, but it is perceived as primarily for English-speakers. GVJCI has “Tomonokai” for both English and Japanese-speaking seniors, but there seems to be a clear divide between Japanese and English-speaking seniors.
- Some Japanese-speaking seniors mentioned that they go to the senior program run by Faith United Methodist Church (UMC) although they are not church members. Their program (run in English) is open to non-members and provides various learning opportunities. According to the participant from Faith UMC,

the church utilizes youth members (volunteers) to assist the program, such as providing technical assistance (iPad, iPhone). The J-speaking participants mentioned that they don't feel "divided" in the program.

- Japanese-speakers expressed a need for efforts to promote communication and relationship-building between Japanese and Korean residents of senior housing buildings due to the demographic shift in the area. In some areas where Japanese-speakers had been the majority, they have been feeling marginalized in contrast to the growing number of Korean seniors.
- There are many isolated/disconnected Nikkei seniors (including widows) in the South Bay due to language, mental, and physical issues, and an inability to access transportation. Seniors shared the need to strengthen networks and support systems.
- "Morning Café" (conversation group) was suggested by Japanese-speaking participants on either or both Wednesday and Friday mornings to complement and avoid conflicting with existing programs. For example, Gardena Buddhist Church has a senior program on Tuesday morning, and Faith UMC has another senior program on first and third Monday mornings.
- There is a need for more in-home care, preferably from trained and certified caregivers. Younger seniors can assist elder seniors with light care. A training program (how to lift, CPR, preparing low sodium meals, etc.) could improve quality of care and confidence. It would be a good opportunity for younger seniors to learn basic caregiving skills and to engage in the community, as well as earn extra income.

#### **Information and Communication Gaps**

- Both English-speaking and Japanese-speaking seniors shared a need to access reliable information from a trusted source regarding Japanese or bilingual caregivers, doctors, helpers, retired nurses, handymen, etc.
- For Japanese-speaking seniors, Japanese ads are a resource to find vendors, but they still worry about the trustworthiness of the vendors since they do not have the means to independently verify or vet them. English-speaking Nikkei can better access mainstream information and seem to have more options, but they are also looking for "reliable" information and culturally-sensitive resources.
- Participants stated that they would like to see a nonprofit organization, as a third party, make a "South Bay Nikkei Resource Book" both in English and Japanese, from neutral perspectives.

#### **(2) Parenting**

Lack of space and programs to socialize, learn and exchange information, and information and generation gaps were identified as major issues by parents who are currently raising children from toddlers to teenagers.

### **Space/Programs to Socialize, Learn, and Exchange Information**

- Japanese-speaking parents shared the need to create “Children’s Centers” (日本の児童館) in multiple locations (Gardena/North Torrance area and South Torrance/PV area) by using an existing facility such as GVJCI or Nishiyamoto Academy, where community organizations such as GVJCI and LTSC social workers provide services and have programs, or run Japanese-speaking classes for Nikkei parents and children.
- Some Japanese-speaking parents pointed out that the South Bay lacks a place and opportunity for Japanese-speaking teens to socialize and experience mainstream society. It is especially challenging for parents during summer vacation. They showed interest in Japanese American camps (as a bridge) where Japanese-speaking teens can use English and learn about America through Japanese American experiences. They were not aware of Kizuna programs or other Japanese American camps at GVJCI.

### **Information and Communication Gaps**

- Some resources are already available in the South Bay, but marketing is a challenge. For example, LTSC has been providing services in the South Bay for 20+ years, but has low name recognition, especially among Japanese-speaking parents. They pointed out that the organization’s name gives the impression that it is a “Little Tokyo” organization not a “South Bay” organization. Therefore, even if LTSC organizes events in the South Bay and publicizes them online in Japanese, such as on ViviNavi, readers skip the information.
- Since the community is divided and some experience language and cultural barriers, many feel they need a centralized system for Nikkei parenting information including camps, classes, educational programs, and workshops. Creation of “Children’s Centers” may help to centralize the information.
- English-speaking parents suggested “WhatsApp JA,” a virtual information system where South Bay JA daycares, activities, and community events are listed and constantly updated.

### **Generation Gaps**

- Japanese-speaking parents (Shin-Issei) shared the need for inter-generational programs in the community since many don’t have extended families living in the United States. Their children are growing up without interacting with seniors or experiencing a sense of a big family. Japanese-speaking parents requested a program where their children can interact/help/volunteer with and for Nikkei seniors in the South Bay.

