

Empowering change: The crucial role of education in women's business leadership



Supporting women's participation in economics and politics

Ayuko Kato
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES MEMBER

In September 2023, I joined the second Kishida Cabinet as minister of state for policies related to children, measures for the declining birthrate, gender equality and women's empowerment. The core of the Cabinet's flagship "new capitalism" policy was "women's economic independence," and efforts were made to accelerate the promotion of women in companies, improve measures to support work-life balance and correct the gender pay gap.

In Japan, the number of women in decision-making positions is still low. There are particularly few women in the fields of economics and politics. The Global Gender Gap Index announced by the World Economic Forum in 2024 ranked Japan 118th out of 146 countries with a score of 0.663, with high scores in the categories of education and health but low scores in the categories of economics and politics. This is an improvement on the previous year's score, but further efforts are needed.

In order to develop female leaders, the Japanese government is working to fix long working hours and promote flexible working styles, and is encouraging companies to formulate action plans to achieve their targets for appointing female executives. The effects of these measures are gradually being seen. The

ratio of female executives in Japan has gradually increased over the past decade, rising at companies listed on the Prime market from 11.4% in 2022 to 13.4% in 2023. On the other hand, around 10% of the companies listed have no female executives, and the gap between Japan and the average for other Group of Seven and OECD countries remains large.

In this context, the Intensive Policy for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment 2023 set a target of increasing the ratio of female executives at leading Prime market-listed companies to at least 30% by 2030, and the Tokyo Stock Exchange established a listing system in October 2023 in response to the Intensive Policy. In addition, the Basic Plan for Gender Equality was revised in December, and new performance targets were set for 2025, including targets of 19% women among the executives of companies listed on the Prime market and zero such companies with no female executives. In order to achieve this goal, it is necessary to steadily build a pipeline for the promotion of women to management and, ultimately, board positions.

In addition to encouraging companies to change their behavior, I think it is also important to foster a social environment that is supportive of women who are active in society. Due to fixed gender-role perception and unconscious biases, women end up shouldering the burden of housework and child care,

and as a result are unable to secure sufficient time for work. In some cases, workplaces do not provide women with sufficient opportunities for the education and experience necessary for promotion to managerial positions, regardless of their wishes. We also have to face the reality that women sometimes have no choice but to leave their jobs or switch to irregular employment due to childbirth, child care or their spouse's transfer.

According to a public opinion survey conducted by the Cabinet Office, when asked about what is necessary for men to more actively participate in housework and child care, the younger the men were, the more they answered that it is necessary to promote understanding among their superiors and colleagues at work, and the less they answered that it is necessary to eliminate the resistance among men themselves. I feel that the attitudes of the younger generation, who will be responsible for the future, are changing.

Although it can't be achieved overnight, we need to promote the development of a national consciousness that supports women who want to play an active role in society, and expand the use of support systems. I think it is also important for society as a whole to support women so they can draw up and realize the life plans they desire, keeping in mind life events such as marriage and childbirth as well as health issues specific to women.



Ayuko Kato
Born in 1979 in Tsuruoka, Yamagata Prefecture. Graduated from Keio University and worked in a consultancy firm and as a secretary before being elected in the 2014 general election. She is currently serving her third term. From September 2023 to September 2024, she served as the minister of state for child policy, youth empowerment, the declining birthrate and gender equality.

Cheltenham Ladies' College: Strong tradition and bold innovation toward an equitable future

Jake Reed
Contributing writer

Recently celebrating its 170th anniversary, Cheltenham Ladies' College has been a bastion of education for girls and young women ages 11 to 18. From its Victorian roots to its role today as a global educational leader, with students from over 40 countries and 80% of them boarding, CLC continues to evolve under the guidance of its 11th principal, Eve Jardine-Young. In an interview, she shared insights into the college's enduring legacy, its pioneering connections with Japan and the ongoing challenge of preparing students for an unpredictable future.

Tradition as a catalyst

Jardine-Young emphasized the value of tradition not as a constraint, but as a source of courage and belonging by connecting students with the past and those who came before. "There's this idea of 'cherishing' that I think is crucial. We don't value traditions out of a sense of obligation, but out of free will. Once upon a time, these great women that came before us were 11 years old as well, and grew to be amazing leaders, taking it one day

simultaneously considering what could be relinquished while maintaining CLC's roots is a constant challenge.

