



REPORT OF THE
2021 US-Japan Women Leaders Dialogue


SEEKING THE “NEXT NORMAL”

CREATING A POST-PANDEMIC
WORLD WHERE WOMEN
(AND MEN) CAN THRIVE



JAPAN CENTER FOR
INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE
(JCIE/JAPAN)

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March–April 2021

Prepared by
Kim Gould Ashizawa

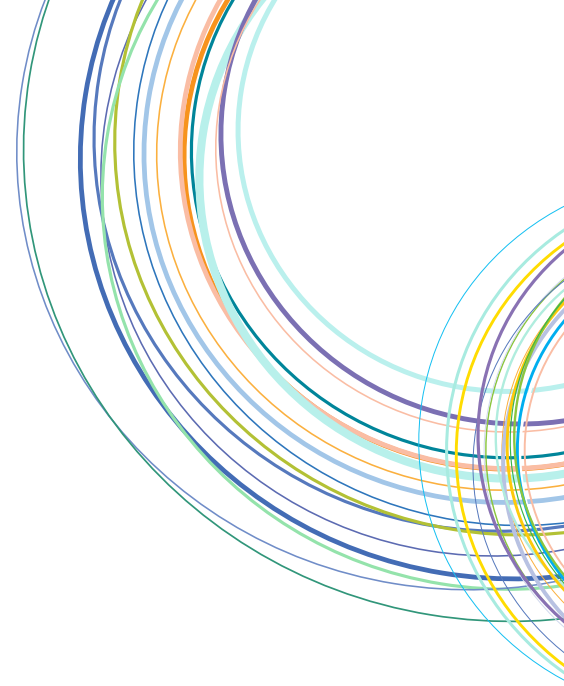
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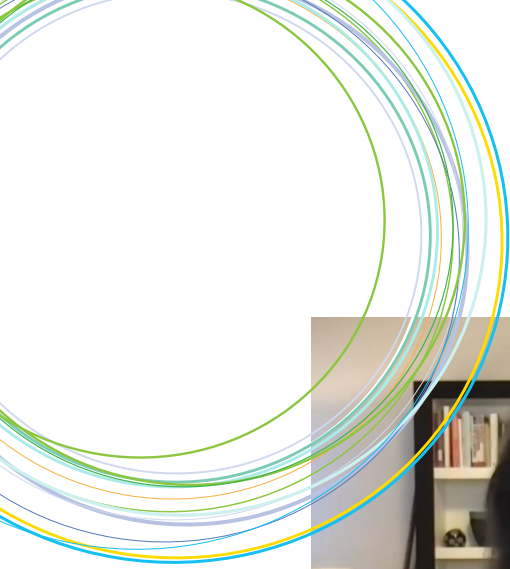
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Co-chair: Hon. Diana DeGette



Co-chair: Hon. Seiko Noda



Acknowledgments

The 2021 US-Japan Women Leaders Dialogue was held over the course of three virtual sessions—evening sessions for those in the United States, and morning for those in Japan—that brought together a diverse group of more than 40 women from the two countries, including politicians and government officials, business leaders, journalists, policy experts and academics, and nonprofit leaders.

The program built on discussions that took place as part of a 2017 project, when the Japan Center for International Exchange (JCIE) brought a delegation of Diet members to the United States comprised solely of female legislators. The delegation held talks with a wide range of policymakers, policy specialists, and business leaders in Washington DC and New York. That trip culminated in a weekend retreat at Pocantico with American women leaders from various sectors, which explored the challenges facing US-Japan relations and the shared obstacles women have overcome to achieve success.

While the COVID-19 pandemic precluded holding another in-person exchange, the importance of the issues compelled us to find a way to carry on that discussion. Fortunately, we were able to secure the enthusiastic support of Representative Seiko Noda (executive acting secretary-general of the Liberal Democratic Party), who had headed the previous delegation, and Representative Diana DeGette, a senior member of the House of Representatives who has strong ties to Japan and had previously participated in JCIE parliamentary exchange delegations to Japan. These two inspirational women served as co-chairs of this virtual dialogue, and we would like to express our sincere gratitude for their time and efforts to ensure that the sessions were a great success. In the case of Rep. DeGette, we must add our deep admiration and appreciation for her unwavering commitment to this dialogue despite the fact that the planning stages overlapped with the traumatic events of January 6 on Capitol Hill and her subsequent involvement as a House manager for the impeachment hearings.

We would also like to thank all of the women leaders from the United States and Japan who took part. Their willingness to share their unique experiences and rich insights led to incredibly frank and fascinating discussions. In particular, we are grateful to our four resource speakers who kicked off our sessions with thought-provoking presentations: Sachiko Habu (Nikkei xwoman), Sheryl WuDunn (Pulitzer-prize winning author), Yoko Takeda (Mitsubishi Research Institute), and Deborah Walsh (Center for American Women and Politics).

2 Seeking the “Next Normal”

Our sincere thanks go to the Henry Luce Foundation and the MRA Foundation, whose support made this program possible, and particularly to Helena Kolenda and Yuting Li for their continued encouragement and to Tazuko Shibusawa. The views expressed in this report are solely those of the authors and are not intended to reflect the stances of our funders. In addition, we must thank Hannah Katz and Kazuko Shoji in our co-chairs’ offices for their assistance and patience as we organized the sessions and recruited participants. We also thank our fantastic simultaneous interpreters, Terumi Gale and Manabu Yoshinaga, and our technical assistant, Takaaki Ando, who helped us navigate the world of online bilingual dialogues. And last but not least, we are also grateful to Hifumi Tajima, Kim Gould Ashizawa, and Stephen McHugh for their tireless work to ensure the success of the meeting.

We hope that the networks built during this project will form the basis for ongoing dialogue and cooperation, and that the recommendations that emerged will have a positive impact on our respective countries and on US-Japan relations moving forward.

Peggy Blumenthal
Chair, JCIE/USA

Hideko Katsumata
Executive Director and Chief Operating Officer,
JCIE/Japan

REPORT OF THE 2021 US-Japan Women Leaders Dialogue

Overview

The US-Japan Women Leaders Dialogue met virtually in March–April 2021. The dialogue was intended to build on an in-person visit to the US by women Diet members in 2017, which led to the creation of a Diet caucus to support young mothers and fathers in the legislature as well as the launch of a foreign policy study group for women Diet members. The 2017 visit also brought the Japanese group together with over a dozen American women leaders in the private sector for a weekend dialogue at the Pocantico Conference Center of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, where they shared common concerns and challenges. Much has changed since that earlier dialogue. The #MeToo movement gained momentum in late 2017, shortly after the previous exchange, and the United States saw a boom in the number of American women running for office in 2018 and 2020. As a result, the US now has the largest number of women ever serving in the US Congress, and the swearing in of Vice President Kamala Harris in January 2021 as the first woman ever to hold that post has further strengthened women’s political leadership. Japan, meanwhile, has also made it a priority in recent years for women to gain more equal footing in both business and politics, with record numbers of women now in the workforce. However, still too few are in C-suites or serving as elected officials. Both countries also remain low on the Inter-Parliamentary Union’s ranking of women in national parliaments, with the US ranked 67th and Japan coming in at 165th.¹

Another drastic change was the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, which profoundly disrupted the lives and livelihoods of people around the globe. By the start of our 2021 virtual meetings, more than half a million American lives had been lost—a tragic figure that was much higher than the roughly 10,000 COVID-related deaths in Japan, although the latter was seeing a spike in cases in some locations during the period of this dialogue. In both countries, the pandemic has had a particularly outsized impact on women’s lives and livelihoods. And while we were starting to see encouraging signs of economic recovery, it was still unclear how quickly women would feel those benefits.

These issues weighed heavily on the minds of the women who joined in the three discussions—more than 40 women in all, including 11 national legislators as well as leaders from

government, business, media, philanthropy, academia, and think tanks. The sessions were chaired by two esteemed legislators, Rep. Diana DeGette and Rep. Seiko Noda, who brought to the table their extensive experience and insight, as well as their strong commitment to US-Japan relations and to empowering other women leaders. Experts were invited to start each session with presentations designed to offer background information and spark conversation. This was followed by a lively roundtable-style discussion, co-moderated by Hideko Katsumata, executive director and COO of JCIE/Japan, and Peggy Blumenthal, chair of JCIE/USA. Following Chatham House rules, the comments made were not for attribution, and thus while the conclusions drawn in this report reflect many of the ideas, themes, and tenor of the discussions, they are solely the responsibility of the author.

1. As of April 1, 2021. <https://data.ipu.org/women-ranking?month=4&year=2021>.

Recommendations

1. Creating the “next normal”

Assess and adopt best practices from during the pandemic

Many practices adopted over the past year by necessity should be intentionally maintained after the pandemic as the new normal. Telework, for example, is now a “known entity” and allows greater job flexibility, encourages deurbanization, and decreases commuting-related carbon emissions; telemedicine (for both physical and mental health) offers greater accessibility for those with limited time and mobility; and restrictions on after-hours business can benefit working parents—both men and women—greatly. At the same time, we must build on measures begun during the pandemic to address systemic inequities affecting vulnerable groups, particularly women and children, to ensure they are not left behind in this digitalized era.

Offer affordable, high-quality childcare and eldercare for all

Women’s talents will never be fully utilized in the workforce unless childcare and eldercare services are affordable and accessible for all, and not left to wives to juggle along with their careers. The success of our economies is also dependent on the success of our families and our communities, and thus it is important that caregivers be paid a wage that reflects their valuable role in that context.

Make paid family leave available to all men and women

Promote both the normative and regulatory changes that will allow people in all sectors and all stages of their careers to take advantage of family leave, and that will ensure that men as well as women make full use of that leave. In this process, the expectation that men will take paternity leave should be both modeled and verbalized by

company leaders, and mandated paternity leave should be considered.

Shift away from the current reliance on nonregular/contracted employment practices that undermine women’s financial security

The business sector in both countries has relied heavily on nonregular/contracted employment as a way to reduce payroll and benefits, which led to greater vulnerability for women during the pandemic. Policies are needed that provide greater job and financial security, particularly in Japan, where such insecurity contributes to women’s reluctance to have children. Companies that have a heavily male regular workforce and a heavily female nonregular workforce could face penalties, for example, as a way to promote greater gender equity.

Retrain women, particularly in IT and other areas that provide greater income and job stability

Women can and should benefit from the digital transformation, so further efforts to promote women in STEM are needed in both countries. Cybersecurity is an area where Japan needs more human resources in particular, so offering training in that field to women could yield positive results both for trainees and for Japan as a whole. In the United States as well, making technical training in key sectors accessible to more women will address labor shortages and boost women’s job opportunities.

Encourage greater job flexibility and mobility in Japan

While the nonprofit and academic sectors allow greater job mobility, the corporate sector in Japan still has limited mid-career opportunities for those who wish to change companies or on-ramp back into the workforce after taking time

off for children or other family obligations. Options such as flex time, job sharing, and other innovations should be offered in ways that do not put women at a disadvantage in terms of compensation and career opportunities. While American women enjoy greater job flexibility than their Japanese counterparts, greater efforts to facilitate successful on-ramping are still needed in the United States as well.

