Summer 2025

Waffle Camp Hometown

Impact Report

Introduction

Waffle Camp is a one-day program designed for junior and senior high school girls and non-binary students. Its goal is to spark interest in IT and technology fields and encourage participants to proactively think about their future. In 2025, the program was held in five cities across Japan with 119 students participating. Centered around website creation, the program also incorporated new learning experiences using generative AI and discussions on unconscious bias. As a result, participants were exposed not only to technical skills but also to diverse values and career options. This report shares the outcomes from each location, participant feedback, and survey analysis to highlight the learning and changes brought about by Waffle Camp, as well as our outlook for the future.

Background of Waffle Camp Hometown

Waffle Camp Hometown is a free one-day course for local junior and senior high school students, where participants experience building websites using HTML/CSS. In addition to skill acquisition, the program features career talks by women currently working in IT, providing valuable insights for students' future career choices.。

Since 2020, Waffle has been running Waffle Camp to reduce anxieties toward IT and STEM fields and to build interest in them. Starting in 2022, Waffle expanded the initiative nationwide as "Waffle Camp Hometown," supported by companies and municipalities that share the vision of providing opportunities for students with limited exposure to IT.

To date, nearly 600 junior and senior high school students have participated. After attending, some have gone on to pursue STEM tracks, study computer science at university, or actively challenge themselves in IT-related contests, contributing both to bridging the gender gap in IT and to supporting students' career development.

Waffle Camp Hometown Overview

Period: July 1, 2025 (Tue) – August 31, 2025 (Sun)
Participation Fee: Free
Eligibility: Junior and senior high school girls and non-binary students living in the host city
Number of Participants: 119
Content: Participants create their own original website using HTML/CSS in one day. The program also integrates learning about AI and "dialogues with role models" featuring women working in IT, supporting students in making informed career choices in the IT field.

2025 Initiatives

In 2025, Waffle Camp introduced a new component utilizing generative AI in lectures. During the website creation process, students used AI tools to efficiently generate content and gain design ideas, enabling them to build purpose-driven websites. This allowed participants to attempt expressions they would not have thought of on their own, while also learning how to make proper use of AI. Ethical use of technology was also discussed, ensuring that digital-native students feel confident in using AI responsibly in society.

One participant commented, "I didn't really know much about IT or AI at first, but after today I realized that women can expand their futures through these fields." Such feedback shows that AI integration had a positive influence on participants' career outlooks.

In addition, time was dedicated to exploring unconscious bias. By recognizing hidden assumptions, students were able to reflect on preconceived notions and consider career paths true to themselves. One participant said, “I learned the term ‘unconscious bias’ for the first time. I realized I had unknowingly assumed that STEM was for boys and humanities for girls.” Another shared, “I was surprised to find out that my experiences had created hidden assumptions in me.” These reflections helped students notice biases that are hard to see in daily life, rethink stereotypes, and embrace diverse perspectives.

Such new initiatives went beyond technical skills: experiences like using AI to realize their own ideas and recognizing unconscious bias sparked a mindset shift in students, helping them feel “I can do this” and “I want to try.”

Results

In 2025, Waffle Camp was held in five cities across Japan. Out of 144 applicants, 119 students participated. While the program primarily targeted junior and senior high school girls and non-binary students, in Nagasaki City 11 boys also joined at the community’s request, creating a valuable opportunity for diverse students to learn together. With continued collaboration with local governments and companies, the average number of participants per city rose to 23.6, compared to 19.8 the previous year. This growth was supported by stronger trust and cooperation with local partners. However, participation in Nagaoka City dropped to only 3 students, far below the previous year. This was likely influenced by competing workshops and events held during the summer break, in addition to outreach challenges. Moving forward, it will be important to adjust program timing and publicity more closely to each community’s circumstances.

