



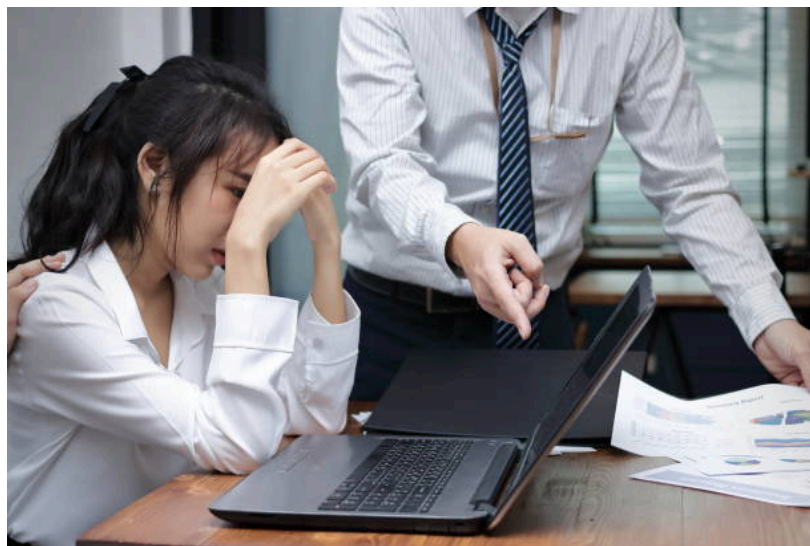
When you think about Japan, the first things that pop up might be advanced health care systems, authentic food, or natural wonders like Mount Fuji. However, most people probably haven't thought about its discrimination towards women in the workplace. Though Japan is among some of the top countries in terms of technological innovations, cultural influence, and economic power, even with these achievements, women in Japan are still not treated equally to their male coworkers.

To compare, many countries like Iceland, Finland, Norway, New Zealand, and Sweden use a [Global Gender Gap Index \(GGGI\)](#) of 0.816 - 0.935. The GGGI measures the gap between men and women in areas like economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment by providing a score between 0 and 1, with 0 being complete inequality and 1 being complete equality. These countries have a higher chance of being able to provide better services to women than Japan because of the low level of gender inequality. On the GGGI Japan has a score of 0.663. Though it isn't the best score, the country is trying to refine it by working to improve the conditions for women.

Many factors increase gender inequality in the country. The gender [wage gap](#) is a notable example. In Japan, there is a significant difference in pay between the two genders. Women in Japan earn about 25% less than men, and women tend to work less in science and engineering fields. These are also sectors where men are paid higher for the same work. An article by the [University of Tokyo](#) displays the income gap between the two genders. The reason dates back

to the traditional beliefs of Japanese culture. Previously, in traditional norms, women were bound to be caregivers and housewives. These age-old beliefs have affected the way that the country has developed. Though they are working to reduce inequality, women are still underrepresented in certain fields.

This also led to the disproportionate distribution of higher-positioned workers, as jobs with higher pay are mostly occupied by men. Women are responsible for family work at home along with their work life, creating a hassle because of Japan's long work schedules. Japan's corporate culture is known for its overtime and long work hours. This culture of “karoshi” (death by overwork) is a big issue in Japan, affecting both men and women. However, this culture has a more significant effect on women because of the number of responsibilities placed on their shoulders, as they have to take care of both their families and jobs. Even with Japan's efforts to reduce this stress through flexible working hours, many women still feel that they have to choose between work and family.



The “[glass ceiling](#)” also has a significant impact on the distribution of jobs for women. The “glass ceiling” effect is a metaphorical term used to refer to the invisible barrier that prevents women from being able to be part of higher roles in an organization despite their achievements and qualifications. This has a big effect on women in the workforce because, though they have the same qualifications as their male counterparts, they are still overlooked in terms of promotions and decision-making. Women also face [sexual and gender-based harassment](#), and there have been many reports of women being bullied at their workplace, leading some to commit suicide. Some said that they could not or did not report their problems because they believed that reporting the issue would not help resolve it, or they felt that by reporting the issue, it could negatively affect their work life. The [#MeToo movement](#) has also reached Japan, bringing light to the topic of workplace harassment, even though this topic may be sensitive or considered taboo in some circles.

One of the most significant forms of work discrimination in Japan is the “maternity penalty”. Though Japan has plenty of maternity and paternity leave policies, the social norms of Japanese culture place a higher burden on the women as they traditionally have roles that make them tend to their family. This led to career breaks and made it harder for women to reenter the workforce after giving birth. It might cause them to lose promotions or be sent back to a lower-work position. Access to childcare services is also a challenge due to Japan’s high level of aging populations, causing working mothers to have a harder time finding the appropriate childcare for their kids. Japan’s society has deeply ingrained gender roles that dictate what roles are suitable for men and women. While these roles are slowly changing, we can still see how women tend to be pushed into more submissive positions, which are connected to traditional gender roles. Women who try to challenge these gender roles are called rude and overly aggressive, lowering their chances of getting a good career.

In recent years, the Japanese government has implemented new laws and policies that help reduce this inequality. For example, the “Act on Promotion of Women's Participation and Advancement in the Workplace” requires large companies to reveal their efforts to boost female representation. The government is also working towards requiring companies to have more flexible work arrangements to help women better handle their responsibilities. They have also been encouraging companies to offer better childcare services. This is slowly changing the cultural attributes of Japanese culture for the better. Women in Japan today are working towards higher education, and more are entering the workforce. International companies located in Japan are also starting to adopt more inclusive policies and work cultures. Though the change is slow, it is working to help improve the country’s social status.

Ultimately, workplace discrimination in Japan is a [multifaceted](#) issue with roots in cultural expectations, corporate norms, and outdated systems.

While Japan is working to improve issues in certain areas, like education for women and some legal reforms, disputes like the gender wage gap, maternal penalties, and workplace harassment continue to hinder women’s career achievements and economic participation. To live in a world where women are truly free, there is much more progress to come.