

Japanese workers work longer hours

Elementary

1 Warmer

How much do you know about Japan? Choose the correct answers.

1. The population of Japan is **less than** / **more than** 100 million.
2. The Japanese flag is **red and white** / **blue and white**.
3. **Tokyo** / **Kyoto** is the capital of Japan.
4. The currency of Japan is the **yuan** / **yen**.
5. The **emperor** / **king** is the head of state of Japan.

2 Key words

Fill the gaps in the sentences with these key words from the text. The paragraph numbers will help you.

tradition

employee

typical

loyal

junior

1. If something is _____, it is like most people or things of the same type. (para 1)
2. An _____ is someone who works for a person or an organization. (para 1)
3. A _____ is an activity that happens very often and has become the usual thing. (para 5)
4. A _____ person does not have a lot of responsibility or power in their job. (para 5)
5. If you are _____ to your company, you support it and do everything you can to help it. (para 5)

3 Find the information

Find the following information in the text as quickly as possible.

1. How many hours does a typical Japanese worker work each day?
2. How many hours do American workers work each day?
3. How many days' holiday do Japanese workers get each year?
4. What Japanese word means working so hard that you kill yourself?
5. When can Japanese workers leave work at 3pm?
6. How many Japanese companies say they have no plans to change their working hours?

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Japanese workers work longer hours than workers in other countries

6 April, 2017

- 1 Japanese workers work longer hours than workers in many other countries around the world. A typical employee in a Japanese company works around nine hours every day, compared with about eight hours in the USA and seven in many European Union countries.
- 2 Japanese workers get about 20 days' holiday each year but a typical employee only uses about nine days of holiday, which is less than 50%. Workers in other Far Eastern countries use all or almost all of their holiday. So, Japanese workers work longer hours and take less holiday than employees in many other countries in the Far East region. There is even a word in the Japanese language – *karoshi* – which means working so hard that you kill yourself.
- 3 But now, the Japanese government is asking companies to let their employees leave work at 3pm on the last Friday of every month. The government hopes that employees will use the extra free time to spend money in shops and restaurants and help the economy.
- 4 Some big Japanese companies like the government's new idea and say that their employees can leave work at 3pm on one Friday each month if they want to. However, almost half of Japanese companies say they do not have any plans to change their working hours.
- 5 Many Japanese workers, especially new employees, often go home late from work, even when they have nothing to do. This is because it is a tradition in Japan for junior employees never to leave work before their boss. Working long hours is also a sign that you are a good worker and that you are loyal to your company.
- 6 One young employee said she was enjoying her first free Friday afternoon. She and her friends went shopping and then went to a restaurant. Another said that it was very nice to do something different from work on a Friday afternoon.

4 Comprehension check

Match the beginnings to the endings to make statements about the text.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Japanese workers take ... | a. ... only uses about nine days of holiday. |
| 2. The Japanese government is asking companies ... | b. ... less holiday than employees in some other countries in the Far East region. |
| 3. The government hopes that employees will ... | c. ... leave work before their boss. |
| 4. A typical Japanese employee ... | d. ... do not have any plans to change their working hours. |
| 5. Junior employees do not ... | e. ... to let their employees leave work at 3pm on the last Friday of every month. |
| 6. Some Japanese companies say they ... | f. ... spend money in shops and restaurants and help the economy. |

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5 Chunks

Rearrange the words to make phrases from the text.

1. countries the world in other many around
2. nine day around every hours
3. region other countries Far East in the
4. every the last month Friday of
5. they even when to do nothing have
6. free extra the use time

6 Verb + noun collocations

Match the verbs in the left-hand column with the nouns or noun phrases in the right-hand column to make expressions from the text.

- | | |
|----------|-----------------|
| 1. work | a. plans |
| 2. have | b. money |
| 3. take | c. long hours |
| 4. spend | d. less holiday |

7 Word stress

Put these words from the text into three groups according to their stress.

government

Japanese

tradition

employee

company

especially

A 0 o o	B o 0 o	C o o 0

8 Discussion

- Is it a good idea to give workers a free Friday afternoon? Why? Why not?
- Do people in your country work long hours?

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KEY

1 Warmer

1. more than
2. red and white
3. Tokyo
4. yen
5. emperor

2 Key words

1. typical
2. employee
3. tradition
4. junior
5. loyal

3 Find the information

1. nine
2. eight
3. 20
4. karoshi
5. on the last Friday of every month
6. almost half

4 Comprehension check

1. b
2. e
3. f
4. a
5. c
6. d

5 Chunks

1. in many other countries around the world
2. around nine hours every day
3. other countries in the Far East region
4. the last Friday of every month
5. even when they have nothing to do
6. use the extra free time

6 Verb + noun collocations

1. c
2. a
3. d
4. b

7 Word stress

A	0 0 0	B	o 0 o	C	o o 0
government company	tradition especially (can also be pronounced with an extra syllable - /ɪˈspeʃ(ə)li/)	Japanese employee			