

Towards Accepting Diverse Work Styles and Lifestyles

From the “White Paper on Gender Equality 2016”

Summary

Cabinet Office, Government of Japan

May 2016

The Cabinet annually submits to the Diet a report on the state of formation of a gender-equal society and policies implemented by the government (the White Paper on Gender Equality).

Please see the White Paper (in Japanese) for more detailed information on sources cited.



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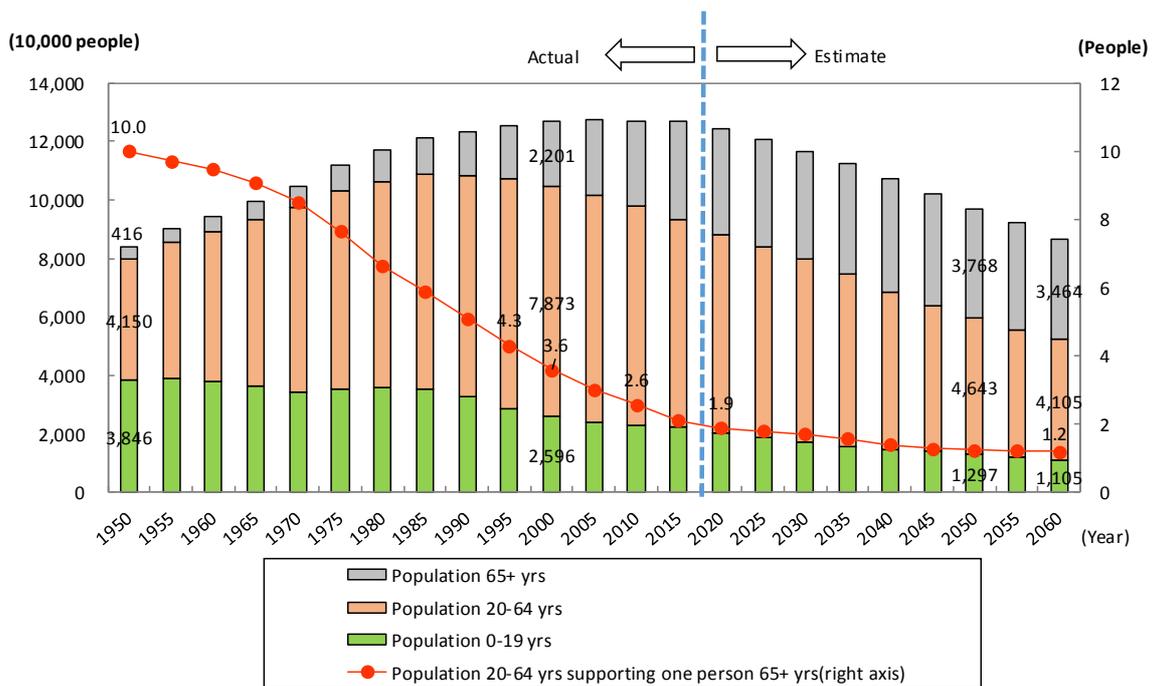
Towards Accepting Diverse Work Styles and Lifestyles

Section 1 The State of Women in Society

(Decrease in working population supporting senior citizens)

By the year 2048, Japan's population will fall below 100 million people. That number is expected to further decline to 86.74 million people by the year 2060. The decline in birth rate and increase in aged population means an increasing number of people need elderly care. For the sake of social system sustainability, the activity of women has become an urgent societal issue, as women represent one of Japan's greatest sources of potential labor force (I-Feature-Figure 1).

