

Before Starting to Job

Hunt in Japan

Many aspects of job hunting in Japan are unfamiliar for international students. It appears that many that are job hunting are at a disadvantage compared to Japanese students.

Before starting to job hunt, make sure you understand the following two points.

POINT 1

Understand Japan's unique job hunting activity

First, start by understanding the aspects of job hunting in Japan and how the process is different from your own country. Although the schedule varies by each company, job hunting activities in Japan usually start with applications, company briefing sessions, written tests, and other activities in March the year before graduation—while still in school. Preparation such as internships, industry research, and self-analysis must be started even earlier (page 6). It makes a difference to understand the job hunting process, how job hunting works early on, and to start necessary preparations.

POINT 2

Gain Japanese skills for business scenes

What companies look for in international students is their "Japanese ability" and "communication skills". Also, Japanese language ability is required in order to explain yourself properly at interviews.

Skills/traits which employers consider to be important when hiring international students

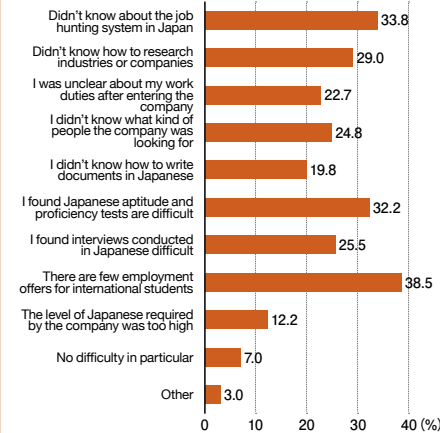
Skill/Trait	Manufacturing industry (%)	Nonmanufacturing industry (%)
Japanese language skills	64.8	75.7
Communication skills	55.2	65.4
Vitality	41.9	33.6
Enthusiasm	28.6	29.0
Specialization	26.7	22.4
English language skills	19.0	11.2
Imagination	14.3	14.0
Leadership	9.5	7.5
University one attended	4.8	3.7
University academic record	1.9	1.9

From *Survey on Career and Retention for International Students* (Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry, 2012)

As you can see from the graph on the next page, international students who have experienced job hunting seem to have been troubled as they say "I didn't understand how job hunting in Japan works" and "I didn't know how to do industry research and company research". They also felt a lack of language ability.

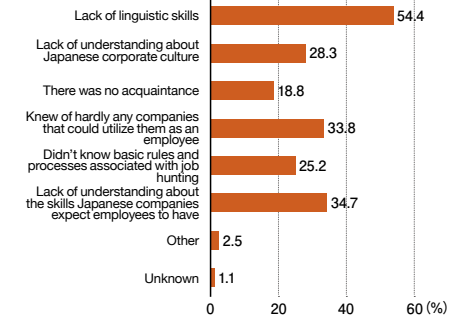
Please use this guidebook to take early action for your job hunting in Japan, and work on gaining Japanese language skills.

Difficulties experienced during job hunting



From *Survey on Career and Retention for International Students* (Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry, 2015)

What international students felt they were lacking while job hunting in Japan



From *Research on Employment Support for International Students by Japanese Universities* (Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare, 2014)

The voice of former international students

The story of experienced job-seekers regarding the challenges and what they should have done when job hunting in Japan.

I regret not being able to do enough company research. Rather than trying to look into as many companies as possible, I felt that I could have worked more efficiently by doing company research and understanding international student employment. Even companies that promote diversity and globalization, you need to investigate deeply which countries they are actually expanding into and whether they are related to your countries of origin. **Mongolia (Female)**

Compared to Japanese students, I received a job offer late. I think it wouldn't have been that late if I had done self-analysis and industry research in my junior year, narrowed down the industry to a certain extent, and participated in internships and briefing sessions. **Vietnamese (Male)**

I had a hard time preparing my resume. I think it's better to prepare early and have your teacher or Japanese friend check it before you submit it. Also, you should practice Japanese pronunciation and interview manners before the interview. **Chinese (Female)**

You will move a lot in job hunting, and need a lot of physical strength. It is very important to take good care of your health. **Vietnamese (Female)**

Most of the questions asked during the interview are almost the same, so I wish I had studied more Japanese so that I could answer the questions properly. **Korean (Female)**

Job Hunting in Japan

For international students who want to find a job in Japan, it is important to know about the recruitment circumstances in Japan in order to succeed in job hunting. Job hunting activities in Japan are very unique and very different from job hunting in your own country. This chapter introduces the features of job hunting activities in Japan and the hiring system in Japan.

