

Positive Masculinity for Japan

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Visualizing a positive representation of masculinity depends not only on personal choices, but on the overall culture of a country—and, in Japan, the office lifestyle and legacy is getting in the way. Looking at our top-selling visuals from the past 12 months, we discovered that the number one visual story for men Japan is still in business. Men are also 25% more likely than women to be visualized working hard in business, rather than as family members or enjoying leisure activities. This traditional view of the roles men play means that, as our Visual GPS research has found, 64% of men in Japan don't feel represented in media and advertising—which is much higher than the global average of 52%.

After a year of uncertainty, nearly half of male consumers in Japan are rethinking their lifestyles and priorities as long-term outcomes of the Covid pandemic. Japanese corporate culture is still struggling with the idea of flexibility, and discourages employees from taking any kind of time off. Seniority in the office strongly influences the promotion system, and because employees are generally rewarded for their time spent in the office rather than their performance, working extra hours is encouraged. Peer pressure keeps employees at the office late, as no one wants to be seen as the first to leave, fearing the risk of being sidelined for a promotion or flagged as not being a team player.

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These behaviors unfortunately affect men in their family engagements and, coupled with the idea that men are the family providers, means that paternity leave is never really considered by most companies and families. Technically, [Japan's paternity leave policies ranks amongst the best in the world](#), but in practice, only 6% take advantage of it, often because of these deeply ingrained workplace attitudes, slowing down any potential social progress. A positive development has been Japan's House of Representatives passing a bill to enact [a law making paternity leave more flexible for men](#).

Our Visual GPS data reveals that almost 50% of men in Japan have encountered bias, but men and women do not suffer from similar discrimination. Men are most likely to experience discrimination based on body size or type, age, and their race or ethnicity. Our Visual GPS research also revealed that men and women in Japan suffer from implicit stereotypes (i.e., manly men, feminine women), so it is critical to always check back with yourself about whether you are unconsciously choosing stereotypical representations of men, whether in a business or lifestyle context. For example, self-care has always

been thought of and marketed as something practiced primarily by women, but men's self-care isn't much different than women's.

So, how do we truly begin addressing these findings and start being more inclusive? The key is to celebrate men's fuller range of emotions and behaviors, and demonstrate how nurturing, compassionate, and caring they are toward themselves and others.

When choosing visuals of men in Japan, ask yourself:

Are you showing men's home life? Is he responsible for domestic activities like caring for children while working and sharing house chores?

Are you showing a positive representation of masculinity?

Are you showing men in the moment, whether at work or at play?

Are you showing mature men with realistic bodies and styling?

Are you showing how men work in collaboration with others?

In business settings, are you showing men working with various people, other than people just like them?

Are you showing how men achieve self-care?