The COVID-19 pandemic tested this balance in unprecedented ways. As children were quarantined at home and schools scrambled to adapt, Cheltenham, as a boarding school, faced the additional challenge of maintaining its high standards across multiple time zones. "We were forced through crisis into a period of digital galvanization. We had to rise to the challenge, having no road map nor traditions whatsoever," she recalled.

But when the pandemic began to abate and the college resumed face-to-face schooling, the students craved a return to the traditions that had been seized from them. "The Christmas panto, the Wednesday morning anthem — I believe these were the primal sense of reassurance that normality is returning," she said. The survival of traditions through some of the most tumultuous moments of history — from the bombing of a part of the school during World War II and the COVID-19 pandemic — shows that "they are in the hearts and minds of the students. For me, those traditions have earned their place in our modern experience."



Eve Jardine-Young, Cheltenham Ladies' College's 11th principal. CLC

and her Japanese counterparts are included. One letter from Tsuda thanked Beale for her hospitality and tour of the college. She wrote that "it is indeed a wonderful institution and a living symbol of the progress of your women during the last 30 or 40 years. May we in Japan do as much in the coming ones." After returning to Japan, Tsuda founded the famous Tsuda University, inspired by what she witnessed while abroad.

Beale's correspondence with these Japanese reformers was more than just an exchange of letters. It was a dialogue about inclusivity and the future of women's roles in global society. "When you consider the existing asymmetry of the genders in virtually every country, the work is not finished," Jardine-Young averred. "We're not just forward-looking for the sake of it. It is about our shared endeavor to try and build a more open and inclusive set of opportunities for our children."

Cheltenham's influence persists in Japan today through ongoing partnerships with sister schools. The college hosts a summer school program for students from five Japanese girls schools in which they spend two weeks in Cheltenham, visit Stratford-upon-Avon — the birthplace of Shakespeare — and become members of CLC's flourishing international community.

Encouraging women in STEM

When it comes to women's education, the relatively low number of women in STEM fields is a constant point of concern. CLC strives to provide a holistic education that includes these topics, pushing against gender stereotypes since its founding days. "Our founders — four fathers of daughters — were united in their determination to create a more equitable beginning," Jardine-Young noted. "They asked, 'Why can't our daughters study maths and science?'" and set out to "educate their minds" regardless of barriers to entering the workforce.

At Cheltenham, things are different. "It just doesn't occur to anyone here that they can't do anything. The most popular subject studied here is maths," Jardine-Young said, adding that students' interest in STEM persists into their upper-level studies even when the courses become optional. As evidenced in photographs taken as early as 1876 and up to the

present day, the college has placed science and math "on equal footing" with other subjects despite there being historically a dearth of employment opportunities for women.

With a background in engineering, Jardine-Young believes that a solid foundation in the sciences provides invaluable skills regardless of where a student goes in life. "STEM forces zero tolerance for errors. When you take that into areas of more subjective thinking, it's good for your mind to have that discipline," she explained. She drew a comparison to her mother, who can play the piano by ear but never acquired the ability to read music. "She is so frustrated because she can only ever get to a certain ceiling," she said. Lacking a bottom-up analytical framework like STEM offers can severely limit a student's potential elsewhere.

Preparing for uncertain future

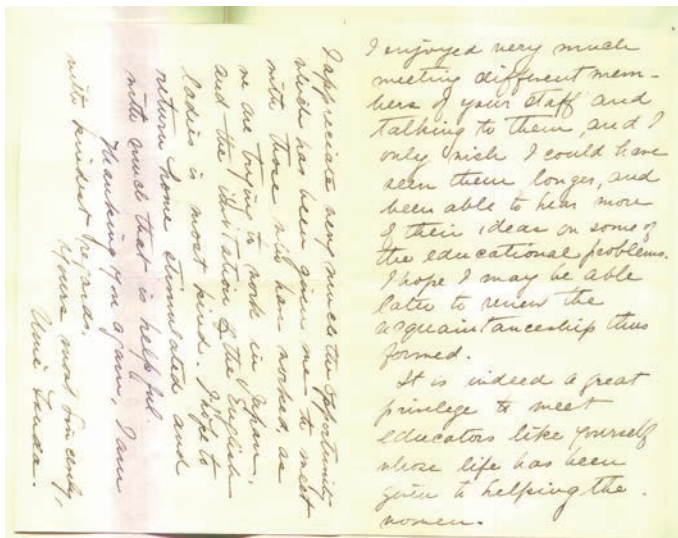
"The further out in time you go, the less clear I am about the world we are trying to prepare students for," Jardine-Young said. Citing issues from the threat of climate change and the growth of divisive politics to the rapid rate of technological developments, she sees many challenges ahead. But amid the fog-shrouded future, she is hopeful that education and the younger generation can play a decisive role in designing better futures.

