

## Lowering the age of adulthood and the Coming-of-Age Day

In Japan the age of adulthood, in other words the legal age in which one is recognised as an adult, was lowered in April 2022 from 20 years old to 18 years old. The main factor promoting this change was the expansion of voting rights in all elections in 2016 to those aged 18 and over. Therefore, now high school students will be in the same class as students who have the right to vote and students who do not. However, due to concerns surrounding impact on physical growth and development, laws for smoking and drinking will remain at the age of 20 or over.

Coming-of-Age Day is a public holiday established in 1948 with the purpose of "celebrating and encouraging young people who realise that they have grown up and will now have the responsibility of looking after themselves." From the Nara period to the Edo period, a ceremony called 'Genpuku' was held on January 15th to celebrate the coming-of-age of boys between 12 to 16 years old. Therefore, January 15th became the national Coming-of-Age Day. However, in 2000, this date was changed to the second Monday of January in order to extend the number of consecutive holidays.

In mid-January, young people dressed in beautiful kimonos and suits can be seen walking the streets. Ceremonies, in which the mayor and other guests give congratulatory remarks, and youth representatives give speeches, are also broadcast on television. These ceremonies are known as the 'Coming-of-Age Ceremony' or 'Gathering to Celebrate the



Coming-of-Age', and are held by each municipal government. Although these ceremonies are mostly held on the national Coming-of-Age Day, in some areas where there are many young people who have left their hometown to find work or go to school, ceremonies are held to coincide with Golden Week, summer holidays, and Obon holidays in August. For many young new-adults, this celebration is not just about recognising their coming-of-age, but is a chance for them to rekindle old friendships with former classmates.

You may be wondering now that the legal age for adulthood has been lowered, who will be participating in the 2023 coming-of-age ceremonies? For many 18-year-olds, this time of year is an important period in their studies, preparation for further education, and job hunting. Therefore, Miyazaki City has decided that to keep the coming-of-age ceremonies from 2023 focused on those turning 20-year-olds, but will be changing the name of this ceremony to the 'Gathering for 20-year-olds'. Additionally, Miyakonojo City and Nobeoka City have

announced that 'the ceremony will be held for 20-year-olds just as before'.

In any case, this ceremony is a good opportunity for both families and local areas to encourage their new adults in the beginning of this new chapter of their lives.

If you have any questions, opinions, or requests about this piece, please contact the Miyazaki International Exchange Association. TEL : 0985-32-8457 FAX : 0985-32-8512 Email : [miyainfo@mif.or.jp](mailto:miyainfo@mif.or.jp) If you have any questions or queries regarding everyday life, please consult the Miyazaki Foreign Residents Support Centre. TEL : 0985-41-5901 FAX : 0985-41-5902 Email : [support@mif.or.jp](mailto:support@mif.or.jp)