### **(3) Civic Engagement**

Various gaps were identified, and the need for bridging gaps was discussed. Creation of a coordinating body was suggested, as well as civic education of the Nikkei community at various levels and groups.

## Bridging the Gaps

- Both English-speaking and Japanese-speaking stakeholders shared the need to create a coordinating body (or town hall meeting) to discuss South Bay Nikkei issues, coordinate and make partnerships among diverse South Bay Nikkei resources, and ultimately to unite the community.
- Japanese-speaking seniors suggested a “South Bay Nikkei Volunteer Expo.” Senior focus group participants also mentioned that they are looking for volunteer opportunities in the community. They need to know “who does what” in the South Bay.

## Education

- Apathy in political and community engagement seems to be a widely shared impression about the Nikkei community. There is a need to educate and strategize as a community. It is distinct compared with other API communities.
- Youth are not well engaged in the community. Both English and Japanese-speaking stakeholders shared the need to integrate the youth in civic and political engagement. Perhaps, there is a Japanese cultural tendency to avoid confrontation and controversy, which leads to lack of interest in political involvement.
- Japanese have relatively low naturalization rates with less drive to become American citizens. Japanese-speaking participants (permanent residents) pointed to unclear immigration (re-naturalization) policies in Japan as one of the reasons, as well as reluctance to give up access to Japan’s National

Health Insurance (Kokumin Hoken). They suggested having a workshop with a specialist who can talk about immigration and the naturalization system. They wanted to know how to “regain” Japanese citizenship or how to apply for Japanese Kokumin Hoken as a U.S. citizen in Japan when they need to go back to Japan due to health or other personal reasons.



Participants learning about ballot measures at a voter education workshop at the Gardena Valley Japanese Cultural Institute in September 2016.

- Nikkei organizations should proactively engage in political education (e.g. candidates' forums) and educate voters.
- More voter registration opportunities need to be created. Nijiya café was recommend as an outreach site since many types of Nikkei use the space.

#### (4) Sports

- Nikkei basketball leagues constantly look for places (gyms) for practices. The J-soccer league expressed similar needs.
- Both Japanese and English-speaking participants shared the view that Nikkei sports leagues provide social interaction and bonding, as well as teaching Nikkei history, culture, and tradition. But this trend is more prominent for the English-speaking community.
- For English-speaking sports groups, ethnicity can pose challenges and can even be the source of controversy. However, some organizations that welcomed diversity became successful in increasing memberships (e.g. JCI Judo, FOR).
- Education of the root history of JA sports and JA interment during WW II needs to be taught not only to children, but also to the parents. As the community grows more diverse, there are concerns about how to pass on Nikkei traditions and train leaders (youth, parents, volunteers). There are also opportunities to collaborate with other Nikkei organizations that are not necessarily focused on sports. For example, FOR started a partnership with GJVCI and Kizuna.
- Japanese-speaking martial arts stakeholders shared that membership among seniors and women is increasing while young men are decreasing. More seniors and women want to learn martial arts for physical protection and a healthy lifestyle. The organizations feel the need to apply for a grant to provide senior programs.
- Japanese-speaking sports groups shared a need to form a Nikkei sports federation to share resources and acquire more publicly available funds for their programs, and to receive technical assistance (e.g. to incorporate as a nonprofit, etc.).