I-Feature-Figure 1 Number of Working-Aged People Supporting One Senior Citizen



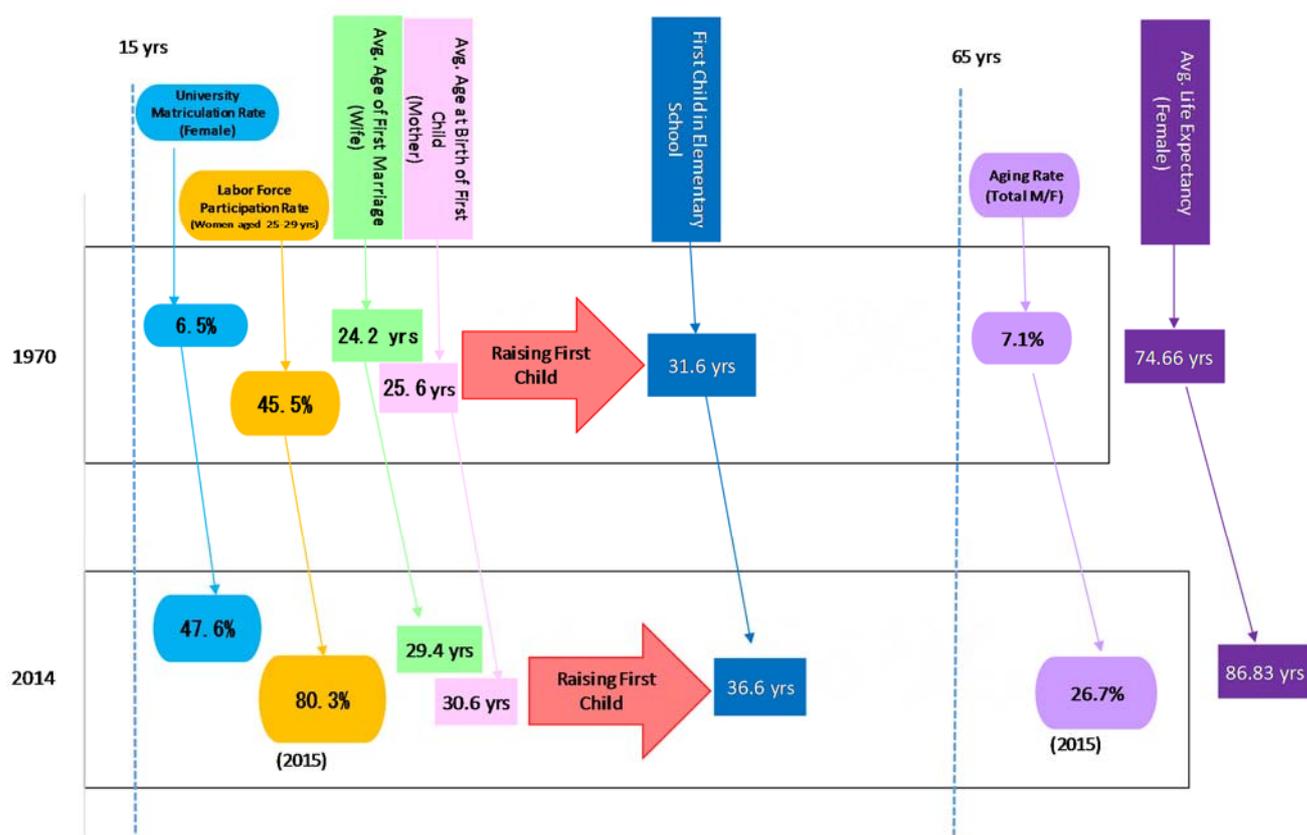
(Notes)

1. Based on Population Census, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, through 2010 and Population Estimates, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, through 2015. Based on Future Population Projections for Japan (2012 Estimates), (Birth and Death Estimates) National Institute of Population and Social Security Research, for years after 2020.
2. As of October 1 for each year.
3. Okinawa not included in years 1950 through 1970.

(Changes in women's major life events and circumstances)

Looking at the circumstances of women over time between the years 1970 and 2014, the figure shows that the average life expectancy of women has increased. At the same time, we see an increase in the mean age at first marriage and mean age at first child birth (I-Feature-Figure 2). The impact of delayed marriage and birth has resulted in Japan's total fertility rate falling from 2.13 in 1970 to 1.42 in 2014.

