

保
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HOGOSHI

~ Volunteer Probation Officers ~



REHABILITATION BUREAU
MINISTRY OF JUSTICE
JAPAN

What are “Hogoshi”?

Hogoshi, or Volunteer Probation Officers, are citizen volunteers who support the rehabilitation of offenders. In Japan, the supervision of probationers and parolees (hereinafter referred to as “offenders”) is performed by professional probation officers (PPOs), and *hogoshi* support the efforts of PPOs by providing offenders with additional supervision and assistance.

The *Hogoshi* system can be traced back as early as the 1880s. In 1888, the “Shizuoka Prefecture Released Prisoners Protection Company” (a private halfway house) was established. It provided a residence for ex-prisoners and appointed about 1,700 volunteer workers throughout the prefecture to support ex-prisoners with counselling and assistance. These great efforts are said to be the precursor of the *Hogoshi* system.

Thereafter, the Volunteer Probation Officers Act (*Hogoshi* Act) was enacted in 1950, and the activities of these volunteers were accepted as a national system, which still continues today.



This badge is an official badge identifying the status of *hogoshi*. *Hogoshi* wear this badge when they perform their duties.

- Five Key Concepts of “Hogoshi” -

1 As a “Supporting Neighbor”

Hogoshi regularly interview offenders and guide them so that they can keep the conditions of their probation/parole, but this doesn't mean *hogoshi* just “monitor” them. Rather than being representatives of the government, they are “supporting neighbors”. *Hogoshi* occasionally invite offenders into their own homes and treat them to meals, attentively listen to their concerns and wishes of daily life, and give both kind and strict guidance as appropriate. Thus,



Interview of *Hogoshi*

the position of *hogoshi* as “supporting neighbors” enables continuous support for offenders even after the probation/parole period ends.

Dedication and Volunteering

Hogoshi are commissioned by the Minister of Justice and are given official status as part-time government officials based on the *Hogoshi Act*. *Hogoshi* serve for two years; however, they can be reappointed repeatedly. They are not paid salaries, but the government reimburses all or part of the expenses incurred in discharging their duties, such as transportation and communication expenses. Nevertheless, *hogoshi* enthusiastically help offenders solve their problems when in time of need, even during the night or during holidays.

This sincere attitude of *hogoshi* allows many offenders to reestablish self-respect, re-enter the community and live their lives independently without re-offending.

Community-Based

Hogoshi are not mere supplements or replacements for PPOs. Their strength of being local community members is what is unique to *hogoshi*. That is to say, as a knowledgeable local resident having familiarity with the community, they have the ability to leverage local social resources and organizations, cooperating with the various individuals involved, all of which contribute to the improved reintegration of offenders.

For offenders, the stage of community-based treatment is the exit point of the criminal justice system, and at the same time the re-entry point into society. As offenders start their new life, *hogoshi* – with strong reputations in the community – play an important role as liaisons that connect the offenders to the local community, which otherwise may exclude them, and give the offender a warm welcome.



Yellow Feather Campaign

~ Campaign to Give Society a Brighter Future ~

Crime prevention activities are carried out under the *hogoshi* initiative to build a safe and secure society.

A series of campaigns are conducted in order to foster a general understanding of the importance of offenders' social reintegration and crime prevention.

The "Campaign to Give Society a Brighter Future" (Yellow Feather Campaign), a nationwide movement which began in 1951, is organized under the leadership of the Ministry of Justice to promote public understanding of the rehabilitation of offenders. Collaborating with other organizations and volunteer groups, *hogoshi* carry out the campaign through various activities such as advertising campaigns, crime prevention meetings for residents, giving lectures on drug abuse and so on, as well as public relations activities through mass media and social media campaigns. In 2021, 867,395 people participated in the Yellow Feather campaign.



Hikone Castle Lit in Yellow: Yellow is the color that symbolizes the Campaign.



Offender Rehabilitation Support Centers

The Offender Rehabilitation Support Center was established as a base for *hogoshi* activities. These centers serve as facilities where any *hogoshi* activities can be conducted, such as interviews with offenders, *hogoshi* training programs, meetings between *hogoshi* and related bodies or even with community citizens and so on. A total of 886 centers have been established nationwide as of 2020.

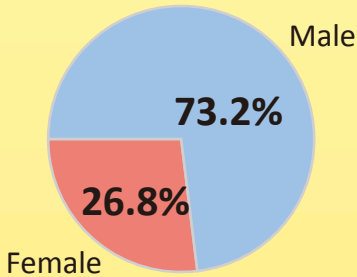
Throughout the country, *hogoshi* organize *hogoshi* associations and have a offender rehabilitation support center in each area.



Case Conference

Statistics on “Hogoshi”

1. Gender



2. Number of Hogoshi



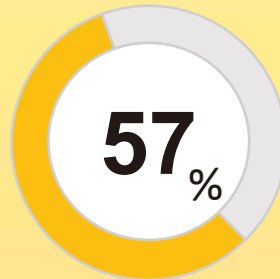
46,956 volunteers

3. Average Age

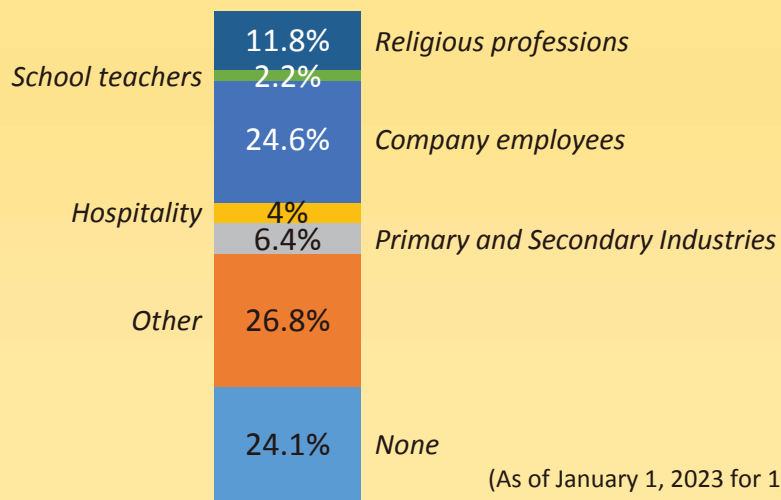
65.5
Years old

4. Years of Service

More than half of all *hogoshi* have been serving for more than eight years.