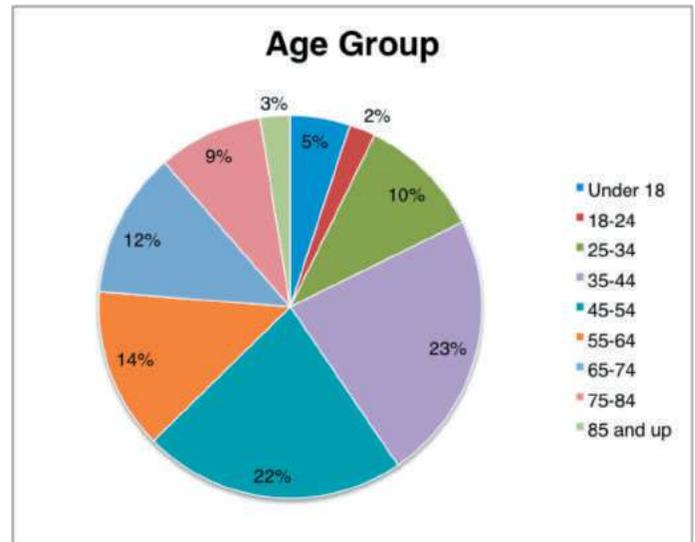
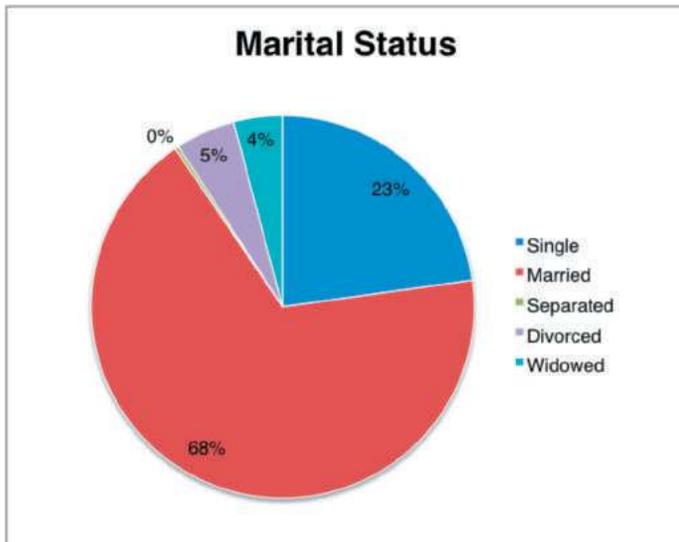
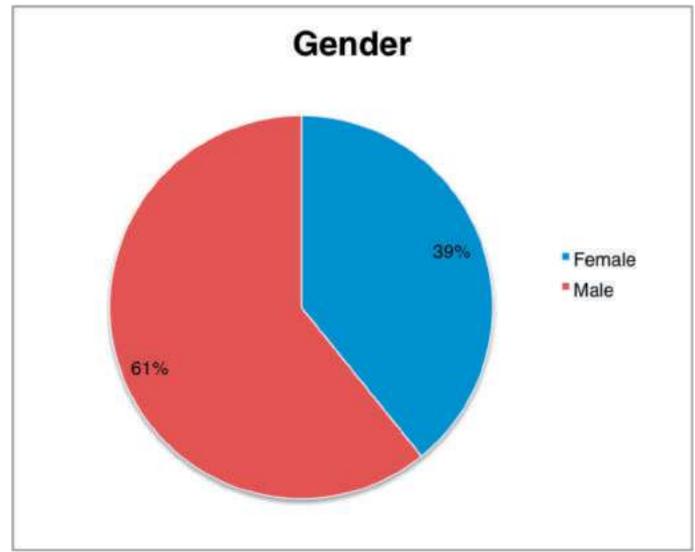
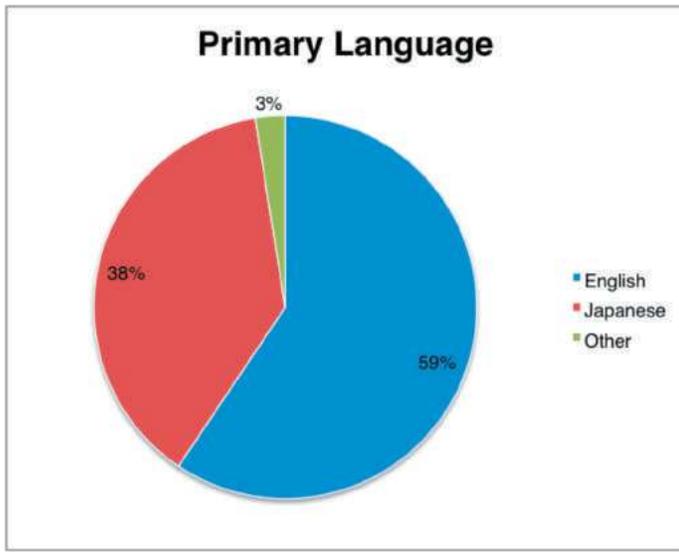
## 5. Clipboard Survey Findings

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### 5.1. Basic Information of Survey Respondents

As described in the methodology section, a survey was conducted during the summer and early fall of 2016. 319 responses were collected online and in person at two large community fesitvals in the South Bay. The following charts highlight characteristics of respondents. .

## Basic Characteristics of Survey Respondents



## Nikkei Identity

Traditionally, Japanese American identity was viewed as being closely tied to an individual's generational status (Kitano, *Generations and Identity: The Japanese American*, 1993). The original immigrants, or Issei, shared a common language and experiences. Their children, the Nisei, grew up as a cohort that had to learn how to navigate Japanese and American culture and social structures.

