Event Report

GPAI Future of Work: Survey Report 2024 in Japan

Date	Thursday, 13 March, 2025, 16:00-18:00
Venue	Zoom Webinar
Organized by	Tokyo College, The University of Tokyo
Co-organized by	Institute for Future Initiatives, The University of Tokyo; Work Environment & Science & Technology Research Center, Doshisha University; Information Sciences and Arts, Toyo University
Collaborator	Japan Deep Learning Association
Supported by	Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry

GPAI Future of Work Working Group and Survey in Japan

The Global Partnership on AI (GPAI) is an international initiative dedicated to the development and use of "responsible AI" based on a human-centric approach.[1] GPAI has several working groups, one of which is the Future of Work (FoW) Working Group. As part of this working group's project work, case studies have been collected through student-led interview surveys in participating countries, with the aim of reflecting workplace situations in international discussions on how our ways of working will change as AI is introduced into the workplace. The Japan team, consisting of participants from several universities, has been conducting surveys for the project work since FY2021, and FY2024 was the fourth year for the team.[2]

At this event, students and professors who participated in the 2024 Japan team took the stage to present an overview of the survey and some of the findings obtained, as well as to discuss the significance and challenges of the survey. The program was as follows:

1. Opening Remarks
2. Introduction of the GPAI Future of Work
3. Overview of the Future of Work Survey 2024 in Japan
4. Student Panel Discussion
5. Professor Panel Discussion
6. Closing Remarks

1. Opening Remarks

The event commenced with opening remarks by Associate Professor Arisa Ema of the University of Tokyo. Associate Professor Ema provided an overview of the event's structure and mentioned that a report would be published at a later date.

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[1] GPAI website: https://gpai.ai/, https://www2.nict.go.jp/gpai-tokyo-esc/en/

2. Introduction of the GPAI Future of Work

Next, Professor Emeritus Yuko Harayama of Tohoku University, who served as 2020-2021 co-chair of the GPAI's "The Future of Work", provided an overview of GPAI's ongoing initiatives.

Professor Emeritus Harayama explained that various projects promoted by GPAI have facilitated the sharing of reports and active exchange of ideas within the community, thereby advancing discussions on the impacts of AI adoption. The annual Innovation Workshop also serves as a platform for cross-working group expert dialogue, and in 2025, it is scheduled to be hosted by GPAI Tokyo Expert Support Center[2].

One notable project under the "Future of Work" working group, titled "Empower AI Workers," has established a student community network across Japan, Mexico, and the United States, enabling collaborative corporate interview research. One of the primary objectives of this initiative is to promote exchange among student communities, with Japan having the longest-standing organization involved.

Currently, as a result of the integrated partnership with the OECD, GPAI is transitioning from version 1.0 to 2.0. For the 2025 cycle, GPAI has introduced two types of project frameworks: top-down projects led by GPAI itself, and GPAI Associate Projects proposed by experts. As part of the latter, Japan's student community has submitted a proposal for a "Student Community" project.

GPAI recognizes the importance of empowering the younger generation—future leaders of society—to take initiative, think from their own perspectives, and engage directly with stakeholders in shaping the future. Moving forward, GPAI intends to further develop frameworks that support such efforts.

3. Overview of the Future of Work Survey 2024 in Japan

Following this, Associate Professor Ema provided an overview of the survey conducted by the Japan team in FY2024. This year's project officially launched in April 2024 and was led primarily by students, including a total of 33 participants from Doshisha University (18 from the Fujimoto Laboratory and 15 from the Katsuno Laboratory) and 4 participants from the Nakano Laboratory at Toyo University. Notably, a new initiative called the "Student Gathering" was also held for the first time, facilitating interaction and discussion not only among students from the Japan team but also with those from overseas teams[3].