Bring men into the discussion of how to change workstyles

Having spent more time at home during the pandemic, how do men now want to allocate their time in their family? New norms are needed surrounding the expectations of male roles in childrearing and housework, and men must be in that conversation in order for change to occur. Political leaders and public figures—particularly, but certainly not only, in Japan—could lead by example and make public statements to promote the dialogue and explore options.

2. Promoting women’s political participation and policy impact

Promote and expand initiatives to inspire young women to learn about and engage in politics

Representation and role models are critical to instill the idea that politics is indeed a place for women. Programs for high school and college women that convey the power and influence that politics can have and that introduce them to real policymakers at the national and local levels can play a vital role in inspiring tomorrow’s political leaders.

Expand programs that support and recruit women candidates

Understanding the nitty-gritty of how to run a campaign is a daunting challenge for most potential candidates, so nonprofit initiatives that provide training and support, as well as fundraising assistance, have proven to be a significant factor

in increasing women’s participation in politics. Party leaders as well as other women politicians should play a role in actively recruiting and supporting talented women.

Reevaluate how politics is conducted

For many women, politics today is not viewed in a positive light for a variety of reasons. As is the case with the business sector, the way that politics is conducted—e.g., campaigning and fundraising, the scheduling of hearings and votes, the way deals are struck, the way policymakers interact with one another, etc.—should be reexamined in the context of creating an environment that attracts more diverse and capable voices. Women in particular must view politics as an effective avenue to address important social issues if they are going to enter the political arena.

Recruit more cabinet members in Japan from outside of government

While some progress has been made in the United States, the Japanese cabinet is still predominantly male, with only roughly 10 percent of ministerial positions filled by women. To encourage greater gender parity in cabinets without taking away those important and still-scarce voices of women in the Diet, future administrations should look to the business, academic, and nonprofit sectors to fill cabinet posts.

3. US-Japan collaboration for the post-pandemic world

Support US-Japan collaboration to shore up the rules-based international order

Between the America First policies of the previous administration, the rise of China, and the impact of the pandemic, many international norms and institutions have come under tremendous strain in recent years. The United States and Japan should work together to strengthen and rebuild trust in global institutions in order to defend our shared values of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. In particular, as

digitization has become key to the success of work in both societies, US-Japan leadership on establishing international norms for cybersecurity should be a high priority.

Engage women not just in soft power conversations, but also in bilateral discussions on national and international security issues

Women have a place in making sure that we are more secure both domestically and on the global stage as well. Whether in a governmental or nongovernmental context, organizers of discussions on security issues should be conscious of greater gender parity and avoid convening “manels” (panels comprised only of men) to ensure that a fuller spectrum of values and perspectives are reflected in critical decisions.

Put women on the agenda of the next US-Japan Summit

The agreements put forth by Prime Minister Suga and President Biden at their April meeting, while undeniably important measures, failed to address key issues related to women in our two countries and around the world. An agenda that specifically addresses gender equity, women’s health (including mental health), and

other essential challenges should be proposed prior to the next bilateral summit.

Facilitate US-Japan collaboration to promote and invest in women in STEM and femtech

Both the United States and Japan have been funding a range of programs to promote women in STEM, but women still face obstacles in these fields whether in academia, business, or policy institutions. The two countries should jointly explore best practices and invest in joint research projects and start-ups that are led by women.

Provide opportunities for ongoing dialogues among women leaders

Given that no one country or sector has the answer to all of the issues facing US and Japanese society, ongoing dialogues such as these meetings offer a unique opportunity to compare notes, gain new insights, and develop better policies. It also provides a chance for women to encourage their counterparts to take a stand on some of the key inequities outlined in this report. Participants welcomed the discussions and called for further meetings—hopefully in person, once the pandemic subsides.

The Dialogue

Session Topics and Speakers

Session 1: March 23, 2021

The Domestic Impact of the COVID-19 Crisis on Women and Shared Lessons for Building Greater Resiliency

Sachiko Habu, *Founding Editor-in-Chief, Nikkei xwoman; Editor-in-Chief, ecomom*
Sheryl WuDunn, *Co-founder, FullSky Partners; Author; former journalist, New York Times; Pulitzer Prize winner for journalism*

Session 2: April 13, 2021

Beyond the Pandemic—Envisioning the “Next Normal” for Women in the United States, Japan, and the World

Yoko Takeda, *Chief Economist and General Manager of the Research Center for Policy and Economy at Mitsubishi Research Institute*

Session 3: April 27, 2021

Amplifying Women’s Voices in Policymaking in the United States and Japan and in US-Japan Cooperation

Deborah Walsh, *Director, Center for American Women and Politics, Rutgers University*

The Pandemic’s Impact on Women

Unlike past economic downturns, where financial markets collapsed and manufacturing slowed, the COVID-19 lockdowns led to a sudden loss of jobs in areas of the service sector that are heavily populated with women, leading to what is sometimes referred to as a “she-cession.” In the United States, the leisure and hospitality, education and healthcare, and retail sectors—all hit hard in the pandemic—account for nearly half of all jobs held by women, compared to just 28 percent of men’s jobs. As a result, an estimated 11.5 million American women left the workforce in the early months of the pandemic.² Working-class women’s employment was hit particularly hard, as they experienced a 15-percent drop from March to

April 2020. And even as job numbers started to pick up in early 2021, the April workforce participation rates for women remained 1.7 percent lower than pre-pandemic levels, and more than 4 percent lower than the high point reached 20 years ago.

Among those whose jobs did allow them to work from home, the stresses of life-work balance took on a whole new meaning for those working mothers whose work lives and home lives collided as schools and daycare facilities closed. Despite the gradual advances that women have achieved in the workplace, particularly in terms of gaining C-suite positions, trying to balance career and caregiving—never an easy task under the best of circumstances—proved particularly difficult during the pandemic, and a 2020 survey

2. Rakesh Kochhar, “Hispanic Women, Immigrants, Young Adults, Those with Less Education Hit Hardest by COVID-19 Job Losses,” Pew Research Center website, June 9, 2020, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/06/09/hispanic-women-immigrants-young-adults-those-with-less-education-hit-hardest-by-covid-19-job-losses/>.

found that 23 percent of American mothers with children under the age of 10 were now thinking of leaving the workplace altogether. This raised concerns that some of the hard-won gains of recent decades were being lost.³

In Japan as well, the pandemic has forced many women out of the workforce, although the numbers are harder to pin down due to the high ratio of women who are part-time or contract-based/freelance employees, known as “nonregular employees” in Japan. Indeed, with the exception of women 25–34 years of age, well over half of all women fall into that category, leaving them with few prospects for managerial or executive positions, lower wages, and a lack of job stability even under the best of circumstances. In fact, the Japanese government’s labor statistics show that 83 percent of nonregular women workers earn ¥1.9 million or less annu-

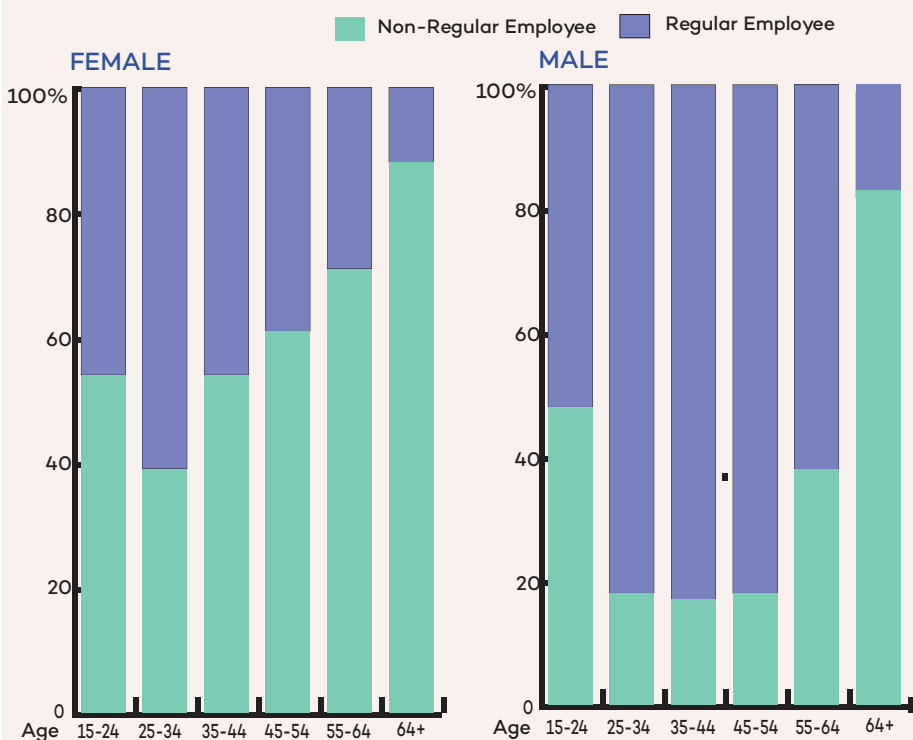
ally (roughly \$17,000).⁴ This is similar to trends in the United States where the Bureau of Labor Statistics reports the median weekly earnings of women working part-time to be just \$314, which would come to an annual income of roughly \$16,300. During the pandemic, these women were exceptionally vulnerable to dismissals and at a greater risk of falling into poverty.

Not surprisingly, then, mental health among women and children is an area of shared concern in the two countries. In Japan, there has been a 22 percent increase in suicide rates during the pandemic, but among women, the rate has risen 83 percent. Some of the increased stress on women in Japan is due to unemployment and isolation, and some has been attributed to the longstanding imbalance in the roles of women and men within households—an imbalance that has become even more apparent

during the pandemic, as will be discussed below. In the United States as well, social isolation, drug addiction, and other mental health issues are taking a heavy toll.

Both governments have been seeking ways to lessen the toll of the pandemic. Under the new Biden administration, Congress passed a bill that provided not only funding for COVID vaccinations, testing, and mitigation efforts, but also emergency paid leave during the pandemic, enhanced child tax credits to target child poverty, block grants for childcare providers, money to help schools reopen safely, the extension of health-care programs for lower-income women, and other measures. Similarly, Japan’s policies have included measures to help small businesses and provide relief for part-time workers, women,

Employment pattern in Japan by gender and age group (2019)



Note: Non-regular here includes self-employed and family workers, who do not have access to the same benefits as regular company employees. “Regular employee” excludes executives in companies/corporations. Source: Statistics Bureau, Japan Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications.

3. Justine Jablonska, ed., “Seven Charts that Show COVID-19’s Impact on Women’s Employment,” McKinsey & Company website, March 8, 2021, <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/seven-charts-that-show-covid-19s-impact-on-womens-employment.those-with-less-education-hit-hardest-by-covid-19-job-losses/>.

4. Shuto, Wakana, “The Failed Promise of Workplace Equality in Japan: A View from the Trenches,” <https://www.nippon.com/en/in-depth/d00653/>.

single parents, and those struggling with anxiety and loneliness. Japan has been more reluctant to impose strict lockdowns during the pandemic, trying to strike the right balance between public health and economic recovery. Nonetheless, the participants expressed concern that the career and socioeconomic trajectories for women in both countries have suffered a substantial setback that will take years to overcome.

