

Japan Times 企画で高1 高2 の有志が英字新聞 SENZOKU TIMES を4 か月かけて完成させました。

働く女性 OG へのインタビューをご紹介します。

Benefits of being working women

Senzoku Gakuen is just one of thousands of high schools in Japan, but the idea of gender discrimination, the inability to find work or further one's education may seem removed. The Senzoku Times interviewed two graduates from the class of 2010, Natsuki Komatsu and Hiromi Sugizaki, to see how the work environment for women receives career women nowadays. First, in the area of university education, Sugizaki said, "Rikei, or natural science courses, is a man's domain in some female-only schools even now, because of the stereotype that girls are more suited in bunkei, the social science courses. There is not even a system where there is an option to pursue sciences." "Actually," Komatsu elaborated, "my major in university had eight girls out of a total of about 150 students." Sugizaki, now working as the youngest manager at a branch of the Nichinoken one-to-one cram school, sees women in various positions in the field of education. She leads a classroom with 70 students, taking charge of managing, marketing, recruiting and sometimes even cleaning up by herself. A decade after graduating high school, it is easy to say she is relishing her life as an independent career woman, passionate about helping students where they wish to shine the most. "In big companies there are rarely any cases I hear of, though maybe in smaller, or family-run companies, there may be cases similar to discrimination," said Komatsu, while holding her 8-month-old son, who so generously welcomed us to his house with a big smile. Komatsu, currently on maternity leave, works at the Image Communications Group of Canon Ltd., developing software for the company's single-lens reflex cameras. Having studied biological engineering at university, Komatsu joined her current firm in hopes of pursuing her passion for developing medical equipment. Representing the rare and cherished population of rikejo, or women working in the science and medical field, Komatsu is taking full advantage of her position as a woman. Respect in the workplace is something she definitely has, experiencing no problems, even as a new mother. Regarding the advantages of being a woman, Komatsu said, "As a researcher, cooperation with other people and groups is necessary, so being a woman may make it easier for me to converse with people goodheartedly." "Because my job requires me to talk with parents, maybe being a woman makes it easier for some to confide in me about worries they may have, you know, from a motherly point of view." Sugizaki also echoed Komatsu that being a parent is beneficial in the work place. "Yes, theoretically I think that would be the case," she laughed, "Well, keeping aside whether I can and will get married, that is." Since the enactment of the equal employment law in 1985, the number of female

workers in Japan has been increasing. However, in the World Economic Forum (WEF) gender equality ranking, Japan ranked 111th, a drop from being 101st in 2015. According to the WEF, the gender gap among professional and technical workers, especially in areas of politics, economy, education and health is still significant. “Is it easy to manage a worklife balance? No,” said Komatsu, finally being able to eat dinner after putting her son to sleep. “Not only is there a worry of being able to work as well back in my previous position, but when I come home from work, I have to cook dinner, clean up, do laundry and more.” Komatsu believes programs by the government make it easier for young employees to manage their work life and house life are still insufficient. “You know what would really help, is if all husbands were to volunteer to take over housework,” said Komatsu matter-of-factly. “Is that a complaint?” Sugizaki joked. “No no, we (Sugizaki and her husband) do cooperate. Every household dividing the work just as much as they strive to do in the workplace would make such a big difference. In my case for example, we have a rule where the person who didn’t cook, is in charge of washing dishes. When I come home early I cook dinner for us three, and he’ll clean up after...vice versa,” Komatsu said. The environment to respect the time of employees with their families, is still not ensured by many companies. “The single biggest worry is whether I can go back to my previous position,” Sugizaki said, contemplating the risk of leaving her work to start a family. “Women in the workforce need to plan out their whole lives — when you might get married, when you might have children ... and you need to consider at what point of your career you will be at those times. Sometimes (you may) even sacrifice a job offer if it does not go well with your plan. That’s something men who work definitely do not need to consider much. Ultimately, the options they consider are whether they like the position offered or not.” Sugizaki warned, “I don’t know if it’s because I’m young, or because I’m a woman, the feeling of being undermined is still there.” Discrimination is not simply a nationwide phenomenon, but it is each and every comment made to a person, every judgmental glance, every pause of hesitation, to disregard a person’s opinion just because of their gender. It is easy to idealize what we wish for in gender equality, and social structure, but what we do not realize is that problems lie in the simple things that anyone can take action in solving. “At the end of the day, men and women are biologically different creatures, all we need to do, and I hope for people to learn how to do more, is to be willing enough to acknowledge the differences and work together.”



