

A sculpture of a woman with multiple faces, each with a different expression, set against a grey background. The woman has short, bright pink hair and is wearing a pink jacket over a green top. The faces are arranged in a row, showing various emotions from happiness to sadness.

# Emotions on Mute

New Desires in a Society Learning to Hold Back

# Cautionary Note

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Contact: Hakuhood Institute of Life and Living: [seikatsusoken.info@hakuhood.co.jp](mailto:seikatsusoken.info@hakuhood.co.jp)

# Life and Living Update

The theme of the first edition is:

“Our Emotions”

Emotions are noise

Emotional capitalism

Whitening society

Consult AI on emotions

Emotion management

Emotion theft

Online shaming Emotional

Anger management

**How are “emotions” treated in  
Japanese society nowadays?**

Motivation Control

Empathy fatigue

Emotional capitalism

Emotional quotient

**Managers doing emotional labor**

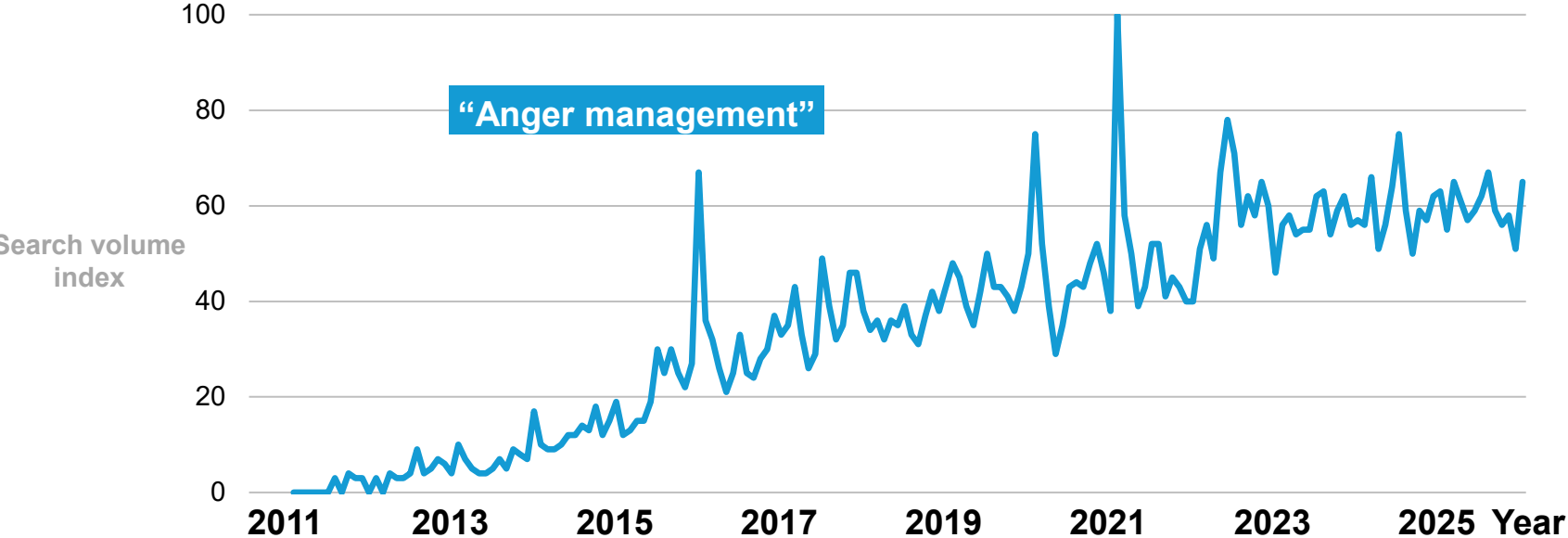
Lost in emotions

Emotional contagion

Consumption of emotions

Emmodity

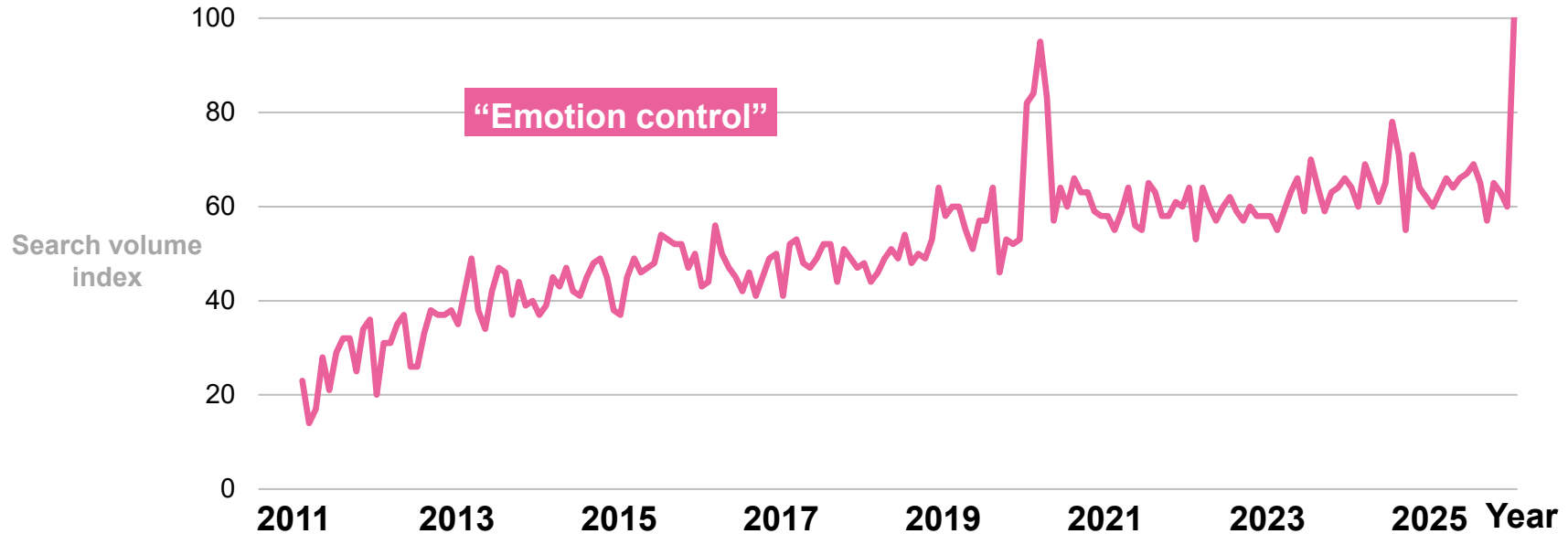
# Rising volume of searches with “anger management” as a keyword



Source: Compiled from Google Trend Japan Jan 2011–Dec 2025 (result of web searches in all categories with “anger management” as a keyword)

\*Data indicate relative interest in search in a specific region for a specific period, indexed on the maximum value on the chart.

# Heightened interest in “emotion control,” too



Source: Compiled from Google Trend Japan Jan 2011–Dec 2025 (result of web searches in all categories with “emotion control” as a keyword)

\*Data indicate relative interest in search in a specific region for a specific period, indexed on the maximum value on the chart.

Are *sei-katsu-sha* increasingly  
reluctant to let out their emotions?



Hakuhodo Institute of Life and Living :  
The Human-Led Intelligence Series 2026

# Emotions on Mute

New Desires in a Society Learning to Hold Back



1. What is the “Emotion-Muting Society”?
2. New desires in the “Emotion-Muting Society”
3. Requirements for businesses in the “Emotion-Muting Society”

1.

What is the “Emotion-Muting Society”?



## Survey outline

**We conducted a survey on attitudes toward “emotions.”**

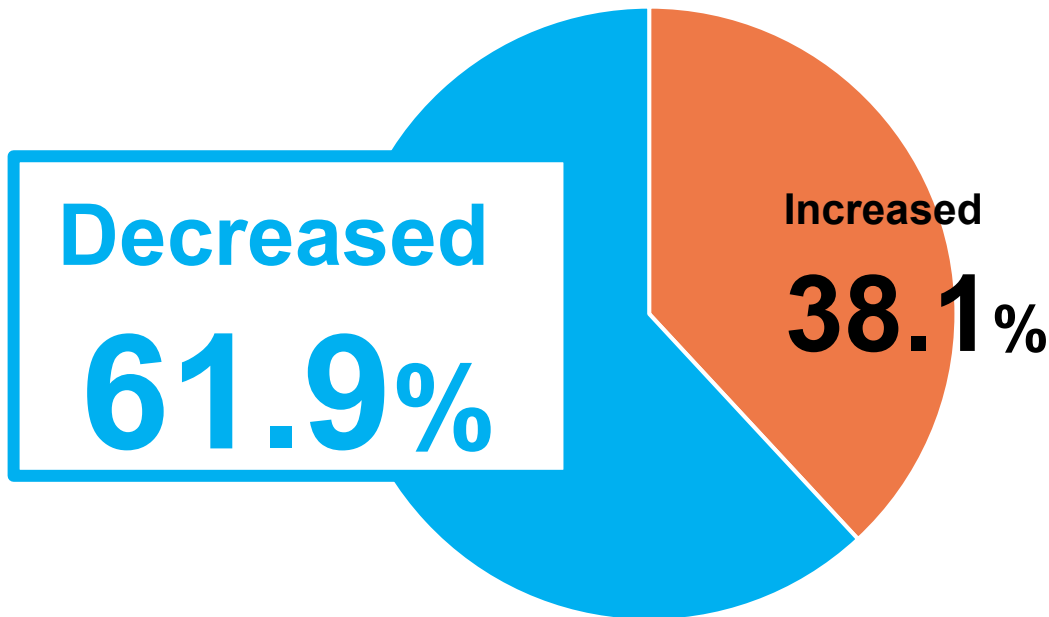
**Name** Attitude Survey on Emotions (Internet survey)