Features of Job Hunting in Japan

■ Simultaneous job hunting

Many companies in Japan commence their recruitment activities in accordance with the same schedule. The job hunting schedule led by the Japanese government for the employment of graduates scheduled for 2022 are open to the public and the acceptance of application forms on March 1st, 2021. The selection will start on June 1st.

■ Simultaneous Recruitment of New Graduates

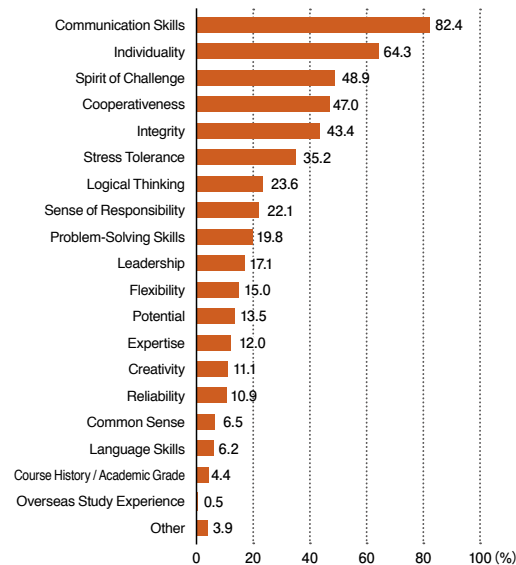
The employment of people who recently graduated from university, graduate school, vocational schools and other such schools, and who are seeking employment for the first time is called “recruitment of new graduates”. Job hunting activities in Japan involve this unique style of recruiting new graduates, and the recruitment method adopted by companies involves the simultaneous recruitment of students who are scheduled to graduate every year, so companies commence their recruitment activities while the students are still studying at school.

■ Joining the Company in April

In Japan, students generally start at university and vocational schools in April and graduate in March. Because of this, students in Japan who graduate in March join a company and begin working from April 1st.

■ Potentiality-Based Recruitment

The potentiality-based recruitment refers to a method of recruitment that evaluates a person’s potential capabilities and future prospects at the point of recruitment instead of skills and know-how that can be used for immediate effectiveness. Japanese companies maintain effective training programs for new recruits joining the company, and they tend to recruit human resources based on predictions of their future potential, as opposed to immediate effectiveness.



From FY2018 Survey Into Graduate Employment
(The Japan Business Federation)

Hiring system in Japan

■ Lifetime Employment System

The lifetime employment system refers to the style in which a person is employed by the same company from graduation until retirement (60 years old, although this differs between companies). Although this is not clearly stated within employment contracts under normal circumstances, it is customarily expected in Japan that new recruits and companies tacitly agree to this.

■ Seniority-Based System

This refers to a system in which employees are assigned positions and pay increases in accordance with the number of years they have worked for the company and their age. The system is based on the prerequisite that employees will accumulate work skills and know-how the longer they work for the company and the older they get, and that these skills and know-how will be reflected back on the company performance in the long run. Recently more and more companies switch to a performance-based system after a certain period of time.

The Changing Style of Employment

The employment system described above is a common practice in Japan, but there is a movement to review the traditional employment system. The impact of COVID-19 has also accelerated it.

Some companies have changed from the conventional "membership-based employment" approach, in which people are assigned to work, to "Job-Based Employment" in which people are assigned to work.

