



Role and Perceptions of Immigrants & Foreigners in Japan

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Introduction

We explore Japan's aging population, immigration policy, & how foreigners are perceived in Japanese society

Research Question

What is the role of immigrants in Japan and how are they perceived?

Methods

First, we examine Japan's population demographics and how non-Japanese people are perceived in Japan. Then we examine the reasons behind Japan's decreasing birthrate and its implications. Finally, we examine Japan's history of immigration policy and rejection of outside influence.

Result 1

Japanese society's homogeneity and collectivist culture emphasizes conforming to cultural standards. This can make living in Japan difficult for immigrants because non-Japanese people often feel like perpetual foreigners. However, immigrants have a tremendously important role in Japanese society and Japan must consider easing immigration restrictions to remain competitive in the global economy.

Result 2

Japan has the oldest populations in the world and one of the lowest fertility rates. It has become much harder for young Japanese people to find regular employment, and those who can are often too overworked to have the energy to marry or start a family due to Japan's extremely intense work environment. If Japan doesn't address its population problem, Japan's shrinking workforce will be overwhelmed trying to support its elderly population.

Result 3

Current Japanese immigration policy is rooted in pre-WWII Japanese colonialism and US anti-communist sentiments. Japan's distrust of foreigners and nationalist beliefs are reflected in their politicians immigration policy decisions, despite the fact that it could aid with the aging population and shrinking labor force. Japan has introduced some immigration or asylum policy reform, but it is restrictive and not enough to produce real change in Japan.

Conclusions

The population problem is likely the biggest crisis Japan faces in the 21st century. While there is no simple solution, the Japanese government must address its shifting employment structure, its extreme work culture, and must strive to provide its young people the time, money, and energy to start families. More importantly however, Japan must change its perception of foreigners, and make Japan a place that foreigners want to immigrate to. Increasing immigration would not only directly address Japan's population losses, it would help break down Japan's collectivist work culture that shames employees for taking time for themselves.

References

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