In this year's round of interviews, 34 cases were conducted across 11 industries: IT, information/telecommunications, software, finance, food, brewing, manufacturing, logistics, entertainment, translation, and public office/local government. The interview questions included topics such as the overview of implemented AI systems, the processes that led to their adoption, and how issues are addressed when problems arise. When classifying the AI systems used by the surveyed companies and local governments according to GPAI's category definitions (Table 1), it was found that "Digital Coworkers" accounted for half of the cases, followed by "Servant Proxies at 42% (Figure 1). Given that the selection of organizations to be surveyed is led by the students themselves, Associate Professor Ema suggested that the higher representation of "Digital Coworkers" and "Servant Proxies" systems may reflect the students'

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[2] Scheduled to be held at the end of May: https://www2.nict.go.jp/gpai-tokyo-esc/news/20250124_01/en/

[3] Event report:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1K5huFmhzJHFmSVhL3u5wM_aswu22RsD4/view?usp=sharing

tendency to focus on AI systems that frequently appear in the news and thus more readily capture their attention.

Table 1: Categories of AI systems in the GPAI survey

Servant Proxies

Solutions that replace the cognitive work of people in service relationships with other people, machines, or infrastructure (for instance: smart home hubs, autonomous vehicles, and digital assistants in the areas of sales and customer service, care robots, and concierge robots).

Digital Coworkers

Solutions that expand/support people's cognitive work by providing knowledge and information supporting decision-making, solving non-trivial problems, etc.

Autonomous Operations Platforms

Autonomous cyber-physical platforms offering technological and business services (automated factories and warehouses, and autonomous transport systems).
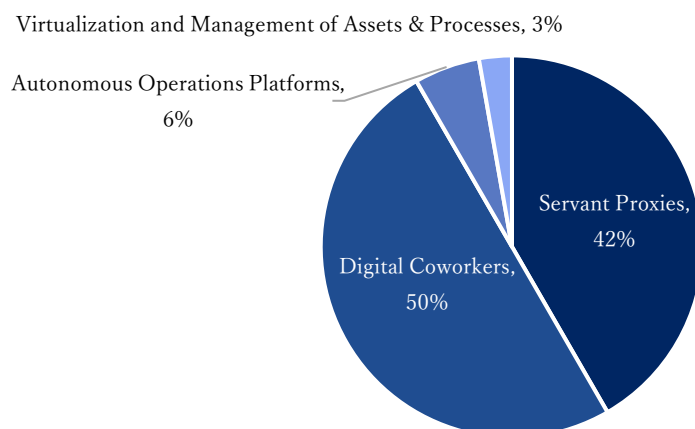
Virtualization and Management of Assets & Processes

Solutions that create a visualization and simulation environment (digital twin) for various assets (tangible assets such as buildings, machines, cities, etc./intangible assets such as processes, systems, etc.) and perform various operations (event prediction, configuration optimization, etc.)

Common Tools & Platforms

Horizontal tools and platforms facilitating the creation of solutions from other application classes (machine learning components, low-code environments focused AI solutions, etc.).

Figure 2: Percentage of each category of cases studied (Multiple choices available)

Virtualization and Management of Assets & Processes, 3%

Autonomous Operations Platforms, 6%

Servant Proxies, 42%

Digital Coworkers, 50%

Categories	n
Servant Proxies	15
Digital Coworkers	18
Autonomous Operations Platforms	2
Virtualization and Management of Assets & Processes	1
Common Tools & Platforms	0

4. Student Panel Discussion

Panelists:

Hiroaki Sato	Undergraduate Student, Faculty of Information Sciences and Arts, Toyo University (Nakano Laboratory)
Kagura Shibata	Undergraduate Student, Faculty of Social Studies, Doshisha University (Fujimoto Laboratory)
WANG Jingyu	Doctoral Student, Graduate School of Social Studies, Doshisha University (Katsuno Laboratory)

Moderator:

Arisa Ema	Associate Professor, The University of Tokyo

In the student panel discussion moderated by Associate Professor Ema, four students representing the four seminars involved in conducting the 2024 survey took the stage to discuss their findings gained through the survey.

