3. Work

Breakdown of the Female Population of 15 Years Old or Over (proportion) (1955 – 2008)

Source: "Labour Force Survey (average of the result of the 2008 survey)," Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications

Until the mid 1970’s, while the percentage of employed workers had gone up, the labour force* participation rate had declined due to a substantial decrease in the proportion of family-business employees, with an increase in the number of those who were primarily engaged in household chores. Since the mid 1970s and onward, although the proportion of family-business employees had continued to decline, the proportion of those engaged in household chores had gone down and the rate of employed workers had continuously increased, with the labour force participation rate remaining at approximately 50%.

*Labour force refers to both employed persons and unemployed persons (without a job but looking for work through job seeking activities and ready to work if work is available) among the population of 15 years old or older.
From the data, the number of female employees in the agriculture/forestry/fisheries was bigger than in other industries until 1965. Since then, the share of other industries, especially the “finance and insurance, real estate and services” and the “wholesale and retail trade,eating and drinking places” had increased significantly, to account for 43.9% and 28.5%, respectively, in 2008 of all female employees. A similar trend is seen in the data for males, although the share of the construction, manufacturing, electricity/gas/heat supply/waterworks, and transport/communications industries is larger among male workers than among female workers.
The female labour force participation rate by age group shows an M-shaped curve, with women in their 30’s at the bottom, indicating that many women still stop working at the time of marriage, childbirth and child-rearing.
The data on the employment of women before and after the delivery of their first child shows that 67.4% of women left their employment at the time of childbirth.

Note: Employment status of mothers with one child. Only the children staying with their mothers at the time of the survey are aggregated.
Changes in Employee Composition Ratio by Employment Status Excluding Company Executives (in all industries excepting Agriculture and Forestry)

The graph indicates the declining proportion of regular workers in recent years. Particularly, female regular workers declined to less than half of the female labour force from 68.1% in 1985 to 46.5% in 2008.

Changes in Average Hourly Wage for Workers (hourly wage of male regular workers = 100)

With regard to the salary gap between male regular workers and male and female short-time workers, the level of wages for male short-time workers and for female short-time workers in 2008 arrived at 53.3% and 48.5%, respectively, based on the level of wages for male regular workers being at 100. The gap between regular and short-time workers remains wide and the level of wages for short-time workers remains very low.