

As a Japanese girl, I am really not happy with the current gender gap, and I think that one way to close this gap is to have women more involved in politics.

Let's start with family. Have you ever heard the term "family service"? It is a term used when men take time off to do something for their families. Due to women's growing participation in society, men have to take on more family responsibilities. Why is there a special term for men, while women are taken for granted? This is just one example of gender inequality that I noticed. It is time for both men and women to be viewed as equal and to get rid of phrases that praise one gender over the other.

I have found inequality in politics as well. In a recent election, I was shocked by the low number of women politicians in Japan. Today, the strong sense of "Politics is for men" continues to cast a shadow preventing an increase in women legislators. Surprisingly, according to the Gender Equality Bureau, the percentage of female legislators in Japan in 2023 is only 15%. This was the same as Sweden in 1970. However, Sweden has raised that almost three times to 46% in the past 50 years. In The Gender Gap Index published by the World Economic Forum, Sweden is ranked 5th while Japan is 125th out of 146 countries.

Last year, as a student council officer, I was engaged in school politics. After conducting a survey, we put forward a proposal to place sanitary products in the school restrooms. We could easily make this suggestion, largely in part because our school is an all-girls school, but I realize girls may encounter hurdles in expressing their opinions in broader society.

The key to solving this is us younger people. Japanese policy is more oriented toward the elderly. According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, the voter turnout of people in their sixties is the highest, at about 70%. While women turnout is currently less than 50%. If we raise this percentage, it will help bridge the gender gap. To do this, I would like to help educate those under the age of 18 about politics in a fun way. Implementing mock elections could work. A mock election is a pretend voting event to practice voting for actual elections. I'm targeting those who do not have the privilege to vote yet because the gender gap problem needs to be solved through long term action. I hope by doing this students will naturally become more interested in politics. I am also hoping that other schools in the Kansai area would join me in trying mock elections, too.

Japanese politicians won't make changes unless we act ourselves. I, as a future voter and a woman, decided to face this issue. Why don't we start by thinking about what gender gaps there are within Japanese society today. Even better, join me in holding a mock election in your school. I believe small events can lead to big changes.

木浦 麗奈

小林聖心女子学院中学校

The Key: Mock Elections