I-Feature-Figure 2 Change in women's major life events and circumstances



(Notes)

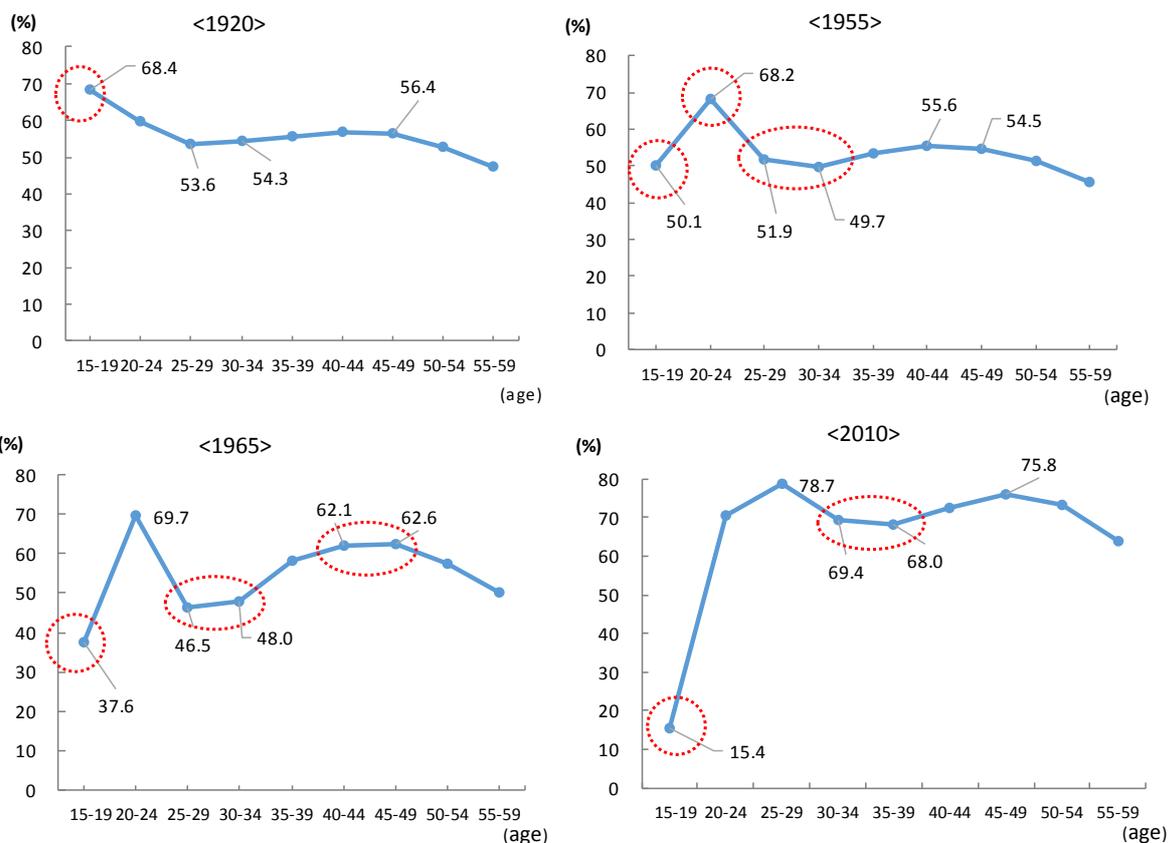
1. Average life expectancy based on Complete Life Table, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, for 1970 and Abridged Life Table, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, for 2014.
2. Aging rates based on Population Census, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, for 1970 and Population Estimates, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, for 2014. As of October 1 for each year. Senior citizen rates for 2014 used values for 2015.
3. Labor participation rate (women aged 25-29 years) based on Labour Force Survey, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (1970, 2015).
4. Other based on Vital Statistics, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare.
5. Senior citizen rates represent ratio of individuals aged 65 years and older compared to the total population.
6. Average marriage age based on youngest spouse at time of marriage or cohabitation.
7. Average age at birth of first child for 1970 calculated as arithmetic mean value of age according to Western calendar plus a 0.5 year correction value. Figures for 2014 calculated as arithmetic mean value of age in days.