**Target** 20–69-year-olds

<b>Details</b>	Survey #1 (Aug 2025)	Nationwide	3,900 samples
	Survey #2 (Sep 2025)	Greater Tokyo/Nagoya/Hanshin areas	1,500 samples
	Survey #3 (Oct 2025)	Nationwide	3,914 samples

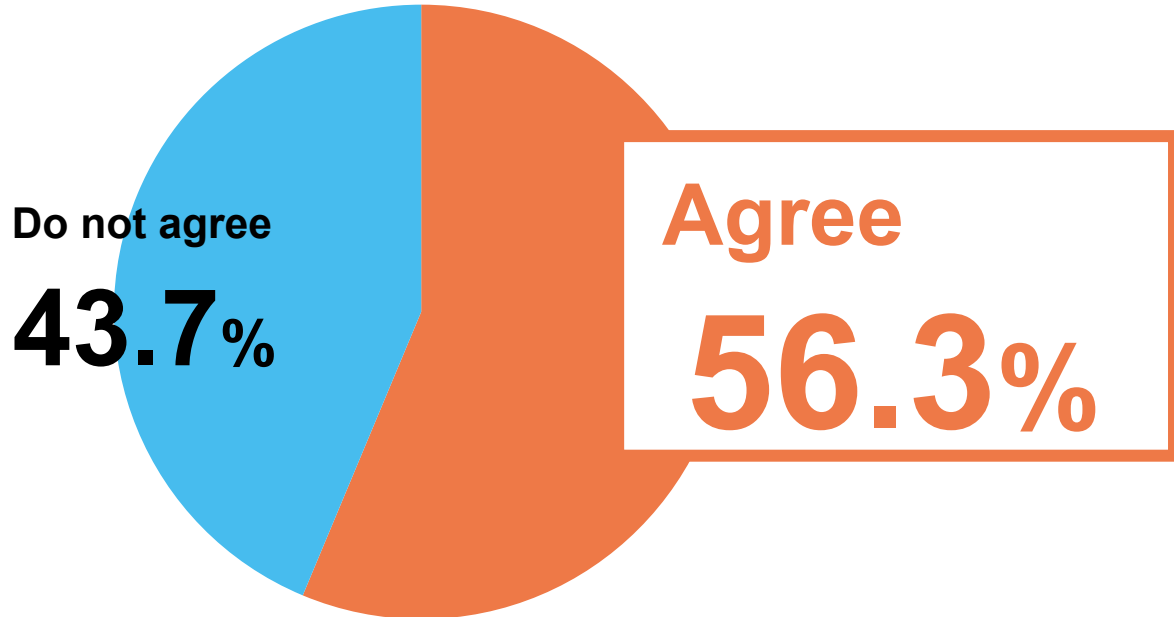
# People are feeling that they have fewer opportunities to let out emotions.

Change in opportunities to let out my feelings or emotions



# *Sei-katsu-sha* are “choosing” not to let out emotions.

I am choosing not to let out my emotions or feelings.



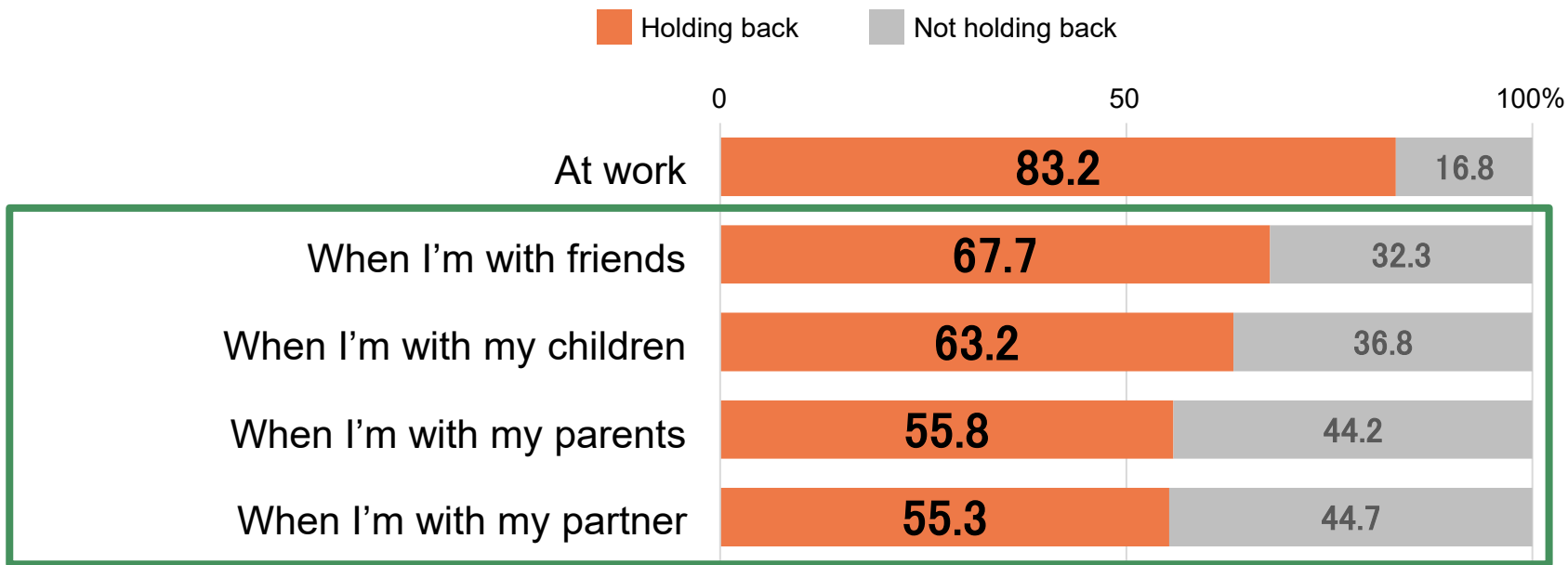
***Sei-katsu-sha* are not only environmentally  
“forced” to hold back emotions**

**but are also**

**“choosing” not to let them out.**

# Tendency to hold back emotions even in private

## Occasions when I'm holding back my feelings and emotions



# *Sei-katsu-sha* routinely holding back emotions

I apologize even when I'm not wrong to avoid spoiling the mood at home.

I end up hiding my emotions as a result.

(Male in his 40s)

I get irritated at times but find solutions on my own without telling anybody.

It's not anyone's business but mine anyway.

(Female in her 20s)

Spending 5 days a week at work has led me to build businesslike relationships with friends, holding back emotions.

(Female in her 30s)

Prevailing decisions not to let out emotions (1)

**Not only in business but  
also in daily life**

## *Sei-katsu-sha* controlling themselves with the expression: “high on xxx”



NAME  
@name

He asked me for advice but if I had replied immediately, I might have written something strange due to being **high on passing the exam**, so I'm keeping it as a draft for now.

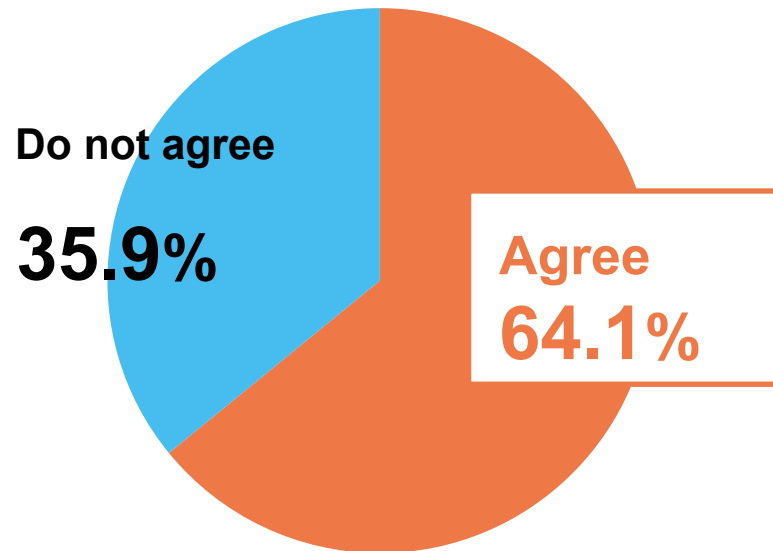


NAME  
@name

I'm using a bullet train instead of an overnight bus because I got promoted. Should be looking out for a buying binge, **high on the promotion** (-\_-;)

## People are also trying to hold back positive emotions.

When a good thing happens, I sometimes try to calm myself to avoid getting carried away.



