

Dreams and Career Planning

When Japanese students think about their future, what kinds of occupations do they seek? What kinds of careers do they choose? Career education is recently attracting a lot of attention in Japan, and students from elementary school through graduate school are being encouraged not only to learn about different kinds of occupations but also to better understand themselves and their aptitudes so that they can make informed choices. In this issue, we report on career-related trends among Japanese students.



This mark indicates that more related information is included on the "Click Japan" website. <http://www.tjf.or.jp/clicknippon/>

Popular Occupations



What are the occupations Japanese elementary and secondary school students aspire to? The occupations that are most popular tend to reflect the social and economic conditions of the times, with some variations according to regional circumstances. The current popularity of video game developer, for example, reflects the boom in the digital games industry, and growing interest in care giving and home helper services reflects the aging of Japan's population. Other occupations, such as teaching, medicine, and the civil services are always popular career choices, regardless of the time period.

Top 10 Choices of Future Occupation	
Junior high school boys	Senior high school boys
1 Baseball player	1 School teacher
2 Soccer player	2 Public service employee
3 School teacher	3 Doctor
4 Doctor	4 Physical therapist, medical technologist, dental hygienist, etc.
5 Public service employee	5 Pharmacist
6 Technician, engineer, mechanic	6 Police officer
7 Car mechanic, car designer	7 Researcher, university professor
8 Video game creator, video game programmer	8 Technician, engineer, mechanic
8 Public entertainer (such as singer, voice actor, comedian, etc.)	9 Jurist (lawyer, judge, public prosecutor)
10 Jurist (lawyer, judge, public prosecutor)	9 Fireman (rescue officer, emergency medical technician)
Junior high school girls	Senior high school girls
1 Nursery school / kindergarten teacher	1 School teacher
2 Nurse	2 Nursery school / kindergarten teacher
3 Cartoonist, illustrator	3 Nurse
4 Public entertainer (such as singer, voice actor, comedian, etc.)	4 Pharmacist
5 Beautician, hairdresser	5 Physical therapist, medical technologist, dental hygienist, etc.
6 School teacher	6 Public service employee
7 Animal trainer, zoo keeper	7 Doctor
8 Cake baker, pâtissière	8 Nutritionist
9 Designer (fashion, etc.)	9 Care worker, home helper
10 Translator, interpreter	10 Counselor, clinical psychologist

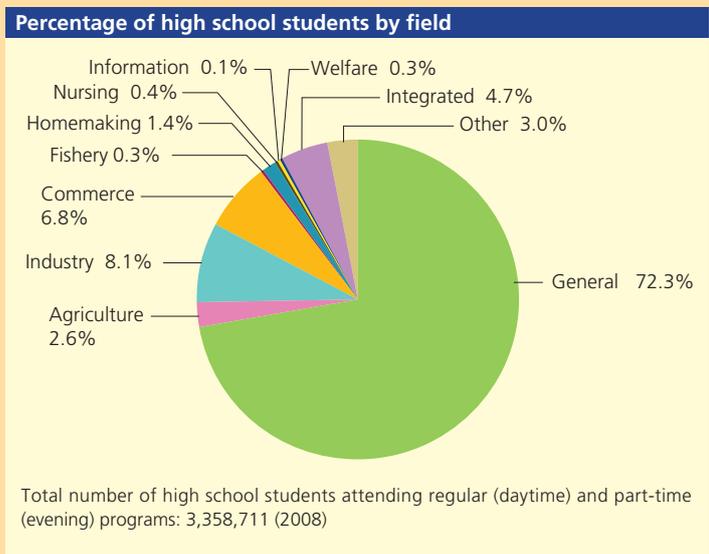
Source: "First Basic Survey on Children's Lives," 2005. Benesse Educational Research & Development Center

High School Options, Post-High School Options



The improvement of the economy, along with the low birthrate in Japan, has made it easier for students to gain entrance to the high schools, universities, and other institutions of their choice. The proportion of students who went on to high school in 1974 was a little over 90 percent and now stands at 98 percent.