Participants by Location

	Toyooka	Fukui	Nagasaki	Kamiina	Nagaoka

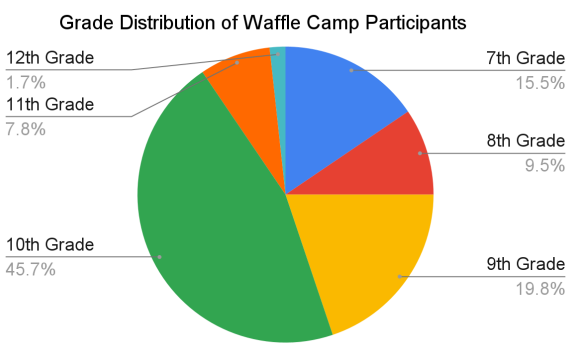
2025 Participants	16	53	26	21	3
2024 Participants	12	42	10	19	17

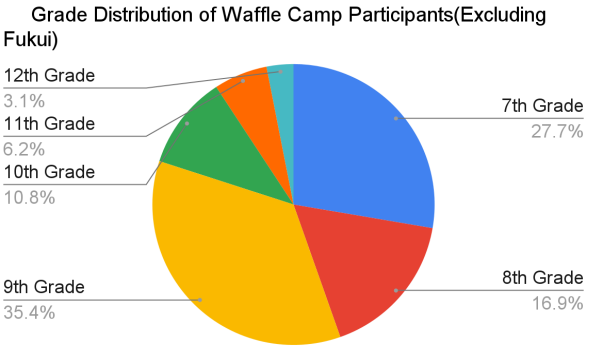
Participant Demographics

Increase in junior high school participation

Of the 116 survey respondents, 52 were junior high school students and 64 were senior high school students. Overall, there were slightly more senior high school participants, but in Fukui Prefecture—where recruitment focused specifically on high school students—51 were in high school. Excluding Fukui, however, only 13 high school students participated, while junior high school students accounted for the majority with 52.

Notably, the proportion of junior high school students has risen compared to previous years. This trend may be attributed to the “GIGA School Initiative,” which has provided devices from the elementary school level, and the nationwide introduction of mandatory programming education starting in 2020. As a result, more students have early exposure to ICT and programming, leading those who developed an interest in elementary school to actively participate in Waffle Camp once they reach junior high.

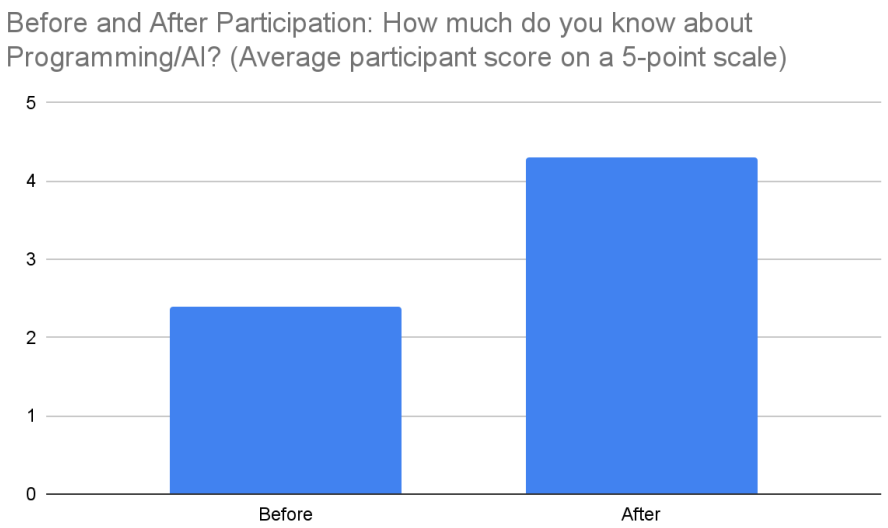




Understanding of Programming/AI and Changes in Interest in IT/Technology Career Paths

