

PROGRESS TOWARDS DIVERSITY, INCLUSION AND GENDER EQUALITY IN THE JAPANESE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

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1. INTRODUCTION

Japan occupies the 19th position from 163 countries considered in the index rank of the Sustainable Development Goals 2022 (SDGs) and the overall score of 79.58 out of 100 [1]. However, there still areas that need to be improved. The SDG dashboard and trends available with the current performance of each goal by country shows that, from the 17 goals, 14 of the Japanese indexes are still considered as “Challenges remain”, “Significant challenges remain”, and “Major challenges remain”, meaning that there are many aspects needing improvement. Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) topics are mentioned indirectly in various of the SDGs, being Goal 5, 8, and 10 directly correlated to the topic (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls/Promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all/Reduce inequality within and among countries).

Therefore, the measures taken to promote DEI policies will have positive influence in many SDG targets and indicators. According to Iyer [2], institutions can combat inequalities in two ways: (1) monitoring existing policies and procedures to identify and eliminate any bias or discrimination, or/and (2) employ proactive strategies to increase representation, status, and power for disadvantaged groups, so all groups can feel supported and welcomed by the organizations in being their authentic selves. The SDGs are an opportunity to implement both measurements, looking at the current policies and promoting strategies to increase participation of all groups.

This paper has as an objective to observe the changes in policies from companies in Japan in 2016 and 2022, corresponding to before and after the implementation of SDGs. The research looked specifically into the Construction Industry (CI) in comparison with an overall of all industries in a range of 324 Japanese companies (300 General Industries and 24 CI).

For this, we used data from Environment and Human Resources collected by Toyo Keizai Inc. about the number of Females, Males, Foreigners and People with Disabilities (PwDisabilities) in Japanese companies. The data also included the number of Females, Males and Foreigners in Managerial position. We also investigate the LGBT promotion and initiatives and Respect for Human Rights and Prohibition of Discrimination.

2. DATA COLECTION AND ANALYSIS OF CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY EMPLOYEES

The data were gathered by the Toyo Keizai Inc. and represented 1325 companies. After the data cleaning process, the number of companies were reduced to 324 with complete answers of all items. The data was analyzed

by using the average answer of “Construction Industries” (24 companies) and the average of total number of companies for “All Industries”, including the CI (324 companies).

Figure 1 shows the number of Males, Females, Foreigners, and PwDisability in percentage related to the total number of employees in Construction Industry companies and the average of All Industries in this research. The data analyze shows that the majority of the employees of CI from 2016 to 2022 continues to be Males. The number of Females increased in percentage in the same period for both Construction Industries and All Industries average number. For the “All Industries”, it can be noticed that the number of PwDisabilities are higher than Foreigners for both 2016 and 2022.

Figure 2 shows the number of Males, Females and Foreigners in Managerial position in percentage related to the total number of employees in the company (All Industries). There was not data available for People with Disabilities for both periods. The percentage of Females and Foreigners in position of leadership increased after the implementation of SDGs for both cases. The increase in number of Foreigners were promoted lately by the Japanese Government by in policy of attracting Specialized Workers, it could reflect in the incrementation of the number in Managerial position.

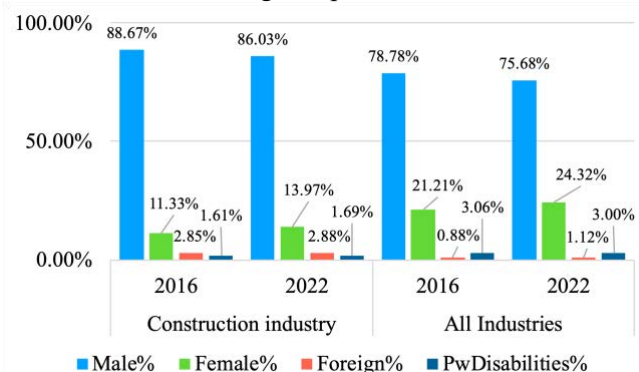


Figure 1 Diversity of employees by year



Figure 2 Diversity of Employees in Managerial Position

Keywords: DEI, People with Disabilities, LGBT, Racial/ethnic minorities groups, Human rights.

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3. CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY AND THE CHALLENGE OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

The CI has for a long time being a very conservative when compared to other Technological and Engineering Industries. It is a point reflected in the high number of Male workers. Japan is a very particular case of society with a very patriarchal root that has to be considered.

When observing Japan, the rating of SDG number 5 - Gender Equality from 2022, for example, presents the same situation of developing countries in Africa and Middle East with “Major challenges remain” as can be seen in Figure 3 showing the countries in red. Also in Japan, topics related to LGBT are not well discussed in the institutions, including the same sex marriage not being recognized in the entire country.

