Report

Promoting Diversity at Companies

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Abstract

Promoting workplace diversity is now an essential basic strategy for Japanese companies. The worker categories targeted by such efforts have expanded to include women, seniors, people with disabilities, foreigners, and LGBT people. However, the level of companies' efforts and their stance on diversity vary significantly, making it difficult to understand the current situation and relevant issues. This paper divides companies into groups according to two criteria—whether they employ the concept of diversity and whether they specify target worker categories—and discusses the characteristics of each group. This paper also examines the significance of employing the concept of diversity. The analysis focuses on how it differs from the traditional ideas such as rights protection and equal opportunity and on what makes it unique than simply addressing each worker category. This paper concludes that one of advantages of employing the concept of diversity is that it shifts companies' motive from support for minority groups to positive affirmation of a diverse workforce. Another advantage is that dealing in a cross-sectional manner with issues relevant to different worker categories gives a clue to figure out the direction and details of measures to be taken. This paper discusses how it might be practical to have a cross-sectional approach to issues facing different worker categories in exploring the significance of accepting diversity and promoting participation. It does not mean that attention to issues specific to each worker category is unnecessary. What is needed is to deal with these specific issues while embracing the comprehensive concept of diversity and taking cross-categorical views and measures.

Introduction

Japanese companies' efforts to promote workplace diversity, which create environments that accept workers with diverse characteristics and encourage them to play an active role, have been expanding their target from women to groups that also include seniors, people with disabilities, and foreigners.[1] It has become increasingly difficult for companies to secure workers, particularly young people. In this context, promoting diversity and thereby increasing the types of workers whom companies can hire and retain is now an essential basic strategy for corporate growth and sustainability, rather than just a way to improve employee benefits or corporate image.

Companies are taking measures to facilitate women's active participation, to raise the retirement age for seniors, and to achieve the legally mandated employment rate set for people with disabilities, but they tend not to consider that these measures have a common thread of diversity promotion, as evidenced by the fact that each measure often has a different person in charge. Also, some companies voice concerns about the extent to which they must provide support to employees when relevant issues arise, such as how to support employees raising a child or caring for a family member and employees with an illness or injury who continue to work while undergoing treatment. At the same time, there are companies that employ the concept of diversity, refrain from categorizing employees and issues according to employees' characteristics (e.g., being female), nurture employee attitudes and a corporate culture that comprehensively accept diversity, and create an environment that facilitates their various ways of working. It should be noted, however, that while using the word "diversity" in policies or in the name of an organizational division, some companies in effect take different measures for different target categories of workers, such as women. Companies' policies and commitment levels are not something that can be simply classified into several categories, but instead have a complex gradation of directions and levels of interest.

In promoting diversity, companies tend to emphasize not only eliminating discrimination against minority employees at the organization and providing necessary support to them, but also encouraging these employees to play an active role. There are, however, multiple ways to interpret the objective of such encouragement. For example, it is not clear whether efforts to facilitate women's active participation are aimed at participation by men and women without distinction or participation by women based on their unique perspectives. It is also not clear whether, as part of such efforts, companies strictly enforce the same standards for both men and women in hiring and job assignment or have standards and concessions that are uniquely applied to women. In other words, the question is whether companies should take a universal approach or should take positive action (i.e., actively make improvements) aimed at reducing inequality faced by minorities. Another issue is that companies tend to take one approach to deal with cases involving women, but a different approach for cases involving seniors, people with disabilities, and foreign workers. A question therefore arises whether it is reasonable to have different approaches to diversity promotion depending on the target of such action. There may be no right measure or course of action, but without a consistent commitment and consistent action, companies' efforts to promote diversity may confuse their employees and job seekers, and companies may fail to obtain the expected results. The purpose of this paper is to categorize, from several perspectives, different directions and levels of interests concerning companies' efforts for promoting diversity, to understand how companies' efforts vary depending on their views on diversity, and to show some points that companies should bear in mind for promoting diversity with a consistent viewpoint.

Toward this end, this paper uses data from " Questionnaire Survey on Diversity Promotion by Companies" which was published in June 2017 by the Diversity Management Strategy Department of Mitsubishi UFJ Research and Consulting.[2]

1. Promotion of Diversity by Companies: A Summary of Concepts

The importance of diversity promotion by companies has been frequently discussed, yet employees in HR departments often say that they do not know how to properly approach it. Also, some companies do not take a clear stance on diversity promotion and consequently implement various policies that lack consistency and result in confusion.

1.1 From Minority Protection to Diversity Promotion

Diversity promotion can be regarded as creation of an environment that accepts workers with diverse characteristics and encourages each of them to play an active role. The flip side of this interpretation is that there have been workers who have not been accepted at companies. Measures to promote diversity therefore can be considered to target minorities at companies, such as women, seniors, people with disabilities, and foreign workers.

Any company must not discriminate against minorities and must provide legally required support to them in accordance with the obstacles that have kept them from staying in organizations. It is necessary to outline how such protection of minimally required rights and the relevant support differ from diversity promotion. Take the example of LGBT issues which have gained attention in recent years as part of diversity promotion. LGBT issues are considered in promoting diversity not only based on the idea of eliminating discrimination against sexual and gender minorities and recognizing their right not to reveal or not to be persistently asked about their sexual orientation, but also because of the fact that diversity in gender identity and sexual orientation and in personal values has become positively viewed and accepted, and that it has become easier for them to come out by their own choice.[3]

At Japanese companies, efforts to promote diversity are rooted in two relevant but separate women's issues: equal opportunities for men and women and women's active participation. There are companies that, in the process of promoting women's active participation, began to use the term "diversity" in place of "women's active participation." If they had pursued only equal opportunity in employment, this substitution of the term "diversity" might not have happened. Also, through the switching of the terms, some companies may have intended to convey the message that they were aiming to create an organization where both women and men, rather than just women, could play active roles. When efforts to promote women's active participation started to attract attention, emphasis was placed on benefiting from women's unique perspectives and other characteristics. Such emphasis, however, could lead to the idea that some jobs are not suitable for women, which might create obstacles to women's active participation. Companies that were selected for the 100 Diversity-Friendly Corporations when the program first started also emphasized women's perspectives (Ministry of the Economy, Trade, and Industry, 2013). This implies that not all companies that shifted focus from women's participation to workplace diversity had intended totally inclusive policies.

1.2 Common Measures for Multiple Target Groups

Another reason why companies have started to use the term "diversity" is that they want to organize their various efforts for different target groups, such as women, seniors, people with disabilities, and foreign workers, under the concept of diversity promotion. A growing number of companies are creating an organizational division and policies that advocate diversity promotion, under which measures for different target groups are taken. Even though such a division or a set of policies is designated for diversity promotion, there are cases in which targeted measures are taken for different groups and cases in which common, comprehensive measures are taken for all target groups. Comprehensive measures include nurturing employee attitudes and a corporate culture that accept diversity and creating mechanisms that enable employees to work in various ways and build their careers (see Figure 1). Such a difference in approach is also observed in diversity training programs: some are based on specific issues concerning particular groups, while others have across-the-board topics such as being aware of unconscious bias and managing employees' various ways of working. Targeted measures to promote diversity are for specific groups, whereas comprehensive measures can be applied to a wide range of groups and issues. Companies that have started placing emphasis on taking advantage of a diverse workforce are grasping the idea that while outward characteristics of women and other groups provide a way to achieve diverse hiring and a diverse workplace, it is the diversity of internal factors, such as values, skills, and experiences, that is truly important. Based on this idea, some companies comprehensively promote diversity, considering that individual employees are different from one another, and that measures taken based on specific personal characteristics can hinder efforts to promote diversity, including the truly important diversity in employees' internal attributes.

Figure 1: Illustration of targeted and comprehensive measures to promote diversity
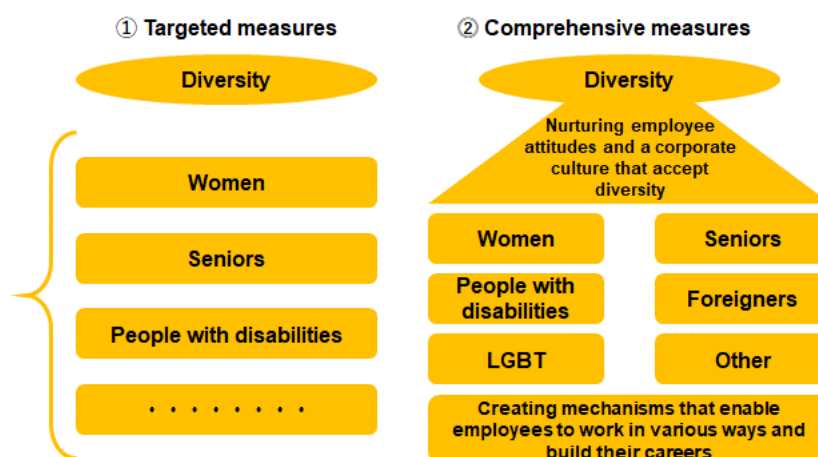
Source: Author`s illustration

Although the idea that every employee is distinct from others may be useful for personnel evaluation or managers' hands-on managerial activities, the idea may not lead to companies creating a corporate environment and mechanisms as part of positive action aimed at eliminating discrimination and other disadvantages. Among comprehensive measures, which are illustrated in the right diagram of Figure 1, there could be cases in which issues concerning individual groups are not addressed. Yet, in reality, companies are likely to take measures to deal with such issues. In Japan, all major companies are required by the Act for Promoting Women's Active

Participation to set goals and plans for positive action. For companies that take targeted measures regardless of personal attributes, setting goals concerning, among other things, the percentage of female employees in the organization would mean more than just complying with a legal requirement. Without the help of indicators that are based on employees' outward characteristics, it can be difficult to grasp the extent to which the levels of diversity in employees' internal characteristics and diversity in their various other attributes have risen, as well as the extent to which relevant measures are effective. Even companies taking comprehensive measures to promote diversity probably need to do more than just meet preconditions for employees' active participation by eliminating discrimination faced by different groups and providing support that enables employees to continue to work. They must also obtain clues from observed diversity when they set goals, evaluate employee performance, and implement measures.

1.3 Various Ways of Working

A major factor that has forced women to quit their jobs once they became pregnant or had a child was that they could not choose nontraditional ways of working while raising a child. The amendment to the Child Care and Family Care Leave Act in 2009 has made it possible for employees to have short working hours until their child becomes three years old. This has led to a decline in the number of female regular employees who quit their jobs directly due to pregnancy or childbirth. At the same time, the problem has emerged that employees' use of child care leave programs and reduced working hour programs over a long period of time have negatively affected their career-building efforts.

This problem is relevant to active participation of not only women, but also employees who choose nontraditional ways of working because of their need to raise a child, care for a family member, or undergo treatment for an illness or injury. From the standpoint of companies, measures to promote work-life balance are different from measures to promote diversity. Traditional measures to promote work-life balance needed to redress the problem of long working hours and offer flexible ways of working. However, not much consideration was given to encouraging program users to realize their full potential or build their careers. The goal of the Work-Life Balance Charter put forth by the Cabinet Office is that all workers lead a healthy, comfortable life, being able to not only work with a sense of fulfillment and meet professional responsibilities, but also have time for raising children, caring for family members, spending time with family, contributing to the community, and pursuing self-improvement. Enabling workers to realize their potential while maintaining a balance between work and child-rearing or family care requires mechanisms for setting goals, assigning tasks, and evaluating work performance according to employees' various ways of working. In addition, it is necessary to set appointment criteria according to employees' various ways of working and support their career development through training programs and information dissemination so that employees can form expectations about building their careers while taking advantage of a reduced working hours and other programs.
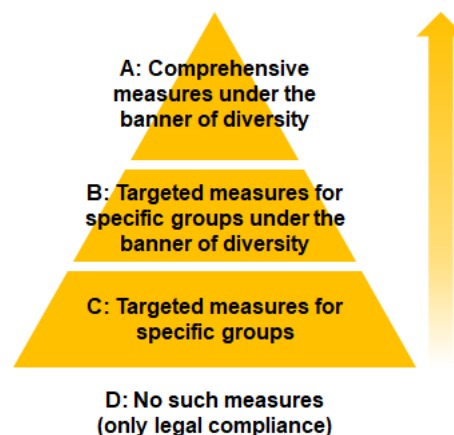
2. Status of Diversity Promotion at Companies

2.1 Types of Diversity Promotion

This section considers the state of diversity promotion at Japanese companies in connection with the different approaches discussed in the previous section. The analysis is based on data from a survey conducted by Mitsubishi UFJ Research and Consulting (2017). The survey considers six groups that are targeted by diversity promotion efforts: women, seniors (aged 60 years or older), people with disabilities, highly skilled foreign workers, time-constrained employees, and LGBT people.[4,5,6]

To understand companies' efforts to promote diversity that are based on employees' outward characteristics, companies are divided into four types according to two criteria: whether they use the term "diversity" or the concept of diversity in their measures (i.e., whether they take measures under the banner of diversity) and whether their efforts are comprehensive or targeted to specific groups (see Figure 2).[7] Here, it is assumed that type A companies promote diversity more heavily than type B companies, type B companies promote diversity more heavily than type C companies, and so on.

Figure 2: Types of diversity promotion efforts and their target

A: Comprehensive measures under the banner of diversity

B: Targeted measures for specific groups under the banner of diversity

C: Targeted measures for specific groups

D: No such measures (only legal compliance)

Source: Author`s illustration

To see whether this categorization is related to companies' willingness to emphasize diversity, cross-tabulation analysis is performed using the responses to the survey question asking whether the company considers diversity promotion in its management policy or as a management issue. As expected, type A companies and type B companies, which implement measures under the banner of diversity, overwhelmingly address diversity promotion in their management policy or as a management issue (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Diversity promotion addressed in management policy or as a management issue (by company type)
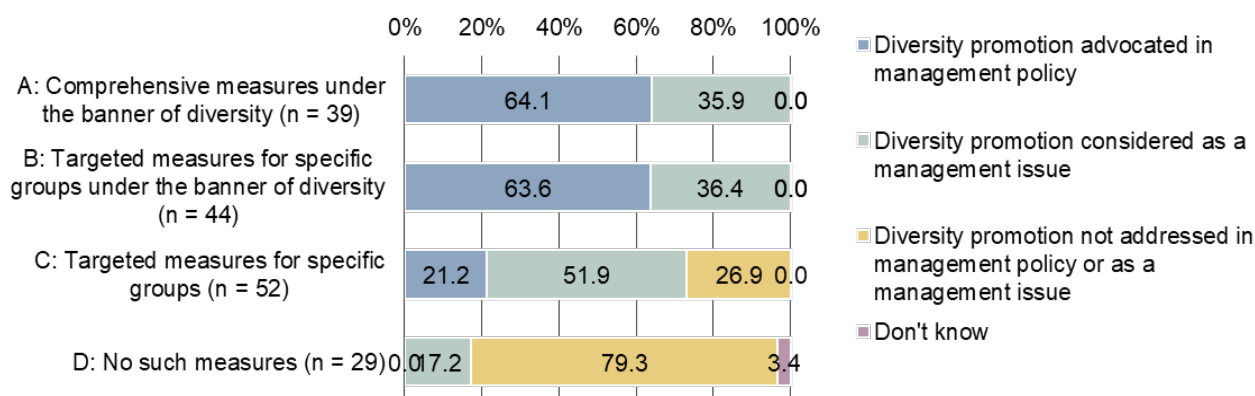
Source: Mitsubishi UFJ Research and Consulting. (2017). Kigyo ni okeru diversity suishin ni kansuru anketo chosa [Questionnaire Survey on Diversity Promotion by Companies]. The same source is used for Figures 4 to 12 and Tables 1 and 2.

Figure 4 illustrates the result of a cross-tabulation analysis for the four types of companies and the groups targeted by active measures. For companies of types A, B, and C, those that merely comply with legal requirements are excluded. That is, the figure shows only the percentage of companies responding that they take active measures. Type B companies, which take targeted measures for specific groups under the banner of promotion, have the highest percentage of companies that take active measures for women. Meanwhile, type A companies, which take comprehensive measures under the banner of diversity, have the highest percentage of companies that take active measures. Compared with type A and type B companies, type C companies, which only take targeted measures for specific groups, have a low percentage of companies taking active measures for highly skilled foreign workers. Also, type C companies take no active measures for LGBT people. Type D companies, which take no measures intended for minorities, merely comply with legal requirements with respect to some groups.

Figure 4: Worker categories targeted by diversity promotion measures (by company type)
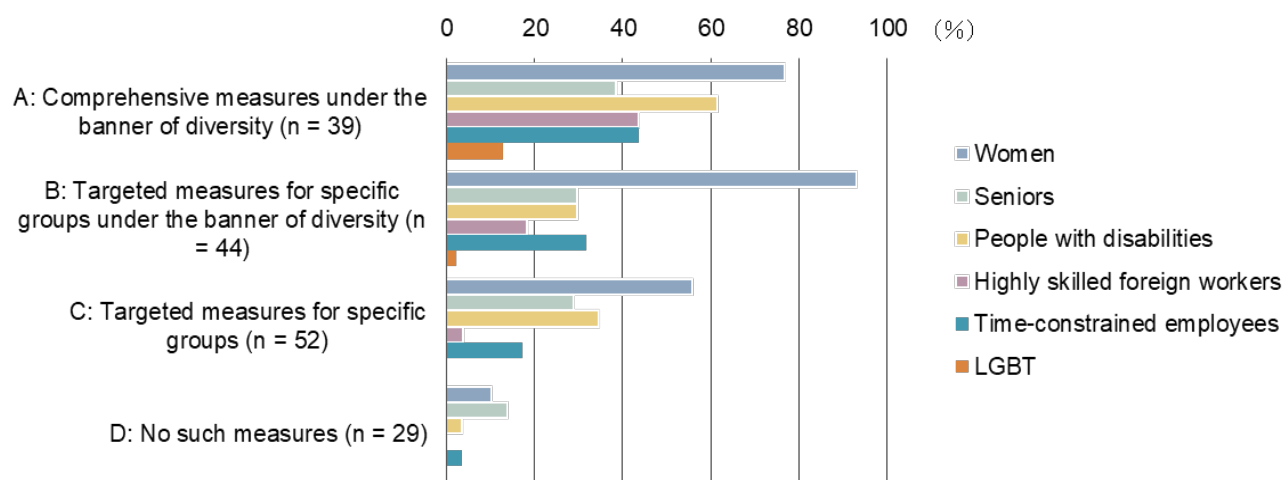
2.2 Kinds of Diversity Emphasized and Objectives of Diversity Promotion

Let us now turn to the kinds of diversity that companies emphasize. Figure 5 shows the relationship between the type of measures taken by companies and the kinds of diversity that they emphasize, which include not only diversity in worker categories, but also in workers' various ways of working, their types of employment, and their internal attributes—namely, diversity in skills, experiences, and expertise and in individual values and views. The percentage of companies emphasizing diversity in worker categories (women, foreigners, etc.) is highest for type A, followed by type B and then type C companies. Most type A companies (more than 90 percent) emphasize diversity in worker categories. The main difference between type A companies and type B companies is that the latter put greater emphasis on variety in ways of working (flextime, etc.). Also, as seen in Figure 4, the percentage of type B companies heavily promoting women's active participation is high. It is therefore considered that the various ways of working examined here reflect reduced working hours and other various ways of working that are intended for employees trying to keep a good balance between work and child-rearing. Type A companies have the highest percentage of companies emphasizing diversity in skills, experiences, and expertise, although the differences from the other company types are small. Type C companies are characterized by their high percentage of companies emphasizing diversity in employment types (regular employment with certain restrictions, etc.). There are a fair number of type C companies that actively take measures for women, seniors, and people with disabilities, although the percentage of such companies is not as high for type C companies as for type A and type B companies. It is possible that type C companies emphasize diversity in employment types in the sense that they accept various types of employment other than regular employment—which requires a full commitment by employees—in order to enable women, seniors, and people with disabilities to continue working.

**Figure 5:** Kinds of diversity emphasized (by company type)
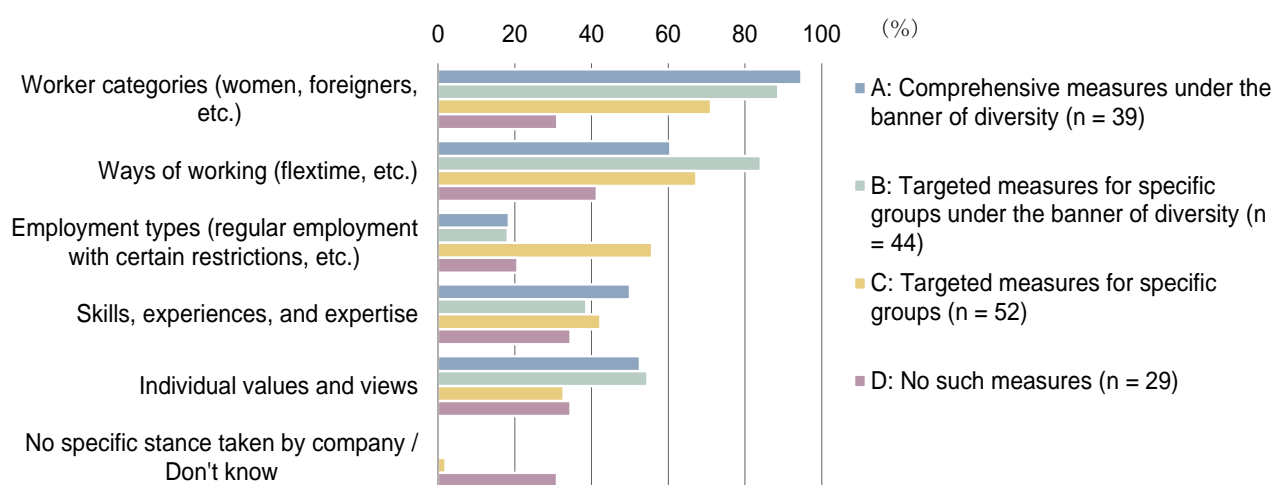
What do companies expect to gain by promoting diversity? As Figure 6 shows, approximately 80 percent of type A and type B companies say that their objectives in promoting diversity include creating a better workplace and hiring productive workers. It seems that the primary objective is to secure workers. Differences between the two types of companies are large in the following objectives: expanding the business internationally, developing innovative services and products, and responding to increasingly diverse markets. Type A companies seem to

emphasize responding to changing markets and producing innovations. Also, large differences between type C companies and type A and type B companies are observed in objectives such as changing the corporate culture and increasing trust in the company and its accountability.

Type A and type B companies take measures under the banner of diversity. One could say that such companies try to not only support minority employees, but also achieve organizational reform or gain trust by transforming themselves into diversity-friendly organizations.

Figure 6: Objectives of promoting diversity (by company type)
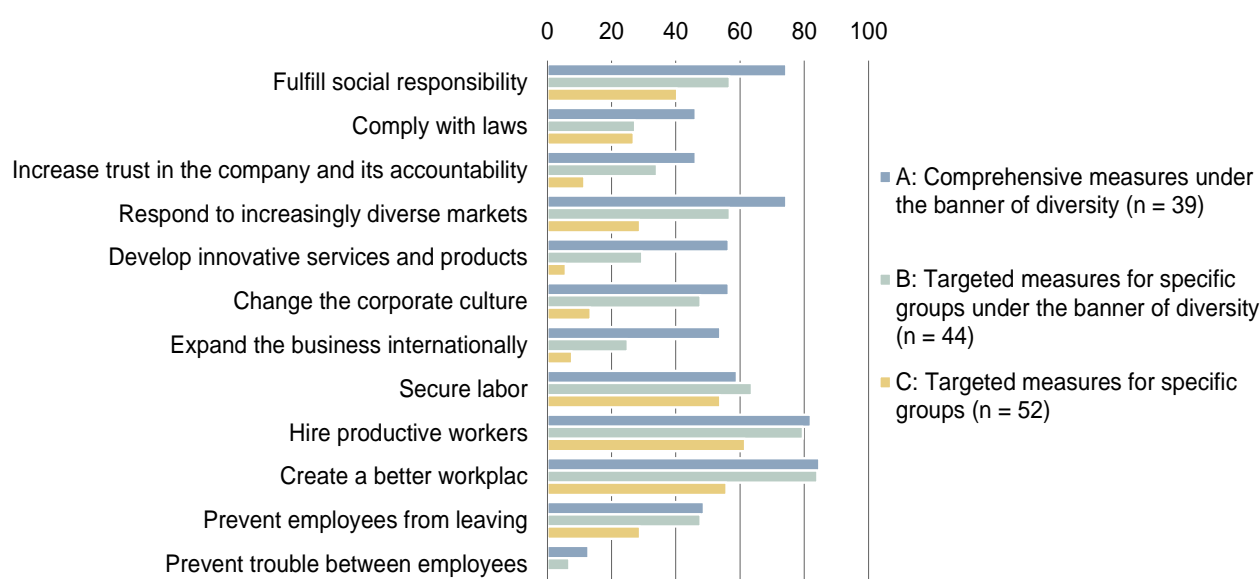
Note: Type A, type B, and type C companies are considered.

(%)

2.3 Diversity Promotion and Positive Action

In promoting diversity, do companies take special measures targeted to women, seniors, and other minorities in terms of hiring and job assignment, or do they apply the same standards to all workers? Tables 1 and 2 show what types of positive action are taken by companies. The table shows values for all respondent companies (i.e., without dividing them into the four types) due to the complexity of the data and a lack of differences among the four types.

With regard to hiring, more than 60 percent of companies have a policy to actively hire women (see Table 1). It should be noted, however, that the percentage of companies that allow cases in which a woman is hired over other equally qualified candidates (i.e., being a woman is positively considered) is about 12 percent, and that no company uses special hiring criteria for women that are different from those applied to other candidates. The percentage of companies using hiring criteria that are the same as those applied to other candidates is about 70 percent. These results show that even companies that actively hire women do not take a drastic positive action such as changing hiring criteria. However, the situation differs depending on the worker category. In the case of people with disabilities, a high percentage of companies actively cooperate with an external entity for hiring them and use hiring criteria specially designed for these workers.

Table 1: Policies and measures for hiring (n = 168)

	Women	Seniors	People with disabilities	Highly skilled foreign workers	Time-constrained employees	LGBT
Have a policy for active hiring	64.9	5.4	26.8	12.5	3.6	1.8
Hold company information sessions for workers in a given category, hiring seminars on them, or other events	27.4	1.8	15.5	7.7	0.0	0.6
Cooperate or consult with an external entity for the purpose of hiring workers in a given category	6.5	7.7	50.0	13.1	6.0	3.6
Allow cases where a worker in a given category is hired over other equally qualified candidates	11.9	6.0	23.8	7.1	4.2	1.2
Use hiring criteria for a given worker category that are different from those applied to other candidates	0.0	6.5	31.0	8.3	3.6	2.4
Use hiring criteria that are the same as those applied to other candidates	70.8	39.3	16.7	39.9	36.3	44.0

Note: The tabulation is based on relevant multiple-response questions. Some companies do not have special hiring policies or measures. Therefore, the percentages for each worker category does not necessarily add up to 100.[8]

Companies implement various policies regarding job assignments for women (see Table 2). The percentage of companies that give no special consideration to employees' being female is 44.0 percent, which is smaller than the percentage of companies using hiring criteria that are the same as those applied to other candidates. Also, 18.5 percent of the companies assign female employees to divisions that can take advantage of their unique characteristics; 17.9 percent assign female employees to divisions with consideration given to difficulties arising because they are women. Similarly to the case of hiring, people with disabilities tend to receive special consideration in job assignment. Highly skilled foreign workers tend to be assigned to divisions that can take advantage of their unique characteristics. The latter tendency becomes much higher when companies that do not employ highly skilled foreign workers were excluded from the analysis. Also, the percentage of companies without specific policy regarding job assignment exceeds 20 percent. This may suggest the possibility that expectations and intentions of companies are different from those of foreign workers hired by them.

Table 2: Policies and measures for job assignment (n = 168)

	Women	Seniors	People with disabilities	Highly skilled foreign workers	Time-constrained employees	LGBT
Assign employees to divisions that can take advantage of their unique characteristics	18.5	19.6	34.5	24.4	8.9	0.0
Assign employees with consideration given to difficulties attributed to their being in a given worker category	17.9	20.2	62.5	4.8	19.6	1.8
Assign employees to divisions that have a large number of employees in the same worker category	4.8	0.6	11.3	1.8	0.0	0.0
Assign employees to divisions that have a small number of employees in the same worker category	2.4	0.0	0.6	0.6	1.2	0.0
Give no special consideration to employees' worker category	44.0	28.0	2.4	13.7	16.1	19.0
Have no specific policy	25.0	27.4	10.1	21.4	23.2	22.0
Have no such minority employees / Don't know	0.6	6.5	7.1	29.8	24.4	52.4

Note: The tabulation is based on relevant multiple-response questions. Some companies do not have special hiring policies or measures. Therefore, the percentages for each worker category do not necessarily add up to 100.

Similar category-dependent differences in policies are observed even among type A companies which take comprehensive measures to promote diversity. Several relevant questions arise. Should approaches to actively employing minorities as part of diversity promotion differ depending on worker categories? Are such differences a result of having insufficient employees in certain categories? Or, are they a result of companies' lack of cross-categorical views? The survey results considered here cannot provide clear answers to these questions, and therefore further studies are needed.

### 2.4 Nurturing a Corporate Culture That Promotes Diversity

Let us now consider how companies are raising awareness to create a corporate culture that promotes diversity. Training seminars can be organized to raise awareness. Given that it is important how target worker categories are set for such seminars, the survey asked the respondents to report not only the subject of seminars, but also their target worker categories.[9] With regard to seminars on diversity promotion in general and seminars on measures against harassment, the percentage of companies holding seminars is highest for type A companies, followed by type B companies, type C companies, and type D companies (see Figure 7). Since type C and type D companies do not explicitly advocate diversity promotion, it is natural that the percentages of these companies holding seminars on diversity promotion are generally low. However, they also have low percentages in the case of seminars on measures against harassment.

As for the percentage of companies holding seminars on promoting women's active participation, type A companies have a high percentage for seminars targeting employees in general, whereas type B companies have high percentages for seminars targeting female employees and seminars targeting managers (see Figure 8). That is, companies that promote diversity by separately training different types of employees tend to organize seminars for employees in specific worker categories and seminars for their superiors.

Figure 7: Percentage of companies holding seminars intended for employees in general (by company type)
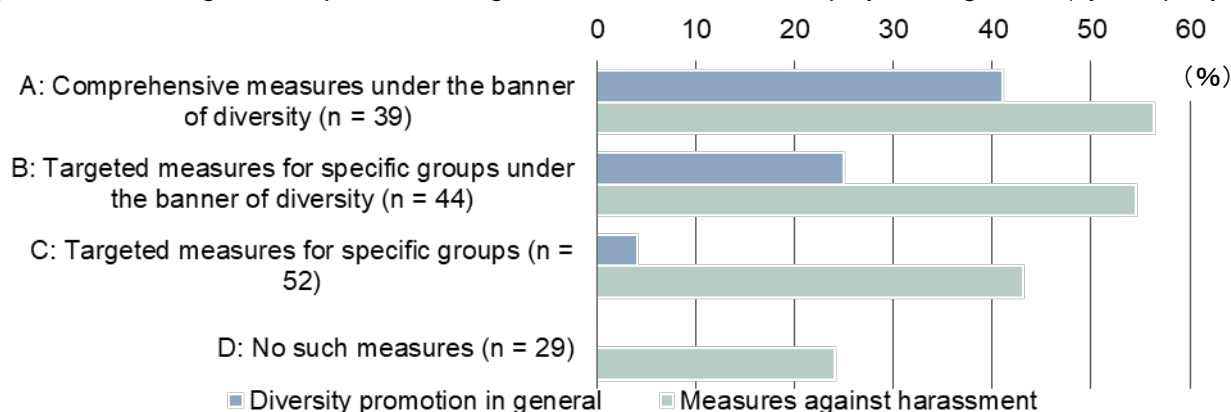
Figure 8: Percentage of companies holding seminars on promoting women's active participation (by company type)
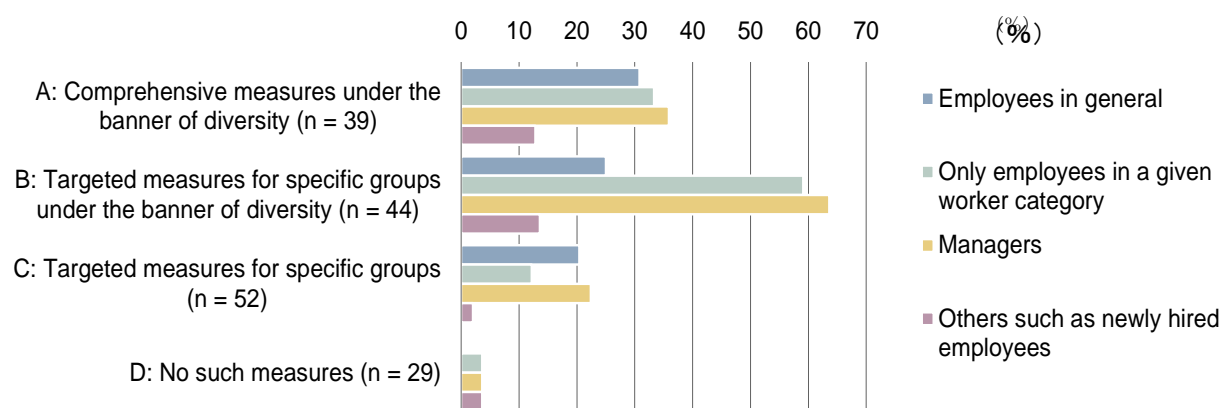
In the case of seminars on ways of working for time-constrained employees and their managers, the percentages of companies holding seminars for time-constrained employees and mangers are highest among type A companies. The reason seems to be that management of time-constrained employees is important not only for employees categorized as such, but also for women, seniors, people with disabilities, and foreign workers as it is a common, cross-categorical issue. Therefore, the percentage of companies holding such seminars is highest among type A companies which have comprehensive measures for different worker categories.

2.5 Diversity Promotion, Ways of Working, and Personnel Management Systems

The previous section has shown that companies do not take drastic positive actions concerning hiring women and assigning jobs to them. At the same time, many major companies have taken positive action in regard to promotion because of the Act for Promoting Women's Active Participation, and it seems that a fair number of companies actively promote women based on distinctive criteria for their promotion. However, according to Mitsubishi UFJ Research and Consulting (2016), positive actions such as establishing a clear system for promoting women's active participation, creating positions responsible for the effort, and setting policies and objectives regarding promoting women to management positions have been effective at companies where the percentage of women in management positions has recently increased. Also, companies where the percentage of

women in management positions has reached a relatively high level (i.e., 20 percent or more) are characterized by their criteria for promotion emphasizing productivity rather than seniority, and that the percentage of employees working long hours is low. These results imply that companies do not achieve workplace diversity simply by actively accepting new types of workers, and that companies must change their organization including systems for existing employees in order to accept new types of workers.

What characteristics of the employees' ways of working and personnel management systems are revealed by the survey? As Figure 9 shows, high percentages of type A and type B companies consider redressing the problem of long working hours and promoting flexible ways of working as important measures in work reform. As for type C companies, while a high percentage of them consider redressing the long-hours problem as an important measure, only about half of them consider promoting flexible ways of working as an important measure. It seems that companies taking measures under the banner of diversity emphasize not only reducing working hours, but also enabling diverse types of employees to choose from various ways of working according to their needs.

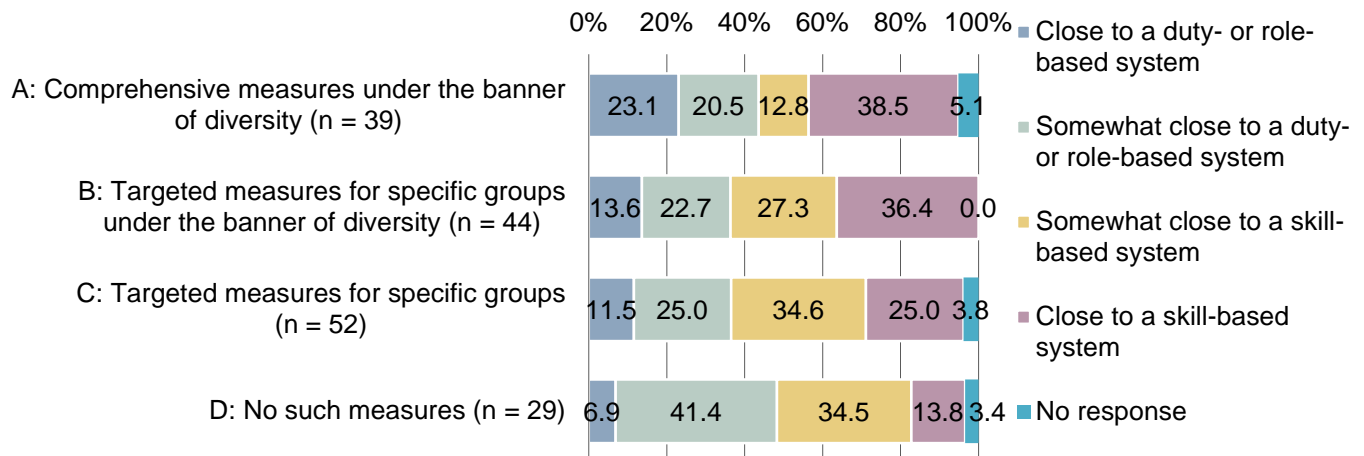**Figure 9:** Measures considered important (by company type)
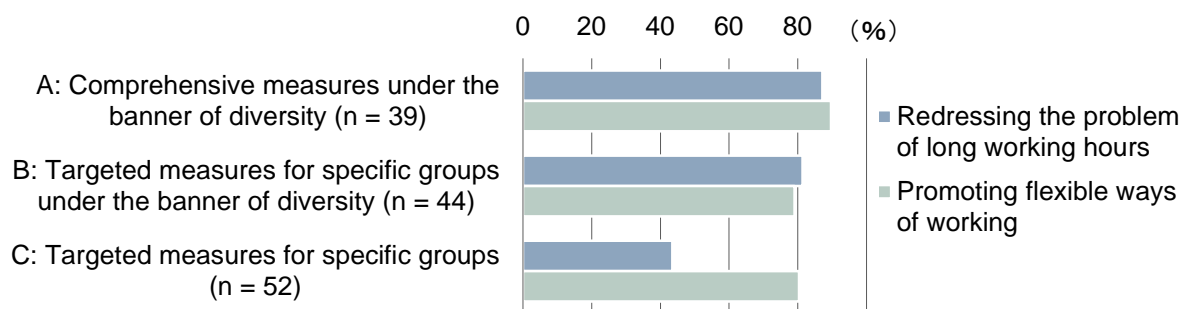
Note: The responses from type A, type B, and type C companies are considered.

With regard to employee rating, a duty- or role-based rating system, which clarifies the extent of each employee's duty or role, may be appropriate in fairly evaluating employees who have chosen nontraditional ways of working. In Japan, many companies have used skill-based employee rating systems, which are considered to make regular employees' duties and roles unclear, to result in long working hours, and make it difficult to ensure fairness among employees working in different ways. Figure 10 shows how companies of each type adopt different employee rating systems. The difference between the percentage of companies adopting a skill-based system and the percentage of companies adopting a duty-based system is smallest for type A companies whose workplaces are considered most diverse. It should be noted, however, that the percentage of companies adopting systems that are close to or somewhat close to a skill-based system is higher than the percentage of companies adopting systems that are close to or somewhat close to a duty- or role-based system.

Mitsubishi UFJ Research and Consulting (2016) points out that there is no clear relationship between the kind of employee rating system adopted and the degree to which women's active participation is promoted (as seen in, for example, the percentage of women in management positions). Also, it is known that there seems to be no consistent pattern between the type of employee rating system (i.e., duty-based or skill-based) and criteria for performance evaluation and promotion, even though one would expect them to be related.