(Changes in Women's Labor Participation Rates)

Looking at the labor force participation rate for women by age group, the graph shows an interesting contrast compared to other countries. The M-shaped curve hasn't always been the case historically for Japan. In fact, the phenomenon is relatively recent, emerging during Japan's period of high economic growth. In 1920, the labor force participation rate tended to decline with age. However, the left side of the M-shaped curve formed a peak in 1955. This M-shape has become more prominent in 1965 which was during the era of high economics growth in Japan. While the level of the bottom has increased, the age group at the bottom of the shape has also increased (I-Feature-Figure 3).

Comparing 1972 and 2015 according to marriage status, we see an increase in the number of unmarried workers, which represents one factor in the rise at the bottom of the M-shape curve (I-Feature-Figure 4).

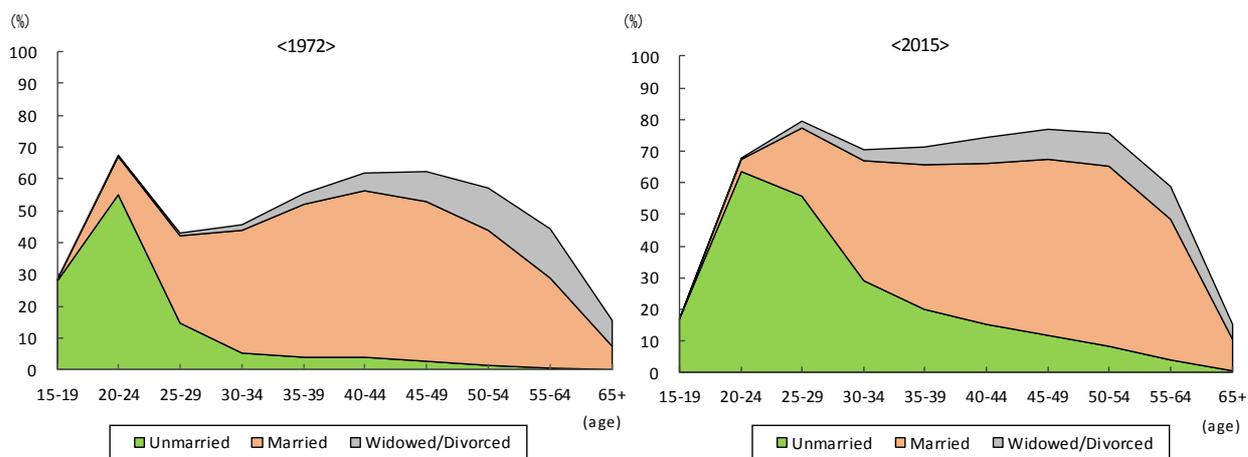
I-Feature-Figure 3 Changed in Women’s Labor Participation Rates



(Notes)

1. Based on Population census by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications
2. Employment rate in 1920
3. 1920 definition of "domestic servant in husband's household" includes employed persons distributed proportionately.
4. 1955 and 1965 figures reflect a 1% extraction.

I-Feature-Figure 4 Women’s Labor Participation Rates by Marital Status, Age Group

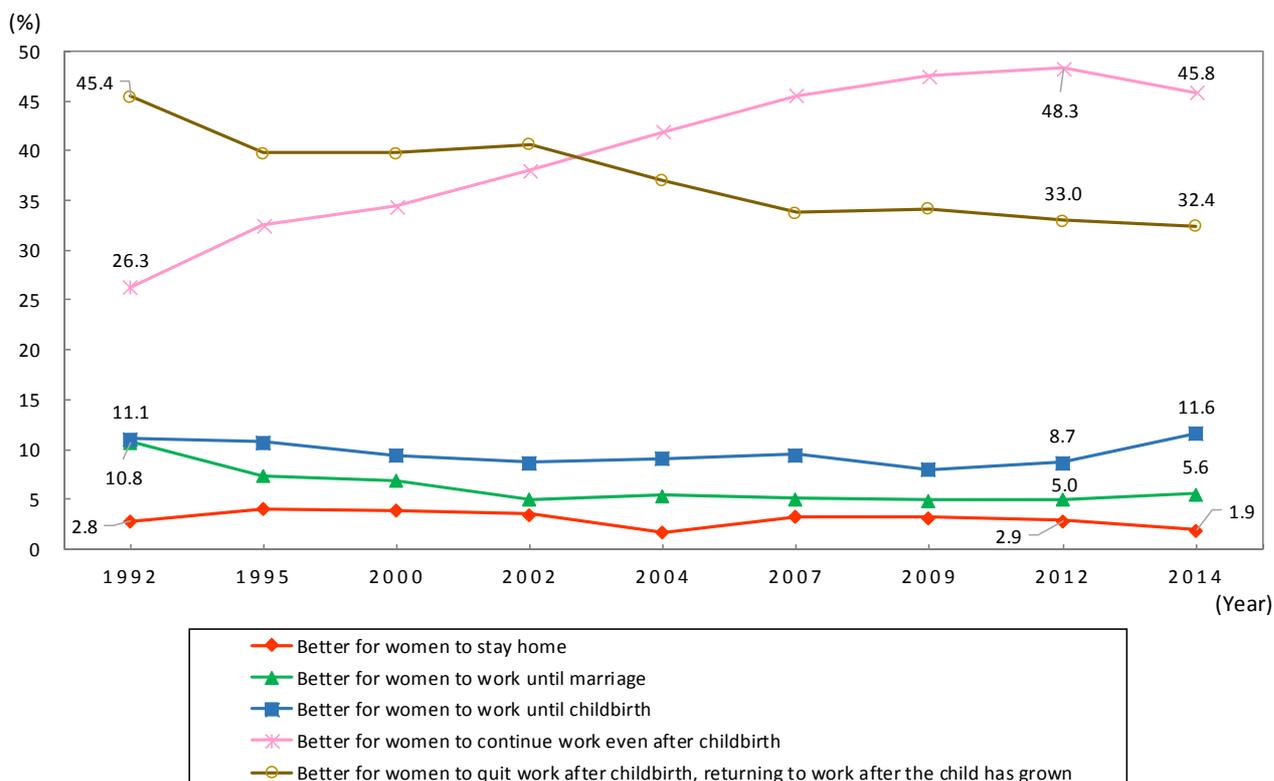


(Note) Based on Labour Force Survey, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications

(Increase in women's acceptance of continuing work after childbirth)

A comparison of women's perception towards employment between 1992 and 2014 reveals that the proportion of women who believe that "it is better to continue work even after childbirth" has surpassed that of women who believe that "it is better to quit work after childbirth, returning to work after the child has grown". This trend demonstrates a change in attitudes towards working while raising children among women (I-Feature-Figure 11). The reality of the situation, however, is that many women choose to leave work after childbirth. This suggests a sizable gap between the attitudes of women towards work and their actual behavior.

I-Feature-Figure 11 Changes in Women's Perception Regarding Employment



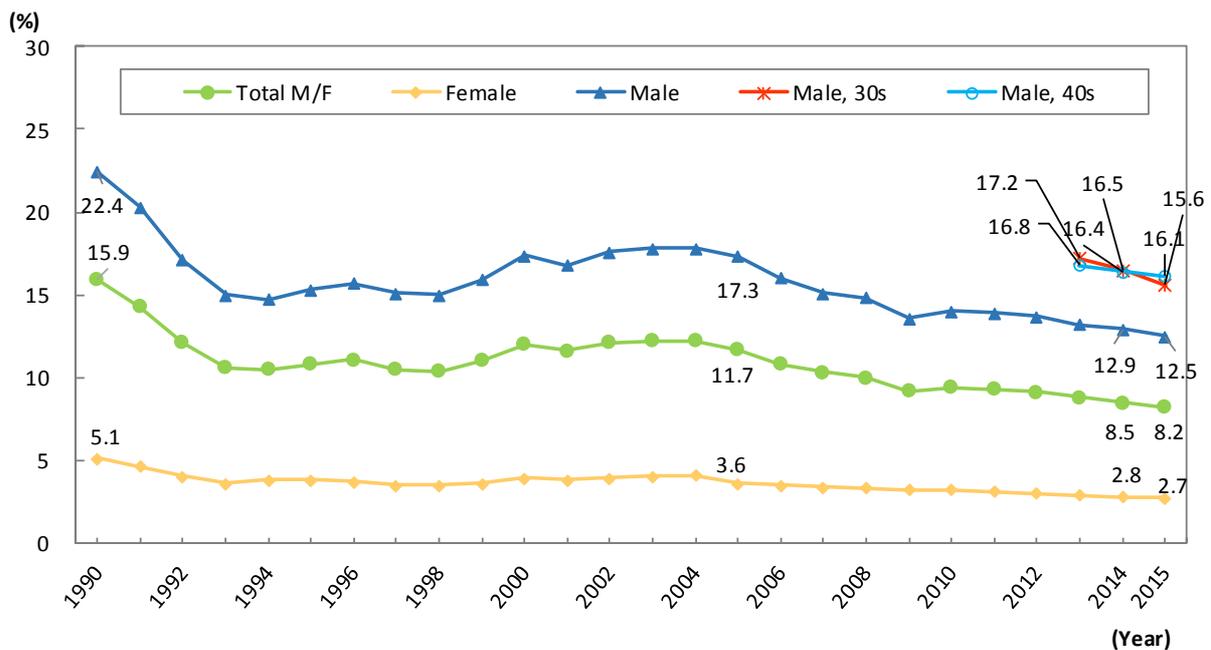
(Notes)

Based on Public Opinion Survey on the Gender Equality (1992), Public Opinion Survey on the Gender Equality Society (1995-2012), and Public Opinion Survey on the Enhancement of Women's Participation and Advancement (2014), the Cabinet Office.

(Proportion of Males and Females Working 60 Hours or More per Week)

Trends in long work hours among men and women show that the proportion of individuals working 60 hours or more per week was 2.7 percent for women and 12.5 percent for men for 2015. However, the proportion of men in their 30s and 40s (age overlapping child-rearing years) is relatively higher (I-Feature-Figure 12). Work styles that presume long work hours make it difficult to balance work and family life. Long work hours make it difficult for men to participate in home life. At the same time, long work hours for males affect the participation of women in non-family activities as they become unable to continue working long hours.

I-Feature-Figure 12 Proportion of Males and Females Working 60 Hours or More per Week



(Notes)

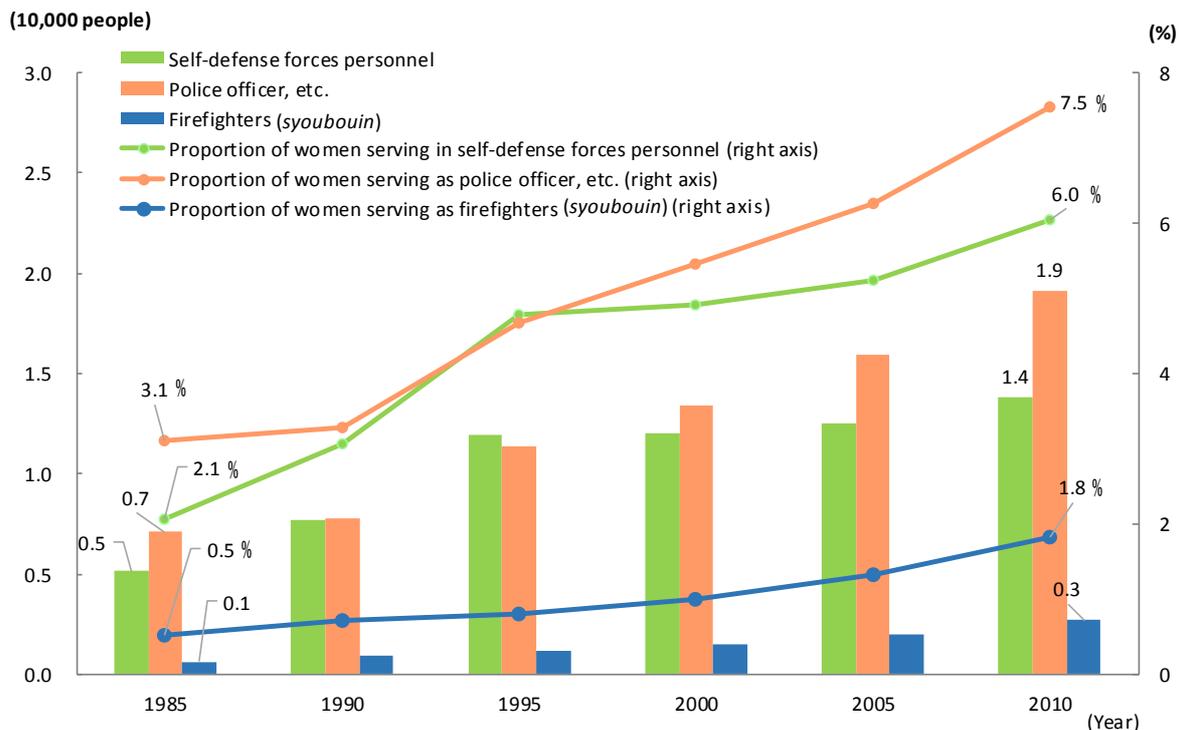
1. Based on Labour Force Survey (Basic Tabulation), the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications
2. Ratio among non-agricultural employees (excluding workers on leave).
3. Figures for 2011 are national figures, excluding Iwate, Miyagi, and Fukushima prefectures.

