

## NATIONAL

## Job hunt stressing students, making them suicidal: poll

### 1 in 5 consider killing themselves amid tight race to secure career

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Tormented by the difficulty of landing a position and unfair practices by prospective employers, 1 in 5 college students contemplate suicide during the job-hunting process, a poll of 122 students conducted in July by the nonprofit group Lifelink found.

The Tokyo-based group conducted two surveys, on 121 students in March and 122 in July, on the stress associated with the job hunt, spurred by recent government statistics pointing to a marked increase in suicides among people in their 20s. Only the students in July were asked about suicide.

According to National Police Agency statistics on suicides in 2012, the total number of suicides in Japan has shown a downward trend over the last 15 years, dipping below the 30,000 mark for the first time last year to stand at 27,858.

However, the number among people in their 20s has gone up since the late 1990s, numbering 3,000 in 2012.

“Failures in job hunting” accounted for 149 suicides among people in their 20s last year, 2½ times the rate in 2007.

Released Friday, the Lifelink poll, which covered people in four-year universities, graduate schools and vocational colleges, found that students have a strong distrust of firms in Japan and of Japanese society overall, yet have a burning desire to get full-time employment after college.

Sixty-nine percent said Japan is a society where honesty and hard work are not rewarded, while 97 percent said they want to become full-time employees after graduation.

Eighty percent of those surveyed said they felt a strong sense of anxiety during their job search, with many citing the fear of not getting an offer from the firm of their first choice, and of “getting left behind” by their peers.

Adding to their stress is the often unfair treatment by companies. Some firms, the students found, secretly gave more opportunities to students from certain high-ranking universities while officially touting a “no-college-name-asked” hiring policy.

Students often rely on friends, social media and Internet bulletin boards for tips on job hunting, but they also suffer from a sense of exasperation and isolation when their job search doesn't go smoothly in comparison with their peers, said Lifelink founder Yasuyuki Shimizu.

"These problems lead to greater issues after they get jobs," Shimizu said. "They have a strong sense of distrust of society to begin with, which leads them to think they must have full-time employment to defend themselves. When they are able to become full-time employees (right out of college), they feel as if they must put up with anything to hold onto that job. And others who couldn't get full-time employment are driven to think they are worthless."

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