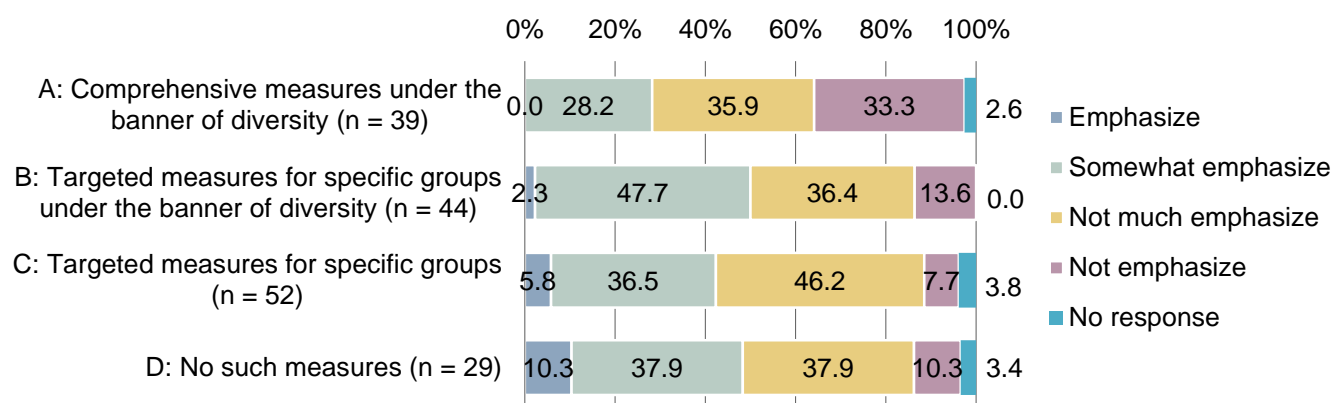**Figure 10:** Employee rating systems (by company type)

Company type	Close to a duty- or role-based system	Somewhat close to a duty- or role-based system	Somewhat close to a skill-based system	Close to a skill-based system	No response
A: Comprehensive measures under the banner of diversity (n = 39)	23.1	20.5	12.8	38.5	5.1
B: Targeted measures for specific groups under the banner of diversity (n = 44)	13.6	22.7	27.3	36.4	0.0
C: Targeted measures for specific groups (n = 52)	11.5	25.0	34.6	25.0	3.8
D: No such measures (n = 29)	6.9	41.4	34.5	13.8	3.4

The comparison among the four types of companies reveals that the higher the degree of diversity promotion (i.e., the closer the company type is to type A), the higher the percentage of companies with a system close to a skill-based system, or the higher the percentage of companies with a system close to a duty- or role-based system (that is, the lower the percentage of companies providing a vague answer—"somewhat close to"). This may suggest that what is relevant is whether the features of a company's personnel management system are made clear and clearly understood, rather than whether the company's system is skill-based or duty- or role-based.

In designing reduced working hour programs for employees who are raising a child, in creating administrative rules for such programs, and in promoting work reform, problems sometimes arise regarding consistency with the basic personnel management system. In particular, in setting goals regarding diverse employees and considering methods to evaluate their performance, it is important to take into account the features of the basic personnel management system. One could say that the clearer the features of a company's personnel management system, the easier it is to promote workplace diversity, or that a company should clearly organize the features of its personnel management system (by making them consistent, etc.) in order to promote diversity.

Let us now consider the characteristics of the criteria for promotion used by companies. As seen in Figure 11, there is a clear tendency with respect to emphasis on seniority, compared to the case of employee rating systems. The higher the degree of diversity promotion (i.e., the closer the company type is to type A), the higher the percentage of companies that emphasize seniority in deciding promotion. For type A companies, the percentage of companies that do not emphasize seniority exceeds 30 percent, and the percentage of companies that do not emphasize seniority or do not much emphasize it is close to 70 percent. Mitsubishi UFJ Research and Consulting (2016) also points out a similar tendency between emphasis on seniority in promotion and the degree to which women's active participation is promoted (as seen in, for example, the percentage of women in management positions).

**Figure 11:** Emphasis on seniority in deciding promotion (by company type)

Company type	Emphasize	Somewhat emphasize	Not much emphasize	Not emphasize	No response
A: Comprehensive measures under the banner of diversity (n = 39)	0.0	28.2	35.9	33.3	2.6
B: Targeted measures for specific groups under the banner of diversity (n = 44)	2.3	47.7	36.4	13.6	0.0
C: Targeted measures for specific groups (n = 52)	5.8	36.5	46.2	7.7	3.8
D: No such measures (n = 29)	10.3	37.9	37.9	10.3	3.4

Employee evaluation based solely on seniority makes it difficult to promote employees who take advantage of programs that require adjustments of goals, but allow various ways of working, such as a reduced working hour program. However, at Japanese companies the influence of seniority is more deep-rooted in promotion than in personnel evaluation, which is reflected in salaries. It may be difficult for companies to devise convincing criteria that can replace seniority. The survey has questions on not only seniority, but also work performance and skills as factors emphasized in deciding promotion. Data from the survey show that for type A companies the percentage of companies emphasizing skills is higher than the percentage of companies emphasizing work performance. Also, a high percentage of type A companies and type B companies clearly show their rules on promotion to their employees. The role of managers is important in diversity promotion not only because diverse employees must be properly managed and trained, but also because promoting diverse employees to management positions requires reexamination of the traditional role of managers. Japanese companies have traditionally tended to value and promote employees who have achieved results that are expected of general employees. However, as the role of managers is reexamined, it becomes necessary to separately consider compensating employees for their work performance with salaries and bonuses and promoting them to management positions. It will be increasingly important to promote to management positions people who have management skills and have an aptitude for training subordinates or to develop employees into such leaders. The key to doing so is whether the company can set indicators for evaluating qualitative aspects of work, including abilities developed through experiences and the role within the organization.

Lastly, let us consider the degree to which companies emphasize employees' wishes regarding career development. As Figure 12 shows, the higher the degree of diversity promotion (i.e., the closer the company type is to type A), the higher the percentage of companies that emphasize or somewhat emphasize employees' wishes. For each company type, data from the survey do not show a difference between two types of career development—single-path (leading only to a management position) and multiple-path (leading to positions including specialist positions). In accepting diverse workers, their various values, and their different ways of dealing with life events such as raising a child and caring for a family member, companies need to put strong emphasis on employees' wishes concerning career development. At major companies, the speed of promotion is maintained roughly at a constant level because of a management system that is based on the year when each employee was hired, and there are cases in which promotion involves relocation. It will therefore be important that

promotion and relocation occur with various timings, and that the relevant employees' wishes are reflected in such events.

Figure 12: Emphasis on employees' wishes regarding career development
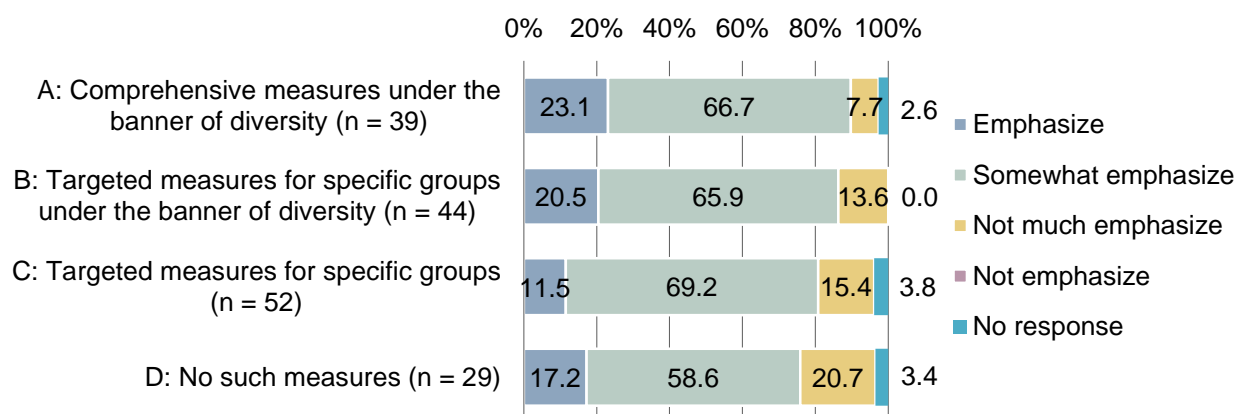
Conclusion

This paper sought to measure the extent of diversity promotion by companies (the level of commitment, promotion policies, promotion measures), taking a clue from how companies utilize the concept of workplace diversity. Three main types of companies are considered: type A companies, which emphasize comprehensive measures taken under the banner of diversity rather than targeted measures for different worker groups; type B companies, which incorporate the concept of diversity in such targeted measures; and type C companies, which take targeted measures without using the concept of diversity. Examination of policies and measures based on survey data elucidated to some extent the characteristics of each type of companies and suggested that the way in which companies use the concept of diversity promotion reflects somewhat the degree of their diversity promotion. It should be noted, however, that type A companies could be divided into further categories because they place different weights on comprehensive measures for diversity promotion (e.g., raising awareness and reforming employees' ways of working) and targeted measures for specific groups.

It is not known whether it is appropriate for every company to take type A companies' approach in changing itself into an organization that can accept workers which it could not easily accept in the past. To promote individual employees' active participation regardless of personal attributes, it is necessary to eliminate discrimination based on personal attributes. Few companies seem to have discriminatory elements remaining in their organizational systems; however, bias that would affect business operation, corporate management, and personnel evaluation, which could subsequently lead to discrimination, probably exists in many companies and workplaces. Positive action, which is necessary in redressing such problems, is effective when the target worker categories are made clear.[10] However, if companies pay less attention to discovering issues specific to different minority groups, taking action becomes difficult. Also, the approach to be taken by companies will differ depending on the progress made by companies in eliminating discrimination and improving corporate culture.

Women, for example, face problems of gender discrimination. such as their superiors forming different expectations for men and women in job assignment or training. Women also face problems as time-constrained employees, for example, when they take advantage of reduced working hours and other programs for raising a child, they may be disadvantaged in terms of occupational goal setting, performance evaluation, and job

assignment, which in turn could hinder their career development. To solve such gender discrimination problems, it is important to eliminate any unconscious bias against women that is held by executives, managers, and HR employees. It is certainly possible that these problems can be addressed from the standpoint of promoting workplace diversity in general, rather than with focus solely on women. However, the progress made in solving these problems is hard to observe without using indicators such as the imbalance in women's appointments and the state of women's promotions. For the latter problem faced by time-constrained employees, in order to increase managers' level of interest, it is effective to approach the problem not by regarding it as women's issue, but by considering it as an issue involving both men and women or by dealing with employees' need to both raise a child and care for a family member and treat their illness or injury. Also, time-constrained employees can more easily continue working and perform to their potential if measures for all employees are in place that implement flexible evaluation methods (taking into account employees' time efficiency and different ways of working) and help employees build their careers in various ways. There are executives, managers, and HR employees who do not seriously consider the work performance and career development of time-constrained employees. A reason seems to be that they have low expectations regarding women's contribution and career development. Companies, however, face risk if they disregard the perspective of women in their approach to promoting the active participation of time-constrained employees.

One of the advantages of using the concept of diversity is a shift in focus from support for minorities to positive affirmation of a diverse workforce as a significant factor in corporate management. This shift of focus is accelerating recent efforts by companies to address issues faced by LGBT workers. Also, the shift parallels the transformation of minority employees' issues into organizational issues. Management's stance on relevant issues is significantly affected by the question of whether it is beneficial for minority employees or the company to not only enable time-constrained employees to continue working by accepting their short working hours, but also provide them with opportunities to perform to their full potential.

Another advantages of employing the concept of diversity is that dealing in a cross-sectional manner with issues relevant to different worker categories gives clues to grasp the direction and details of measures to be taken. As mentioned above, it is important to take measures that consider work reform for not only time-constrained employees, but all employees. Furthermore, it is practical to have a cross-sectional approach to issues facing different worker categories in exploring the significance of accepting diversity and promoting active participation. With regard to women, it is a relatively widespread idea that companies should evaluate both women and men using the same standards, rather than creating special positions or special hiring standards for women, and should create an environment where both women and men, rather than just women, can perform to their potential. In contrast, highly skilled foreign workers face the problem that companies not only often expect them to do things unique to foreign workers, while also expecting them to do everything that Japanese employees can do. Issues involving foreign workers have some similarity with those involving women: if companies are concerned about short-term results, it may make sense for companies to expect foreign workers to perform tasks in which they have unique advantages; however, such expectations may strengthen the biased idea that some jobs are not suitable for foreign workers or may discourage them from staying at the organization if they cannot expect to work actively and build their careers over the long term because a fixed role is imposed on them. If foreign workers can do everything that Japanese employees can do, it may be advantageous for companies in

terms of organizational administration, but the pool of hirable foreign workers would be smaller, or companies may hear from less job seekers. It is also possible that even though companies want to achieve diversity in employees' values, they are only able to hire foreign workers who have values similar to those of the Japanese. With regard to people with disabilities, companies should create a welcoming environment in accordance with the characteristics of their disabilities. Companies also must investigate on a case-by-case basis how a worker's disability affects various operational tasks. In taking these actions, companies should take a serious look at what individual employees can or cannot do, rather than definitively assuming that certain types of disabilities keep them from performing certain tasks (just like assuming that all women who are raising a child cannot work overtime). Just as universal design is incorporated in everyday tools and living environments, if companies create workplaces that are friendly to all employees as part of their efforts to reform working environments and employees' ways of working, then areas where companies should give special consideration to employees with disabilities would gradually become smaller. However, as companies take various measures, they should examine relevant data such as the percentage of employees with disabilities in the organization and results of employee satisfaction surveys in order to understand the progress made in terms of creating an organization that truly accepts people with disabilities and encourages their active participation. In such a case, attention should be paid to the specific worker category. In other words, companies must deal with issues specific to individual worker categories while embracing the comprehensive concept of diversity and taking cross-categorical views and measures.

Lastly, since the survey used in this paper presented new concepts and was a survey conducted by a private-sector company, the response rate was low, and the number of responses was not enough to conduct various quantitative analyses. As companies take a variety of approaches to promoting diversity, future progress in research will require analyses that are based on a large-scale survey. Also, it will be necessary to examine the relationship between companies' concrete systems and measures (including personnel management systems) and the degree of diversity, using outcome indicators for different worker categories (e.g., the percentage of employees in a given category, years worked, and the promotion rate).

Endnotes

1. Using the phrase "diversity and inclusion," some companies not only accept diverse workers, but also emphasize encouraging their active participation. Also, one can argue that the diversity advocated by Japanese companies implies both diversity and inclusion. This paper does not distinguish between diversity and inclusion and considers that diversity includes encouraging active participation by diverse employees.

2. The survey was conducted by sending questionnaires to 3,693 listed companies. The survey period was December 2016 to February 2017, and 168 companies submitted valid responses (response rate: 4.5%).

3. The term LGBT normally refers to a subset of sexual and gender minorities and does not reflect all types of gender identity and sexual orientation. In recent years, in the context of diversity promotion, Japanese companies seem to use the term in a broader sense to mean diverse types of gender identity and sexual orientation.

4. In the survey, highly skilled foreign workers are defined as those who do not have Japanese nationality and who are specialists in engineering or research and development, have specialized skills in management, legal affairs, or accounting, are executives or managers, or have a bachelor's degree or equivalent from a domestic or overseas institution regardless of the field. The focus is limited to highly skilled foreign workers who are deemed likely to be regular employees expected to work productively over a long period of time.

5. Time-constrained employees are defined as both male and female employees who have constraints on working hours due to illness or their responsibility for child or family care. The term also refers to employees who are constrained by non-time factors such as location.

6. LGBT stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender. In the survey, LGBT people are defined as sexual and gender minorities including homosexuals, bisexuals, and transgender people who feels a conflict between their biological sex and their gender identity.

7. The choice of responses shown in the survey was as follows: (1) measures are taken using the concept of diversity or the term "diversity" and without restriction of target groups (including measures in which detailed actions may be directed to different groups); (2) measures are taken using the concept of diversity or the term "diversity," but they are implemented for only specific groups at the moment; (3); measures are taken for specific groups without using the term "diversity;" and (4) none of the above is implemented.

8. Values are different from those shown by Mitsubishi UFJ Research and Consulting (2017) whose calculation excludes non-responses. The same applies to Table 2.

9. The response options for the target worker categories are as follows: seminars for employees in general; seminars for only employees in a given worker category; seminars for managers; seminars for newly hired employees and others; no such seminars. The respondents were asked to select all that apply.

10. Promoting work-life balance and work reform and creating a diversity-friendly environment in general through, such as raising awareness of relevant issues, can be considered as part of positive action in a broad sense. Here, however, positive action is defined narrowly as actively giving opportunities and preferential treatment to minority groups.

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1   April   2019

Report

Support for Maintaining Balance between Work and Childrearing

By Michiko Arai, Senior Consultant

Abstract

Recently, the way in which women work has finally started changing. For about 20 years following the enactment of the Child Care Leave Act in 1991, little change occurred in the situation surrounding women's employment and childrearing: Approximately 60 percent of women who had worked before childbirth left their job afterward. However, the amendment to the Child Care and Family Care Leave Act in 2009 required companies to offer shorter working hours to workers taking care of a child less than three years old, which has made it possible for women, especially those who are regular employees, to continue their employment. Managing personnel who have time constraints is a new challenge for many companies. Workplace supervisors must have considerable management skills in order to utilize the skills of those who have returned to work after taking childcare leave and are working under time constraints. Many supervisors, however, have little such experience and are struggling to figure out how they can support returning employees. With an increasingly diverse workforce, companies need to reform their management methods so that all their employees can work with motivation and perform well. At the same time, returning employees who work under time constraints need to actively examine their careers while engaging in discussion with their families and supervisors. Supporting workers in maintaining balance between work and childrearing can lead to acceptance of people who have various needs in terms of ways of working, whose number is expected to increase. Providing this support will become an increasingly important issue against a backdrop of significant changes in the work environment and changes in the values of workers

1. Introduction

A growing number of women are taking childcare leave, returning to work, and continuing working while facing time constraints and other issues (hereinafter, "returning employees"). For more than 20 years, against a backdrop of significant changes in the work environment, workers' values, and the associated legal requirements, companies have expanded their programs for helping returning employees maintain balance between work and childrearing. Recent years have seen the fruits of such efforts: returning employees, especially those who are regular employees, have been able to successfully continue their employment.

Now that the idea of opportunity for working women has expanded from maintaining work-childcare balance to include realizing their full potential, it is not enough for companies to simply introduce a program for supporting work-childcare balance, and the question has become how they can effectively administer such programs and encourage returning employees to perform to their full potential. This paper summarizes and analyzes issues concerning programs for supporting work-childcare balance and discusses important points for companies to heed in encouraging returning employees to play an active role at their workplace.

2. Amendments to the Child Care and Family Care Leave Act and Returning Employees' Continued Employment

Thirty-one years have passed since the enactment of the Equal Employment Opportunity Act[1] in 1986, and 26 years have passed since the enactment of the Childcare Leave Act in 1991.1,[2] Through several amendments over the years, the government has expanded support for workers to maintain balance between work and childrearing (Figure 1, Table 1). Despite the expanding support, there was little change in the situation surrounding women's employment and childrearing for twenty-some years: Approximately 60 percent of women who had worked before childbirth left their job afterward. However, things have finally started to change in recent years. According to a survey conducted by the National Institute of Population and Social Security Research, the percentage of women who continued their employment by taking childcare leave substantially rose to 28.3 percent from 5.7 percent observed in the 1985-89 period (Figure 2). (The proportion of the same women to women who were employed before giving birth to their first child rose to 39.2 percent from 9.3 percent.). In particular, the increase between the 2005-09 period and the 2010-14 period is remarkable. Figure 3 shows the same variable for different types of employees. The percentage of female regular employees who continued their employment by taking childcare leave significantly increased from 40.4 percent in 1985-89 to 69.1 percent in 2010-14.

The ways in which women work started to change, in part due to the 2009 amendment to the Child Care and Family Care Leave Act requiring companies to implement a reduced working hours program for employees raising a child less than 3 years of age.[3] Yajima (2014) discusses support to prevent women from quitting their jobs due to pregnancy and childbirth through mandatory reduced working hour programs.
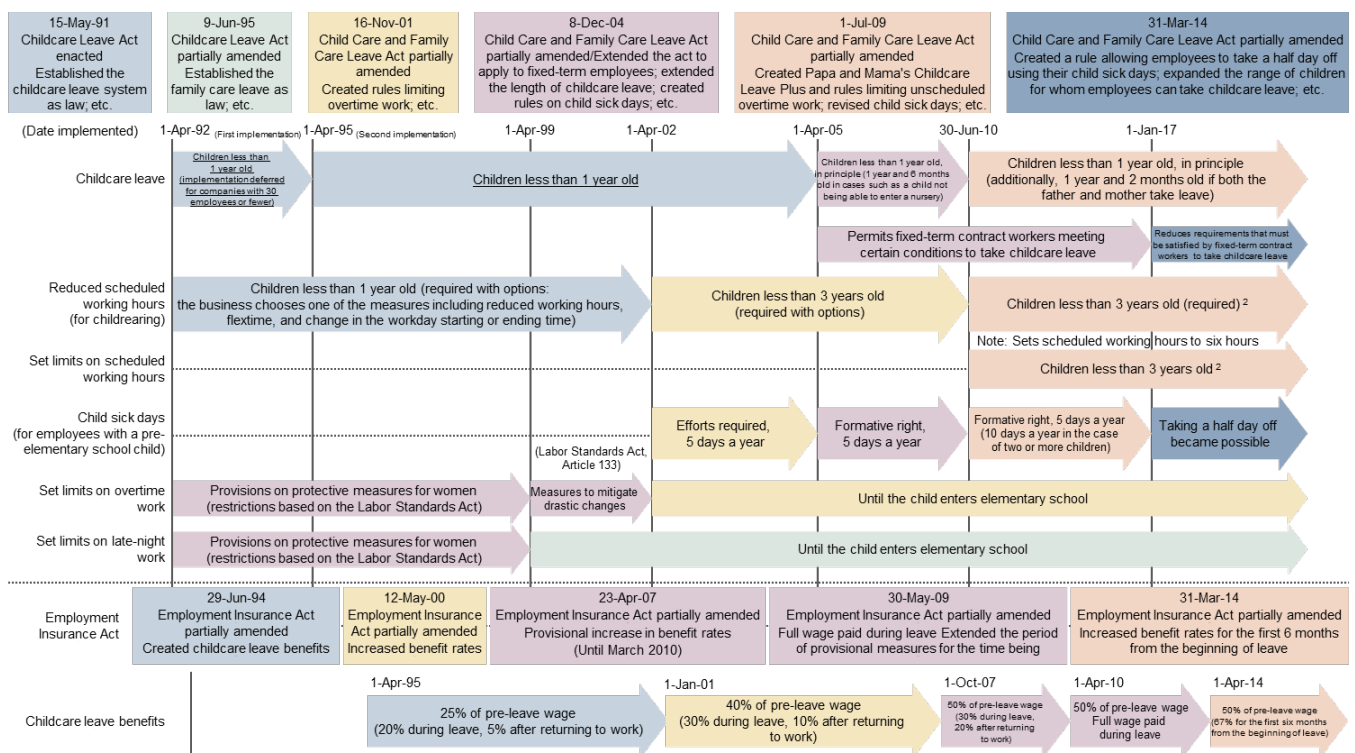
Even though the Child Care and Family Care Leave Act gives employees the right to utilize a childcare leave program, quite a few pregnant women quit their jobs without doing so. This can be attributed to the problem that even though childcare leave is available, these women give up on the idea of continuing their employment, expecting that they will return to the long working hours that they experienced before their pregnancy. In some cases, female regular employees expected, at the time of marriage, continued employment to be difficult after

childbirth and therefore changed jobs or became contract employees or temporary workers. For many women after childbirth, their preferred way of working involves shorter working hours or full-time work without overtime. Since women can now choose these ways of working while remaining at their companies as regular employees, they have a greater incentive to return to work after taking childcare leave, instead of quitting their jobs due to marriage or pregnancy.[4]

A number of major companies, companies in industries where many women work, and companies with positions mainly filled by women have implemented programs to support work-childcare balance that go beyond what is required by laws in order to gain productive human resources, reduce hiring cost or training cost, prevent knowledgeable and skilled workers from quitting their jobs, and produce positive public relations. Mitsubishi UFJ Research and Consulting has increasingly been consulted by companies that have observed that few women quitting their jobs due to pregnancy or childbirth; these companies want to switch to a personnel system that operates based on the assumption that women will work for a long time.

Figure 1: Amendments to the Child Care and Family Care Leave Act

Note: 1. The analysis considers first-time married couples whose first child was aged 1 year or older but under 15 years at the time of the survey. Data from the 12th to 15th surveys are combined (12,719 couples). The change in employment status considered here refers to the difference between the wife's employment status at the time of learning of her pregnancy and her employment status when the child became 1 year old
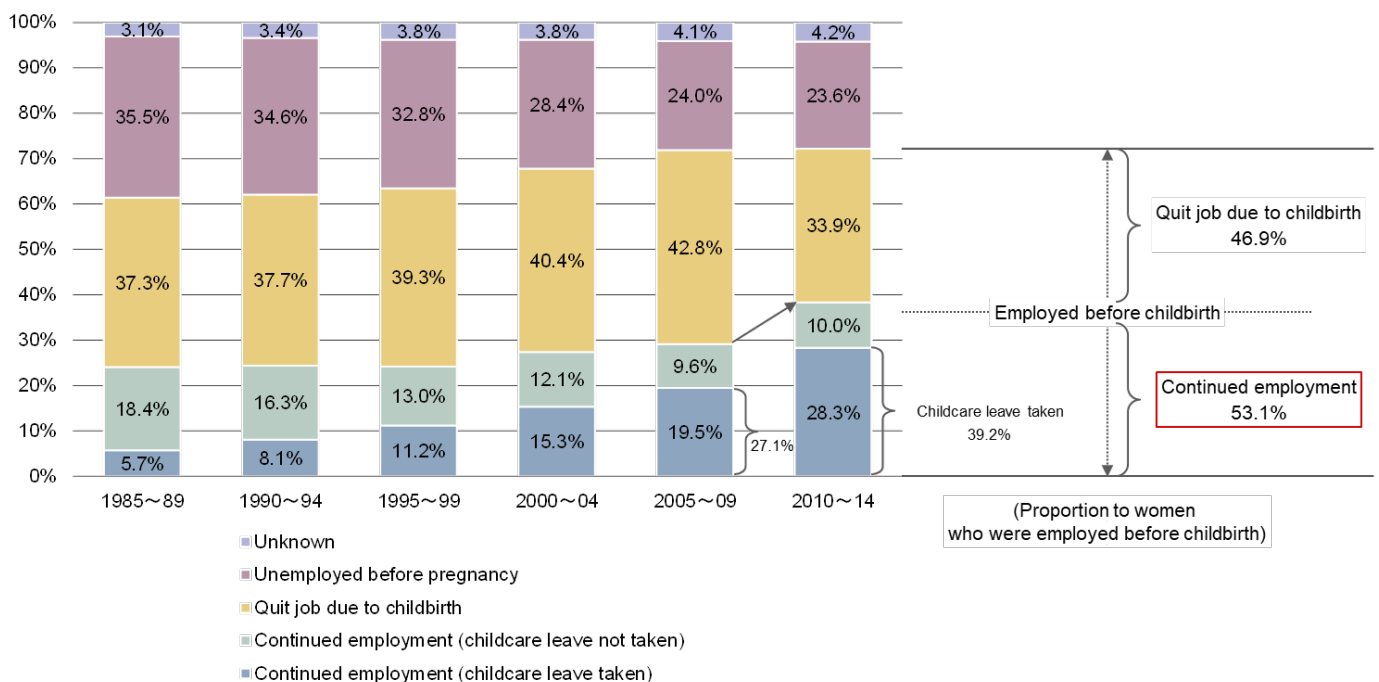
2. The arrow in the graph was drawn by the author

Source: Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare. Reference material 1 (data on the proportion of women who continued their employment around the time of the birth of their first child, p. 3) distributed during the 39th meeting of the Committee for Cooperatively Promoting and Evaluating Work-Life Balance.

Table1: Summary of programs for supporting work-childcare balance

①	Childcare leave	An employee can take a leave of absence to raise a child (until the day before the child's first birthday; in principle, once per child).
②	Reduced working hour program (Reduction of scheduled working hours)	After making a request, an employee raising a child aged less than 3 years can have shorter working hours (6 hours a day).
③	Exemption from unscheduled overtime work	After making a request, an employee raising a child aged less than 3 years becomes exempt from overtime work.
④	Child sick days	After making a request, an employee raising a preschool age child can take a day (or days) off to take care of a sick child (five days per year per child).
⑤	Limitation of overtime work	After an employee raising a preschool age child makes a request, certain limits are set on the employee's overtime work.
⑥	Limitation of late-night work	After an employee raising a preschool age child makes a request, limits are set for the employee's late-night work (i.e., work performed between 10 p.m. and 5 a.m.).
⑦	Other measures for supporting work-childcare balance	Businesses must make efforts to implement one of the following: (1) flextime, (2) staggered working hours, and (3) creation and operation of an in-house day-care facility, or a similar measure for employees' convenience.
⑧	Considerations given regarding transfer	Businesses are asked to give certain considerations with regard to transfer of an employee who is raising a child.
⑨	Prohibition of disadvantageous treatment	Businesses must not take actions that are disadvantageous to employees, including hiring, in response to their requesting for or benefiting from one or more of the first six programs.

Source: Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare. (August 2017).An Outline of the Child Care and Family Care Leave Act.

Figure 2: Empoyment situations for women around the time of the birth of their first child (with focus on those who were employed before the birth)

Notes:　1. The analysis considers first-time married couples whose first child was aged 1 year or older but under 15 years at the time of the survey. Data from the 12th to 15th surveys are combined (12,719 couples). The change in employment status considered here refers to the difference between the wife's employment status at the time of learning of her pregnancy and her employment status when the child became 1 year old
　　　　2. The arrow in the graph was drawn by the author

Source: Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare. Reference material 1 (data on the proportion of women who continued their employment around the time of the birth of their first child, p. 3) distributed during the 39th meeting of the Committee for Cooperatively Promoting and Evaluating Work-Life Balance.

Figure 3: Change in the wife's employment status around the time of the birth of the first child (for different birth years, by employment type). Proportion of women who had been employed before childbirth and continued their employment
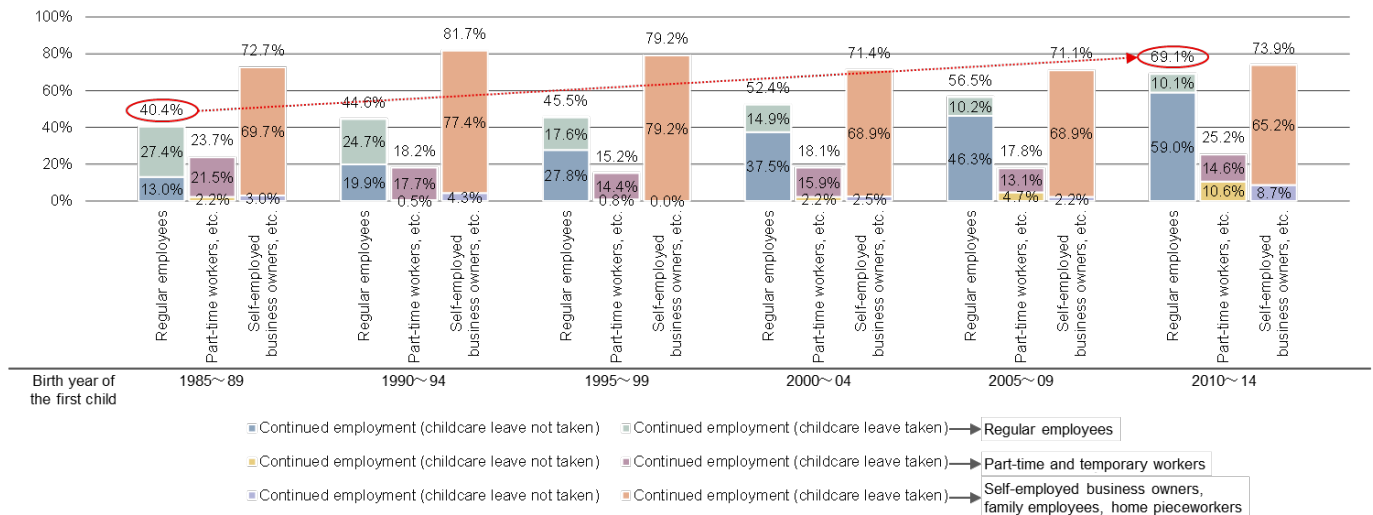
Notes: 1. The graph is based on National Institute of Population and Social Security Research. (2016). Dai 15 kai shussei doukou kihon chosa (fufu chosa)［The 15th Basic Survey on Birth Trends (Couples Survey)］

2. The graph shows data on first-time married couples whose first child was aged 1 year or older but under 15 years at the time of the survey

3 .Employment status around the time of childbirth
Continued employment (childcare leave taken): employed at the time of learning of pregnancy --> childcare leave taken --> employed when the child becomes 1 year old
Continued employment (childcare leave not taken): employed at the time of knowing pregnancy --> childcare leave not taken --> employed when the child becomes 1 year old

4. The pre-childbirth employment status is the status at the time of learning of the wife's pregnancy. In the survey, it is selected by the respondent from multiple options. Also, part-time and temporary workers include part-timers, side-job workers, temporary workers, and various (full-time, etc.) fixed-term contract workers

5. According to the Child Care and Family Care Leave Act, fixed-term employees who can take childcare leave must satisfy the following conditions:
(1) They have been continuously employed by the same employer for 1 year or more
(2) They are expected to continue being employed after the child's first birthday
(3) It is not definite not only that will the labor contract have been expired two days before the child's second birthday, but also that the contract will not be renewed

6. The arrow in the graph was drawn by the author

Source: Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare. Reference material 1 (data on the proportion of women who continue working around the time of the birth of the first child, p. 4) distributed during the 39th meeting of the Committee for Cooperatively Promoting and Evaluating Work-Life Balance.

3. Supporting Work-Childcare Balance

As programs for supporting work-childcare balance have been expanded, more and more women have returned to work. At the same time, however, returning employees often have concerns and anxieties about issues such as the gap in their career created by their childcare leave, time constraints, and the possibility that they may suddenly need to take a day off due to their child's unexpected illness.

Both returning employees and their superiors are anxious. Returning employees who face many issues as they work according to a restricted schedule (e.g., shorter working hours) express concerns that they feel bad because they may have to take a day off on short notice due to their child's illness. Another concern is that they

cannot easily work as they used to do. Their superiors, on the other hand, worry that they cannot assign important tasks to returning employees, and that friction will arise in workplace relations as workload of other employees increases (see Table 2). These concerns imply that the presence of returning employees with time constraints in a traditional workplace—where employees have been assumed to work full-time and overtime—causes confusion, and that returning employees are often blamed for it because they are regarded by some as having low motivation. Such blame, however, does nothing to fundamentally solve the issues. Although the position and perspectives of returning employees are different from those of the employer, it is an important issue for both sides whether returning employees can be motivated to work and continue to perform to their potential. Supervisors need to not only understand the situation that returning employees face, but also talk about childrearing and other private issues without hesitation if they seem to interfere with returning employees' work. Also, returning employees need to voice their struggles, talk with their superiors, colleagues, family members, and others, and make relevant proposals, instead of disregarding their career development and giving up playing an active role in the workplace.

Table 2: Issuer involving ways of working that employees face in maintain work childcare balance

Issues for returning employees	Issues for employers
- Time constraints	- Job assignment
- Constraints related to job experience	- Goal setting and employee evaluation
- Workplace personal relationships (with superiors, colleagues, etc.)	- Interpersonal relationships between returning employees and other employees
- Medium- to long-term career development	- Communication with returning employees
- Maintaining motivation for work	- Excessive consideration given to returning employees
- Sharing responsibilities with the husband while utilizing a shorter hours program, etc.	- Support for returning employees' career development

Source: by author

Another serious problem relevant to companies' personnel management is "maternity harassment," that is, disadvantageous treatment such as firing, contract termination, and demotion that female employees face because of their pregnancy, childbirth, childcare leave, and other reasons. Among the reports of possible violations of the Equal Employment Opportunity Act that were made in FY 2016 to prefectural labor bureau departments in charge of employment conditions and equality, 34.9 percent (7,344 reports) were related to disadvantageous treatment attributed to employees' marriage, pregnancy, childbirth, etc. (Article 9) or harassment related to pregnancy, childbirth, etc. (Article 11, Section 2), and the percentage of these reports is as high as that of reports of sexual harassment (see Table 3). If a company is sued for maternity harassment, it is possible that the company must pay a settlement, damages, or compensation. In such a case, the company's corporate image will suffer immeasurable damage.

Table 3: Subjects of consultations related to the Equal Employment Opportunity Act and the number of consultations

	FY 2016
Gender discrimination (in recruitment, hiring, job assignment, promotion, training, indirect discrimination, etc.) (relevant to Articles 5 to 8)	1,281（6.1%）
Disadvantageous treatment attributed to employees' marriage, pregnancy, childbirth, etc. (relevant to Article 9)	5,933（28.2%）
Harassment related to pregnancy, childbirth, etc. (relevant to Article 11, Section 2)	1,411(6.7%)
Sexual harassment (relevant to Article 11)	7,526（35.8%）
Management of support for mothers' health (relevant to Articles 12 and 13)	2,755（13.1%）
Other (positive action, etc.)	2,144（10.2%）
Total	21,050(100.0%)

Source: Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare. Heisei 28 nendo todofuken rodokyoku koyo kankyo kinto bu (shitsu) deno hou shikou jokyo [FY 2016 State of Implementation of Law by the Departments (Offices) of the Prefectural Labor Bureaus in Charge of Employment Conditions and Equality]. p. 4. Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare. Heisei 28 nendo todofuken rodokyoku koyo kankyo kinto bu (shitsu) deno hou shikou jokyo [FY 2016 State of Implementation of Law by the Departments (Offices) of the Prefectural Labor Bureaus in Charge of Employment Conditions and Equality]. p. 4.

The Child Care and Family Care Leave Act, as amended in January 2017, newly required businesses to take measures to prevent maternity harassment and "paternity harassment," namely, harassment committed by supervisors and colleagues for reasons such as pregnancy, childbirth, childcare leave, and family care leave. Companies therefore need to not only create an environment where returning employees can continue to work comfortably, but also take measures to eliminate the causes of their concerns.

4. Important Points in Encouraging Returning Employees to Perform to Their Full Potential

Devising various ways in which returning employees work while raising a child and providing various career paths are important factors that can determine whether or not they can successfully perform their work during their childrearing period and become the type of employee who contributes to the company in the medium to long run.

4.1 Creating a System to Support Employees before and after Their Return to Work

Workplace supervisors need proper management skills to enable returning employees to perform to their full potential. However, many superiors lack relevant experience and are not sure how they can support returning employees. An effective measure to support such superiors and returning employees is to introduce a mechanism that facilitates communication among the personnel department, returning employees, and their superiors, starting before the employees take childcare leave and continuing until about a year after the return. With such a mechanism, it is expected that the personnel department and superiors can understand returning employees' circumstances, eliminate their concerns about returning to work, and boost their motivation for work.

Many progressive companies have organized training seminars for both returning employees and their superiors. Managing time-constrained workers is a new issue for many companies. It is therefore meaningful not only to make relevant corporate policies and approaches widely known among their employees, but also to create

opportunities to examine issues faced by returning employees and their superiors.

The following sections show examples of such training programs and discuss important issues to be considered in the programs (see Examples 1 and 2).

4.2 Training for Employees Who Return to Work after Childcare Leave

Training sessions for returning employees provide opportunities for them to examine and share information about the challenges and responses they face, so that they can actively perform their work while maintaining work-childcare balance without being completely dependent on support programs. It is important for companies to encourage returning employees to contemplate how they will perform to their full potential, taking their constraints as a given, instead of contemplating how these employees used to be before childbirth. It is also important for these employees to gain necessary skills and devise ways to increase their productivity. It is effective to provide opportunities for returning employees to consider, from a medium- to long-term perspective, how they want to personally grow and how they should engage in their work to achieve such goals. At the same time, returning employees need to actively examine their own career by involving their superiors and family members.

