

# Japan falls to 101st place in gender equality rankings

Jiji

GENEVA — Japan came 101st in the World Economic Forum's 2012 global gender equality rankings announced Wednesday, down three places from last year.

Japan was at the bottom among the Group of Eight major countries. The WEF rankings are compiled based on the group's survey on the gap between men and women in four categories — economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment.

Japan fell to 34th from top in the health and survival category. In addition, the WEF cited a decrease in the number of female lawmakers in the nation, while saying, "Women still make up a fairly low percentage of the senior and highly skilled positions" in Japan.

Meanwhile, Japan ranked top in literacy rate and primary education, with no gap cited between men and women.

Among the 135 countries surveyed, Iceland remained top in the overall rankings, having the smallest gender gap. Other Nordic countries followed, with Finland coming in second, Norway third and Sweden fourth. Ireland ranked fifth.

Among the G-8 nations, Germany ranked 13th, Britain 18th, Canada 21st and the United States 22nd.

"The most important determinant of a country's competitiveness is its human talent — the skills, education and productivity of its workforce — and women account for one-half of the potential talent base throughout the world," the WEF said.

"A nation's competitiveness depends, among other things, on whether and how it educates and utilizes its female talent," it added.

The WEF said Japan is classified in a group of countries that have made key investments in women's education but "have generally not removed barriers to women's participation in the workforce and are thus not seeing returns on their investments in the development of one-half of their human capital."

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