

### ■ Significance of Japanese Women's Potential

In Japan, where it is predicted that the future productive-age population and the ratio of the productive-age population to the total population will decline, there are concerns about a lack of premium payer to be responsible for the social security system and a decline of economic power. Meanwhile, Japanese women's labor participation ratio by age group forms a so-called "M-shaped curve (refer to page 7)", and between the ages of mainly 25 and 49 there are more than 3.42 million women who would like to work but are not working. This number shows an extremely large potential, at 12.4% of the female labor force population and 5.2% of the total labor force population when men are included.

Based on the awareness that women's activities are necessary for revitalizing Japan's economy, in 2012 prime minister instructed to set up a "Cabinet Meeting to promote economic revitalization through women's successful careers". In June it formulated the "Action Plan for Economic Vitalization through the Promotion of Women "A Grand Strategy for Working *Nadeshiko*"", and decided to proceed with promotion for "visibility" of the situation of promotion of women's activities in companies, direct encouragement for companies, creation of a system for honorary recognition, support for women to start businesses, and encouragement for men to take child care leave. The content of this action plan was also included in the "Rebirth of Japan: A Comprehensive Strategy" that was formulated in July 2012. Numerical goals to be achieved by 2020 are also included, such as raising the "employment rate of women between the ages of 25 and 44" from 66.0% (2009) to 73%, raising the "women's ratio of continued employment when their first child is born" from 38% (2005) to 55%, and the "ratio of men who take childcare leave" from 1.72% (2009) to 13%.

### ■ The Situation of Women in Employment, Self-Employment, and Starting Businesses

As for the number of employed people, the number of women employed for the middle and long-term is increasing (the number of employed men is decreasing), mainly in the growth fields of medical care and welfare.

As for self-employment and business start-ups, according to special totals by the Cabinet Office based on the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications' "2009 Economic Census, Basic Survey", which targeted all of Japan's places of business (except for private agricultural, forestry, and fishery businesses, housekeeping service businesses, and foreign public affairs), of the approximately 2.43 million individually-run businesses, 29.0% were single-proprietor businesses run by women. Meanwhile, according to special totals that used the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications' "2006 business and corporate statistical survey" and "2009 Economic Census, Basic Survey," of the approximately 130 thousand individual businesses that were newly established between 2006 and 2009, 34.6% were single-proprietor businesses run by women.

### ■ Necessary Strengthening of Support for Children and Child Care

Although the employment rate declines for women in their 30s, there are many women who want to work but are not working. There is a particularly high number of women who leave their jobs in their 30s "in order to raise children", and the ratio of continued employment when their first child is born is low at less than 40% (the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications' "2007 Employment Status Survey"). For that reason, the government is positioning support for children and child care as an "investment in the future". As a means of support child care by society as a whole, the government is also discussing and aiming to build a "new children's and child care system". This would be a comprehensive and integrated system for supporting children and child care by combining kindergarten and nursery schools, eliminating the need for children to be on waiting lists to enter nursery school, and so forth, and it would be based on integrated reforms of social security and taxes.