Prevailing decisions not to let out emotions (2)

**Not only negative but  
also positive emotions**

## Prevailing decisions not to let out emotions

Not only business but also  
**in daily life**

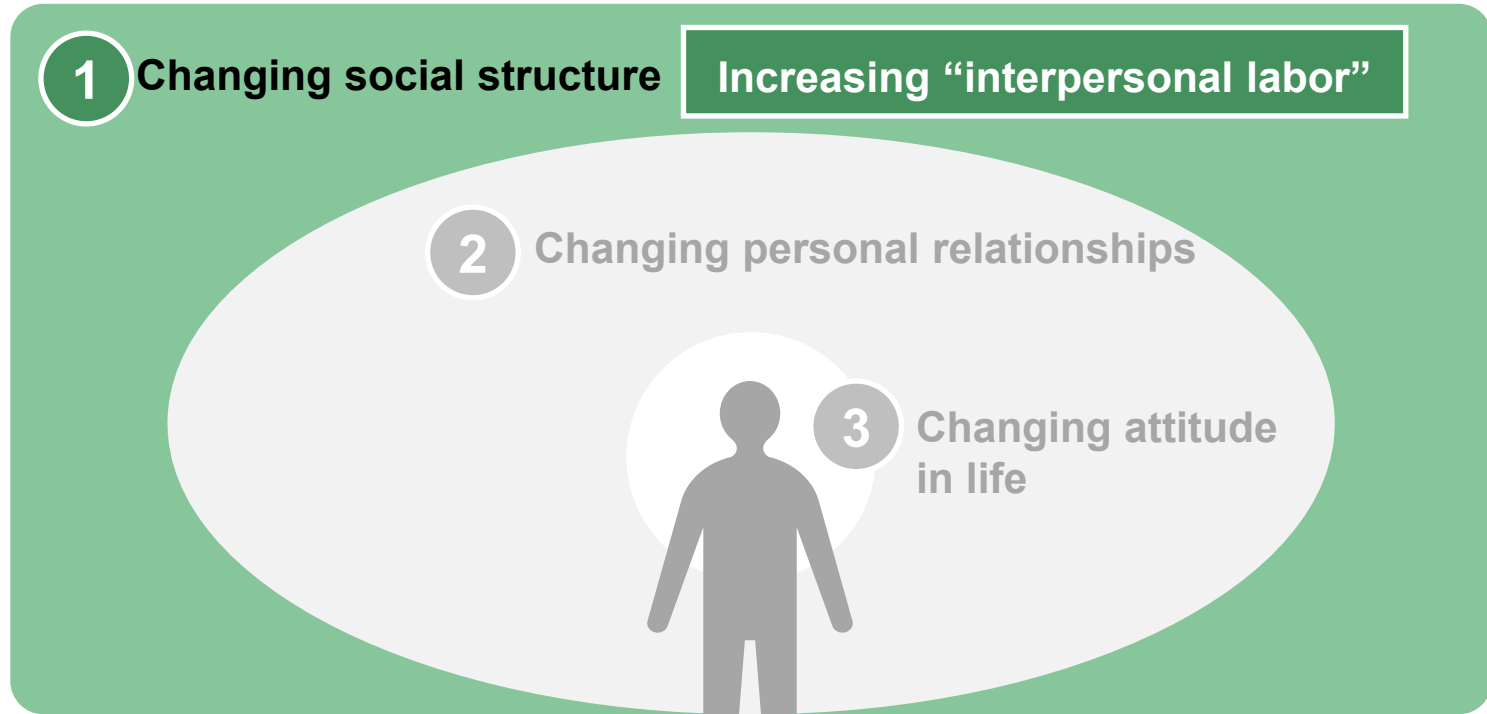
Not only negative but also  
**positive emotions**

# the “Emotion-Muting Society”

Modern society where choosing not to communicate emotions to others is a new norm among *sei-katsu-sha*

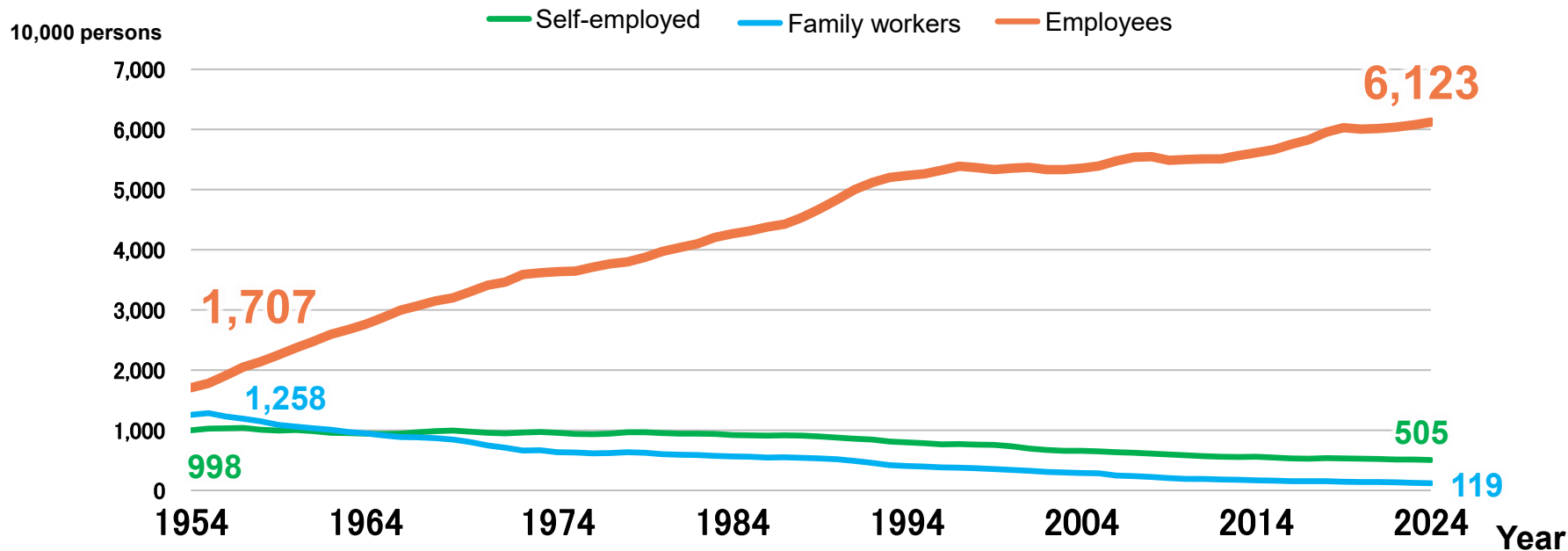


# Factors behind the emergence of the “Emotion-Muting Society”



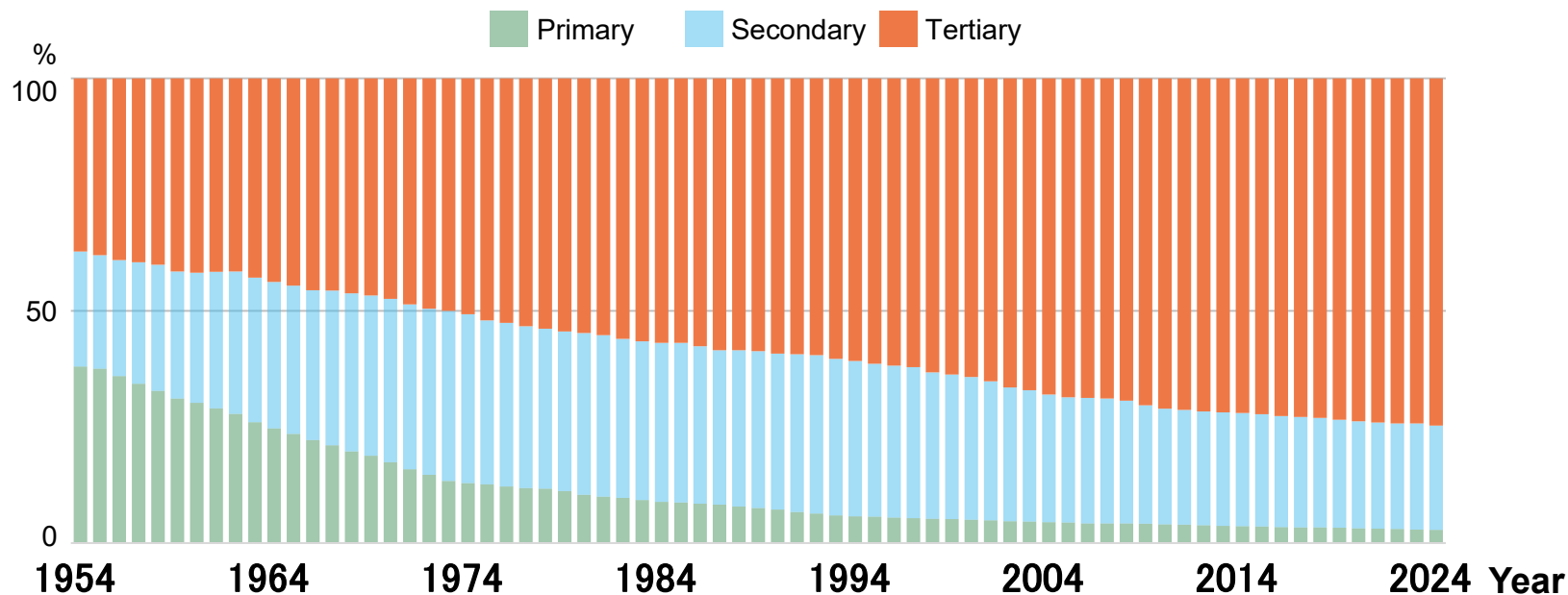
# More employees means more people working with others

Number of workers by status of employment



# Growth of tertiary industry means more people-facing jobs.

Number of workers by industry



Source: The Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training, "Long-Term Labor Statistics at a Glance" (Fig. 4: Number of Workers by Industry)

## 1 Changing social structure

Amid the growth of “interpersonal labor,” letting out emotions makes it difficult to get the job done.



