

Interactive Evening Lounge (IEL) – Gender series

What is IEL?

IEL is a student-led activity to promote multidisciplinary discussion on topics which are shaping our world. The aim is cultivate awareness of key social and technological issues, and to emphasise that in today's highly interconnected and changing society, we have the opportunity and responsibility to go beyond a fixed area of specialisation. By bringing students and specialists together from various backgrounds, IEL aims to encourage students to build confidence in engaging with important developments outside their major, and to think together about innovative solutions to tough problems.

IEL is organised by students from GSDM, the Global Leader Program for Social Design and Management. GSDM is the University of Tokyo's flagship Program for Leading Graduate Schools, bringing together students from 21 departments in 9 graduate schools, game-changing academics, and professionals from government and industry.

What is the IEL Gender series?

In the words of UTokyo president Gonokami Makoto at the 2019 autumn graduation ceremony on 13 September:

“Half of humanity is women and any society is made up of both men and women. You can understand society only by looking at it through the eyes of both women and men. It is important for society to have both perspectives.”

In this series of interactive workshops, students, faculty and invited guests will be given the chance to interact and exchange ideas on various topics surrounding gender in 2019/20 in Japan. The sessions will include film, brainstorming, and panel discussions. Students from all majors and backgrounds are welcome. Please feel free to participate in one or all of the workshops.

The series will trace the following progression:

- (i) Understanding causes of gender imbalance in Japan: documentary screening (Oct 2019)
- (ii) Analysing current policies to promote gender equality in Japan (Feb 2020)
- (iii) Proposing new methods towards equality by study of successful cases (March 2020)

Edition #2

Gender-balanced decision making: policy vs. reality

Date: 18 February 2020, 5–7.15pm

Location: Graduate School of Public Policy, UTokyo, Hongo Campus

BACKGROUND

On the surface, gender balance in Japan seems aligned with many other OECD nations. Women's suffrage in Japan has existed since 1947 (e.g. 1928 in UK, 1944 in France), gender equality in the workplace is a legal right since WWII (cf. 1947 Labour Standards Act, 1972 Act on Securing Equal Opportunity and Treatment between Men and Women in Employment), and two female Japanese astronauts have been into space (same as UK and France combined).

But in reality, gender equality in Japan is among the lowest in developed countries on a range of levels. The gender wage gap in Japan is the 2nd largest in the OECD (24.5% in 2018), and three times more women are employed in fixed-term (i.e. non-permanent) job contracts than men (53% vs 14.1% in 2014).

STUDENT WORKSHOP

This second edition of the IEL Gender Series aims to empower students to understand how they can act in an inclusive way in their daily life, through awareness of how gender impacts decision-making. The workshop consists of three parts:

- 1) Learning about the impact of gender-bias in decision making in industry and academia from invited guests, as well as the potential gap between equality policy and reality.
- 2) Understanding differences between men and women in their expectations for public policy, based on the results of our online survey. Recognising that even as students, the way we make decisions is influenced by gender.
- 3) Analysing gender equality policy and proposing improvements, through a policy scenario game.

DETAIL

1) Panel discussion (40 min)

Invited speakers from industry and academia will provide first-hand experience of gender-bias in decision making in their fields. Short presentations will be followed by time for interactive discussion. Speakers may cover some of the following topics:

- (i) Key obstacles for gender-balanced decision making;
- (ii) Gaps between policy, which may appear gender-balanced, and reality, which may be less balanced;
- (iii) Potential ideas for improvement.

2) Showcase of survey results (10 min)

Ahead of the IEL, we have conducted an anonymous survey for GSDM students and faculty (around 100 participants), aiming to understand how gender influences, in our own community: (i) differences in decision making, and (ii) differences in needs and expectations from public policy. The focus is on important life-changing decisions relating to career and family, as well as to smaller scale day-to-day concerns. The gender-disaggregated results will be used to evaluate to what extent our own decision-making and public policy needs are influenced by gender. A comparison will be made with the contents of the preceding panel discussion. Time will also be set aside for interactive exchange of opinions.

3) Policy scenario game (40 min)

By this stage, participants will have begun to develop awareness of how gender influences decision-making, as well as the importance of considering men and women's different concerns and expectations when creating new policies.

In this final part of the IEL, participants and invited guests will form teams, and take part in a policy scenario game. Each team will be presented with an imaginary policy which has just been introduced to increase gender equality in a specific field in Japan. However the policy is far from perfect, and each team will take the initiative to:

- (i) identify the positive and negative impacts of the policy on men and women;
- (ii) summarise the limitations of the proposed policy;
- (iii) decide to approve, reject or amend the policy;
- (iv) propose an improved version, or an alternative (if applicable).

Each team will then present a summary of their discussion to all IEL participants. An official award certificate will be presented to members of the winning team, on the basis of the originality, comprehensiveness, and thought-provoking nature of the updated policy proposal. The results are valuable, as they will be used by the Student Initiative Project (SIP) "Towards Gender Equality in UTokyo".

PROGRAM

Setting the scene

17:00-17:10 Opening remarks, objectives of IEL Gender Series

17:10-17:15 Self-introduction of facilitators and invited guests

Part 1: Panel discussion on obstacles for gender-balanced decision making

17:15-17:35 In academia

17:35-17:55 In industry

Part 2: Showcase of survey results

17:55-18:05 To what extent does gender influence our own: (i) decision-making and (ii) expectations and needs towards public policy?

Part 3: Policy scenario game

18:05-18:10 Introduction of policy scenario game

18:10-18:15 Group formation and ice-breaking

18:15-18:55 Policy scenario game

18:55-19:10 Short presentations, feedback, awards, closing remarks

Noteworthy further material

Drama series on social attitudes and public policies towards new mothers in Japan
坂の途中の家 (2019, Japanese)

Critically-acclaimed Korean film on gender-based discrimination
Kim Ji-young, Born 1982 (2019)

Short-term contract policy for young researchers at UTokyo
<https://www.u-tokyo.ac.jp/kyodo-sankaku/ja/activities/index.html>
<https://www.u-tokyo.ac.jp/kyodo-sankaku/ja/activities/josei-program.html>