Inequities and Weaknesses Laid Bare

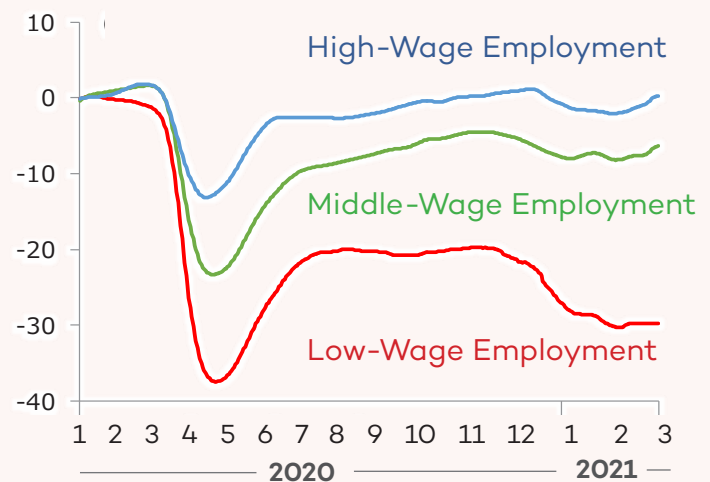
The issues shared by women in the United States and Japan in many instances reflect inequities that have long been present in our societies but were intensified and brought into stark relief by the COVID-19 pandemic. As noted above, the differences between “regular” and “nonregular” employment have played a substantial role in depressing women’s earnings over the years in both countries. On the one hand, freelance and part-time employment can offer much-needed flexibility for working mothers, but it generally denies them both career opportunities and job stability, and it impacts their ability to accumulate wealth over their lifetimes. During the pandemic, the inequities between the “regular” and “nonregular” categories became even more problematic. Women who are part-time employees, self-employed, or gig workers often have limited access to healthcare in the United States, and in both countries, they have limited access to paid sick leave and family leave. This means that a single mother working part-time in a restaurant or grocery store must choose between staying home when they or their child falls ill or getting paid.

For children forced to learn remotely and working mothers who suddenly needed to tele-

work, gaps also arose between those who had or did not have access to broadband internet and the necessary computer equipment and skills. Those in many rural areas, those with lower income levels, and those unfamiliar with IT found themselves facing not just the pandemic, but the added burden of accessing the technology they needed to participate in work and school. In the United States, these issues were compounded by underlying racial inequities.

In both countries, the ability of workers to take advantage of IT to continue working from home during the pandemic was directly cor-

Change in number of US employees by income group
(% change compared to Jan 2020)



Note: This index is calculated daily by Harvard University’s research institute “Opportunity Insights” based on the data from payroll companies. The latest data available are March 12, 2021.

Source: Opportunity Insight, Economic Tracker, as shared in a presentation by Yuko Takeda, Mitsubishi Research Institute (MRI).

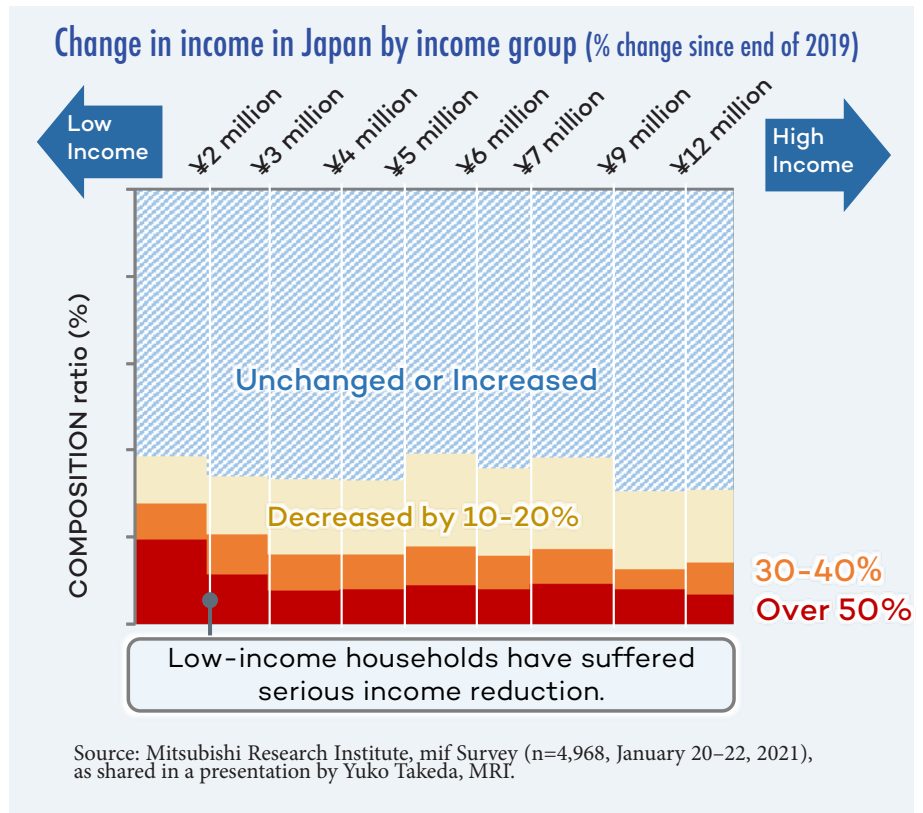
related to income levels, and that has exacerbated the growing wealth gap in the two countries. In Japan, more than half of those making ¥10 million or higher (approx. \$90,000) were working from home, while only 20 percent of those making less than ¥5 million were able to do so.⁵ And in both countries, the overall impact of the pandemic in terms of lost wages and income was also most severe for those with the lowest wages.

5. From a presentation by Sachiko Habu (Nikkei xwoman).

Perhaps even more significantly, there was an apparent disconnect between the stock markets, which—with the exception of a short downturn—were booming throughout much of the pandemic, and the financial hardships experienced by large numbers of citizens and businesses. In short, there has been increasing polarization in both countries as the wealthy have fared much better than others in terms of job retention and wealth accumulation.

The full implications of the gender imbalance in providing care to children and older family members was also laid bare during the pandemic, as access to support systems like daycare, nursery schools, and, in the US case, babysitters and nannies suddenly disappeared. This imbalance was evident in both countries but was even more pronounced in Japan, where men still leave most of the household and child-care work to women, whether their spouse is working full-time or not. It was reported that mothers in Japan were seven times as likely as fathers to have taken time off to care for children during the pandemic,⁶ and similarly in the United States, employers report that even when men are eligible for paid family leave, they are reluctant to take advantage of that policy, leaving the responsibility for childcare and elder care to their spouse. One participant noted that her male employees—unlike their female counterparts—felt the need to justify their requests when asking for time off to take care of their children, as if it were an unusual request.

Weaknesses in the educational systems also became clear during the pandemic, and participants from both countries expressed concern about how that had impacted children. As noted, not all children had equal access to the



technology needed to attend school remotely, but the challenges of remote learning went well beyond that. Not all schools and not all teachers were equipped to make the shift to online teaching, so the quality of education offered and the ability of students to adapt to this new mode of learning varied greatly. Furthermore, not all students had a safe, quiet space at home where they could study. Although the final numbers are not yet known, in 2020, McKinsey & Co. predicted that 1 million US high school students would drop out if remote learning continued through the 2020–2021 school-year,⁷ and both countries saw students dropping out of or delaying college due to financial concerns. Participants feared that this would have long-term implications for the future of our countries’ economic prowess and innovation.

The pandemic has also affected the physical and mental health of women and children in both countries—an ongoing and inadequately addressed issue even under normal circum-

6. “Review of Gender Roles in Japan Family Life Needed Amid Virus Crisis,” *Mainichi*, August 17, 2020, <https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20200817/p2a/00m/0na/009000c>.

7. Emma Dorn, Bryan Hancock, Jimmy Sarakatsannis, and Ellen Viruleg, “COVID-19 and Student Learning in the United States: The Hurt Could Last a Lifetime,” McKinsey & Co. website, <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-and-social-sector/our-insights/covid-19-and-student-learning-in-the-united-states-the-hurt-could-last-a-lifetime#>.

stances. In the United States, it has been pointed out that while reports of child abuse have actually decreased during the pandemic, experts believe those statistics are masking a darker reality. With students not in school on a regular basis, the teachers and school officials who are often the ones to identify problems, have been unable to see and report suspected abuse. Participants discussed the need to address the increase in depression and suicide among women and children. In Japan in particular, it was noted that greater understanding is needed of depression among adolescents. And here again, the pandemic's impact on limiting access to mental health services exacerbated underlying weaknesses in terms of access, affordability, and stigma that long predated the pandemic. These are issues that will have a long-term impact on those affected. The one positive note on this front was that the pandemic has led to increased acceptance—including by health insurers—of telemedicine, which can be particularly helpful for behavioral health.

The topic of “period poverty” was also raised—an issue that has been receiving increased attention in both countries in recent years, as many women struggle to afford the menstrual products and medicines they need, and some are forced to miss work or school if the symptoms are not properly addressed with their physicians. Currently, NGOs, schools, and other public facilities are taking the lead in providing assistance to those in need, but during the pandemic, that access has been limited, and policymakers have raised this as an issue that needs to be addressed.

Women policymakers and leaders have been discussing many of these inequities for decades, but the pandemic has given them greater saliency, making it a good time to push for change.

Reimagining the Next Normal

As this group of women leaders explored the impact of the pandemic and the underlying

cracks in our societal foundations that have been exposed as a result, it was clear to all that “getting back to normal” was not an option. There was a call to “reimagine the next normal” instead. They agreed on the need to focus on the growing awareness and positive transformations that have occurred during the pandemic and envision the type of future that we want—one that is more equitable and healthier for all.

One of the frequently discussed topics, both for its pros and cons, was telework. One participant noted that she tried decades ago to convince her company—a leader in global technology—to introduce telework without any success. But overnight, the pandemic forced organizations across the spectrum to change their policies. Although the ability to work remotely has varied greatly by sector and by status within companies, with white-collar workers more likely to have that option than blue-collar workers, by and large the impact has been positive, and participants called for its expansion. With many schools closed, the ability to juggle childcare and online meetings was certainly challenging for working parents, but on the positive side, the lack of commuting time freed up extra hours in the day. And many urban areas saw an outmigration of residents to the suburbs or even to rural areas as a result—something that could potentially bode well for Japan, if younger residents can take advantage of telework to make a U-turn to their rural hometowns, which have suffered from depopulation in recent decades.

In Japan, telework had two rather unexpected consequences for the country's “workstyle.” First, it was noted that the traditional emphasis on teamwork has given way to more attention on individual work in the remote working environment, with employers now having more opportunities to engage with and evaluate each employee individually. That has brought into sharper focus the strong individual contributions of women, which were often overlooked in the past.

It has also curtailed after-hour drinking among colleagues—a practice that puts working mothers

at a disadvantage since they are often left out of the critical decision-making and consensus-building that takes place outside the office. When they do join in, such alcohol-fueled events are also occasions where women tend to be subjected to sexual harassment, and so Japanese women politicians were delighted to have an excuse not to hold such meetings.

