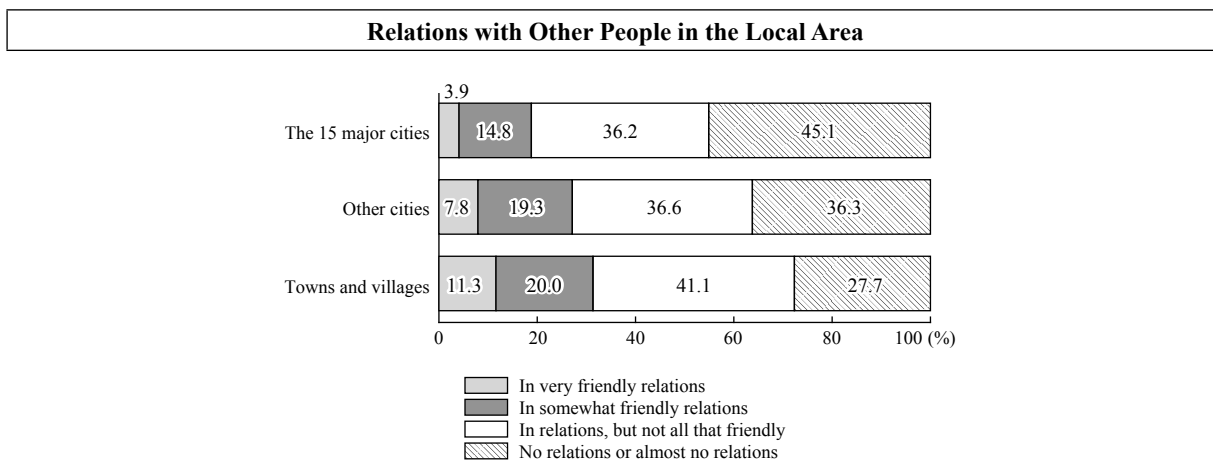


**[Issues accompanying the weakening of local communities]**

Neighborhood communities bound together by local connections form the basis for living a lifestyle where community residents help each other out, and have come to play an important role in ensuring community safety and security in times of natural disaster. Yet societal changes are leading to an attenuation of these local bonds and a weakening of local communities. New movements can be seen in certain quarters, however, lending a contribution to community safety and security.

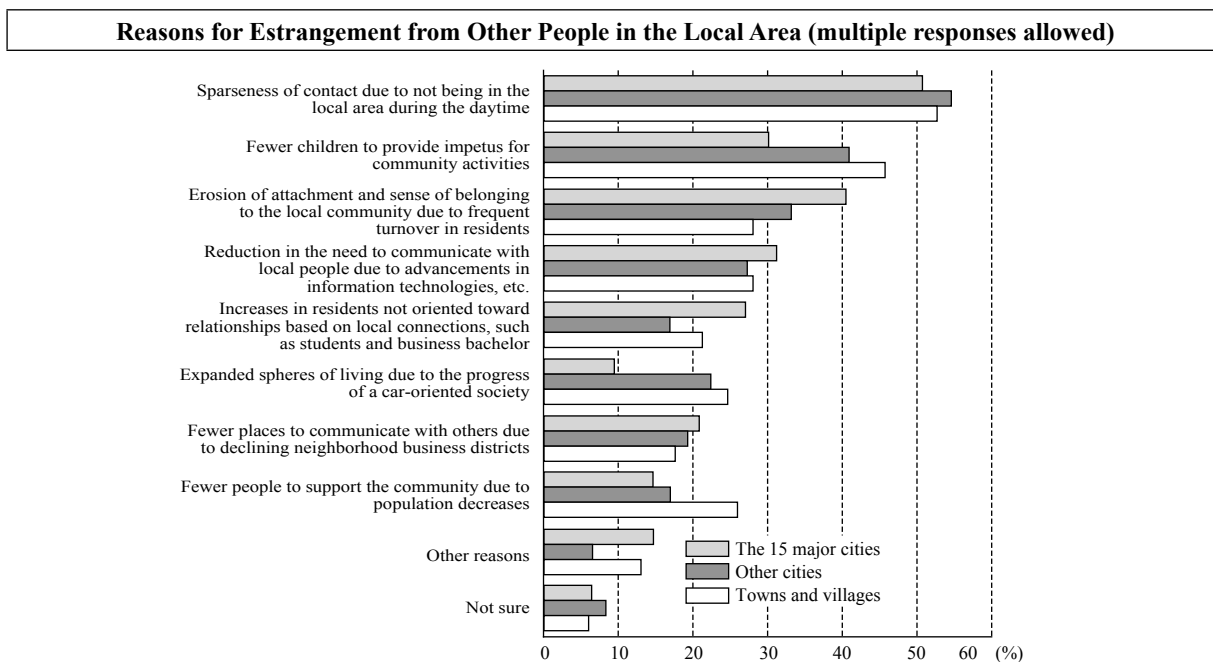
○ The weakening of local communities in urban and rural areas