Companies can effectively help returning employees examine their career from a medium- to long-term perspective by teaching them how to create a career plan sheet or by sharing the experiences of those who have been maintaining work-childcare balance. In some cases, especially during the first year after returning to work, employees desperately try to maintain balance between work and unaccustomed childrearing and they worry about things, lacking a positive attitude. Helping returning employees connect with other returning employees prompts them to share information and knowledge, which subsequently enables them to discover a breakthrough, become enthusiastic about their work, and find it satisfying.

Training programs for returning employees also need to encourage them to reexamine the role at home, where women often take care of most of housework and childrearing. Not many couples discuss their future careers when they get married. Returning to work without such discussion tends to make it unclear how housework and childrearing responsibilities are shared. Returning employees often say that they have unconsciously given priority to their husband's career. Encouraging couples to make time to reconsider their careers will eventually put an end to childrearing as a one-person operation and will help women to play an active role in the workplace.[5] This is an era in which individuals and companies should together contemplate the ways of working that are suited to the fact that it is normal for both the husband and wife to work.

Example 1: Training program for employees who return to work after taking childcare leave

- Ways of working after the return: programs and issues
One may face many issues as one works according to a limited schedule, including shorter working hours. What should one may do in order to actively perform your work while maintaining work-childcare balance without being completely dependent on support programs. We will share information on relevant issues and appropriate measures through

- Time management for maintaining work-childcare balance
One may will learn key points in time management as a skill for efficiently working within a given time frame.

- Experiences of senior colleagues who maintain work-childcare balance
Sharing of information on creative actions for work-childcare balance taken by senior colleagues, who are a little more experienced, and sharing of their vision for their future career can reduce your anxieties and increase one motivation. Also, one self-awareness increases by exposing yourself to various values.

- Networking
Relationships among returning employees are important for maintaining work-childcare balance in the future. Working mother can gain motivation through information exchanges and be encouraged by the presence of colleagues.

- Career development: basic approaches and planning
After returning to work, one tend to become so busy with the work at hand and other responsibilities that it becomes difficult to contemplate your future career. However, thinking about your career from a medium- to long-term perspective, including how you will work after your child grows beyond a certain point, can change the way in which you engage in the work at hand. After learning about basic approaches to a professional career through lectures, you will actually create a plan for yourself.

Source: Training seminars for returning employees and for their superiors organized at Mitsubishi UFJ Research and Consulting.

4.3 Training for Managers Who Support Returning Employees after Childcare Leave

In training sessions for the supervisors of returning employees, it is important to deepen these managers' understanding of support for maintaining work-childcare balance by providing information on the company's programs and rules concerning childcare leave (including rules on salaries and employee evaluations) and information on practices such as disadvantageous treatment of employees who have used programs specified in the Child Care and Family Care Leave Act. The greater the efforts of companies to support employees' work-childcare balance, the more often they change their programs and administrative procedures to go beyond what is required by law. However, managers often manage returning employees without properly understanding programs for supporting work-childcare balance. Companies therefore must make sure managers have up-to-date information through training programs and other efforts.

Many managers also cannot understand returning employees' opinions and issues concerning their work. It is important for companies to share information on the situations of returning employees—information on issues that they raise at training seminars and their responses to the issues. By showing supervisors how to motivate their subordinates to properly build a career and how to convey their expectations about the performance of their subordinates, companies can then present approaches and know-how concerning the management of returning

employees and encourage supervisors to support returning employees' career development. Also, training sessions for managers provide opportunities to exchange opinions with other managers and reflect on various aspects of their management of returning employees, such as the amount and quality of communication, efficiency in managing an entire division, and their own preconceptions.

Example 2: Training program for managers on supporting employees who return to work after taking childcare leave

- Compliance in connection with employees returning to work after taking childcare leave: laws to follow and risks to avoid
The amended Child Care and Family Care Leave Act that was implemented in January 2017 required businesses to take measures to prevent the so-called "maternity harassment" and "paternity harassment" committed by supervisors and colleagues. If one do not understand the law well, they may make questionable comments or take problematic actions. They also may not be able to utilize returning employees because of excessive anxieties about unknown elements. Through the training program, managers can gain an appropriate understanding of relevant laws and rules from the standpoint of compliance.
- Issues involving job assignment, goal setting, and employee evaluation
If there are employees working according to a restricted schedule, including shorter working hours, managers need to devise various measures. After they learn, through lectures, basic approaches to the main issues, namely, job assignment, goal setting, and personnel evaluation, we will discuss actual issues arising in the workplace.
- Returning employees' career development: what you can do as managers and your expectations of your subordinates
Devising various ways in which returning employees work while raising a child and presenting various career paths are important factors that can determine whether they can successfully perform their work during their childrearing period and become employees who contribute to the company in the medium to long run. Through lectures based on survey data and discussions among the participants, we will consider how managers can motivate their subordinates to properly build a career and how they should convey their expectations about the performance of their subordinates.

Source: Training seminars for returning employees and for their superiors organized at Mitsubishi UFJ Research and Consulting.

4.4 Important Points for Managing Returning Employees

- Do not blindly assume that inability to work overtime means lack of motivation

In many cases, the difference between returning employees working under a reduced working hour program and returning employees working full-time does not have anything to do with their abilities or willingness to work, but rather arises from family situations, such as whether they have cooperative parents living nearby and whether their husbands is cooperative. Managers therefore should not only encourage individual employees, including time-constrained employees, to perform to their full potential, but also reexamine the ways in which work gets done at the workplace as a whole.

- Considerations for employees in the first year after returning to work

The first year after employees return to work is time when their children do not have a strong immune system

and often get infectious diseases at their nursery. Some women who will become new mothers worry how long such a situation will last. Providing supervisors with some background information enables them to tell returning employees to engage in the current work while keeping an eye on the future, and as a result, the employees may feel at ease. Although situations are different from one child to the next, starting in the second year after employees return to work, their children tend to get sick less frequently. Supervisors' considerate actions that enable employees to return to work without worry gradually builds trust between them and make the process of returning to work a smooth one.

- Guiding employees with positive expectations

Returning employees perform to their full potential and become highly motivated if they are guided by superiors who have positive expectations about both returning employees and other employees. Supervisors should not dismiss the ability of returning employees who seek to maintain work-childcare balance. Instead, they should recognize that returning employees' personal growth and work performance are important to the company and tell this to returning employees.

5. Conclusion

With an increasingly diverse workforce, managers urgently need to reform their management methods so that all their subordinates can work with motivation and perform well. It is therefore important for companies to highly regard and produce supervisors who can respond to situational changes and positively accept workplace diversity.

Support measures that encourage returning employees to play an active role in the workplace make it possible for companies to accept people who have various needs in terms of their ways of working and whose number is expected to rise.

Endnotes

1. The Equal Employment Opportunity Act refers to *Koyo no bunya ni okeru danjo no kinto na kikai oyobi taigu no kakuho tou ni kansuru horitsu* (the Act on Securing Equal Opportunity and Equal Treatment for Men and Women in the Area of Employment).

2. The Childcare Leave Act refers to *Ikuji kyugyo tou ni kansuru horitsu* (the Act on Childcare Leave and Relevant Issues). The law was amended in 1995 and was renamed as *Ikuji kyugyo kaigo kyugyo tou ikuji matawa kazoku kaigo wo okonau rodosha no fukushi ni kansuru horitsu* (the Act on Childcare Leave, Family Care Leave, and Other Welfare Measures for Workers Raising a Child or Caring for a Family Member, or, for short, the Child Care and Family Care Leave Act).

3. The law was amended in 2009 and was implemented in 2010. However, some provisions were put into effect in 2012 for businesses that normally employed 100 employees or fewer.

4. Yajima, Y. (2014). *Josei no noryoku hakki wo kano to suru work-life balance shien no arikata* [Support for work-life balance that enables women to perform to their potential]. in H. Sato & M. Takeishi (Eds.), *Work-life balance shien no kadai: jinzai tayoka jidai ni okeru kigyo no taio* [Issues in supporting work-life balance: measures taken by companies in the age of growing labor force diversity] (pp. 65-66). Tokyo, Japan: University of Tokyo Press.

5. "One-person operation" in childrearing ("*wan ope ikuji*" in Japanese) refers to one person's sole responsibility for income-generating work, housework, and childrearing, which arises due to reasons such as the spouse's job transfer without accompanying family members.

Report

Support for Maintaining Balance between Work and Family Caregiving

By Yoko Suzuki, Chief Analyst

Abstract

As the number of the elderly who need care rises with the aging of society, the number of people who both work and provide care to family members has reached approximately three million. It is expected that there will be more and more such workers in coming years. Against this backdrop, Japan's plan for active participation by all people (Nippon Ichioku Sokatsuyo Puran) was approved by the Cabinet on June 2, 2016, and sets the goal of no person leaving his or her job because of family care responsibilities. The plan also calls for enhanced consultation and support services for families with care-related concerns as measures for achieving this goal. The level of anxiety among workers about providing care for family members has continued to rise. Many people are worried about maintaining balance between work and caregiving or about leaving their jobs. The number of people who left their jobs because of family care responsibilities reached five hundred thousand in the past five years. It seems that many people quit working before seeking help or, even if they do seek help, they do not receive sufficient support. There is a growing need for consultation on maintaining balance between work and family caregiving. Companies, local government offices providing care-related consultation, and care providers must devise ways to address the potential concerns of workers who provide care to family members. Expanding consultation services that facilitate comprehensive utilization of various resources, such as workplace programs, services covered by long-term care insurance, and services not covered by such insurance, would make it possible to prevent workers from leaving their jobs because of family care responsibilities or enable people to maintain balance between work and family caregiving.

Introduction

With the aging of Japanese society, the proportion of elderly adults (aged 65 or older) in the population has grown from 10.3 percent in 1985 to 20.2 percent in 2005 and then to 26.7 percent in 2015. Put simply, approximately one in four Japanese is elderly. This proportion is forecast to reach 39.9 percent in 2060.[1]

As the number of elderly adults has risen, so has the number of those who need support or care. In 2000, when the Long-Term Care Insurance program was started, the number of people certified as needing care or support was 2.18 million, but the number rose roughly three-fold to 6.08 million as of 2015.[2]

As the number of the elderly needing care rises with the aging of society, an increasing number of people are expected to both work and provide care to a family member. According to the 2012 Basic Survey on Employment Structure, the number of people who both work and provide family care reached approximately three million (specifically, 2.91 million were employed and 2.40 million were company employees).

Against this backdrop, Japan's Plan for Dynamic Engagement of All Citizens (Nippon Ichioku Sokatsuyo Puran) was approved by the Cabinet on June 2, 2016, and sets the goal of no person leaving his or her job because of family care responsibilities ("zero care-related job resignations").[3]

The need for the goal is explained as follows.

The number of people who leave their jobs because of family care responsibilities has surpassed 100,000 per year. The reality is that the elderly and the working generation are in a precarious situation. By 2020, when the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games will be held, Japanese baby boomers will be over 70 years old. Their children constitute the central pillar of the Japanese economy, and if many of them leave their jobs, the economy will collapse. The government has set a clear goal of zero care-related job resignations (so that everyone can continue to work when he or she provides care for a family member) and will implement reforms to create a social security system that provides peace of mind to the working generation.

Source: Japan's Plan for Dynamic Engagement of All Citizens. Approved by the Cabinet on June 2, 2016.

The plan considers maintaining balance between work and family caregiving as an everyday issue relevant to the goal of zero care-related job resignations. For the policy directions to be examined and the associated measures to be taken, the plan proposes the following (see Figure 1): (1) creating an environment that enables people to support their family members (through enhancement of consultation and support services for families with care-related concerns), (2) increasing the use of family care leave and family sick days (through creation of a workplace environment where caregiving workers can easily take family care leave or family sick days), and (3) redressing the problem of long working hours and increasing the use of flexible ways of working (through work reform).

Various support services for family caregivers have been provided by local associations and elderly affairs departments or labor-related departments of companies and local governments. The first of the above proposals shows the government's intention to further promote consultation and support services for working family caregivers as part of support for work-care balance in order to reduce care-related job resignations.

Figure 1: Goal of zero care-related job resignations in Japan's Plan for Dynamic Engagement of All Citizens: a tree diagram
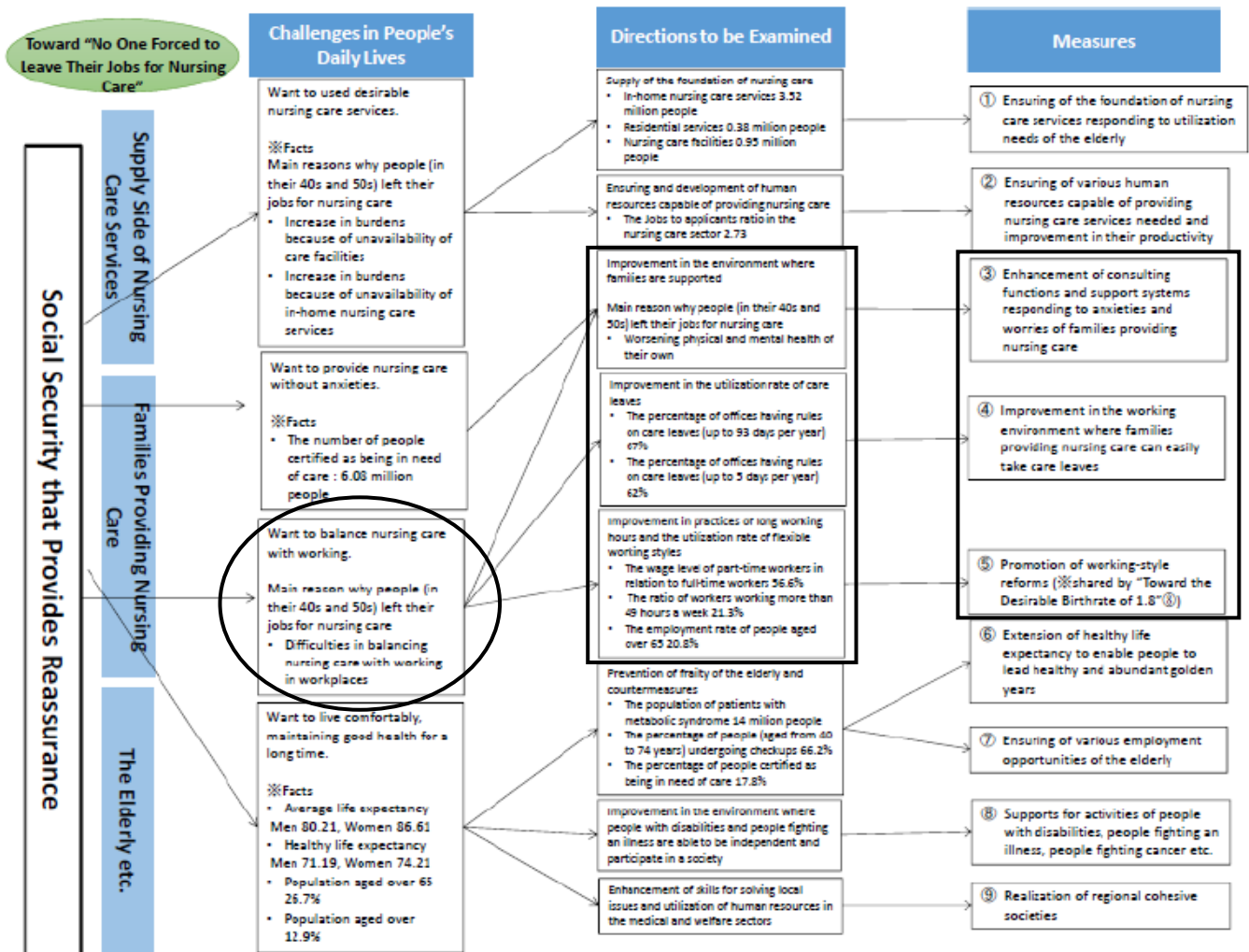
Source: Japan's Plan for Dynamic Engagement of All Citizens approved by the Cabinet on June 2, 2016 (with modification by the author)

1. Anxiety about Family Caregiving or Work-Care Balance

How worried are people about the possibility of having to provide care for a family member? According to the September 2010 survey of the Public Opinion Survey on the Long-Term Care Insurance Program conducted by the Cabinet Office, 77.6 percent of respondents indicated that they often or sometimes worried about the possibility of a family member becoming bedridden or developing dementia. This percentage is higher than when this survey was conducted in July 2003, with an especially large increase in the percentage of respondents who are often worried. This result shows that an increasing number of people are concerned about family caregiving.

The percentage of working-age respondents—those in their 20s to 50s—who are often or sometimes worried about the possibility of having to provide family care exceeds 80 percent, and the percentage of respondents who are company employees and are often or sometimes concerned about the possibility of having to provide family care also exceeds 80 percent (Figure 2). These results show that many workers have concerns about the possibility of a family member requiring care.
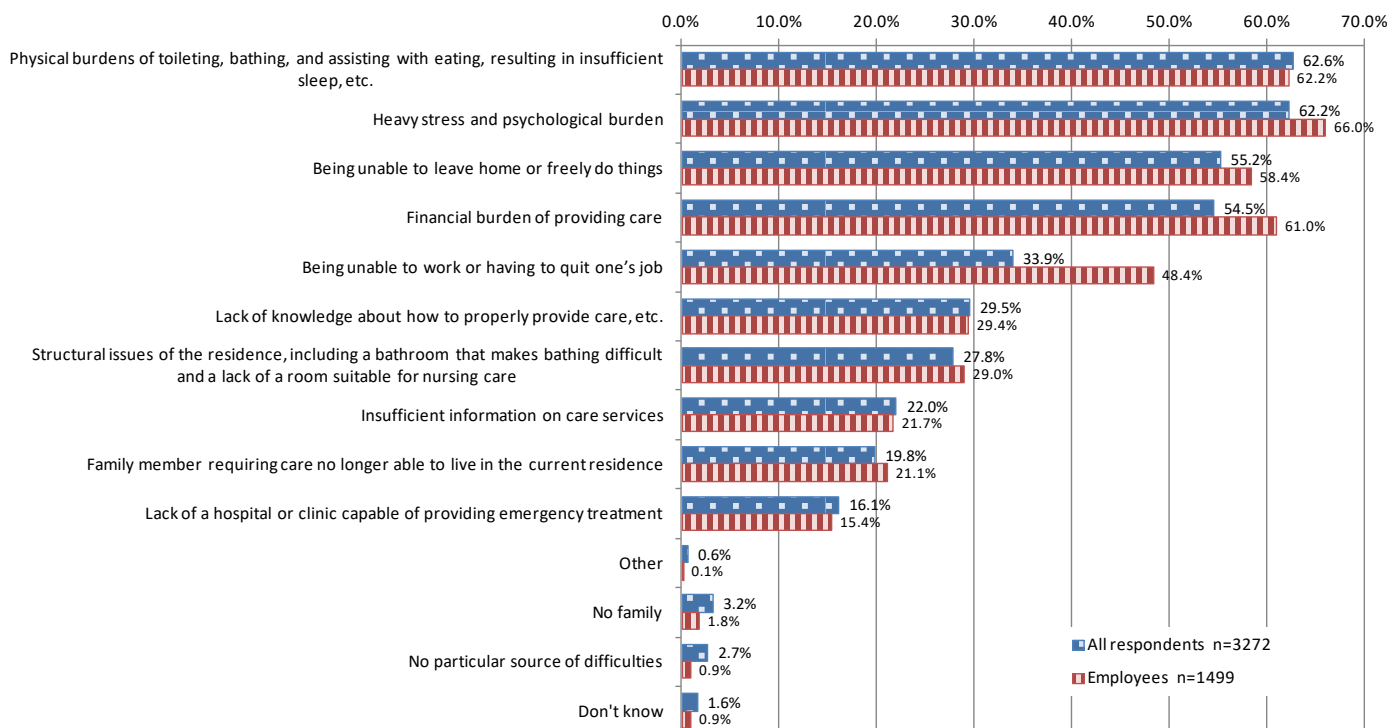
Figure 2: Worrying about the possibility of a family member requiring family care
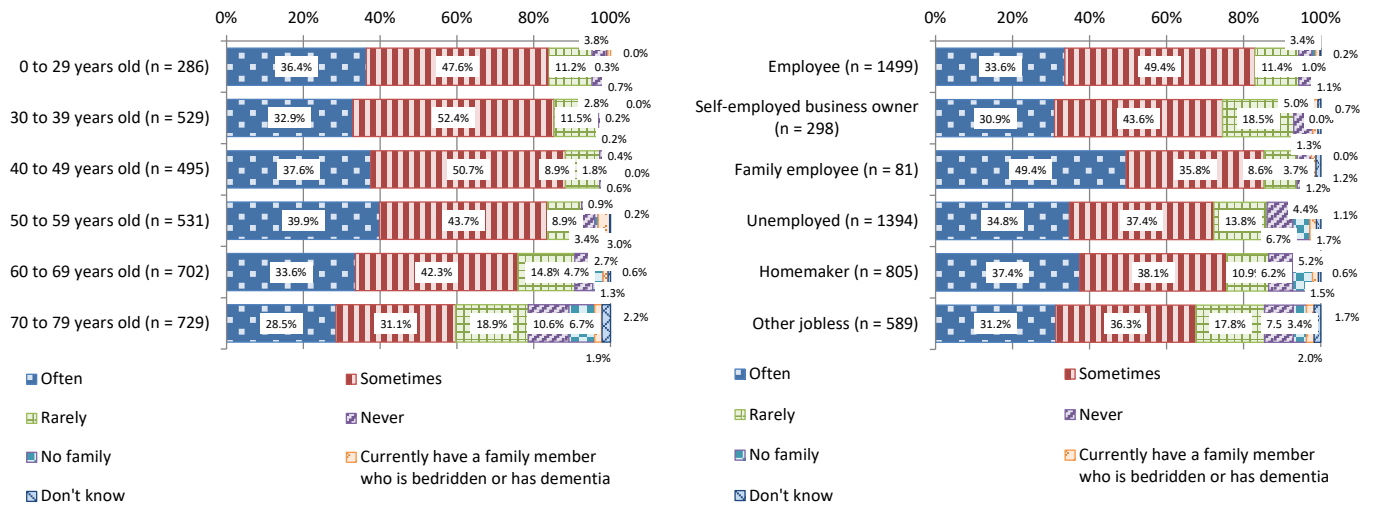
Source: Cabinet Office (2010). Public Opinion Survey on Long-Term Care Insurance Program.

The survey also asked respondents what they thought would be sources of difficulties if an elderly family member became bedridden or developed dementia and needed family care; respondents with a family member who was bedridden or had dementia were asked to identify actual sources of difficulties. The result shows that 48.4 percent of employed respondents answered being unable to work or having to quit their job (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Potential sources of difficulties if it becomes necessary to provide care to an old family member


Source: Cabinet Office (2010). Public Opinion Survey on Long-Term Care Insurance Program.

Not only has the number of people with concerns about family care been increasing, but the extent of their concerns has also become greater. In addition, these concerns are widespread among workers, many of whom expect that they may have to quit their jobs when a family member requires care. It is therefore important that people who have not reached a life stage where they potentially have to provide family care receive support aimed at reducing their care-related concerns.

Let us now turn to the level of anxiety among workers about maintaining balance between work and family caregiving. According to the Questionnaire Survey of Workers on Maintaining Balance between Work and Family Caregiving (hereinafter, the Worker Survey) conducted by Mitsubishi UFJ Research and Consulting (MURC), more than 70 percent of both male and female employed workers who did not currently have a parent requiring care were "worried" or "very worried" about possible family caregiving (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Employed workers' level of concern about maintaining work-care balance
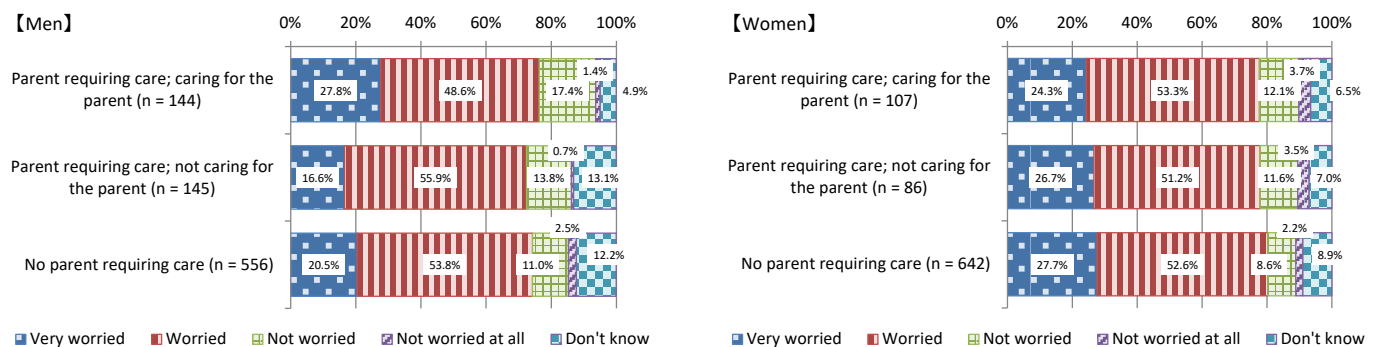
Source: Mitsubishi UFJ Research and Consulting. Questionnaire Survey of Workers on Maintaining Balance between Work and Family Caregiving (Commissioned by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare in 2012).

With regard to specific concerns of those who were worried about maintaining work-care balance, the Worker Survey reveals differences among employed workers who care for a family member, people who left their jobs because of family care responsibilities, and employed workers who do not have a family member requiring care.

Employed workers providing care for a family member are more likely to worry about the absence of a replacement who can take over their job, which reflects their concerns about the workplace system that is intended to enable them to continue working. People who left their jobs because of family care responsibilities are more likely to worry about a lack of a support system for workers who try to maintain work-care balance, such as a family care leave program, and about superiors and colleagues wanting workers to quit if they must provide family care. This result implies that reasons why workers leave their jobs include the inability to utilize support programs and a lack of understanding at the workplace.
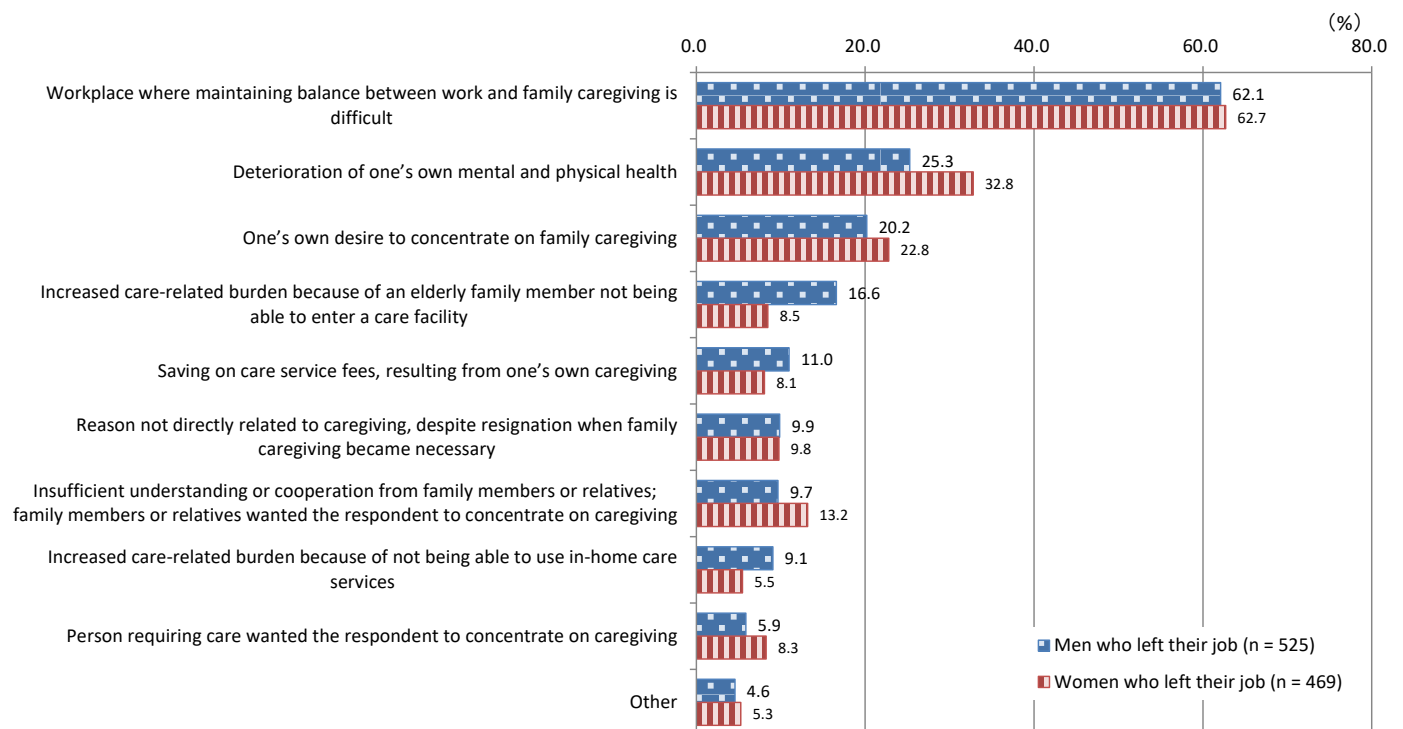
Employed workers who do not have a family member requiring care are more likely to worry about the fact that they do not know how to use care-related services and how to properly combine such services with support systems for workers who try to maintain work-care balance. In other words, they seem to be concerned about their lack of knowledge regarding services and systems that can be utilized when they provide family care.

(Figure 6). This result suggests that even when people leave their jobs, they feel burdened by work-care balance not only financially, but also psychologically and physically.

Figure 6: Changes after job resignation
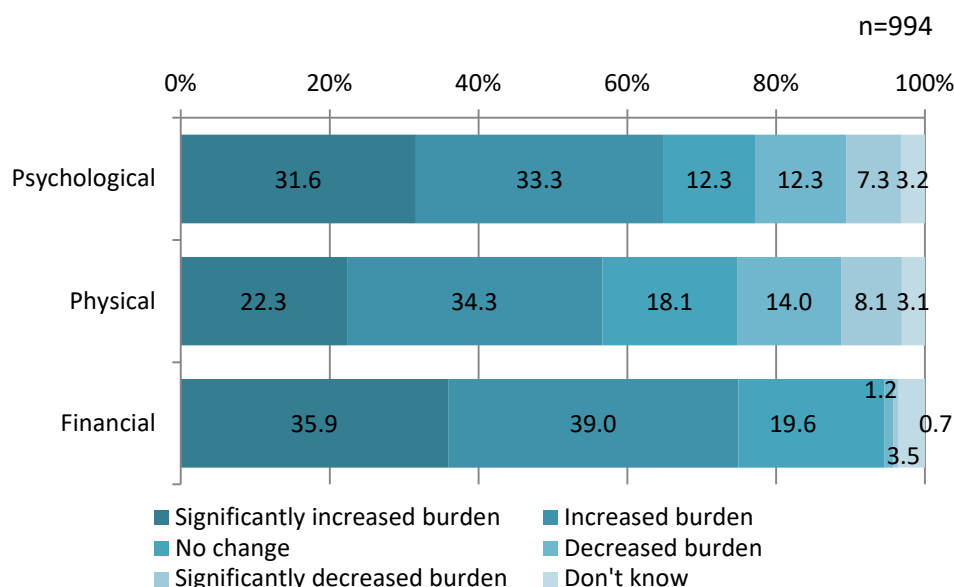
n=994

Source: Mitsubishi UFJ Research and Consulting. Questionnaire Survey of Workers on Maintaining Balance between Work and Family Caregiving (Commissioned by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare in 2012).

3. Family Caregiving

3.1 Factors Making Family Caregiving Necessary

The Comprehensive Survey of Living Conditions 2016 provides data on main factors that made family caregiving necessary for different Care Levels (Table 1). According to the data, joint disorders were identified as the main factor by the highest percentage of respondents (17.2%), followed by frailty due to old age (16.2%). Dementia was identified as the main factor in people requiring nursing care by the highest percentage of respondents (24.8%), followed by cerebrovascular disease (stroke) (18.4%). Dementia is likely to require daily observation, and cerebrovascular diseases are likely to require ongoing care and preparedness for sudden hospitalization. Both of these conditions therefore significantly impact work-care balance. The third main factor for people certified as requiring Care Level 4 or 5 was a bone fracture or fall, which can cause the elderly to become bedridden (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Top three factors that made family caregiving necessary

(Unit: %)   2016

Care Requirement Levels	First		Second		Third	
All	Dementia	18.0	Cerebrovascular disease (apoplexy)	16.6	Frailty due to old age	13.3
People requiring support	Joint disorders	17.2	Frailty due to old age	16.2	Bone fracture or fall	15.2
Requiring support 1	Joint disorders	20.0	Frailty due to old age	18.4	Cerebrovascular disease (apoplexy)	11.5
Requiring support 2	Bone fracture or fall	18.4	Joint disorders	14.7	Cerebrovascular disease (apoplexy)	14.6
People requiring long-term care	Dementia	24.8	Cerebrovascular disease (apoplexy)	18.4	Frailty due to old age	12.1
Requiring long-term care 1	Dementia	24.8	Frailty due to old age	13.6	Cerebrovascular disease (apoplexy)	11.9
Requiring long-term care 2	Dementia	22.8	Cerebrovascular disease (apoplexy)	17.9	Frailty due to old age	13.3
Requiring long-term care 3	Dementia	30.3	Cerebrovascular disease (apoplexy)	19.8	Frailty due to old age	12.8
Requiring long-term care 4	Dementia	25.4	Cerebrovascular disease (apoplexy)	23.1	Bone fracture or fall	12.0
Requiring long-term care 5	Cerebrovascular disease (apoplexy)	30.8	Dementia	20.4	Bone fracture or fall	10.2

Note: Kumamoto Prefecture is excluded
Source: Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (2017). Comprehensive Survey of Living Conditions 2016.

The report entitled " Important Points for Maintaining Balance between Work and Family Caregiving: Examples of Work-Care Balance" which the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare commissioned MURC to prepare (hereinafter, the MHLW report) discusses examples of how people maintain work-care balance based on interviews with nine working family caregivers (Box 1). These examples provide concrete reasons for family care. In some cases, a family member's hospitalization, fall, or bone fracture suddenly made it necessary for a worker to provide care. In another case, a worker was aware of a family member's slowly progressing dementia but started providing care once the condition had deteriorated.

Box 1: Factors that made family caregiving necessary

– My father had aspiration pneumonia and was hospitalized for two weeks. Since then, he has been bedridden. He is certified as requiring Care Level 5. (Case no. 1)

– My mother fell at home and was taken to the emergency room due to traumatic cerebral hemorrhage. This was the beginning of family caregiving. She did not regain consciousness for four days. My wife, two sisters, and I took turns, and one of us went to the hospital each day. (Case no. 3)

– About a year ago, my mother-in-law, who lived with me, had a compression fracture in her lumbar spine and was hospitalized for about a month. During her hospitalization, she needed help eating and moving around. We applied for Long-Term Care Insurance. She was certified as requiring Care Level 4. (Case no. 4)

– My father had long had a weak heart and underwent cardiac catheterization surgery ten years ago. But, the heart kept slowly getting weaker, and he had repeated hospitalizations due to worsening heart failure. During that period, he fell at home causing a brain hemorrhage, which resulted in another hospitalization. (Case no. 5)

– Both of my parents had worsening memory lapses, but I thought that it was not unusual because of their age. One day, when I went in their room, it was messy, and they both were wearing food-stained sweaters even though it was summer. I thought that their behavior was not normal and had them

> examined at a hospital. I then talked with my supervisor and used paid holidays to take them to an acute-care hospital's outpatient department specialized in memory loss and had them tested for dementia. As a result, my father was diagnosed with Lewy body dementia and my mother was diagnosed with Alzheimer's dementia. (Case no. 7)
>
> – About three years ago, my mother was hospitalized to undergo surgery for rectal cancer. My father frequently visited her at the hospital. A social worker at the hospital one day told me that my father might have dementia and recommended that he should be examined at an outpatient department specialized in dementia. My parents' home is in Aichi Prefecture. While my mother was in the hospital, my father was living at home alone. I talked with a social worker when I became aware of my father's abnormal behavior after seeing that his house was a complete mess. (Case no. 9)

Source: Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (2017). Important Points for Maintaining Balance between Work and Family Caregiving.

People's anxieties about providing family care arise from not only the heavy burdens associated with having to urgently respond to diseases and other disorders and providing necessary care, but also the fact that they do not always have sufficient knowledge of how to respond appropriately. Although people anticipate that they will have to provide family care at some point, the moment arrives rather unexpectedly and forces them to take various actions.

3.2 Consultations about Family Caregiving

The Worker Survey provides data about whom the respondents consulted regarding family caregiving (Figure 8). The data show that, for both employed workers and people who left their jobs, the highest proportion of respondents consulted with family members or relatives. A notable difference between the two groups is that the proportion who consulted with a care manager is higher for employed workers. This suggests that employed workers are more likely to consult with a specialist in nursing care and make necessary arrangements in order to maintain work-care balance with help from care services. In contrast, the percentage of employed workers who consulted with their employer is less than 10 percent, which is considered low.

The examples from the MHLW report shed light on how people seeking to maintain work-care balance consulted with their company when they started to provide family care (Box 2). Some people notified or consulted with the company as soon as caregiving became necessary, taking the first step toward work-care balance by gaining the company's understanding. They did so because they considered such prompt notification important in order to make proper arrangements with the company and maintain work-care balance.