While each ensuing generational cohort has their own defining experiences, a number of factors have complicated the Nikkei identity. Ongoing immigration resulting in what is sometimes referred to as a "Shin" (new) Issei population, and trends such as increased intermarriage, have made it increasingly challenging to apply the traditional generational categories. The American-born child of newcomers

from Japan may speak Japanese at home and feel connected to family in Japan, but eat spam musubi and identify strongly with Yonsei and mixed race (Hapa) friends on their basketball team.

When survey respondents were asked to self-identify with a single label, the largest single block of respondents, 23%, identified as Japanese nationals. This combined with the Issei and Shin-Issei categories indicates that 42% of respondents were Japanese immigrants. The combined total of American-born Nikkei who identified with one of the traditional generational categories (Nisei, Sansei, Yonsei, Gosei) was 38%. Adding the Shin-Nisei and Hapa categories brings the total of American-born Nikkei respondents to 42%.

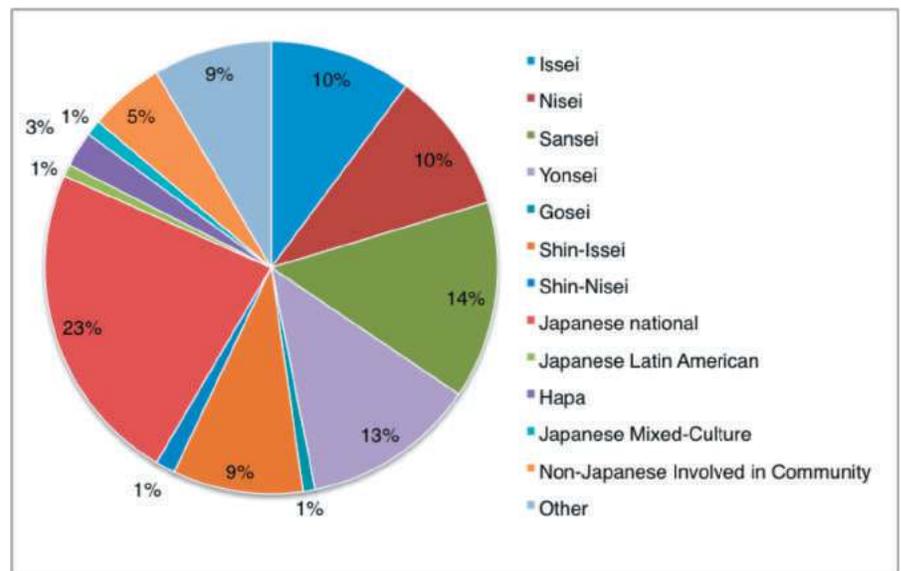
Conversations with respondents while administering the survey revealed that many struggled with choosing a category because they have multiple identities. Some mixed race respondents chose to identify as Hapa, while other deliberately chose a different category, sometimes “for convenience” to indicate their generation, whether it be Yonsei or Shin-Nisei.

However, the layered identities were not just about racial or ethnic backgrounds, but also included intra-Nikkei identities. For example, those with one Sansei parent and one Shin-Nisei parent thought of themselves as Sansei-han (3.5 generation).

In addition, some respondents did not want to identify themselves as “Shin-Issei” or “Shin-Nisei” and preferred to identify as “Issei” and “Nisei” though they were obviously postwar immigrants. Also, some respondents who indicated that they were a “naturalized citizen” on a different question in the survey still identified themselves as a “Japanese national,” reflecting a strong attachment to Japan. Their reality and everyday life displays a dual or transnational identity.

Finally, 9% of respondents refused to choose a category, saying “it depends,” highlighting the fluidity of identity in the Nikkei community today. The traditional identity categories do not adequately capture or reflect the increasingly diverse Nikkei community, but perhaps nothing could. The Nikkei in the South Bay need to consciously strive to create a meaningful and cohesive sense of community.

