

8. Work-life Balance for Men and Women

On December 18, 2007, a Council of Executives of Public and Private Sectors to Promote Work-life Balance consisting of representatives from related ministries, economic circles, labour circles, and local governments formulated a “Charter for Work-life Balance” and an “Action Policy for Promoting Work-life Balance” (revised in June 2010), and efforts are now being made by the public and private sectors working together.

Society in which a Work-life Balance Has Been Achieved

A society in which an individual citizen can work with motivation and a sense of fulfillment and discharge his/her responsibilities at work, while at the same time can choose and lead a variety of living styles in his/her family and community life, in accordance with each stage in life, such as raising children and middle- and older- stages of life.

Society where people can provide themselves with jobs for **economic independence**

*Examples of numerical targets

Currently → 2020

Number of casual employees

1.83 million (2010) → 1.24 million

Employment rate of women (age 25-44)

66.6% (2010) → 73%

Employment rate of the elderly (age 60-64)

57.1% (2010) → 63%

Society where people **have time** to lead healthy, affluent lives

*Examples of numerical targets

Currently → 2020

Proportion of employees who work 60 or more hours a week

9.4% (2010) → reduce by half

Rate of paid annual leave consumption

48.1% (2010) → 70%

Society where people **can choose** from a variety of working and life styles

*Examples of numerical targets

Currently → 2020

Ratio of men who take child care leave

2.63% (2011) → 13%

Hours spent by men with children under 6 years old for child-rearing and household chores

60 minutes/day (2006) → 2.5 hours/day

All individuals, irrespective of age or gender, will be able to participate in a variety of activities, such as work, child-rearing, nursing, self-development, and community activities, to the degree of their own choice. This in turn will create a positive cycle by enriching life both at work and outside of work.

Roles that Should Be Carried Out by Relevant Parties

The Action Policy sets forth policies for effective efforts by corporations, workers, and citizens, and measures by the national government and local public bodies, in order to realize “a society where a work-life balance has been achieved.”

	Corporations and Workers	National Government and Local Public Bodies
	The fundamental matter is for labour and management to discuss effective ways to move forward, in accordance with the situation of the individual corporation, and then make voluntary efforts.	The national government and local public bodies will actively support the efforts of corporations, workers, and other citizens, and will actively build a social base for things such as child-rearing support and nursing care, in correspondence with a variety of working styles.
General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Reform of perceptions, realization of flexible working styles, etc. in order to change the workplace atmosphere through use of management leadership -Setting objectives, systematic efforts, mechanism for checking, steady implementation -Improvement of hourly productivity by reconsideration of working styles by labour and management, reconsidering of duties, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Building a framework for realization -Agreement among the government, labour, and management – building momentum that matches the local situation -Creation of a systematic framework (review of how to make tax and social security systems that are neutral to working styles) -Improvement of productivity of society as a whole, measures for small- and mid-sized corporations -Evaluation of efforts corresponding to contract content for public purchases -Securing the health of workers, promoting mental health measures -Leadership activities taken by government organizations
Economic independence through employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promotion of hiring based on fair evaluation of people's characters - Fair and equal treatment irrespective of form of employment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Support of economic independence by young people, etc. -Systematic improvement of career education and vocational education at the school stage -Development of the vocational abilities of society as a whole and creation of an evaluation system -Establishment of a second safety net, resembling a trampoline
Securing time to lead healthy, affluent lives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Strict compliance with laws and ordinances related to working hours -Promotion of labour and management reconsideration of duties and securing the necessary number of employees, in order to revise set working hours, etc. to control long working hours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Support of efforts by labour and management to improve set working hours, etc. -Control of long working hours and promotion of the paid annual leave consumption, through responses to revised Labour Standards Laws, etc.
Choosing from a variety of working and life styles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Creation of systems in place to support flexible working styles that correspond to individuals' situations, such as child care or nursing leave, reduced-hours work, reduced-hours regular employee system, tele-work, and work from home, and promotion of creation of workplace atmospheres in which it is easy to use such systems -Creation of an environment to promote child care leave by men, in order to support and promote men's involvement in child care -Provision of opportunities for re-employment and continued employment of women and the elderly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Promotion of child-rearing support that corresponds to a variety of working styles, such as improvement of child care services; formation of regional social bases to support families raising children or providing nursing care -Support of women's continued employment, creation of an environment in which it is easy to take child care leave, improving the employment rate -Support and promotion of men's involvement in child care (promotion of utilization of 'Mam & Dad' Child Care Leave Plus', Provision of learning opportunities, etc.)

