

Buraku Youth Today: Findings from Recent Questionnaire Survey

From 2009 to 2010, the Central Headquarters of the Buraku Liberation League (BLL) conducted a survey through a questionnaire with the support of Buraku Liberation and Human Rights Institute. Although the final report is to be completed in due course, this serves as an interim report based on numerical results that are already available.

The aims of the survey were: i) to grasp the conditions of Buraku youth today for the purpose of improving conditions that may encourage youth to continue their involvement in the movement in their own communities; ii) to provide opportunities for Buraku youth, including those who have left Buraku communities, to develop a network; and iii) to help the BLL Youth Division expand linkages with youth in neighboring communities.

The survey was conducted with youth (aged 15 to 39) living both in and outside Buraku communities for a year, from July 2009 to July 2010. A total of 851 valid responses were received. As the survey was conducted through the Buraku Liberation League, it does not represent the whole picture of Buraku youth. It is reasonable to say that the survey was conducted with people with close ties to the BLL liberation movement. It is recommended that these results be viewed as an indication of the present condition of those who responded to the survey. Despite this, the responses from the 851 young people provide very precious data that cannot, by any means, be ignored.

1. Outline of Respondents

By regional block, those from the Kinki region account for 46.7% of all respondents, followed by 17.9% from Kyushu, 11.5% from Shikoku, 8.95% from Kanto, 8.5% from Chugoku, and 6.6% from Tokai. By sex, male respondents account for 66.2% while females account for 33.7%. By age group, those under twenty-years-old account for 13.0%, those between 20 to 24 account for 23.6%, those between 25 to 29 account for 25.1%, those between 30 to 34 account for 23.9%, and those above 35 account for 13.4%.

Regarding residence, those living in Buraku communities account for 67.6%, whereas those living outside Buraku communities account for 24.4%. This indicates that one-fourth of the respondents live outside Buraku communities.

Regarding educational background, those who completed primary education (up to junior high school, or dropped out from high school) account for 19.6%, those who completed secondary education (up to high school) account for 47.0%, and those who completed higher education (university or college) account for 32.4%. When comparing these figures with the national average, the responses of Buraku youth remain below average scores.

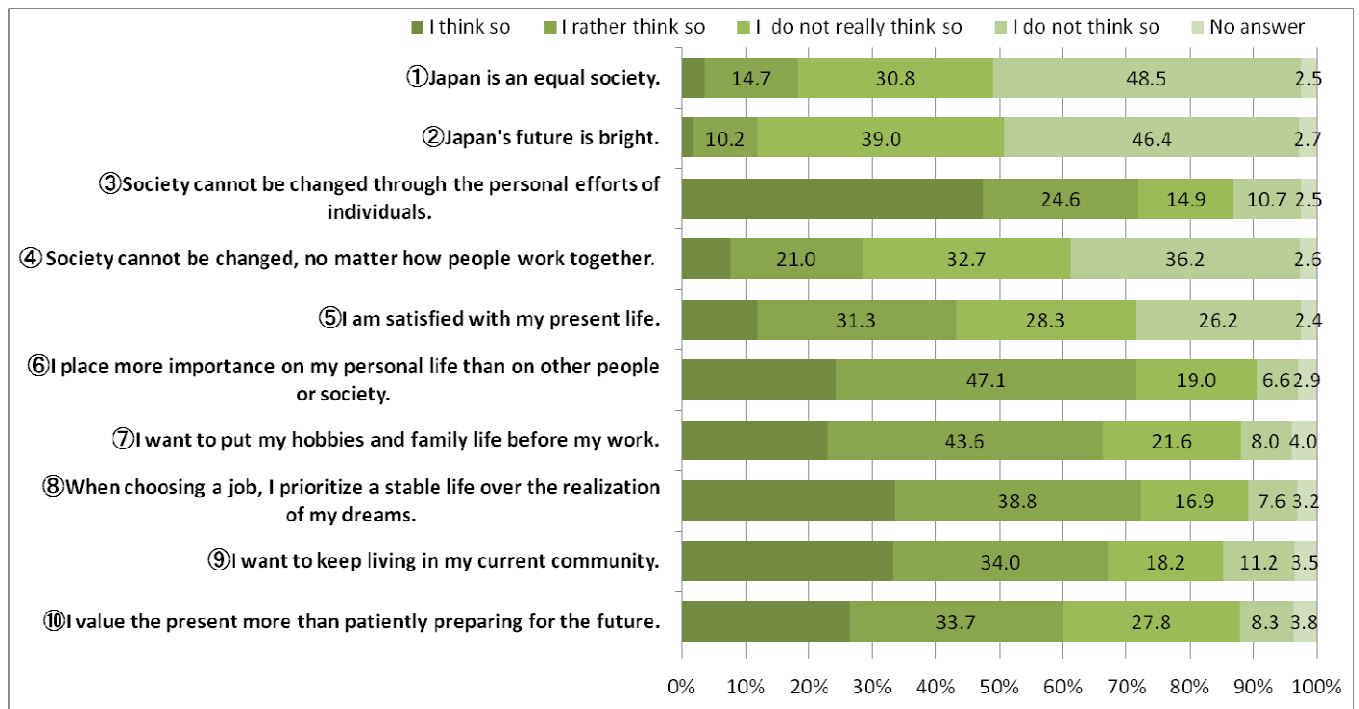
Regarding experiences of discrimination, 21.2% of respondents answered that they had been subjected to discrimination, while 14.5% said although they had never been subjected to it, they had witnessed discriminatory practices. By age group, the younger the respondents, the less they had of such experiences. It is good that younger people have less experience of being discriminated against, however, people who discriminate against others comprise a certain percentage of a total population at any time,