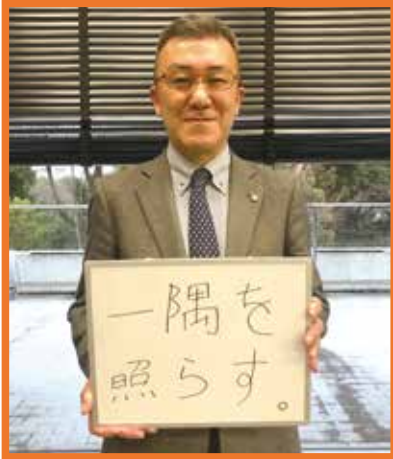
5. Occupation



(As of January 1, 2023 for 1,2,3 and 5)
(As of January 1, 2024)

-Messages from “Hogoshi”-

Hogoshi are working to help offenders rehabilitate themselves to create a safe and secure community. The following are some examples of the mottos they always keep in mind.



“Lightening up a corner”

I would like to guide offenders on the path to rehabilitation by accepting them into society as a neighbor. Each *hogoshi* is one light, but if we all come together as one, we can form a “formidable light” that can help to build a bright future.

“Making an effort with continuous self-development”

Hogoshi support offenders’ rehabilitation and provide volunteer work for local communities in order to build a society where everyone can live safely. Therefore, continuous self-development is essential for our activities.



“Accepting others without prejudice”

Regardless of who it is, I always try to accept the person as they are in a respectful manner and with open arms. It is my belief that “we are all human.”



The Volunteer Probation Officer (Hogoshi) system in Japan and the significance of Community Volunteers for community-based work internationally.

Stephen Pitts

Ambassador – Confederation of European Probation (CEP)
Consultant in Community-based Justice



The Volunteer Probation Officer (Hogoshi) system in Japan is remarkable in its scale and range of duties. It has been, and continues to be, an inspiration to probation and correctional services in Asia and beyond.

The reasons are not difficult to understand. Hogoshi in Japan are integral to the work of the probation services. Their central role is well-established; the first Hogoshi Act stems from 1950 and addresses many aspects of the Hogoshi system including volunteer qualifications and appointment. Although they volunteer time, experience and expertise, Hogoshi have the status of part-time national government officials (including compensation for injury). Among other distinguishing features are their extent of duties and presence throughout the country. The Act allows for the appointment of 52,500 Hogoshi, a number which means they frequently offer the core and critical contact with justice-involved individuals in all but more serious cases.

Hogoshi are supported in their work by local and national Associations, and are further guided and supported by formal arrangements with professional Probation Officers. Increasingly they have access to “Offender Rehabilitation Support Centres” . Hogoshi also promote system sustainability by encouraging other suitable volunteers. Furthermore, the Hogoshi system is complemented by other important volunteer organisations including the Women’s Associations for Rehabilitation Aid and Big Brothers and Sisters Association.

About 22,000 “Cooperating Employers” provide further important community support.

The Hogoshi system undoubtedly provides an exceptional example of community engagement in community-based justice work. Volunteers, working with people who may have complex backgrounds and needs, demonstrate the care of society, a belief that change is possible, and encourage optimism about an individual’s future. They also offer practical guidance and support in overcoming barriers to reintegration. As established members of the community, Hogoshi are well-placed to “demystify” probation practice and to encourage communities to accept and actively support reintegration. All are practices that evidence tells us are often central to an individual’s successful integration and desistance.

Internationally too, volunteers contribute a wide range of important roles, including work with higher risk persons (for example Circles of Support and Accountability which originated in Canada) or extending the “reach” of probation work with specific groups or in more remote areas. Whatever their precise role, volunteers, as so well-exemplified by the Hogoshi system, give practical expression to the Tokyo Rules’ encouragement of public participation in community-based work and to the unquestionable value of embedding probation work closely in the communities they serve.

17 April becomes “the International Day for Community Volunteers Supporting Offender Reintegration” (the Day for Volunteers).



About the International Day for Community Volunteers Supporting Offender Reintegration (17 April)

The Declaration on the International Day for Community Volunteers Supporting Offender Reintegration was endorsed at the Second World Congress for Community Volunteers Supporting Offender Reintegration on 17 April 2024 which was held as a parallel session of the Sixth World Congress on Probation and Parole in The Hague, the Netherlands. The Declaration mentioned the necessity of establishment of the Day for Volunteers to enhance global awareness of the efforts of community volunteers and to promote international networks among volunteers.

This movement will encourage and motivate the volunteers to facilitate offender rehabilitation and reintegration.

Please scan the QR code to access a short video on the importance of community volunteers in the offender rehabilitation field.



(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1UPhw2Q_EKw)

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Scan the QR code and visit
the Rehabilitation Bureau’s website.



Cover picture : “The Great Wave” by Katsushika Hokusai
Cover title: “保護司”written by Murakami Kosho (Hogoshi)

(https://www.moj.go.jp/EN/hogo1/soumu/hogo_index.html)