Referring to a global-headline-making comment from former Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori, who claimed that women talk too much at meetings (an idea that has been statistically disproven in study after study⁸), one participant noted that when women do speak up at meetings, it is often a result of this practice of backroom consensus-building. Since women are often not part of the consensus, they ask more questions and press for actual discussions of the topic at hand rather than just rubber-stamping what their male counterparts have already agreed on. While those men who thought a matter was already settled may find the process of being forced to discuss it frustrating, it is certainly a healthier approach to policymaking.

On the negative side, however, telework can also create greater stress and “Zoom fatigue,” and while many people express that they have been busier and more productive than ever, some corporate leaders and policymakers feel that they have lost the synergy that comes from being in the same office day-to-day. Whether or not employees—and particularly women—will welcome the idea of putting on real work clothes and resuming sometimes-long commutes to an office every day remains to be seen.

Some companies have taken advantage of the pandemic to reexamine their core corporate values and implement more humanistic approaches that emphasize work-life balance. One executive noted that her company realized that their women employees were not only focusing on their jobs but were also serving as “teachers, short-order cooks, and moms” throughout the day—even more so than usual. They have found that small measures like banning weekend

emails and Friday meetings helped employees cope with these multiple demands. However, that takes not only good policies but also a top-down commitment and corporate culture that supports those policies if women are actually going to use them. And the question for those in the private sector is how to take the best of what has been done during the pandemic and carry that forward to reset the norms.

Paid family leave and paid sick leave were also seen as critical areas where the United States in particular needs to improve. There is currently no federal law mandating paid leave, which means that a mother working part-time at a restaurant, for example, is less likely to stay home when she or a family member is sick. Here again, the gap between part-time and full-time workers is striking, as a survey by the Kaiser Family Foundation found that while 68 percent of full-time workers were covered by their company’s paid sick leave policy (over 90 percent if the company had 200+ employees), only 26 percent of part-time workers enjoyed such benefits (56 percent in large companies). Even worse, only 25 percent of companies offered paid parental leave to their employees.⁹ While some US states and cities have mandated paid leave, many have not. And women freelancers or those in the gig economy have no access to such benefits.

Japan’s laws are much more progressive in this area. Fathers and mothers can take up to one year of partially paid leave to care for a new child. If childcare is not available, they can apply for an additional year. Changes in early 2021 provided even greater flexibility for employees, including some part-time employees, to take time off to care for a child after the parental leave is done. And the most recent legislation, passed shortly after this dialogue was held, allows men to take four weeks of paid leave (at 80 percent of their pay) following a child’s birth, which can be divided up over a period of eight weeks.¹⁰ However, the number of men who actually take advantage of family leave after the

8. Adam Grant, “Who Won’t Shut Up In Meetings? Men Say It’s Women. It’s Not,” *Washington Post*, February 18, 2021, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2021/02/18/men-interrupt-women-tokyo-olympics/>.

9. “Paid Family Leave and Sick Days in the U.S.,” KFF website, <https://www.kff.org/womens-health-policy/fact-sheet/paid-family-leave-and-sick-days-in-the-u-s/>.

birth of a child remains incredibly low—similar to the case in the United States. And one participant raised the concern that the fact that women do take advantage of this extended leave after childbirth raises the expectation that they will remain at the center of childcare in their family afterward and increases the likelihood that they will fall permanently off the management track at work.

The corporate practice of transferring employees every few years to new locations domestically or abroad, and essentially kicking people off the career track if they refuse, also needs to be reexamined in light of the increasing number of women in the workforce. Since women still earn less than their spouses on average, they are usually the ones who forego such promotions, which in turn limits their ability to rise in the managerial ranks. And the limited job mobility in Japan makes it harder to find new positions at equivalent levels if they want to change companies.

These trends and policies help explain why Japan ranked 117th in the World Economic Forum's gender gap report this year in terms of Economic Participation and Opportunity, despite 72 percent of women now engaging in the labor force—a higher rate than the United States. Greater job mobility and better on-ramps for women returning to the workplace are needed if Japan is to reap the full benefit of its female workforce—a workforce that is highly educated and severely underutilized.

It has often been suggested that the large number of women in the workforce is the primary cause of the low birthrate in Japan, which is a serious concern as the country faces a greying population and a shrinking number of working-age people who can support them. But the participants shot that idea down, pointing to surveys that show Japanese women's hesitancy to start or expand families is based on their lack of financial independence and stability. Indeed, one corporate participant shared her own experience, explaining that her life and career deci-

sions were guided not by some great ambition, but rather by a pragmatism born from having seen her mother widowed at a young age and at a loss for how to make a living.

Japanese policymakers shared that they are now debating the creation of a new Children's Agency to consolidate policies on children and families that are currently handled across multiple ministries. The goal of the proposed agency is to allow Japan to create a clearer strategic vision for policy related to children and more effectively address the declining birth rate in the country. It was noted that in both Japan and the United States, "women and children" are often lumped together in discussions, but that reinforces the idea that children are raised only by women and that all issues related to women are somehow related to their roles as mothers. In the United States, policymakers noted that they are trying to broaden the definition by talking about "family policies," for example pushing for "family leave" that allows both fathers and mothers to get paid leave to care for children or other family members.

All of these issues come down to one key question: How can we create policies that encourage our families to thrive, our businesses to thrive, and our economies and societies to thrive? How can workplace policies support employees to not only excel in their work, but to thrive as members of their families and communities as well?

To start, as one participant stressed, we must rethink the dominance of the traditional male role and its ability to define women's roles in both Japan and the United States. That traditional gender role is the underlying assumption that enables a corporate culture of transferring people around at will, encourages an unequal division of caregiving and housekeeping roles, and even defines the concept of a political career. How can that be challenged and adjusted? We should examine whether the experience of the pandemic has shown men what they are missing in terms of being present for their families in the

10. "Japan Enacts Law Making Paternity Leave More Flexible for Men," *Japan Times*, June 3, 2021, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2021/06/03/national/social-issues/japan-law-paternity-leave-flexible-men/>.

home. Do they want a different role? Can they be persuaded or even mandated to contribute more at home?

One politician shared that when she ran for office, her husband had to step up and play a bigger role in their daughters’ lives for the first time, helping them with homework and even learning how to braid their hair (although she wryly remarked that he never did learn to cook). That experience allowed him to develop a much closer relationship with his children—one that persists even now that their daughters are grown. She suggested, only half-jokingly, that if more women run for office, more men will be forced to step up at home.

Politics for Women by Women

A common theme echoed by participants from both Japan and the United States throughout the dialogue was the need to have more women in policymaking positions in order to produce policies that are more empathetic and that address the critical issues affecting women and families as we look to create the new post-pandemic normal.

The discussions during the final session of the dialogue focused specifically on the progress made and the obstacles still confronting women in politics. That session took place the night before Biden’s first address to Congress, where Vice President Kamala Harris and Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi stood on the podium behind him—the first time those chairs were both filled by women in the history of the United States. Although there has still been no woman president, six women ran in the 2020 election for the post. Women now hold a record number of seats in Congress and in state-level elected offices (governorships being the one exception), and there are more diverse women serving than ever before. This progress offered encouragement to women in Japan as well, and one participant noted how pleased she was to hear the current government referred to as the “Biden-Harris administration.” And yet, despite

these encouraging signs, the numbers of American women in politics are still relatively low



Vice President Kamala Harris and Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi on the podium for President Biden’s first address to Congress, April 28, 2021. | Photo credit: White House

compared to much of the world. Progress has been slow, and women do not hold more than a third of offices at any level, meaning that we are still far from political parity.

Similarly, former Prime Minister Abe’s policy goal of helping women in Japan “shine” has had some impact, albeit quite limited. One positive sign is that the three people now in charge of the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics are all women—including Seiko Hashimoto, who replaced Mori following his misogynistic gaffe. One of her first moves was to announce that a dozen new female directors would be added to the committee’s board, raising the ratio of women to over 40 percent. It was pointed out that despite these positive steps, women are still underrepresented in the Japanese cabinet. One suggestion was that Japan should more actively recruit women from areas other than politics in order to encourage greater gender parity, something we have seen recently in the United States with the selection of ten female cabinet members, only two of whom were sitting members of Congress. There have also been calls to implement a quota system for parliamentary candidates in Japan, with the current target being set at 35 percent by 2025.

The progress in the United States has been facilitated by a number of nongovernmental organizations and academic institutes. The Center for American Women in Politics (CAWP) at Rutgers University, for example, which was created in the early 1970s to study women in politics, offers a number of initiatives to support American women interested in running for office. The center provides training programs such as Ready to Run, which encourages women to throw their hat in the ring, and a New Leadership program that targets college women. Other organizations, such as Emily's List, help women candidates fundraise and offer resources that help them understand the basics, like how to hire a campaign manager, how to run a campaign, and so on. In Japan, Rep. Noda has started a political incubator to encourage more women to run for office, but more organizations such as these are needed.



Civic group members submit a petition that calls for more female parliamentary representation to ruling party lawmaker Seiko Noda (center) in Tokyo in October 2020. | Photo credit: KYODO

When women do run in the United States, they win at about the same rate as men, but the challenge is to get more women to run. Studies have found that men and women often run for different reasons. It has been said that “women run to do something; men run to be somebody.” In other words, women are more likely to see politics as a means to getting things done on issues of importance to them, while their male counterparts tend to view politics as a career

choice. For example, one participant shared that she ran for office because she was passionate about education, and after working at the state level, she realized that many decisions were being made because of federal laws. When asked to run for a seat in the US Congress, she said yes.

Her story highlights the important role that recruitment plays in convincing women to take the next step and run for office. One study of American state representatives, for example, found that only 26 percent of women representatives came up with the idea of running on their own as opposed to having been encouraged by others to run, compared to 43 percent of their male counterparts.¹¹

The Japanese Diet members at the dialogue represented a range of career paths, including the daughters of politicians, as well as women who were previously nurses, diplomats, city council members, and so on. In contrast to the United States, they noted, women are often discouraged from focusing too much on specific policies when campaigning. Nonetheless, in recent years, women politicians in both countries have been increasingly drawing on their own private experiences and struggles, believing that they can win by being their authentic selves and being more relatable to the public.

As the participants discussed the hurdles to increased political participation for women, they agreed that time is still a major obstacle. Many women in both countries do not consider it an option until after their children are grown because they remain the primary caregiver, and the majority are also working, which means that running for office—particularly for local office, which is generally unpaid or minimally paid work—becomes a third job for them. During the pandemic in particular, this has presented a major hurdle and has impacted women’s willingness to run for office at a time when we most need women’s voices in politics.

So how can women be encouraged to take on that burden? Recruitment of women is particularly important in the United States, as is assistance in fundraising. Women are able to raise as

11. Susan J. Carroll, “Women in Government: Still Too Few,” in Council of State Governments, *The Book of the States*, vol. 48, <https://cawp.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/resources/stilltoofew-carroll.pdf>.