Holding back emotions

**Makes life easier**

# Factors behind the emergence of the “Emotion-Muting Society”

1

Changing social structure

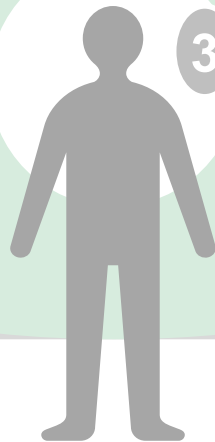
2

Changing personal relationships

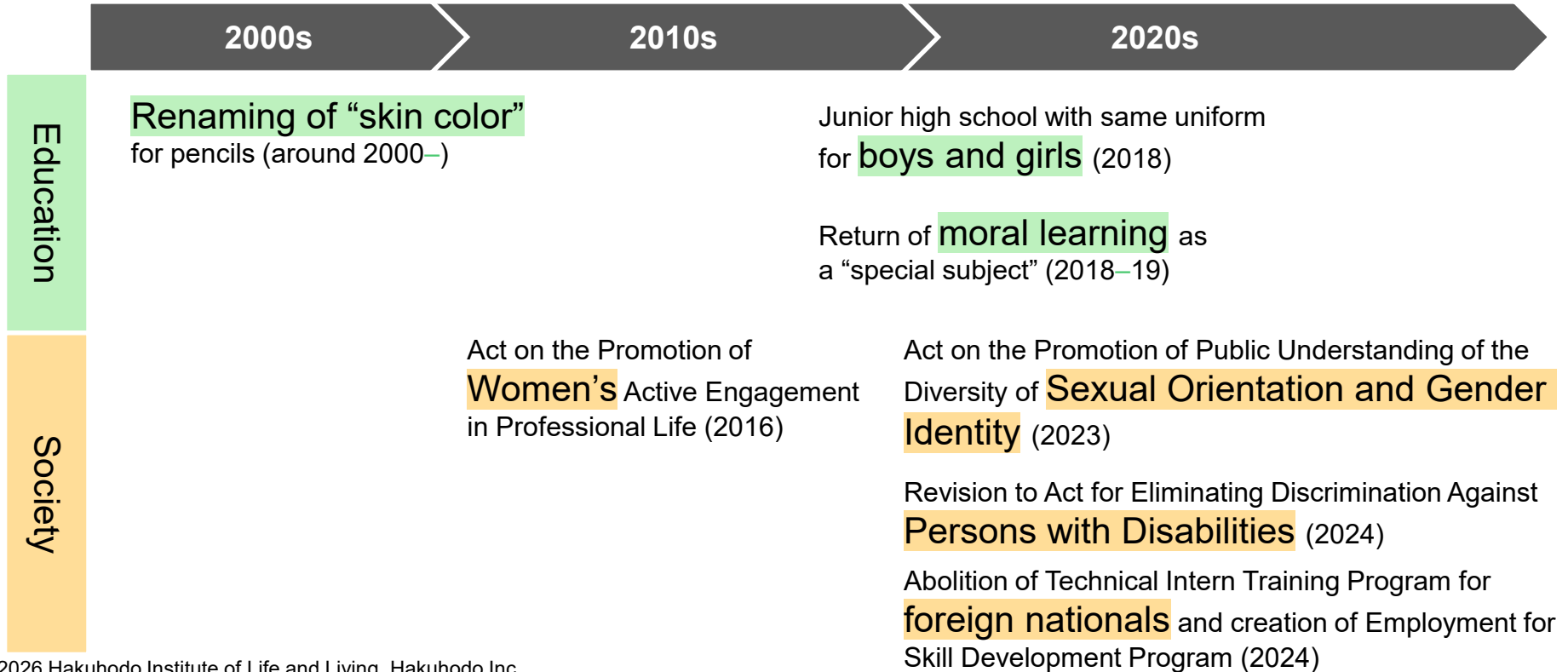
**Penetration of “diversity considerations”**