Figures 4 shows the adoption of diversity policies in the Japanese Industries for 2016 and 2022. It can be observed in Figure 4 that All Industries showed that there was a policy for Respect of Human Rights and Prohibition of Discrimination, both in 2016 and 2022. Also, there was an increase in companies that presented “Dep of HR to Promote Diversity”, “Basic Policy for LGBT”, and “LGBT Initiatives”.

The construction Industry (Figure 5) also showed a high number of companies with Respect for Human Rights and Prohibition of Discrimination for both years. The CI also showed progress in the Diversity and LGBT policies and initiatives.

4. CONCLUSION

Japan has many opportunities to increase the performance of SDGs by improving DEI. The organizations can contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development agenda for 2030 and the analyze of the actual situation and strategies employed to improve are a step forward to a better society. The awareness that the SDGs brought to the countries is very important, helping to measure and identify points to grow. There is still a long way to go for Japanese Industries to be more inclusive, diverse, and equal for all members of society, so it is important to address the diversity issue even when it stills represents a tabu in the society.

Data publication with information about DEI in Japanese Construction Industry are not often available in publications so this research aims to arise the discussion for this field. By doing so, organizations can create an inclusive environment where all individuals, irrespective of their groups, feel valued and supported in expressing their true identities without any hesitation.

5. FUTURE WORKS

The current data set present more detailed information about the description of the groups. Specific details about the age of the employees, maternity leave, childcare, remote work, and also other important strategies used to promote inclusion and gender equality can be observed in future analysis to better understand the unique characteristics of Japanese organizations and society.

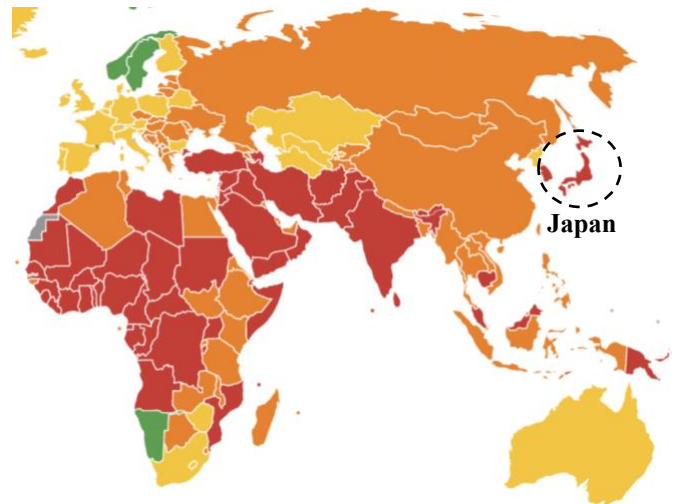


Figure 3 Gender Equality Ratings (5 SDG) by color [1]

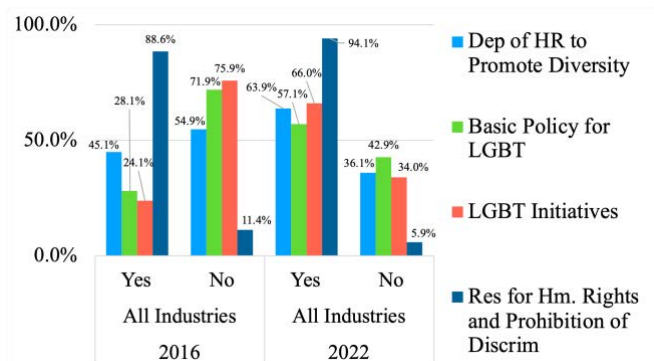


Figure 4 Existence of Diversity Policies for All Industries

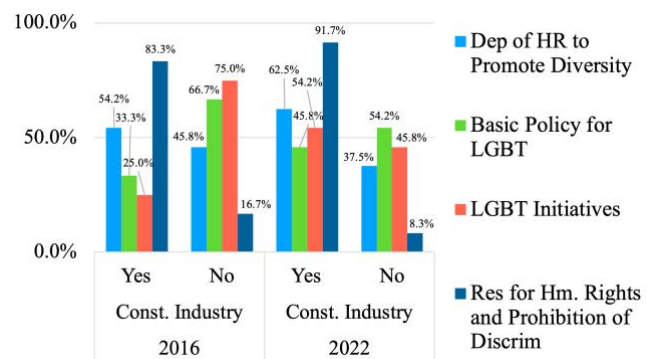


Figure 5 Existence of Diversity Policies for Construction Industry

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