Figure 8: People consulted with about family caregiving

Employed workers (n = 251)   People who left their job (n = 994)
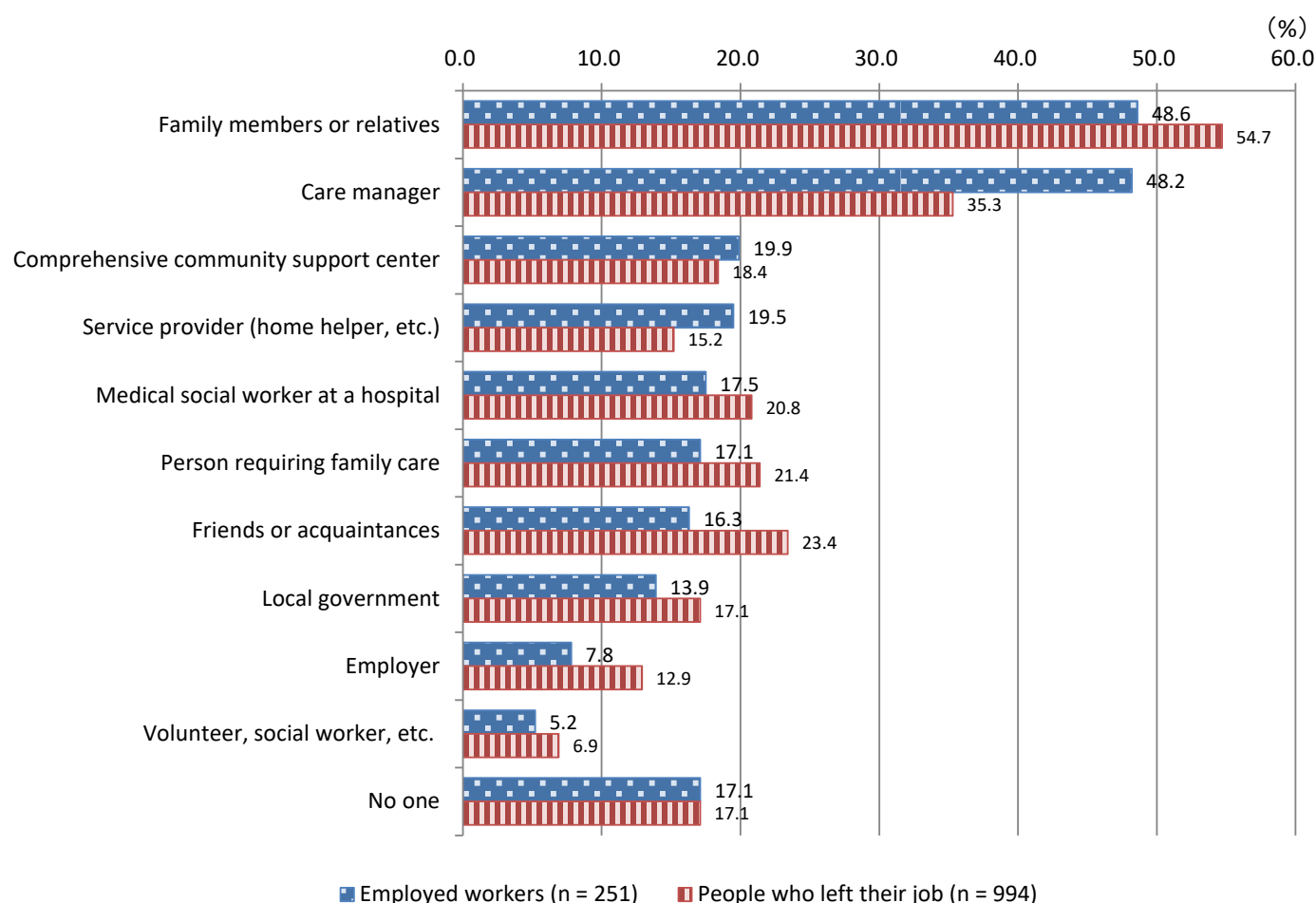
Box 2: Consultation with the company at the time of starting family caregiving

- I notified my company after my father was discharged from the hospital and started receiving in-home care. (Case no. 1)

- I told my supervisor about my parent's care-related situation and discussed work-care balance and relevant issues. (Case no. 2)

- When my mother fell, I immediately notified my superior and subordinates. My superior had a parent who was ill and therefore was understanding about making work-related arrangements to provide care. (Case no. 3)

- Before caregiving became necessary, I had told my company that I was living with my elderly parents-in-law, and that they might start requiring care at any time. When they fell I immediately notified my company. (Case no. 5)

- When I was taking my parents to the hospital for the first time, I immediately contacted my then supervisor about my parents' condition. I did it because I thought that I would probably have to go to the hospital many times and wanted to inform the supervisor about the situation early. (Case no. 7)

Source: Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (2017). Important Points for Maintaining Balance between Work and Family Caregiving.

3.3 Characteristics of Family Care Provided by Workers

The Worker Survey also provides information on how employed workers who provide family care and people who left their jobs but had provided family care before quitting their jobs look after a parent who needed care. In general, people who left their jobs were more likely than employed workers to provide care by themselves, bearing greater care-related burdens. In contrast, the proportion of employed workers who had a care provider handle physical care, such as toileting and bathing, was higher than the proportion who handle it by themselves, showing how employed workers take advantage of care services.

Employed workers' utilization of outside support is also evident in their reasons for using a family care leave program (Figure 9). Many employed workers use such programs to make arrangements for utilizing various services, which include filing paperwork for facility admission and discharge and making arrangements related to the assignment of care responsibilities or the use of a service. In comparison, many people who left their jobs had used the program to provide various types of care by themselves, including regular conversations to check on the person needing care and physical care (e.g., toileting and bathing).

Figure 9: Purposes of using a family care leave program
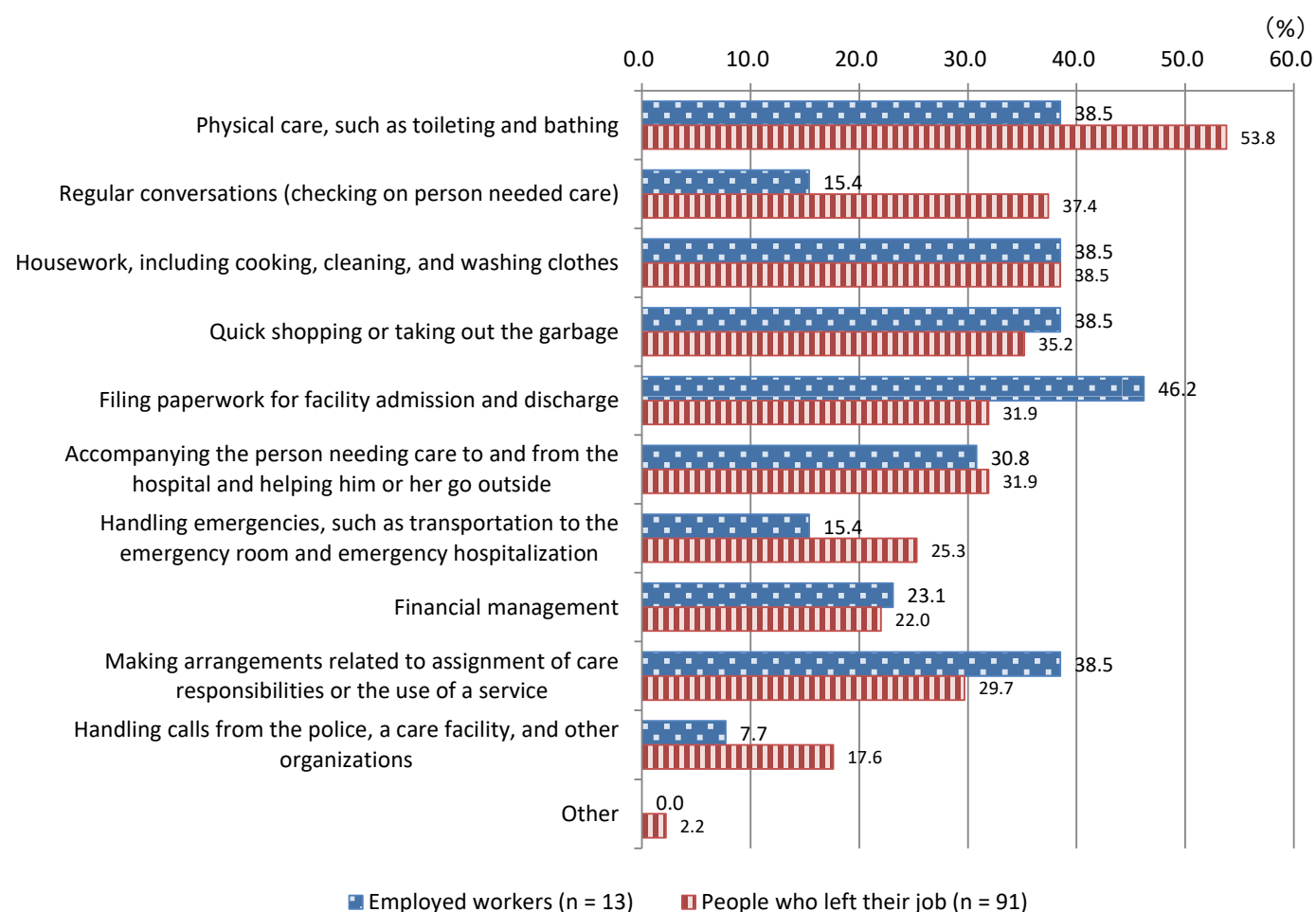
Source: Mitsubishi UFJ Research and Consulting. Questionnaire Survey of Workers on Maintaining Balance between Work and Family Caregiving (Commissioned by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare in 2012).

Examples from the MHLW report reveal how people maintaining work-care balance provide family care or utilize care services (Box 3). As the aforementioned data from the Worker Survey show, by utilizing care services, they built a support system that enabled them to maintain work-care balance. In particular, it is important that some of them use services on non-working days to make time for resting themselves. If a worker goes to work on weekdays and provides family care on weekends, he or she cannot have time to rest and consequently would face difficulties in maintaining work-care balance. In one case, a care manager who understood this issue recommended the use of care services. Since workers may not be aware of this issue and fully engage in both work and caregiving or may not know how to take advantage of care services, it is important for them to receive consultations and support from care specialists.

Box 3: Use of care services

- My father currently goes to a rehabilitation facility twice a week, every Wednesday and Saturday. He goes on Saturdays, when I'm at my home, so that I can have time for myself to rest. Almost every day, a care worker visits his home in the morning, at noon, and in the evening to cook, help him change clothes and go to the toilet, and get ready for bed. In addition, for cleaning and washing clothes, I pay for housework assistance services provided by an NPO. (Case no. 1: living far from the person needing care)

- My parents-in-law currently go to the same elder day-care center five days a week, Monday to Friday. My father-in-law was initially reluctant to go there, but recently began to go. Since they go to the same place, they now seem to talk to each other more. My mother-in-law goes to the day-care center on Saturdays, too, because it seems stressful for her to stay home on both Saturday and Sunday. Apart from the day-care center, my parents-in-law have visiting care service from Monday to Thursday every week and visiting nurse service on Friday every other week. (Case no. 5)

- A few years after I started providing care, a care manager told me that it is OK not to do everything by myself and recommended that I employ a helper before I started hating my parents. The advice relieved me because I felt constrained by the idea that children must care for their parents. I had the helper assist my parents in going to and coming back from an elder day-care center, warm up dinner that I prepared in the morning, and set up the table for dinner. On days when they did not go to the day-care center, they used a food delivery service for lunch and dinner, and the helper came twice a day at meal time. (Case no. 7)

Source: Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (2017). Important Points for Maintaining Balance between Work and Family Caregiving.

4. Company Support for Employees' Work-Care Balance

4.1 Issues Related to Promoting Work-Care Balance

Let us now turn to the issues faced by companies and the measures that they take. The Questionnaire Survey of Companies on Maintaining Balance between Work and Family Caregiving (hereinafter, the Company Survey) conducted by MURC brings to light issues that are currently faced by companies in promoting support for workers who try to maintain balance between work and family caregiving (Figure 10). The most frequently mentioned issue was concern about the current age structure of employees leading to a future increase in the number of employees providing family care (53.3%), followed by issues to be addressed remaining unclear despite employees' concern about work-care balance (43.8%).

Figure 10: Issues faced by companies in promoting support for work-care balance (multiple responses allowed; n = 967)

■The situation and needs of employees providing family care

- Issues to be tackled are not clarified even though there are employees worrying about work-care balance. — 43.8%
- It is unclear what employees need in regard to work-care balance. — 30.4%
- Employees' needs related to work-care balance are too diverse to meet them fully with corporate programs. — 13.0%
- Many employees do not want others to know that they are providing family care. — 12.8%

■Workplace management

- It is difficult to secure replacement employees for divisions with employees utilizing a care-related program. — 39.0%
- Personnel assignment and task allocation at the workplace becomes complicated. — 36.5%
- It may be difficult to use a care-related program depending on the type of job or the division. — 33.8%
- Some divisions have an environment where utilizing a care-related program is easy, but others do not. — 13.4%
- It is difficult for people in management positions to use a care-related program. — 13.0%
- At divisions with employees utilizing a care-related program, it is difficult to gain other employees' understanding. — 6.8%
- It is difficult to evaluate the performance of employees utilizing a care-related program. — 5.8%
- It is difficult to maintain the work motivation of employees utilizing a care-related program. — 3.6%

■Future issues

- Based on the current age structure of employees, it is concerning that the number of employees providing family care will potentially increase in the future. — 53.3%
- Since many employees are in age groups in which few face care-related issues, it is difficult to predict their future needs concerning family care. — 19.4%

■Other issues

- There seem to be employees providing family care, but there are no particular issues. — 6.0%
- Since no employee provides family care, there are no particular issues. — 2.3%
- Other — 1.3%
- No response — 5.1%

Source: Mitsubishi UFJ Research and Consulting. Questionnaire Survey of Companies on Maintaining Balance between Work and Family Caregiving (Commissioned by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare in 2012).

To what extent are companies making efforts to understand the situation of employees who provide family care? Figure 11 shows the result for questions asking, among other things, whether the company is aware of any employees who face the issue of family caregiving and whether it is aware of the types of support for work-care balance that employees seek. Among companies that are aware of the situation and needs of employees providing family care, 75.8 percent obtained relevant information when employees consulted with them, and 34.8 percent obtained information when employees applied for care-related programs. The result implies that these companies would not have known about employees' family caregiving or care-related needs without actions initiated by employees.

Figure 11: Ways of becoming aware of employees who face the issue of family caregiving (multiple responses allowed; n = 967)
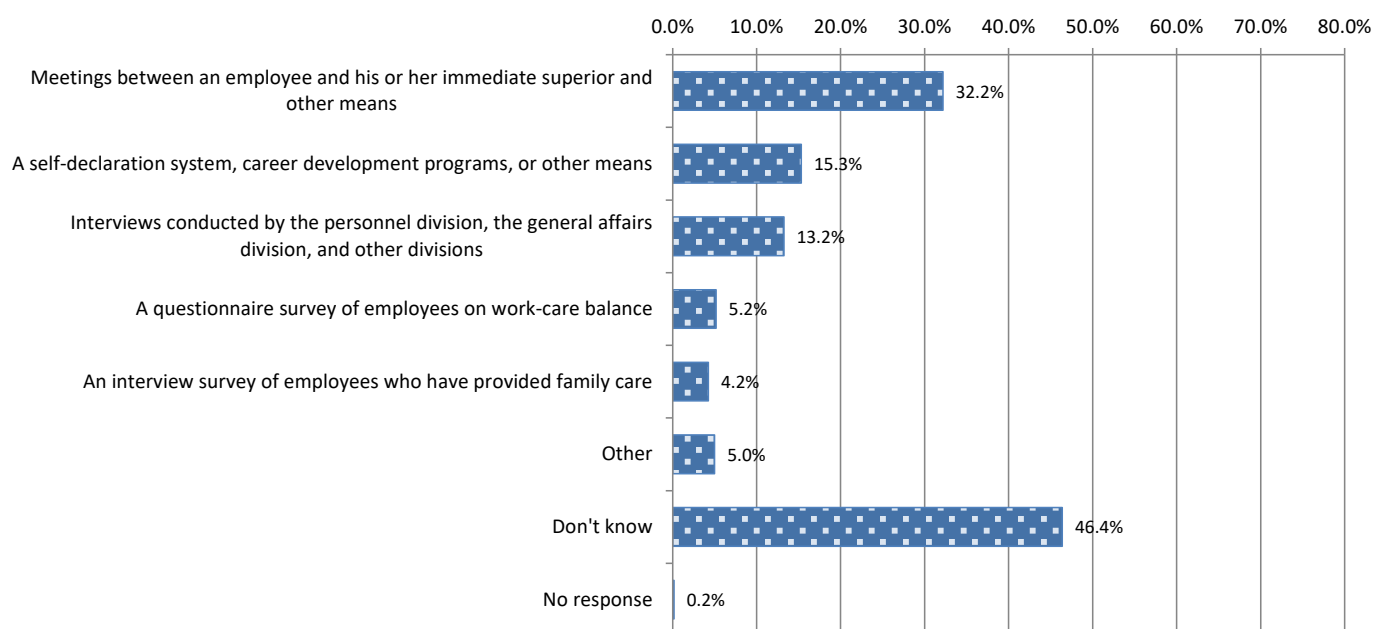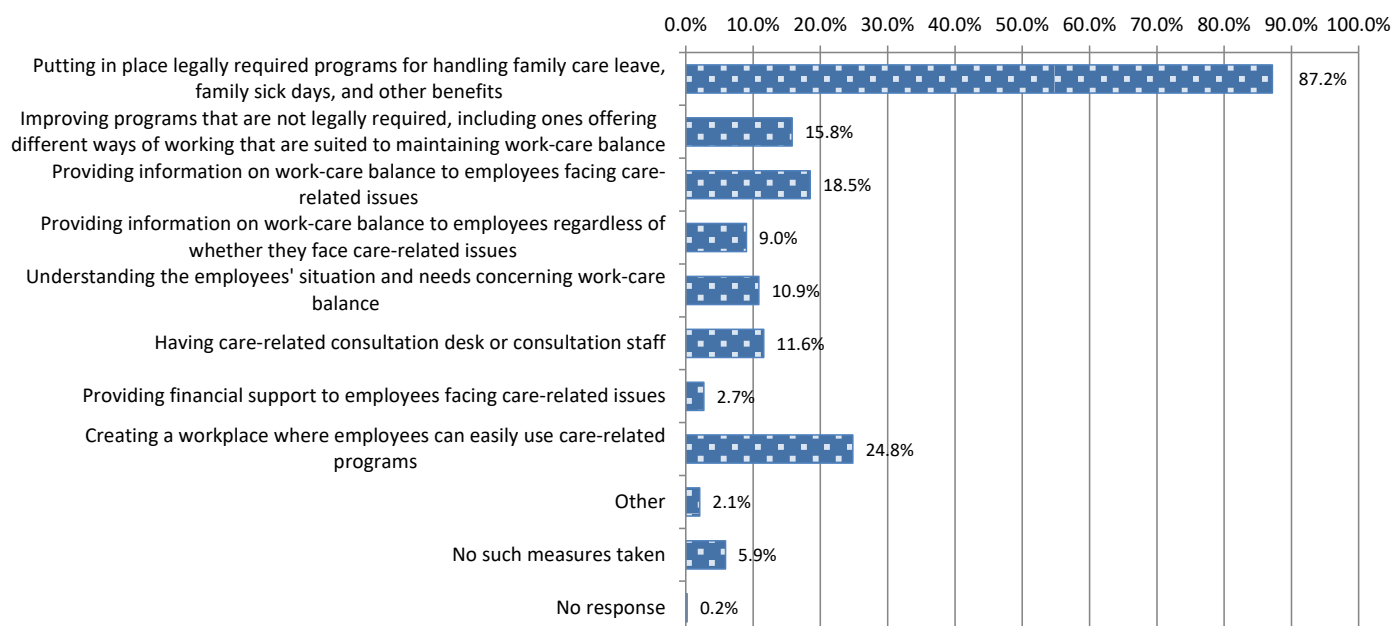

Source: Mitsubishi UFJ Research and Consulting. Questionnaire Survey of Companies on Maintaining Balance between Work and Family Caregiving (Commissioned by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare in 2012).

### 4.2 Corporate Measures to Promote Work-Care Balance and Important Factors for Supporting It

According to the Company Survey, companies do not seem to be currently making significant efforts to support employees' work-care balance, except for putting in place legally required programs for handling family care leave, family sick days, and other benefits (by explicitly describing them in employment rules; see Figure 12). With regard to important factors in supporting employees' work-care balance, 43.4 percent of companies point out understanding the situation and needs of employees concerning work-care balance; 40.8 percent point out putting in place legally required programs for handling family care leave, family sick days, and other benefits; and 40.1 percent point out providing information on work-care balance to employees facing care-related issues (Figure 13). These results imply that many companies do not sufficiently understand the situation surrounding their employees' family caregiving but recognize the need to understand the situation and needs of employees and to provide information on family caregiving.

Figure 12: Current efforts to support employees' work-care balance (multiple responses allowed; n = 967)

Source: Mitsubishi UFJ Research and Consulting. Questionnaire Survey of Companies on Maintaining Balance between Work and Family Caregiving (Commissioned by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare in 2012).

Figure 13: Important factors in providing corporate support for work-care balance (multiple responses allowed; n = 967)
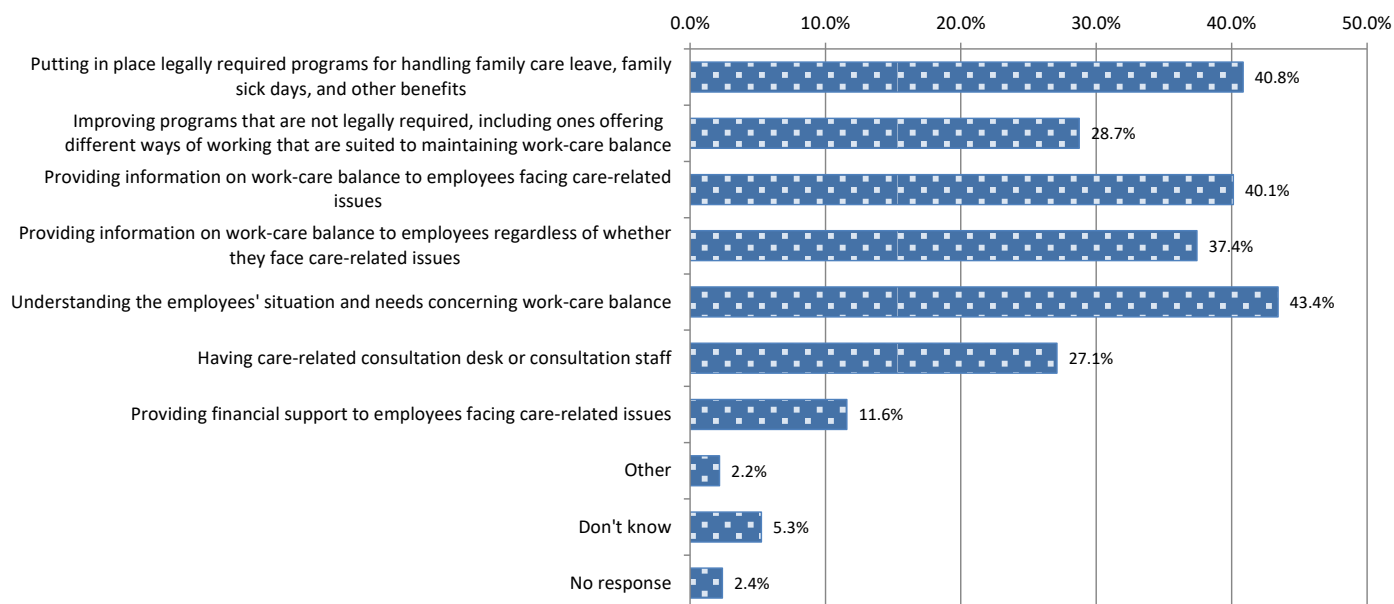
Source: Mitsubishi UFJ Research and Consulting. Questionnaire Survey of Companies on Maintaining Balance between Work and Family Caregiving (Commissioned by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare in 2012).

The Company Survey also provides data on programs in place for regular employees, such as a program for supporting flexible ways of working to promote work-care balance (Figure 14). Notable programs include a program that reduces scheduled daily working hours (implemented by 69.0 percent of companies), a program that allows employees to take time off in half day or hourly increments (46.0%), and a program that allows employees to change the starting or ending time of the workday (45.7%).

Figure 14: Programs in place for regular employees, such as support for flexible ways of working to promote work-care balance (multiple responses allowed; n = 967)
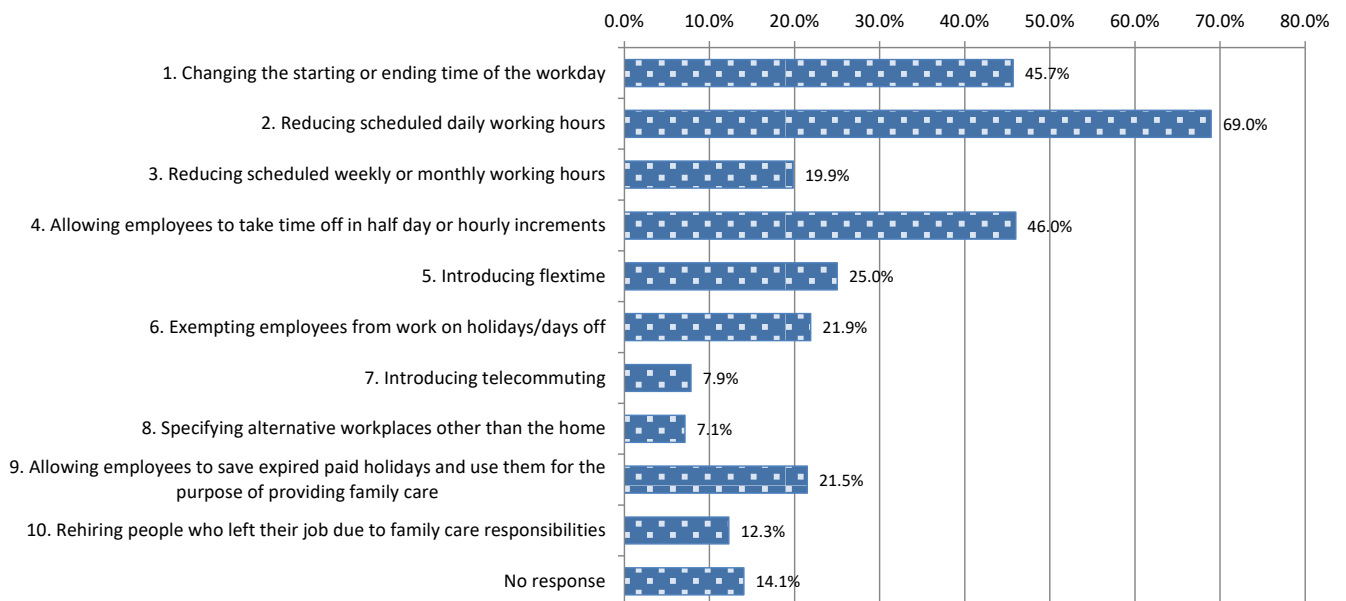
Source: Mitsubishi UFJ Research and Consulting. Questionnaire Survey of Companies on Maintaining Balance between Work and Family Caregiving (Commissioned by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare in 2012).

Examples from the MHLW report show how companies support employees' work-care balance and how employees utilize support programs. It appears that employees who maintain work-care balance wisely take advantage of taking time off in half day or hourly increments and having a flexible work arrangement approved by the company. According to Yajima (2015), differences from the case of work-childcare balance are that employees need to be able to take short-term leave or arrange working hours as necessary instead of being able to take long-term leave like childcare leave, and that some employees need such flexibility for a long period of time.[4] Companies should therefore set rules and put in place measures that offer employees flexible ways of working.

Examples from the MHLW report also suggest that employees' psychological burden is reduced when their work environment is one where people are willing to help one another and when the company understands the importance of work-care balance (Box 4).

Box 4: Company support for employees' work-care balance and employees' utilization of support programs

> − I used up all my paid holidays (20 days a year) for family care and my daughter's school events. To visit care facilities, I took half-days off. I regularly accompanied my parents to the hospital, but did so on weekends and holidays. My focus was on how I could provide care by adjusting my working hours rather than on taking unpaid days off. (Case no. 7)
>
> − I sometimes take paid hours off depending on my schedule for visiting my parents' house. For example, I take one hour off at the end of the workday, leave the company at 4 p.m., go to Osaka on the Shinkansen bullet train, get on a ferry for an overnight ride to Ehime, and arrive there next morning. Since I can sleep on the ferry, this travel pattern is easiest physically. Being able to take hours off is really useful because I can spend my days off more efficiently. (Case no. 9)
>
> − I fully utilize telecommuting. My company allows me to work from not only home, but also similar

places. This really works for me. Even if I telecommute, I can concentrate on my work as effectively as I would do with regular commuting thanks to electronic documents and teleconferences. (Case no. 1)

− Sometimes, I have to start my workday late or leave the workplace for a while during the day because I need to accompany my mother-in-law to the hospital. In such cases, I don't officially take days off or hours off, but flexibly adjust my working hours by consulting with my superior. For example, since anything can suddenly happen to her, like a broken bone from a fall, I share information about her with my supervisor and colleagues so that they can understand my situation. (Case no. 4)

− I sometimes use my paid holidays when I suddenly need to go to the hospital. But I'm glad that people at my workplace understand my situation. Since there are many people at the workplace who have time constraints due to childrearing or family care, we support one another and share our concerns. Even if I experience difficulties in caregiving, I can talk about it at work, which has kept me from becoming pessimistic and has allowed me to relieve my stress. (Case no. 5)

− Since I may need to respond to care-related emergencies, I often talk to my colleagues about my caregiving. Things were really smooth when I was working with people who understood the demands of caregiving. But, not everyone is understanding, so people will feel care-related psychological burdens differently depending on the level of their colleagues' understanding.

Source: Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (2017). Important Points for Maintaining Balance between Work and Family Caregiving.

5. Important Points Raised by People Maintaining Work-Care Balance

The MHLW report presents interviewees' secrets for successful work-care balance and their advice for working caregivers (Box 5). A first important point in maintaining balance between work and caregiving is to proactively consult with family members, one's company, care specialists, and others about concerns, difficulties, and causes of stress. A second point is to act from the standpoint of managing a support system by working with a care specialist and wisely utilizing care services. This can be achieved based on the types of consultations discussed in the first point. A third point is to maintain local relationships as caregiving workers can be helped by neighbors (for example, they can casually keep an eye on an aging family member).

Box 5: Secrets for successful work-care balance and advice for working caregivers

Proactively consult with family members, colleagues, care specialists, etc.

− I have somehow overcome difficulties thanks to the understanding and cooperation of family, friends, company, colleagues, superiors, subordinates, and other people around me. Different people have different situations, but I feel that personal connections are important. Also, it's necessary to signal your concerns, communicate with others, and seek their understanding and, sometimes, their help before you feel that everything is pointless and suffer a breakdown. (Case no. 2)

− It's important to make friends with whom you can discuss your concerns and consult for advice so that you don't have to deal with problems all by yourself. In my case, I, for example, regularly talk with my workplace colleagues about my day, things interesting to me, my concerns, and other things. (Case no. 4)

− The secret to my work-care balance is to talk in any case. Talk and have others understand your situation. My care manager and visiting nurses kindly listened to me over the phone in a friendly manner even at night when I got to my parents' house from work. I have been very thankful for that. (Case no. 6)

− It's important to consult with someone and avoid dealing with care-related concerns and issues

all by yourself. In my case, no one around me was providing family care. I couldn't consult with anybody around me. So, I consulted with my care manager about everything. (Case no. 7)

- The most important thing is to have people who listen to you. In my case, I can talk to my aunt about anything. The idea of mutuality is also important. (Case no. 8)

Cooperate with care specialists and build a support system

- Since I can't always be with my father, I always remind myself to have arrangements that enable him to seamlessly receive care in my absence. It's important if you live far from the person needing care to make such care-related arrangements. I have built good relationships with my care manager and the heads of service providers by frequently contacting with them by phone and e-mail and by meeting them every time I go to my father's house, even for a short time. (Case no. 1)

- In maintaining work-care balance it's important to consult with a care manager and other care specialists about detailed care-related issues and wisely utilize various programs and services. Some people may equate getting professional help with running away from reality or making a poor decision, but people shouldn't bear too much of a burden by themselves. You may feel conflicted, but nothing good will happen if you overwork yourself and have a physical or psychological breakdown. (Case no. 2)

- If you regard caregiving as a project, you can see common elements between it and your regular work. It is important to think that you are not the sole caregiver, and that you are the leader who manages care-related activities, assigning tasks to various people such as family members, a care manager, helpers, and care facility employees. (Case no. 3)

- Caregiving was difficult for me until my weekly activity pattern was set. Once it is set, you live your life accordingly, and things suddenly get easier. (Case no. 7)

Maintain local relationships

- It's important to communicate with the care recipient's neighbors. Every time I go to my father's house I pay a visit to his neighbors and thank them for keeping an eye on him. (Case no. 1)

- I feel encouraged when my neighbors tell me that I work hard to care for family members. It is heartening that someone recognizes your hard work. (Case no. 5)

- I asked community members to keep an eye on my parents when they go outside. For example, I asked the owner of a small grocery store that my parents frequented to remind them if they were buying the same vegetable or prepared food that they bought the day before and to call my cell phone if anything happened. I built cooperative support in this way. (Case no. 7)

Make preparatory work arrangements

- After my mother had kidney failure and started dialysis, I always tried to be ahead of my work schedule because unexpected things could come up at any time. Doing so let me relax. (Case no. 6)

- Since I had to rush to the hospital or the care facility if I got a call, I regularly made sure to save my work documents and customer request data in shared folders on my company's system network so that my colleagues could take over my work if I was away from the office.

Have your own approach to caregiving and remain committed to continuing work

- Different families have their own approach to caregiving. No one can definitively say that care must be provided at home, or that care must be provided at a care facility. It is important to thoroughly consider your parents' wishes and find your own approach to caregiving while taking care of your own life. (Case no. 1)

- It's never the case that my way of caregiving is absolutely correct. Different families have different but appropriate approaches to caregiving. I hope that people provide care for their parents without getting stressed out, taking into account their and their parents' circumstances and wishes. Caregiving gives people a precious opportunity to spend time with their parents. If

> you can approach it with well-thought-out plans, you may be able to provide the kind of care that will leave you with no regrets in the end. (Case no. 5)

- Some people may think that they have no regrets because they have worked hard to provide care. But, I think that different people have different attitudes toward caregiving and get different levels of satisfaction from it. (Case no. 6)

- Having financial resources is also very important. Since my sister and I were working, we had many options. Leaving your job is not a good strategy for either your current life or your retirement years. (Case no. 2)

- It's more important than anything else that you find a way to maintain work-care balance with the determination that you will not quit your job because of caregiving. I was saved by a helper's advice. The importance of that determination is my message to working caregivers. (Case no. 9)

Source: Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (2017). Important Points for Maintaining Balance between Work and Family Caregiving.

A fourth point is to make work arrangements with one's company in preparation for unexpected events. Such arrangements lead to peace of mind or gaining the company's understanding.

A fifth point is to remain committed to continuing to work[[The source says "remain committing to never quitting work" but this seems clearer in English as a positive statement.]] while taking an approach that suits one's own needs or the needs of one's family because people have different approaches to caregiving and because there is no one right way to provide care.

6. Conclusion

The level of anxiety among workers about providing care for family members has continued to rise. Many people are worried about maintaining balance between work and caregiving or about leaving their jobs. At the same time, many companies find it problematic that that the issues needing to be addressed remain unclear, even though there are employees who worry about work-care balance. There are also many companies that have not proactively looked into whether they have employees facing care-related issues or what types of support are needed by such employees. Even if companies recognize the situation of employees who provide family care in a general sense, they often learn about it only when employees consult with them or apply for company support programs. Therefore, it seems that care-related situations are not discussed until employees raise the issue themselves.

In response to the problem described above, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare has created a model for supporting work-care balance to prevent care-related job resignation, put forward a plan for supporting family caregiving, and encouraged companies to support the work-care balance of their employees. The model for supporting work-care balance focuses on five corporate actions, including understanding the situation involving employees' work-care balance and providing information and other support to employees before they face the issue of family caregiving (Figure 14).

Figure 14: A model for supporting work-care balance
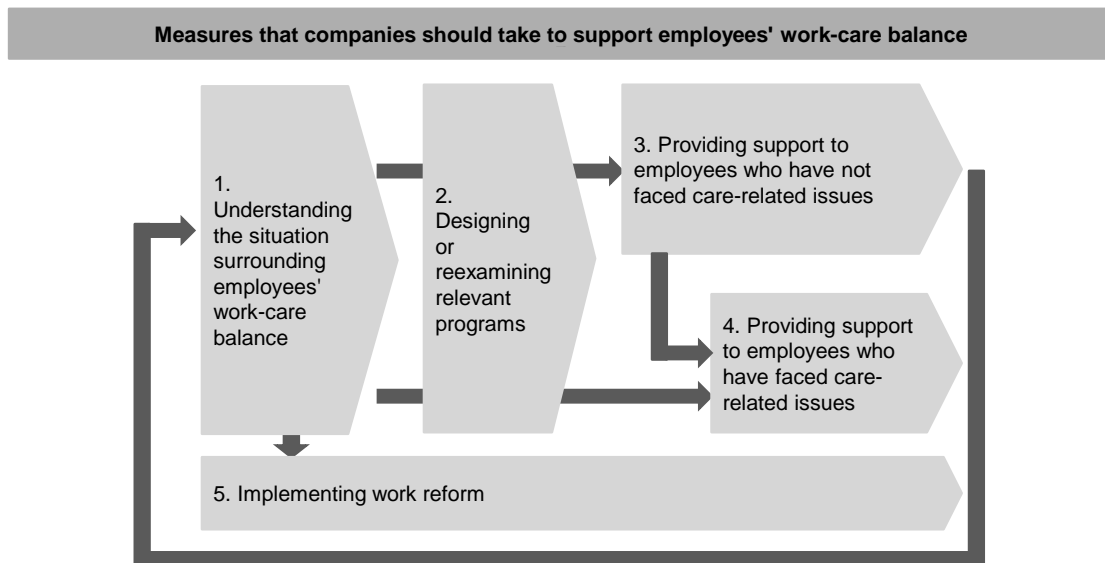
Source: Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (2015). A practical manual for companies supporting employees' work-care balance.

The plan for supporting family caregiving applies to one of the five actions considered in the model, namely, providing support to employees facing the issue of family caregiving. This support is provided by managers or human resources employees who, together with the employees, consider how work-care balance can be achieved and maintained (Figure 15). Utilizing various mechanisms and tools suggested by the model and the plan would be effective for companies that are not sure what actions they should initiate as part of efforts to prevent care-related job resignation. In particular, if a company is not aware of the situation of caregiving employees, it needs to not only investigate the situation, but also create a workplace environment or system that enables employees to voice their concerns.

Heavy care-related burdens appear to cause workers to quit their jobs: caregiving workers who later leave their jobs tend to provide care by themselves to a greater extent than those who continue to work. For people who need care-related consultations, there are comprehensive community support centers (chiiki hokatsu shien senta). These are government offices that provide consultations on a wide range of issues to the elderly and their family and connect them with appropriate health, medical, and welfare services as well as relevant agencies and programs. In its opinion on reexamination of the Long-Term Care Insurance program, the Committee on Long-Term Care Insurance of the Council on Social Security (2016) calls for enhancing consultation support provided by comprehensive community support centers from the standpoint of preventing care-related job resignation(Box 6). In response, the support centers have improved their consultation services for working caregivers. The support centers and other organizations that provide care-related consultation services need to listen to not only the elderly who require care, but also their family members who provide care and have concerns about work-care balance. Furthermore, these support centers and organizations should consider how to support family caregivers in utilizing care services and various other social resources.

Figure 15: "Interview sheet" (incl. support plans) used to support employees' work-care balance

Source: Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (2016).Support for employees facing the issue of family caregiving: a plan for supporting family caregiving.(with modification bu the author).

Box 6 Opinion on reexamination of the Long-Term Care Insurance program (Committee on Long-Term Care Insurance, Council on Social Security, 2016)

- From the standpoint of preventing care-related job resignation, comprehensive community support centers should make greater efforts to enhance their consultation support for not only working caregivers, but also employed workers who worry about their future work-care balance.
- Therefore, the comprehensive community support centers should strengthen their consultation services by, for example, opening on weekends and holidays, expanding consultation channels including telephone consultation, and organizing community consultation teams. At the same time, an environment should be created that promotes seamless implementation of these measures nationwide.

Source: Committee on Long-Term Care Insurance, Council on Social Security (2016). Opinion on Reexamination of the Long-Term Care Insurance Program.

If a family member receives services covered by long-term care insurance, a care manager is important for consultations on nursing care in general. Sato (2015) points out the need to train care managers to support not only people requiring care, but also their family caregivers who try to maintain work-care balance.[5] According to Matsuura et al. (2015), care managers who actively support work-care balance tend to provide comprehensive services, which include services not covered by long-term care insurance such as asking neighbors to keep an eye on aging family members and helping caregivers with housework.[6] Care managers need to be able to utilize various services and social resources that enable family caregivers to maintain work-care balance.

For workers, their concerns about family caregiving often stem from their lack of knowledge on care services and programs for supporting work-care balance. Therefore, it is important for them to learn about family caregiving and the programs available before a family member requires care and to be ready to voice their concerns to their company or care consultants when a family member needs care.

Many people who have concerns about family caregiving or work-care balance quit their jobs before seeking help or quit because they cannot receive sufficient support even if they do seek help. Therefore, companies, local government offices providing care-related consultation, and care providers must devise ways to address the potential concerns of workers who provide care to family members. Expanding consultation services that facilitate comprehensive utilization of various resources, including workplace programs, services covered by long-term care insurance, and services not covered by such insurance, would make it possible to prevent workers from leaving their jobs because of family care responsibilities and would enable people to maintain balance between work and family caregiving.

Endnotes

1. See Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (2016), Figure 1-1-2 "Population for three age categories and the proportion of elderly adults" (p. 6).
2. See Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (2016), Figure 1-1-14 "Number of people certified as needing care or support" (p. 16).
3. This goal is one of three goals set forth in the plan. The other two are achieving the largest postwar nominal GDP of 600 trillion yen and the target birth rate of 1.8.
4. Yajima, Y. (2015). Shigoto to kaigo ni okeru ryoritsu no katachi to kigyo ni motomerareru ryoritsu shien [The Types of Balance between Work and Family Caregiving and Support for Work-Care Balance That Companies Should Provide]. Nihon Rodo Kenkyu Zasshi, 658, 47-65.
5. Sato, H. (2015). Teigen ryoritsu shien care manager no ikusei wo [A Proposal to Train Care Managers Who Support Work-Care Balance]. Nihon Rodo Kenkyu Zasshi, 658, 3.
6. Matsuura, T., Takeishi, E., Asai, Y. (2015). Care manager ni yoru shigoto to kaigo no ryoritsu shien no genjo [The State of Care Managers' Support for Work-Care Balance]. Nihon Rodo Kenkyu Zasshi, 658, 66-79.

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Yajima, Y. (2015). Shigoto to kaigo ni okeru ryoritsu no katachi to kigyo ni motomerareru ryoritsu shien [The Types of Balance between Work and Family Caregiving and Support for Work-Care Balance That Companies Should Provide]. Nihon Rodo Kenkyu Zasshi, 658, 47-65.

Sato, H. (2015). Teigen ryoritsu shien care manager no ikusei wo [A Proposal to Train Care Managers Who Support Work-Care Balance]. Nihon Rodo Kenkyu Zasshi, 658, 3.

Matsuura, T., Takeishi, E., Asai, Y. (2015). Care manager ni yoru shigoto to kaigo no ryoritsu shien no genjo [The State of Care Managers' Support for Work-Care Balance]. Nihon Rodo Kenkyu Zasshi, 658, 66-79.

Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (2015). Kigyo ni okeru shigoto to kaigo no ryoritsu shien jissen manual [A Practical Manual for Companies Supporting Employees' Work-Care Balance]. (http://www.mhlw.go.jp/file/06-Seisakujouhou-11900000-Koyoukintoujidoukateikyoku/0000119918.pdf).

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Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (2017). Shigoto to kaigo ryoritsu no pointo: anata ga kaigo rishoku shinai tameni [Important Points for Maintaining Balance between Work and Family Caregiving: Prevention of Job Resignation due to Family Caregiving]. (http://www.mhlw.go.jp/file/06-Seisakujouhou-11900000-Koyoukintoujidoukateikyoku/0000154737.pdf).

Report

Support for Employees Who Continue Working during Cancer Treatment

By Suzuko Noda, Analyst

Abstract

Recent years have seen a growing number of employees who want to work while undergoing cancer treatment. This trend is partly attributable to shorter hospital stays and rising survival rates as a result of medical advances. The Amended Cancer Control Act, which was enacted in 2016, requires employers to consider continued employment of patients with cancer. In response, companies and hospitals have begun providing support for patients who continue to work while undergoing cancer treatment. Some companies have introduced various measures including paid medical leave, flexible work arrangements, and relevant procedural manuals. Also, systems are being set up so that consultants from the cancer consultation/support centers located at nationally designated cancer hospitals can provide advice on continued employment. In this context, we conducted a questionnaire survey to understand the situation of employees who continue to work while undergoing cancer treatment and to clarify factors at the workplace that facilitate their work. The results show that encouragement to complete daily tasks within regular working hours, ease of communication with superiors, and ease of consultation about the disease are important factors in making those employees feel needed at their workplace. There are several important aspects of promoting support for employees who continue to work during cancer treatment. Companies should not only reexamine the ways in which their employees work, but also show their intent to support both treatment and work in cases of illness, and companies should create a culture in which employees can easily seek consultation. Also, hospitals must provide information from the standpoint of the patient's continued employment, such as the schedule of upcoming treatments.

Introduction

This paper considers the recently emerging topic of support for employees who continue to work during cancer treatment and discusses measures that companies and medical institutions should take to provide such support. This paper first outlines the circumstances in which support for working during cancer treatment has attracted attention and the various current efforts made by the national and local governments, companies, and medical institutions. Then, based on results from the Survey on Working during Cancer Treatment, which was conducted by Mitsubishi UFJ Research and Consulting in 2015, this paper describes the current situation including how employees who work during treatment utilize support programs, how companies support such employees, and what kinds of difficulties these workers face. Lastly, taking into account the current measures and the reality revealed by the survey, this paper discusses future measures that companies and medical institutions will need to take.

1. Why Is Continuing Working during Cancer Treatment an Issue?

Recent issues faced by companies include how employees with personal illness or injury can continue to work while receiving treatment, as well as how employees maintain balance between work and childrearing or family caregiving. From among various diseases, this paper focuses on cancer and continuation of work during treatment because the number of working-age cancer patients has been on the rise. According to nationwide estimates of cancer incidence based on data from regional cancer registries, cancer patients aged 20 to 64 years account for 29.0 percent of all cancer patients (Figure 1). Also, according to the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 325,000 people receive outpatient cancer treatment while continuing to work.[1] This situation can be attributed to higher cancer survival rates as a result of medical advances and to shorter hospital stays as a result of outpatient treatment becoming mainstream.[2,3] In other words, instead of leaving their jobs to concentrate on treatment, cancer patients are increasingly able to continue working while receiving regular outpatient treatment after a brief hospitalization. Cancer is becoming a disease that survivors live with for a long time rather than an incurable disease.

Figure 1: Number of male and female cancer patients by age group (2013)
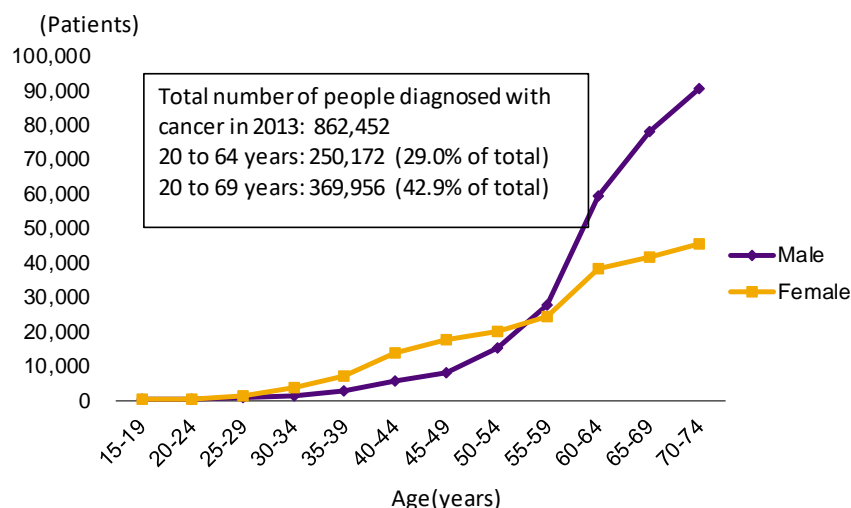

Source: Cancer Registry and Statistics. Cancer Information Service, National Cancer Center, Japan

While it has become medically feasible for cancer patients to continue working during treatment, a gap exists between this medical trend and both the public's views and the actual situation in the workplace. A survey by the Cabinet Office asked respondents whether they thought workers in Japanese society today could continue working if they needed to visit a medical institution for cancer treatment or follow-up examinations once every two weeks. Of respondents, 64.5 percent did not think so (Figure 2; more specifically, 35.2 percent selected the option "no, if forced to choose between 'yes' and 'no'", while 29.3 percent simply selected "no"). In addition, a survey conducted by a research group from the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare shows that 34 percent of workers who receive a cancer diagnosis leave their jobs, and another survey reveals that about 40 percent of those who left their jobs did so before starting treatment.[4,5] The most common reasons for leaving their jobs reflect their uncertainties about cancer treatment and include reasons such as not wanting to put a burden on colleagues, expecting the effects of cancer on the body to make it mentally or physically impossible to work, and not being confident about continuing working during treatment. It is true that the condition of cancer patients varies depending the specifics of each case, and some workers will have to leave their jobs to concentrate on treatment. However, it is not desirable for both workers with cancer and their companies if patients leave their jobs because of vague anxieties or a lack of understanding at the workplace even though they are willing and able to work.

Within this context, the national and local governments, companies, medical institutions, and various other entities have begun to support workers who continue to work while undergoing cancer treatment. The next section provides an overview of such support provided by these various entities.

Figure 2: Is it possible in Japanese society today to continue working if cancer patients need to visit a medical institution for treatment or follow-up examination once every two weeks?
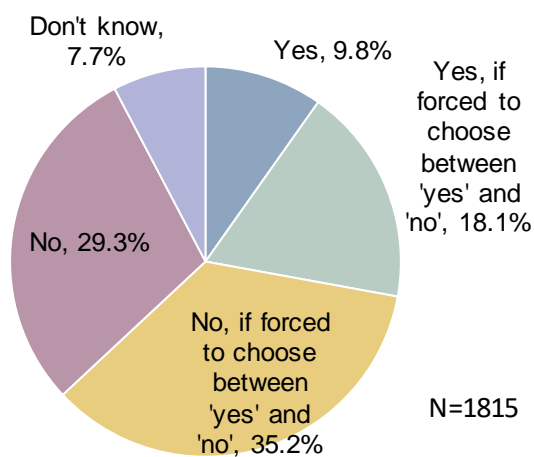
Source: Cabinet Office. (2016). Opinion Poll on Cancer Control.

2. Current Measures

2.1 Measures Taken by the National and Local Governments

The 2016 Amended Cancer Control Act requires employers to consider continued employment of cancer patients. Also, the Work Reform Action Plan, which was created in March 2017, discusses the topic of continuing to work while receiving treatment for a disease and advocates the following: efforts by companies to change workplace attitudes and create systems for accommodating employees with a disease; measures to promote a three-actor support system consisting of the primary physician, the company or occupational health physician, and a work-treatment support coordinator; and measures to enhance the role of occupational health physicians and occupational health services. Furthermore, the Third Basic Plan to Promote Cancer Control, which will be set in the same year, is expected to include employment support measures that center on the idea of living with cancer.

In February 2016 the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare published the Guideline for Businesses Supporting Employees' Treatment and Work and has shown what kinds of measures companies should take in supporting employees' work during treatment. The Ministry also plans to launch a pilot program that assigns work-treatment support coordinators to medical institutions that provide cancer treatment. The coordinators include nurses and medical social workers, and their expected role is to consult with the patient, the primary physician, and the company to prepare a plan for the patient's return to work.

At the local government level, Tokyo has implemented programs that grant awards or subsidies to companies that actively support employees who continue working during treatment. In Okayama Prefecture and Oita Prefecture, their labor bureaus have created teams that promote prefectural measures to support employed patients in work and treatment. These efforts at the prefectural level have just begun, and similar efforts are expected to be made by more local governments.

2.2 Measures Taken by Companies

Prior to the aforementioned measures taken by the national and local governments, companies voluntarily started to support employees' efforts to continue working during cancer treatment. Companies have taken various measures: cancer education through an e-learning platform; paid medical leave; leave that can be taken in half-day or hourly increments, and staggered working hours; flexible work schedules that fit with treatment schedules; preparation of a workplace manual to handle cases of medical leave; and support for a gradual return to work in cooperation with an occupational health physician.

Not many companies, however, are taking the measures described above. A survey conducted by the Tokyo prefectural government provides data on companies that have programs available for the purpose of supporting treatment of personal illness or injury. According to the data, while a little less than half of companies offer medical leave that can be taken in half-day increments, other programs are offered by low percentages of companies: 13.6 percent of companies offer staggered working hours, and 11.5 percent offer medical leave taken in hourly increments (Figure 3). Also, companies have different approaches to dealing with employees' personal illness or injury: 61.7 percent of companies handle cases on an individual basis, 15.5 percent allow employees to return to work after a full recovery, and 12.0 percent have employees gradually return to work on a provisional basis or

under some other arrangement. With regard to difficulties experienced by companies that had an employee or employees who took medical leave due to personal illness or injury for a month or longer, 60.2 percent of such companies point to uncertainty about prognosis and treatment outcomes, and 51.9 percent point to difficulty in assessing the possibility of a return to work. These issues cannot be solved by companies alone, and individual patients need to share information obtained from medical institutions with their companies. Survey data suggest, however, that many companies currently have problems in establishing such cooperative activities.

Figure 3: Corporate programs supporting flexible ways of working: Proportion of companies that have a given program available for personal illness or injury (regular employees)
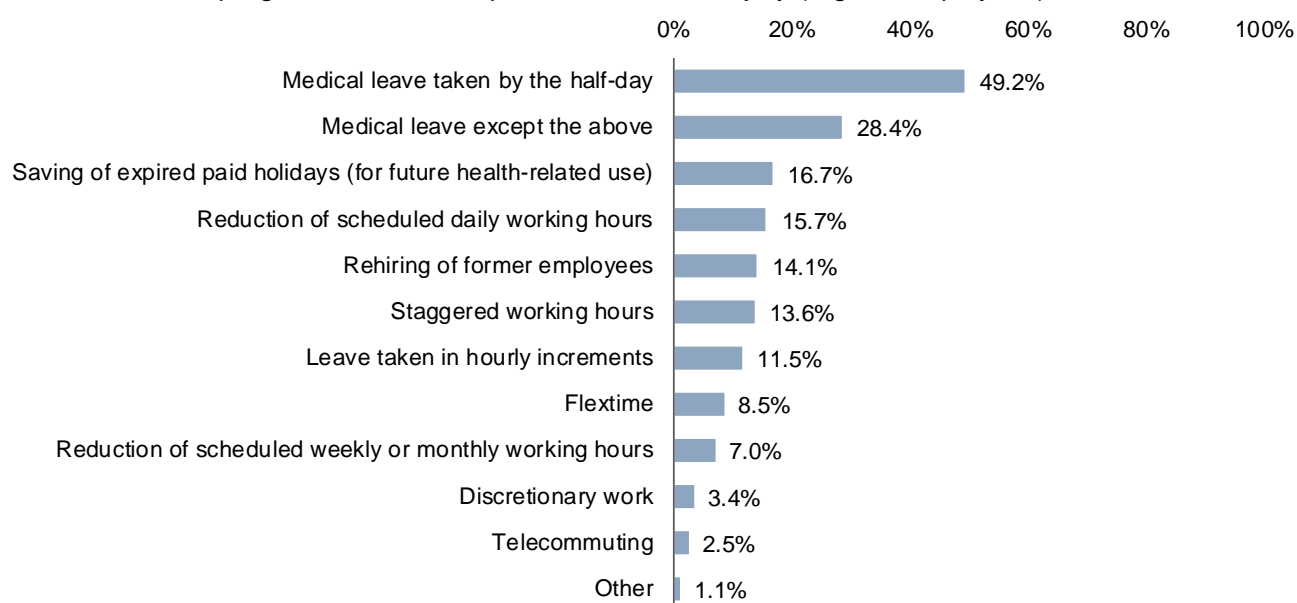

Source: Bureau of Social Welfare and Public Health, Tokyo Metropolitan Government. (2014). Report on the Survey on Cancer Patients' Employment.

2.3 Measures Taken by Medical Institutions

Medical institutions have also started to take various measures. Cancer consultation support centers have been set up at about 400 core medical institutions for cancer treatment (hereinafter, core medical institutions) that are located nationwide. At these support centers, medical social workers and nurses serve as cancer consultants and discuss various cancer-related issues. In recent years, efforts have been made to create a system that enables the cancer consultation support centers to answer questions regarding continuation of work during treatment: employment support has been added to the topics covered in training programs for cancer consultants, and cooperative relationships have been established with certified social insurance consultants (*shakai hoken romu shi*) and job placement offices (called Hello Work). Some medical institutions organize consultation sessions on employment or forums in which medical social workers or nurses serve as moderators and encourage participating patients to share their concerns. Also, some medical institutions have started to offer nighttime outpatient treatment to make it easier for working patients to receive treatment.

There are, however, issues with measures taken by medical institutions. First, the existence of cancer consultation support centers is not well known. According to a survey of cancer patients at core medical institutions, only 7.8 percent of patients have used services offered by support centers, whereas 39.3 percent do not know about their existence and 4.7 percent do not remember whether they had any interactions with them (Figure 4). It is notable that even among patients at core medical institutions, the proportion of those who do not know about the existence of cancer consultation support centers is as high as about 40 percent. Second, it has been pointed out that not only patients, but also medical institution staff outside of cancer consultation support centers generally do not know the role of these centers.[6] Because the existence of the consultation support centers is not well known among patients, it is important for the staff at medical institution, including physicians and nurses who actually interact with patients, to identify patients who have concerns and refer them to consultants. However, such cooperative activities are not currently established at many medical institutions. Third, many cancer consultants lack necessary knowledge and skills. A number of consultants have no experience with employment support and do not have basic knowledge of labor laws and relevant government programs. In addition, patients seeking consultation often do not know that they can ask questions about work; therefore, the extent to which employment-related concerns get heard depends on ability of individual consultants.

Figure 4: Utilization and recognition of cancer consultation support centers (by patients at core medical institutions for cancer treatment)

N=6267
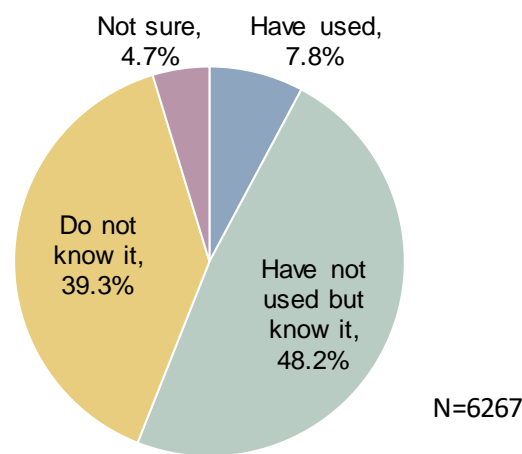
Source: National Cancer Center, Center for Cancer Control and Information Services. (2015). Japan's Cancer Control According to Data. (Study on Creation of Progress Management Indicators for Cancer Control and Their Measurement Systems)

This section has provided a brief overview of the current measures taken by various entities. The next section considers results from a survey conducted by Mitsubishi UFJ Research and Consulting and clarifies what programs are utilized by cancer patients who actually continue working during treatment, how they work, what issues they face, and what factors are important in increasing their sense of job satisfaction.

3. Situations of Employees Who Continue Working during Cancer Treatment

3.1 Outline of the Survey

Based on results from the Survey on Working during Cancer Treatment, which was conducted by Mitsubishi UFJ Research and Consulting in August 2015, this section analyzes the situation of employees who continue working during cancer treatment. The survey was an online questionnaire survey.[7] The respondents were men and women aged 65 years or younger who were regular employees at the time of cancer diagnosis within the preceding 10 years and continued with the same employment. Primary-sector employees and public servants were excluded from the analysis. The number of valid responses was 978 (670 from men and 308 from women). It should be noted that the sample did not include cancer patients who left their jobs and have not returned.

3.2 Work and Cancer Treatment

3.2.1 Cancer Diagnosis and Treatment

Figure 5 describes the age of male and female patients at the time of cancer diagnosis. A greater proportion of women than men are diagnosed with cancer at the age of 40 years or younger. A reason for this may be that the incidence of breast cancer, which predominantly affects women, starts to increase in the latter half of their 30s. Although not shown in the graph, slightly less than half of the female cancer patients have breast cancer.

Figure 5: Age at cancer diagnosis (men and women)

	30s or younger	40s	50s	60s
Men (670)	9.6%	35.1%	50.6%	4.8%
Women (308)	29.9%	47.7%	21.4%	1.0%
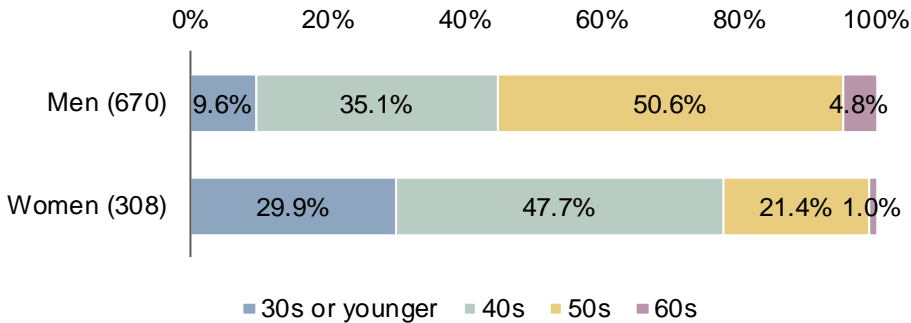
Note: Sample size is shown in parentheses (N).
Source: Mitsubishi UFJ Research and Consulting. (2016). Survey on Working during Cancer Treatment. (The same source is used for Figures 6 to 22 and Tables 1 and 2.)

Figure 6 shows the stage of cancer at the time of diagnosis. According to the figure, 32.8 percent of respondents were diagnosed with stage 1 cancer, and 20.0 percent were diagnosed with stage 2 cancer. Also, more than 10 percent of respondents did not know the stage of their cancer.

Figure 6: Stage of cancer at diagnosis

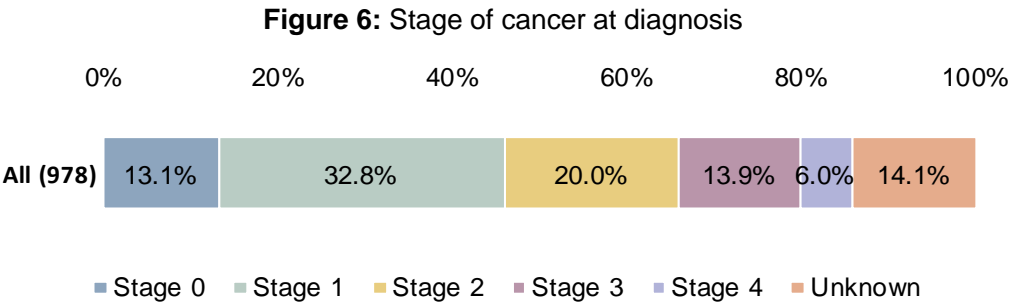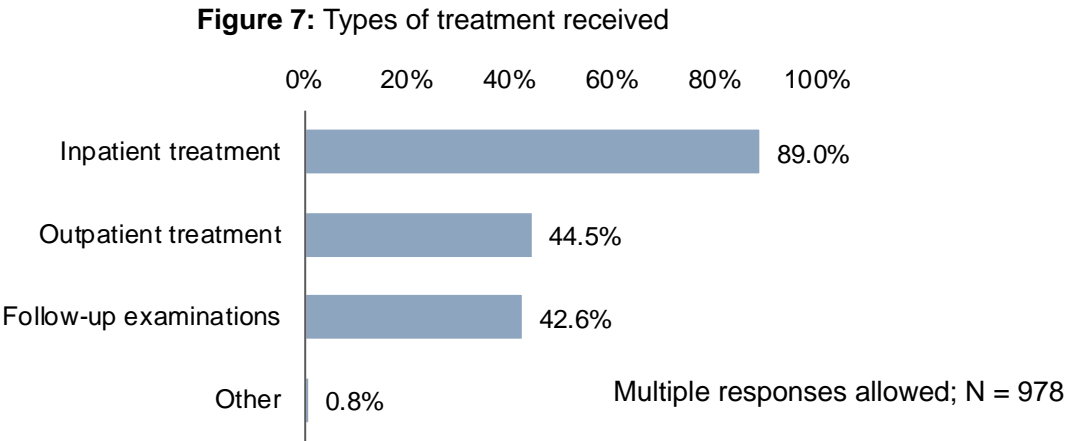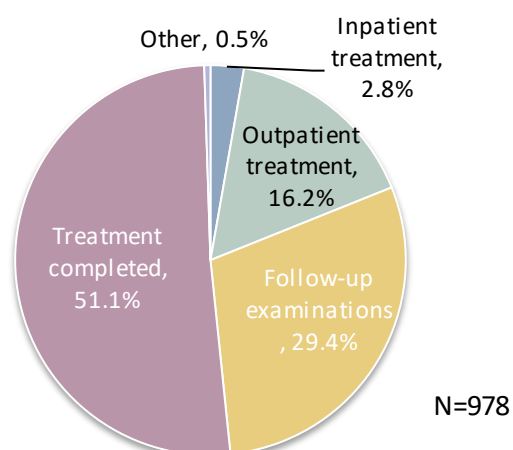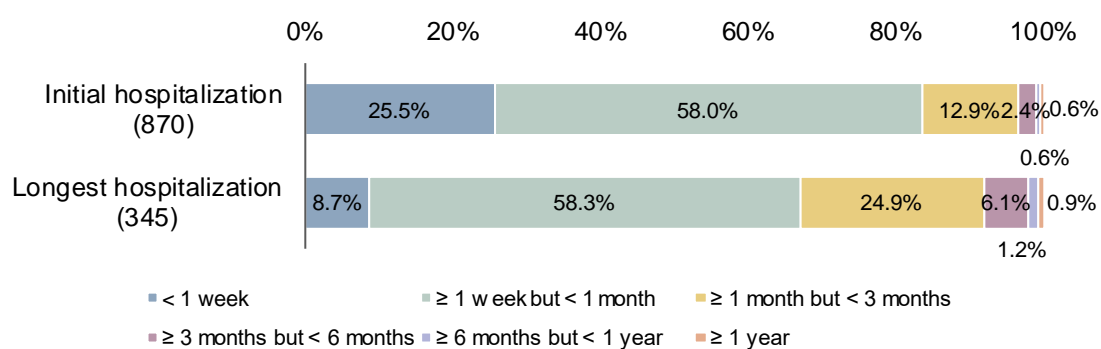|	Stage 0	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Unknown
All (978)	13.1%	32.8%	20.0%	13.9%	6.0%	14.1%

Figure 7 shows the types of treatment that the respondents received. Almost 90 percent of them received inpatient treatment. As for the current status of treatment, 51.5 percent of respondents had completed all treatment and follow-up, 29.4 percent were attending follow-up examinations, and 16.2 percent were receiving outpatient treatment (Figure 8). Also, among the respondents who were hospitalized, 25.5 percent stayed at the hospital for less than 1 week for their first hospitalization, and 58.0 percent answered that their longest hospitalization was 1 week or more but less than 1 month (Figure 9). This result suggests that many cancer patients are discharged from the hospital after a relatively short period of stay.

Figure 7: Types of treatment received

Inpatient treatment	89.0%
Outpatient treatment	44.5%
Follow-up examinations	42.6%
Other	0.8%

Multiple responses allowed; N = 978

Figure 8: Types of current treatment

Other, 0.5%

Inpatient treatment, 2.8%

Outpatient treatment, 16.2%

Treatment completed, 51.1%

Follow-up examinations, 29.4%

N=978

Figure 9: Duration of initial hospitalization and the longest hospitalization

	< 1 week	≥ 1 week but < 1 month	≥ 1 month but < 3 months	≥ 3 months but < 6 months	≥ 6 months but < 1 year	≥ 1 year
Initial hospitalization (870)	25.5%	58.0%	12.9%	2.4%	0.6%	0.6%
Longest hospitalization (345)	8.7%	58.3%	24.9%	6.1%	0.9%	1.2%

■ < 1 week   ■ ≥ 1 week but < 1 month   ■ ≥ 1 month but < 3 months

■ ≥ 3 months but < 6 months   ■ ≥ 6 months but < 1 year   ■ ≥ 1 year

3.2.2 Workplace Programs

Figure 10 describes various support programs offered by companies of different sizes to employees who continue working during cancer treatment. It can be seen that the larger the company, the more likely it offers a given type of support program.

Figure 10: Corporate support programs at cancer diagnosis (by company size)
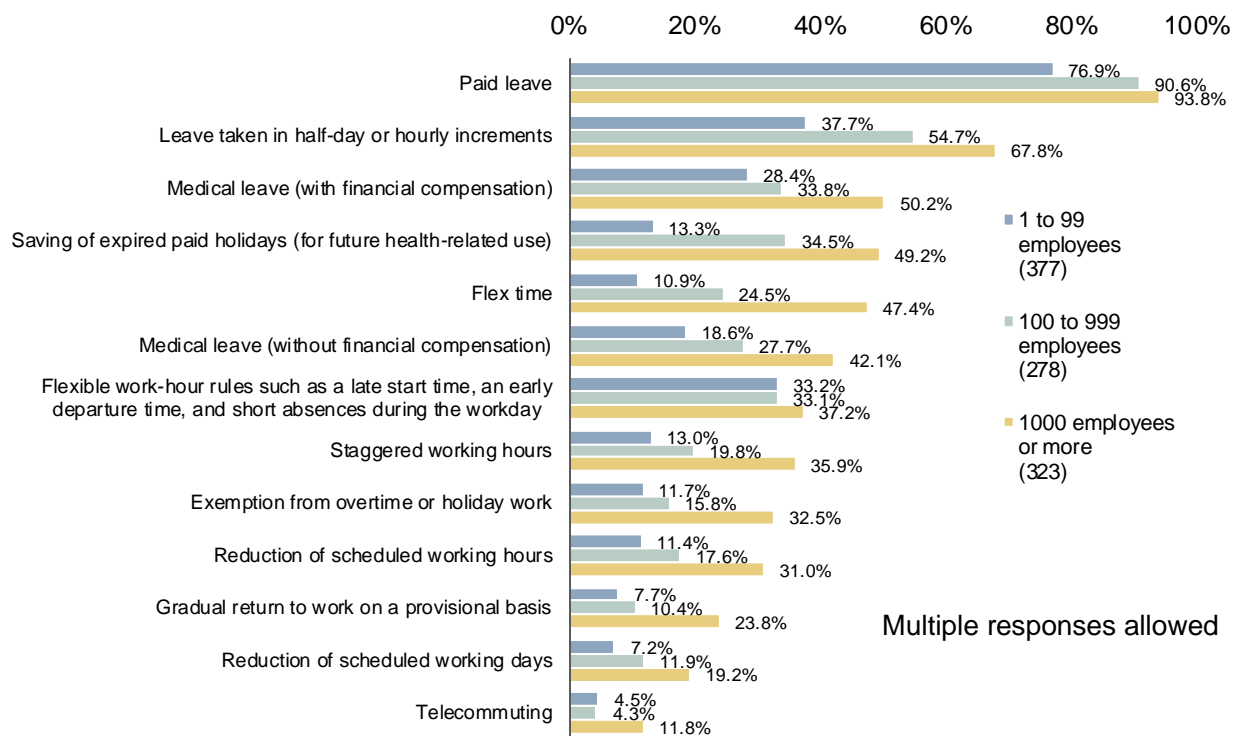
Note: Percentage indicate the proportion of respondents who answered that a program was present.

In contrast, there are no substantial differences among companies of different sizes in terms of program utilization (Figure 11). However, smaller companies had higher utilization rates for flexible work-hour rules such as a late start time, an early departure time, and short absences during the workday.

Figure 11: Utilization of corporate support programs at the time of cancer diagnosis (by company size)
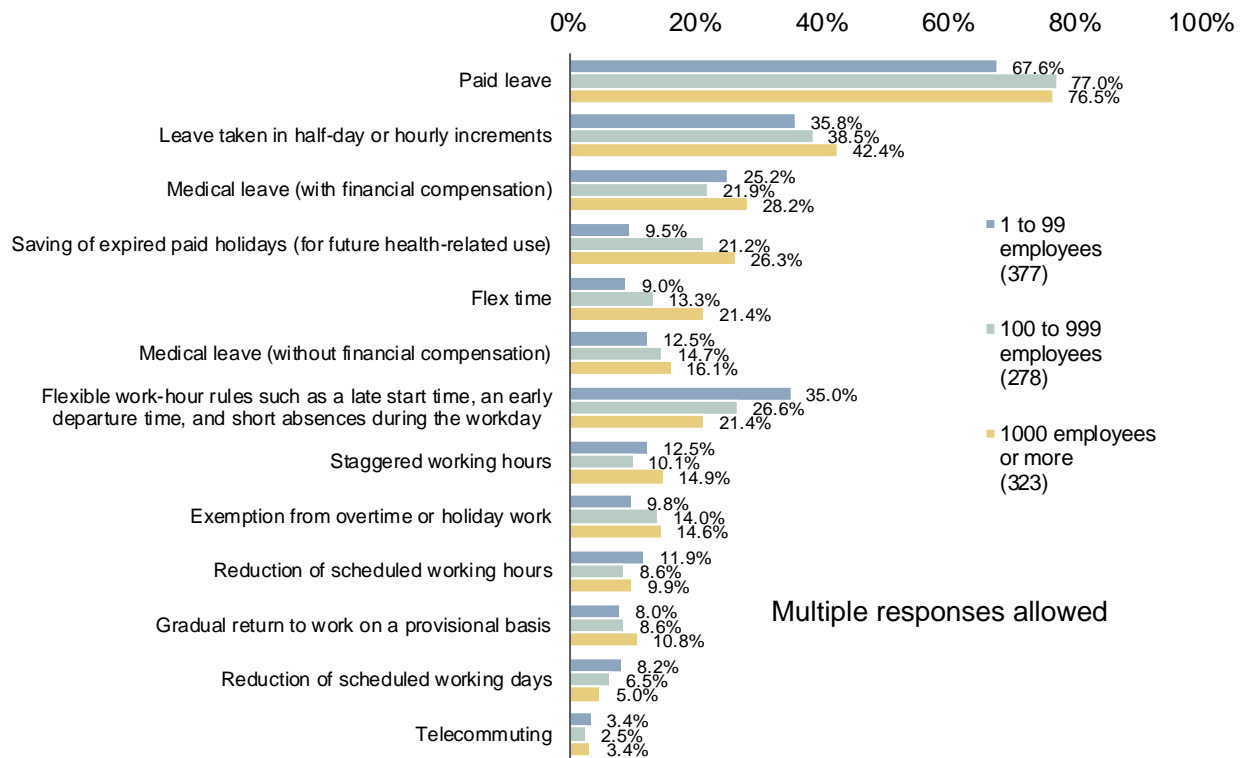
Note: Percentages indicate the proportion of respondents who used a given program. Even if a was not present, an equivalent measure achieved through workplace adjustments was counted.

3.2.3 Companies' Responses

Figure 12 shows companies' responses at the time of cancer diagnosis. About half of respondents (the highest proportion of respondents) received no particular response from their companies. Only about 30 percent of respondents confirmed their intention and wishes about future work with their company.

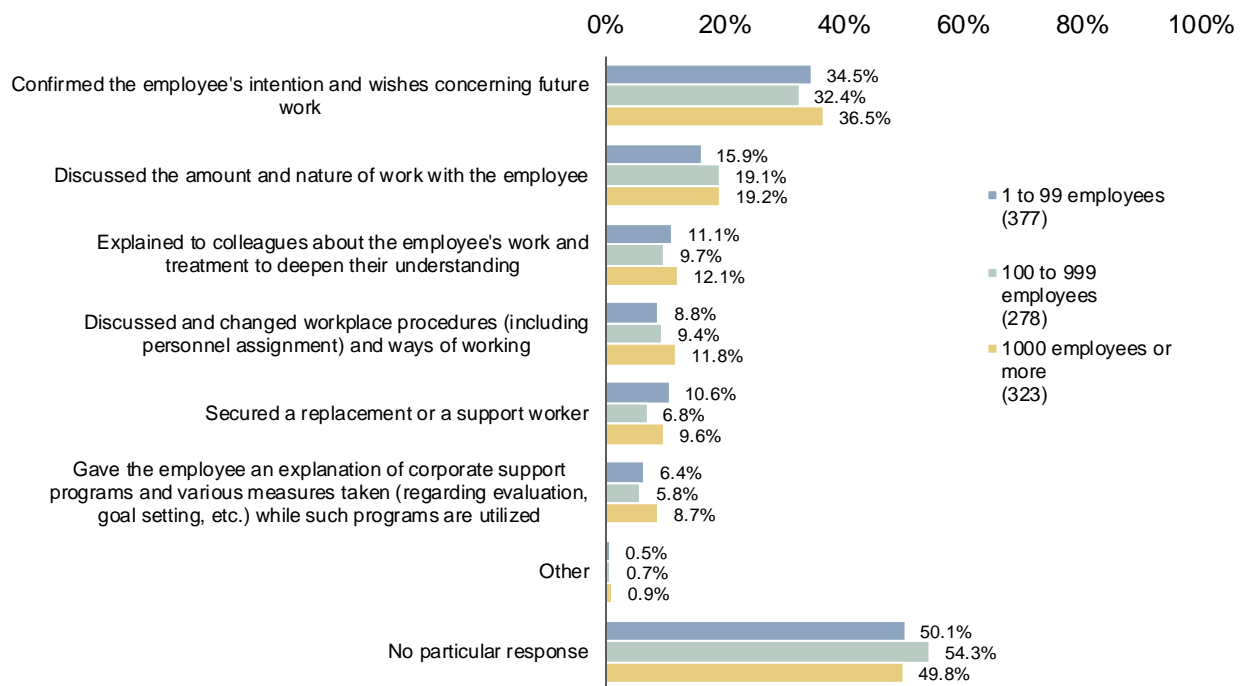**Figure 12:** Companies' responses at cancer diagnosis (by company size)

Figure 13 shows work-related changes that occurred after cancer diagnosis. About 20 percent of respondents experienced a change in the nature of their work, such as the assignment of lighter tasks and restrictions on assigned tasks. Also, about 20 percent experienced reduced working hours.

Figure 13: Work-related changes
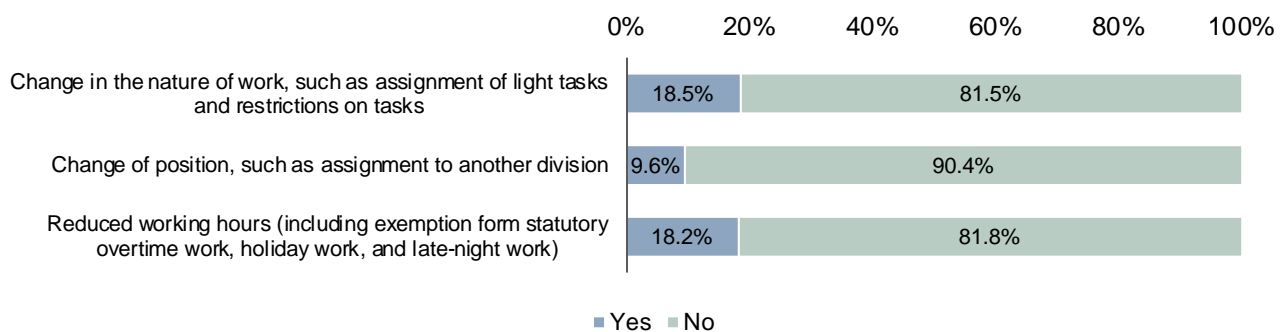
With regard to consistency between post-diagnosis changes in the nature of work and the patient's wishes, about 30 percent (a relatively high percentage) of respondents who changed positions, such as assignment to a different division, reported that the change was against their wishes (Figure 14). This contrasts with the result that respondents who had a change in the nature of their work or in working hours generally find it consistent with their wishes.