Local communities are weakening to a considerable degree in the 15 major cities, with towns and villages also experiencing some weakening in local communities, even if not to the extent experienced in the 15 major cities.



Note: Survey conducted over the Internet with households all over the country (sample size of 2000; conducted in December 2005)

Source: MLIT



Notes: 1. Survey conducted over the Internet with households all over the country (sample size of 2000; conducted in December 2005)

2. Out of the whole sample population, this data was tabulated from 400 respondents who said they had "become very estranged" or "become somewhat estranged" from people in their local area as compared with before

Source: MLIT

(Factors contributing to the weakening of local communities that are common to both urban and rural areas)

In both urban and rural areas, increasing suburbanization has brought about separation between the living place and working place or school, reducing contact with their local community primarily during the daytime.

(Factors contributing to the weakening of local communities in urban areas)

In urban areas, with the continued influx of people from rural areas and frequent flows of residents into and out of the cities, it is possible that attachment and a sense of belonging to the local community are being eroded. Households not oriented toward activities in communities bound together by local connections are also on the rise with the increase in single-person households, studio apartments, and so on.

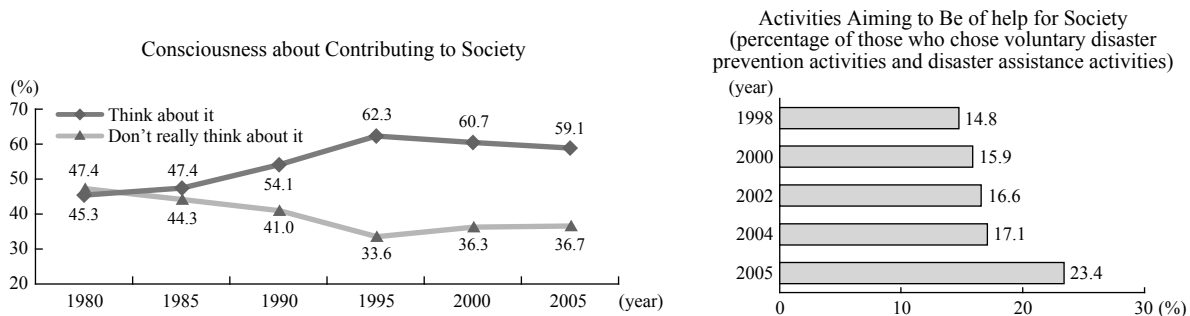
(Factors contributing to the weakening of local communities in rural areas)

In rural areas, conspicuous population outflow of mainly young people to the urban areas and continuing depopulation and population aging are reducing the number of people available to support the local community. Also becoming apparent is the lower number of children, who provide impetus for community activities through school events and the like. The expanded spheres of living that accompany the advancement of a car-oriented society could also be considered a factor in the decreased level of contact people are having with their local communities.

○ New movements concerning local communities

NPO, volunteer, and other activities are gaining momentum.

### Changes in Consciousness about Contributing to Society



Source: Compiled from Cabinet Office, *Shakai Ishiki ni Kansuru Seron Chousa* (Public Opinion Poll on Social Consciousness)

(Development of support activities using the knowledge gained from having been through disasters)

The citizen-based NPO, volunteer, and other activities that have been gaining steam in recent years not only lead to stronger local protection against disasters, these entities are also trying out the idea of having people go to remote disaster areas to provide support and expertise, utilizing their own experiences of having lived through disasters themselves.

(Expectations for the “*dankai no sedai*” (baby-boom generation))

Even amid concerns about weakening local communities brought on by population aging, there is a strong trend of interest in the middle and upper age brackets toward participating in local communities. The so-called “*dankai no sedai*” (baby-boom generation) is about to reach retirement age, and with the extra time on their hands they can be expected to provide new support to the local community in the future.