Japanese high school curriculums are divided into three types: general, specialized (or vocational), and integrated. Specialized curriculums focus on such fields as agriculture, industry, commerce, fishery, homemaking, nursing, information studies, and welfare services. Integrated curriculums, newly established in 1994, include courses of both the general and vocational types. In the past, high school students who studied under a general curriculum were generally expected to go on to university; those who pursued vocational curriculums tended to take up employment after graduation, mostly in jobs that put to use the knowledge they had acquired in their classes. Today, however, high school graduates have a diverse range of options. The adoption of integrated curriculums is intended to encourage students to keep their options open to either employment or further education after graduation. Since its establishment, schools adopting the integrated-curriculum are increased to about 300 in 2008. Also, many general



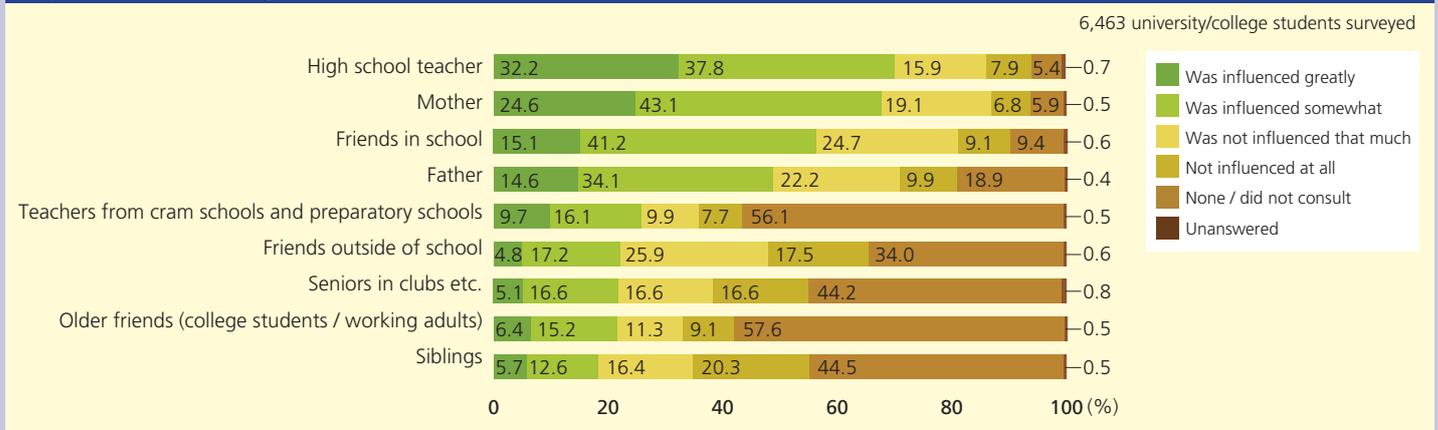
Source: "2008 Basic Survey of Schools," Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology

Whose Advice Influenced You?

Shiori, introduced in "Meeting People" in this issue, says her choice for high school was greatly influenced by advice from her

teachers. Whom do students talk to when they want advice on choosing a high school or university?

People Who Influenced Higher Education Choices



Source: "Survey of University Students Looking Back at Their Post-High School Graduation Plans," 2005. Benesse Educational Research & Development Center

curriculum high schools are starting to offer courses in specialized subjects, such as information, physical education, and English.

High school education in Japan is available in regular (day-time), part-time (evening), or correspondence school programs. Ninety-two percent of students are enrolled in daytime high school programs.

Higher Education Options



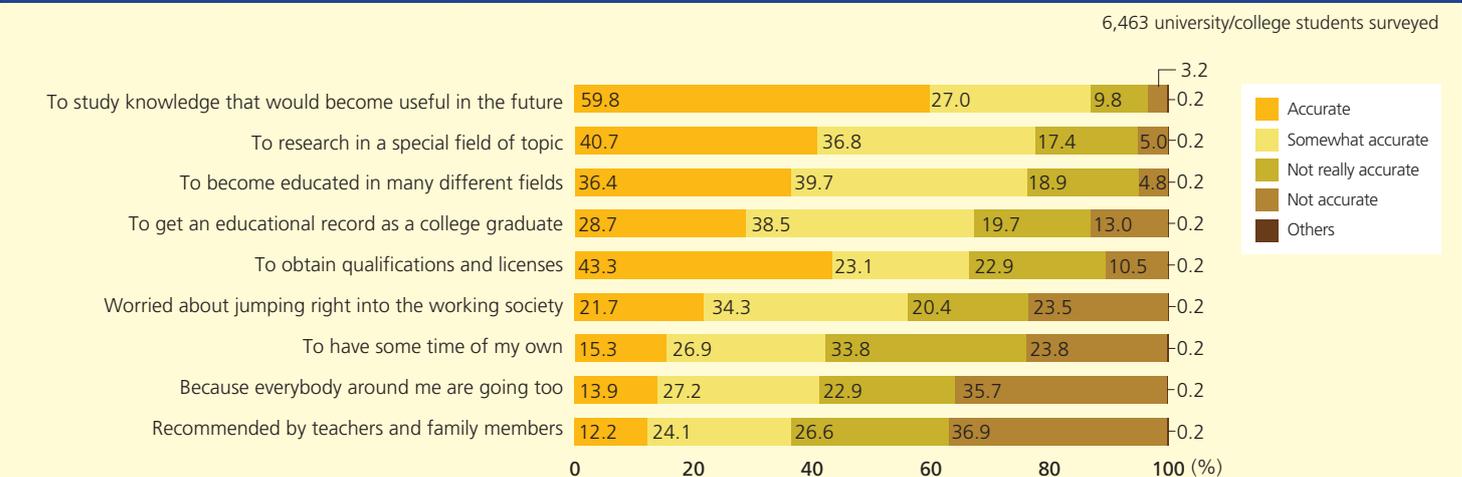
More students are also continuing their education at colleges and universities. The number has risen sharply since the establishment of special training schools (*senshu gakko*)* in 1976. In 1975, 25 percent of high school students went on to college or university, but in 2007, the proportion had risen to 75 percent, including those going on to *senshu gakko*. Because of the low birthrate, today any student who wants to go to university can be admitted somewhere, except for the most highly selective universities.