She believes that the students of "Gen C" — the COVID generation — may have acquired a resilience and skill set during the pandemic that will grow more apparent over time. "We haven't yet found our way to the language to describe the strengths of weathering COVID," she said. She is excited about what they will bring to the table when they become adults and the world is faced with another global crisis such as climate change: "They won't have the same set of assumptions that we have about what is possible, and their shared experience will inform their courage and their potential ability to collaborate."

Despite an unclear outlook, it is still the task of schools to prepare students as best they can, and in Jardine-Young's mind, Shakespeare said it best: "The readiness is all." Being paralyzed by uncertainty is unacceptable. "We have to get better at making decisions that are still thoughtful, but with imperfect information," she asserted. As for CLC's role, she endeavors for it to be "a place where we welcome girls with the potential and appetite to try, to be responsive, to be challenged, not to just be leaders, but to be capable of leadership — to understand the relational choreography that is not just all about 'me,' but also about followership and allyship."

One thing she is certain of, however, is the timelessness and importance of engaging with values central to humanity.

She traced a direct line from Dorothea Beale and the school's legacy up to the present day. Beale "sat here with those Japanese guests, and they talked about the world — about love, family, justice, opportunity, happiness, striving and need. ... And those are the same values we're discussing today, and will also in the future."



A letter to Miss Beale from Umeko Tsuda. CLC

at a time," she said.

While tradition is a cornerstone of Cheltenham's identity, Jardine-Young is mindful of the potential pitfalls of an overreliance on it. Schools as old as Cheltenham that have a rich, inspirational history can "be the handbrake on how fast you can move and adapt," she acknowledged. "Something that enriches you can also be heavy baggage. As the years clock by and more tradition is behind you, you have to be more intentional about what you leave behind and what stays with you."

She is keenly aware of the tension between preserving these traditions and embracing innovation, admitting that CLC has had difficulty at times in distinguishing between traditions that align with its core educational values and those that are simply habitual. "The appetite is to keep adding more and more to the shopping trolley and not take anything out," she illustrated. Adapting new ideas and

Shared intercontinental vision

The college's relationship with Japan dates back to the 19th century, a time when women's education was still a radical concept. Under the stewardship of Dorothea Beale ("Miss Beale"), principal from 1858 until the day she died in 1906, the school became a symbol of female empowerment. Beale's influence extended far beyond British borders, reaching reformers like Utako Shimoda and Umeko Tsuda, who were likewise instrumental in establishing the foundations for women's education in Japan.

In the 1890s, Shimoda and Tsuda both visited Cheltenham Ladies' College as part of a Japanese government initiative to study Western practices regarding women's education. CLC Archivist Georgina Robinson showed one of several volumes of letters entitled "Letters to Miss Beale from Famous People" in which exchanges between Beale



The college has placed science and math "on equal footing" with other subjects from its beginning. CLC



Pupils' interest in STEM fields persists into their upper-level studies, Jardine-Young says. CLC



Cheltenham Ladies' College, then and now

CLC is an independent boarding and day school for girls ages 11 to 18 in Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, England. Founded in 1853, the college is celebrating 170 years of history, with its pupils having grown from 82 in the first year to approximately 850 today, and coming from over 40 countries. The college says, "Education is about the person you become while you gain your grades ... full of joy, excitement and challenge."



CLC's vast archives include about 4,500 books and thousands of photos. Here, photo 1 shows how the Princess Hall – still one of the largest and most impressive structures at the college – was used as a makeshift hospital during World War I, when the college served as a branch of the Red Cross. Photo 2 shows seniors attending a class during the war.

Currently over 150 co-curricular activities are available for the pupils. The continuity of school life from past to present can be seen in pictures of the iconic Marble Corridor, built in the late Victorian era, in 1930 (photo 3) and today, as well as pupils on the college grounds in the 1950s (4, 5) and today.

In 1953, celebrations for the school's centenary were held at the college garden (6), where students still enjoy time with friends.