■ Job-Based Employment

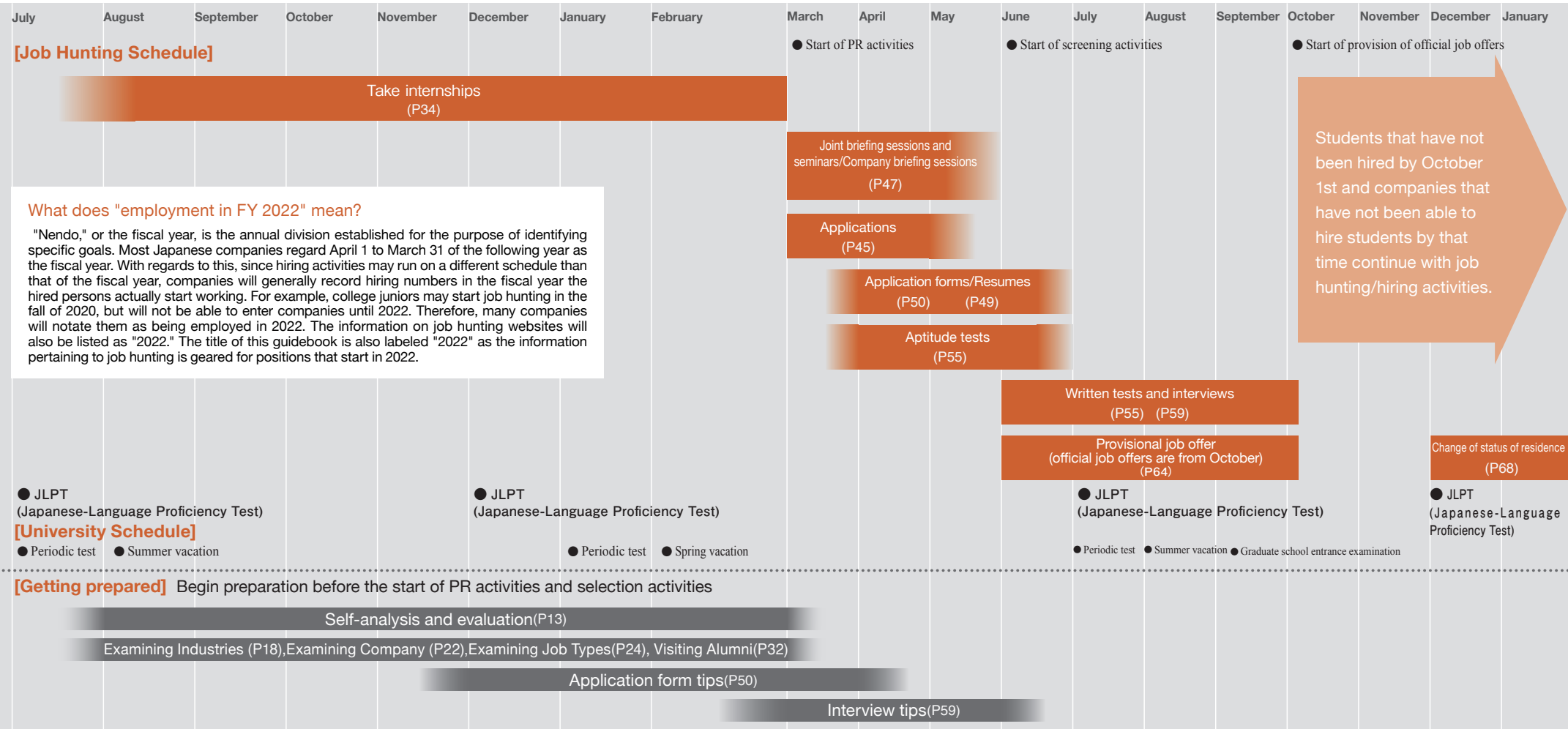
A style of employment that limits duties and place of work, etc. The main feature of this style of employment is that the job description is clearly defined and that capabilities are evaluated in accordance with skill levels as specialists. The continuation of employment and treatment is determined in accordance with job continuity and job performance, and it is the most common style of employment mainly in Western countries. It enables companies to secure capable workers with high levels of expertise. However, because workers are on a contract basis covering a specific area of work, contracts are terminated without the workers being reassigned to other work in the event that the duties they perform are no longer required due to changes in the company’s financial status or policy. This means that workers are at risk of becoming unemployed.