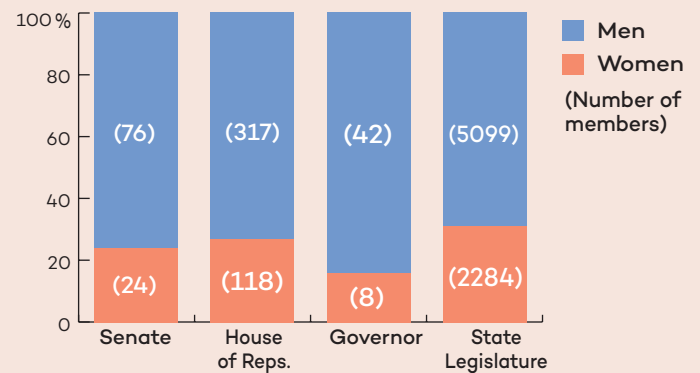
much money for campaigns as their male counterparts, but it often takes twice as much work, so organizations such as Emily’s List, which is a PAC for pro-choice women, has been a game-changer for Democratic women.

In Japan, as in the United States, women who are born into a political family might have greater interest in and opportunity to enter politics, but ordinary women face difficulties as politics is still viewed as a male domain and there are no readily available support mechanisms. Those Japanese lawmakers who have studied or spent time in the United States point to that experience as being an important factor in inspiring them to run for office. Seeing examples of strong women leaders made them realize, “I can do that too.” As is often said, representation is critical in encouraging women to aspire to leadership roles.

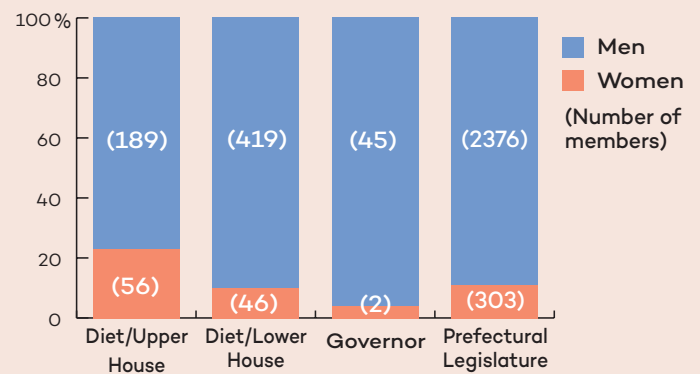
In that respect, women empowering women was a common theme across sectors. CAWP received a generous initial grant in the 1970s from the Ford Foundation thanks in large part to a female program officer (who later became the foundation’s president) who believed in the importance of their work. In the business field as well, it was noted that the presence of women in venture capital, while still rare, is critical for encouraging women entrepreneurs. A Harvard study, for example, found that only 11 percent of investing partners at venture capital firms were women, which goes far in explaining why only around 13 percent of venture capital funding goes to startups whose founders include a woman.¹² Similarly, in the political realm, as one participant noted, “sisterhood” is critical in order to overcome the current male-dominated environment in the Diet and allow women’s voices to be better represented.

But another important element, harkening back to the question posed earlier, is to rethink the way in which politics is done to make sure that policies reflect women’s voices, but also that men and women politicians can thrive. If women view the government as too polarized, gridlocked,

US elected officials by gender (as of June 2021)



Japanese elected officials by gender (as of June 2021)



corrupt, or simply ineffective, then they will not run. How can the basic systems of politics—from campaigning and fundraising to the scheduling of hearings and votes—be reimagined to ensure that qualified people view politics as an effective avenue to achieve their goals?

Global Policy and US-Japan Cooperation

Turning to the global perspective once again, participants also considered what the “next normal” should look like in terms of global and US-Japan relations, stressing the need for policies to promote resilient and sustainable societies.

The pandemic added fuel to the fire of rising populism and nationalism in many countries and has been a destabilizing force at both

12. “Venture Capital and Entrepreneurship,” Women and Public Policy Institute, Harvard Kennedy School website, <https://wapp.hks.harvard.edu/venture-capital-and-entrepreneurship>.

the national and international levels. The deep divisions already apparent in US society led to a politicization of the pandemic response to such an extent that even mask-wearing became a political act in some parts of the country, and the heated rhetoric of the presidential elections boiled over into an unprecedented attack on Congress itself on January 6, 2021. Indeed, the first session of this dialogue had to be postponed at the last minute due to a sudden change in the Congressional schedule in response to reports that a second attack on the Capitol might occur. These fissures within American society and the perception that democratic norms have been undermined in recent years has weakened America's ability to lead globally on critical issues such as human rights and climate change, and thus the reestablishment of US credibility will be a major task facing the Biden administration in the coming years.

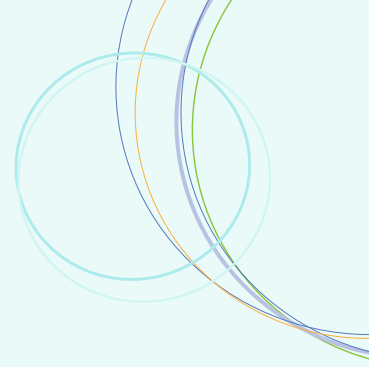
Meanwhile, the Suga administration's approach to the pandemic, which at first appeared successful, was starting to be called into question by the time these meetings were held. As noted above, the government was trying to manage the delicate balancing act between economic health and public health, but rising COVID cases were creating clear strains. Within the Japanese public, there is a perception that political leadership is lacking to cope with the problem, as the government's emphasis on "self-help, mutual help, and public help" seems to imply that people should take care of themselves. There is also increasing frustration with the lack of long-term vision to manage the society in the post-pandemic era, and with the government's push to hold the Olympics despite new surges in cases and a slow roll-out of vaccines. The administration's ability to resolve these concerns will undoubtedly have an impact on the election scheduled for later in 2021 and on its policy agenda in the interim.

In addition to domestic challenges, the pandemic has hampered diplomatic efforts, and there were calls for greater US-Japan collaboration to shore up the international rules-based

order, counter China's growing global influence, and promote multilayered cooperation on critical issues such as climate change and human rights. In particular, as Japan pushes for greater digitalization, cooperation with the United States on international norms and rules in that sphere will be critical to its success.

Participants noted approvingly that the first overseas visit by the new US Secretary of State Antony Blinken was to Japan, and that on April 9—just days before the second session of the dialogue—Prime Minister Suga became the first head of state to visit President Joe Biden in Washington DC. These meetings served to highlight the importance of the bilateral relationship. As Biden and Suga sat down at the table with their respective teams, however, observers quickly pointed out that while the US team did include three high-ranking women, including the US Trade Representative and the Treasury Secretary, the Japanese team was all male. Perhaps not surprisingly, then, the plans they announced for US-Japan partnership did not include a single policy regarding women. Participants agreed that at the next bilateral summit, there should be a concerted effort to reflect women's voices and include issues related to women.

Given that no one country or sector has the answers to all of the issues facing US and Japanese society, international dialogues that bring together a wide range of experiences and viewpoints offer a unique opportunity to compare notes, gain new insights, and develop better policies. But it is equally important to ensure that women's voices and perspectives be heard in those venues, and that women also have an opportunity to engage with, learn from, and provide mutual encouragement to their female counterparts overseas, who clearly share many of the same concerns and priorities both on domestic and global issues. At the enthusiastic urging of the participants, JCIE hopes to continue these discussions, whether in person or virtually, in the years to come.



Participants

UNITED STATES

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Susan Berresford, Former President, Ford Foundation

***Peggy Blumenthal**, Chair, JCIE/USA; Senior Counselor to the President, Institute of International Education (IIE)

Suzanne Bonamici, Member, House of Representatives (D-OR)

Kara Carscaden, Vice President, Global Public Affairs, The Estee Lauder Companies

Claire Chino, President & CEO, ITOCHU International Inc.

Barbara Dyer, Senior Lecturer, MIT Sloan School of Management; Executive Director, Good Companies, Good Jobs Initiative, MIT Institute for Work and Employment Research

Chrissy Houlahan, Member, House of Representatives (D-PA)

Kazuyo Kato, Executive Director, JCIE/USA

Helena Kolenda, Program Director for Asia, Henry Luce Foundation

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Sheryl WuDunn, Co-founder, FullSky Partners; Author; Pulitzer Prize winner for journalism

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Akiko Okamoto, Member, House of Representatives (CDP)

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Keiko Tashiro, Vice President, Daiwa Securities Group Inc.

Yukako Uchinaga, Board Chair, J-Win (Japan Women's Innovative Network)

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Stephen McHugh, Assistant Program Officer, JCIE/USA

Hifumi Tajima, Chief Program Officer, JCIE/Japan

US Participants

Diana DEGETTE [CO-CHAIR]

Member, House of Representatives (D-CO)



Rep. Diana DeGette is now serving her 13th term representing Colorado’s 1st Congressional District. DeGette recently served as one of nine impeachment managers who presented the House of Representatives case in the Senate trial against President Trump in January 2021. She is recognized as a leading voice in the United States’ ongoing healthcare debate and as the chair of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce’s Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee, which is responsible for overseeing some of the most important federal agencies, including the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). In addition to chairing the Energy and Commerce Oversight panel, DeGette also serves as a member of the House Natural Resources Committee, where she’s working to enact policies that will further protect Colorado’s public lands and combat climate change.

Susan BERRESFORD

Former President, Ford Foundation



Susan Berresford began working at the Ford Foundation in 1970 and rose through the ranks to become president of the foundation in 1996. During her tenure, which lasted through 2007, she helped guide the foundation’s efforts to end discrimination, increase minority voter registration, and build a civil rights network in the United States; oversaw the creation of a national loan program that has helped tens of thousands of minority and low-income Americans; and was a key voice in the fight against gender bias. Since November 2008, she has worked as a philanthropy consultant out of the offices of The New York Community Trust. She also serves on the boards of JCIE/USA, the US Fund for UNICEF, United States Artists, the Trinidad Trust Foundation (California), the California Endowment, and the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation. She is a member of the Council on Foundations, the Trilateral Commission, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the European Foundation Center’s Governing Council.

Peggy BLUMENTHAL

Chair, JCIE/USA; Senior Counselor to the President, Institute of International Education (IIE)



Peggy Blumenthal has been with the Institute of International Education (IIE) for 30 years, serving as IIE’s Chief Operating Officer from 2005 and transitioning to the role of Senior Counselor to IIE President in 2011. Her responsibilities at IIE have included supervision of its international offices, research, and educational services. Before joining IIE, Ms. Blumenthal served as Assistant Director of Stanford University’s Overseas Studies and as Coordinator of Graduate Services/Fellowships for the University of Hawaii’s Center for Asian and Pacific Studies. Her earlier work focused on the development of US-China exchanges as a staff member of the National Committee on US-China Relations and the Asia Society’s China Council. She has written extensively on international education and academic mobility. Ms. Blumenthal holds a BA from Harvard University in Modern Chinese History and an MA in American Studies from the University of Hawaii at Manoa. She is Chair of the Board of JCIE/USA and serves on the Boards of the Hong Kong–America Center and the Global Engineering Education Exchange.