(All photos were provided by CLC)

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Top-level involvement is vital for women's further advancement

Yuko Takahashi
PRESIDENT OF TSUDA UNIVERSITY

Our founder, Umeko Tsuda, established Tsuda University in 1900. Umeko bravely challenged the patriarchal norms and customs of Meiji Era Japan and served as a pioneer in promoting women's participation in higher education. As of 2024, Umeko's image is featured on the new Japanese ¥5,000 note in recognition of her unique accomplishments. Her goal was to ensure that students develop in an "all-round" way to nurture independent women who can collaboratively work with men and contribute to society.

Is the Japan of today the one that Umeko visualized?

The World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index 2024 places Japan at 118th, indicating how underrepresented women in Japan are in the political and economic fields. Since we live under such conditions, it is difficult to imagine what society would be like if we could close the gap.

I believe that participation in the job market is not enough. Women's involvement in top management roles is vital.

Addressing this issue requires the presence of more role models in leadership posi-

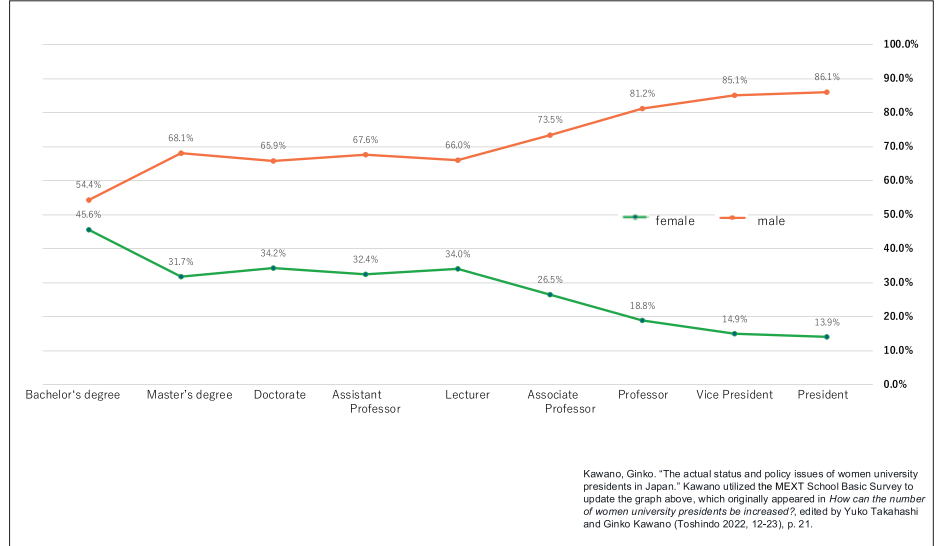


tions. Students benefit greatly from the mentorship of experienced women who have navigated various career paths. Women's universities, in particular, can provide an environment that significantly influences students' development and career choices.

When observing rituals such as entrance or graduation ceremonies in Japan, students predominantly see men in the roles of university representatives, such as presidents, board members or deans. This underrepresentation of women in such significant positions is a clear indication of the need for change.

Our university stands in stark contrast to this biased landscape. At Tsuda University, the majority of our presidents, deans and department chairs are — and have been — women. This representation is crucial in helping students envision their future roles. Schools like Tsuda University, with a significant presence of women in vital management positions, are essential for transforming the Japanese work environment.

Another crucial aspect that needs to be addressed is the encouragement of women in pursuing postgraduate education. The current number of women in graduate schools



This graph shows how the ratio of women decreases as the academic ladder progresses.

in Japan is significantly lower than the global average. As the academic ladder progresses to the master's and doctoral levels, the ratio of women decreases further, highlighting the urgent need for action (see graph above).

This distortion in the gender ratio has a significant impact on disparity in Japanese education. It influences the political and economic spheres as well. We need to increase the value of postgraduate education by providing competitive jobs and salaries for those who have earned postgraduate degrees. To achieve this, universities, companies and government agencies need to work together.

Tsuda University set out its strategy for the future under the heading "Tsuda Vision 2030." This lays out the university's approach to developing and enriching higher education for women in a way that responds to the demands of the age while staying true to the spirit of the university's founder, Umeko

Tsuda. The overarching ideas of the strategy are expressed in the motto "Empowering Women to Make a Difference." This reflects Umeko's spirit and acts as our foundation in leading women's higher education in Japan.