■ Membership-Based Employment

A style of employment that does not limit duties, place of work, or working hours. The main feature of this style of employment is that people are evaluated in accordance with their ability to perform all duties as generalists. This is a style of employment typical in Japan in which companies offer unlimited work in exchange for stable employment and treatment. Companies employ large numbers of graduates simultaneously, provide OJT (On-the-Job Training) and internal training courses to ensure that they have the knowledge and experience necessary to perform their jobs. The main feature of this style of employment is that the jobs and workplaces they are assigned are not predetermined, so they can be relocated to any position at the discretion of the company. Owing to this, there is a possibility that recruits will not be assigned to the job and workplace that they desire. This style of employment means that the jobs offered in employee recruitment information are titled as “general work”.

How to Conduct Job Hunting Activities

Hypothetical Job Hunting Schedule for FY 2022



The keys are when you start and gathering information!

International students tend to start job hunting later than Japanese students. Begin job hunting activities early. This is the key to successfully finding employment in Japan.

First, let's look at what you need to do and when you need to do it.

Students that have not been hired by October 1st and companies that have not been able to hire students by that time continue with job hunting/hiring activities.

■ Employment for September Graduates

On the simultaneous recruitment calendar, September graduates will take their employment tests as new graduates at the same time as students graduating six months later. With many companies, graduating in September and getting a job offer still means that the actual start of employment is in April the following year. With some companies, the start is in October. Make sure to confirm this in advance.

■ Year-Round Recruitment

Most companies recruit new graduates simultaneously to start employment in April, assuming graduation in March for job hunting by new graduates. However, an increasing number of companies, mostly companies based overseas and IT companies, are offering year-round recruitment, hiring throughout the year. The increasing trend is expected to continue.

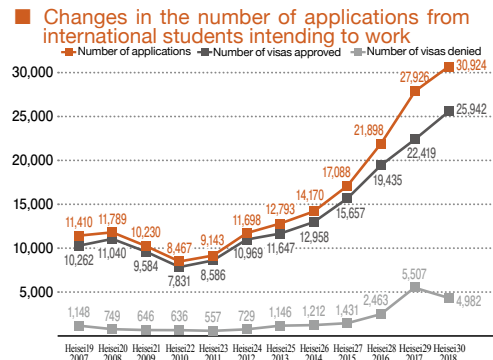
Status of the Employment of International Students

Number of international students intending to work in Japan

As of May 1, Reiwa 1 (2019), the number of international students has grown to 312,214, more than 2 times larger than it was a decade ago (according to the Japan Student Services Organization (JASSO))

At the same time, in Heisei 30 (2018) a total of 30,924 international students applied for a change of status of residence for the purpose of employment at Japanese companies. Of these, 25,942 were approved. Although these numbers are increasing annually, it is not so easy for international students to find employment in Japan.

From *The Employment of International Students by Japanese Companies in 2018* (Immigration Services Agency of Japan)

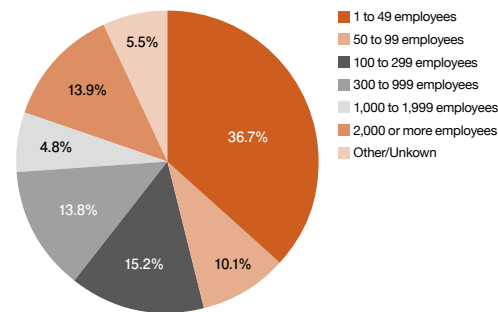


Sizes of companies where international students find employment

Since international students deeply desire to work for a large company, many of them want to enter a famous company. As can be seen according to the data in the graph on the right, approximately 80% find employment at small-to-mid-sized companies which have 999 or less employees and 40% find employment at small-to-mid-sized companies with less than 50 employees. In addition to serving as subcontractors for large companies, many Japanese small-to-mid-sized companies are outstanding, holding world-leading technologies and the highest market shares. Job seekers can expand their employment opportunities by researching what companies do in addition to their sizes.

From *The Employment of International Students by Japanese Companies in 2018* (Immigration Services Agency of Japan)

Percentages of international students engaged in employment by company size



Note: this chart shows the result with the rule to count all of the multiple answers.

Industries and job types at places of employment

Many international students are hired to work in commerce (trading), computer-related service, computer-related service, and restaurant industries, with many of them working in translation/interpretation and sales/marketing.

