

# Iga City's Guidelines for Intercultural Cohesion



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Iga City

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## Introduction

Since the revision of the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act in 1990, Iga City has seen an increase in the number of foreign residents, especially those of South American descent, and diversification of nationalities. At present, people of more than 40 nationalities and with diverse cultural backgrounds<sup>1</sup> live here, and their period of stay is becoming longer and more permanent. As of the end of December 2020, as high as 6.2% of city's population are foreign residents of a wide range of age groups.

So far, Iga City has been giving foreign residents information and a consultation service in multiple languages. In addition, Iga City has opened *Tabunka Kyousei Center* (Intercultural Center), set up a website, published the multilingual newsletters, and actively provided a variety of services so that foreign residents can live here without any worries.

However, because of an increase in the number of people of foreign nationalities living in Japan for a long time or being permanently settled and the number of children with diverse cultural backgrounds who are born and raised in Japan, foreign residents are also faced with a variety of issues, such as the aging of their family members, or issues which cannot be dealt with only through the administrative services.

The national government, prefecture, and local municipalities have enacted laws on the protection of human rights of foreign residents in Japan and Japanese language education for them. In such a situation, the city is expected to develop a sustainable, diverse, and inclusive society which “leaves no one behind”, as promised in the SDGs or Sustainable Development Goals<sup>2</sup>. Both Japanese and foreign residents should deepen ties with each other and work hand in hand to solve regional issues.

In this day of a declining birthrate and aging population in Japan, be aware that foreign residents are not here just for making up for a labor shortage in local communities. They will rather be a key factor<sup>3</sup> in helping Iga City to survive the population decline. As time goes by, more and more complex and diverse challenges are piling up. In order to make local communities more active, local residents should understand and respect diverse cultures regardless of nationalities and join their forces to further develop their communities.

For this reason, Iga City will draw up Iga City's Guidelines for Intercultural Cohesion (hereafter called the Guidelines) and assist the citizens, *Jūmin Jichi Kyōgikai* (resident autonomous organization), various organizations<sup>4</sup>, businesses, and administrative agencies in working as one to solve these current issues with the viewpoint of the citizens. Putting its own characteristics and potential to good use, Iga City aims to make the city more comfortable to live in and create new value through intercultural cohesion.

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<sup>1</sup> People with diverse cultural backgrounds herein refer to people greatly influenced by their parents' cultures as well as Japanese culture, such as foreign nationals, those who become Japanese citizens, children whose parents are foreign nationals, and children who return to Japan after living in other countries.

<sup>2</sup> SDGs or Sustainable Development Goals consist of 17 goals and 169 targets to be achieved for sustainable development from 2016 to 2030, such as No Poverty, Zero Hunger, Affordable and Clean Energy, Climate Action, and Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions.

<sup>3</sup> Factor means one of several things that influence or cause a phenomenon or a situation.

<sup>4</sup> Various organizations herein refer to NPOs, welfare organizations, economic organizations, and so forth.

# Chapter 1 Overview of the Guidelines

## (1) Status of the Guidelines

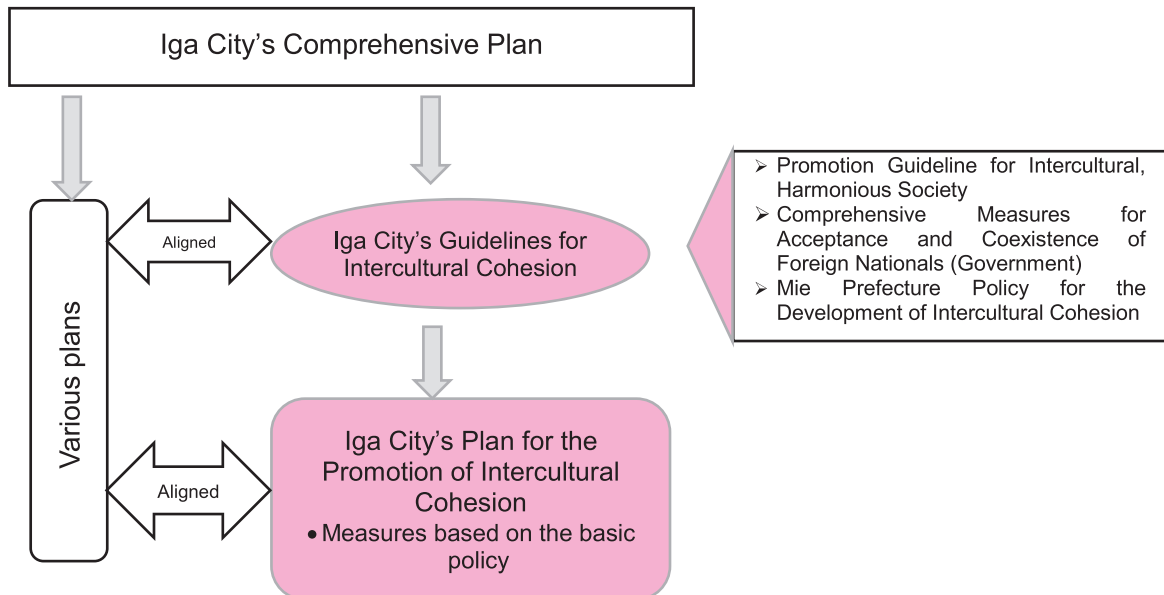
In addition to Iga City's Basic Ordinance of Local Governance, Comprehensive Plan, Comprehensive Plan for Measures for Raising Awareness about Human Rights, and other plans, the Guidelines aim at clearly stating the basic approaches which all parties concerned in Iga City should take to mutually respecting people of different nationalities and cultures and developing an intercultural society.