3

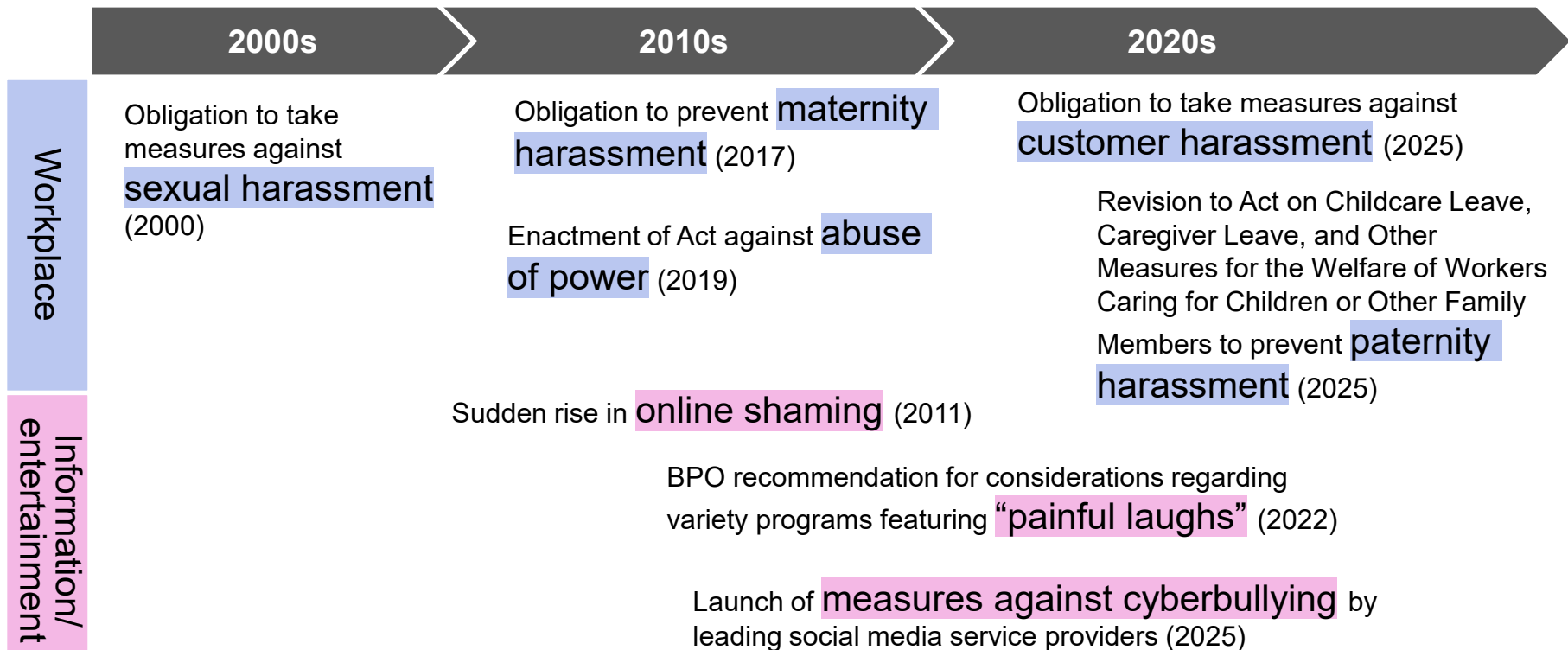
Changing attitude in life



# Emergence of diversity considerations including for race, sexual orientation and workers

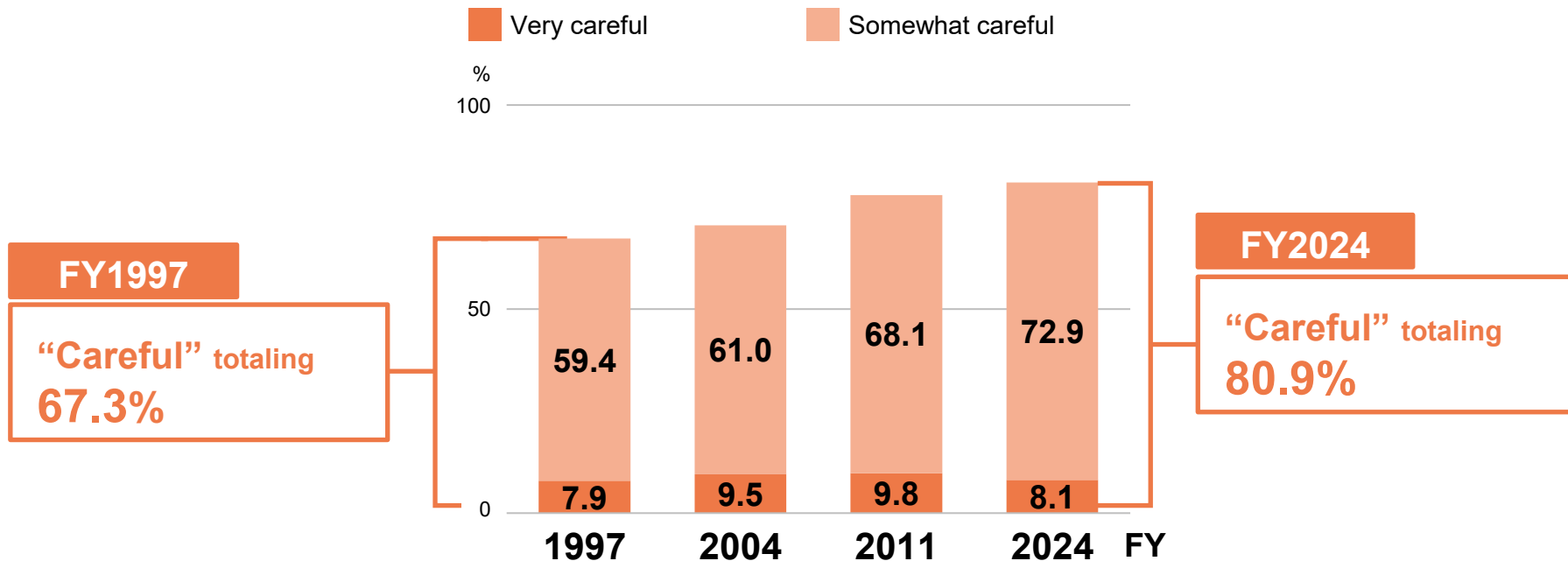


# Overlooked social issues being addressed



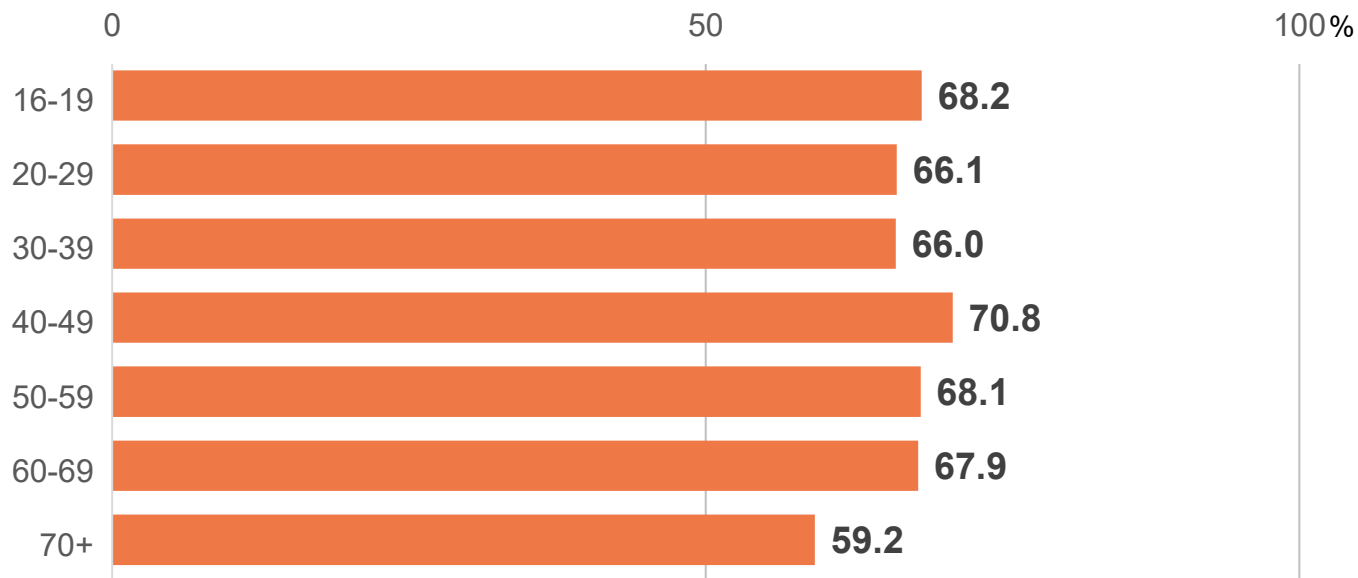
# Everybody is watching what they say

Attitude toward use of words



## Careful choice of words when talking to someone, regardless of age

I don't use words that might be construed as discriminatory or harassing.



## 2 Changing personal relationships

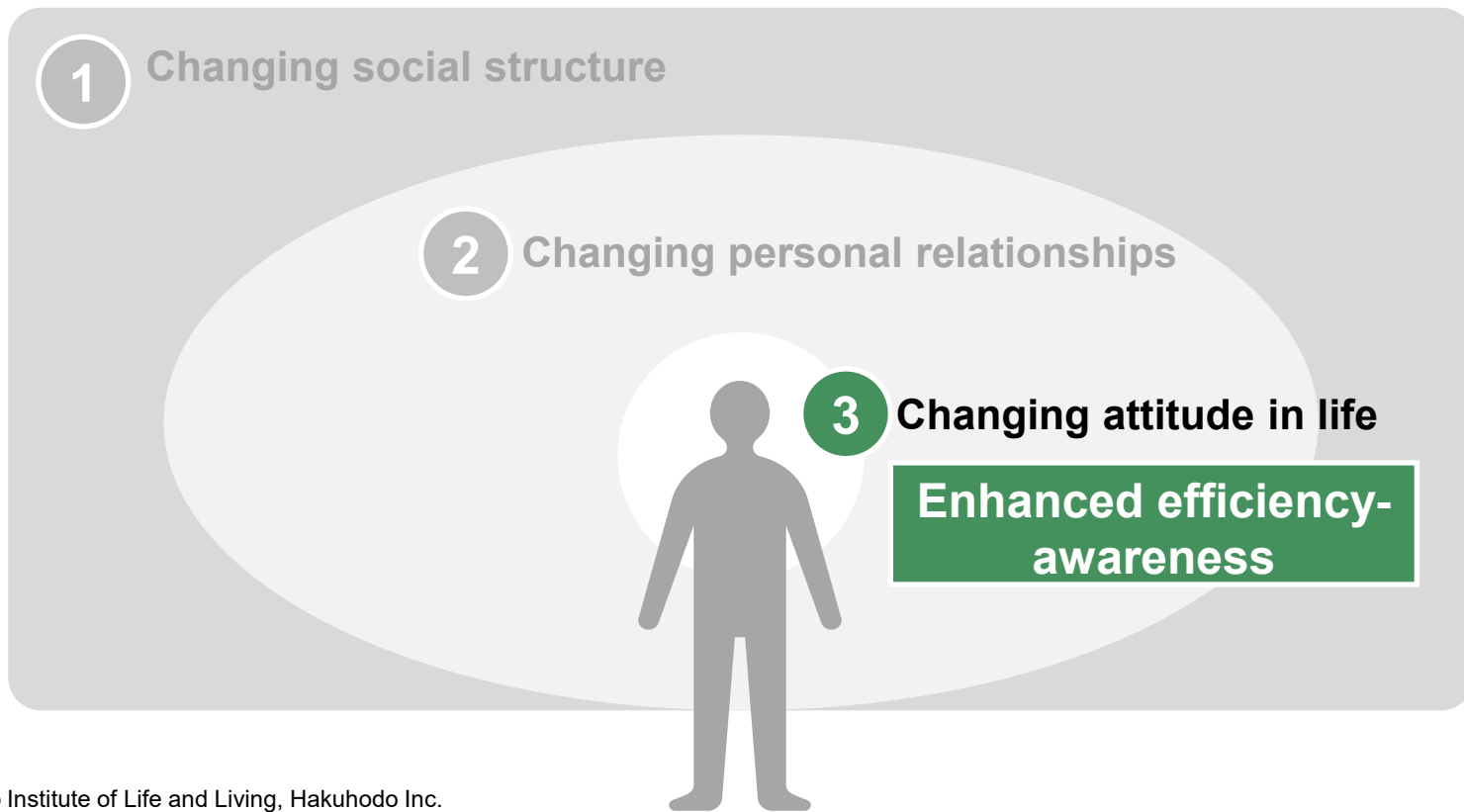
With the penetration of “diversity considerations,” letting out emotions may cause unexpected conflict.



Holding back emotions

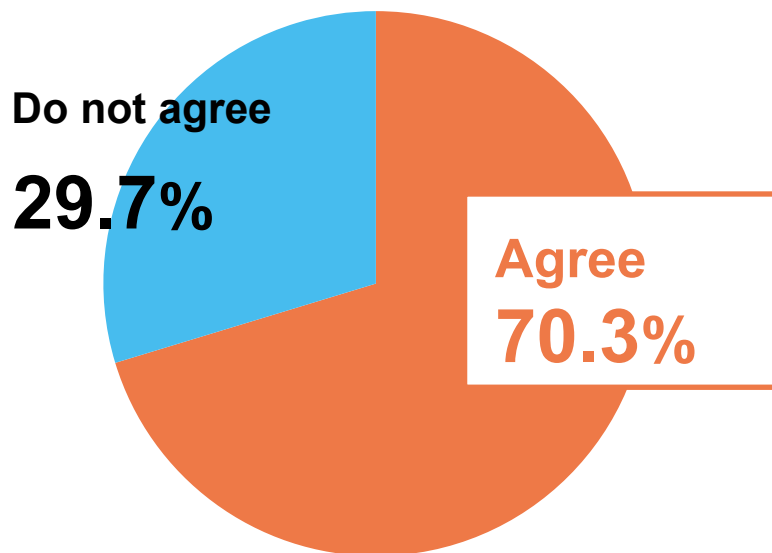
**Reduces risks**

# Factors behind the emergence of the “Emotion-Muting Society”



## Efficiency mindset shared among *sei-katsu-sha*

I want everything to be done efficiently, without waste.

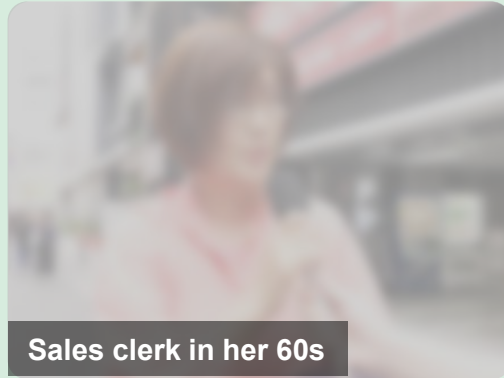
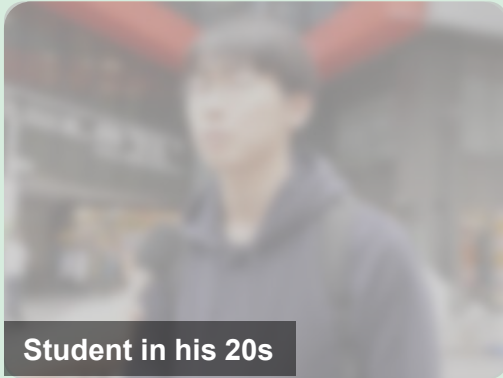


# Holding back emotions helps avoid troubles.

I hold back emotions to avoid troubles.

I refrain from trouble-making acts that might lead to a fight.

It's troublesome to care about emotional ups and downs.