Industries and job content at places of employment

Industry type	Composition ratio (%)	Industry type	Composition ratio (%)	Industry type	Composition ratio (%)
Computer-related services	8.3	General Machinery	2.8	Translation/Interpretation	23.6
Commerce (trading)	8.2	Electronics	2.7	Sales/Marketing	13.4
Restaurant industry	4.9	Food	2.6	Overseas work	9.0
Hotels and Inns	4.7	Automotive	1.4	Technology development (IT)	6.5
Education	4.2	Chemicals	0.7	Trade work	4.5
Construction	3.1	Fiber	0.6	Planning	4.3
Transportation	2.1	Steel	0.4	Technology development (other than IT)	4.3
Travel industry	1.6	Other manufacturing industries	7.1	Public relations/advertising	3.5
Health care	1.0	Manufacturing subtotal	18.4	Education	3.2
Finance and insurance	0.9			Accounting work	3.0
Other non-manufacturing industries	42.6			Research studies	1.5
Non-manufacturing subtotal	81.6			Management/Administrative work	1.4
				Health care	0.6
				International finance	0.3
				Other	21.1

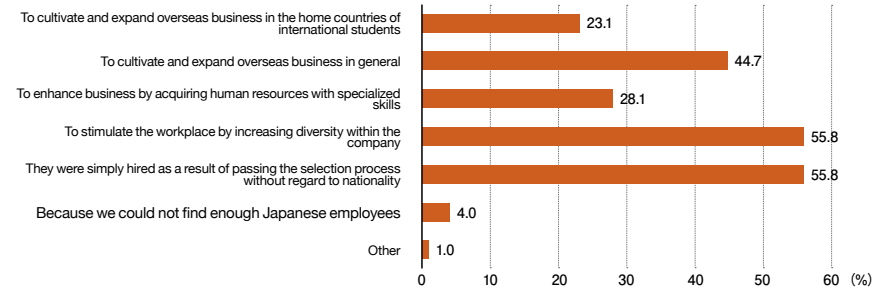
From *The Employment of International Students by Japanese Companies in 2018* (Immigration Services Agency of Japan)

What Japanese Companies Expect

Reasons for hiring international students

The first reason why Japanese companies hire international students is "As a result of conducting hiring activities regardless of applicant's nationality, the international student was hired." This is a sign of the hiring policy, "secure excellent human resources regardless of nationality". The second reason is the concept of diversity. The companies aim to stimulate their organizations by deliberately securing employees with varied backgrounds. The third reason is to hire people who can serve as a bridge between the company and overseas, and develop or expand overseas business.

Reasons for hiring international students

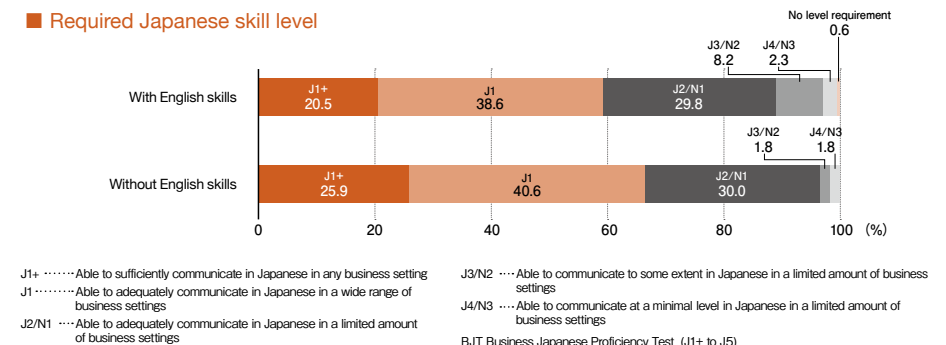


From *Survey on Career and Retention for International Students* (Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry, 2015)

Level of Japanese language skills required for international students

Japanese companies focus mostly on the Japanese skill levels of international students engaged in job hunting activities. These job-seekers must submit application forms and attend interviews since these are required steps of the hiring process. However, since companies consider interviews to be very important, "the ability to understand explanations (listening skills)" and "the ability to communicate about oneself (speaking skills)" are necessary. More than 90% of Japanese companies expect international students without any English skills to be at Japanese Proficiency Level Test N1 or above at time of hiring. Although few in number, there are also some companies that will hire English speaking international students at the N2 level.