The Guidelines include the concept of the Promotion Guideline for Intercultural, Harmonious Society, which was revised by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications in 2020, and the perspectives of SDGs. Furthermore, the Guidelines are designed in line with Iga City's Comprehensive Plan and other administrative plans.

What is more, the Guidelines reflect the present situations and issues of the city, citizens' opinions, and demand.

The goals specified in the Guidelines are intended to be achieved by 2030.

The city will flexibly adapt the Guidelines to rapidly changing social situations. Therefore, the city will update the Guidelines as necessary while keeping an eye out for future trends in Japan. Once the Guidelines have been decided on, Iga City's Plan for the Promotion of Intercultural Cohesion (tentative name) will be separately drawn up in order to reach the goals specified herein.



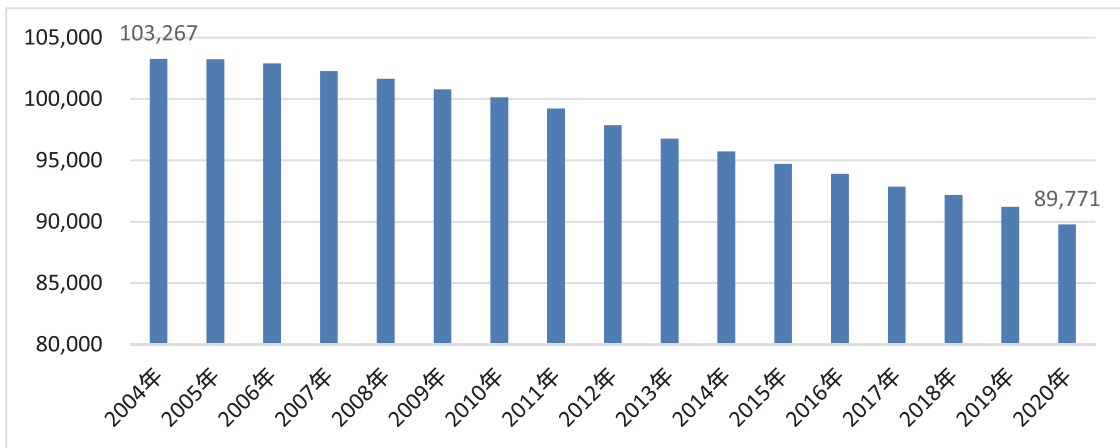
## Chapter 2 Present Situation and Issues of Iga City

### (1) Present situation

#### ① Population

Iga City has a population of 89,771 as of the end of December 2020, and 5,575 of them are foreign nationals. The total population decreased by about 13,500 for the last 16 years compared to 2004, when it was 103,267. Speaking of the number of Japanese residents, it has decreased by 14,864 in total or by about 900 per year for the last 9 years.

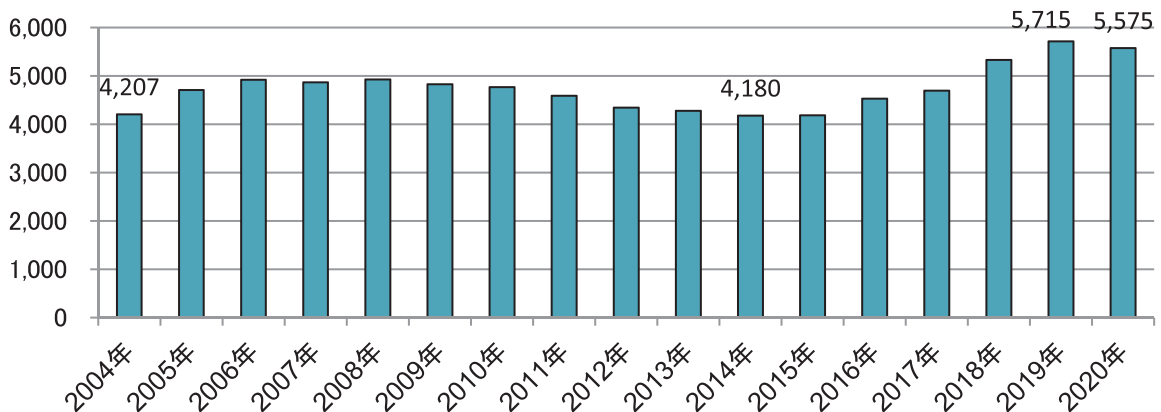
**Chart 1 Iga City's total population by year**



#### ② Present situation of foreign residents

The Brazilian account for about 40% of the total number of foreign residents. The number of South Americans of Japanese ancestry moving into the city started to rapidly grow after changes to the Immigration Control and Refugee-Recognition Law in 1990. It temporarily decreased because of an impact of the bankruptcy of Lehman Brothers in 2008, but it has been growing again since 2015.

**Chart 2 Total number of foreign residents in Iga City by year**



③ Number of foreign residents by nationality

These days, the number of Vietnamese has been rapidly increasing. The Vietnamese account for about 20% of foreign residents in Iga City, following the Brazilian. Today, foreign residents of 43 different nationalities live in Iga City. As the number of nationalities is growing, the composition of population of foreign residents changes accordingly.