Section 2 Diverse Work Styles and Lifestyles

(Activity of women across a diverse range of fields)

More than a few women in Japan wish to work or have skills and knowledge to work, but are not working. These circumstances are a loss of economic resource for Japan. However, we are seeing a rising trend for women participating in industries and jobs with traditional low female participation (industries/jobs requiring heavy physical labor, etc.). For example, a significant long-term trend in the proportion of women working in security-related occupations has been observed. It is important that society allows women to be active across a wider range of occupations (I-Feature-Figure 16).

I-Feature-Figure 16 The Proportion of Women Working in Security-related Occupations



(Notes)

1. Based on Population Census, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications
2. "Police Officer, etc." includes police officers, Coast Guard officers, and Railroad Security personnel .
3. "Firefighters(syoubouin)" as referred to in Population Census, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications. This definition differs from "firefighter(syoubouriin)" as defined in the Fire Service Organization Law. "firefighter(syoubouriin)" means uniformed and titled personnel assigned to firefighting headquarters or fire stations.

[Article: [Supporting Women Pursuing Work in Science and Engineering!](#)]

As Japan strives to become a scientific and technological powerhouse, we must find ways to increase the number of women in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). Not only is diversity among people working in STEM fields essential, more perspectives to create greater innovation are also needed. In support of this notion, Japan has created an industry-academic-government program called the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Challenge to encourage girls (Riko-challe) to select a career path in the STEM fields. The Symposium for female students and their parents was held during the summer of 2015. Here, a female engineer involved in aircraft development encouraged the female students who attended the symposium. "In technology-related jobs, there is always a logical answer. If you say something that is correct, then your input will be accepted whether you're male or female.

I think this is an easy field for females to take on active roles."

[Article: [Better Support through Technological Innovation](#)]

Workers on the front line of the agriculture industry are looking forward to the introduction of "power assist suits" for agriculture work. The power assist suit is worn by a worker, who uses the function of the suit to reduce the physical burden of labor. As these suits become more popular, more women will be able to participate in agriculture-related work. The power assist suit is slated for introduction to the market during fiscal 2016. Private companies are developing other applications for the power assist suit, including nursing care and construction work.