The session began with an overview of the types of AI services each participant had investigated. Jingyu Wang, a doctoral student at Doshisha University, focused on AI assistant services that support everyday life and work. She examined software that functions as a chatbot to assist humans, and classified it as "Digital Coworkers." Kagura Shibata, an undergraduate student at Doshisha University, explored the use of generative AI in advertising agencies. His research examined a chatbot system designed to enhance employee creativity using internal data. This system was also categorized as "Digital Coworkers," as it complements and facilitates human output.

Hiroaki Sato, an undergraduate student at Toyo University, conducted a broad investigation into AI products aimed at improving operational efficiency, including AI image analysis solutions in agriculture. As these systems also rely on humans for final decision-making, he likewise classified them as "Digital Coworkers."

Next, the participants shared their perspectives on how AI is changing the nature of work. Ms. Wang highlighted the potential of AI to reduce the burden of communication through selectable dialogue options, while also cautioning against the risks of excessive personalization. She recommended a careful and deliberate approach to implementation. In response, Mr. Shibata focused on how AI can complement human experience and stimulate creative thinking. Mr. Sato noted that AI can accelerate both input and output processes, allowing individuals to dedicate more time to growth and decision-making.

The discussion then turned to perceptions of a society becoming increasingly busy due to AI. Mr. Sato

described AI as a catalyst that can accelerate personal growth, and Mr. Shibata emphasized the need for adaptation and recognized the positive aspects of increased productivity. In contrast, Ms. Wang stressed the importance of having time to pause and reflect, as well as the value of face-to-face communication.

Finally, the participants addressed the risks associated with AI and potential countermeasures. Mr. Sato pointed to the issue of AI bias, highlighting the importance of content filters and the role of AI ethics committees. Mr. Shibata raised concerns about data ownership, misinformation, and privacy protection. He emphasized the need to clearly define accountability and promote literacy, both within and beyond organizations, to manage different types of risks. Ms. Wang discussed the dangers of informational and emotional dependence on AI, as well as the challenges that may arise when AI services are discontinued. She argued that in addition to user-side precautions, institutional frameworks must also be developed.

5. Professor Panel Discussion

Panelists:

Masayo Fujimoto	Professor, Faculty of Social Studies, Doshisha University
Hirofumi Katsuno	Professor, Faculty of Social Studies, Doshisha University
Masafumi Nakano	Professor, Faculty of Information Sciences and Arts, Toyo University
Kosei Miyazaki	Professor, Faculty of Contemporary Economic Studies, Hyogo University

Moderator:

| Yuko Harayama | Professor Emeritus, Tohoku University; former 2020-2021 co-chair of the GPAI's "The Future of Work" |

In the professor panel discussion moderated by Dr. Harayama, four professors who were involved in the 2024 survey took the stage to discuss the significance and challenges of the survey, as well as the findings derived from guiding the survey.

The session began with each professor offering their insights into recent trends in corporate AI adoption. Professor Masayo Fujimoto of Doshisha University provided a multi-year analysis, noting that in FY2021, AI was primarily introduced by pioneering companies and government agencies. In FY2022 and FY2023, she observed an increase in adoption driven by the need to compensate for labor shortages and to preserve the expertise of veteran workers through AI learning before their retirement—a phenomenon she referred to as "vertical intergenerational transfer." Additionally, she identified efficiency-driven initiatives such as labor reduction and the transfer of advanced expertise to AI systems ("vertical transfer across skill levels"). She also pointed out the spread of adoption influenced by the "bandwagon effect," as well as the substitution of professional roles traditionally held by women. By FY2024, she noted a growing polarization in corporate AI strategies: some companies are focusing on governance, acquiring cutting-edge global knowledge on ethics and risk management, while others rely on AI service providers for these concerns and instead prioritize expanding the use and diffusion of AI technologies. Professor Max (Masafumi) Nakano of Toyo University remarked on changes in how humans interact with AI over the past three years. With increasing attention on AI risk management, he observed two distinct approaches: one in which humans actively engage with AI systems, and another where technology is expected to control the risks. He also noted that