Figure 14: Consistency between post-diagnosis work-related change and the employee's wishes
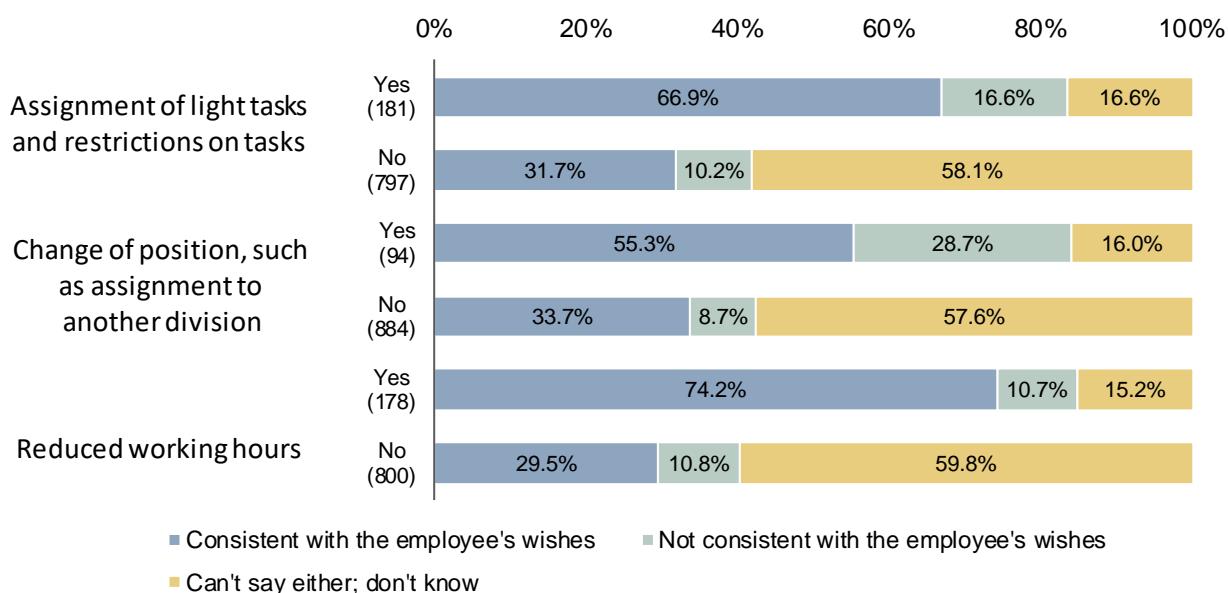

Figure 15 presents difficulties that respondents experienced in continuing to work during treatment. The top three difficulties were as follows: serious anxieties about cancer recurrence (27.2%), difficulty taking leave or sick days for treatment, follow-up examinations, or outpatient treatment (17.0%), and reduced income due to absences from work or changes in their way of working (16.9%).

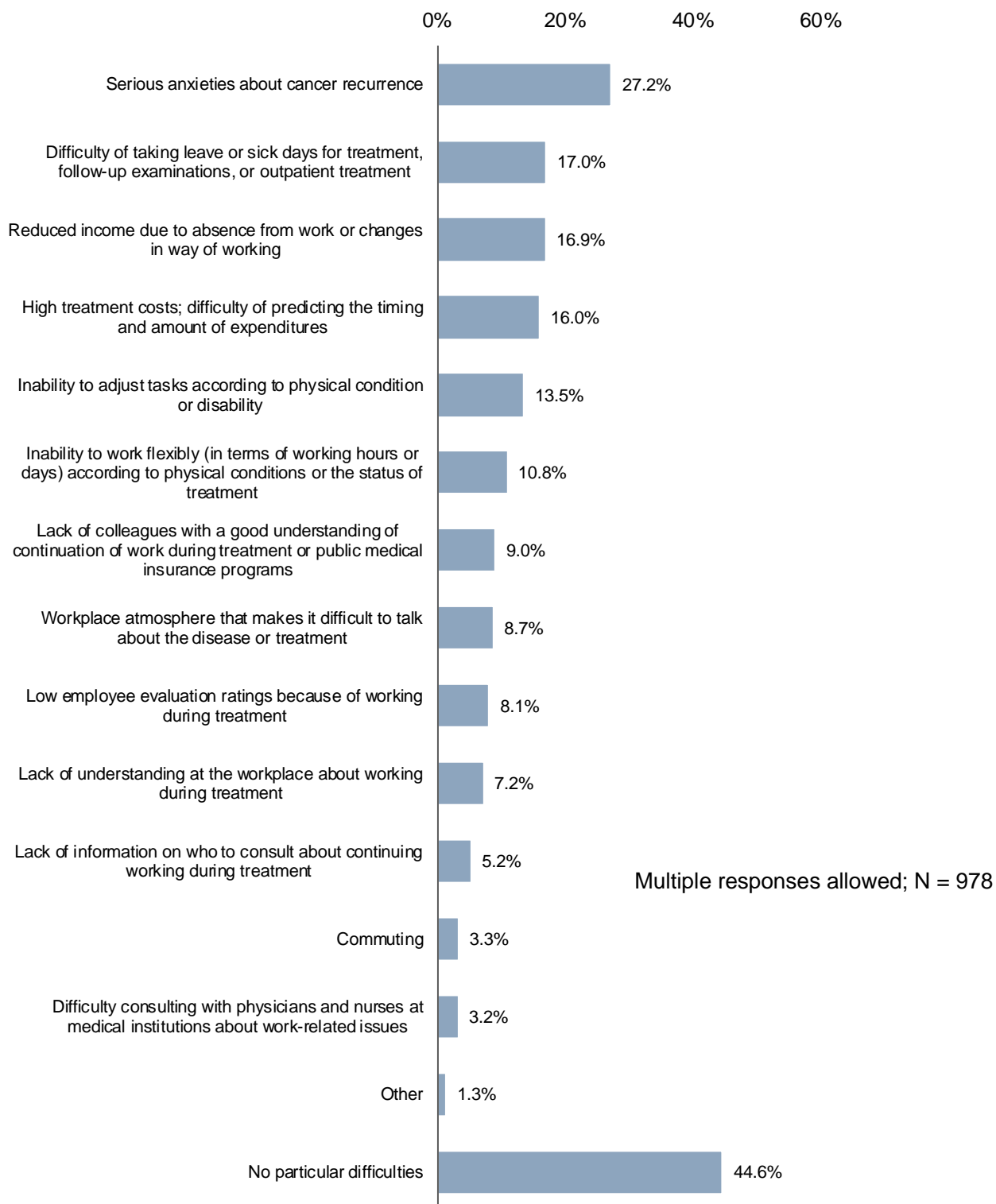**Figure 15:** Difficulties experienced in continuing to work during treatment

Category	Percentage
Serious anxieties about cancer recurrence	27.2%
Difficulty of taking leave or sick days for treatment, follow-up examinations, or outpatient treatment	17.0%
Reduced income due to absence from work or changes in way of working	16.9%
High treatment costs; difficulty of predicting the timing and amount of expenditures	16.0%
Inability to adjust tasks according to physical condition or disability	13.5%
Inability to work flexibly (in terms of working hours or days) according to physical conditions or the status of treatment	10.8%
Lack of colleagues with a good understanding of continuation of work during treatment or public medical insurance programs	9.0%
Workplace atmosphere that makes it difficult to talk about the disease or treatment	8.7%
Low employee evaluation ratings because of working during treatment	8.1%
Lack of understanding at the workplace about working during treatment	7.2%
Lack of information on who to consult about continuing working during treatment	5.2%
Commuting	3.3%
Difficulty consulting with physicians and nurses at medical institutions about work-related issues	3.2%
Other	1.3%
No particular difficulties	44.6%

Multiple responses allowed; N = 978

Figure 16 shows the kinds of workplace support that respondents consider necessary. The top four in order of popularly are as follows: a mechanism that allows employees to change the starting or ending time of the workday; financial assistance for cancer treatment; a mechanism to eliminate or reduce overtime; and a mechanism that allows employees to take medical leave by the day. The result shows that employees with cancer seek not only financial assistance, but also mechanisms that allow them to flexibly adjust their working hours according to their treatment schedule and to take short leaves as the need arises.

Figure 16: Kinds of workplace support deemed necessary to continue working during cancer treatment
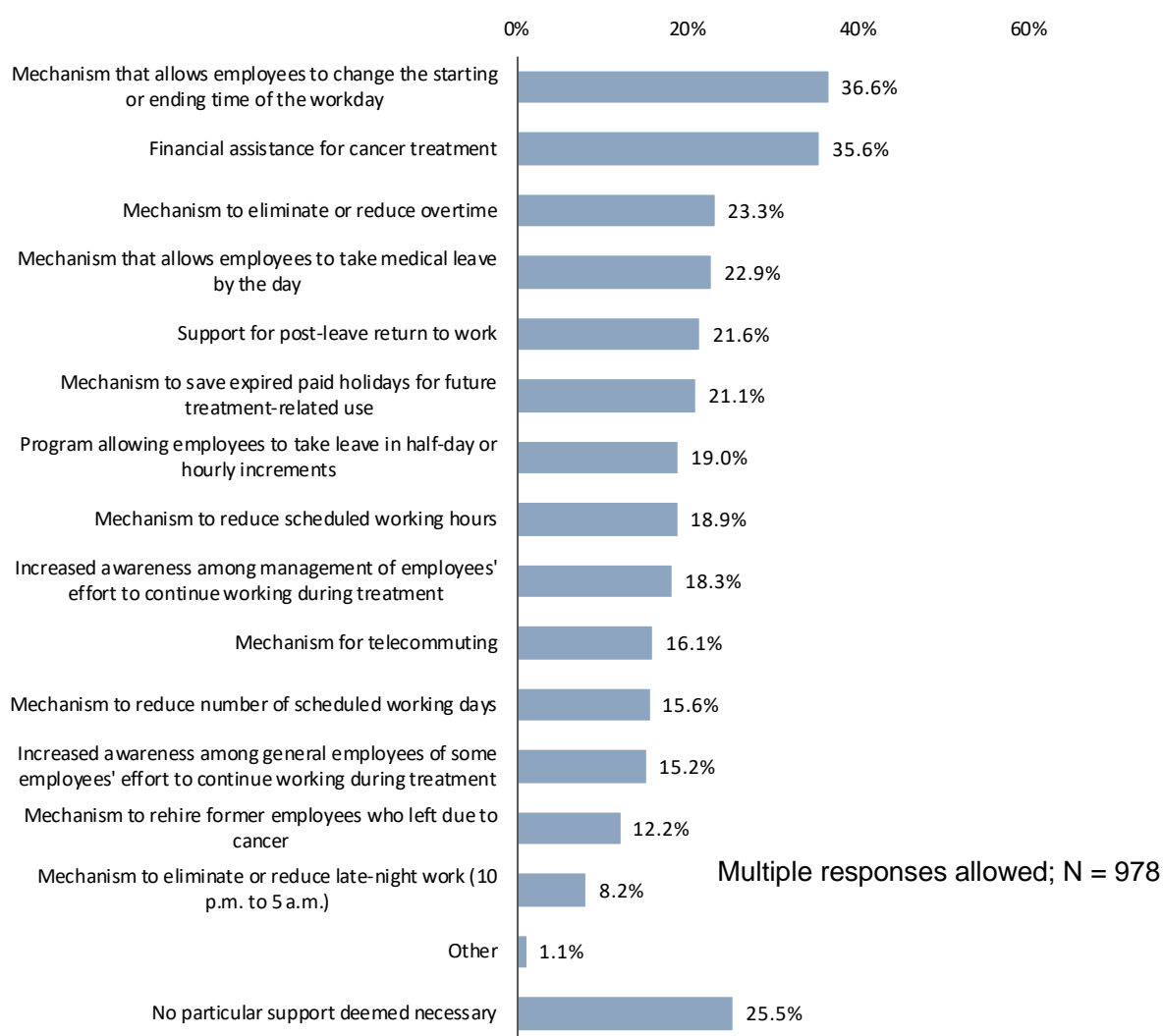
3.3 Workplace Factors Contributing to Employees' Sense of Being Needed

3.3.1 Method of Analysis

This section performs a cross-tabulation analysis of factors that potentially make employees who continue working during cancer treatment feel that they are needed at their workplace. This sense of being needed is focused on here because it is a prerequisite for truly achieving balance between work and treatment. What are the characteristics of workplaces where cancer patients can work with a sense of being needed despite limitations due to their treatment?

The factors considered in this analysis can be divided into three main categories: working hours, use of support programs, and workplace attributes. Four workplace attributes were considered: management methods that take into account constraints on employees; a system in which colleagues cover work when a cancer patient's is absent; discretion, training, and evaluation; and workplace culture. Table 1 explains the variables used in the analysis.

Table 1: List of variables

■Explained variable	
○Sense of being needed at the workplace	"Applicable" and "Somewhat applicable" are interpreted as "Needed." "Not really applicable" and "Not at all applicable" are interpreted as "Not needed."
■Explanatory variables	
○Current actual working hours per week	Average actual working hours per week during the most recent 1-year period
○Support programs	
Flexible ways of working	1 if one of the following is used: staggered working hours; flextime; telecommuting; gradual return to work on a provisional basis; exemption from overtime or holiday work; reduced scheduled working hours; reduced scheduled working days. 0 if "Do not use but want to" or "Do not use and do not want to."
Various types of leave	1 if one of the following is used: leave taken in half-day or hourly increments; saving of expired paid holidays (for future health-related use); medical leave (with financial compensation); medical leave (without financial compensation). 0 if "Do not use but want to" or "Do not use and do not want to."
○Workplace attributes	"Agree" and "Somewhat agree" are interpreted as "Applicable." "Somewhat disagree" and "Disagree" are interpreted as "Not applicable."

The respondents considered in the analysis are limited to those who had a cancer diagnosis more than 1 year prior to the survey. This timing was chosen because, immediately after diagnosis, employees may not be certain about the possibility of continuing working while receiving treatment. More specifically, since the survey was conducted in August 2015, respondents who received a cancer diagnosis in 2013 or before are considered in the analysis. Consequently, the sample consists of 808 observations. It should be noted that the sample included former patients who had completed treatment. Thus, this analysis concerns not only the continuation of work by current patients during treatment, but also the continuation of work by cancer survivors and their concerns about recurrence and the aftereffects of cancer.

3.2.2 Results

Figure 17 shows the connection between employees' sense of being needed and their current working hours per week. The proportion of respondents who did not feel needed is relatively high among respondents who work 60 hours or more a week.

Figure 17: Connection between employees' sense of being needed and their current working hours per week
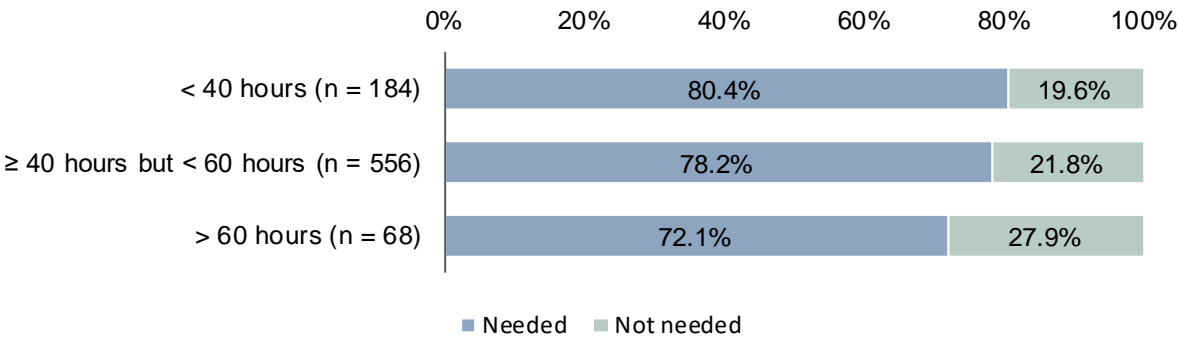

Figure 18 depicts the connection between employees' sense of being needed and their use of corporate support programs. For each of two types of support—flexible ways of working and various types of leave—there is no substantial difference between program users and non-users in terms of the proportion of those who feel needed.

Figure 18: Connection between employees' sense of being needed and their use of corporate support programs
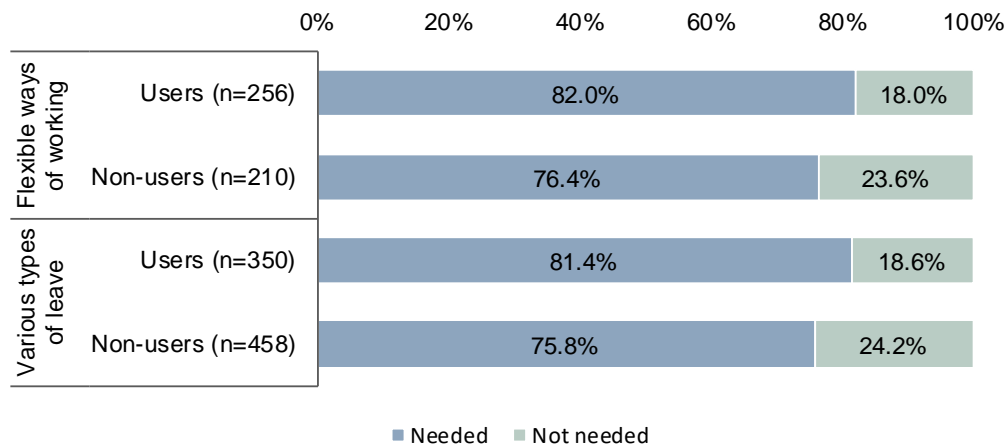
Let us now turn to the role of workplace attributes. Figure 19 focuses on management methods that take into account employees' constraints. The proportion of respondents who feel needed is relatively high for each method if it is implemented at the workplace. In particular, for two methods—work assignment that takes into account employees' lives and careers and encouragement to complete daily tasks within regular working hours—there is a relatively large gap in the proportion of employees who feel needed between when the method is implemented and when it is not.

Figure 19: Workplace attributes, part 1: Management methods that take into account employees' constraints (and their connection with employees' sense of being needed)
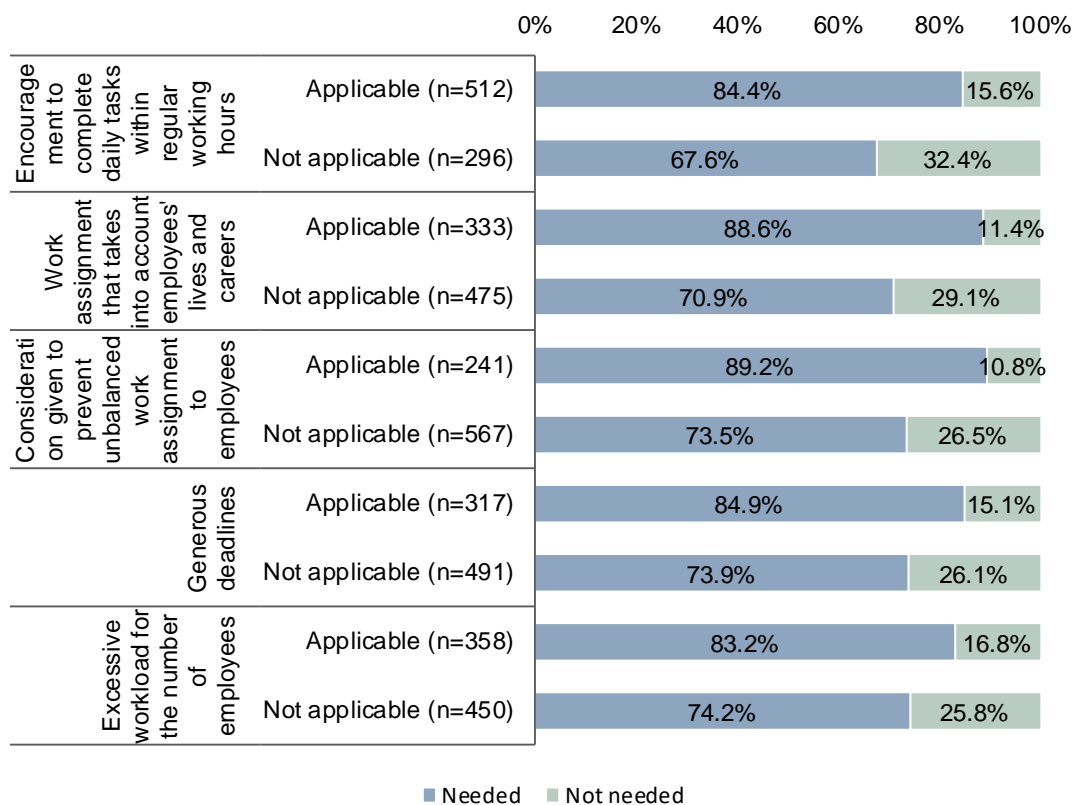
Figure 20 shows the connection between employees' sense of being needed and the presence of a system in which colleagues cover work when a cancer patient is absent. The proportion of respondents who feel needed is about 20 percentage point higher when such a system is implemented than when it is not.

Figure 20: Workplace attributes, part 2: System in which colleagues cover work in a cancer patient's absence (and its connection with employees' sense of being needed)
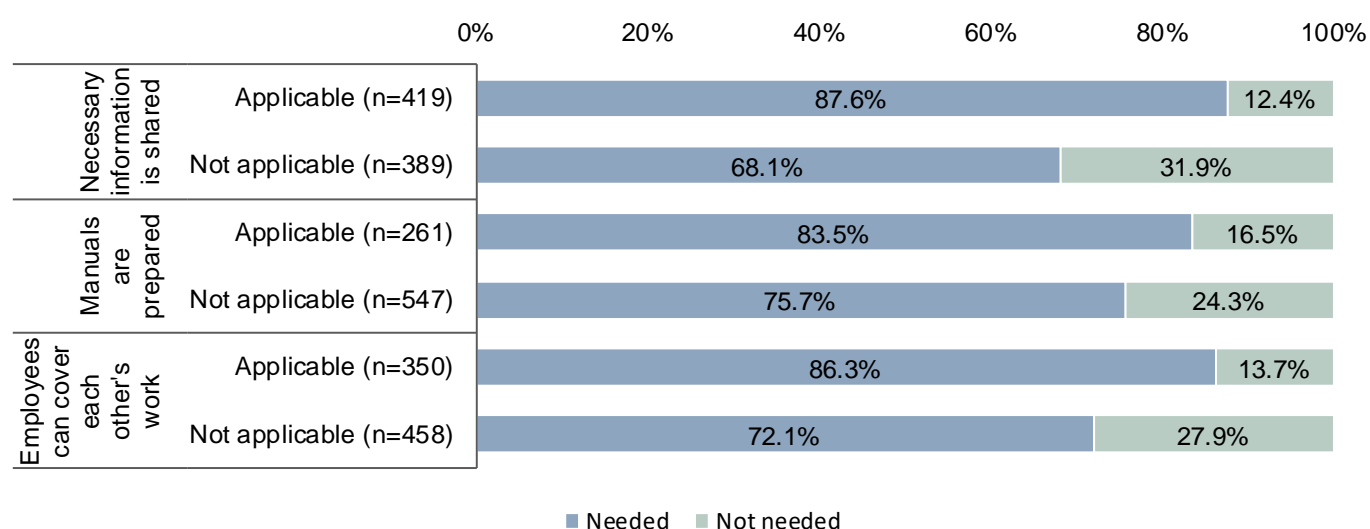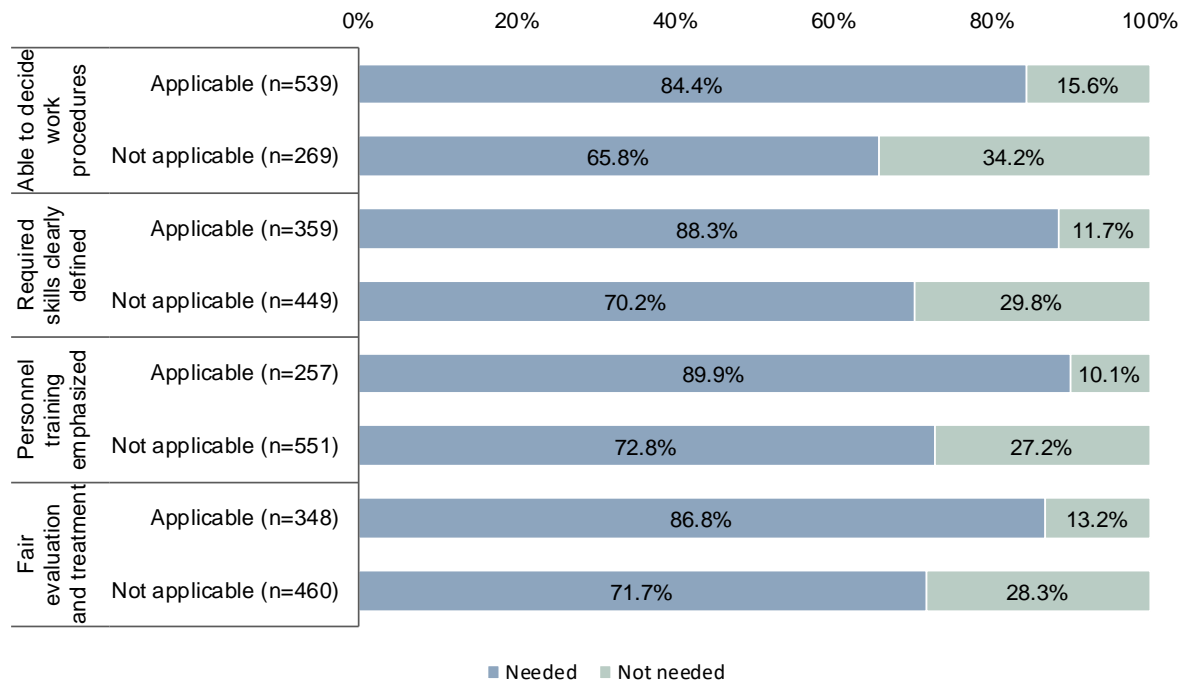

Figure 21 shows the connection between employees' sense of being needed and factors related to discretion, training, and evaluation. For each factor, the proportion of respondents who feel needed is more than 15 percentage point higher when the given factor applies to the workplace than when it does not. This result implies that a workplace can enable employees with cancer-related constraints to play an active role if they have substantial discretion, if they are evaluated and treated fairly, if required skills are clearly defined, or if personnel training is emphasized.

Figure 21: Workplace attributes, part 3: Discretion, training, and evaluation (and their connection with employees' sense of being needed)

Lastly, Figure 22 shows the connection between the employee's sense of being needed and workplace culture. The proportion of respondents who feel needed is 20 percentage point higher when communication with superiors is smooth (or communication with colleagues and subordinates is smooth, or discussion with the company about the disease is easy) than when it is not. For cancer patients, it seems important for the workplace to have an atmosphere that makes it easy to communicate with others or talk about the disease.

Figure 22: Workplace attributes, part 4: Workplace culture (and its connection with employees' sense of being needed)
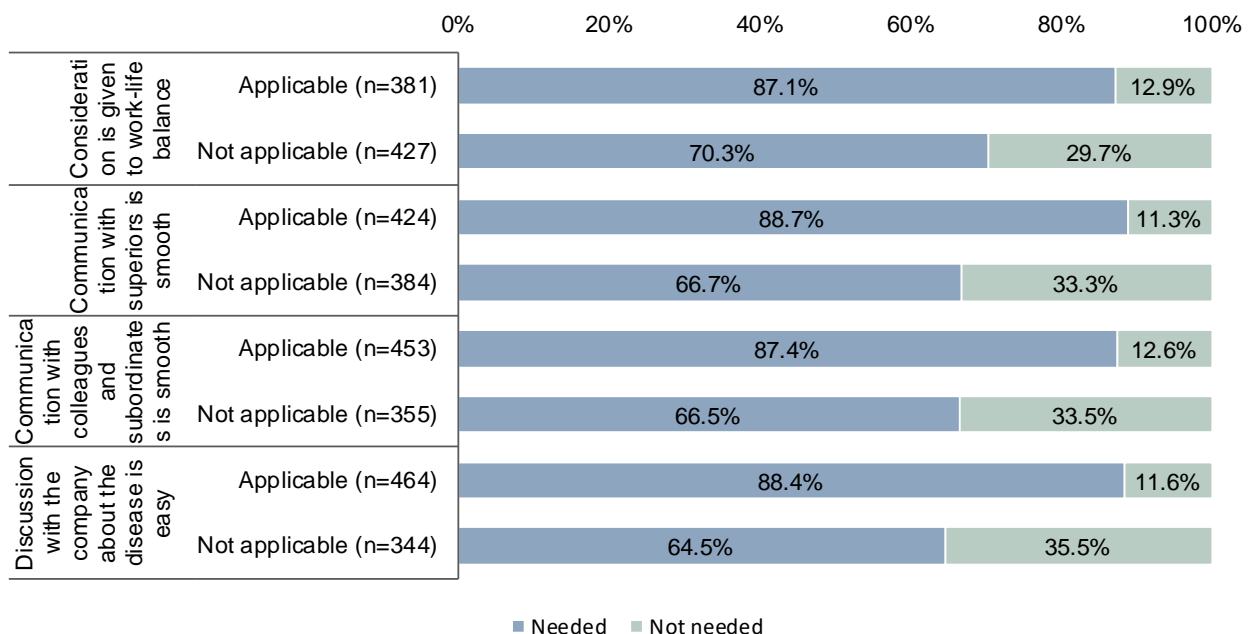
To summarize the above results, Table 2 lists the factors for which the proportion of respondents who feel needed is 15 percentage points higher when the factor applies to the workplace. The size of the increase is particularly large for three factors: smooth communication with superiors; smooth communication with colleagues and subordinates; and ease of communication with the company about the disease. Therefore, ease of communication is crucial for a workplace to be a place where employees with constraints can work with a sense of satisfaction that they are needed. In contrast, the increase is not large for factors related to working hours or corporate support programs.

Table 2: List of results (factors with 15-percentage-point gap)

Factor	Gap
(1) Management methods that take into account employees' constraints	
Encouragement to complete daily tasks within regular working hours	16.8%
Work assignment that takes into account employees' lives and careers	17.6%
Consideration given to prevent unbalanced work assignment to employees	15.7%
(2) System in which colleagues cover work in a cancer patient's absence	
Necessary information is shared	19.5%
(3) Discretion, training, and evaluation	
Able to decide work procedures	18.6%
Required skills defined clearly	18.1%
Personnel training emphasized	17.1%
Fair evaluation and treatment	15.0%
(4) Workplace culture	
Consideration is given to work-life balance	16.9%
Communication with superiors is smooth	22.0%
Communication with colleagues and subordinates is smooth	20.9%
Discussion with the company about the disease is easy	23.8%

Note: The factors listed are such that for each of them the proportion of respondents who feel needed is 15 percentage point higher in the case where the given factor applies to the workplace than otherwise. Factors with a gap of 20 percentage points or more are highlighted.

In sum, the results imply that in terms of making employees feel needed, factors related to the management and culture of the workplace as a whole are more important than individual-level factors such as those related to working hours and corporate support programs.

In passing, Yajima (2016) uses the same data to perform an analysis with future possibility of continued employment as the explained variable. The result shows that factors related to the workplace environment—namely, consideration given to prevent unbalanced work assignment and seamless communication with superiors—are positively associated with future possibility of continued employment. This present paper's analysis cannot be directly compared with Yajima's analysis because of methodological differences. Nevertheless, the common result is that communication with superiors is an important factor but the use of corporate support programs is not. Also, while factors such as encouragement to complete daily tasks within regular working hours and an atmosphere that makes it easy to talk about the disease are not significantly associated with future possibility of continued employment, they are important factors in terms of making

employees feel needed at the workplace. Therefore, in order for employees to work with a sense of satisfaction while undergoing cancer treatment, it is important that the company as a whole facilitates their efficient work and provides an atmosphere that promotes honest conversation.

4. Summary

Taking into account the measures taken by various entities and the reality revealed by various surveys, this final section considers future measures that companies and medical institutions should take.
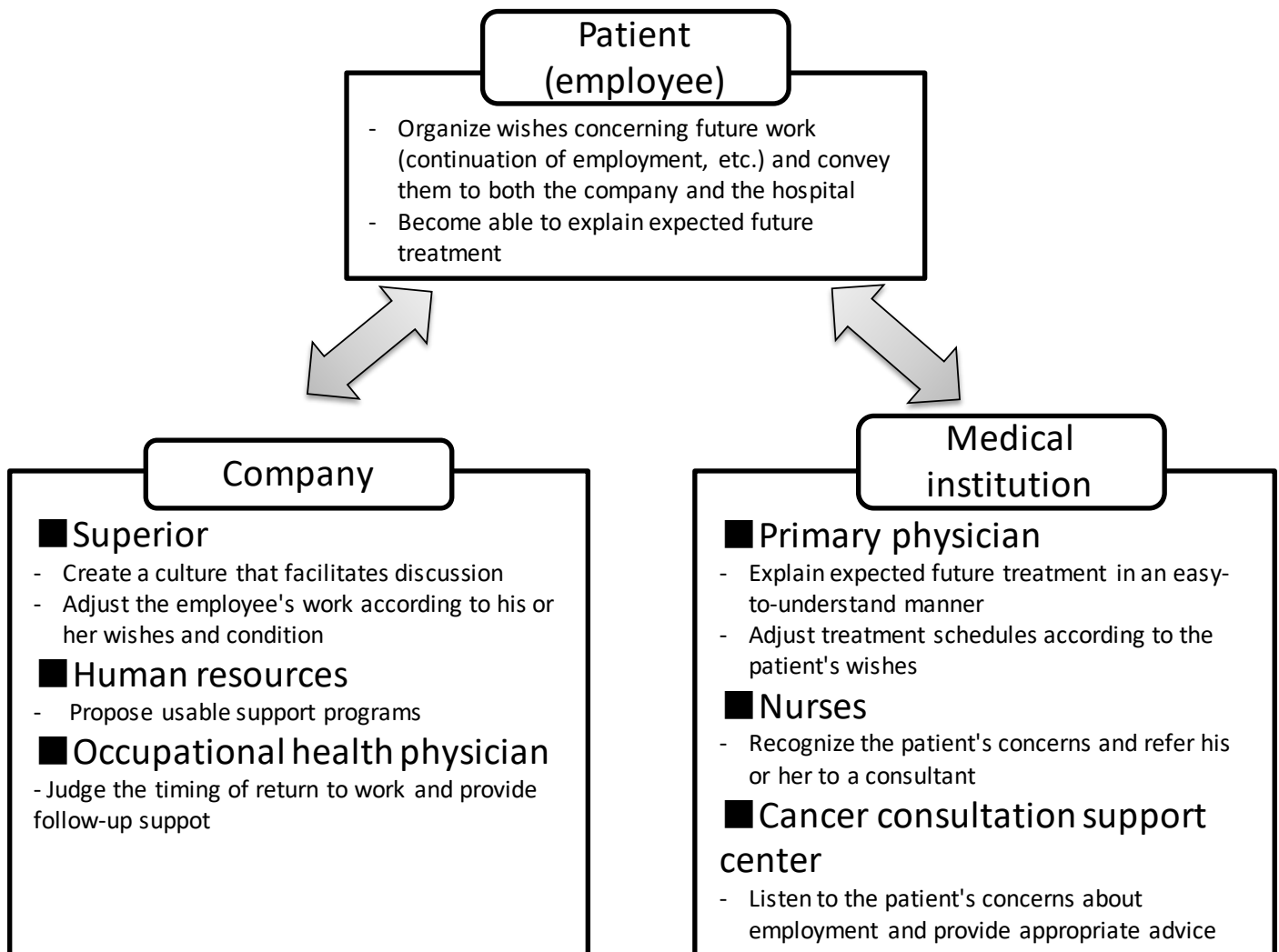
For companies, it is important to shift away from long working hours (not only for employees who continue to work during cancer treatment, but for all employees) to more efficient ways of working. In responding to the needs of employees with constraints, some companies might only create support programs, but not change management methods or employees' ways of working. In that case, employees with cancer may have difficulty playing an active role given their constraints, and may consequently lose their motivation, thinking that they are not needed at the workplace. A similar observation was made for maintaining balance between work and childrearing or family caregiving: the way in which work is performed must be reexamined for the entire workplace in order to encourage employees with constraints to play an active role. Also, in order to create an atmosphere that facilitates discussion about cancer, companies need to hold training sessions that provide correct information about the disease and announce their intention to support employees who continue working during treatment. When an employee reports their cancer to the company (or discusses it with the company), it is important that the company creates an opportunity for the employee, his or her superiors, and human resources to hold a discussion, and that the company responds appropriately based on the employee's explanation of the prognosis and his or her wishes.

To facilitate seamless communication between patients and their companies, medical institutions need to provide information about expected future treatment and its potential effects on the patients' work. The important role of medical institutions is not only to provide easy-to-understand medical information about the necessary length of medical leave, the expected frequency of outpatient visits after hospitalization, and the expected side effects and potential complications, but also to ensure that the patient understands the information well enough to be able to explain his or her future course of action to the company. However, physicians may not have enough time to have detailed discussions with their patients. The cancer consultation support centers are therefore expected to facilitate communication between patients and their primary physicians.

Figure 23 illustrates the roles played by the different actors discussed above. The key to enabling employees with cancer to continue working during treatment is communication among the employees (patients), companies, and medical institutions. However, patients may be so preoccupied with dealing with the emotional impact of their cancer diagnosis that they cannot think about how they can continue working. This is why support provided by both companies and medical institutions is extremely important. They must convey to patients the possibility of continuing to work during treatment and must be willing to respect the patients' decisions.

Creating a society where cancer patients can easily work and realize their potential means that people with other issues can also live their lives without difficulties. Efforts to make it possible to live well with cancer have just started, and the national and local governments, companies, and medical institutions must continue to actively make relevant improvements.

Figure 23: Continuation of work during cancer treatment

Patient (employee)

- Organize wishes concerning future work (continuation of employment, etc.) and convey them to both the company and the hospital
- Become able to explain expected future treatment

Company

■Superior
- Create a culture that facilitates discussion
- Adjust the employee's work according to his or her wishes and condition

■Human resources
- Propose usable support programs

■Occupational health physician
- Judge the timing of return to work and provide follow-up suppot

Medical institution

■Primary physician
- Explain expected future treatment in an easy-to-understand manner
- Adjust treatment schedules according to the patient's wishes

■Nurses
- Recognize the patient's concerns and refer his or her to a consultant

■Cancer consultation support center
- Listen to the patient's concerns about employment and provide appropriate advice

Endnotes

1. The estimation was performed by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare based on the 2010 Basic Survey on People's Daily Lives and is published in the Guideline for Businesses Supporting Employees' Treatment and Work.

2. According to data collected by the National Cancer Center, the 5-year overall survival rate (the proportion of cancer patients surviving 5 years after diagnosis) increased from 53.2 percent for those who diagnosed with cancer during the 1993-96 period to 62.1 percent for those diagnosed during the 2006-08 period. (Source: National Cancer Center, Center for Cancer Control and Information Services. (2016). The Survival Rate Report for 2006-08 Diagnoses Based on National Cancer Incidence Monitoring Data)

3. According to the FY 2014 Survey of Patients conducted by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, the average duration of hospitalization for cancer patients declined from 40 days in 1999 to 20 days in 2014.

4. The former survey was conducted by a joint research group on the sociology of cancer (led by chief researcher Ken Yamaguchi and supported by a Kakenhi grant and a cancer research grant from the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare). The result was published in 2004. A similar survey was conducted in 2011. There was no substantial difference in the percentage between the two surveys.

5. The latter survey is the Multicenter Survey on the Timing of Leaving Work conducted by the Takahashi research group (supported by a Kakenhi grant from the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare). Its result is discussed in On the Current Situation Involving Cancer Patients and Support for Their Employment (Specific Disease Control Division, Health Service Bureau, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2016).

6. The information is based on the Current Situation and Issues Involving Cancer Consultation Support Centers (a reference material submitted by guest expert Tomoko Takayama at the eighth meeting of the Committee on Cancer Treatment Service Systems).

7. Results from two survey companies were used in order to have a sufficiently large sample. In cases where two observations were possibly from the same person (i.e., a person who responded to both survey companies' questionnaires), one of them was dropped from the sample.

References

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Report

Management of Employees in the Short Working Hour Sysyem and Their Career Development

By Yumi Ojima, Senior Analyst

Abstract

The 2009 amendment to the Child Care and Family Care Leave Act mandated the introduction of a short working hour system for employees who are taking care of children, and companies, mainly large ones, have increasingly adopted this system. Consequently, an increasing number of female regular employees have been seeking continued employment during pregnancy and after childbirth under the short working hour system. The 2016 amendment included the expansion of the short working hour system to include employees who are providing care for family members and it is expected that more and more employees with care-related time constraints will continue to work. In this context, how to promote the performance of employees with such time constraints has become an urgent issue in human resource management. However, various problems have occurred in administering the short working hour system under traditional workplace management systems, which have assumed that employees work long hours. Based on the result of a questionnaire survey of female regular employees conducted by Mitsubishi UFJ Research and Consulting in 2016, this paper summarizes the situations and issues related to the allocation of tasks to employees in the short working hour system, goal setting, performance evaluation, and other administrative activities and analyzes the effect of work-style reform for all employees (including those without time constraints) on retention and the performance of employees with time constraints. Considering the analysis results, this paper examines the sort of workplace management that would promote the performance and career development of employees in the short working hour system.