A long line of our graduates have pioneered in numerous fields: Ai Kume, one of the first women lawyers; Toshiko Yamane, the first woman diplomat; Mayumi Moriyama, the first woman chief cabinet secretary; and Kikue Yamakawa, the first woman to head the Women and Minors' Bureau at the Ministry of Labor. Tsuda University aims to extend this line of women whose leadership will make a difference.



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The 30% Club works for gender diversity in top posts

Kaori Shoji
Contributing writer

Japan is known for being one of the safest and most technologically advanced societies in the world. Yet it lags far behind the West when it comes to women's participation in society and the business world. Among the Group of Seven countries, Japan has the lowest percentage of women in executive positions in major corporations — a dismal 10% compared to the 30%-plus achieved by other nations. France heads the list, with 40% of top-tier corporate jobs held by women.

In 2020, Keidanren (the Japan Business Federation) decided that something must be done to improve Japan's gender balance, and announced that by 2030, the percentage will go up to 30.

The 30% baseline was an idea spawned in the U.K. in 2010. An organization called the 30% Club was launched by Dame Helena Morrissey as a call to increase the number of women in leadership positions at companies throughout the world. During the club's inception, more than 1,000 board chairs and CEOs across 20-plus countries signed up as members and aimed to boost to at least 30% the female representation in both their boardrooms and executive positions. Today, the 30% Club spans six continents with chapters from Mexico to Australia.



The 30% Club Japan officially kicked off on May 1, 2019. Since then, the chapter has advanced by leaps and bounds. By 2023, the percentage of women in board member positions among the TOPIX 100 companies had almost doubled to 19.6%.

The Japan chapter operates on the belief that a healthy gender balance in the top ranks of a major corporation will lead to a much better corporate environment in the present and long-term sustainability in the future. The chapter is fully aware that for many Japanese companies, the endorsement of gender diversity and equality are priority goals and believes that the 30% Club Japan can aid their realization.

Becoming an active member of the club will lead to more productive discussions, which in turn will lead to a more informed approach to bridging Japan's gender gap.

Membership is not limited to the corporate sector. The Japan chapter operates through three different working groups and other groups. The first group, the President's Committee, consists of Topix 100 companies and Mid 400 companies. The second is made up of institutional investors. The third consists of top-level universities.

The 30% Club Japan runs on volunteers, and all membership is free. For the first group, members are limited to CEOs of companies listed in the TOPIX 100 and Mid 400. For the second group, before becoming members, institutional investors are asked to sign a statement of intent that includes a passage saying, "Boards that genuinely embrace cognitive diversity, as manifested through appropriate gender representation and a broad spectrum of skills and experience, are more likely to achieve better outcomes for investors." The third group operates by the slogan "from classroom to boardroom" and endorses a pipeline from university campuses to companies that seek

a robust corporate culture through hiring and achieving gender diversity.

What the 30% Club Japan aims for, not just in Japan but worldwide, is to push forward the notion that gender diversity can, and will, make a genuinely positive change in the corporate environment. There is evidence in worldwide studies that says women are more likely than men to focus on emerging and urgent issues such as company culture and employee development — that the presence of women in leadership positions points to better corporate performance and the gaining of a more competitive edge in global markets.

Among other key findings, women are three times more likely to recommend ethnic diversity. Women are also 50% more inclined to raise performance on ESG (environmental, social and governance) issues as an area for improvement.

Hanneke Smits, global chair of the 30% Club, said: "The findings further confirm that a more gender-diverse group of board members will consider a greater variety of issues and ask a wider range of questions. There is evidence that female board directors place a greater priority on hiring diverse teams and therefore increasing access to a broader pool of skills and experience."

In other words, women occupying top-tier positions in the business world bring something different to the table than their male counterparts. And in this rapidly changing era, "different" is what makes the business world go round. In Japan, there is certainly a lot to hope for from the 30% Club. As Smits said, "Against the backdrop of a challenging macro and geopolitical environment, it's critical that companies harness the power of diverse talents at all levels of their organization to succeed."

<https://30percentclub.org/>



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The Japan Times presents the seminar Next Generation Education

Supported by The Japan-British Society

The Global Gender Gap Report released in 2023 by the World Economic Forum ranked Japan 125th out of 146 countries. The low ratio of women in leadership positions, particularly in politics and corporate management, is a continuing issue for Japan. The Japan Times has invited Eve Jardine-Young, the principal of Cheltenham Ladies' College, a world-class educational institution for women, to share her expertise in the education of women as future leaders. We believe this will be a valuable opportunity for companies and organizations working toward the advancement of women in Japanese society, as well as for anyone promoting girls' education and studies abroad.