■ Examples of National Government Initiatives

- **Promotion of the accreditation (Kurumin Mark) based on the Act on Advancement of Measures to Support Raising Next-Generation Children**

In accordance with the Act, the general business owner action plan is to be drawn up and submitted, and companies that have met certain criteria such as achieving the objectives of the action plan are to be accredited by the Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare. With the revision of the Act (which is to come into force in April 2011), the scope of the obligation to draw up and submit the general business owner action plan is expanded from companies with 301 or more employees to include companies with 101 or more employees.



- **Support for introduction of the permanent employment with reduced working hours scheme**

The permanent employment with reduced working hours scheme is designed to allow people who were unable to stay at jobs due to various constraints such as child care and family care the flexibility to choose from among various working styles. For companies, it should serve as a personnel system effective in reducing employee turnover and invigorating the organization. It is expected that the scheme will be widely introduced and adopted. A website has also been set up to provide information about the scheme, examples of its application, and procedures for its introduction.

- **Support for turning casual employees into regular employees**

Regular employment of casual employees, particularly older ones (age 25-39) who were unable to become regular employees during difficult times for job-seekers, will be promoted through utilization of consistent support and assistance systems.

When necessary, the same staff member will provide assistance to a job-seeker from the stage of employment consultation and referrals until the person finds and gets settled in a job.

- **Support for combining both work and family under the Act on the Welfare of Workers Who Take Care of Children or Other Family Members including Child Care and Family Care Leave (hereinafter referred to as the Child Care and Family Care Leave Law)**

The Child Care and Family Care Leave Law stipulates that a parent can take child care leave during the time until a child reaches the age of one (until 1 year and 6 months in certain cases when it is acknowledged that leave is necessary even after the child turns the age of one). It also stipulates leave for family care (family care leave can be taken once for each time a family member receiving care becomes in need of constant care, for a total of 93 days of leave) and leave for caring for a sick / injured child. These and other systems are set up in order to support people's ability to balance various forms of work and family life

In light of Japan's rapidly declining birth rate, portions of the Child Care and Family Care Leave Law were revised in order to further promote the balancing of work, child care and family care by workers who are raising children or providing nursing care. The revisions introduced "Mom & Dad Child Care Leave Plus" (if both the father and the mother take child care leave, it is possible to take one year of child care leave during the period until the child reaches the age of 1 year and 2 months) so that fathers can participate in child care, and expanded leave for caring for a sick / injured child (leave for caring for a sick child can be taken up to 5 days per year in the case of one child under primary school age, and up to 10 days per year in the case of two or more children). They also created an obligation for a reduced working-hour system and exemption from overtime for people raising a child under the age of three.

- **Promotion of an after-school plan for children**

Empty classrooms in primary schools will be made use of, in order to provide appropriate places for children's after-school/weekend activities, such as playing, spending time, studying, doing various experiments, and interacting with others, thereby promoting sound growth for children.

- **Promotion of wide introduction of balanced working styles**

Examples of corporate initiatives to "make work more efficient" were investigated by conducting hearings with corporations.

A report was made public that summarized knowhow for "making work more efficient" to realize a work-life balance (realize a balanced working style). The following three cycles were deemed necessary in order to realize a balanced working style: (1) make work more efficient, (2) motivation and changing perceptions, and (3) system reform.

● “Change! JPN” Campaign

In December 2007, following an agreement between representatives of government, labour, and management, the “Charter for Work-life Balance” and the “Action Policy for Promoting Work-life Balance” were formulated (revised in June 2010), based on which a public-participation-type campaign under the slogan “Change! JPN” is being promoted in order to make the public movement for realization of a work-life balance more effective.