**Chart 3 Population by nationality in 2020 (top 5 countries)**

|   | Nationality        | End of Dec. 2020 | Percentage |
|---|--------------------|------------------|------------|
| 1 | Brazil             | 2,190            | 39.30%     |
| 2 | Vietnam            | 1,073            | 19.30%     |
| 3 | China              | 560              | 10.00%     |
| 4 | Peru               | 419              | 7.50%      |
| 5 | Philippine         | 410              | 7.40%      |
|   | Total 43 countries | 5,575            |            |

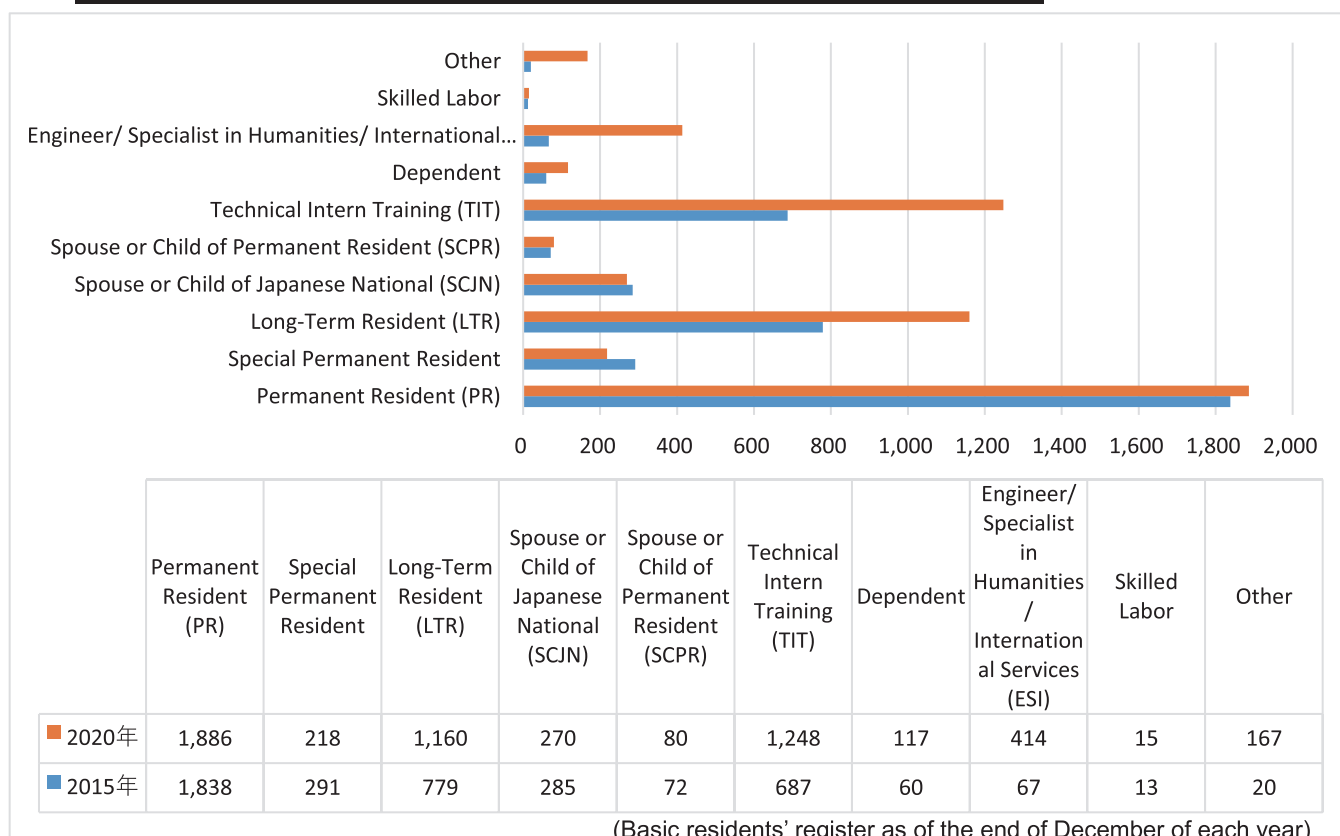
**Chart4 Population by nationality in 2004 (top 5 countries)**

|   | Nationality           | End of Dec. 2004 | Percentage |
|---|-----------------------|------------------|------------|
| 1 | Brazil                | 2,380            | 56.57%     |
| 2 | China                 | 635              | 15.09%     |
| 3 | South and North Korea | 421              | 10.01%     |
| 4 | Peru                  | 356              | 8.46%      |
| 5 | Thailand              | 116              | 2.56%      |
|   | Total 38 countries    | 4,207            |            |

④ Number of foreign residents by status of residence

Permanent Residents and Long-Term Residents hold a majority of foreign residents in Iga City. In recent years, because demand for labor force is growing, the number of technical interns has doubled compared with 2015. In addition, the number of residents under a status of residence “Engineer, Specialist in Humanities / International Services” has increased by about 6 times.

**Chart 5 Number of foreign residents in Iga City by status of residence**

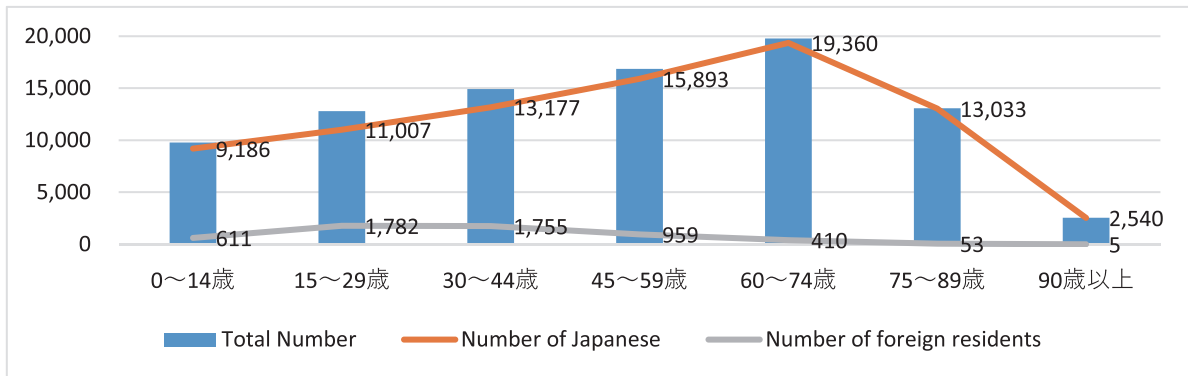


⑤ Population by age group

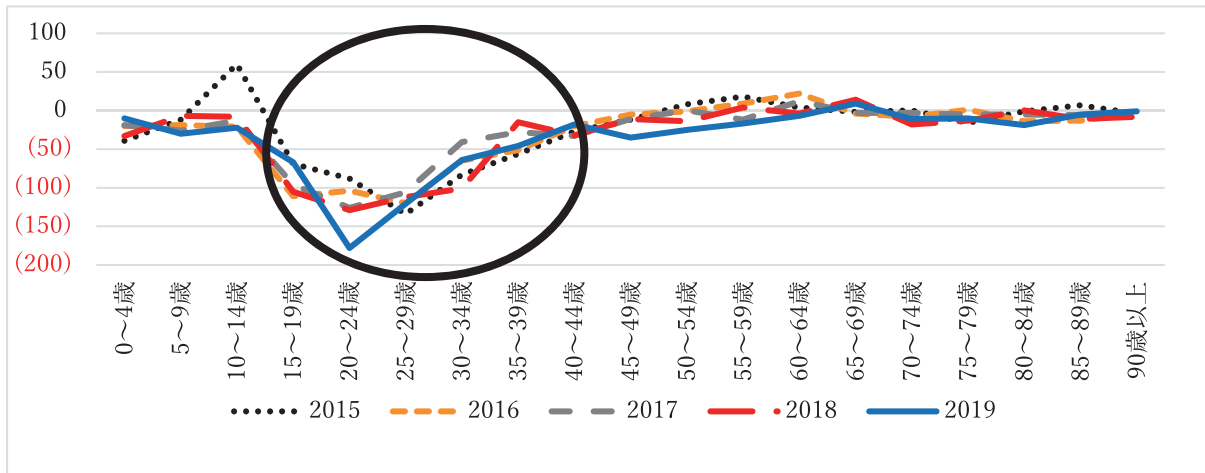
Chart 6 clearly demonstrates a declining birthrate and aging population of the Japanese by age group.

In addition, Chart 7 shows that many Japanese residents aged 15 to 44 move out of the city. On the other hand, Chart 8 shows that foreign residents move in. In other words, an increasing number of foreign residents moving in make up for a decrease in the number of Japanese residents in Iga City.

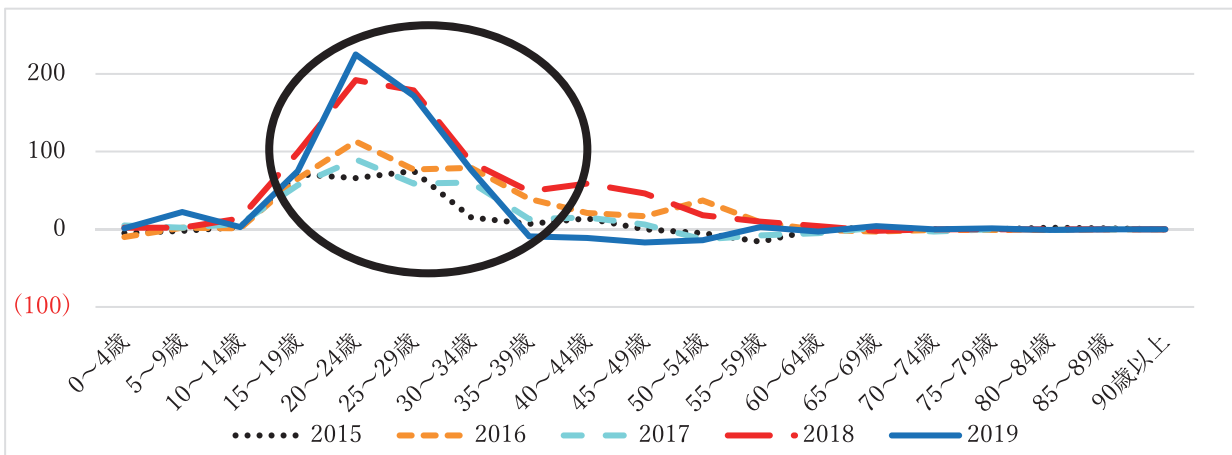
**Chart 6 Population by age group**



**Chart 7 Demographic shift by age group (Japanese residents)**



**Chart 8 Demographic shift by age group (Foreign residents)**



## (2) Iga City's efforts

Iga City has been making a variety of efforts such as a consultation service for foreign residents, exchange programs in cooperation with *Kokusai Kōryūkyōkai* (International Exchange Association), and learning assistance programs mainly for elementary and junior high school students with diverse cultural backgrounds.

In addition, in response to the opinions of *Gaikokujin Jūmin Kyōkai* (Foreign Residents Council), Iga City opened *Tabunka Kyousei Center* (Intercultural Center) in 2016. This facility is engaged in raising Japanese residents' awareness about intercultural cohesion, carrying out exchange programs, assisting foreign residents in their volunteer activities, and helping them to solve issues about their daily lives. Foreign residents sometimes have difficulty in getting necessary information in their daily lives because they are not good at Japanese. For this reason, Iga City translates information essential for their daily living into Portuguese, Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese, English, and plain Japanese for convenience, and then post it on the website and Facebook of *Tabunka Kyousei Center* (Intercultural Center).

Furthermore, *Iga Shiyakusho* (City Hall) regularly provides a "Plain Japanese" training course so that the staff at the city hall can communicate with foreign residents even if they cannot speak foreign languages.

## (3) Approach to the development of a diverse society

The national government organized the Comprehensive Measures for Acceptance and Coexistence of Foreign Nationals (Ministerial Conference on Acceptance and Coexistence of Foreign Nationals) in December 2018. The national government will continue to revise or renew the measures, and work on the acceptance of people from different countries and the development of intercultural societies. In 2019, the Act on the Promotion of Japanese Language Education was enacted. The act aims at making clear the responsibilities and obligations which the national government, local public bodies, and employers must fulfill for Japanese language education. The act also states the basic courses of action and guidelines for the promotion of Japanese language education. The act requires that comprehensive measures for Japanese language education should be promoted.

According to the policies of the national government as described above, Iga City strives to develop a society which guarantees the human rights of all citizens, never accept discrimination against anyone including *buraku* (a former untouchable group in Japan as the traditional social hierarchy), and encourages people of different backgrounds to respect each other based on the principle of SDGs.

## (4) Future challenges

### ① General issues

As more and more foreign residents live in Iga City permanently or for a long term, the city should deal with issues which they may be faced within each stage of life. From the perspective of SDGs, the city should develop a prejudice and discrimination-free society where both Japanese and foreign residents respect each other.

According to Iga City's attitude survey on city planning in 2019 in the Comprehensive Plan, 49.3% of respondents are satisfied with the measures for intercultural cohesion, and 31.6% of them have ever joined in the measures. The survey shows that citizens' interests in the measures are still low. Therefore, the city should continue to try to raise citizens' awareness about intercultural cohesion.

### ② Issues about population

Chart 1 clearly shows that the total population decreases year by year. Particularly, the number of Japanese residents is decreasing with the birthrate declining and population aging. Also, Chart 9 demonstrates a clear fall in working-age population. Luckily, a decrease in the total population has slowed down thanks to an increase in the number of foreign residents. But the city still has to work hard to steadily maintain the total population. Therefore, the city needs to continue to make efforts to be more appealing and a city of choice in order to stop residents from moving out and increase the number of people moving in.



**Chart 9 Iga City's population of residents of 3 different age groups**

|                                     | 2005 年 | 2010 年 | 2015 年 | 2020 年 |
|-------------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Young population (0~14yrs)          | 13,356 | 12,478 | 11,276 | 9,924  |
| Working-age population (15~64yrs)   | 64,488 | 61,080 | 54,652 | 50,484 |
| Old-age population (65yrs and over) | 25,383 | 26,730 | 28,919 | 29,689 |

(Iga City Population Vision)

## ③ Issues about daily living

Some administrative services are available for both Japanese and foreign residents, and others are not depending on an agreement made between Japan and their home countries. As a result, the city consultation center receives requests for advice from foreign residents about a variety of issues. (See Chart 10.)

*Shiyakusho* (City Hall) and *Tabunka Kyousei Center* (Intercultural Center) receive 9,000 consultations a year, either through visits or phone calls. Especially in the present situation where Covid-19 is spreading, the city should further improve a system to inform as many foreign residents as possible that they have a place to ask for advice whenever they have troubles.

Not only the administrative agencies but also local communities give foreign residents assistance in order not to leave them uninformed or left behind because of their language problems.

In addition, according to the questionnaire survey for foreign residents in Iga City in 2019 (see Chart 11), about 60% of respondents do not know about *Jichikai* (resident associations). This means that they are not as closely connected with local communities as the Japanese residents are. Though foreign residents are given assistance, they are also expected to join in community activities as members of society and play active parts there.

The city should give foreign residents more opportunities of joining in community activities. To change the present situation for the better, the city should help both Japanese and foreign residents to overcome cross-cultural differences and get more closely connected with each other. If so, foreign residents will be able to live safe, secure, and comfortable lives by themselves or with the help of people around them, regardless of different nationalities.

**Chart 10 Number of consultations at the centralized consultation service in Iga City in****2020**

|                          |                        |                      |                              |          |                                   |                              |           |
|--------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|----------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------|
| Contents of Consultation | Immigration Procedures | Employment and Labor | Social Insurance and Pension | Tax      | Medical Care                      | Childbirth and Child-Rearing | Education |
| Number of consultations  | 691                    | 753                  | 2,271                        | 590      | 445                               | 540                          | 323       |
| Contents of Consultation | Learning Japanese      | Disaster Prevention  | Housing                      | Identity | Transportation / Driver's License | Interpretation/ Translation  | Other     |
| Number of consultations  | 6                      | 0                    | 260                          | 408      | 73                                | 88                           | 2,327     |

\*8,875 requests in total: Requests for translation of administrative documents: 99  
Requests for an interpreter to deal with issues in other sections: 140

**Chart 11 Questionnaire survey for foreign residents in Iga City in 2019**

| Do you know your local community association (Jichi-kai)? | Number of Responses | Percentage |
|---|---------------------|------------|
| Yes, I know   | 43                  | 37.70%     |
| Don't know  | 66                  | 57.90%     |
| No answer   | 5                   | 4.40%      |
| Total   | 114                 | 100.00%    |

④ Issues about working conditions

i) Status of residence

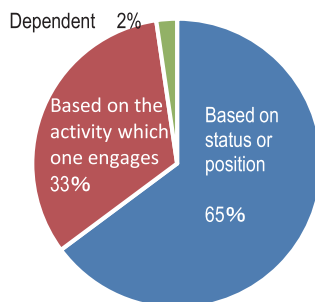
Foreign residents must have a status of residence and resident registration under the Resident's Basic Register Law if they want to use the public services in Japan. In addition, if they desire to work in Japan, they must have the status of residence which allows them to work. In Iga City, Permanent Residents, Special Permanent Residents, Long-Term Residents, and Spouses or Children of Japanese Nationals account for about 65% of all foreign residents. Next, about 33% of foreign residents live here for the purpose of working or taking training as Instructor / Engineer / Specialist in Humanities / Technical Intern while about 2% as Dependent. (See Chart 12.) As the survey shows, foreign residents work in a wide range of fields, and serve as a pillar of the local economy.

Furthermore, there is a high proportion of children who are Permanent Residents or Long-Term Residents. Considering this situation, the city should provide them with support programs for job seekers, career education programs, and other talent development programs. Through such programs, the city should help them to work in local communities and get involved in community activities as the Japanese residents do.

Moreover, new statuses of residence were added in 2019, as shown in Chart 13. Types of jobs or countries which have an agreement with Japan are always updated. For this reason, more and more foreign nationals are expected to come to Iga City mainly from the Asian region. So, the city will become more multinational. If foreign residents have a status

of residence of Specified Skilled Worker (ii), they may take their family to Japan. Therefore, the city will need to assist not only such workers but also their family members. As a period of stay becomes longer, they will live in the city longer accordingly. In conclusion, the city should promote intercultural cohesion from a medium to long-term standpoint.

**Chart 12 Classification of foreign residents by status of residence**



[Based on status or position]

Spouse or Child of Japanese National (SCJN), Special Permanent Resident (SPR), Permanent Resident (PR), Spouse or Child of Permanent Resident (SCPR), Long-Term Resident (LTR)

[Based on the activity which one engages]

Engineer / Specialist in Humanities / International Services / Skilled Labor / Technical Intern Training / Designated Activities

[Dependent] Dependent, Student, and so forth

**Chart 13 Classification of Specified Skilled Worker (SSW)**

| New statuses of residence     | Industrial fields  | Remarks   |
|-------------------------------|--|---|
| Specified Skilled Worker (i)  | Nursing care / building cleaning / Material processing industry / Industrial machinery industry / Electric and electronic information related industry / Construction / Shipbuilding and ship related industry / Automobile maintenance / Aviation / Lodging / Agriculture / Fisheries / Food and beverages manufacturing industry / Food service industry | Period of stay: Up to 5 years in total with renewals every year, 6 months, or 4 months <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In general, they are not permitted to be accompanied by their family.</li> <li>• They are supported by an accepting organization or a registered support organization.</li> </ul> |
| Specified Skilled Worker (ii) | Construction / Shipbuilding and ship related industry  | Period of stay: Up to 3 years in total with renewals every year or 6 months <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They are conditionally permitted to be accompanied by their family.</li> <li>• They are not supported by an accepting organization or a registered support organization.</li> </ul>          |

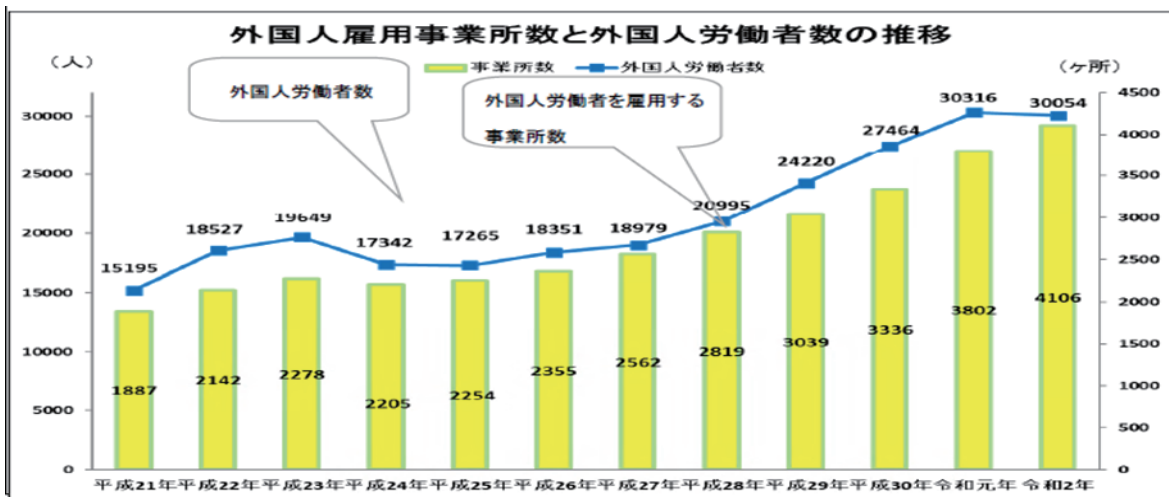
ii) Issues about working and living environments