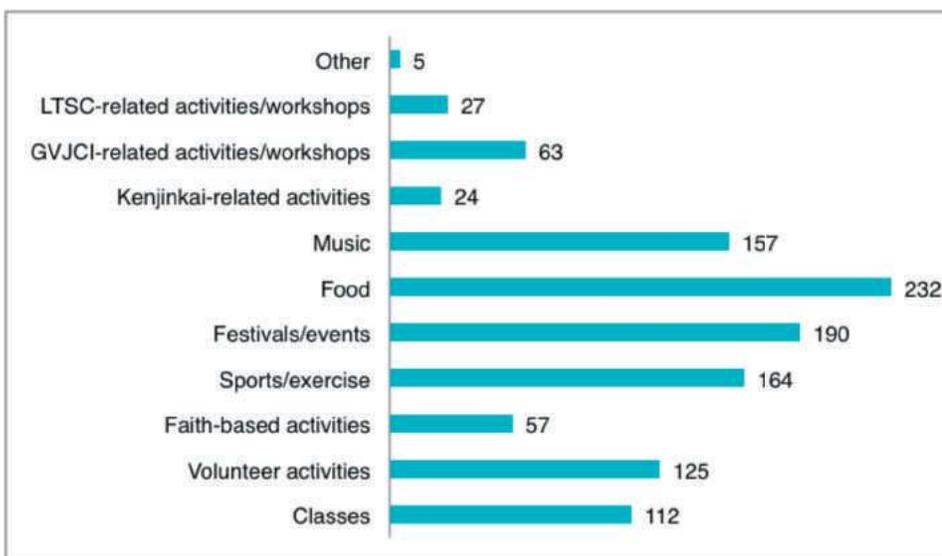
How Survey Respondents Self-Identified



## Other Characteristics

70% of the survey respondents were U.S. citizen. Of the 30% who were not citizens, 19% were U.S. permanent residents. Of the U.S. citizens, 79% reported that they were registered to vote

### Favorite Nikkei Community Activities of Respondents



## 5.2. Favorite Activities in the South Bay

The South Bay is home to various Nikkei activities. Respondents were asked to indicate as many activities on the survey as they enjoyed participating in. Food-related activities are the most popular, followed by festivals. Sports activities are also popular. Organizations may attract more people from Nikkei populations by combining their activities with food, sports, and music.

## 5.3. Popular Places to Go in The South Bay Nikkei Community

While supermarkets are not usually thought of as a cultural community asset, Japanese supermarkets were included as a survey response option because they were mentioned as hubs of activity during early interviews with community members. Survey results indeed show that Japanese supermarkets are by far the primary place of intersection (人々が交差する場) of English and Japanese-speaking Nikkei of all backgrounds.

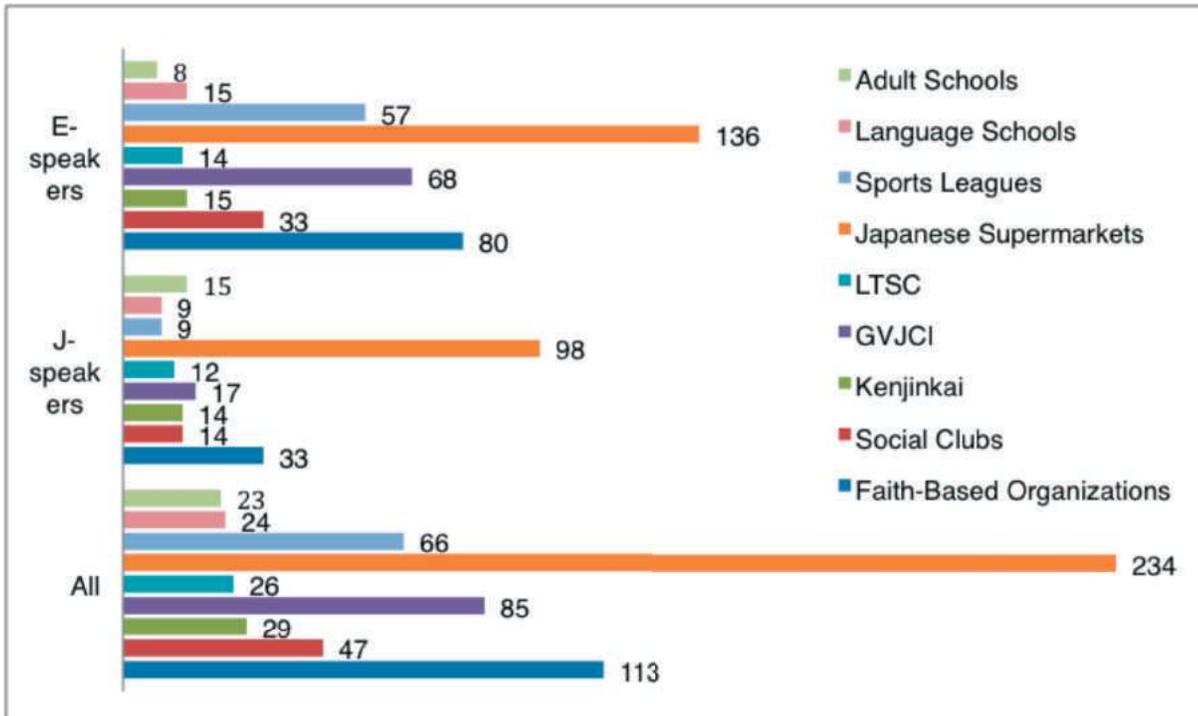
Various free Nikkei magazines are available at the Japanese supermarkets. Most of the markets also have bulletin boards where people post and seek information ranging from community events to local services and garage sales.