Introduction

The 2009 amendment to the Child Care and Family Care Leave Act mandated that companies introduce a short working hour system for employees who are raising children.[1] As a result, a growing number of female regular employees returning to work after maternity leave have sought continued employment under the short-hour system. Though eight years have passed since the amendment, employees who utilize the short-hour system (hereinafter, "short-hour employees") still face various issues at the workplace, such as difficulties in performing to their full potential or developing a successful career, restrictions on divisional assignment or reassignment, and different treatment from different managers. One reason is that the short-hour system is not properly implemented because the necessary management methods are not consistent with traditional workplace management methods. In the traditional mindset, it is not assumed that some employees work under time constraints because of their responsibility for childrearing or family caregiving. Undesirable situations are found at many companies. Short-hour employees become dissatisfied because they are not given tasks that require responsibility or that are rewarding, or because they receive a low evaluation for the sole reason that they work short hours. Colleagues who support short-hour employees bear increased burdens. Moreover, the increase in the number of short-hour employees has exacerbated these issues.

As Japan's labor force continues to shrink, companies must improve their business performance by effectively utilizing their human resources. Therefore, it will be an urgent issue for companies to enable employees with time constraints due to childrearing or family caregiving to perform to their full potential and contribute to the organization. Within this context, this paper analyzes data from a survey of female regular employees with preschool-age children, which was conducted by Mitsubishi UFJ Research and Consulting, and considers the sort of workplace management that is ideal for the work performance and career development of short-hour employees.[2]
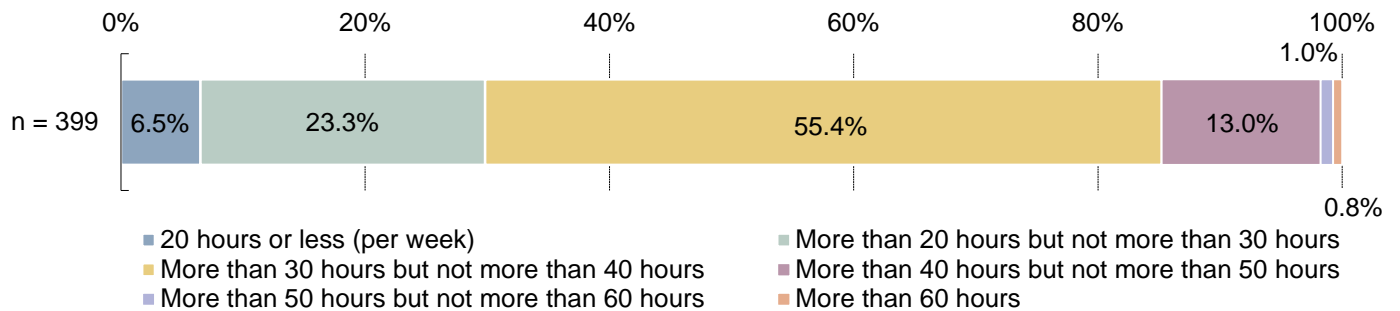
1. The Short-Hour System

Let us first consider short-hour employees' working hours and planned duration of utilizing the short-hour system. Figure 1 shows the actual working hours per week of female regular employees who currently use the short-hour system, which allows fewer working hours per day or fewer working days per week. As the figure shows, 55.4 percent of these employees work more than 30 hours but not more than 40 hours per week; 23.3 percent work more than 20 hours but not more than 30 hours per week; and 13.0 percent work more than 40 hours but not more than 50 hours per week. A large majority work 40 hours or less per week. Yet, despite the use of the short-hour system, more than 10 percent work more than 40 hours just like full-time employees.

Figure 2 shows the relationship between the use of the short-hour system and colleagues' overtime work. It seems that the greater the amount of overtime work performed by workplace colleagues, the higher the proportion of short-hour employees. Similarly, as Figure 3 shows, the greater the amount of overtime work performed by colleagues, the higher the proportion of short-hour employees who plan to utilize the system for a long period of time (i.e., until the child finishes second or third grade, or until the child finishes fourth or higher grade). It seems that some employees use the short-hour system to signal to their overtime-prone workplace that they cannot work overtime, even though they could work full-time if the workplace culture allowed them to easily

leave the office at the scheduled time. In other words, whether an employee uses the short-hour system or how long she plans to use it depends on not only her family and childcare situations, but also the overtime situation of her workplace.

Figure 1: Actual working hours per week of short-hour employees

- ■ 20 hours or less (per week)
- ■ More than 30 hours but not more than 40 hours
- ■ More than 50 hours but not more than 60 hours
- ■ More than 20 hours but not more than 30 hours
- ■ More than 40 hours but not more than 50 hours
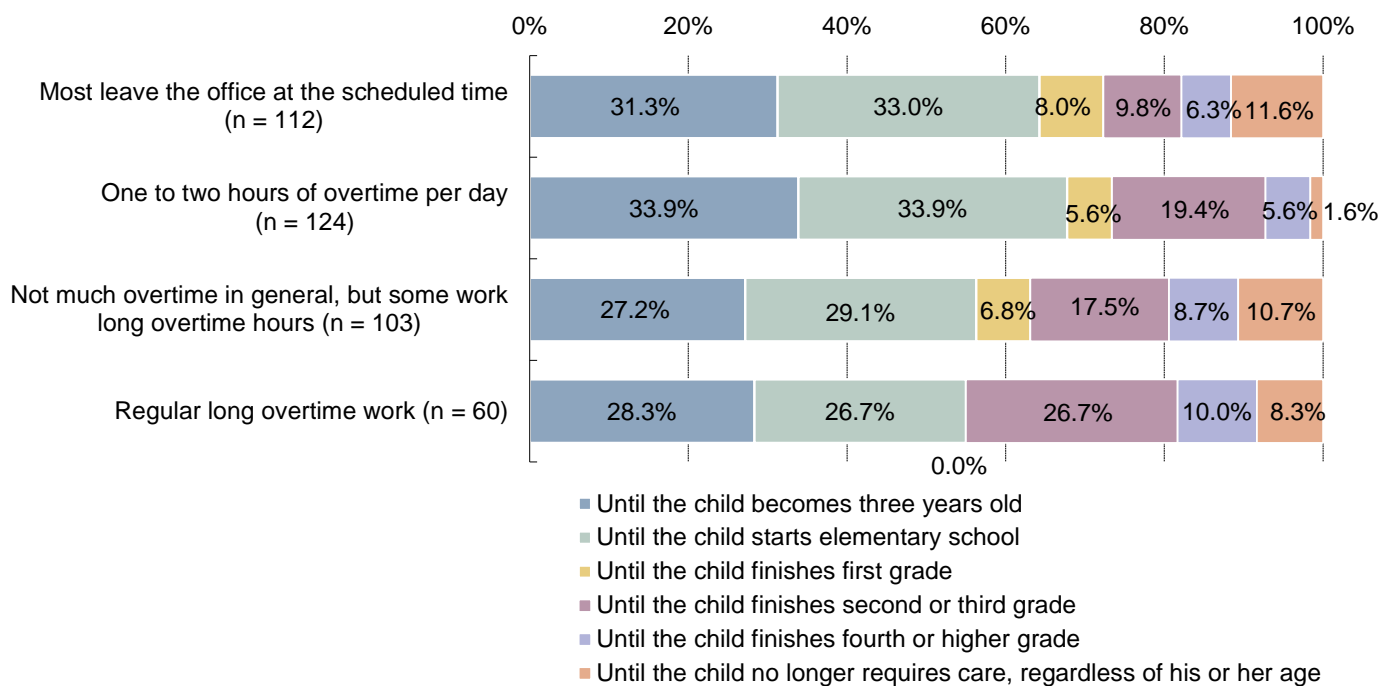- ■ More than 60 hours

Note: Short-hour employees considered here are female regular employees who currently use the short-hour system, which allows fewer working hours per day or fewer working days per week.

Source: Mitsubishi UFJ Research and Consulting (2016). The Survey on Active Participation of Female Regular Employees Who Continued to Work after Childbirth. The same source is used for Figures 2 to 16 and Table 1.

Figure 2: Use of the short-hour system and different overtime situations of colleagues at the workplace


- ■ User
- ■ Non-user
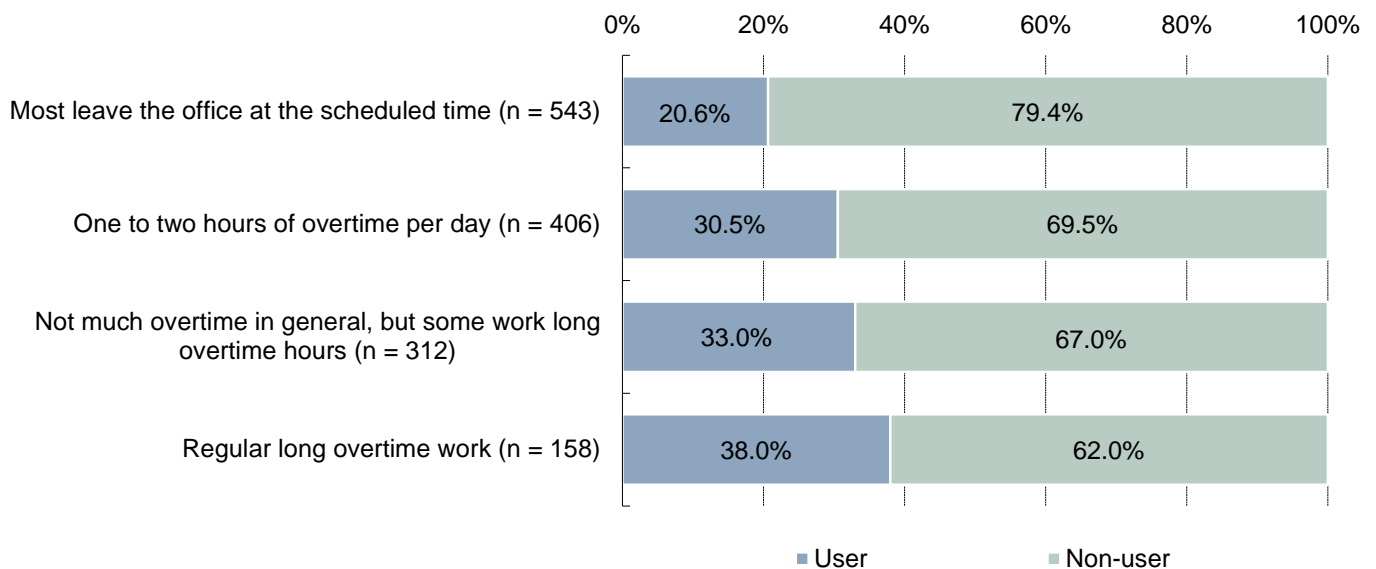
Figure 3: Planned duration of the use of the short-hour system and different overtime situations of colleagues at the workplace
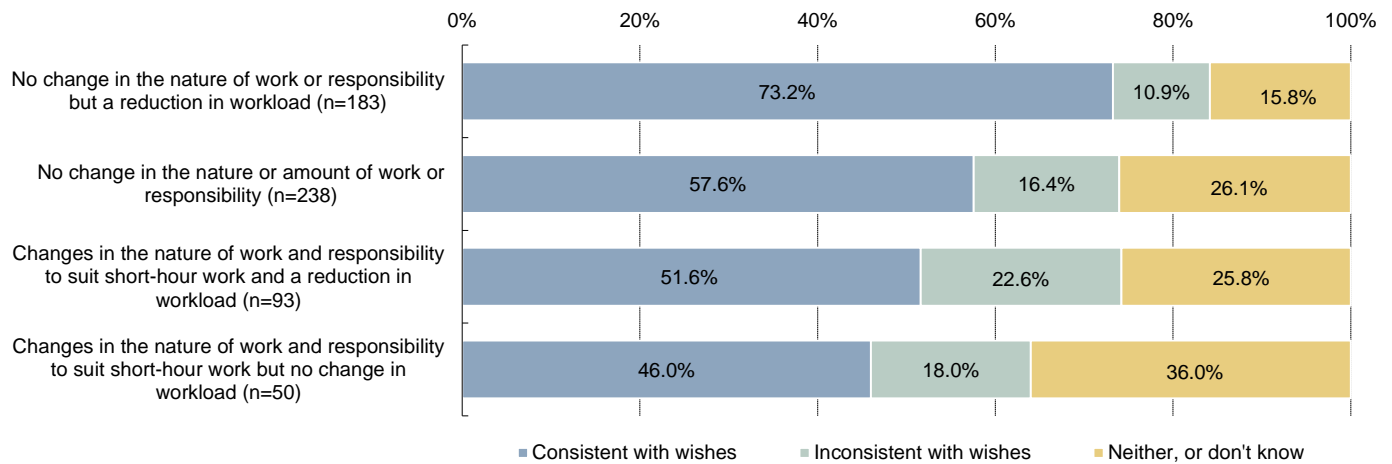

Note: Short-hour employees considered here are female regular employees who currently use the short-hour system which allows fewer working hours per day or fewer working days per week.

Figure 4 describes changes in the nature and amount of work that result from the use of the short-hour system. As the figure shows, 41.9 percent of short-hour employees report no change in the nature or amount of work or responsibility; 32.2 percent report no change in the nature of their work or responsibility but a reduction in workload; and 16.4 percent report changes in the nature of their work and responsibility to suit short-hour work and a reduction in workload.[3] Also, as Figure 5 shows, among short-hour employees with no change in the nature of their work or responsibility but a reduction in workload, more than 70 percent consider the result consistent with their wishes. However, among short-hour employees with changes in the nature of their work and responsibility, about half consider the result inconsistent with their wishes or consider it neither consistent nor inconsistent.

Figure 4: Changes in the nature and amount of work resulting from the use of the short-hour system
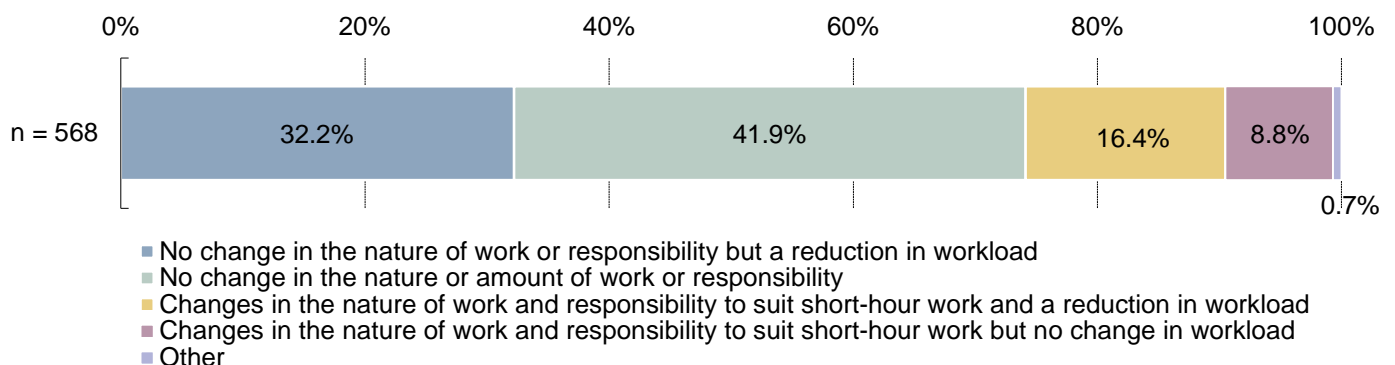
Figure 5: Changes in the nature and amount of work resulting from the use of the short-hour system and their consistency with short-hour employees' wishes


With regard to the performance evaluation of short-hour employees, the highest proportion of short-hour employees considered their evaluation to be based on work performance as it is for normal employees. However, about 30 percent considered their evaluation to be lower because of their use of the short-hour system (Figure 6). Similarly, with regard to the effect of the use of short-hour system on promotion, the highest proportion of short-hour employees consider that use of the system does not affect promotion, but nearly half of short-hour employees thought that it slows or prevents promotion (Figure 7).

Figure 6: Evaluation of the work performance of short-hour employees
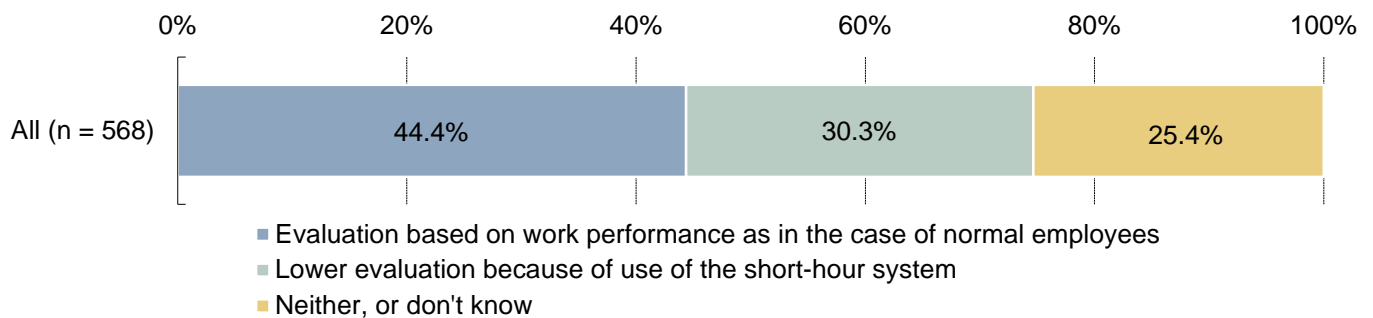
Figure 7: Effect of the use of the short-hour system on promotion

0%	20%	40%	60%	80%	100%

All (n = 568): 33.6% | 27.3% | 19.0% | 1.2% | 18.8%

■ Use of the short-hour system does not affect promotion
■ Use of the short-hour system slows promotion
■ Use of the short-hour system prevents promotion
■ Other
■ Don't know
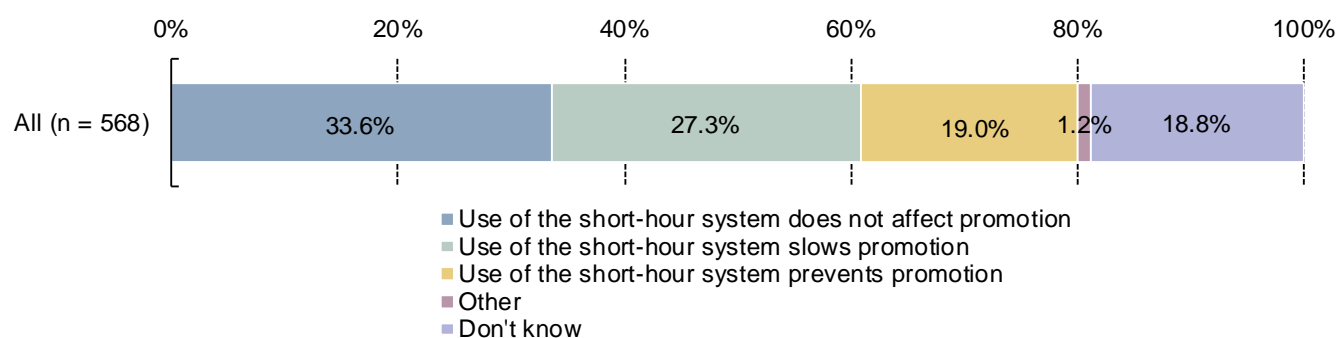
The Manual for Supporting the Implementation of the Short Working Hour System (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2016) puts forward a basic approach to goal setting for short-hour employees. In principle, the quantitative goals of short-hour employees should be set lower in accordance with their reduced working hours while their qualitative goals should not be changed, relative to those set for the full-time regular employees with the same occupational category and position, and the goals should be set based on the nature of their work and the short-hour employee's requests. The basic idea is that since the salary of short-hour employees is often reduced in proportion to the reduction in working hours based on the "no work, no pay" rule, the quantity of their work should also be reduced accordingly, whereas the quality of their work should be maintained as much as possible because their responsibility and expected role do not change even with the use of the short-hour system. For short-hour employees, maintaining the quality of their work while they use the short-hour system is an important factor in a smooth return to full-time work after the short-hours period. In addition, when employees are starting to use the short-hour system, managers must ensure that increased burdens on their colleagues are not excessive by examining current work processes that can be simplified or made more efficient or by making adjustments such as canceling or outsourcing low-priority tasks.

The general rules concerning the evaluation of short-hour employees are that activities performed to achieve set goals should be evaluated based on the level of achievement, and that, in principle, an employee's skills and actions should be evaluated based on the same standards used for the full-time regular employees with the equivalent occupational category and position. In the case where the colleagues of short-hour employees support their work, taking such support into consideration when evaluating their colleagues is effective in eliminating a sense of unfairness and ensuring that workplace operations run smoothly. Companies must ensure that all managers thoroughly know and act on these basic ideas and must monitor them so that the use of the short-hour system will not directly lead to low evaluations and will not become a seriously disadvantageous factor in promotion-related decisions.

As the aforementioned survey results reveal, not many companies implement the short-hour system in an ideal manner. In fact, there seem to be many cases where no special consideration is given to the nature and amount of work of short-hour employees; or changes in the nature of their work and responsibility are made to suit short-hour work, and workload is reduced. Also, as for the evaluation and promotion of short-hour employees, a fair proportion of them consider that their use of the system leads to low evaluations and hinders their promotion.

What then are short-hour employees dissatisfied with as they use the short-hour system? When the use of

short-hour system did not result in reduced workload, a large proportion of short-hour employees point to two sources of dissatisfaction: no change in the nature and amount of work despite the reduced hours; and their inability to leave the office at the time they set in advance (Table 1). Some companies do not reexamine short-hour employees' workloads even though their scheduled working hours are reduced. Such inaction increases the burden on short-hour employees and may negatively affect their balance between work and childrearing.

Table 1: Changes in the nature and amount of work resulting from the use of the short-hour system and sources of dissatisfaction of short-hour employees

	Total (n)	Sources of dissatisfaction in using the short-hour system										
		No change in the nature and amount of work despite the reduced hours	No overtime work even if it is wanted	Delayed promotion	Low evaluation for the given nature and amount of work	No conceivable path for career development	Inability to leave the office at the predetermined time	Inability to work on tasks that require responsibility or that are rewarding	Inability to use the short-hour system over a long period of time	Superiors' and colleagues' low levels of understanding	Inability to use the short-hour system multiple times	Nothing in particular
All	681	31.7	27.2	22.2	21.3	18.6	18.2	17.3	16.6	10.6	7.3	19.1
No change in the nature of work or responsibility but a reduction in workload	183	19.7	31.1	20.8	23.0	16.9	12.6	16.9	15.8	9.8	7.7	21.9
No change in the nature or amount of work or responsibility	238	48.7	30.3	21.4	21.8	14.7	23.5	10.1	17.6	10.9	8.0	18.5
Changes in the nature of work and responsibility to suit short-hour work and a reduction in workload	93	10.8	21.5	28.0	20.4	33.3	15.1	35.5	24.7	8.6	11.8	12.9
Changes in the nature of work and responsibility to suit short-hour work but no change in workload	50	38.0	24.0	20.0	20.0	30.0	20.0	26.0	18.0	16.0	2.0	16.0

Unit: %

When the nature of their work and responsibility are changed to suit short-hour work, short-hour employees tend to be dissatisfied with issues related to career development and sense of fulfillment gained from work, which include the absence of a clear path for career development; inability to work on tasks that require responsibility or that are rewarding; and delayed promotion. It appears that inconsistency between the tasks assigned in short-hour work and the responsibility and expected role previously assumed by short-hour employees results in lower work motivation or more worry about their career development.

Short-hour employees for whom the nature of their work or responsibility did not change tend to be dissatisfied with their inability to work overtime even if they sometimes want to. There are companies that do not allow short-hour employees to work overtime because of difficulties of designing and administering relevant rules. Short-hour employees tend to express their desire to sometimes work overtime to fulfill their responsibilities, especially when the nature of their work and responsibility is equivalent to that of full-time employees. As discussed above, short-hour employees' dissatisfaction is closely related to changes in the nature and amount of their work and is also attributable to a lack of proper workplace management. On the companies' side, there are managers and human resources officers who think that short-hour employees have an attitude problem, arguing that short-hour employees are not sufficiently motivated and burden their colleagues, and that short-hour employees do not seek to develop their careers. Before blaming short-hour employees, companies must reexamine and improve their implementation of the short-hour system by investigating whether work assignment and goal setting for short-hour employees are properly performed, whether there is sufficient communication between management and short-hour employees, and whether short-hour employees are disadvantaged in terms of performance evaluation and promotion.

2. Short-Hour Employees' Attitudes toward Their Careers and Changes in Their Colleagues' Work

Section 1 has analyzed how short-hour employees' work changes and how the short-hour system is implemented. This section focuses on short-hour employees' work satisfaction and career attitudes and considers the effect of changes in their colleagues' work on female employees' continued employment and desire for promotion (including those of short-hour employees).

Figure 8 shows the relationship between work satisfaction and changes in the nature and amount of work resulting from the use of the short-hour system. Among short-hour employees for whom the nature of their work or responsibility did not change, the proportion who are satisfied with their work (satisfied or somewhat satisfied, to be more specific) exceeds 70 percent. In contrast, short-hour employees tend to be less satisfied if they have changes in the nature of their work and responsibility. In particular, in the case of changes made in the nature of their work and responsibility along with reduced workload, more than 40 percent of short-hour employees are not very satisfied or not satisfied with their work.

Figure 8: Changes in the nature and amount of work resulting from the use of the short-hour system and short-hour employees' work satisfaction
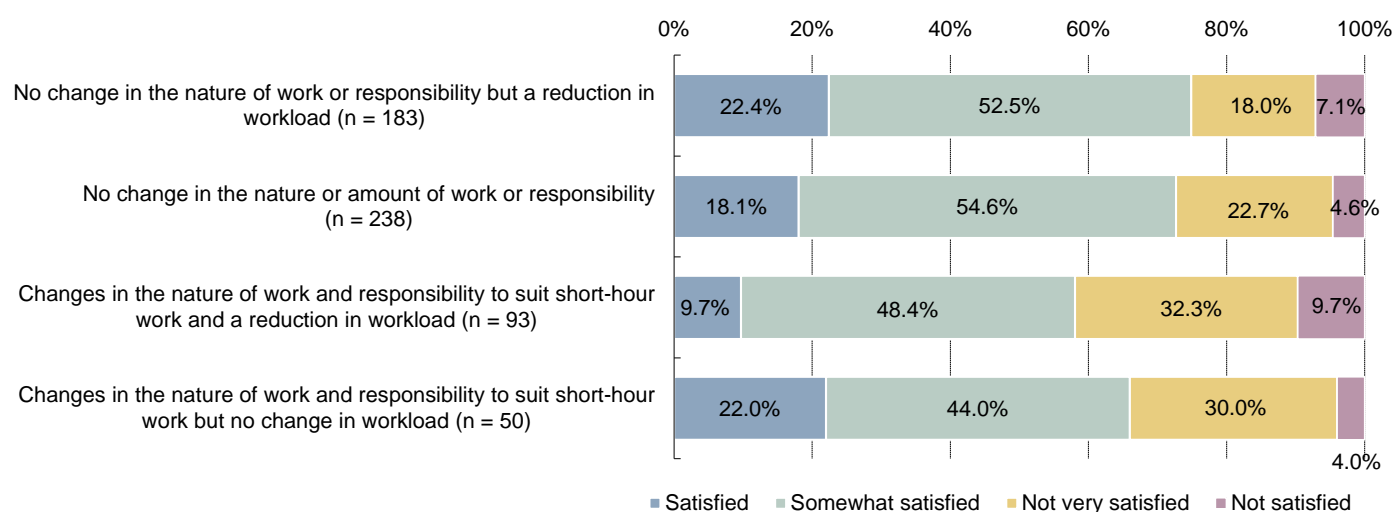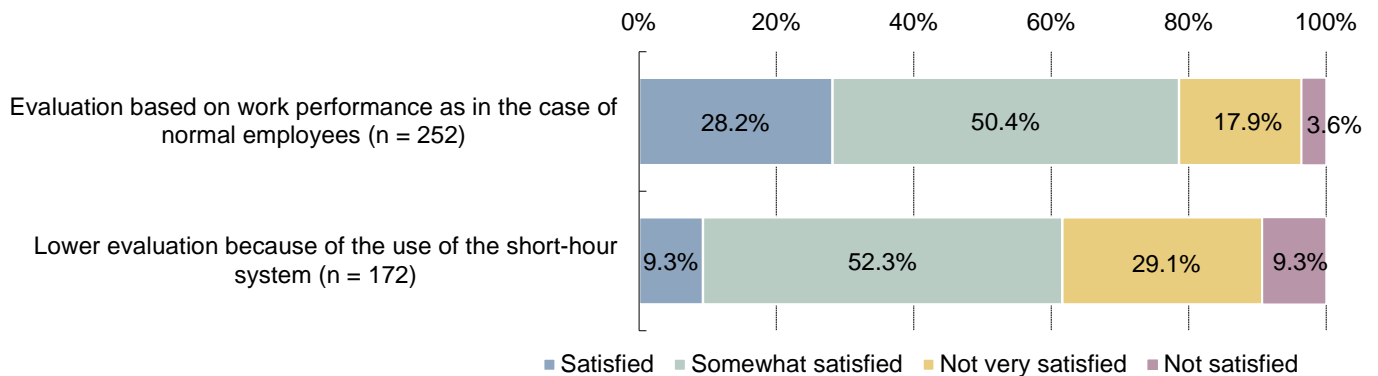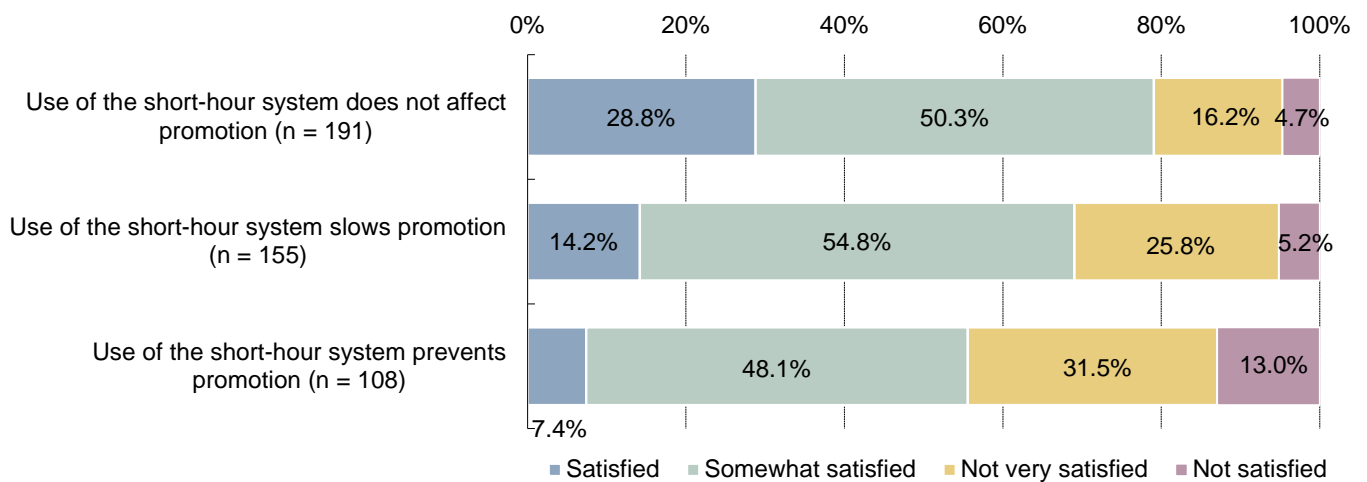

Figure 9 describes a possible connection between the performance evaluation of short-hour employees and their work satisfaction. Short-hour employees who feel that they receive lower evaluations because of their use of the short-hour system tend to be less satisfied with work than those who feel that they are evaluated based on their work performance. Figure 10 describes a possible connection between the effect of the use of the short-hour system on promotion and short-hour employees' work satisfaction. As the figure shows, short-hour employees who think that their use of the system slows or prevents promotion tend to be less satisfied with their work. As the above results imply, changes in the nature and amount of work and in perceptions about employee evaluation and promotion that result from the use of short-hour system have a significant effect on the level of short-hour employees' work satisfaction.

Figure 9: Evaluation of the work performance of short-hour employees and their work satisfaction

Figure 10: Effect of the use of the short-hour system on promotion and short-hour employees' work satisfaction

Figures 11 and 12 describe possible connections between work satisfaction and intention to continue working and between work satisfaction and desire for proportion, respectively. As the figures show, the more satisfied short-hour employees are, the more eager they are to continue working and to be promoted. By contrast, short-hour employees who are not satisfied with their work are significantly more likely to want to quit working if possible and more likely not to want to be in management positions.
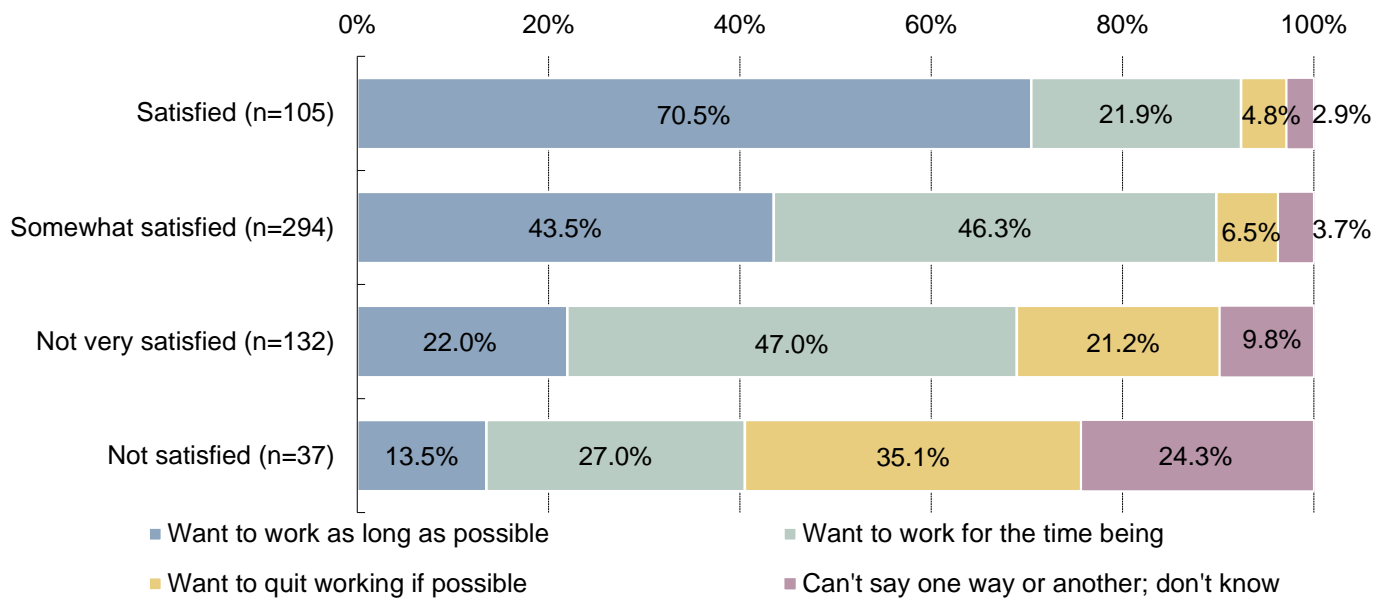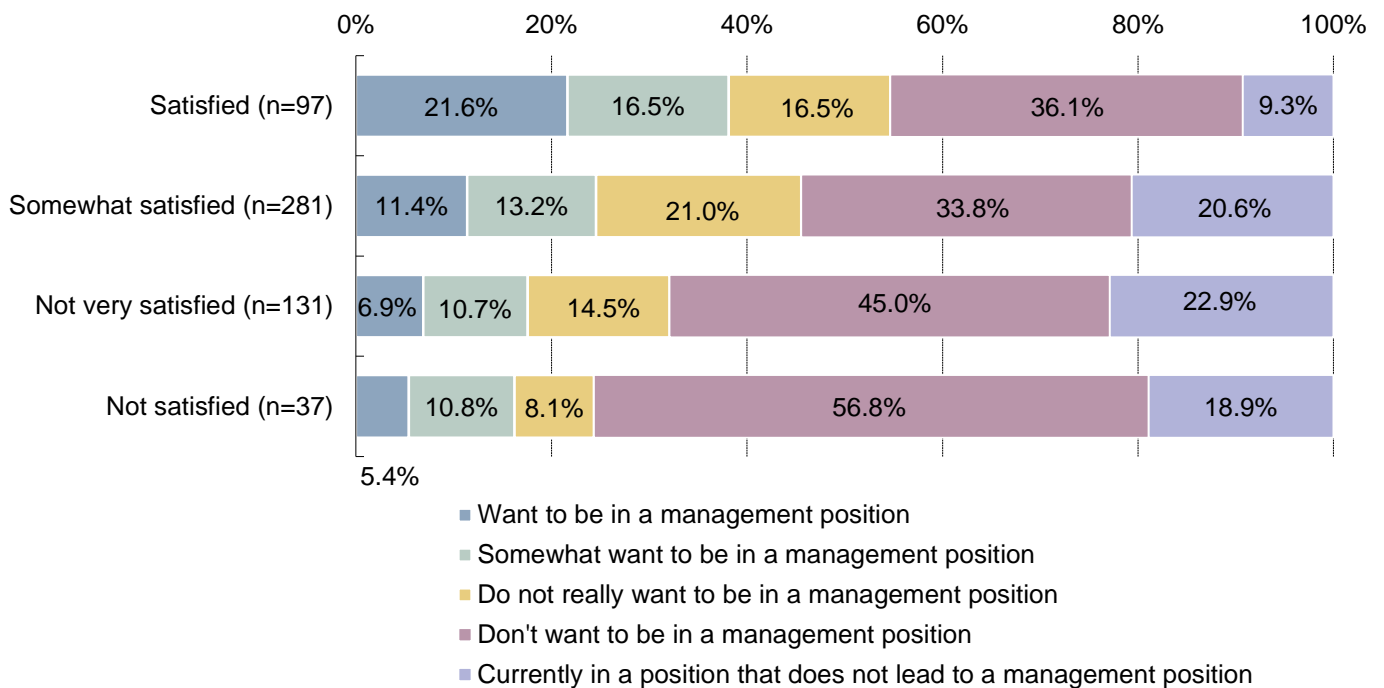
Figure 11: Work satisfaction and intention to continue working

Figure 12: Work satisfaction and desire to be promoted to management positions

Figure 13 describes a possible connection between short-hour employees' work satisfaction and their opinion about time-constrained employees' potential for to contribute to their organization (i.e., whether they think employees with time constraints due to childrearing and family caregiving can significantly contribute to the workplace). As the figure shows, the more satisfied short-hour employees are, the more likely they are to think that it is possible to make a significant contribution.