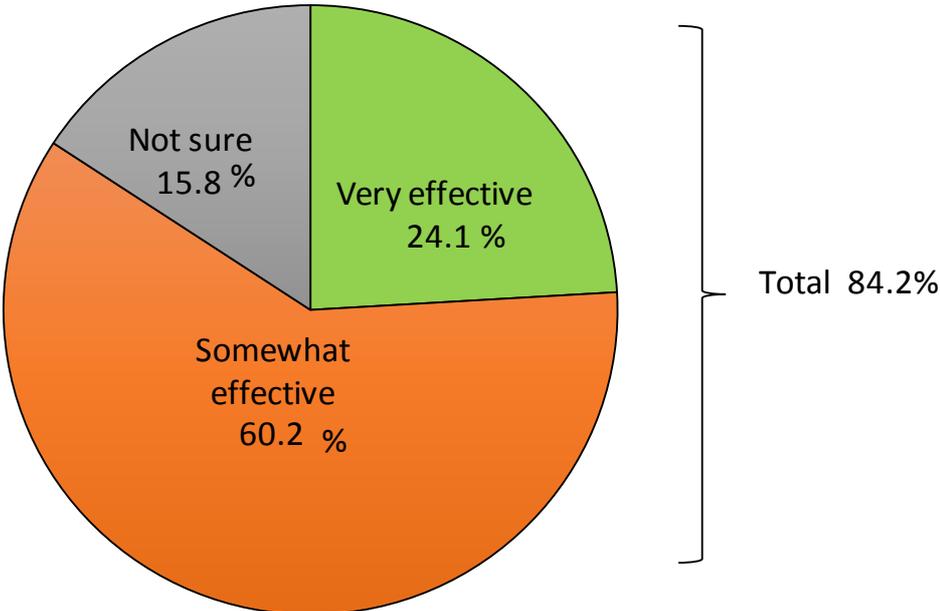
(Changing to accept diverse work styles and diverse lifestyles)

With lower birth rates and an aging population, the number of workers needed to support a single senior citizen in Japan is in decline. Today, the key is to support individuals in accomplishing several roles at the same time, rather than a single role in either "work" or "family." To accomplish this, we change the accepted ideas of long working hours and traditional working styles to create a society in which businesses are flexible enough to handle the needs and talents of each employee individually.

Developments in information and communications technology will lead to work environments that are not constrained by time or location. Telework is one example that holds tremendous promise. Many employees wish

telework arrangements, and numerous companies that have already adopted it relate the benefits of telework (I-Feature-Figure 19). We believe in the importance of recognizing and accepting the various needs related to work styles. In so doing, employers can provide an environment in which both men and women can work comfortably.

I-Feature-Figure 19 Effectiveness of Adopting Telework



- (Notes)
- 1. Based on Communications Trend Survey (2014), the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications
 - 2. Surveyed companies in non-government industries with 100 or more regular employees. Respondents: 236 companies
 - 3. As of 2014 year end.
 - 4. Rounded to the nearest tenth; totals may not match detailed figures.

[Article: 100 Employees, 100 Human Resource Management Systems]

Software maker Cybozu, Inc. has consistently facilitated diverse work styles over the past 10 years.

Cybozu adopts a variety of systems that provide maximum flexibility to individual worker needs. Workers are free to select their work hours and location, as well as determine whether they work overtime, short-time, and how many days they work during the week. Other innovative human resources programs include child care leave for parents of children up to age six, as well as a sabbatical leave program-which allows employees to take up to six years for personal/professional development. As a result of adapting to diverse work styles, the company has reported a reduction in employee turnover from a peak of 28 percent down to 3.8 percent. The turnover rate for women in particular has decreased, with the ratio of female workers growing to represent 40 percent of the overall Cybozu workforce. In addition, the company is seeing greater diversity in human resource management and more job satisfaction among its labor force.

To accomplish this, accepted ideas of long working hours and traditional working styles must be changed in order to create a society in which businesses are flexible enough to handle the needs and skills of each employee individually. This is a critical issue toward facilitating diverse living styles and creating a society in which both men and women can live and thrive. Achieving a diversity in work styles and lifestyles will enhance our nation's ability to adapt to social change. This change is necessary if Japan is to continue its strong economic and social growth. Additionally, this change is vital for Japan in tackling the challenges of a low birth rate and an aging population. Japan must be more committed to initiatives for change. These changes will make life desirable for men and women, for the elderly and the young, for the disabled and the chronically ill, leading to the dynamic engagement of all citizens.