

Recommendation

Toward Gender Equality and Equity in Society and Academia: Challenges for 2030



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Science Council of Japan

This recommendation was formulated primarily by the Gender Equity Subcommittee of the Committee on Scientists of the Science Council of Japan and its Subcommittee on the Sixth Basic Plan for Gender Equality, in joint deliberation with the Comprehensive Gender Subcommittee of Section I, the Gender and Diversity Subcommittee in Life Sciences of Section II, and the Gender and Diversity Subcommittee in Science and Engineering of Section III, and is hereby issued as an official statement of the Science Council of Japan.

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			and Politics, Tokyo Metropolitan University
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HARADA Yoshie	(Associate Member)		Specially appointed Professor, Premium Research Institute for Human Metaverse Medicine (WPI-PRIME), The University of Osaka

Working Group for Sixth Basic Plan for Gender Equality

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	TAKEYAMA Haruko	(Section II Council Member)	Professor, Faculty of Science and Engineering, Waseda University
	HIDA Kyoko	(Section II Council Member)	Professor, Faculty of Dental Medicine, Hokkaido University
	SAKO Kazue	(Section III Council Member)	Professor, Faculty of Science and Engineering, Waseda University

MORI Hatsumi	(Section III Council Member)	Professor, The Institute for Solid State Physics, The University of Tokyo
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NAKANO Hiromi	(Associate Member)	Professor Emeritus, Toyohashi University of Technology
NAGOSHI Sumiko	(Associate Member)	Visiting Professor, Saitama Medical Center, Saitama Medical University
HARADA Yoshie	(Associate Member)	Specially appointed Professor, Premium Research Institute for Human Metaverse Medicine (WPI-PRIME), The University of Osaka
MITSUNARI Miho	(Associate Member)	Professor, Faculty of Law, Otemon Gakuin University, Professor Emeritus, Nara Women's University

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RAITA kyoko	(Associate Member)	Professor, School of Sports Science, Chukyo University

Section III, Subcommittee on Science and Engineering Gender Diversity

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	OBA Michiko	(Section III Council Member)	Professor, Information Engineering Department, Kyoto Tachibana University
	SASAKI Yo	(Section III Council Member)	Professor, Faculty of Science and Engineering, Waseda University

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SUYAMA Shoko	(Associate Member)	Chief investigator, Energy Systems Research and Development Center, Toshiba Energy Systems & Solutions Corporation
SEKINE Chizu	(Associate Member)	CEO, RiseWave Kae LLC
SENJU Tomonobu	(Associate Member)	Professor, Faculty of Engineering, University of the Ryukyus
NOJIRI Mihoko	(Associate Member)	Professor, Institute of Particle and Nuclear Studies, High Energy Accelerator Research Organization
WATANABE Miyoko	(Associate Member)	Managing Director, Nihon University, Representative Director, Specified Nonprofit Corporation Wood Deck

Staff members responsible for preparation of Advisory Report.

Secretariat	GOKE Yasunori	Director, Division for Scientific Affairs I
	KASE Hirokazu	Deputy Director, Division for Scientific Affairs I
	MASUDA Yoshinobu	Unit Chief, Division for Scientific Affairs I
	NAKASHIMA Sayaka	Unit Chief, Division for Scientific Affairs I
	JITSUKAWA Masataka	Unit Chief, Division for Scientific Affairs I

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I Purpose and Background of the Recommendation

The year 2025 marks two significant milestones: the 40th anniversary of Japan's ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1985, and the 30th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995. In Japan, about twenty-five years have elapsed since the enactment of the Basic Act for a Gender-Equal Society in 1999, as well as the establishment of the Gender Equality Bureau within the Cabinet Office.

Despite the implementation of various gender equality policies over this period, Japan continues to rank persistently low in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index. In 2025, Japan ranked 118th out of 148 countries — the lowest among the G7 countries — and 37th out of 38 OECD member states. Since the index was first published in 2006, Japan has remained at an unacceptably low position for almost two decades.

This Recommendation was formulated with the objective of realizing gender equality and equity in Japanese society and academia. By identifying the underlying causes (backgrounds) of this situation and examining countermeasures from an academic perspective.

In 2020, the Science Council of Japan issued the Recommendation entitled *Toward the Realization of Gender Equality in Society and Academia: Challenges Toward 2030*. Taking into account social changes over the last five years, and in light of the formulation of the Sixth Basic Plan for Gender Equality beginning in 2025, there is an urgent need to further accelerate progress toward gender equality through more effective and systematic approaches.

The principle of gender equality — identified by the Basic Act for a Gender-Equal Society identified as “the most important issue” for Japanese society in the 21st century— must be addressed more comprehensively as a matter of both gender equality and equity, and positioned as a cross-cutting priority policy encompassing human rights, family, labor, education, healthcare, and social welfare. Without serious and sustained efforts in this regard, Japan's future society would not be sustainable.