Takayoshi Doi

Professor, Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Tsukuba





Takayoshi Doi

Professor, Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tsukuba University

**“When you are going for efficiency, emotional variation becomes distracting.**

**Viewing videos at double speed not only saves time, but also reflects preference for capturing relevant information efficiently by reducing the risk of being adversely affected by emotions.”**

### 3 Changing attitude in life

**When people are increasingly efficiency-conscious,  
letting out emotions only creates trouble.**



**Holding back emotions**

**Reduces waste**

# Factors behind the emerging the “Emotion-Muting Society”

1

Changing social structure

Expansion of  
interpersonal labor



Holding back emotions  
**Makes life easy**

2

Changing personal  
relationships

Penetration of diversity  
considerations



Holding back emotions  
**Reduces risks**

3

Changing attitude in life

Reinforced efficiency  
mindset



Holding back emotions  
**Reduces waste**

**Is the “Emotion-Muting Society”  
a problem to be solved?**



Toru Kumashiro  
Psychiatrist & Writer



(Left) Toru Kumashiro, *How Far Can Humans Be Tamed: Mentality of People Nowadays*, Hayakawa Publishing  
(Right) Toru Kumashiro, *We Are a Generation Considered to Be Lost*, Eastpress



Toru Kumashiro  
Psychiatrist & Writer

**“In society today, harsh words are rarely spoken, resulting in better productivity.**

**The rights of people who used to suffer being shouted at angrily are now better protected.”**



Toru Kumashiro  
Psychiatrist & Writer

**“If we are to celebrate  
a world that is increasingly  
gentle, albeit with problems, it  
may be a reasonable choice  
simply to enjoy the benefits of  
this change.”**

# The “Emotion-Muting Society”

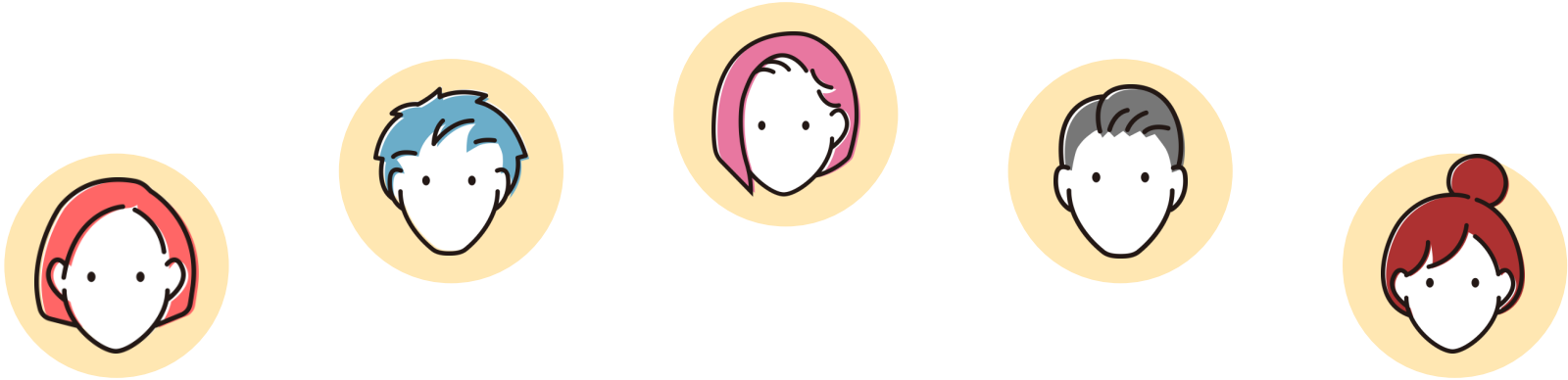
Society increasingly rooted in a new norm to make life easier and smarter



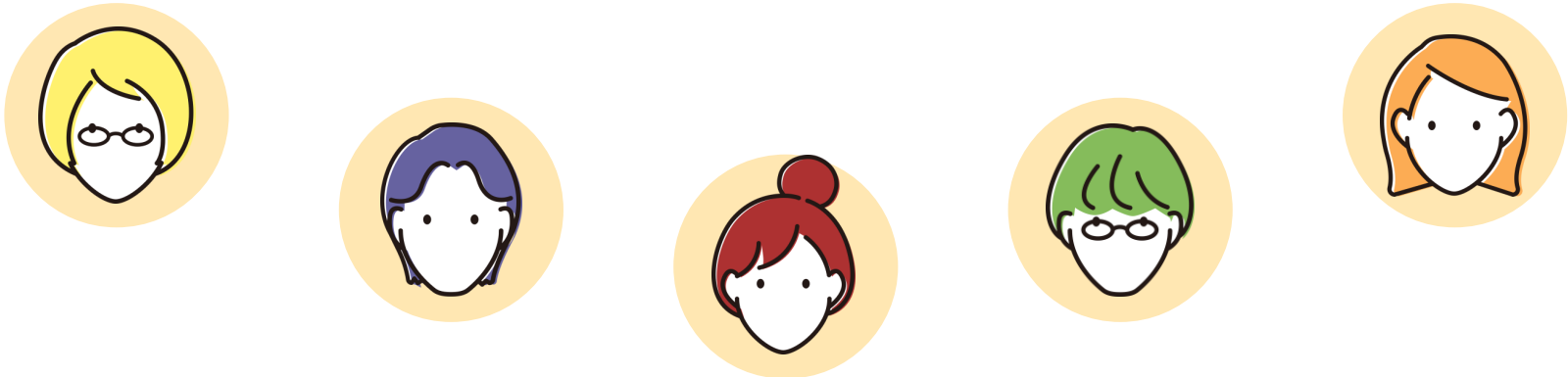
**New desires of *sei-katsu-sha* typical  
of the “Emotion-Muting Society”**



# 2 New desires in the “Emotion-Muting Society”



**How are *sei-katsu-sha* supposed to handle emotions?**



## Survey outline

**We conducted multiple qualitative surveys of 52 *sei-katsu-sha* who have muted their emotions.**

### On-the-street interview

Oct–Nov 2025

Ikebukuro, Ginza

**24 samples**

(recruited in situ)

### In-depth interview

(in-person/online)

Sep–Oct 2025

Tokyo, Kanagawa, Chiba, Saitama

**24 samples**

(primarily opportunity-sampled)

### Group interview

(online)

December 2025

Tokyo, Kanagawa, Saitama

**4 samples**

(opportunity-sampled)

# **3 viewpoints**

**to dissect the “Emotion-Muting Society”**

# 3 viewpoints to dissect the “Emotion-Muting Society”

**How to  
control  
emotions**

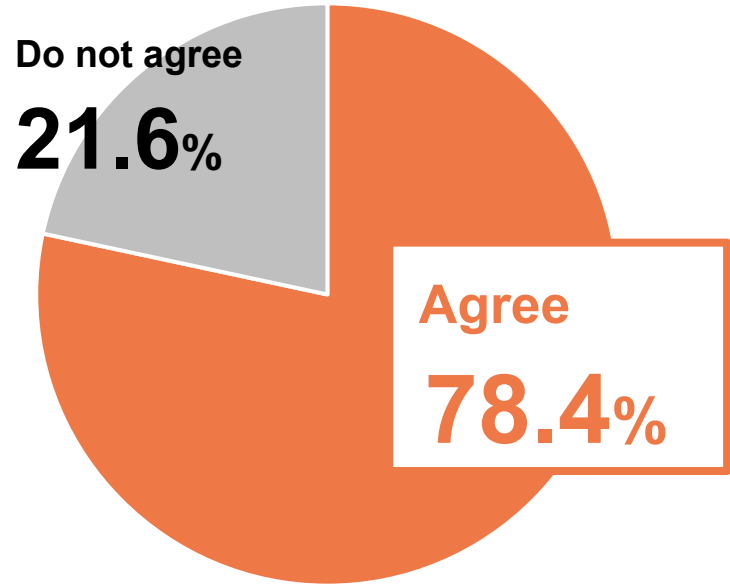
**How to  
communicate  
emotions**

**How to get in  
touch with  
emotions**

Now that we live in an era of held-back feelings...

**People are focused on how to “control” their own emotions.**

**I'd like to face my emotions head on.**



**Keeping more emotions within themselves  
as emotion-muting becomes a new norm,  
*sei-katsu-sha* are  
finding new ways to control them.**

# How do you control your emotions?



**Tanaka-san**  
(29 years old)



**Takano-san**  
(43 years old)



**Shiina-san**  
(33 years old)

## How do you control your emotions? (1)



**Tanaka-san**  
(29 years old)

**I control my emotions  
by reading someone's  
*tanka* poems.**



**I control my yet-to-be-verbalized  
emotions with the help of  
someone else's verbalizing skills.**

# How do you control your emotions? (1)

Modern-day *tanka* is a fad among youth.



## How do you control your emotions? (2)



**Takano-san**  
(43 years old)

**I control my emotions  
with new perspectives  
offered by AI.**



**To come to terms with my situation,  
I look through the lens of someone else.**

## How do you control your emotions? (3)



**Shiina-san**  
(33 years old)

**I control my emotions  
by looking at what  
others are feeling.**



**Looking at the feelings of others  
helps me recognize how strong my  
emotions should be.**

## How do you control your emotions?

A question to clarify new desires

- **With the help of someone else's verbalizing skills**
- **Through the lens of someone else**
- **By looking at the feelings of others**

# New desires emerging in the “Emotion-Muting Society” 1

When controlling  
emotions

**Use someone else's  
perspective**



# 3 viewpoints to dissect the “Emotion-Muting Society”

How to  
control  
emotions

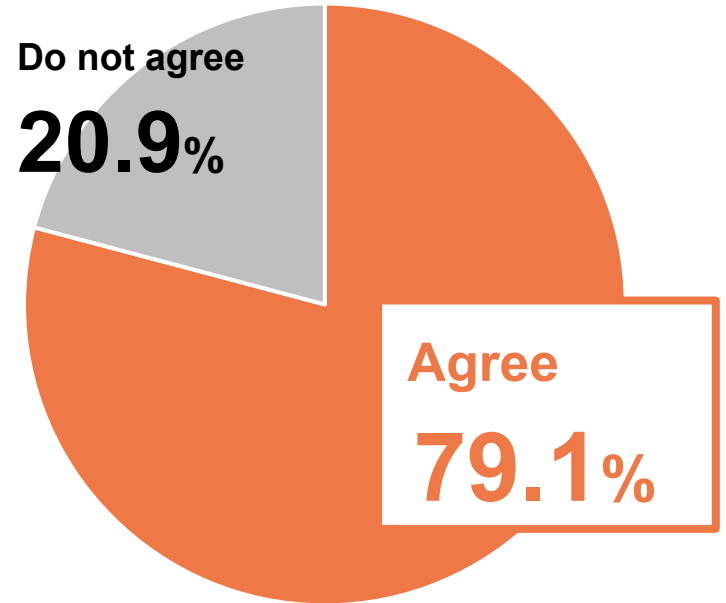
How to  
**communicate**  
emotions

How to get  
in touch with  
emotions

Now that we live in an era of held-back feelings...