Required Japanese skill level



From *Survey on Career and Retention for International Students* (Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry, 2015)

Were you able to grasp the status of the employment of international students and what Japanese companies expect? The three key points for successful job hunting in Japan are as follows.

- 1 Understand Japan's unique job hunting activity
- 2 Act early for job hunting (application and company briefing sessions start in March, the year before graduation, so start self-analysis and company research earlier than that.)
- 3 Acquire Japanese language skills for job hunting activity (See page 37)

Understand

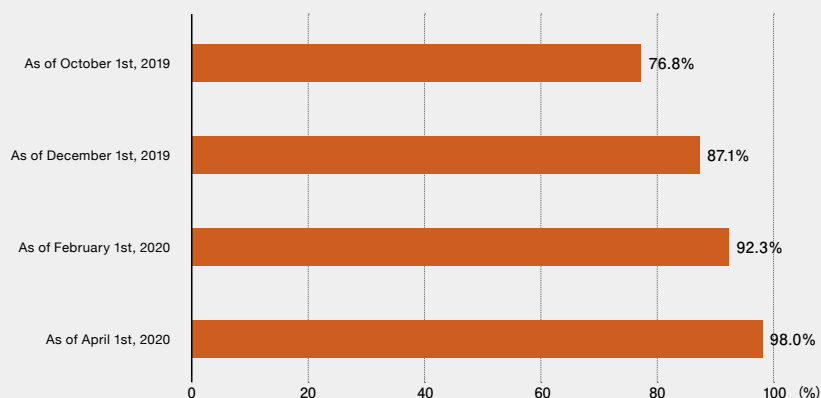
The difference between "New-graduate recruiting" and "Hiring of already-graduated persons"

As described on page 5, there is a trend toward reviewing recruitment activities and employment styles, but many Japanese companies are planning to hire new graduates.

Japanese companies have long had the idea of lifetime employment systems, they expect their employees to work for a long time, and when hiring new graduates they are expected to grow after joining the company.

For this reason, companies employing in Japan value new graduates for the fact that they are entering the company immediately after graduation, and the prevailing way of hiring is the simultaneous recruitment of new graduates. Being a new graduate is considered an advantage for the students, as well. This is because the number of companies and positions that accept applications from already-graduated persons is drastically less, so you have to find a job in the same positions for mid-career recruitment which requires immediate business performance.

Status of the Employment of Graduates in March 2020 (for Undergraduate Students)



From *Employment Survey of University Graduates* (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2020)

As of April 1st, 98.0% of university students who graduated in the previous March received a job offer, and the employment rate among new graduates gradually increases at a high level.

COLUMN 1

Online Job Hunting

Due to COVID-19, more companies are conducting company briefing sessions, internship and interviews online for New-graduate recruiting for 2021, and this will continue to be mainstream.

Benefits

- You can participate without restriction of location such as home or school. Therefore, there is no need to go to the company and there are no transportation costs. You can use your time efficiently.
- In the case of company briefings and internships, you can use chat and other means to ask questions easily.
- For interviews, being able to do so in a familiar environment, such as your own room, may help reduce psychological stress.

Disadvantages

- The audio and text information may not be transmitted accurately because you will be using a computer or smartphone to view the content, and the quality depends on the internet connection, the specifications of the device, the size of the screen, etc. If you are in an environment where you can use a computer, use a computer. When you use a smartphone, fix the screen so that it doesn't shake and adjust the screen to the height of your eyes.
- Since you won't physically visit the company, you are not able to feel the real atmosphere of the company, the employees, and other students in the session. Also, you are not able to see the office itself.

Notes :

- It is important to participate on time. Importantly, it is necessary to confirm whether the device you use can access the company system correctly, so please allow enough time to complete access before the event.
- As a basic rule, you should turn on the camera so that the company can see your face. The impression of your face and clothes will change depending on the time of the day and your surroundings, so consider the overhead lighting and natural light, and adjust it so that it reflects on the screen with natural brightness. Wearing the same clothes as you wear at the briefing session, internship and interview at the company is recommended. Wearing only the upper half of your business attire may affect your attitude. Also, make sure that the background in your surroundings looks good, and that anything unnecessary is not shown. You can set up a virtual background, but if you move, you may have problems such as being cut off from the screen.