Therefore, it is expected that this Recommendation will be fully considered in the formulation and implementation of all laws and policies in Japan through 2030 as the final year of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

II Main Points of the Recommendation

Recommendation 1: “Gender mainstreaming” should be implemented as a concrete and systematic policy process.

In accordance with the Sixth Basic Plan for Gender Equality, gender mainstreaming should be consistently applied across all phases of policy development, including the formulation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of government policies and programs. The Basic Act for a Gender-Equal Society stipulates the provisions for such an approach in Articles 4, 15, and 18. Moreover, gender mainstreaming was already incorporated into the 2000 plan, which led to the establishment of an expert committee tasked with developing concrete assessment methodologies (namely *the Gender Equality Impact Assessment*). However, in practice, these assessments have not been implemented then, and gender mainstreaming has not been effectively achieved.

The Sixth Basic Plan should accordingly re-incorporate the implementation of Gender Equality Impact Assessments, re-establish a dedicated expert committee on impact assessment, and develop institutional frameworks that enable all ministries, agencies, and local governments to conduct such assessments. Through these measures, gender mainstreaming should be realized as a concrete and operational policy process.

Recommendation 2: Institutional mechanisms should be strengthened to ensure the effectiveness of the Basic Plan for Gender Equality.

Institutional mechanisms intended to ensure the effectiveness of the five successive Basic Plans for Gender Equality have not functioned adequately and should therefore be restored and operationalized. Specifically:

1. Requiring an expert committee under the Council for Gender Equality responsible for “monitoring the status for implementing policy measures” to be re-established, implementation guidelines to be formulated, their execution to be monitored, and public disclosure to be ensured through annual reporting.
2. Requiring the Headquarters for the Promotion of Gender Equality, the Meeting of Gender Equality Officers, and the Gender Equality Promotion Councils within each ministry headed by vice-ministerial-level officials to revive their activities, and to become formally accountable for the effective and timely implementation of the Basic Plan.
3. Systematically assess and evaluate the overall progress of the Basic Plan on an annual basis. For measures with numerical targets, efforts should be made to clearly articulate the relationship between the objectives of those targets and the policy measures and programs designed to achieve them. Where progress is insufficient, analyses should be conducted to identify underlying causes, and the Council for

Gender Equality should be empowered to present its views and recommendations to the relevant ministries and agencies. Adequate and sustainable human and financial resources should be secured to support these functions.

Recommendation 3: Measures to prevent gender-based discrimination and violence should be further strengthened across all stages, including prevention, accountability of perpetrators, and remedies for victims.

Under previous Basic Plans, various policies and legal reforms have been implemented based on the recognition that “violence against women constitutes a serious violation of human rights”, and these efforts have yielded certain results. However, in recent years, cases of sexual abuse involving former executives of major entertainment agencies and other public figures have drawn international criticism. Sexual harassment within public institutions, including the Self-Defense Forces and prosecutorial bodies, as well as within private enterprises, universities, and research institutions—including sexual harassment related to job-seeking activities—has also become a serious social issue. Moreover, measures to address sexual harassment in the National Diet and local assemblies remain insufficient.

It is essential to explicitly recognize that there is discrimination against women and such gender-based discrimination constitute the structural background of violence against women. To strengthen prevention, ensure effective remedies for victims, and hold perpetrators accountable, thoughtful consideration should be given to the enactment of a comprehensive anti-discrimination law that broadly prohibits gender-based discrimination.

Recommendation 4: Gender equality and equity should be systematically realized in human resource development across all fields.

In order to achieve gender equality and equity in society and academia, it is important to systematically implement equality-oriented measures at all stages of future human resource development. It is essential to once again take a direct look at the current state of gender inequality in Japan across the fields of science and engineering, life sciences, the humanities, and the social sciences; to identify the structural and institutional factors that hinder equality; and to vigorously promote effective evidence-based measures.

Specifically, concerted efforts are required to increase the ratio of women’s enrollment in universities and graduate schools; to raise the proportion of female students and faculty members in science, engineering, and life sciences; and to enhance the representation of women in senior positions and decision-making bodies across all fields, including the humanities and the social sciences. Urgent measures should be taken for addressing gender bias; further strengthening implementation of positive action; establishing

harassment-free research environments that support work–life balance; and providing targeted support for women facing difficulties in “highly competitive employment environments with fixed-term” etc., where career advancement depends on the production of research outcomes within limited contract periods.

Recommendation 5: To further advance Japanese academia, gender perspectives should be systematically and proactively integrated into all academic fields, and gender equality and equity in society should be promoted through the advancement of scholarship.

It is essential to ensure diverse gender perspectives in academic research for fostering a fair, inclusive, and prosperous digital society. In addition, it is likewise indispensable to advance sex- and gender-based medicine and of gendered innovation for further development of scholarship. On the other hand, fair and equitable academic development can be expected to contribute to sustained progress in gender equality and equity in society.

To operationalize this internationally recognized approach, gender-related indicators should be systematically incorporated into the evaluation criteria and review processes for various large-scale research projects, Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research, and other public research funding programs.