Suzanne BONAMICI*Member, House of Representatives (D-OR)*

Congresswoman Suzanne Bonamici has represented the 1st Congressional District of Oregon since February 2012. In Congress, she is a leader on the Education and Labor Committee and Chair of the Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Human Services. She is dedicated to setting national policies that give students the support and opportunities they need to succeed in school and in life. Suzanne serves on the Select Committee on the Climate Crisis, fighting for comprehensive policies that mitigate the effects of climate change, strengthen the economy, and protect the planet. She also serves as a member of the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, and previously served as the top Democratic member on the Subcommittee on the Environment. A lawyer by trade, Rep. Bonamici was an attorney at the Federal Trade Commission in Washington DC, where she was in the Credit Practices Division of the Bureau of Consumer Protection. She then practiced law in Portland, where she represented individuals and small businesses.

Kara CARSCADEN*Vice President, Global Public Affairs, The Estee Lauder Companies*

Kara joined the Estee Lauder Companies nearly four years ago in Global Public Affairs. Originally focused on building the public affairs program in the Asia Pacific region, she is now the interim lead for the global team and oversees the Americas region, including Canada, Latin America, and United States. Prior to joining ELC, Kara was a Senior Consultant in Public Affairs with Ogilvy in Beijing, where she provided effective analysis, practical counsel, and engagement recommendations to global companies facing increased scrutiny from government entities and media within the market. Her political and government experience includes serving as Deputy National Press Secretary for President Barack Obama's 2012 re-election campaign, where she managed direct-to-voter content, pushback efforts, and was an on-the-record spokesperson. On Capitol Hill, Kara was Rapid Response Manager for US Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid and implemented caucus-wide pushback efforts during major legislative initiatives, including health care reform and Supreme Court confirmation hearings. She also served as Deputy Press Secretary for Senator Barbara Mikulski of Maryland.

Mitsuru Claire CHINO*President and CEO, ITOCHU International Inc.; Managing Executive Officer, ITOCHU Corporation*

In 2018, Mitsuru Claire Chino was appointed President and CEO of ITOCHU International Inc., based in New York. She previously served as Executive Vice President and Chief Administrative Officer of ITOCHU International, and before that, as the General Counsel of ITOCHU Corporation, a Fortune Global 300 company headquartered in Japan. In 2013, she became the first female executive officer of any major trading company in Japan. Prior to joining Itochu, she was a partner of an international law firm. Claire has received several recognitions, including from the World Economic Forum (Young Global Leader), Yale University (Yale World Fellow) and Asia Society (Asia 21). She is a graduate of Smith College (BA cum laude) and recipient of the Smith College Medal (2021) and Cornell Law School (JD), where she serves on the advisory board.

Barbara DYER

Senior Lecturer, MIT Sloan School of Management; Executive Director, Good Companies, Good Jobs Initiative



Barbara Dyer is a Senior Lecturer at the MIT Sloan School of Management and Executive Director of the Good Companies, Good Jobs Initiative at MIT’s Institute for Work and Employment Research (IWER), which seeks to make work work for everyone in the 21st century. Prior to joining the MIT faculty, Dyer was president and CEO of The Hitachi Foundation. Under her leadership, the foundation was an influential force in bringing focus to the role of business in society. Dyer’s extensive career in public policy included serving as special assistant to the Secretary of the US Department of the Interior; director of policy studies with the Council of Governors’ Policy Advisors; and founding director of the National Academy of Public Administration’s Alliance for Redesigning Government. She also cofounded and was the first chair of the National Fund for Workforce Solutions. She is a graduate of Clark University and the John F. Kennedy School of Government’s Program for Senior Executives in State and Local Government.

Chrissy HOULAHAN

Member, House of Representatives (D-PA)



US Representative Chrissy Houlahan is an Air Force veteran, engineer, entrepreneur, and educator who is currently serving as the first woman to represent Pennsylvania’s 6th District in Congress. Prior to her election in 2018, Rep. Houlahan helped lead several thriving Southeastern Pennsylvania companies including AND1, a basketball apparel company headquartered in Paoli, and B Lab, the organization that launched the B Corporation movement. She went on to serve in Teach for America as a high school chemistry teacher in North Philadelphia and then led and scaled a nonprofit focused on addressing the early childhood literacy gap. She is the daughter and granddaughter of Holocaust survivors who came to America with nothing. She grew up in a military family and earned her engineering degree from Stanford with an ROTC scholarship that launched her service in the US Air Force and Air Force Reserves, later earning her MS in Technology and Policy from MIT.

Kazuyo KATO

Executive Director, JCIE/USA



Kazuyo joined JCIE/USA as Executive Director in April 2021, after spending nearly two decades at nonprofit organizations dedicated to US-Japan relations and international affairs in both the United States and Japan. Prior to JCIE/USA, she was Senior Director of Global Partnerships and Initiatives at Japan Society in New York. Before joining Japan Society in February 2020, Kazuyo worked for over five years at Sasakawa Peace Foundation USA in Washington DC, and prior to that was responsible for exchange programs and research projects at Sasakawa Peace Foundation in Tokyo (2010–2014) and the International Security Program of the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington (2003–2007) and worked in consulting businesses including Armitage International and Arthur Andersen (later KMPG) in Tokyo. Kazuyo graduated from Stanford University with a BA in International Relations and an MA in International Policy Studies. She has a Certificate in Non-Profit Management from Duke University’s Continuing Studies Program and is a Cohort V member of the Maureen and Mike Mansfield Foundation US-Japan Network for the Future program.

Helena KOLENDA*Program Director for Asia, Henry Luce Foundation*

Helena Kolenda joined the Henry Luce Foundation's Asia Program in 1998, serving as program officer prior to her appointment as Program Director in 2008. Ms. Kolenda holds a BA in Chinese Language and Literature from the University of California, Berkeley (1980) and a JD from the University of Texas School of Law (1989). Between 1981 and 1996, she spent a decade in China, working first as an English teacher with Volunteers in Asia and later as an attorney with the law firm Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison. She is board chair of the Harvard-Yenching Institute and a member of Phi Beta Kappa and the National Committee on United States-China Relations.

Sachiko KUNO*Co-Founder & Managing Member, S&R Technology Holdings, LLCd; Co-Founder, President & CEO, S&R Foundation*

Sachiko Kuno earned her PhD in biochemical engineering from Kyoto University and conducted post-doctoral research at the Technical University of Munich, Germany. In the mid-1980s, Sachiko joined Dr. Ryuji Ueno in establishing R-Tech Ueno Ltd. in Japan and launched Rescula® eye drops in 1994, to treat glaucoma. She moved to the US and co-founded Sucampo Group serving there until 2012. At Sucampo, they launched AMITIZA® to treat irritable bowel syndrome. As a social entrepreneur, Sachiko co-founded S&R Foundation in Washington DC in 2000. In April 2020, she became Executive Vice President for International Liaison and Funding at Kyoto University.

Yuting LI*Program Associate, Henry Luce Foundation*

Yuting was born and raised in China and holds a BA in International Studies and a MA in Comparative Politics from Peking University. In 2016 she received her PhD in Political Science from the University of Washington, Seattle. Her academic focus is the study of political economy and social welfare, especially public housing in China. Prior to joining the Foundation in 2017, Yuting devoted herself to women in philanthropy and early childhood education.

Julie MAKINEN*Executive Editor, The Desert Sun; 2016 JCIE US-Japan Journalism Fellow*

Julie Makinen is executive editor of The Desert Sun and State Editor – California for the USA Today Network, overseeing 11 newsrooms in the Western United States. Before joining The Desert Sun, she was a reporter, editor, and foreign correspondent for publications including the Washington Post, the Los Angeles Times, and the International New York Times. She has served as a journalism trainer with the Institute for War and Peace Reporting in Afghanistan and on the board of the Foreign Correspondents Club of China. She was a JSK Journalism Fellow at Stanford 2016–2017, traveled to Japan on a JCIE US-Japan Journalism Fellowship in 2016, and later was on staff at the Stanford Graduate School of Business' Center for Entrepreneurial Studies. She is the incoming treasurer of the California News Publishers Association.

June McIVOR

President & CEO, Tolosa Winery



June McIvor has led the team at Tolosa winery since 2015, first as General Manager and now as President & CEO. In that time, she has overseen the comprehensive refresh and elevation of Tolosa, including an across-the-board overhaul of Tolosa’s approach to direct-to-consumer sales. Committed to raising the profile of the San Luis Obispo Coast wine country in general and the Edna Valley AVA in particular, June recently concluded a three-year term as president of the San Luis Obispo Coast Wine Collective. She has been very active in the San Luis Obispo community, serving in leadership positions on many nonprofit boards, including as Board President of the San

Luis Obispo Symphony, Regional Commissioner of the American Youth Soccer Organization, Board Chair of Leadership San Luis Obispo, and a Board member of the French Hospital Medical Center Foundation. An attorney, June was a partner in the San Luis Obispo law firm of Sinsheimer Juhnke McIvor & Stroh (now McCormick & Barstow) and was previously associated with the global law firm of Gibson Dunn & Crutcher. June has also held executive positions in the sport of soccer, including with World Cup USA 1994, Major League Soccer, and the 1999 and 2003 Women’s World Cups.

Sheila SMITH

Senior Fellow for Japan Studies, Council on Foreign Relations



Sheila A. Smith, an expert on Japanese politics and foreign policy, is Senior Fellow for Japan Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR). She is the author of *Intimate Rivals: Japanese Domestic Politics and a Rising China* (2015), *Japan’s New Politics and the US-Japan Alliance* (2014), and most recently, *Japan Rearmed: The Politics of Military Power* (2019). She is also the author of the CFR interactive guide *Constitutional Change in Japan* and a frequent contributor to major media outlets in the United States and Asia. Smith joined CFR in 2007, having previously worked at the East-West Center, where she directed a multinational research study on the

domestic politics of the US military presence in Japan, South Korea, and the Philippines. Smith is Chair of the Japan-US Friendship Commission and the US advisors to the US-Japan Conference on Cultural and Educational Interchange (CULCON). She is an adjunct professor at Georgetown University and serves on the board of its *Journal of Asian Affairs*. She earned her MA and PhD from the political science department at Columbia University.

Saori TSUCHIYA

Vice President for Government Affairs at Toyota Motor North America



Saori Tsuchiya serves as Vice President (Government Affairs) of Toyota Motor North America, Inc. (TMNA). Based in Washington DC since January 2019, she has a primary responsibility for coordinating one-voiced external and governmental outreach activities between the parent company, Toyota Motor Corporation, and TMNA, the holding company for Toyota’s North American sales, engineering and production operations. She joined Toyota Motor Corporation in June 2015. From 2015 to 2018, she was in Tokyo Headquarters to oversee Toyota’s global external and government affairs. Her main responsibility was North America and Asia. Prior to joining Toyota,

she held a position at the Japan Science and Technology Agency (JST) from 2006 to May 2015. From 2000 to 2004, she worked for Japan International Cooperation System (JICS), where she mainly oversaw Non-Project Grant Aid for Ethiopia, Madagascar, Mongolia, Thailand, etc. She graduated from the Faculty of Law at the University of Tokyo in March 2000. She also obtained a master’s degree in international public policy at the Graduate School of Public Policy at the University of Tokyo in March 2006.