Furthermore, as mentioned in a focus group discussion, Japanese-speaking seniors in particular gather at Nijiya supermarket's café to socialize. As such, Japanese supermarkets are not simply a place of intersection, they can also serve as a gathering place or informal community center where diverse Nikkei meet and interact and exchange information, and influence each other.

On the other hand, this also shows the critical need for space for Nikkei to simply gather and socialize in the South Bay, something that was also pointed out in focus group discussions.

Faith-based organizations continue to serve an important role for both English and Japanese-speaking Nikkei. GVJCI was also popular. However, the data show that it is primarily a destination for English-speaking Nikkei. Organizations such as Kenjinkais and LTSC, which provide bilingual or Japanese services, do not seem to attract the broader Japanese-speaking Nikkei population, though they may be relevant to their specific members.

Popular Places to Go Among Survey Respondents



**5.4. Main Areas of Concern**

While the respondents may not be a representative sample, common themes appear in response to the question about concerns. “Physical health” is the largest concern for both English and Japanese-speaking Nikkei, followed by “kids’ education” and “retirement life.”

For English-speaking Nikkei, retirement life, social activities, and caring of aging family follow. This supports the need for programs targeting Nikkei seniors. Among Japanese-

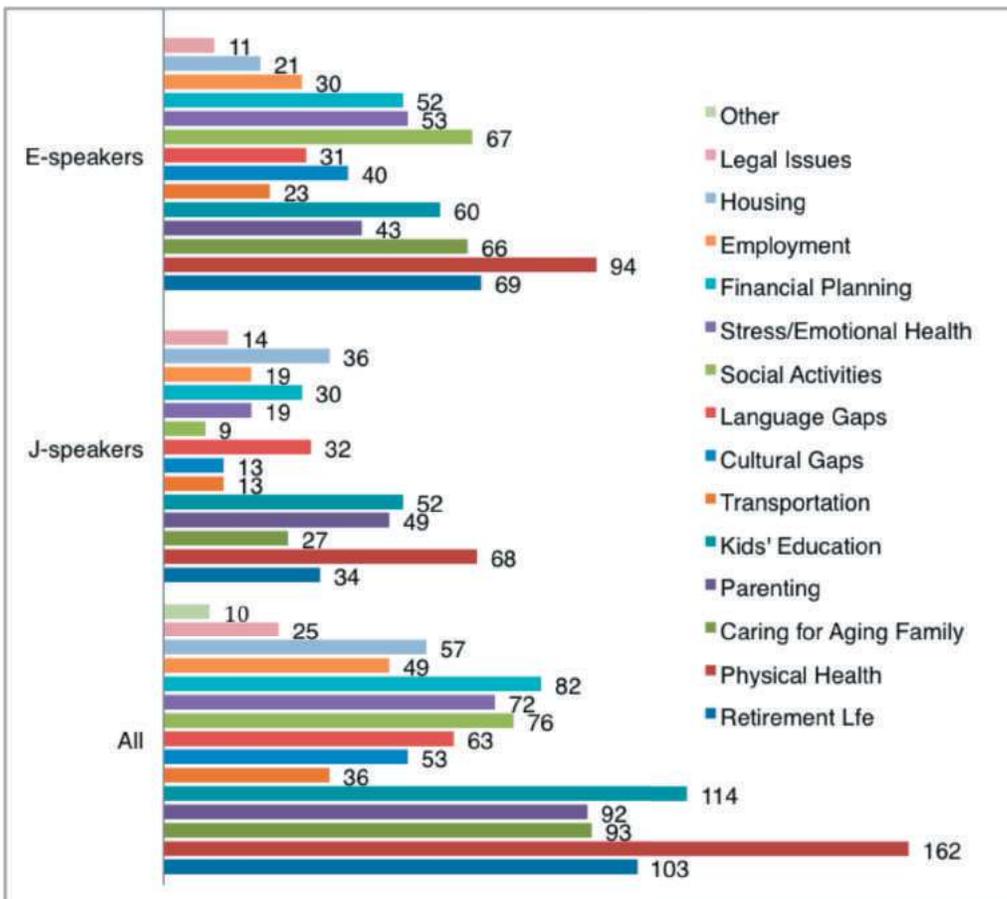
speakers, kids' education and parenting were more serious concerns than retirement life or caring for aging family members. This is probably because new immigrants and visa holders tend to be nuclear families without extended families and older family members in the United States.