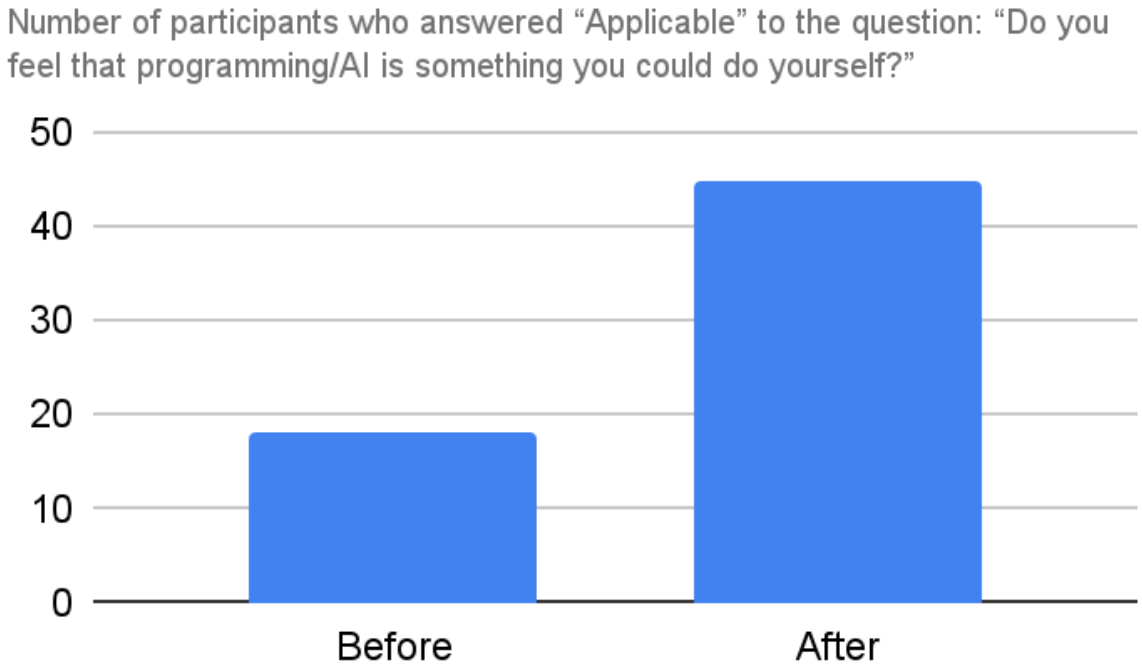
A survey was conducted on participants' understanding of programming/AI and their interest in IT/technology careers. Each item was rated on a five-point scale (1 = not interested at all, 5 = very interested).

In response to the question "Before participating, how much did you know about programming/AI?" the average score was 2.4 out of 5 prior to the program. After participation, this increased significantly to 4.3. While most participants initially answered "I know a little," post-program responses to the question "After the workshop, do you feel you became more knowledgeable about programming/AI?" showed a notable increase in those selecting "5 = strongly agree" and "4 = somewhat agree." This indicates a dramatic improvement in understanding through the program.



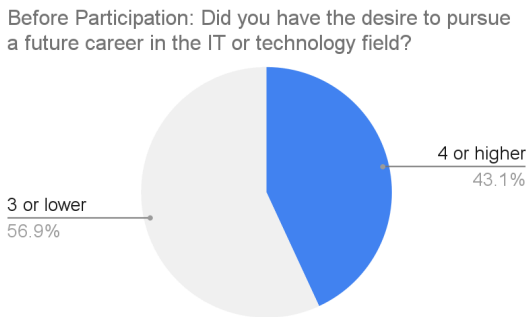
Confidence in Programming/AI

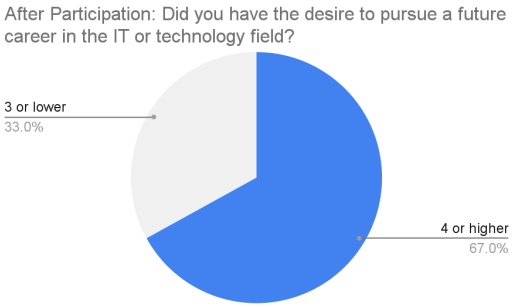
When asked “Do you feel like programming/AI is something you could do yourself?” only 18 students rated 4 or higher (“somewhat agree” or “strongly agree”) before participation. Afterward, this number rose to 45. Comparing pre- and post-surveys, 84 out of 116 students gave themselves a higher score after the program, showing that many participants gained greater confidence. These results confirm that Waffle Camp not only imparts knowledge but also fosters a positive self-recognition of “I can do this.”



Change in Interest Toward IT/Technology Careers

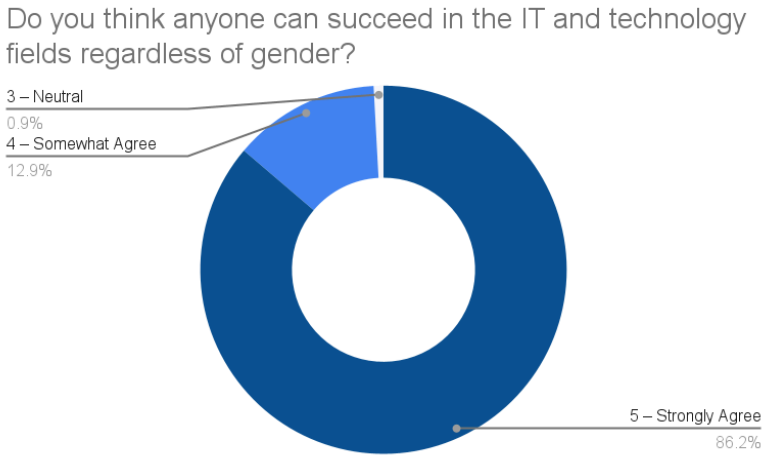
In response to “Do you now feel more interested in pursuing a career in IT or technology?” 48 students rated 4 or higher before the program, while after participation the number jumped to 99 (85.3% of all participants). Furthermore, 71 out of 116 students gave themselves a higher score compared to before, showing that the program significantly heightened interest in IT and technology career paths.





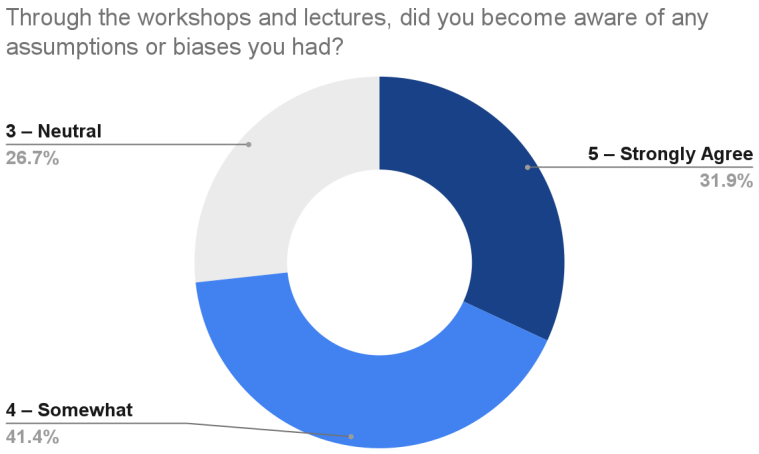
Do You Believe Anyone Can Thrive in IT/Technology Regardless of Gender?

In response to “Do you believe anyone can thrive in IT/technology regardless of gender?” 100 out of 116 participants answered “strongly agree,” and 15 answered “somewhat agree,” meaning 99% expressed positive awareness. These results suggest that the unconscious bias session at the beginning contributed greatly to shifting perspectives and nurturing a mindset that IT is a field where everyone can succeed, regardless of gender.



Reflections from the Workshop

When asked “Did you realize any assumptions or biases you held through the workshop or lectures?” 85 out of 116 students selected 4 or higher, indicating they became aware of unconscious biases. This shows that through Waffle Camp, many participants learned to reflect on their assumptions and consider their futures without being constrained by gender or stereotypes.



Participant Comments (original wording)

- “I thought girls in particular were not good at programming, but by joining a project like this, my mindset changed.”
- “I used to think I could only pursue the humanities and couldn’t choose a STEM path, but I realized that’s not a good way to think.”
- “I realized I had biases I wasn’t even aware of. From now on I want to reflect carefully to make sure those biases aren’t influencing me.”
- “When we were first asked which picture looked like an engineer, I realized I also unconsciously pictured an engineer as male, which made me reflect.”
- “IT may currently have more men, but I think women’s participation will grow, and if people share the same goals, gender doesn’t really matter.”
- “I learned the term ‘unconscious bias’ for the first time. I realized I had unknowingly assumed STEM was for boys and humanities was for girls.”
- “I used to think programming languages were impossible for me to understand, but when I actually tried, I found it surprisingly fun and doable. I realized it’s important not to be trapped by stereotypes but to challenge myself.”

Survey Results on Future Career Intentions

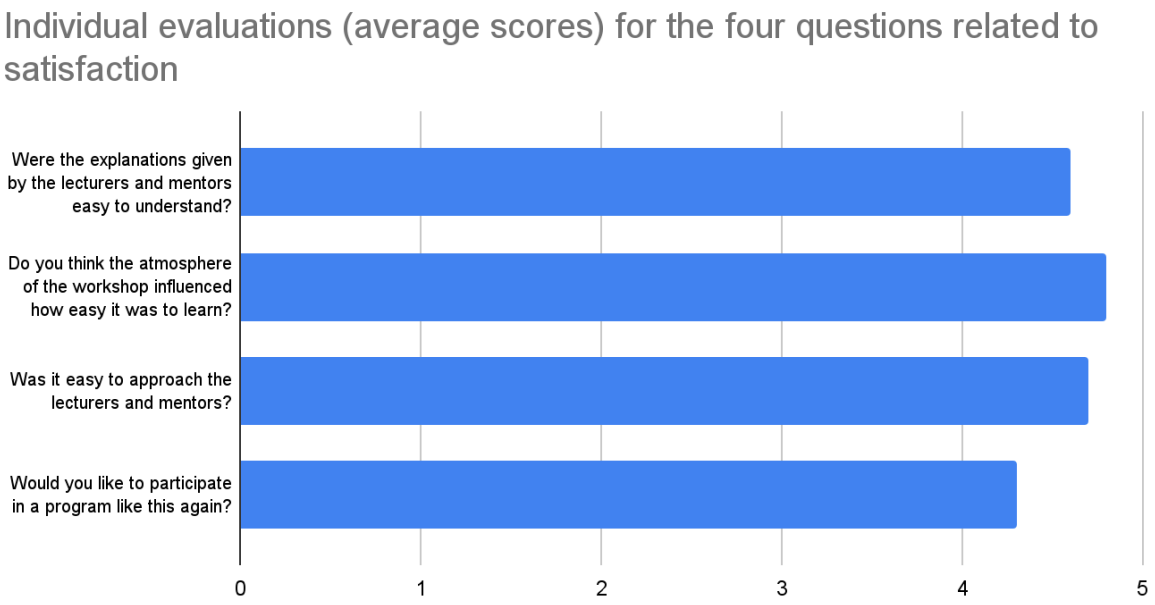
When asked “What field of study or kind of work would you like to pursue in the future?” participants expressed diverse interests. The most common choice was Information & Communications/IT (45 students), aligning with the program content and showing that many students were able to concretely imagine their future. Additionally, 38 students answered “Other,” with free responses including “design,” “entertainment,” “arts,” and “international relations,” reflecting a wide range of career aspirations. This suggests that participants were able to envision diverse futures, with IT as a central element but integrated into their broader personal interests.

A Supportive Learning Environment and High Satisfaction

The program received very high evaluations overall regarding its operation. In particular, for the question “Do you think the atmosphere of the workshop made learning easier?”

all participants rated 4 or higher on a five-point scale, with an average of 4.8. This shows that a safe and supportive learning environment was established.

Other items were also highly rated: “Were the lectures and mentors’ explanations easy to understand?” averaged 4.6, and “Was it easy to approach instructors and mentors?” averaged 4.7. Overall, satisfaction was extremely high, reflecting that participants strongly felt supported.



Impact Highlighted by Student Voices and Future Outlook

In the feedback received from the students who participated in this program, many highlighted that the lectures, mentors’ advice, and career talks were extremely helpful.

Lecture and Mentor Support

Students highly valued the mentors for comments such as “They thought together with me about how I could achieve what I wanted to do” and “They gave me a lot of advice on

how to create my project." This meant that students not only gained knowledge but also received concrete, individualized support while working on their projects.

There were also comments like "When I asked a question about something I didn't understand, they researched it and explained it thoroughly," showing that mentors responded to students' questions with flexibility and care, which likely enhanced the learning effect.

Such mentoring support proved to be an important factor in boosting students' confidence and encouraging them to take initiative in their learning. In particular, the feedback "They taught me kindly, and it really helped" demonstrates how the mentors' approach contributed directly to improving students' motivation to learn.

Impact of Career Talks

Career talks provided participants with opportunities to concretely envision their futures. For students who had not connected "being a woman" with "working in STEM/IT," meeting active role models was transformative.

Comments included: "I felt relieved to know that women can also contribute to society through STEM jobs," and "Seeing women active in IT, which I had pictured as male-dominated, made me feel I could challenge myself too." Role models thus reduced anxieties and encouraged broader possibilities.

Local connections also carried strong meaning: "I was inspired to know that someone from my own region works at a major company in Tokyo," and "I learned that even with a humanities background you can pursue IT, which expanded my career options."

The career stories and values shared by role models—such as "keep choosing what you love" and "even after twists and turns, you can find the path that suits you"—gave students courage and a positive outlook on their futures.。

Conclusion

In 2025, Waffle Camp was held in five cities nationwide, evolving the program with the introduction of generative AI and unconscious bias workshops. Through AI-powered website creation, participants efficiently shaped their ideas while also learning about ethical use, building confidence in technology as an everyday tool. The unconscious bias sessions helped many recognize hidden assumptions, nurturing the belief that gender should not limit opportunities in IT or STEM.

Survey results show significant improvements in understanding, confidence, and career interest in programming and technology. The sharp increase in students who felt “I can do this” reflects a notable rise in self-efficacy.

Meeting female engineers and local role models through career talks further helped participants reduce anxieties and develop the motivation to challenge themselves.

This program is made possible through collaboration with municipalities and local companies, as well as the dedicated mentors and instructors who created a safe and encouraging environment. Indeed, all participants rated the atmosphere as conducive to learning, demonstrating that such an environment directly supports student engagement and growth.

While differences in participation numbers between regions suggest that outreach and recruitment strategies can be improved, the program will continue to evolve in step with changes in ICT use in schools and the spread of AI. Moving forward, Waffle Camp aims to provide even more opportunities for girls and non-binary students to confidently pursue IT, empowering them to envision and create their own futures.

Finally, we sincerely thank the municipalities and companies who provided invaluable support in delivering this program. With the ongoing cooperation of our partners, Waffle will continue to foster learning opportunities for the next generation.

Sponsors and Supporters (titles omitted, in no particular order)

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the following companies for their generous support in making this program possible. On behalf of all Waffle staff, thank you very much.

Waffle Camp Supporting Foundations

- MetLife Foundation
- Mitsubishi Memorial Foundation for Educational Excellence

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End of Report