the form of AI implementation differs based on company size, and that in local governments, the establishment of a support framework plays a crucial role in the success or failure of adoption. Professor Hirofumi Katsuno of Doshisha University highlighted a significant shift in the perception of AI risks over the past two years. He noted a growing interest in ethics and governance, as well as an increase in corporate information disclosure, which he found particularly striking. Professor Kosei Miyazaki of Hyogo University reflected on the challenges of conducting surveys in 2022 due to the limited number of companies implementing AI at that time. In 2023, the emergence of ChatGPT triggered a rush among companies to respond, once again making it difficult to conduct field research. However, by 2024, many companies had entered the AI utilization phase, making surveys smoother. He concluded by suggesting that the coming years may see the emergence of more concrete ethical challenges.

Following this, the discussion turned to the learning outcomes observed among both students and participating companies as a result of the project. Professor Katsuno noted that, given the limited opportunities for Japanese students to engage in academic discussions on ethics, the chance to examine ethical considerations through concrete case studies and interviews regarding AI utilization proved to be a highly valuable learning experience. Professor Nakano also commented that, through the process of learning business etiquette and how to write professional emails, students gained confidence, which positively influenced their job-hunting activities. He further observed that for companies, the project served as an opportunity to reflect on their approaches to AI utilization and the training of new employees. Professor Fujimoto added that students were able to witness both the positive and negative aspects of AI implementation firsthand, which contributed to their personal and academic growth. Regarding company responses, she mentioned that attitudes were polarized: while some companies took an active educational approach toward student engagement, others were more cautious due to concerns over information security. However, she also reported that some companies appreciated the project as it sparked internal discussions through the explanations provided to students, indicating that the project had educational value for the corporate side as well.

In closing, the participating professors shared their perspectives on the future direction of the research activities. Professor Miyazaki emphasized the need to expand the scope of research beyond the "future of work" to include issues and incidents arising from AI implementation. He proposed that exploring these challenges is essential for envisioning a framework for responsible AI. Professor Nakano acknowledged the positive impact of international student collaboration and pointed out the need for further discussion on whether to pursue thematic consistency or to encourage diversity in future projects. Professor Fujimoto highlighted that the widespread adoption of AI is being supported by a broad range of individuals, including those from non-STEM backgrounds. She stressed the importance of understanding social and cultural contexts and expressed a strong desire to promote international collaboration in AI literacy education. Professor Katsuno emphasized the value of interdisciplinary approaches that bridge the humanities and sciences. He also noted the importance of applying lessons learned from previous activities to real-world challenges and suggested leveraging networks with project alumni as a possible future asset. Professor Emeritus Harayama concluded by affirming the growing importance of discussions on responsible AI. She

also touched on the significance of sustaining international collaboration, ensuring consistency among efforts at Japanese universities, and pursuing interdisciplinary research that integrates both humanities and science. She concluded by stating that building intergenerational networks would be instrumental in further developing these efforts.

6. Closing Remarks

At the conclusion of the event, Mr. Yoichi Iida (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications) gave the closing remarks.

Mr. Iida reflected on previous events and shared that listening to students' voices had provided him with fresh perspectives. He was particularly struck by how naturally the digital-native generation accepts AI. He emphasized the importance of addressing both governance and practical implementation in order to realize a human-centric AI society amid the rapid advancement of AI technologies. He also noted that the integration of GPAI into the OECD has further strengthened the foundation for such efforts. In conclusion, he highlighted the need for continuous reassessment of how humans interact with AI and the development of relevant rules, especially as "agentic AI" becomes a reality. Mr. Iida closed by expressing his hopes that Japan will take a leading role in building an international AI ecosystem.