and the chances of Buraku youth being discriminated against rise as they become older and expand their network. It is reasonable to regard the results as demonstrating this.

2. Various Levels of Awareness

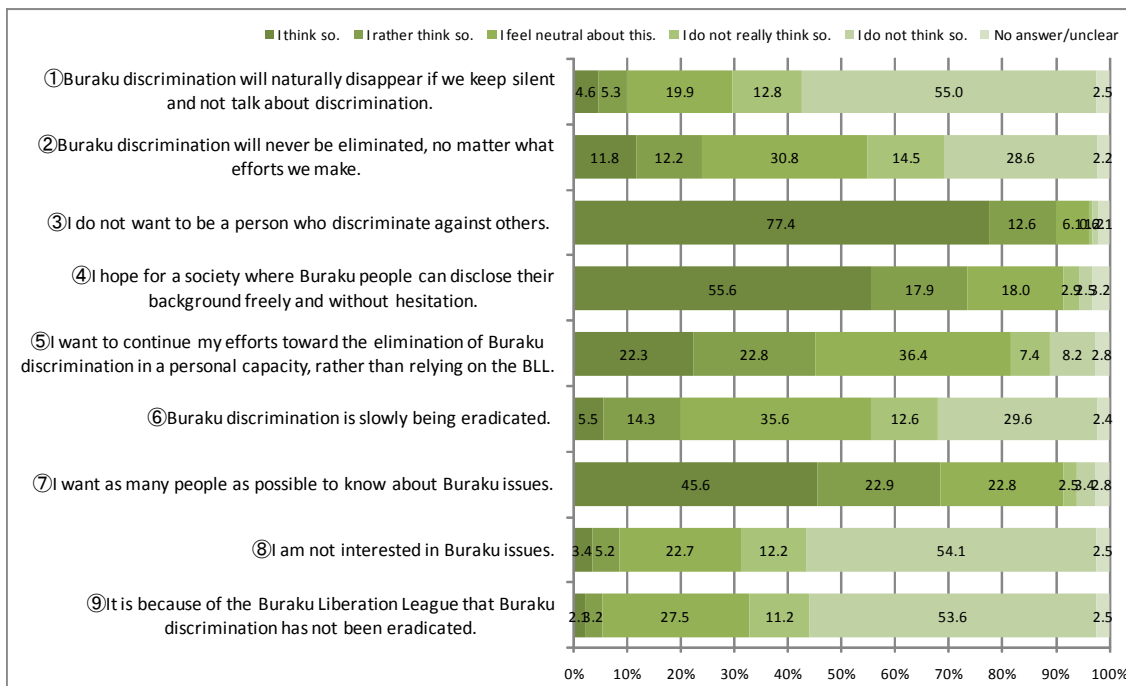
Regarding social awareness, the general tendency was for the respondents to view Japanese society as unequal, and to not be very positive about Japan’s future. Regarding how they viewed their lives, the respondents wanted to prioritize their personal lives and value things such as hobbies and family, rather than work. They tended to seek stability in life, rather than the realization of their dreams, and wanted to value the present, rather than the future.