It should be noted that more English-speakers see “cultural gap” as a concern than Japanese-speakers, while Japanese-speakers see “language gap” as a more serious concern. According to brief conversations with respondents taking the survey, English-speakers who selected “cultural gap” mentioned that they see that the Japanese American community is diversifying as a whole. But not only are they feeling the gaps within the community, but they are also feeling growing cultural gaps within their own families, including extended families, through generational differences and through marriage. Marriage includes inter-racial marriages, mono-racial inter-ethnic marriages, and intra-Nikkei marriages (with Shin-Issei or Japanese nationals, etc.).

English-speaking Nikkei also see “stress/emotional health” and “financial planning” as greater concerns than Japanese-speakers. For Japanese-speakers, “legal issues” seem

to be a more serious concern. This is also consistent with Japanese-speaking focus group participants' observations about the need for bilingual or bicultural legal assistance to navigate family and daily issues (e.g. divorce, fraud). However, there are likely many Japanese-speakers in the community who are concerned about retirement, financial planning, and emotional health based on the types of inquiries received at LTSC's South Bay office, where the top three requested services are for government benefits such as Social Security retirement benefits, health insurance, particularly Medicare and Medi-Cal, and counseling.

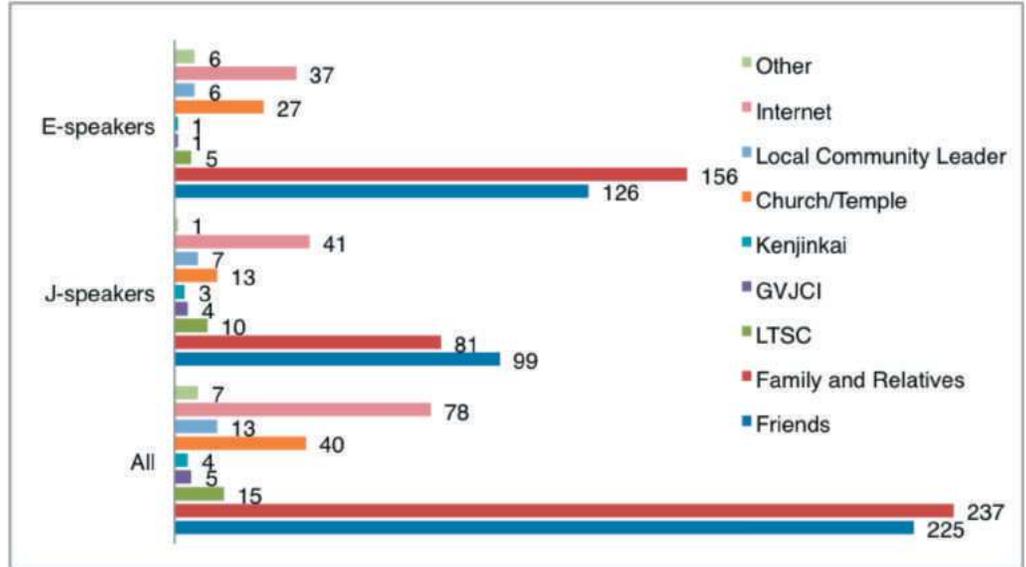
Concerns of Survey Respondents



## 5.5. Support System

By far, family and friends are the main source for Nikkei to seek advice or help. English-speakers were more likely to rely on family and relatives while Japanese-speakers relied more on friends. This is probably because the Japanese-speakers have limited extended families living in the United States from whom they can seek advice. This result is consistent with focus group findings and reinforces the need for outreach not only to seniors, but also to mothers who may be socially isolated.

Who To Go To For Help



While kenjinkais have historically played a major role in providing social support, they no longer seem to be a place where new immigrants seek help. This result concurs with a comment by a focus group participant that as kenjinkais incorporated as nonprofit “cultural organizations,” their activities became more focused and limited their ability to respond to the needs of their members. For some English-speakers, faith-based organizations continue to be a place to seek for help.

The internet is another major resource for both English-speaking and Japanese-speaking Nikkei to look for information to solve issues. However, as participants of both English and Japanese-speaking focus groups pointed out, the Nikkei community needs to have access to more reliable information.