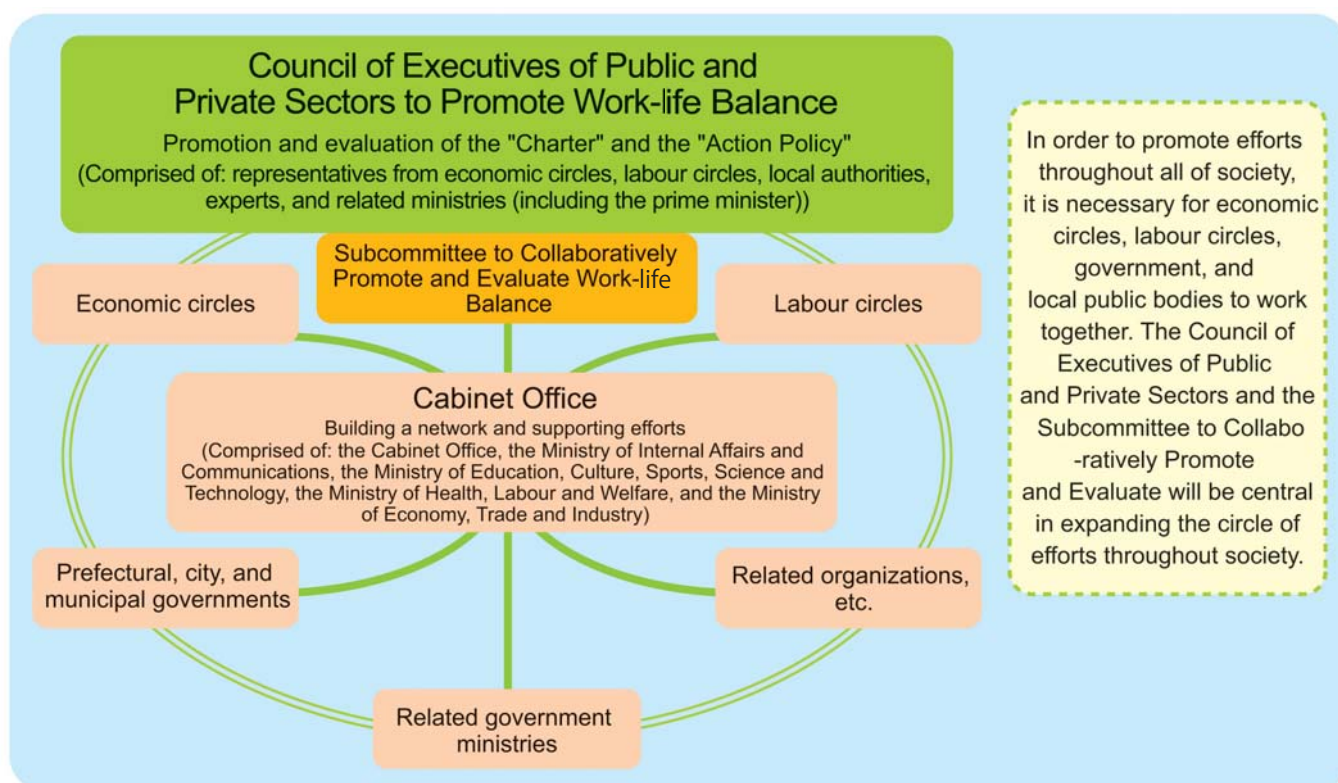


■ Review and Evaluation of the Progress of Efforts

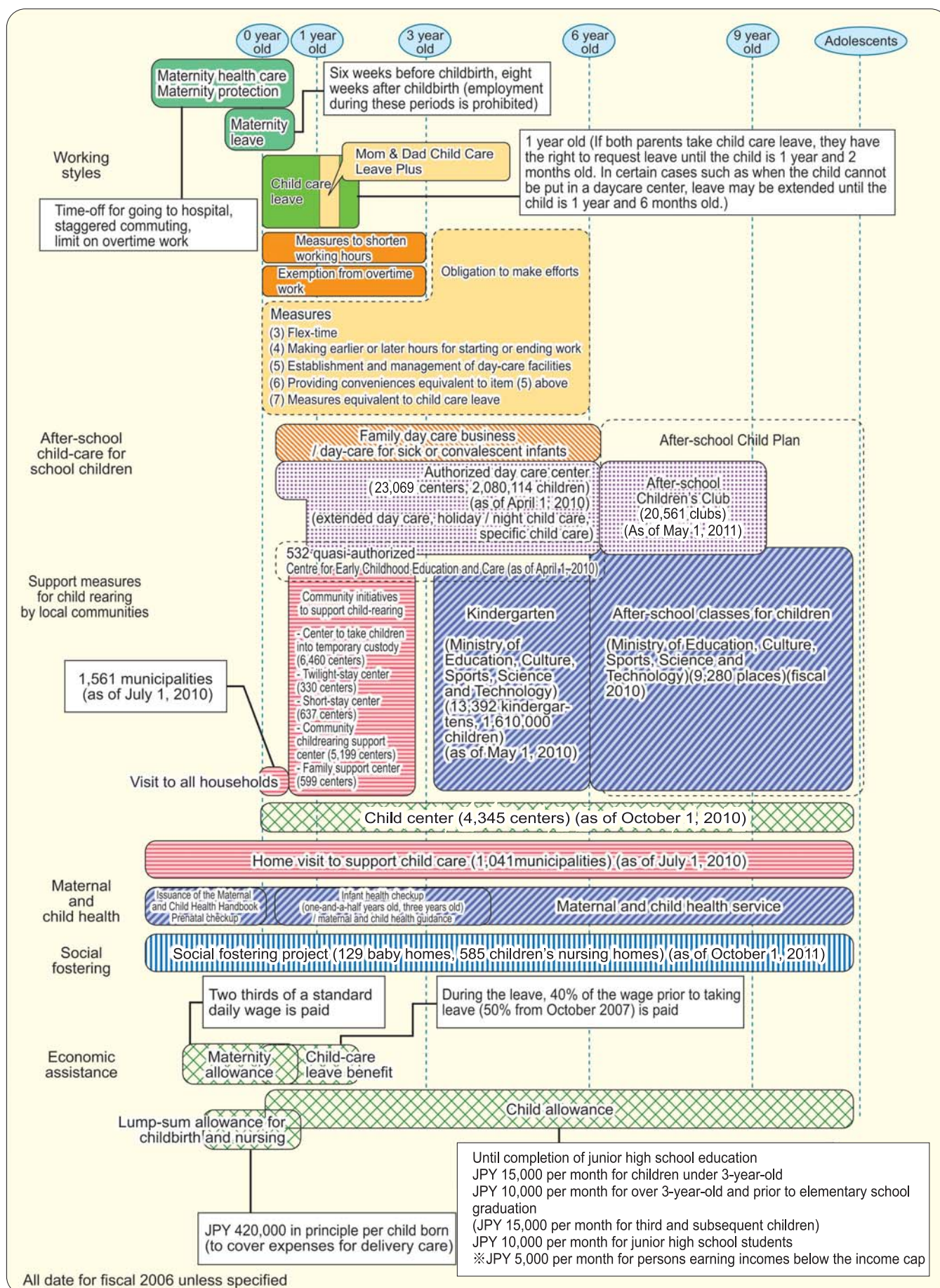
Under the Charter and the Action Policy, promotion of a work-life balance requires close collaboration of the national government, labour, management, and local government working as partners. The “Office for Work-life Balance” was set up as part of the Cabinet Office in order to serve as a core organization supporting that collaborative network.

A “Subcommittee to Collaboratively Promote and Evaluate Work-life Balance” was also set up under the “Council of Executives of Public and Private Sectors to Promote Work-life Balance” in order to review and evaluate the promotion of realization of work-life balance and reflect the evaluations onto the efforts of related parties. Although some people have voiced concerns that efforts aimed at achieving a work-life balance have stagnated amid the worsening economic situation that has continued since 2008, in April 2009 this subcommittee publicized an “Emergency Announcement – Now is the Time to Promote Work-life Balance.” This announcement confirmed that the promotion of work-life balance is an “investment in the future” that will lead to mid- and long-term sustained development, and that it should be steadily promoted as a national movement, irrespective of the state of the economy.

For review and evaluation, a “work-life balance” realization index that measures the degree of realization of work-life balance through numerical targets and an individual’s overall lifestyle is used. The June 2010 revisions of the Charter and the Action Policy included revision of numerical targets and set target values for the year 2020.



Current Structure for Next Generation Nurturing Support Measures in Japan



Source: "Annual Health, Labour and Welfare Report", the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare