

### Section 3 The Attitudes of Women and Issues Related to Employment Promotion

Regarding women's employment, both men and women support the idea that "women should continue working even after having a child". In reality, however, the amount of time that men during their child rearing periods spend on housework is extremely small, and with insufficient social support it is not easy for women to actually continue working. In addition, looking at the employment pattern of women who return to the workplace, most are employed non-regular, and in many cases they have accepted such positions even though they would have preferred regular employment.

Promotion of flexible and shorter work hours in corporations during child rearing periods and of equal treatment of regular and non-regular employees are important in order to encourage the employment of women who want to work. In addition, through support for balancing work and home and the creation of diverse choices, it is important to reexamine the ways people, including men, work today and to seek to harmonize work and private life.

#### **(International Comparison of Female Labour Force Participation Rates)**

Comparing the participation of women in the labour force in different countries, at 59.5%, the USA had the highest rate of participation of the countries surveyed, followed by the Netherlands, the UK, Germany, and France. At 48.3%, Japan had the lowest rate except for Italy. Comparing participation rates by age groups, the graphs for Japan and South Korea form m-shaped curves, while those of Europe and the USA are generally trapezoidal. Female participation in the labour force in Japan is particularly low compared to the USA and Europe in the 30–34 age group, when many women are facing marriage and childbirth (Figure 45).

#### **(Issues in Women's Employment)**

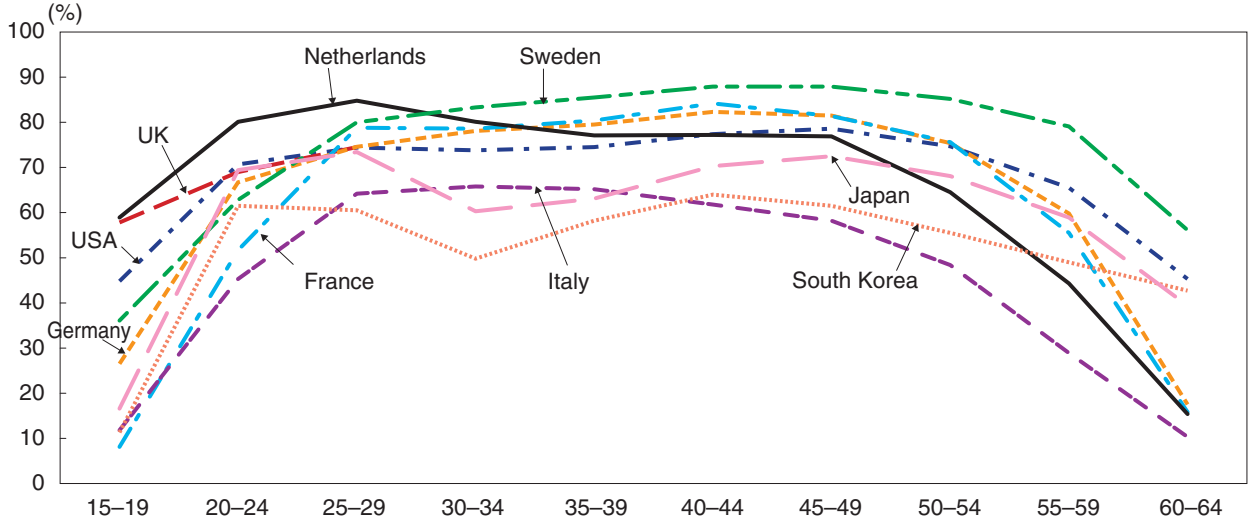
Regarding women's employment, 41.9% of those surveyed answered "Women should continue employment even after having a child", followed by 37.0% who said "Women should leave employment when they have a child and return when the child is older", 9.1% who responded "Women should remain employed until they have a child", 5.4% who replied "Women should remain employed until they get married", and 1.7% who answered "Women should not be employed". The response "Women should continue employment even after having a child" is on an upward trend for both women and men, indicating an increasing sentiment in favor of women continuing employment after having a child (Figure 46).

Looking at the desires of women with children towards work, there are three patterns. There are women who wish to continue working (the "continued employment pattern"), women who wish to take the opportunity of marriage and childbirth to stop working and then return to the workplace when the burden of childrearing has eased (the "reemployment pattern"), and women who wish to be regular homemakers concentrating on housework and childrearing. Below, this paper considers issues related to the continuing employment pattern and the reemployment pattern.

#### **(Issues with the Continuing Employment Pattern)**

According to the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare's "2nd Longitudinal Survey of Adults in 21st Century", the employment status of women who responded "Have a job" in the first survey and then gave birth within one year was 62.1% "Continuing in same employment" and 28.3% "Left employment". Looking at regular and non-regular employment, of those "Continuing in same employment", regular was much higher at 69.1% versus 38.8% for non-regular (Figure 47). In addition, looking back on desire to continue working expressed one year earlier and employment status, of those who said "Will continue working after giving birth", 78.9% were still working, while 11.3% had left their jobs.

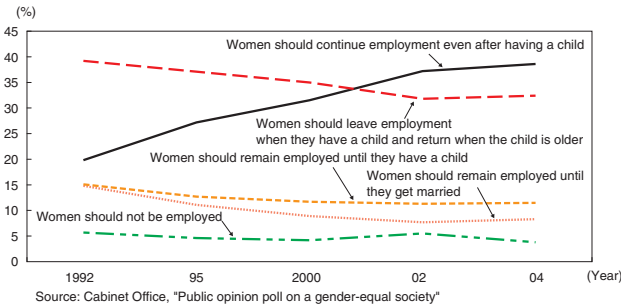
Figure 45 International Comparison of the Percentage of Women in the Labour Force by Age Group



Sources: ILO, "LABORSTA," Statistics Bureau, MIC, "Labour Force Survey"

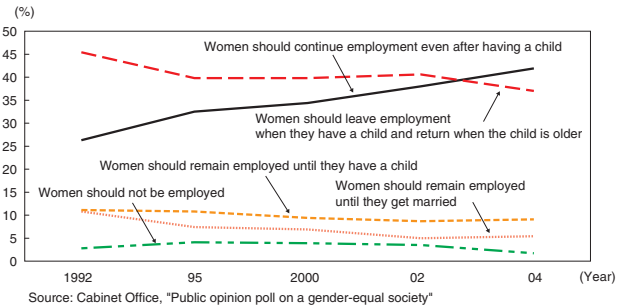
- Notes:
- 1) The "15-19" group for the USA, the UK, and Sweden is actually ages 16 through 19.
  - 2) The UK uses the age groups "16-19," "20-24," "25-34," "35-49," and "50 and above," so only the data for "16-19" and "20-24" are shown. The figures for the other age groups are "25-34," 74.5%; "35-49," 78.3%; and "50 and above," 30.9%.
  - 3) Figures for Japan are for 2004; figures for other countries are for 2003.

Figure 46-1 Opinions on Women in the Workplace (males)



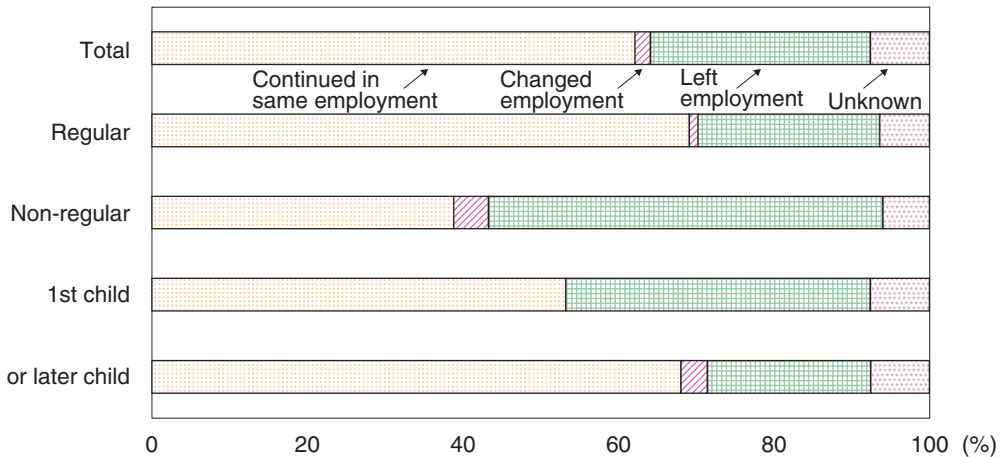
Source: Cabinet Office, "Public opinion poll on a gender-equal society"

Figure 46-2 Opinions on Women in the Workplace (females)



Source: Cabinet Office, "Public opinion poll on a gender-equal society"

Figure 47 Continued Employment of Women who Gave Birth in the Past Year, by Employment Pattern and Number of Children



Source: MHLW, "The 2nd Longitudinal Survey of Adults in 21st Century"

Note: Among married couples who responded to both the first and second surveys, the work status of wives who responded in the first survey that they were working and then gave birth within one year.

### **(Issues with the Reemployment Pattern)**

According to the Japan Institute of Workers' Evolution's "Survey on Treatment of Female Workers", when asked what is necessary in order to continue working in their present companies, the most common response from all women was "Systems and environments enabling mothers to work while raising children" at 51.7%. This was followed by "Work that is challenging and rewarding" at 50.5%, "Consideration in work hours of child-care and nursing care" at 41.3%, "Colleagues and superiors to whom one can turn for advice" at 40.2%, "Workplace cultures and environments in which women are not discriminated against for marriage, childbirth, child-care, and so on" at 32.3%, and "Equal treatment of men and women and fair personnel evaluations" at 32.2% (Figure 48). This indicates a high percentage of responses in areas related to support for balanced work and home life and equal treatment. Looking at the answers by status of youngest child, the highest percentage answering "Systems and environments enabling mothers to work while raising children" was among women whose youngest child is not yet in elementary school, with the percentage dropping as the children got older and entered elementary or middle school. This pattern is repeated with "Consideration in work hours of child-care and nursing care", "Workplace cultures and environments in which women are not discriminated against for marriage, childbirth, child-care, and so on", "Not too much overtime", and "Flexible work hours". The support and systems needed for employment differ by life stage.

### **(Preferable Support Measures)**

According to the Japan Institute of Life Insurance's "Survey on Life Planning, Finance, and Insurance", the most common response on obstacles to full-time homemakers entering the workplace was "Burden of child care", followed by "Lack of jobs with appropriate work form and location", and "Burden of caring for a home" (Figure 49).

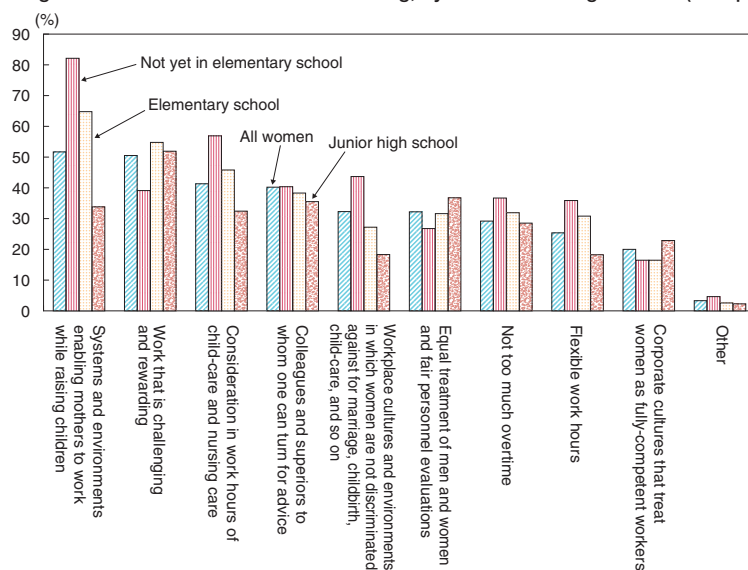
In addition, according to the "Report on Survey Research on Support Policies for Child rearing" commissioned by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, regarding changes in work following the birth of a first child, the most common response was "I will stop working", at 40.3%. This was much higher than the percentage answering "I want to stop working" (26.5%), indicating the difficulty of balancing work and childrearing.

In the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare's "Basic Survey of Employment of Women", the percentage of men taking child-care leave during 2003 was extremely low at only 0.44%, indicating the difficulty men have obtaining such leave.

Furthermore, according to the Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications' "Labour Force Survey" the percentage of males working 60 or more hours weekly was 22.7% in the 30–34 age group and 24.0% in the 35–39 age group. These are the longest work hours of any age group, and this situation is taking men away from spending time with their children. In addition, looking at weekly work hours over time, there are age groups in which the percentage working 60 or more hours per week is increasing and age groups in which the percentage working less than 35 hours per week is increasing, so polarization is advancing as some age groups work more hours and some do not (Table 50).

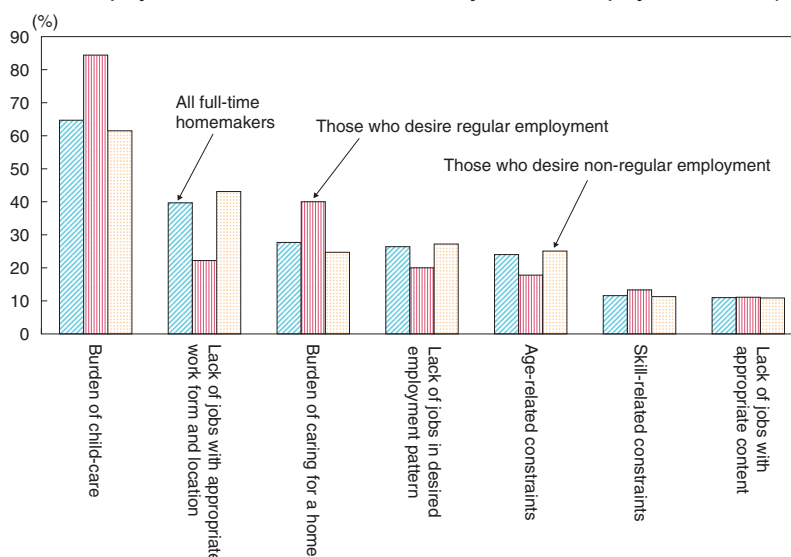
Therefore, balancing work and home obviously requires the cooperation of men and women, but reexamination of ways of working by corporations and the undertaking of initiatives to support such balance are also needed.

Figure 48 Things Needed in order to Continue Working, by Status of Youngest Child (multiple responses)



Source: Japan Institute of Workers' Evolution, "Survey on Treatment of Female Workers" (2004)

Figure 49 Obstacles to Employment for Full-Time Homemakers, by Preferred Employment Pattern (multiple responses)



Source: Japan Institute of Life Insurance, "Survey on Life Planning, Finance, and Insurance" (2003)

Figure 50 Percentage of Workers Employed Less Than 35 or 60 or More Hours per Week (males), by Age Group

(Unit: %)

Age group	1994		1999		2004	
	Less than 35 hours	60 or more hours	Less than 35 hours	60 or more hours	Less than 35 hours	60 or more hours
15-19	29.0	7.2	43.9	5.1	51.6	5.1
20-24	15.2	11.6	19.1	12.3	23.5	13.0
25-29	7.1	18.0	8.0	18.8	9.2	20.2
30-34	6.6	18.9	6.9	21.8	6.9	22.7
35-39	6.3	19.1	6.7	20.9	6.5	24.0
40-44	6.9	16.6	7.1	18.9	6.3	21.9
45-49	7.5	14.9	7.7	16.2	7.1	19.6
50-54	8.0	13.7	8.7	14.0	8.4	16.1
55-59	9.9	10.8	10.5	11.5	10.7	13.0
60-64	19.2	8.0	23.2	8.3	26.3	9.1
65 and older	30.1	6.3	35.6	5.8	41.1	6.7

Source: Specially calculated by the Office of Counselor in charge of Labour Policy, MHLW, from Statistics Bureau, MIC, "Labour Force Survey"

Note: Percentages of all workers, not including those who are not at work during the survey week