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Action required to increase refugee acceptance

Japan has to set measures in order to increase the number of refugees it accepts. However, accepting refugees is not easy. Although Japanese tend to think they should admit refugees, they have taken a negative attitude toward welcoming refugees because there are some drawbacks. Therefore, we need to make an effort to overcome them. First we must understand the word, "refugees." According to the dictionary, a refugee is a person who has been forced to leave their country or home because of war or political, religious or social reasons. They have no choice but to flee their country.

Although Japan is one of the world's largest donors of financial aid to refugees, it hasn't made much effort in accepting them, compared with other countries, because Japan has strictly

followed the refugee definition, which was internationally recognized by refugee convention in 1951, to not be overwhelmed by refugees.

In 2015, 7,586 people applied for refugee status in Japan, but only 27 were recognized as refugees.

It is true that the number of Japanese government's acceptance of refugees has been increasing. But it is clear that some countries are far more accepting than Japan.

There are some countries that continuously accept refugees as wars and conflicts are constant throughout the world.

According to a survey by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the world added 10.3 million displaced people in 2016, and the current number of refugees in the world is said

to be about 60 million people.

Turkey accepts 2.9 million refugees, the most in the world. That is because the country is situated north of Syria.

Pakistan and Lebanon, which accepted the second- and third-largest number of refugees, are close to Afghanistan and Syria, countries that produce many refugees.

What do Japanese think of such a situation? The Senzoku Times sent out questionnaires to three classes selected at random.

By accepting refugees, Japan will be praised in the international community. Also, refugees bring



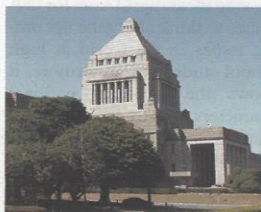
Refugees from Kosovo arrive in Blace, Serbia.

positive effects on the economy because Japan, facing the problem of aging society, needs a larger labor force. However, it costs a lot of money to support refugees. Additionally, an increase in refugees may raise chances of terrorism and possibly deteriorate security.

These are the pros and cons of
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Voting age change impact

Japan decided to lower the voting age from 20 to 18 in 2015. This added approximately 2.4 million youth as qualified voters. In 2014, 81.8 percent of Japanese population had the right to vote. After the legal change, the figure increased 2 percentage points. The history of elections in Japan dates back to 1890, but it was only for very few people. In 1925, every male from aged 25 or older was allowed to vote. In 1945 all the people aged 20 or more were allowed to vote. The Nation Referendum Law was enacted in 2007, which lowered the voting age from 20 to 18 in the case of national referendums.

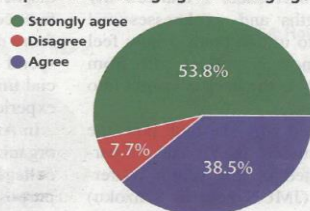


The Diet building

This triggered an argument to lower the voting age from 20 to 18 in all elections. The House of Councilors election in 2016 was the first election people aged 18 and 19 were able to participate in. 46.78 percent of those aged 18 and 19 voted, slightly lower than the 54.7 percent of all voters. Globally, youth playing a role in politics is nothing out of the ordinary. The U.K., the U.S., France and China are examples of countries that permit people from age 18 to vote.

With the voting age being lowered from 20 to 18, how have affected people reacted? Results of the survey on 13 youths addressed that the young generation of the Japanese society has strong opinions on the lowering of the franchising age. Lowering the voting age will force the government to take into account the viewpoints of young people. At the same time, lowering the voting age from 20

Opinions on changing the voting age



to 18 means more opinions of the population on politics echoing the political motion.

Recent politics have been focusing on measures regarding the future of the senior generation. Our survey says that 53.8 percent of the respondents agree with the lowering of the voting age, with most of them citing the government's adoption of opinions of the young generation. This will force the government to implement measures benefiting the young population as well, changing the present situation in which the government mainly takes measures for the elderly. Many also mentioned that their generation will be the one who will build
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NOTICE TO READERS

The very first SENZOKU TIMES was created by a group of 20 volunteers. Topics featured in the paper reflect the interests of millennials, including the change in the voting age, a Model U.N. and school life.

We hope you have a nice read!