## 6. Recommendations

### 6.1. Recommendations for Overarching Issues

There is significant potential to strengthen and build upon the large Nikkei community in the South Bay. The most significant challenge is to bridge the social and cultural gaps between the more established second, third, and fourth-generation Japanese Americans and the large postwar Japanese immigrants, or Shin-Issei, in the South Bay.

The South Bay Nikkei community as a whole can be strengthened through the formation of a South Bay Nikkei coordinating council or federation, to bring together the numerous Nikkei

organizations and networks to coordinate and strengthen the overall community. Through a coordinating council, dispersed micro-communities could be bridged, and resources could be compiled and shared.

Many of the community organizations and programs started by earlier generations of Japanese Americans could be revitalized and strengthened by the participation of more recent Japanese immigrants. There are also organizations and programs formed by the Shin-Issei that can be strengthened by associating with and learning from established Japanese American groups.

It is critical to start thinking about “community-building” among South Bay Nikkei since this assessment found overall concerns of (1) divided communities, and (2) the unclear future of the South Bay Nikkei community due to demographic and other changes, such as the relocation of Toyota Headquarters.

Considering the specific nature of the South Bay Nikkei community, which is clearly not a geographically tight area like Little Tokyo, it is recommended that instead of focusing on preserving a specific space or location, the South Bay Nikkei community needs to focus on preserving and enhancing the rich Nikkei resources through coordination, partnerships, and community engagement.

Other ethnic communities, such as the Jewish American community, which maintains high levels of social and cultural cohesion despite geographical dispersion and assimilation, as well as Native American communities, which strive to preserve their cultural and historical heritage despite being dispelled, may provide models for community-building among South Bay Nikkei.

## **6.2. Prioritized Actions Needed**

Based on the Focus Group and Clipboard Survey results, the following areas for action emerged. Some need immediate actions, while some need mid and long-term commitment. In addition, many actions require partnership and collaboration, or consensus with multiple community organizations.

### **(1) General**

- Initiate joint efforts to create a community council or town hall to serve as a “hub” for the South Bay Nikkei community
- Initiate discussion in the South Bay to discuss identity and what it means to be South Bay Nikkei (Ties That Bind in the South Bay). What can be a “bond” or a “common objective” for this diverse community?
- Conduct asset mapping of resources in the South Bay
- Coordinate nonprofit groups to create a “South Bay Nikkei Resource Directory”
- Create “WhatsApp” for Nikkei to centralize and share information such as local Nikkei daycares, classes, activities, and community events broadly.

- Strengthen networking between various Nikkei nonprofits in the South Bay, and consider supermarkets as community partners for outreach
- Organize a “Volunteer Expo” for South Bay Nikkei organizations to provide information about volunteer opportunities
- Create opportunities for intergenerational interactions (e.g. cultural and language exchange, events with Nikkei kids and seniors, volunteer opportunities for youth in senior programs)
- Expand services such as LTSC Tomodachi volunteer program to visit seniors and parents, especially for isolated Japanese-speaking mothers.

## **(2) Seniors**

- Form a task force with South Bay community organizations and faith-based organizations for further discussion about transportation
- Create more gathering opportunities, such as Morning Café, at the LTSC South Bay office and GVJCI
- Develop training programs to certify volunteers as care providers, case aides, etc.
- Create a list of retired Japanese-speaking nurses to identify potential caregivers

## **(3) Parenting**

- Information and workshops about resources for special needs children
- Support groups for teens, and for mothers of teens, and mothers of toddlers
- Parenting workshops at Japanese schools and preschools

## **(4) Community Engagement**

- Educate and create more voter registration opportunities at various community sites
- Organize candidates forum for future elections
- Educate permanent residents about their rights (they think they are “guests”)
- Provide workshops about citizenship by specialists who know about immigration and Japanese laws

## **(5) Sports**

- Create more space, such as a multi-purpose gym, in the South Bay for Nikkei sports teams to practice and have games
- Educate children and parents about the Japanese American legacy (history, field trips to Little Tokyo) through sports

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*FOR*

*Gardena Buddhist Church*

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*Gardena Cymbidium Club*

*Gardena Valley Baptist Church*

*Gardena Valley Japanese Cultural Institute*

*GVJCI Judo*

*GVJCI Tomonokai*

*Japan Alliance*

*JCI Gardens Senior Apartments*

*Kaizen Dojo*

*Kizuna*

*Kyokushin Karate*

*LTSC South Bay Alzheimer's Caregiver Support Group*

*LTSC South Bay Parenting Support Group*

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*Okinawa Association of America*

*Rafu Shimpō*

*Sakura Chorus*

*Sansei Baseball*

*Shorinji Kenpo*

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