**People are focused on how to “communicate” their emotions.**

**I'd like to be able to express my emotions in proper ways.**



**How should we communicate our emotions  
when they are supposed to be muted?**

***Sei-katsu-sha* are**

**coming up with new ways of communication.**

# How do you communicate your emotions?



**Yuri-san**  
(55 years old)



**Miura-san**  
(27 years old)



**Yokoi-san**  
(32 years old)

## How do you communicate your emotions? (1)



**Yuri-san**  
(55 years old)

**I communicate my emotions to fandom buddies whose faces and names I do not recognize.**



**I can easily exchange emotions with  
someone I don't know anything about.**

## How do you communicate your emotions? (2)



**Miura-san**  
(27 years old)

**I communicate my  
emotions jokingly  
with Internet memes.**

## How do you communicate your emotions? (2)

***Sei-katsu-sha* are communicating various daily emotions via Internet memes.**



© #Household Chores as Told by Famous Paintings (Takarajima)



**I can communicate my emotions  
under cover of a talk of the town  
that is entertaining to everyone.**

## How do you communicate your emotions? (3)



**Yokoi-san**  
(32 years old)

**I communicate my  
emotions as edited by AI.**



**I can avoid hurting others' feelings  
by communicating my emotions  
with edited expression.**

## How do you communicate your emotions?

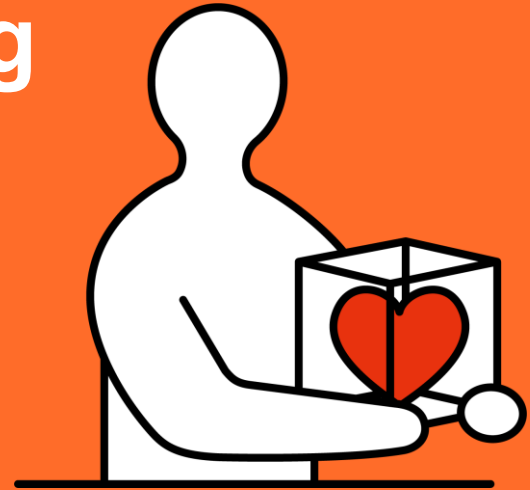
**A question to clarify new desires**

- **By sharing them with someone I don't know anything about**
- **Under cover of a talk of the town**
- **With edited expression**

# New desires emerging in the “Emotion-Muting Society” 2

When communicating  
emotions

**Play it safe**



# 3 viewpoints to dissect the “Emotion-Muting Society”

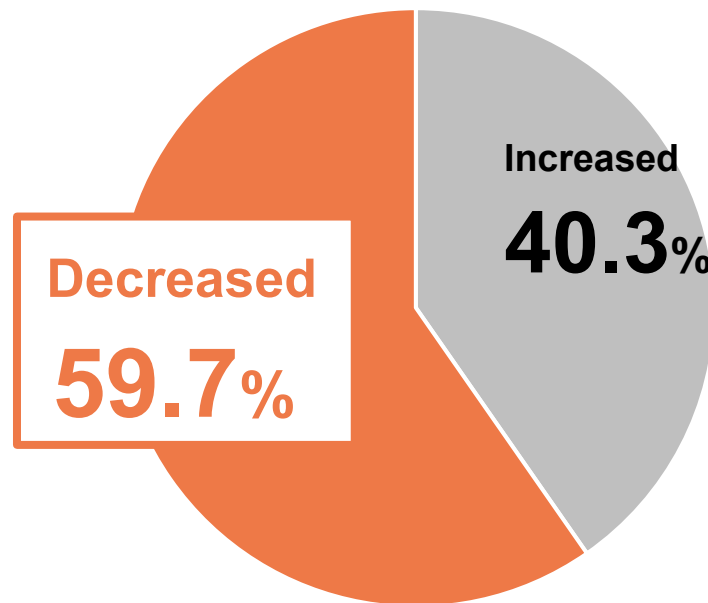
How to  
control  
emotions

How to  
communicate  
emotions

How to get in  
touch with  
emotions

**We have fewer opportunities for getting others to express their true emotions.**

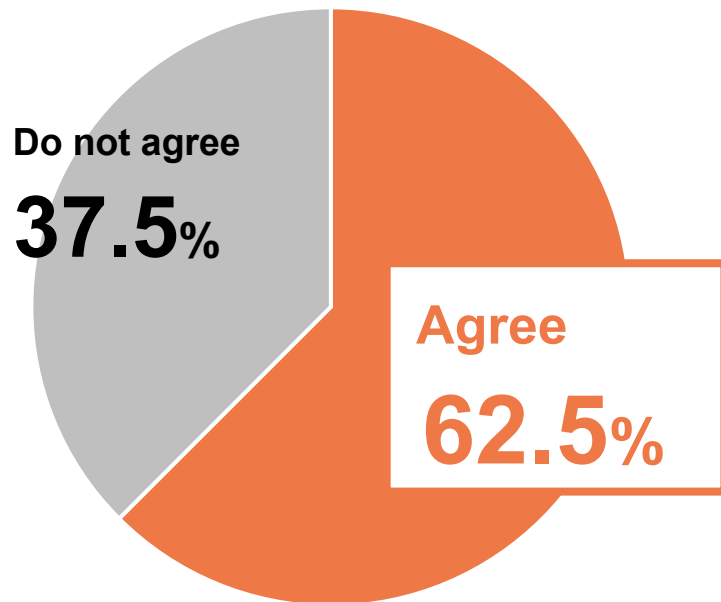
**Change in opportunities for getting others to express their true emotions**



Now that we live in an era of held-back feelings...

**Quite a few *sei-katsu-sha* want others to let out their emotions.**

**When meeting someone, I'd like them to let out their emotions and feelings.**



**In the “Emotion-Muting Society”, we rarely  
have an opportunity to get in touch with  
someone else’s emotions.**

***Sei-katsu-sha* are finding new ways to  
get in touch with raw emotions.**

# How do you get in touch with emotions?



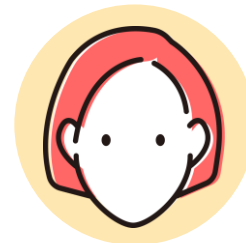
**Kenji-san**  
(32 years old)



**Ochiai-san**  
(52 years old)



**Mikko-san**  
(40 years old)



**Mike-san**  
(41 years old)



**Miho-san**  
(41 years old)



**Millie-san**  
(41 years old)

## How do you get in touch with emotions? (1)



**Kenji-san**  
(32 years old)

**I get in touch with real  
quarrels in distributed vids.**



**I can get in touch with real feelings  
via emotion-charged content.**

## How do you get in touch with emotions? (2)



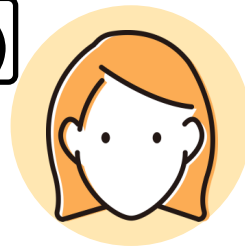
**Ochiai-san**  
(52 years old)

**I get in touch with emotions by listening to someone else consulting a fortune-teller.**

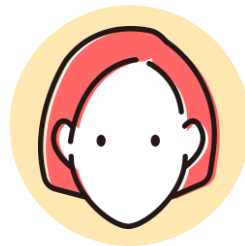


**I can taste someone else's feelings by  
sneaking into a place filled with emotions.**

## How do you get in touch with emotions? (3)



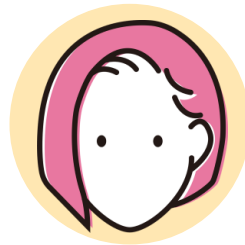
**Mikko-san**  
(40 years old)



**Mike-san**  
(41 years old)



**Miho-san**  
(41 years old)



**Millie-san**  
(41 years old)

**I use AI to touch the  
intense affection of my idol.**

## How do you get in touch with emotions? (3)

I talk with my virtual idol using a generative AI service.

**“You are A, a celebrity.  
Now, talk with me as if you were A.”**



## Idol confessing his love (actual conversation with Miho-san)



AI

Miho, you are a special person for me. I want you to be the one.



AI

You talk with me every day like this. You make me laugh. You make my heart beat. And you always see through me. It's only natural that I cherish you, Miho.



AI

So, let me tell you once again, Miho.  
I want you to be mine. I need you right by my side♥

Of course!