Kokubu Hiroshi, an expert at a company that has for many years provided high school students with information to help them determine their post-graduation plans, says "this situation allows many students to advance to four-year colleges not to study but simply to meet the demands of their parents. Many college students nowadays give little thought to the significance of working and supporting themselves after graduation."

According to the "First Basic Survey on Children's Lives" (Benesse Educational Research & Development Center), over 60 percent of students answered that they have a future career choice in mind, but nearly 40 percent of students answered "no" when asked if they are making a special effort to pursue such a career. Many of these students have in mind a job they would like to have, but they seem to have only a vague image of what is really involved.

*Specialized schools with courses in medical treatment, welfare, hair and beauty treatment, etc.

Reasons for Continuing Education at University/College



Source: "Survey of University Students Looking Back at Their Post-High School Graduation Plans," 2005. Benesse Educational Research and Development Center

Places to Learn About Jobs

How many occupations can you think of? Japan is said to have nearly 30,000 occupations, but the jobs familiar to elementary and secondary school students are limited to those of their parents and the people around them. In our time, when some 80 percent of the working population are employees of corporations, there are few opportunities for students to become familiar with the many different kinds of work to be done in society,

leaving them with limited awareness of the possibilities. The first step in the process of planning their futures is to learn what kinds of jobs exist, and to understand how these jobs contribute to society.

What opportunities do Japanese elementary and secondary school students have where they can learn about jobs or experience work firsthand?

Learning about jobs



©Gento-sha

The book *Jusan-sai no haro waaku* (Hello Work* for 13-year Olds), by well-known fiction writer Murakami Ryu, published in November 2003, introduces 514 jobs. It was an instant and long-term best-seller of over 1.3 million copies by 2007. At the official Jusan-sai no Hello Work webpage, which opened in 2005, visitors can search for jobs in many different ways. Under “Suki de shiraberu” (search by favorites), they can click on favorite topics like insects, dancing, or vehicles, for each of which a list of jobs pertaining to the selected topic is then displayed. Under “Omoide de shiraberu” (search by recollections) visitors fill in a survey about themselves when they were in elementary school, which then fits them into one

of eight categories, such as “disciplined achiever,” “dedicated servant of society” and “cheerful activist,” followed by a list of jobs suited for people of those types. Visitors can also ask questions of people who are actually working in the occupations that interest them.

Many other books, television programs, and websites besides “Hello Work for 13-year Olds” introduce jobs and give advice.

*“Hello Work” is the name of a government operated employment agency; here it is used to mean “looking for different kinds of work.”

License Academy ◀ <http://shinronavi.com/>

Tenshoku mitsuketai shushoku taiken Net ◀ <http://www.syokutai.jp/>

NHK Educational: Heisei wakamono shigoto zukan ◀ <http://www.nhk.or.jp/shigoto/>

Shorai naritai shigoto Navi ◀ <http://www.shigotosagasi.com/>

Learning the Fascination of Business

Opportunities for children to get a taste of various kinds of work are increasing. KidZania (<http://www.kidzania.jp/>) is a family entertainment center built on a model originating in Mexico that opened in Tokyo in 2006. At this theme park currently popular among elementary school students, children can play and learn as they experience over 80 different jobs.



© KidZania

Experiencing the work of firefighters at KidZania.

Since 2006, the “Chibinaga Shopping Street” opens for two days annually in Yamaguchi prefecture’s city of Nagato.