One of the major issues for foreign residents is assurance that they will be able to work in their jobs as long as they like. It is necessary to not only provide fair working environments for foreign residents to work without any worries but also help them to correctly understand basic social and work rules in Japan. In order to accomplish these objectives, the city should push forward the measures to accept talent smoothly and properly from different countries, as suggested by the Japanese government.

Particularly when accepting workers from outside the city, the city should help them to move into public housing or private housing for rent. This is because they have difficulty finding one by themselves.

On the other hand, an increasing number of foreign residents buy houses. However, they sometimes get into trouble with neighbors because of cultural differences. Therefore, an issue is how to encourage foreign residents to join *Jichikai* (residence associations) or communicate with neighbors when they move into their new houses.

**Chart 14 Employment of foreign residents in Mie Prefecture**



⑤ Issues about medical care, health, and welfare

Some foreign residents do not know so much about the Japanese social security program. As a result, some of them may fail to take out the health insurance or pension or pay contributions, and finally miss using local health and welfare services.

What is more, they cannot say what they want about medical or welfare services because they are not good at Japanese. As a result, they may be socially isolated with their troubles unsolved.

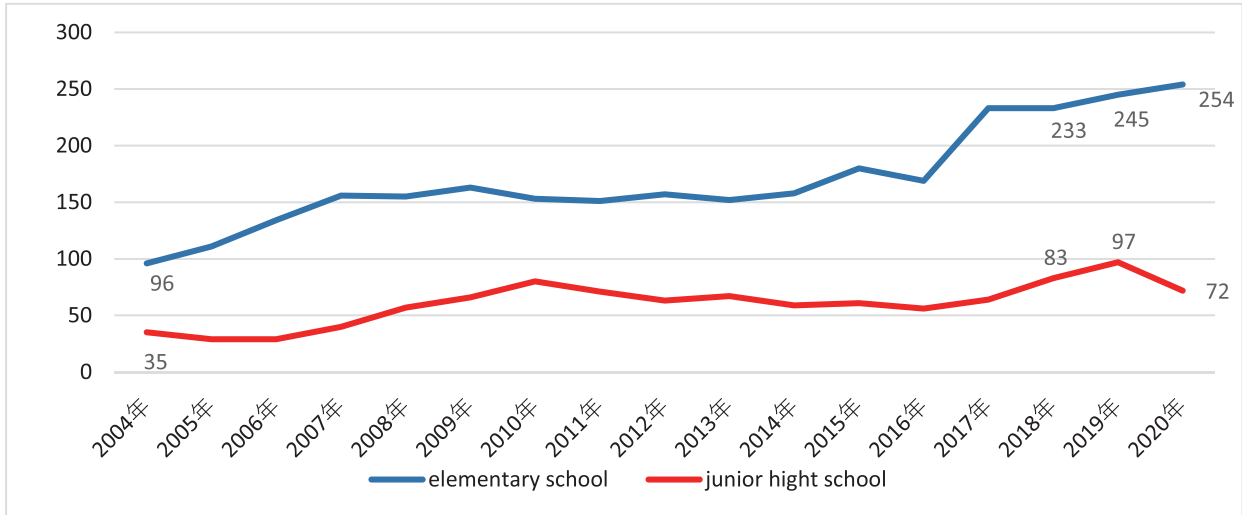
In order to avoid such a situation, the city should give foreign residents as much information as possible about medical care, pension, health insurance, welfare, and other services essential for their daily living in multiple languages. If so, they will be able to enjoy the benefits of such services.

⑥ Issues about education

Foreign-born parents may be confused about differences in the educational system between their home countries and Japan. What is worse, their children have difficulty in adapting themselves to school lives in Japan or do not feel like studying because they cannot understand Japanese well. Some families do not even use Japanese at home. As a result, there is a high proportion of children who need to learn Japanese at elementary and junior high schools. In order to make things better, the city should make every effort to teach Japanese to children with diverse cultural backgrounds, and help them to enroll in schools or go on to high schools and to hand down their identities. In addition, each school should provide a good environment for such children to learn about human rights, understand intercultural cohesion, and have a dream for the future.

As society is being more globalized, children with diverse cultural backgrounds will be more expected to play active parts by using their strengths of good understanding of different cultures and senses of value and their abilities to speak multiple languages.