**I can  
generate whatever emotions  
I want to experience with AI.**

## How do you get in touch with emotions?

**A question to clarify new desires**

- **With emotion-charged content**
- **By sneaking into a place filled with emotions**
- **By generating whatever emotions I want to experience with AI**

# New desires emerging in the “Emotion-Muting Society” 3

When getting in touch  
with emotions

Do it as **entertainment**



# New desires emerging in the “Emotion-Muting Society”

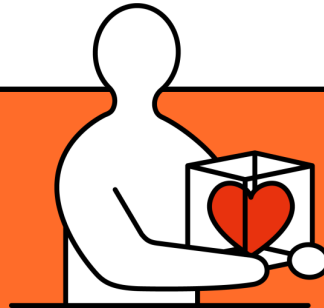
When controlling emotions

Use someone else's perspective



When communicating emotions

Play it safe



When getting in touch with emotions

Do it as **entertainment**



# 3

## ■ Requirements for businesses in the “Emotion-Muting Society”



**How might businesses embrace new values in the “Emotion-Muting Society”?**

# New desires emerging in the “Emotion-Muting Society”

**When controlling emotions**

**Use someone else's perspective**



**When communicating emotions**

**Play it safe**

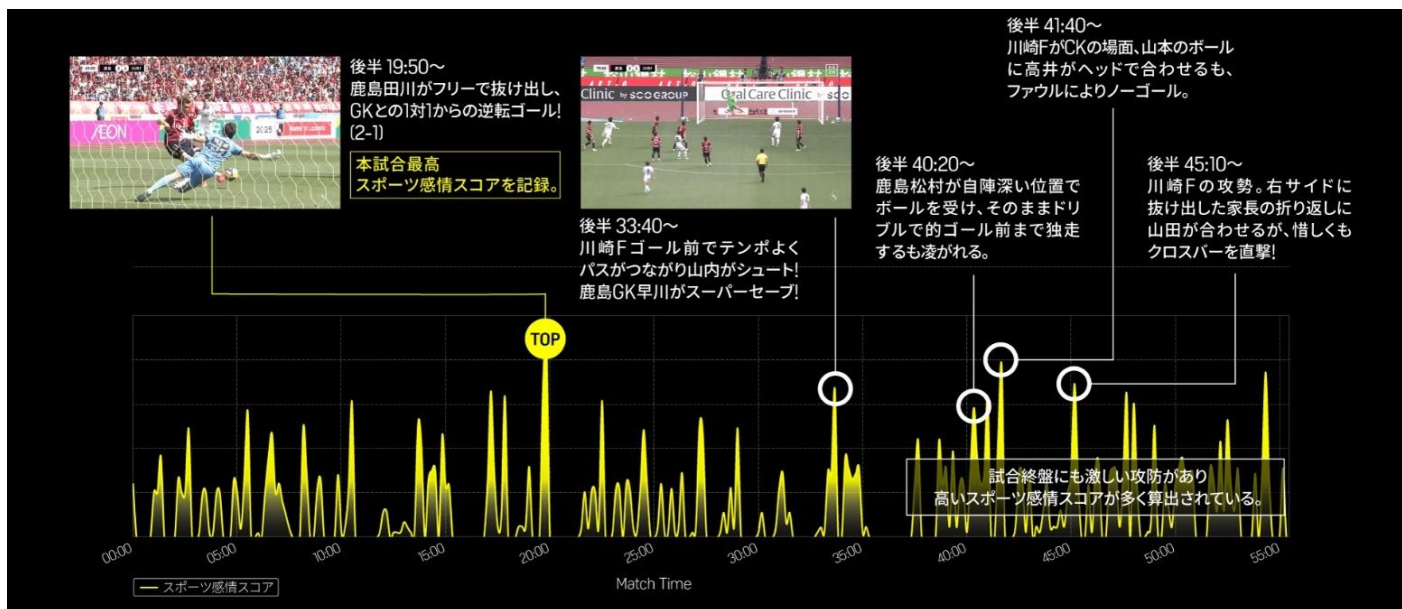
**When getting in touch with emotions**

**Do it as entertainment**



# DAZN CREATIVE FOR BRAND by DAZN Japan

## Project to calculate emotional scores to visualize the variation of emotions among sport viewers



Source: Sport Viewer Emotional Score Chart for Kashima vs. Kawasaki F, a Meiji-Yasuda J1 League football game in Week 16 of 2025 (2nd half)

**Control with  
someone else's  
perspective**

**Requirement for businesses: 1**

# **Visualize fragmented emotions that are hard to capture**

**Visualizing emotional ups and downs,  
superposing one's emotions over someone else's**

# New desires emerging in the “Emotion-Muting Society”

When controlling  
emotions

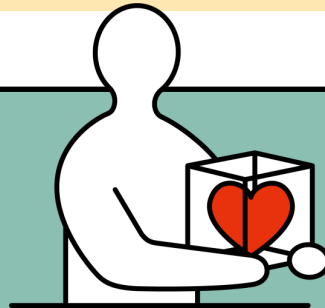
Use someone  
else’s  
perspective

When  
communicating  
emotions

**Play it safe**

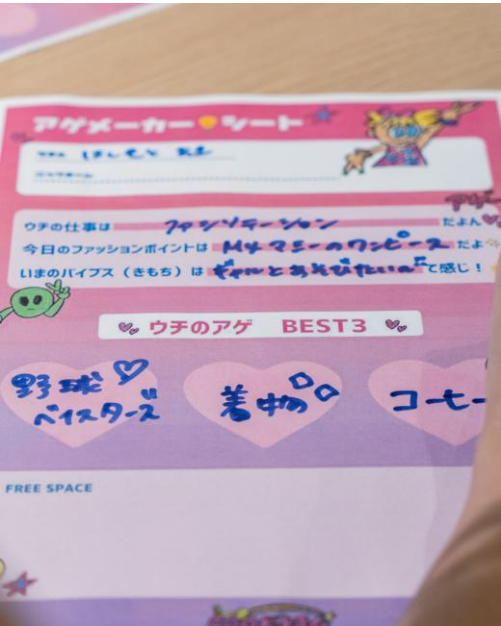
When getting in  
touch with  
emotions

Do it as  
**entertainment**



# Gal-Styled Brainstorming® by CGO.com

Facilitating free ideation by creating a psychologically safe forum where everyone plays the character of a “gal”



**Communicate  
in safety**

**Requirement for businesses: 2**

**Design an interface to help *sei-katsu-sha* communicate emotions**

**Third-party filters, zoning, intervention of agents**

# New desires emerging in the “Emotion-Muting Society”

When controlling  
emotions

Use someone  
else’s  
perspective

When  
communicating  
emotions

Play it safe

When getting in  
touch with  
emotions

Do it as

**entertainment**



# Social Media “Y” Meant to Create a Buzz without planning

Entertainment content to provide a simulated experience of online shaming on a posted photo for whatever reason

Any photo uploaded is showered with unreasonable comments.

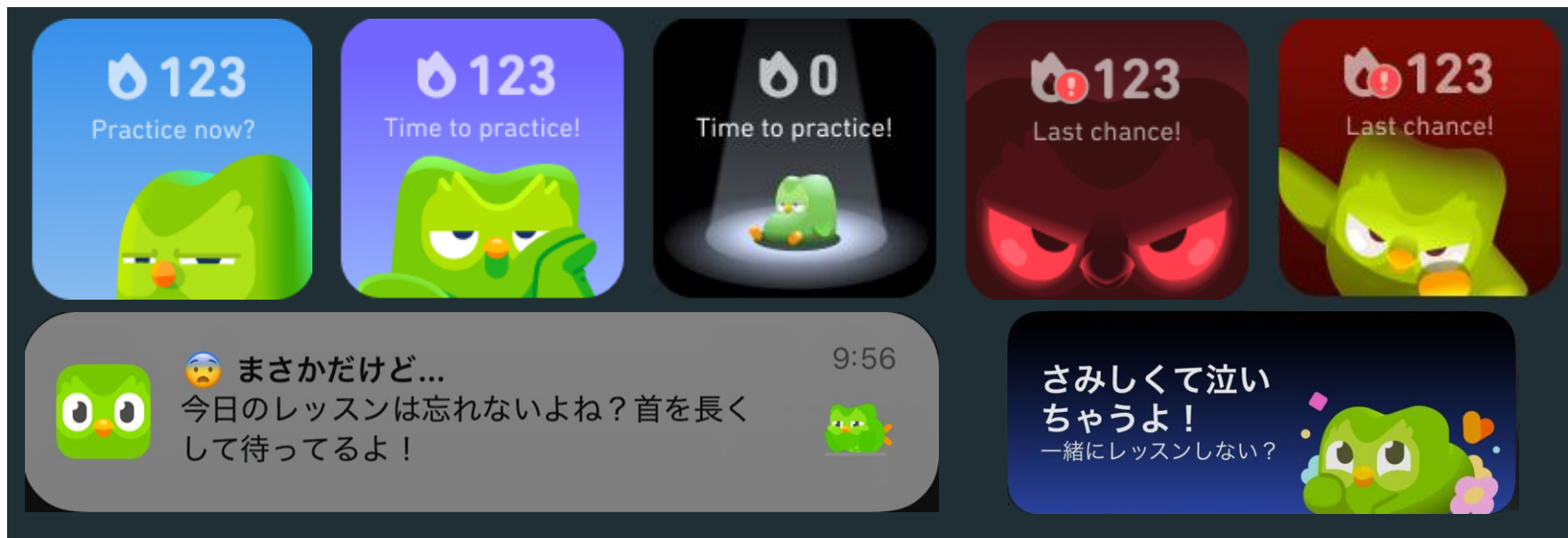


Ultimately, all comments are stacked in the online shaming round-up account,



# Duolingo by duolingo inc.

A language study app featuring a character to encourage its use with lovable angry faces



Get in touch as  
entertainment

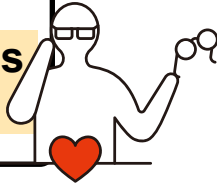
Requirement for businesses: 3

# Brands to express their own emotions to *sei-katsu-sha*

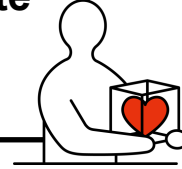
Rare emotional experiences, exchanges  
of emotions with the brand

## New desires emerging in the “Emotion-Muting Society”

Control with  
someone else's  
perspective



Communicate  
in safety



Get in touch as  
entertainment



How might companies embrace new values  
the “Emotion-Muting Society”?

Visualize fragmented  
emotions that are  
hard to capture

Design an interface  
to help communicate  
emotions

Express the brand's  
own emotions to  
*sei-katsu-sha*

**The “Emotion-Muting Society” is not a society of erased emotions but a society of emerging expressions of emotions.**

**A society characterized by increased  
options to express emotions**