Table 1: Social awareness



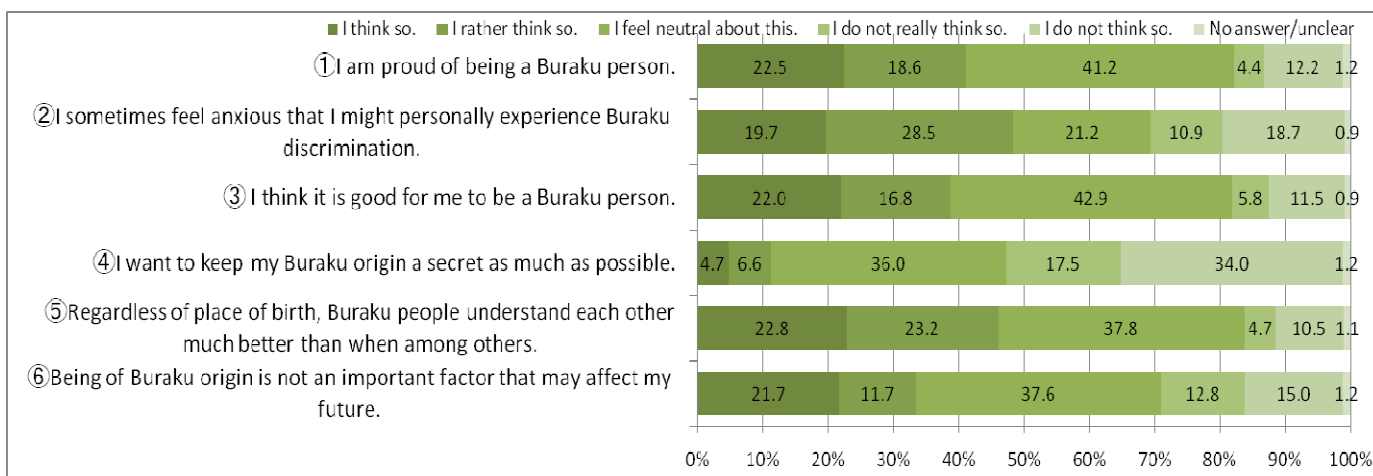
Regarding their awareness of Buraku issues (2), the respondents tended to consider the “Don’t wake the sleeping dog” attitude unhelpful in the eradication of discrimination, and were of the opinion that they would “not want to be a person who discriminates against others.” They also hoped for a society that allows Buraku people to feel at ease when identifying themselves as of Buraku origin. Their comments included: “I want to continue my work for the liberation of the Buraku,” “I do not think that Buraku discrimination has been eliminated,” “I want more people to become aware of Buraku issues,” and “I am interested in Buraku issues.”

Table 2: Awareness of Buraku Issues



In the survey, 75.3% of respondents answered that they were aware of their Buraku origins. A deeper insight shows that half of them felt anxiety about being discriminated against, while more than half did not want to “hide their Buraku origin.” Also, those who were proud of being Buraku or who felt good about it accounted for about 40%.

Table 3: Awareness of Being Buraku



3. Involvement in the Buraku liberation movement

Of the respondents, 53.5% identified themselves as currently participating in the movement, while 36.5% did not. These figures are regardless of residence; i.e. includes those living both in and outside Buraku communities. This demonstrates the fact that Buraku youth living outside Buraku communities also take part in the current Buraku movement. Reasons why they had joined the movement include: to eradicate discrimination; to not be defeated by discrimination; for my own benefit; it was mandatory; attachment to their home town (community); personal relations in the community; and to gain joy.

Those currently not participating in the movement were asked if they would join in future. Those who indicated “want to join” came to 26.4%, while those who did not, 62.3%. The main reason for not currently participating was that they were “busy with work,” accounting for 49.5%. Other reasons included: not knowing what the movement did; not interested; and not wanting to be bound to the organization, accounting for about 20%.

The questionnaire also invited requests or ideas for the eradication of discrimination to the BLL. Many stated that they: “request the BLL to change the organization’s atmosphere or structure to encourage more participation from the youth”; “wish that more people could know about Buraku issues”; “the mass-media or Internet be used for this purpose”; and “want the BLL to make everything open.” Also, many requested the promotion of “human rights education at school and workplace.” Ideas to eradicate Buraku discrimination included: “make many friends, regardless of whether they are of Buraku origin or not,” and “encourage non-Buraku people to take part in the BLL’s programs.”

It is desired that these opinions of the youth are brought into future programs of the BLL.