KEYNOTE TALK
Eve Jardine-Young
Principal of Cheltenham Ladies' College

Date: Wednesday, Oct. 30, 2024 13:00 to 17:00 (reception 17:30 to 18:30)
Location: Hotel New Otani Tokyo (4-1 Kioi-cho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 102-8578)

PROGRAM SCHEDULE:

- 13:00 Doors open
- 13:30 Greetings from the organizer
- 13:45 Keynote talk by Eve Jardine-Young, principal of Cheltenham Ladies' College
- 14:30 Panel discussions
- 17:00 Doors close, followed by reception at 17:30

Language: English Global session (14:30-15:40)

Companies with active women in the workplace

MODERATOR
Mio Takaoka
Partner at DNX Ventures



June Miyachi
President & CEO of Cartier Japan
After graduating from Kyoto University, Miyachi began her career in investment banking. She developed her career in the luxury industry after getting an MBA at INSEAD. In 2017, she joined Cartier, Richemont Japan Ltd. and was appointed as Cartier Japan president and CEO in August 2020.



Alison Beale
Director, University of Oxford Japan Office
After graduating from the University of Oxford, Beale came to Japan on the JET Programme before embarking on a career in international cultural relations, principally with the British Council. In her current role, she develops partnerships for the university with businesses, foundations, alumni and media in Japan. She holds voluntary positions in the British Chamber of Commerce and the Japan-British Society. She is also on the Board of the Inamori Foundation and the New National Theatre, Tokyo.



Michael Rob Gray
Adviser to Jinseki International School and senior adviser to Institut Le Rosey
Gray serves as an adviser to Jinseki International School (2021-present) and senior adviser to the Swiss boarding school Institut Le Rosey (2019-present). After serving as headmaster of the Swiss boarding school Le Rosey (2002-2019), he was headmaster of Le Regent, also in Switzerland, from 2020 to 2022. He is also a board member at Le Rosey (2014-present) and the John F. Kennedy International School in Saanen, Switzerland (2015-present).



Pierre-Yves Lombard
Representative director and head of private banking, Japan, Lombard Odier Group
Lombard manages Lombard Odier's private wealth management activities from its Tokyo offices. Previously he was deputy head of the private clients unit, Asia ex-Japan. He holds a master's in banking and finance with honors from the University of St. Gallen in Switzerland. He is a chartered financial analyst (CFA) and a member of the CFA Society of the United Kingdom. He is a full alumnus of the Harvard Business School.

Language: Japanese Japan session (15:45-16:45)

Challenges companies take on to be chosen by future generations

MODERATOR
Ryoko Ishihara
CEO of Surpass Co. Ltd.



Yumi Takaki
Senior general manager of the DEI Promotion Department, People and Culture Division, Suntory Holdings Ltd.
Takaki joined Suntory in 1996. After spending 10 years in a communications role in the PR department, handling magazine and TV publicity, she took on the role of brand manager for soft drinks, engaging in brand building and development activities. She then worked in the CEO's office, the corporate planning department and the cross-regional development department, where she participated in a cross-cultural branding project in France. She has been the head of DEI since April 2023.



Ayako Hirofuji
Corporate executive officer, executive officer, chief financial officer and chief DE&I officer, Shiseido Co. Ltd.
After working in investment banking, Hirofuji joined Shiseido, where she got involved in management planning and the management of overseas subsidiaries. Most recently, she assumed oversight roles in the strategic finance and financial areas of investor relations. From 2024, she has been involved in formulating DE&I strategies, aiming to enhance corporate values from both financial and nonfinancial perspectives. She also assumed the position of corporate executive officer, chief financial officer this July.



Kotaro Sueyoshi
Deputy general manager of the Sustainable Business Planning Team, Business Banking Coordination Department, Mizuho Financial Group Inc.
Since 2022, Sueyoshi has taken on the role of joint general manager of Mizuho's the Sustainable Business Promotion Department, where he leads the planning and promotion of sustainable business strategies. Regarded as one of the foremost experts on impact finance in Japan, he chairs the Data Index Subcommittee of the Impact Consortium led by Japan's Financial Services Agency. He is also a committee member of GSG Impact Japan and the Impact-driven Financial Initiative.

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Man vs. Woman

Monopoly vs. Share

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Politics vs. Science

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You vs. Me

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