Deborah WALSH*Director, Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP), Rutgers University*

Deborah Walsh is director of the Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP), a unit of the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University. Walsh joined the Center staff in 1981 and became the director in 2001. She oversees CAWP's multi-faceted programs and speaks to a variety of audiences across the country on topics related to women's political participation. CAWP is nationally recognized as the leading source of scholarly research and current data about American women's political participation. Its mission is to promote greater knowledge and understanding about women's participation in politics and government and to enhance women's influence and leadership in public life. She is a member of the Circle of Advisors to Rachel's Network and was named one of the 21 Leaders for the 21st Century by Women's eNews. She earned her bachelor's degree in political science from SUNY Binghamton and her MA in political science from Rutgers, where she was an Eagleton Fellow.

Sheryl WUDUNN*Author; Co-founder of FullSky Partners*

Sheryl WuDunn, co-founder of FullSky Partners, works in banking and also consults with young companies, primarily in healthcare. More recently, she has been working with companies to address the pandemic through testing and vaccines. The first Asian-American reporter to win a Pulitzer Prize, WuDunn is co-author of five best-selling books, including most recently *Tightrope: Americans Reaching for Hope*, and also *Half the Sky*, which address issues of public health as well as social and economic inequality in the United States and the developing world. PBS aired *Tightrope*, a documentary based on the book. Previously, WuDunn was a vice president in the investment management division at Goldman, Sachs & Co., a foreign correspondent for the New York Times, an executive team member of The Times's Circulation Department and a director in its Strategic Planning Department. She is a former Board Trustee at Princeton University and Cornell University. WuDunn holds a BA from Cornell University, an MPA from Princeton, and an MBA from Harvard Business School.

Japan Participants

Seiko NODA [CO-CHAIR]

Executive Acting Secretary-General, Liberal Democratic Party (LDP); former Minister of Internal Affairs and Communications; Minister in Charge of Women’s Empowerment; Member, House of Representatives of Japan (LDP)



Seiko Noda was appointed by Prime Minister Abe to be the Minister of Internal Affairs and Communication in August 2017. She simultaneously was named to the posts of Minister in Charge of Women’s Empowerment and Minister of State for the Social Security and Tax Number System. She started her political career by winning a seat in the Gifu Prefectural Assembly and, in 1993, she was elected to the House of Representatives. She served in several posts in the Koizumi Cabinet, most notably as Minister of Posts and Telecommunications, and, in 2012, she became the second woman ever named to chair the LDP’s General Council, one of the ruling party’s three most influential posts. She also serves as chair of the Women’s Committee of the Japan–South Korea Parliamentary Friendship Association and is a member of the Japan–Taiwan and Japan–China parliamentary friendship organizations. Her areas of interest include the declining birth rate in Japan, measures for persons with disabilities, and consumer issues. Her publications include *Thank You for the Life that Was Born*.

Noriko AKIYAMA

Senior Political Writer, Asahi Shimbun



Noriko Akiyama is a senior political writer at Asahi Shimbun, the second-largest newspaper company in Japan. Ms. Akiyama joined the Asahi Shimbun in 1992. Before assuming her current post, she served as an assistant political editor, political reporter, and reporter for AERA, a Japanese weekly magazine owned and published by Asahi Shimbun. She is the first female senior political writer and an assistant political editor in Asahi. In addition, Ms. Akiyama has authored six books on women in nonprofits, gender politics in Japan, female bureaucrats, civil society leaders, a guide to Japan’s political history, and a biography on Chiyo Obata, Japan’s first female professional wrestler. In 2018, Ms. Akiyama received the Social Journalist Award from the Japan Association of New Public. She is also an alumna of the Japan Women Leadership Initiative (2018), and the International Visitor Leadership Program (2016), the US Department of State’s premier professional exchange program. She holds an MS from the London School of Economics and Political Science and a BA in sociology from the University of Tokyo, and is currently pursuing a PhD.

Rie ASAYAMA

Executive Officer, Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation



Rie Asayama joined Sumitomo Bank in April 1987 (current SMBC). She is the Executive Officer and Deputy Head of Retail Banking Unit and Quality Management Dept. since April 2018. She has gained extensive experiences in Retail Banking Unit throughout her career assuming various positions at departments covering consumer services and customer satisfaction. She has also been leading promotion of Women’s Initiatives as the first GM at Diversity and Inclusion Department. She holds a BA in Economics from Kyoto University.

Mariko EGUCHI

Vice President, Head of Corporate Communications and CSR Activities Office, Aflac Life Insurance Japan Ltd.



Mariko started her career at Mitsubishi Bank as the part of the first group of female professionals under the effort to enforce the equal employment opportunity law. There, she focused on the Capital Market and Investment Banking businesses. She then joined Salomon Brothers (presently Citigroup) as Vice President for Investment Banking Department and UBS as Director for Investment Banking Department. With her expertise in corporate finance and corporate IR advisory, she moved within UBS to the COO Office—Corporate Communications, where she dedicated over a decade to UBS Group's Corporate Communications and Branding. Before joining Aflac, she was Head of Asia Pacific Corporate Communications at LaSalle for its Australia, HK, SGP, Shanghai, and Korea businesses. She assumed her current position in 2020. Ms. Eguchi is a graduate of Keio University with an MA in Law. She completed the University of Tokyo Executive Management Program in 2014. She specializes in Strategic Corporate Communications and Corporate Branding.

Sachiko HABU

Editor-in-chief, Nikkei xwoman



Sachiko Habu joined Nikkei BP in 2005 and is the founding Editor-in-Chief of Nikkei xwoman. She is also founding Editor-in-Chief of Nikkei ARIA (2019–2020), Editor-in-Chief of ecomom (2018–), founding Editor-in-Chief of Nikkei DUAL (2013–2018), and Deputy Editor-in-Chief of Nikkei MONEY (2005–2012). Ms. Habu has created a number of websites and magazines related to women's careers, working mothers, and the financial and digital sectors. She is a guest lecturer on women's empowerment and career development at Waseda University, Chuo University, Showa Women's University, and other universities, and is a frequent commentator on Japanese TV and radio. She has served on a number of government committees and panels, including Selected Future 2.0 (Minister for Economic Revitalization, 2020), the Cabinet Office's Committee for Countermeasures against Declining Birthrate (2015–2019), the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare's IKUMEN Project (2016–), and the Roundtable for Kyoto's Future. After graduating from the Kyoto University Faculty of Integrated Human Studies, she studied in France as well. She previously worked at the Editorial Engineering Research Institute and as a freelancer.

Tomoko HAYASHI

Director-General of Gender Equality Bureau, Cabinet Office



Tomoko Hayashi is Director-General of Gender Equality Bureau in the Cabinet Office. She reports to the Prime Minister and the Minister for Gender Equality as the head of the national machinery for promoting gender equality in Japan. Before the above appointment in August, 2020, Tomoko Hayashi was Director-General for Economic and Fiscal Affairs, serving as Vice Chair of the OECD Economic Policy Committee and supporting the Prime Minister at the G7/G20 Summit meetings as the chief representative of the Cabinet Office. She joined the government as an economist in 1987. She has held various positions of economic research, forecasting and macroeconomic policymaking, including Director for Macroeconomic Policy Coordination with the Bank of Japan, and Director for Economic Policy Framework in charge of medium- and long-term fiscal consolidation issues. In the academic field, she has taught the Japanese economy at the Graduate School on Public Policy of the University of Tokyo since 2010. Her major publications include Macroeconomic Policy Frameworks (2003), Inflation Target and Monetary Policy (2006) (with Takatoshi Ito), and Global Financial and Economic Crisis (2010) (with Kazuo Ueda et al). She is a board member of the Japan Association of Business Cycle Studies and a member of the Japanese Economic Association.

Maiko ICHIHARA

Maiko Ichihara, Associate Professor, Graduate School of Law and the School of International and Public Policy, Hitotsubashi University; Visiting Fellow, Democracy, Conflict, and Governance Program, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace



Maiko Ichihara is Associate Professor in the Graduate School of Law and the School of International and Public Policy at Hitotsubashi University, Japan, and Visiting Scholar at Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. She is a steering committee member of the World Movement for Democracy, East Asia Democracy Forum, and Partnership for Democratic Governance (Japan), and is a co-chair of Democracy for the Future project at the Japan Center for International Exchange. Throughout her career, she has undertaken research on international relations, democracy support, and Japanese foreign policy. She earned her PhD in political science from the George

Washington University and her MA from Columbia University.

Naoko ISHIDA

Managing Officer & General Manager, Accounting Department, Prince Hotels, Inc.



Naoko Ishida is Executive Officer and General Manager of the Accounting Department of Prince Hotels, Inc. She joined Arthur Andersen (currently Accenture Co., Ltd.) in 1989, and served as Manager, Senior Manager, Associate Partner, and Principal. She joined Prince Hotels, Inc. in 2007, and was appointed to her current position in 2015. Ms. Ishida received a master’s in geophysics in 1985 from the Graduate School of Science of the University of Tokyo where she also completed the doctoral coursework for geophysics in 1989.

Takae ITO

Member, House of Councillors of Japan, Komeito



Takae Ito is a member of the Komeito Party who represents Hyogo Prefecture as a first-term member of the House of Councillors. She was elected to the Diet in 2016 and is currently a Director of the Committee on Judicial Affairs, and serves on the Committee on Audit, the Special Committee on Regional Revitalization and Consumer Affairs, and on the Commission on the Constitution. Born in 1968, Ito grew up in Hyogo and earned her law degree from Kansai University. She passed the National Bar Exam in 1995 and began practicing law, working with small and medium-sized business owners and also focusing on housing and homelessness issues and intellectual property rights. She

became a member of the Human Rights Protection Committee of the Japan Federation of Bar Association, and served as chief director for a nonprofit organization, Architecture Sergeant for JUSTICE. She was also registered as a licensed tax accountant in 2010.

Takae ITO

Member, House of Councillors, Democratic Party for the People (DPFP)



A first-term Diet member from Aichi Prefecture, Ms. Takae Ito was elected to the House of Councillors in 2016 and currently serves on the Committee on Education, Culture and Science; the Committee on Oversight of Administration; and the Special Committee on Regional Revitalization and Consumer Affairs. She is also a Director of the Research Committee on National Life and Economy. Born in 1975, Ito earned a degree in Japanese literature and then entered the workforce, first working for Television Osaka and then moving to Recruit, an advertising, publishing, and HR company. As a mother of two young children, she campaigned on the promise of

bringing a working mother’s perspective to policies for Japan’s future

Hideko KATSUMATA*Executive Director and COO, Japan Center for International Exchange (JCIE)*

Hideko Katsumata joined JCIE in 1969. She currently manages the organization's overall operations and is heavily involved in numerous programmatic areas. Ms. Katsumata has been involved in citizen movements to strengthen the nonprofit sector in Japan and served as a member of the Council for the Reform of the Public Interest Corporations that was created to advise the Prime Minister's Office. She has served as external director on the board of the Chubu Electric Power Company, a member of the Board of Governors of the Japan Broadcast Corporation (NHK), vice chair of the NHK Advisory Council on International Broadcasting, a member of the Review Committee of Asahi Shimbun, and a member of the board of the Japan NPO Center and of the Asia Pacific Philanthropy Consortium. She currently serves as a board member of the Sacred Heart School Corporation and a member of the board of counselors of the Public Resource Foundation. She is a Screening Committee member of the ORACLE Volunteer Activities Fund. She has authored numerous articles on civil society, including "Japanese Philanthropy: Its Origins and Impact on US-Japan Relations" in *Philanthropy & Reconciliation: Rebuilding Postwar US-Japan Relations*.

