

Nearly half of young Japanese women say they hate the company they work for in survey

TOKYO

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Japanese customer service may be legendary, but that doesn't mean every person working in Japan loves their job. Especially in a country where long hours and frequent overtime are the norm, it's not surprising that more than a few people are dissatisfied with their employer.

Japanese Internet portal Shirabee recently conducted a survey, asking 875 men and women between the ages of 20 and 69 "Do you hate the company you currently work for?" When the responses were counted, 29.3 percent said yes, they do.

More than one in four respondents showing such dissatisfaction is startling, and that proportion got even bigger for some demographics. The most unhappy of all were young women, with 40 percent of women in their 20s saying they hate the company they work for.

Percentage of women who hate the company they work for

- Age 20-29: 40 percent
- Age 30-39: 26.3 percent

- Age 40-49: 22.7 percent
- Age 50-59: 32.8 percent
- Age 60-69: 15.4 percent

The survey didn't ask participants why they hate their companies, but in the case of young women, it's not hard to imagine what some common causes might be. Traditionally, Japanese working environments have shown differential treatment to male and older employees, and being a young woman puts you on the outside of both pockets of respect.

On the other hand, young men in the survey showed more job satisfaction than most other age groups for their gender.

Percentage of men who hate the company they work for

- Age 20-29: 28.7 percent
- Age 30-39: 31 percent
- Age 40-49: 35 percent
- Age 50-59: 28.9 percent
- Age 60-69: 17.8 percent

For the men in the survey, the 40s were the least happy time at work. Again, Shirabee didn't ask why, but odds are the fatigue of two decades of overtime and company drinking parties, or perhaps the doldrums of being stuck in a middle-management position, are contributing factors. There's also the fact that Japanese society still largely expects adult men to at least be able to be their family's sole breadwinner, and assuming those men are having kids in their 20s and 30s, those children will be entering high school and/or college when Dad is somewhere in his 40s, which means additional

educational and other child-rearing expenses (as Japan's free, compulsory education only lasts until the end of middle school).

It's also worth noting that the age group most satisfied with its jobs, for both men and women, was 60-69, and by a very wide margin. This one is pretty easy to figure out, as Japanese citizens can start drawing a pension in their 60s, and the country's largely middle-class economy and tendency towards responsible saving in personal finance means that many people who are still working at that age are doing so because they want to, either because they enjoy the work they do or because it's extremely lucrative.

But with so many young women in their 20s going so far as to say they "hate" their companies (and the 28.7 percent of young men who say the same aren't exactly an insignificant number), how is it that the level of customer service in Japan remains so high? Most customer service jobs are staffed by younger workers, and shouldn't hating one's company be a serious demotivator?

It probably is, but as with a lot of things in Japan, there's no discounting the importance of pride and considerateness. Adults in Japan are expected to be able to keep their feelings for their company and their customers separate. There may be legitimately bad things about your company that make you dislike it, but since those things aren't your customers' fault, it'd be wrong to transfer those negative emotions onto the customers and treat them badly. If you've got a problem with your employer, that's something that has to be handled between you and your employer.

It's an admirable, but no doubt difficult, philosophy to adhere to. It's also a reminder that even when a clerk or server in Japan is giving you the polite, attentive service the country is famous for, there's a chance that they're also simultaneously dealing with a lot of less-than-pleasant stuff in their job, so definitely consider cutting them some slack if they do make a mistake.

Source: Shirabee via Nico Nico News via Jin

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