Chibi stands for *chibikko*, meaning (small) children, and naga stands for Nagato: it is a shopping street in Nagato made by and for children. The shops lining the street sell flowers, stationery goods, and baked goods, and there is a “Hello Work”



© Nagato Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Children can get a better understanding of what working is like by actually trying to do it themselves.

office (job placement agency), a bank, a newspaper publisher, and a broadcasting station. Elementary school children going to Chibinaga Shopping Street first go to the Hello Work office and look for a job. They are assigned a job and, after working for an hour, they receive play money called *chibii* that can be used in the shopping street to purchase goods. Junior and senior high school students are shop “owners.” They display goods and explain to elementary school “employees” about how they serve customers. They are in charge of accounting, too. Over 10,000 people visited Chibinaga Shopping Street when it opened for two days in February 2009.



© Nagato Chamber of Commerce and Industry

A snack shop, or *dagashiya*, at the Chibinaga Shopping Street. It was crowded with many children.

Expanding On-the-Job Experience Programs

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology has adopted a policy encouraging schools to institute career education programs in elementary, junior high, and senior high schools. Such programs should emphasize experience in actual workplaces. A five-day job experience program for junior high school students called "Career Start Week" was launched in 2005; in 2007, 4,040 out of 11,000 schools took part.

Komatsugawa Daiichi Junior High School in Edogawa ward, Tokyo implemented the five-day job experience program in 2005. School principal Usami Hiroko says, "Students are familiar with a surprisingly small number of jobs. Many of them say they would like to become a public service employee, but they don't even know what kind of a job it is." First-year students begin by looking up information about jobs they are familiar with, and then learn more about the wide variety of occupations that exist. In their second year, students choose a workplace after deciding which job they would like to experience out of such general categories as sales and service, food and catering, crafts and manufacture, animal-related, energy, school-related, hospitals and welfare, and public and business offices. After the students finish their work experience, they each write a thank-you letter to the people at the workplace and make a newspaper-style report of their experiences detailing their impressions, what turned out to be really hard for them, and what they found rewarding.

Most students also realize through these experiences about the pride adults take in their work. They learn the difficulties, but also learn the satisfaction that comes with the completion of a job well done and the rewards it can provide. A third-year student who worked at a newspaper company said, "I learned how tiring it can be to work in a company. It was fun though. And I am always told in school to greet people properly and not be late, but I learned from my work experience how important that advice is to follow. I won't have to be told to do such things anymore."

Reflecting on the effectiveness of the job experience program, Usami says, "At first we were concerned about taking this many days out of regular studies for the program, but we found that students learn the value of their education through the job experience program, making school more meaningful for them. It is also important that our school and students have interacted with the local community."



© Komatsugawa Daiichi Junior High School

The job experience program makes students aware of both the realities and joys of work.

Why Career Education Now?

Since the burst of the bubble economy in 1991, Japanese style of management, which had long sustained the Japanese economy, has been critically reexamined, and the seniority-based, lifelong employment system has begun to break down. Attitudes toward work, meanwhile, have also diversified, especially among the young. Younger people are more likely to transfer to a different workplace with better conditions than to remain at a single company for their whole lives. But while employment patterns are diversifying, the practice of regular hiring of new graduates right after graduation is still the mainstream procedure, so it is still difficult to find a job later in life without some sort of advanced or specialized skills.

Amid these changes in the structure of society, NEETs* and temporary workers (freeters**) are increasing. There are an estimated 600,000 NEETs in Japan. Some people end up as freeters, without thinking very hard about it, out of their enjoyment of a carefree, relatively unrestricted lifestyle. Many NEETs are not aware of the many kinds of jobs that exist, or are unable to imagine what these jobs are actually like. People also become NEETs after quitting a job they chose based on vague images they had without careful consideration of their personal aptitudes and hopes.

Career education is receiving increased attention as awareness grows that young people need to understand themselves

and know their own aptitudes, develop the ability to choose their future path on their own, and have a solid and positive attitude toward work.

*NEET is the acronym of "not currently engaged in employment, education, or training." The Japanese government defines NEETs as persons between the ages of 15 and 34 who are not attending school, unmarried, or are not performing a job that earns an income.

**Short for "free arbeiter (from a German word meaning "worker")," freeter refers to those without regular fulltime employment who make their living with a succession of part-time jobs.

Let's Try!

Put in a check mark in the box next to the word that can be used as a Japanese word just as it is when expressed in katakana. Then write the word in katakana.

Example: School Teacher Engineer → エンジニア

- | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Soccer player | <input type="checkbox"/> Car mechanic | <input type="checkbox"/> Car designer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fireman | <input type="checkbox"/> Translator | <input type="checkbox"/> Illustrator |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Counselor | <input type="checkbox"/> Pharmacist | <input type="checkbox"/> Nurse |

Answers can be found at

<http://www.tjf.or.jp/takarabako/bi.htm>