Akiko KAMEI*Member of the House of Representatives (CDP)*

After graduating from Gakushuin University in 1988 (Bachelor of Law), she moved to Canada and received the second degree from Carleton University in 1992 (BA in Mass Communications). Having returned to Tokyo, she worked as an English-Japanese interpreter and travelled to more than 50 countries. She was engaged in various fields of business such as construction projects, lawsuits, youth exchange programs, sports events, etc. While working as interpreter, she started supporting his father who was an MP, and became a secretary in charge of policy. In 2007, she was elected to the House of Councilors and worked in the committee on Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries for 3 years, in the committee on Environment for the later 3 years. After completing one term in office, she started preparing for the Lower House election. In October 2017, she was elected to the House of Representatives and assigned to the committee on Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. She represents a historic and rural part of Japan (Shimane Prefecture). In October 2018, the CDP opened the International Bureau and she became the first director-general. She continues to work as Director of International Department in the reorganized CDP.

Yayoi KIMURA*Member, House of Representatives (LDP)*

Ms. Kimura was first elected as a member of House of Representatives in 2014 and now serves in her second term. After graduating from Ferris University, she served as a secretary to Representative Ben Kimura, her father. She then entered Keio University's School of Nursing and became a registered nurse in 2007, working at Keio University Hospital. She then worked at the Japan Nursing Association until she was elected to the House of Representatives. Now in her second term, she is serving as a member of the Committee on Health, Labour and Welfare and on the Special Committee on Consumer Affairs. In the LDP, she serves as Deputy Secretary-General.

Izumi KOBAYASHI

Chairman of the Board of Directors, Mizuho Financial Group Inc.; Member of the Board of Director, ANA Holdings, Inc., Mitsui & Co., Ltd., and OMRON Corporation



Izumi Kobayashi is Director and a member of the Board, ANA Holdings, Inc., Mitsui & Co., Ltd., Mizuho Financial Group, Inc., and OMRON Corporation. In 2008–13, she was CEO and Executive Vice President of the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA), the political risk insurance arm of the World Bank Group. From 2001 to 2008, she was in the position of Representative Director and CEO of Merrill Lynch in Japan. She also served on the Osaka Securities Exchange as a Non-Executive Board Member from 2002–08 and Board Member of Japan Association of Corporate Directors from 2007–09 and from 2015–19. Ms. Kobayashi is also co-chair of the Japan chapter of the Women Corporate Directors. She is a graduate of Seikei University in Japan.

Yukako MAEKAWA

Senior Vice President, General Manager, Marketing Department of Management Service Division, NTT Learning Systems Corporation



Yukako Maekawa is Senior Vice President and General Manager of the Marketing Department, Management Service Division of NTT Learning Systems. She is also Chair of the Global Networking Committee of the J-Win Executive Network. She joined Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Corporation (NTT) in 1988 and then NTT Communications Corporation in 1999. Ms. Maekawa graduated from Doshisha University in Kyoto in 1988 with a BA in economics and received her MBA from the Graduate School of Business Administration of the University of Southern California in 1993.

Karen MAKISHIMA

Member, House of Representatives (LDP)



Karen Makishima is a third-term LDP member of the House of Representatives and a former Parliamentary Vice-Minister of the Cabinet Office. She graduated from International Christian University (ICU) in Tokyo and then went on to receive her MA in political management from George Washington University and her PhD in political science and public administration from ICU. She is a member of the Committee on Cabinet and Director of the LDP Youth Division. Dr. Makishima also worked previously at the NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation) office in Washington DC.

Rui MATSUKAWA

Member, House of Councillors (LDP)



After graduating from the University of Tokyo, Rui Matsukawa entered the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1993. She received her MSc in Foreign Service at the Georgetown University in 1997. After serving as a Counsellor at the Embassy of Japan in Korea, Deputy Secretary-General of the Japan-China-Korea Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat in Seoul, and Director of the General Mainstreaming Division of the Foreign Policy Bureau, she was elected to the House of Councillors in 2016 as a member of the Liberal Democratic Party. She was appointed as Parliamentary Vice-Minister of Defense and Parliamentary Vice-Minister of Cabinet Office in September 2020.

Yumiko MURAKAMI*Head, OECD Tokyo Centre*

Since Yumiko joined the OECD in 2013 as the head of OECD Tokyo Centre, she has been at the forefront of policy discussions between OECD and governments, businesses, and academia in Japan and Asia, covering a wide range of economic policy issues. She has been leading discussions with various stakeholders in Japan and Asia, particularly in the areas of corporate governance, tax guidelines, gender diversity, education, international trade, and innovation. Prior to joining the OECD, Yumiko held a number of leadership positions, including Managing Director at Goldman Sachs and Credit Suisse. Yumiko's diverse professional experiences range from banking in New York and London to UN Peacekeeping Operations in Cambodia. Yumiko has an MBA from Harvard University, an MA from Stanford University, and a BA from Sophia University. She sits on the Japan Advisory Board of Harvard Business School as well as several advisory committees of the Japanese Government. She is the author of a bestseller book, *Turning Demographic Challenges into Economic Opportunities* (in Japanese).

Atsuko OKA*Senior Vice President, General Manager, Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Corporation*

Atsuko Oka is Senior Vice President and Head of Technology Planning of Nippon Telegraph Telephone Corp. (NTT). She joined NTT Software Laboratories as a researcher in 1988. She has served as President and CEO of NTT Navispace Corp. (2010–12); Vice President of Corporate Planning, NTT Communications (2012–15); Vice President and Head of IoT Office, NTT Communications (2015–17); Member of the Board and General Manager of the Solution Business Division, NTT Resonant Corp. (2017–19); and became NTT's first female member of the board and Head of Technology Planning in 2019–20. Ms. Oka received her MS in industrial and system engineering from Keio University in Tokyo in 1988, and an MS from the MIT Sloan School in 2000.

Akiko OKAMOTO*Member, House of Representatives (LDP)*

Ms. Kimura was first elected as a member of House of Representatives in 2014 and now serves in her second term. After graduating from Ferris University, she served as a secretary to Representative Ben Kimura, her father. She then entered Keio University's School of Nursing and became a registered nurse in 2007, working at Keio University Hospital. She then worked at the Japan Nursing Association until she was elected to the House of Representatives. Now in her second term, she is serving as a member of the Committee on Health, Labour and Welfare and on the Special Committee on Consumer Affairs. In the LDP, she serves as Deputy Secretary-General.

Yoko TAKEDA*Chief Economist / Deputy General Manager, Think Tank Unit General Manager, Center for Policy and Economy, Mitsubishi Research Institute, Inc.*

After joining the Bank of Japan in 1994, Yoko Takeda was engaged in a wide-ranging policy work, specializing in global financial market analysis and global economic research of the Bank. She joined the Mitsubishi Research Institute in 2009. After a brief stint as visiting researcher for the House of Councillors, she holds memberships in a variety of councils of the Japanese government, such as Pension Committee of the Social Security Council in MHLW, the Council for the Promotion of Social Security System Reform, Fiscal System Council in MOF, the Council for the Realization of Work Style Reform, Industrial Structure Council in METI, The Tax Commission in Cabinet Office, Labor Policy Council in MHLW and Advisory Committee for Natural Resources and Energy in METI. She completed her graduate study in Washington DC, obtaining a master's degree from the Public Policy Institute of Georgetown University.

Keiko TASHIRO

Vice President, Daiwa Securities Group Inc.



Ms. Tashiro began her career with the Daiwa Securities Group in 1986, following her graduation from Waseda University with a BA in Political Science. She received an MBA from Stanford University in 1991 and attended the Advanced Management Program at Harvard Business School in 2011. She has held various positions at Daiwa, including overseas assignments in Singapore, London, and New York. In Japan, in addition to her role as Head of Investor Relations (1999–2005), she spent six years in the retail division of the Group. She rose to the post of Head of Overseas Operations in 2016 and Deputy President in 2019, and from April 2020, she has served as Deputy President, Head of Overseas Operations and Head of SDGs. She serves as a member of the Council for Promoting the SDGs in the Securities Industry at the Japan Securities Dealers Association, a member of the World Economic Forum’s Global Future Council on Responsive Financial Systems, a trustee at the Japan Association of Corporate Executive and a member of the Harvard Business School Japan Advisory Board.

Yukako UCHINAGA

Board Chair, Japan Women’s Innovative Network (J-Win)



Yukako Uchinaga has been Chair of J-Win (Japan Women’s Innovative Network) since 2007. She graduated with a degree in physics from the University of Tokyo in 1971 and joined IBM Japan, Ltd., where she served as Director of the Board, Senior Executive Officer in charge of Research, Development and Manufacturing, and Vice President of Asia Pacific Technical Operations. She was inducted into the Women in Technology International Hall of Fame in 1999, selected Business Stateswoman of the Year by the Harvard Business School Club of Japan in 2002, and received the Upward Mobility Award from the Society of Women Engineers in 2006, Prime Minister’s Commendation for Efforts Toward the Formation of a Gender-Equal Society in 2013, and Achievement Award from the Council for Info-Communications Promotion Month in 2016. Ms. Uchinaga is also Independent Board Director of Hoya Corporation and Teijin Limited, and is a member of the Board of Trustees of the United States-Japan Foundation.



About JCIE

Founded in 1970, the Japan Center for International Exchange (JCIE) is an independent, nonprofit, and nonpartisan organization that works to strengthen US-Japan relations and build international cooperation. Operating with partner organizations in Tokyo and New York (JCIE/USA), JCIE sponsors a wide range of projects in collaboration with institutions around the world. These include policy research and dialogue on cutting-edge issues in international relations, leadership exchanges, and efforts to strengthen the contributions of civil society to domestic and international governance. Through these initiatives, JCIE aims to create opportunities for informed policy discussions that can contribute to a more peaceful and stable world.

In 2016, JCIE launched the Empowering Women Leaders program to provide opportunities for women leaders to participate in international dialogues, to build networks among women leaders, and to share lessons learned on ways to encourage fuller participation by women in the political, economic, and social policymaking processes. Over the course of its five-decade history, JCIE has addressed women's leadership in a number of studies and dialogues, and JCIE publications that touch on this topic include the following:

Common Ground and Common Obstacles: US-Japan Women Leaders Dialogue (2017)

Looking for Leadership: The Dilemma of Political Leadership in Japan (2015)

A Gender Agenda: Asia-Europe Dialogue 3—Economic Empowerment for Gender Equality (2006)

A Gender Agenda: Asia-Europe Dialogue 2—Transformational Approaches to the Roles of Women and Men in Economic Life and Political Decision-Making (2003)

A Gender Agenda: Asia-Europe Dialogue—New Visions and Perspectives for Women and Men (2001)

Japan-US Women Leaders Dialogue: Community Development and the Role of Women
(Co-published with the Institute of International Education, 1994)

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