

The population in Japan, and throughout the world is getting older. Well of course they are one would say, but what I mean is that the average lifespan of a human being is much longer than it was 100 years ago. This is especially true in Japan which hosts the highest average lifespan in the world. The trouble in Japan however compared to most of the world is that their population has begun to shrink. The average rate of birth is below the average rate of death in Japan. [Due to this trend the percentage of people over 65 in Japan has become more than 1 in 4, about 28%, and is projected to become 1 in 3 by 2050.](#) To compare to the United States, the percentage of the population over age 65 in the U.S. is about 15%.

Many industries in Japan have started to experience a shortage of workforce as a result. Industries like healthcare, construction, agriculture, restaurants, etc. To help keep this rapidly sinking ship afloat Japan's government under prime minister Abe has increased the number of semi-skilled foreign workers that will be allowed to work in Japan. There are two specific categories of workers that will be accepted to work in Japan. The first category will be semi-skilled workers. [Up to 345,000 people will be allowed to come to Japan for up to 5 years to work semi-skilled positions but there is a large problem in the legislation that has been put forth.](#) The semi-skilled laborers will not be allowed to bring with them their families. The second category of workers accepted will be for high-skilled positions. Workers in this category will be allowed to stay for up to 10 years, bring their family and have a potential path to citizenship if they so desire. In both categories the applicants will be required to have a certain level of proficiency in Japanese.

The situation that this will force upon many that come to fill the numerous semi-skilled positions that are open in Japan is horrible. Japan is just looking for a way to fill the holes in its workforce while trying to remain as homogeneous as possible. Not to mention the horrible conditions that current foreign workers under work visas are experiencing. Many foreign workers in Japan are not allowed to change their job under the stipulations of their current visas. Too often the work conditions that they are forced to be under are inhuman. Long hours, under paid, not being paid for the time they work, discrimination, etc. Many of these workers are too afraid to speak out against their employer for fear of retribution against them, and many are also unaware of their own rights.

Japan is in desperate need of more workers, both in semi-skilled and high-skilled positions. Due to the current population problems in Japan the most immediate solution to this problem is to bring in more foreign workers. The problem however is the too obvious position the Japanese government currently has on allowing foreign workers to come work and live in Japan. Japan's population currently sits at about 120 million and it's estimated that by 2060 that number will drop to around 85 million if things don't change. A long-term solution is needed but currently many of the younger generations have little to no interest in marriage, yet alone having children. The short-term solution as far as solving their shortage of workers is to allow more foreign workers to come to the country with a reasonable work visa along with their family. Once that is in place more time can be taken to handle the larger problem of Japan's quickly aging population.