**Chart 15 Number of children who need Japanese language education in Iga City by year**



⑦ Issues about natural disasters, disaster prevention, and crime prevention

Once a natural disaster, such as an earthquake and a typhoon, hits us, foreign residents may feel worried or go into a panic. This is not only because they are not so good at Japanese that it is difficult for them to get enough information, but also because they have different cultural backgrounds or have little experience of a natural disaster. In order to let them free from troubles, the city should develop a system to give them guidance on disaster prevention in plain Japanese through a wide variety of media. Also, the city should quickly improve an environment to give foreign residents relevant information and encourage them to join in a disaster prevention drill. If so, they will be able to learn more about disaster prevention, prepare themselves for natural disasters, and then get ready to help each other in case of a natural disaster.

Furthermore, the city should make more efforts to lead foreign residents to join in a patrol or an organization for local crime prevention with the view to developing a society where all citizens can live safely and securely.

⑧ Issus about the spread of an infectious disease

The city must carefully handle information when controlling or preventing the spread of Covid-19 or other infectious diseases. If not, any unknown or wrong information may hurt human rights. The city is striving to give foreign residents necessary information in multiple languages at any time, but should further strengthen the system for providing urgent information.

(5) System to promote intercultural cohesion

Considering the present situation of the city and the world, Iga City should constantly discuss how to promote intercultural cohesion and cooperate with all the parties concerned in order to turn the city's vision into reality and develop an intercultural society efficiently and effectively.

## Chapter 3 Basic Philosophy of the Guidelines

### (1) Basic philosophy

Respecting people of different cultures and backgrounds, turning the city intercultural and comfortable to live in, and creating new value together

### (2) Goals

Iga City has set the goals as listed below in order to realize the basic philosophy of the Guidelines.

- ① People of different cultural backgrounds will respect each other and work hard together to raise awareness about human rights and develop a discrimination and prejudice-free society with an eye toward intercultural cohesion which Iga City aims for.
- ② The citizens, *Jūmin Jichi Kyōgikai* (resident autonomous organization), various organizations, businesses, and administrative bodies will unite as one and develop a sustainable, diverse, and inclusive society which “leaves no one behind”, as promised in the SDGs or Sustainable Development Goals.

### Ideal image of the intercultural cohesion which Iga City aims for

- ◇ Many foreign residents are strongly attached to Iga City, and integrated into local communities.
- ◇ Individual citizens are on an equal footing, and respect each other in local communities without suffering any disadvantages simply because of different nationalities and cultural backgrounds.
- ◇ A variety of groups actively conduct activities to support foreign residents so that they can live their daily lives without any worries.
- ◇ A diverse society\* is made reality.

### Relationship between the Guidelines and SDGs



\*A diverse society is a society which includes and accepts people of different backgrounds and senses of value.

## Chapter 4 Basic Courses of Action in the Guidelines

### (1) Four basic courses of action

In order to reach the goals of the Guidelines, the citizens, *Jūmin Jichi Kyōgikai* (resident autonomous organization), various organizations, businesses, administrative agencies, and other relevant organizations should cooperate with each other and push forward the measures to promote intercultural cohesion as listed below while playing their roles in society and bringing out their strengths and characteristics.

#### ① Raising awareness about intercultural cohesion and participation in social activities through close communication

The city will give foreign residents more opportunities of learning Japanese and Japanese society so that they can actively join in a variety of activities and make contribution as members of local communities.

In addition, the city will raise awareness about mutual understanding and respect through cultural exchange programs so that both Japanese and foreign residents can interact with each other on a daily basis.

[Examples of measures]

- ① Providing opportunities to learn Japanese and opening a Japanese language class
- ② Holding an event to encourage communication regardless of different nationalities and languages
- ③ Raising awareness about accepting both Japanese culture and different cultures
- ④ Providing a place for foreign residents and children with diverse cultural backgrounds to visit with ease

#### ② Further improving the foundations of livelihood

The city will help both Japanese and foreign residents to share information and work together in preparation for the spread of Covid-19 or other infectious diseases, so that they can get rid of inconvenience or worries which they have in their daily living because of different languages and cultures.

In addition, people in different fields will cooperate with each other to ensure solid foundations for everyday living so that anyone can live their lives without any worries.

[Examples of measures]

- ① Preparing a place for foreign residents to ask for advice or get information
- ② Improving a system to cooperate with foreign residents in preparation for a natural disaster or the spread of Covid-19 or other infectious diseases (Establishing a procedure for emergency response in cooperation with local communities, businesses, and foreign residents in case a natural disaster hits us)
- ③ Working together for foreign residents to form solid foundations for their lives (including housing, education, work, medical care, health, welfare, disaster prevention, traffic, and crime prevention)

### ③ Turning a society intercultural

The city will aim at getting rid of prejudice and discrimination against foreign residents by raising awareness about intercultural cohesion, and provide easy-to-join events and opportunities of deeply understanding different cultures.

In addition, the city will give foreign residents opportunities of learning local issues, actively joining in activities, and contributing to local communities.

[Examples of measures]

- ① Encouraging foreign residents to take part in society and local affairs
- ② Developing local communities by promoting diversity
- ③ Taking action against discriminatory treatment

### ④ Improving a system to promote intercultural cohesion and responding to globalization

In view of globalization in many fields and the acquisition of technically skilled and knowledgeable people from different countries (highly skilled professional), the city will work with the citizens, *Jūmin Jichi Kyōgikai* (resident autonomous organization), various organizations, businesses, and administrative agencies toward the goal of the promotion of intercultural cohesion.

[Examples of measures]

- ① Working together with relevant bodies and organizations
- ② Recruiting highly skilled professionals and developing talent