Following Mr. Iida's closing remarks, Associate Professor Ema requested further clarification on the concept of "agentic AI" from Mr. Iida and Professor Emeritus Harayama. Mr. Iida began by sharing that many stakeholders were surprised by reports from China of AI systems capable of autonomously executing tasks without human instructions. He emphasized that this development should not be seen solely as a threat, but rather as an opportunity to actively explore its applications—provided they remain human-centered. Professor Emeritus Harayama elaborated on the evolution from conventional "AI assistants," to "AI agents" that autonomously act based on human commands, and further toward "agentic AI," which approaches full autonomy. She pointed out that agentic AI encompasses two aspects: (1) its role as an intermediate stage prior to complete autonomy, and (2) its potential capacity to make decisions and act independently of human intervention. In relation to the latter, she introduced the concept of "agency" and raised the question of whether AI, like humans, can possess such agency. She stressed that in order to discuss the implications of agentic AI, it is essential to first consider the degree to which humans are able to maintain control. This, she argued, is no longer a matter of the distant future, but an urgent and present issue. In response to these supplementary explanations, Associate Professor Ema concluded that the categorization of AI in GPAI's research should be updated in accordance with technological progress, and that more granular, high-resolution analysis is needed. With this, the event came to a close.
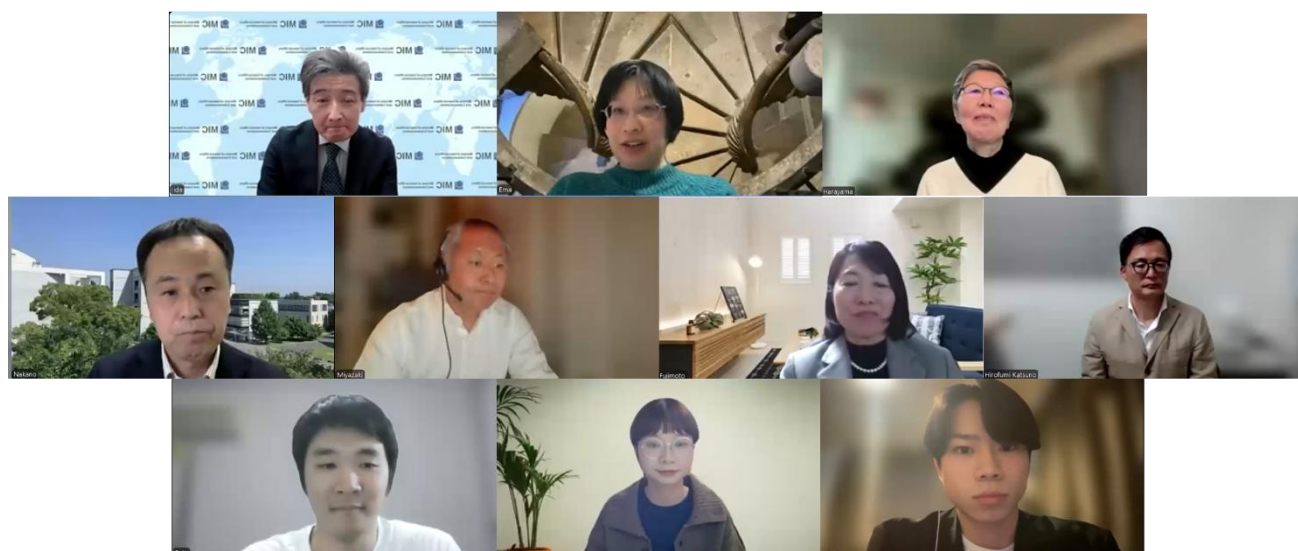
Top row from left to right: Mr. Iida, Associate Professor Ema and Professor Emeritus Harayama
Middle row from left to right: Professor Nakano, Professor Miyazaki, Professor Fujimoto, and Professor Katsuno
Bottom row from left to right: Mr. Sato, Ms. Wang and Mr. Shibata

References

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GPAI Future of Work website
GPAI Tokyo Expert Support Center
GPAI Summit 2022

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【Event report】GPAI Future of Work: Insights from International Survey
【Event report】GPAI Future of Work: Survey Report 2021 in Japan
【Event report】GPAI Future of Work: Survey Report 2022 in Japan
【Event report】GPAI Future of Work: Survey Report 2023 in Japan

【Report】Global Partnership on AI Future of Work Survey Report 2021
【Report】GPAI Future of Work 2022
【Report】GPAI Future of Work 2023

Based on a report by Manaka Karino