Figure 13: Work satisfaction and time-constrained employees' potential to contribute to the organization
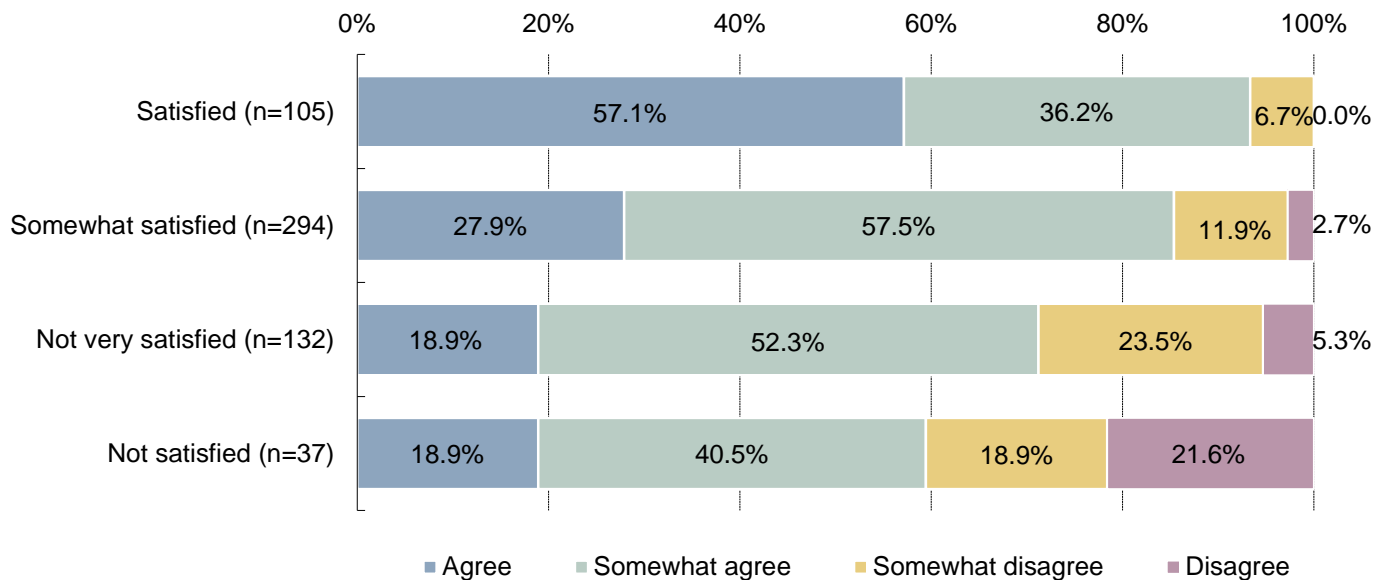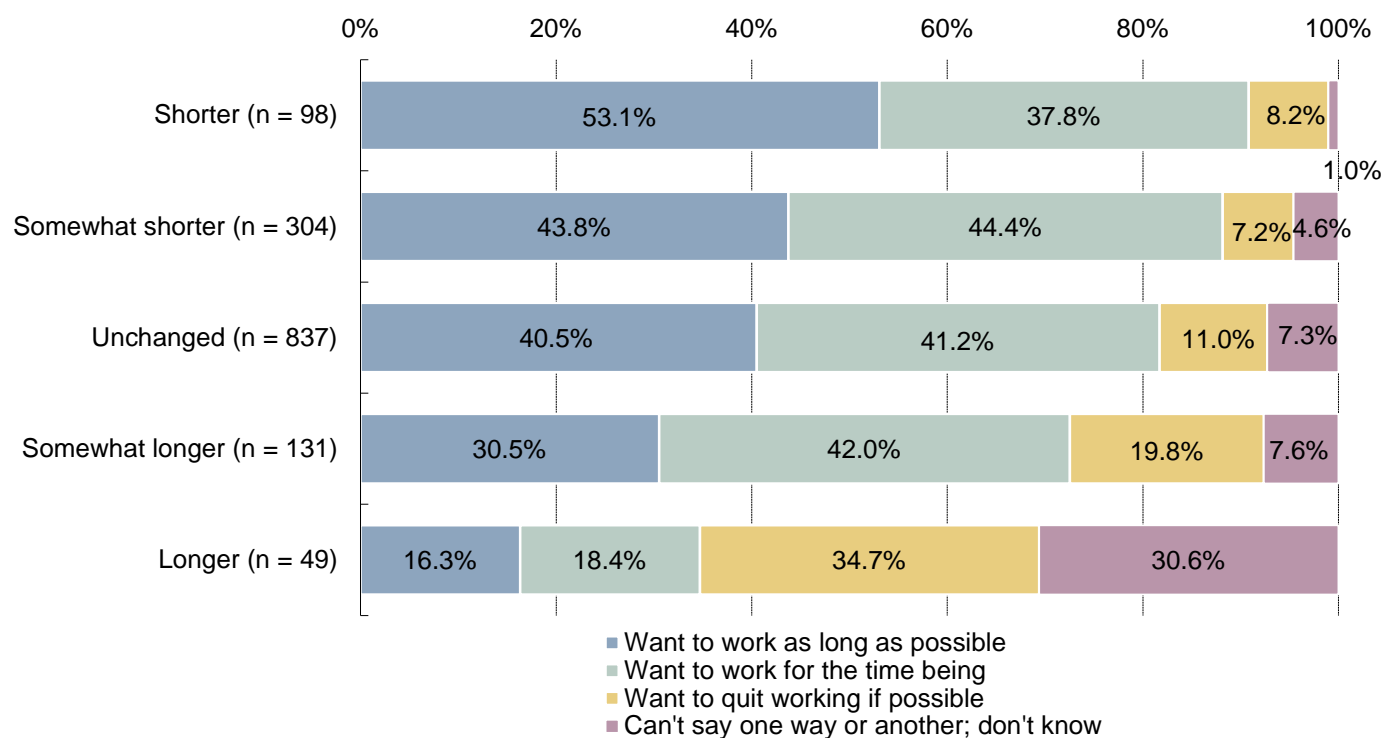

Figure 14 considers all female employees, including short-hour employees, and describes a potential connection between changes in colleagues' working hours and time-constrained employees' potential to contribute to the organization. Short-hour employees with colleagues whose working hours became shorter are more likely to think that time-constrained employees can contribute to the workplace. At workplaces where employees are assumed to work long hours, the level of responsibility and the range of tasks that time-constrained employees can take on are limited. However, at workplaces requiring less overtime work, the gap in working hours between short-hour employees and normal employees is small, which should make it relatively easy for short-hour employees to bear certain responsibilities. Also, at workplaces where necessary work and meetings occur in the evening hours when short-hour employees are not present, if employees cannot work overtime, it is difficult for them to work on tasks that require substantial responsibility. Therefore, in enabling short-hour employees to perform to their full potential, companies must reexamine how all employees, including non-time-constrained employees, perform work.

Figure 14: Changes in colleagues' working hours and time-constrained employees' potential to contribute to the organization (all female employees)
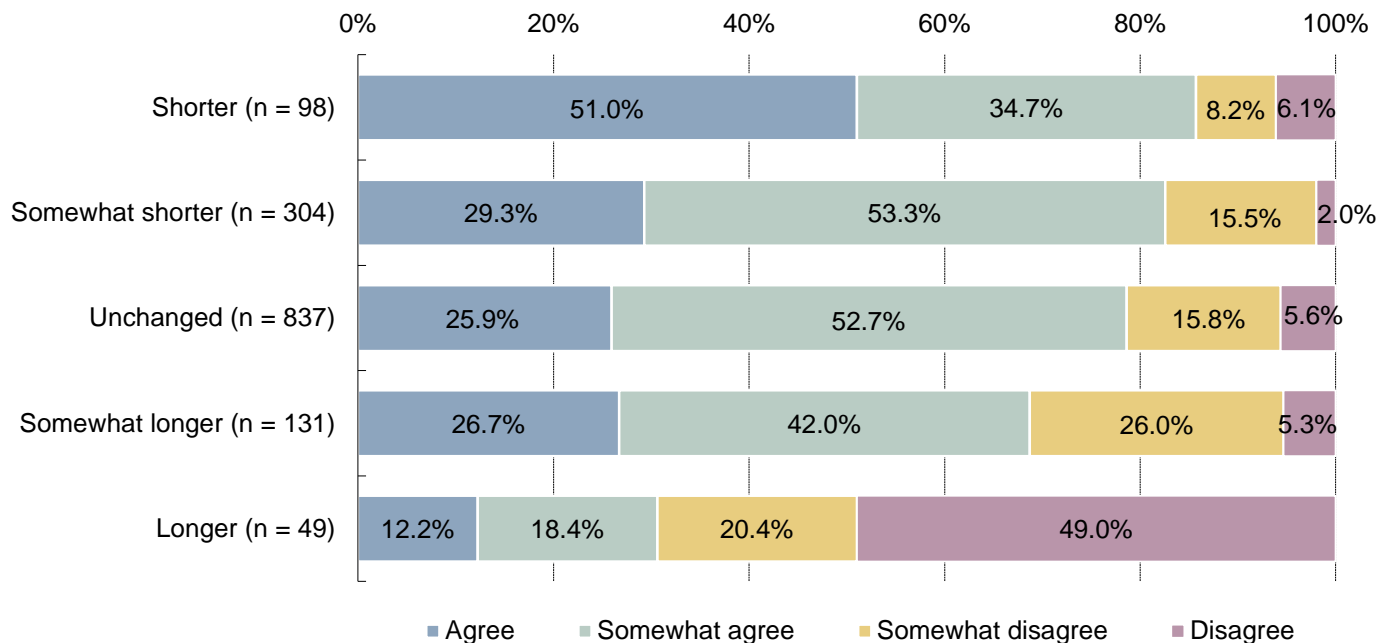
As Figures 15 and 16 show, short-hour employees with colleagues whose working hours became shorter tend to want to continue working at their current companies and desire to be promoted. Eliminating long hours and creating a workplace environment that enables employees to maintain work-family balance are important for companies as these measures not only enhance time-constrained employees' contribution to the organization, but also encourage all female employees regardless of time constraints to stay with their companies, perform to their full potential, and develop their careers.

Figure 15: Changes in colleagues' working hours and intention to continue working (all female employees)

- Want to work as long as possible
- Want to work for the time being
- Want to quit working if possible
- Can't say one way or another; don't know

Figure 16: Changes in colleagues' working hours and desire to be promoted to management positions (all female employees)

- Want to be in a management position
- Somewhat want to be in a management position
- Do not really want to be in a management position
- Don't want to be in a management position
- Currently in a position that does not lead to a management position
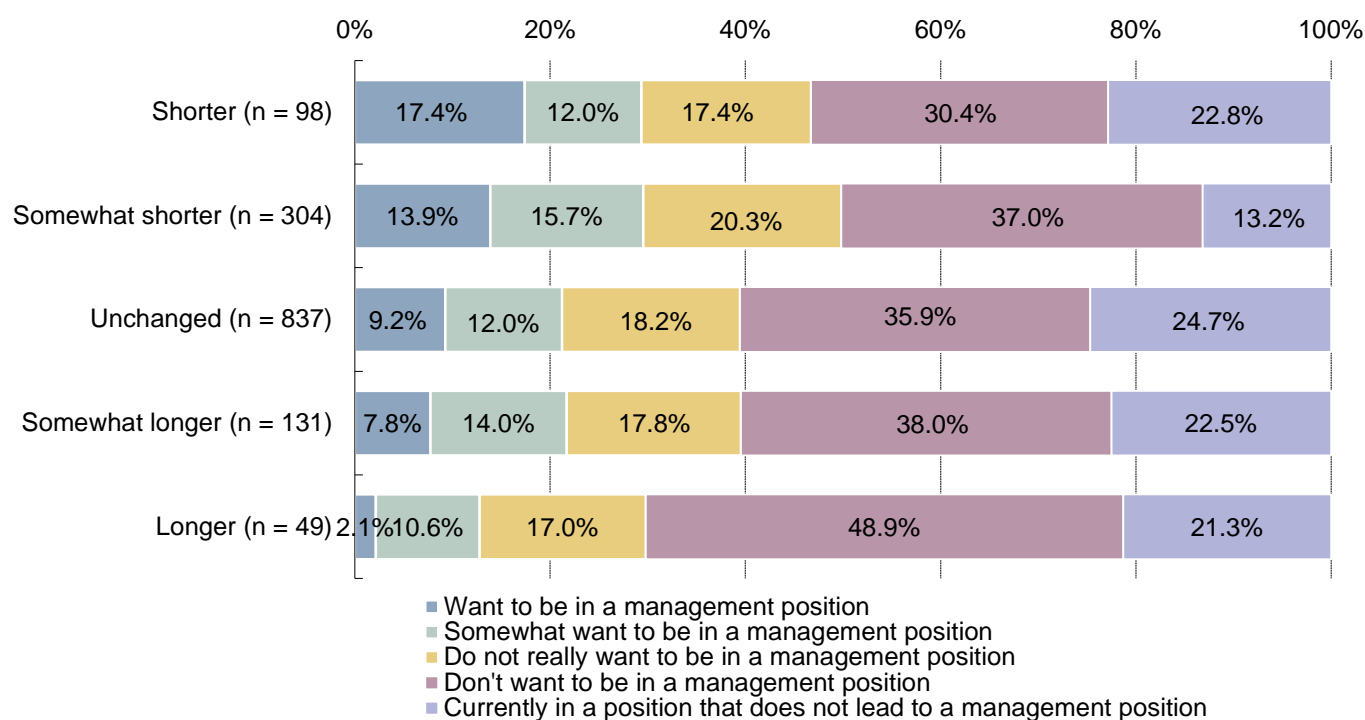
3. Types of Support Needed to Enable Short-Hour Employees to Perform to Their Full Potential

Based on results from a questionnaire survey, the previous sections have discussed the implementation and issues of the short-hour system, with main focus on short-hour employees' work assignment, goal setting, and performance evaluation. This section examines the role of managers who hold the key to providing the support necessary for short-hour employees to perform to their full potential.

Managers have three main responsibilities in supporting short-hour employees: communicating with them, maintaining and increasing their motivation, and giving consideration to their colleagues.

First, managers need to communicate with short-hour employees, because these childrearing employees receive different levels of family support and have different childcare situations and because managers must consider these factors when they make decisions. For example, short-hour employees may be able to handle pre-arranged overtime work depending on how childrearing responsibilities are shared with their spouse or whether they receive help from their parents or relatives. Childcare situations can vary widely: different childcare facilities have different policies in terms of the availability of early drop-off and late pick-up, service during long school vacations (e.g., summer vacation), and attendance of sick children. There are also significant regional differences with regard to childcare facilities accepting sick children. Short-hour employees may also be able to handle business trips that are scheduled in advance in some cases, while they may not be able to do so in other cases even for a same-day trip. In addition, short-hour employees' situations change according to the child's age. Despite having to consider short-hour employees' individual situations, many managers may hesitate to seek information from them because of fear of violating their privacy. Nevertheless, it is important for managers to maintain regular active communication with short-hour employees throughout the short-hours period, instead of limiting the range of work performed by them. In doing so, managers must tell short-hour employees that considerations are given to individual cases, such as what kinds of tasks they can perform and what types of support they need in performing their work. Needless to say, in considering work-related arrangements, managers need to take into account short-hour employees' intentions.

Second, with regard to maintaining and increasing short-hour employees' motivation, managers need to tell (potential) users of the short-hour system to sufficiently understand the effect of their use of the system on their careers. The law allows employees to use the short-hour system until their child becomes three years old; however, many companies, primarily large ones, allow a longer short-hour period. Being able to use the short-hour system over a long period of time helps the users maintain balance between work and childrearing, but may affect their career development in the medium to long term. If managers accurately convey the purpose of the system to (potential) short-hour employees and tell them to engage in work while keeping in mind their future return to full-time work, their motivation for work during the short-hours period will be significantly different. Also, in motivating short-hour employees, it is effective to convey management's high hopes for them through daily communication and regular meetings. According to the Survey on Female Managers: Training and Appointment conducted by Mitsubishi UFJ Research and Consulting (2015), women are more likely than men to give themselves low ratings on skills that they think are necessary to become a manager, and many women are hesitant to become managers, citing their lack of skills as a reason. The survey also reveals that women are more likely than men to cite the company's or superiors' positive evaluation of their work and superiors' persuasion or encouragement to become a manager as reasons to become willing to seek a management position. This result

implies that an effect way to motivate women is for management and superiors to recognize their work, convey high hopes for them, and actively give them encouragement. Short-hour employees are particularly prone to losing confidence in their work due to their frustration that time constraints make it impossible to work as much as they previously did, or due to a sense of indebtedness arising from the idea that they put burdens on their colleagues.

Third, an important responsibility of managers is to provide information on the short-hour system so that colleagues of short-hour employees can be more understanding and to create cooperative mechanisms at the workplace. The details of the short-hour system, as well as other measures for supporting employees who maintain balance between work and childrearing or family caregiving, are often not known to employees other than those who use them. It is therefore possible that many employees do not understand the advantages and disadvantages of these systems for their users or the operational rules of the systems. Since misunderstanding can lead to complaints about short-hour employees, managers must provide the colleagues of short-hour employees with accurate information about the short-hour system. As discussed in Section 1, managers also need to proactively reexamine the operations of the entire workplace and improve operational efficiency, regularly check whether or not excessive burdens are put on only certain employees, and potentially give consideration, in employee evaluation, to significant contributions made to supporting short-hour employees. In addition, the human resources department can support managers by providing information on their roles through management seminars for managers who supervise short-hour employees or by listening and giving advice to managers who have concerns about workplace management.

Conclusion

The Amended Child Care and Family Care Leave Act, which was implemented in January 2017, increased the number of times the short-hour system can be used and the duration of a short-hours period for employees who provide family care. As a result, it is expected that an increasing number of employees will use the system for not only childrearing, but also family caregiving. Therefore, workplace management that enables employees with time constraints for various reasons to perform to their full potential will be increasingly important.

The results of the survey considered in this paper show that there is a close relationship between short-hour employees' work satisfaction and management factors (such as work assignment, goal setting, and employee evaluation), and that assigning short-hour employees to challenging, satisfying tasks consistent with the responsibility and expected role that they previously assumed and evaluating and promoting them according to their work performance increase their motivation for work, which in turn maintains or enhances their career consciousness. The results also imply that reexamining how all employees, including non-time-constrained employees, perform work is an effective measure for making all female employees, including short-hour employees, willing to continue working or accept a promotion.

Companies must present their basic policies aimed at smooth operation of the short-hour system and provide support to managers through seminars and other means so that they can properly manage short-hour employees. At the same time, the users of the short-hour system must convey to management and superiors their wishes and requests regarding tasks assigned or the way in which they work and actively plan their career development.

There are companies that eliminate long hours and promote use of paid vacation days to improve productivity and maintain employees' health as part of work reform, which has increasingly attracted companies' attention in recent years. However, serious problems remain, including the difficulty for time-constrained employees to perform to their full potential at workplaces that regularly require overtime work. As discussed in Section 1, when colleagues regularly work overtime, time-constrained employees tend to use the short-hour system as long as possible. Also, many companies have put restrictions on short-hour employees' divisional assignment or reassignment, considering that divisions requiring long hours are not suitable for them. Negative consequences are observed at some workplaces: on the one hand, short-hour employees get stuck in the so-called "mommy track," which has little prospect of promotion, and face difficulties in developing their careers over the medium to long term; on the other hand, non-time-constrained employees bear greater burdens. The prolonged use of the short-hour system and the restricted divisional assignment or reassignment are not ideal for short-hour employees' career development. Some companies have recently started to raise awareness of both managers and short-hour employees by creating a workplace environment that encourages female employees who are raising children to return to full-time work as soon as possible and by actively assigning them to divisions where not many women have traditionally worked in order to have them expand their professional experiences. In creating a workplace where various workers can realize their full potential, it is essential for companies to reexamine their traditional workplace management, which has taken long hours and overtime work as given, and for companies to promote work reform for all employees including those without time constraints.

Endnotes

1. For businesses with more than 100 employees, the provisions of the Amended Child Care and Family Care Leave Act of 2009 were set to take effect on June 30, 2010. For businesses with 100 employees or fewer, however, the provisions were set to take effect on July 1, 2012 or later because of relevant transitional measures.

2. Mitsubishi UFJ Research and Consulting (2016). Shussanji ni shugyo keizoku shita seishain josei no katsuyaku ni kansuru chosa [Survey on Active Participation of Female Regular Employees Who Continued to Work after Childbirth]. The respondents were 1,420 female regular employees with preschool-age children, working at the same company where they worked before becoming pregnant with the youngest child.

3. Unless mentioned otherwise, short-hour employees considered in this paper's data analysis refer to female regular employees who have used the short-hour system after the birth of their youngest child (i.e., current and former short-hour employees).

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Report

Systematic Efforts to Promote Development and Appointment of Women Managers

By Kimi Yonemura, Senior Consultant

Abstract

Promoting active participation of women is an important management issue. Since the implementation of the Act on Promotion of Women's Participation and Advancement in the Workplace in September 2015, there have been increasing opportunities to tackle the issue. Two main issues in promoting active participation of women: (1) continued employment and (2) skill performance and career development. Companies have an increasing number of female employees who continue to work by utilizing programs that support work-family balance. For these companies, the next challenge is to promote women's skill performance and career development, especially, the development and appointment of women managers. The lack of female managers is sometimes attributed to issues on women's side, including issues with skills and attitudes toward work. However, women's skill development and willingness to move up the professional ranks are significantly affected by traditional employment management methods, as well as by the way in which tasks are assigned by superiors. This traditional approach is based on assumptions of full-time work, overtime, and men playing the central role. To increase the number of women managers, it is ideal to make systematic efforts that accelerate the trend of promoting women's active participation by providing them with various opportunities and to aim at organizational improvement by continuously offering a workplace where both men and women can perform to their full potential. Promoting active participation of women has long been a subject of debate in corporate management, and the issue requires a prompt response. Companies must swiftly take effective measures according to the challenges they face and develop the leaders that their future will depend on.

1. Introduction

Women's active participation is a core theme of Japan's growth strategy. The Act on Promotion of Women's Participation and Advancement in the Workplace (hereinafter, the Act on Promotion of Women's Participation), which was implemented in September 2015, requires that companies with more than 300 employees (1) understand the situation involving women's active participation and analyze relevant issues, (2) prepare, submit, and announce (both internally and externally) an action plan that includes both numerical goals consistent with addressing these issues and measures for achieving the goals, and (3) make information on women's active participation publicly available.

The law requires companies with 300 or fewer employees to "make efforts" to take these actions. However, regardless of size, companies seem to take women's active participation as an important management issue, as evidenced by the fact that, as of August 31, 2017, among 389 companies that were certified as Eruboshi certified company[1](a category of a certification system created based on the law), 55 were companies with 300 or fewer employees.

Two main issues involving women's active participation are (1) continued employment and (2) skill performance and career development. Japan has faced rapid population aging, and markets and workers' values in the country are becoming more diverse. In order to continue business operations such an environment, companies must shift away from traditional management, which assumes a male-centric workplace and full-time and overtime work, to a type of management that promotes female employment and accelerates measures that enable women to perform to their full potential.

As companies have established systems that help employees maintain work-family and work-life balance, an increasing number of women have chosen to continue working after marriage or childbirth. The Report on the Survey on Women's Active Participation (Mitsubishi UFJ Research and Consulting, 2015) shows the extent to which female regular employees leave their jobs because of marriage or childbirth (Figure 1). According the report, a relatively high proportion of companies reported that almost no women leave due to marriage or childbirth, or that a small number of women do so.

Another issue faced by companies with an increasing number of women who continue to work is their skill performance and career development. This paper focuses on the development and appointment of women managers, which is one of the most important aspects of women's skill performance and career development, and examines measures that enable more women to unleash their skills and natural talents and play active roles as leaders.

Figure 1: Extent to which female regular employees leave their jobs because of marriage or childbirth (single response)
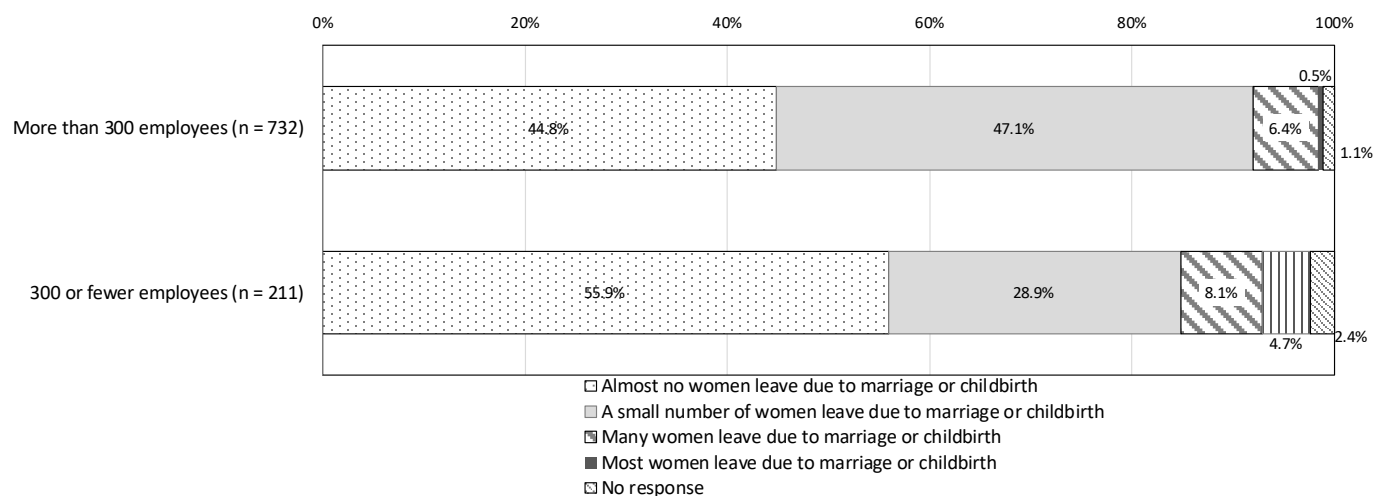
Source: Mitsubishi UFJ Research and Consulting. FY 2015 Report on the Survey on Women's Active Participation. (Commissioned by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare).

2. Reasons for the Lack of Women Managers

Currently, the proportions of women in positions at the levels of section head, department head, and division head are 18.6 percent, 10.3 percent, and 6.6 percent, respectively, and the long-term trend is upward.[2] However, the proportion of women in management positions in Japan is 13.0 percent, which is lower than the 30 to 40 percent in other countries.[3]

Why is the proportion of women in management positions low in Japan? According to a result from the Basic Survey of Gender Equality in Employment Management for FY 2013 conducted by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, companies reported that the top reasons why no women or a small number of women were in management was that they currently do not have female employees with the necessary knowledge, experience, or decision-making skills (47.7 percent) and that they do not have female employees who seek management positions (22.6 percent). These results suggest that companies attribute a lack of women managers mainly to the level of women's skills or desire for promotion.

In the Results of the Survey on Careers and Work-Family Balance of Male and Female Regular Employees (The Japan Institute for Labor Policy and Training, 2013), data are provided on workers' desire for promotion to management positions (Figure 2). According to the data, the proportion of female general employees who want to be promoted to department head or higher is less than the proportion of male general employees with the same interest in promotion. Compared with this result, the proportion of section heads who want to be promoted to department head or higher is higher for both men and women; however, the gap between the two genders is not smaller.

Table 1: Non-managers' desire to be promoted to department head or higher

	Male			Female		
	General employees	Section head	No response	General employees	Section head	No response
300 or more employees						
Fine with non-management position	25.7%	11.0%	25.0%	68.9%	23.3%	42.9%
Section head	13.9%	16.9%	–	19.7%	46.6%	28.6%
Department head	23.3%	30.2%	–	7.9%	23.4%	14.3%
Division head	20.5%	27.5%	50.0%	1.9%	4.7%	–
Executive or higher	16.0%	13.3%	–	1.0%	1.3%	14.3%
Department head or higher	59.8%	71.0%	50.0%	10.9%	29.4%	28.6%
No response	0.6%	1.1%	25.0%	0.4%	0.8%	-
Total	(1,508)	(1,652)	(4)	(2,238)	(932)	(7)
100 to 299 employees						
Fine with non-management position	31.6%	14.9%	-	74.7%	25.6%	57.1%
Section head	15.0%	19.7%	-	17.8%	46.0%	14.3%
Department head	19.7%	26.9%	-	5.3%	22.0%	-
Division head	19.3%	22.9%	-	1.2%	5.1%	-
Executive or higher	13.3%	15.3%	100.0%	0.5%	0.6%	14.3%
Department head or higher	52.3%	65.0%	100.0%	7.1%	27.8%	14.3%
No response	1.2%	0.4%	-	0.4%	0.6%	14.3%
Total	(865)	(1,054)	(1)	(1,388)	(472)	(7)

Note: The percentage for "department head or higher " is the sum of the percentages for "department head," "division head," and "executive or higher."

Source: The Japan Institute for Labor Policy and Training. (2013). Results of the Survey on Careers and Work-Family Balance of Male and Female Regular Employees.

For a long time, human resource development at Japanese companies has been based on the accumulation of employees' work experience within an organization. A company typically has an employee experience a wide range of positions for about 15 years after he or she starts working at the company and judges whether the employee is suitable for a management position. Also, it has been assumed that such a career track requires full-time and overtime work. Therefore, for women to become management candidates in spite of life events such as childbirth and childrearing, they have had to meet the condition of continuing to work full-time and overtime over a long period, even before their skills and natural talents are taken into account.

Gender gaps still remain at companies in terms of personnel assignment and human resource development. While men are assigned to various divisions and can gain a wide range of professional experience related to the core of the company's business model, women's divisional assignment is limited and biased.[4] Even if women are in the same position at the same division as men, women tend to spend a number of years as operational employees in limited areas, whereas men are gradually assigned to management-related tasks, starting with business data management and assistance for superiors.

The gender gaps in employment management described above are typical examples of statistical discrimination. In this type of discrimination, superiors or companies consider, regardless of individual employees' skills and motivation, that providing women with the same training opportunities that men receive tends to be wasteful because women are more likely than men to quit their jobs, and put limits on women's divisional assignment and training.

If companies do not offer, without gender discrimination, work experience and training opportunities that lead to long-term career prospects, it is difficult for women to gain satisfaction from their work. In such a situation, the occurrence of a life event, such as childbirth and childrearing, women might waver in their resolve to continue working, rather than pursue their career prospects. Career-oriented women would quickly abandon companies with few opportunities to utilize their skills and natural talents because they see their positions as dead-end jobs with no long-term career prospects, and would move to other companies where they can expand their possibilities.

According to a survey conducted by Mitsubishi UFJ Research and Consulting (2014), high proportions of both men and women point to increased stress and increased responsibility as reasons for not wanting promotion to management positions (Figure 2). One characteristic of women's responses is that women are particularly more likely than men to point to the difficulty in maintaining work-family balance.

Figure 2: Non-managers' reasons for not wanting promotion to management positions (multiple responses allowed)
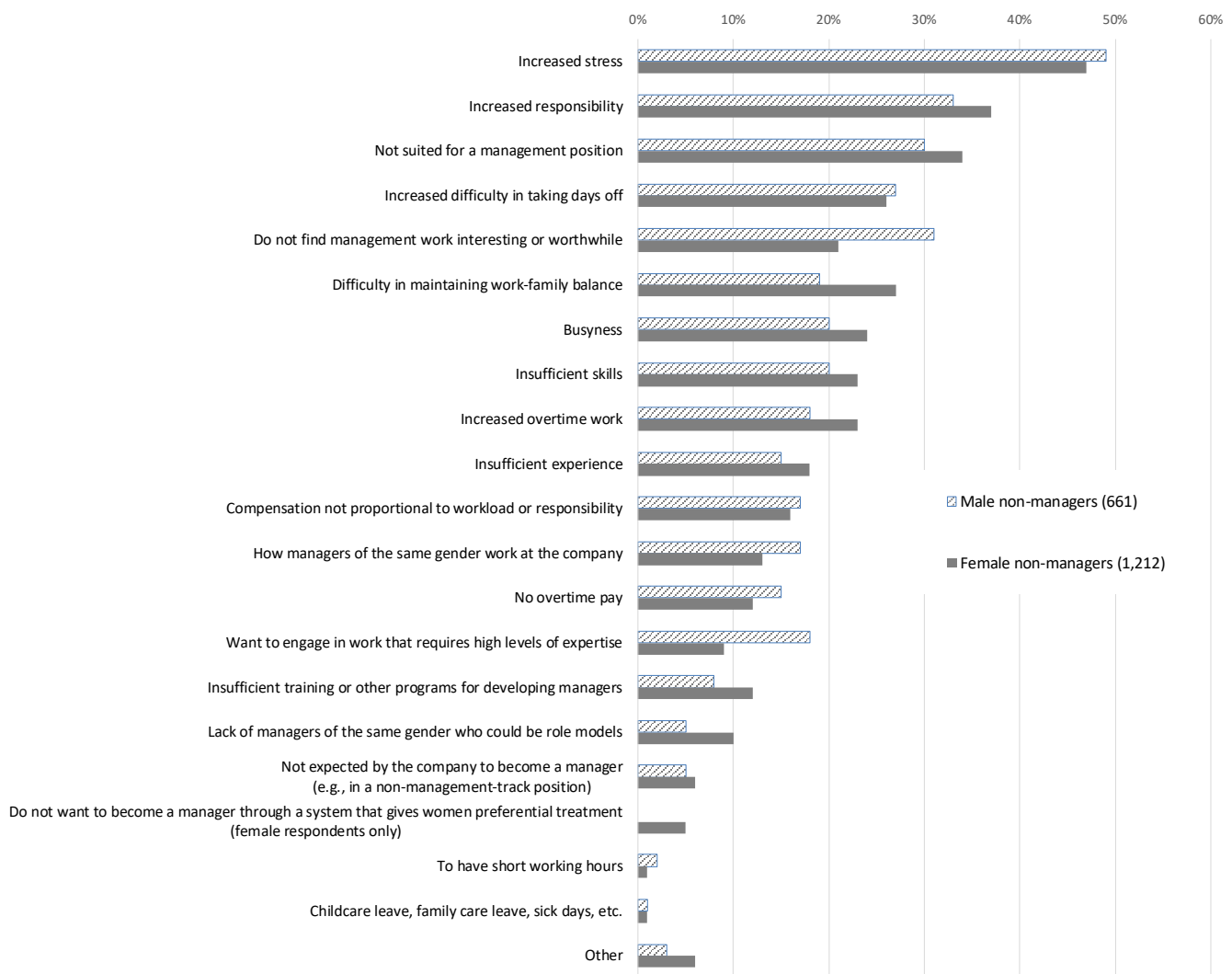
Source: Mitsubishi UFJ Research and Consulting. (2014). Survey on Female Managers: Training and Appointment.

Women may consider that the way in which managers work makes it difficult to maintain work-life balance. The difficulty, however, is not limited to women. Both women and men over 40 years old face the possibility of needing to maintain balance between work and family caregiving or treatment of a disease. Although not addressed by the survey, unless there are changes in how managers work, more men will be reluctant to be promoted to or remain in management positions because of problems involving work-family balance.

It is true that there are currently fewer women than men who become management candidates. Maintaining motivation for work and improving skills is not easy for women in an environment where childbirth, childrearing, or another life event can easily put constraints on their work. An examination of reasons why women face difficulties

in improving skills necessary to become management candidates or becoming willing to be promoted shows that their attitudes are not the only problem.

3. Systematic Efforts to Promote the Development and Appointment of Women Managers

What kinds of measures should be taken in order to change the situation that is hindering women's active participation, to make improvements, and to promote the development and appointment of women managers?

Many action plans that companies prepare as required by the Act on Promotion of Women's Participation set numerical goals (e.g., increasing the number of women managers twofold in five years or increasing the proportion of women managers to 7 percent or more) and specific measures (e.g., organizing career seminars for women).[5] These plans reflect companies' intention to actively provide opportunities to women and increase the number of women managers in a short period of time in accordance with the government goal of increasing the proportion of women in leadership positions to at least 30 percent by 2020 in various areas of society.

A company's measures to actively provide opportunities to women can easily have an impact on workers at the company and tend to produce positive short-term results. However, since such measures target only women, some might object that these measures are implemented just to comply with the Act on Promotion of Women's Participation, and others might complain that training needs are not limited to women and question why men are not targeted by these measures. Also, it should be noted that measures to actively provide opportunities to women are temporary measures that are in place until gender inequality is effectively eliminated, but that obtaining expected results may be difficult if these measures are not properly administered according to the company's human resource strategies and policy on women's active participation.

Companies should make systematic efforts in order to change the situation that is hindering women's active participation, make improvements, and ultimately realize a workplace where various workers, be they male or female, can continuously perform to their full potential. Such efforts should achieve organizational improvement by accelerating women's active participation through various opportunities provided to them and by continuously offering a workplace where both men and women can play active roles.

3.1 Efforts to Actively Provide Opportunities to Women

There are various ways to actively provide opportunities to women: (1) creating a goal or plan to promote women's active participation (based on the Act on Promotion of Women's Participation); (2) soliciting women for job application in hiring new graduates and mid-career workers (for example, through corporate public relations to attract women and efforts to increase the number of women pursuing studies in science, engineering, civil engineering, architecture, etc.); (3) supporting women's training and careers (through training sessions for women, mentoring or role model programs, creation of an in-house network of women, etc.). This section discusses measures to support women's training and careers, on which the author is often asked for advice in her consultation work.

In asking for advice on supporting women's training and careers, human resources officers express their concern that women often decline a recommendation to take a management promotion examination because of

their lack of confidence, or request consultants to organize training sessions that would motivate women to seek promotion to management positions.

In general, women who are close to management positions have long worked in an environment that has hindered women from becoming managers and tend to think that, compared with men, they have gained less experience that would expand skills and possibilities. While some women positively respond to the offering of training sessions for developing women managers, others have a negative opinion that it is too late for them. Supporting human resource development requires not only the efforts of the support provider, but also the efforts and willingness to participate of the support recipient. It is therefore important for companies to listen to women's concerns about their skills and management promotion, implement training programs that meet their needs, and demonstrate to them the significance of participating in such programs.

The aforementioned survey conducted by Mitsubishi UFJ Research and Consulting (2014) asks the respondents to evaluate the necessity of attributes for managers (Figure 3.1) and to evaluate their own attributes (Figure 3.2) on a scale of one to five. The most notable characteristic of women's responses is the large gap between the level they considered necessary for managers and their self-evaluation for a given attribute for three attributes: management ability, ability to train subordinates, and leadership.

**Figure 3.1:** Attributes necessary for management positions according to non-managers (average score)
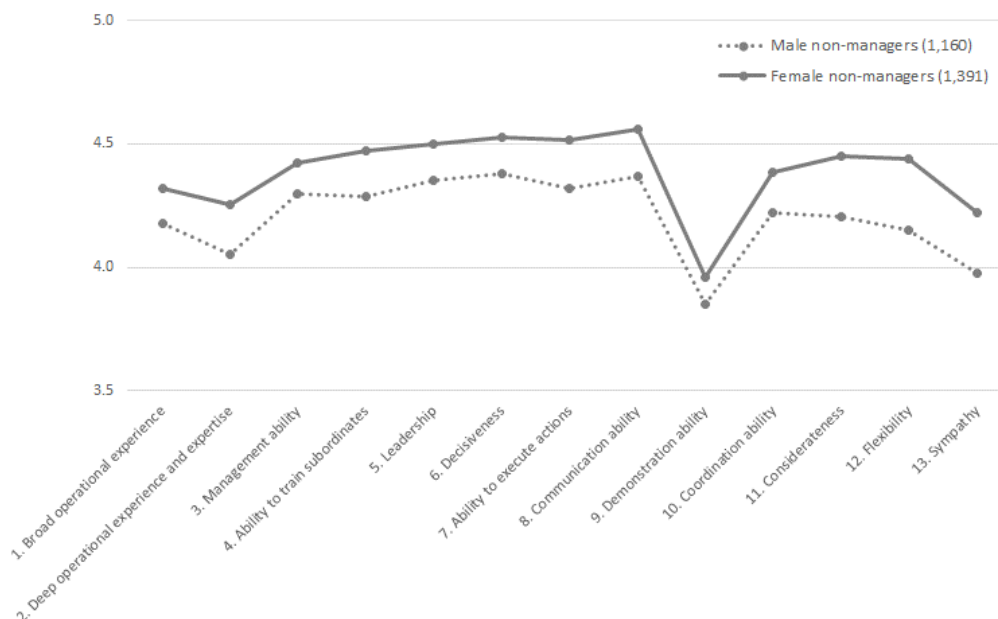
Note: The score is a weighted average based on the responses to each attribute: "necessary" (5 points); "somewhat necessary" (4 points); "don't know" (3 points); "somewhat unnecessary"
Source: Mitsubishi UFJ Research and Consulting. (2014). Survey on Female Managers: Training and Appointment.

Figure 3.2: Non-managers' self evaluation of attributes (average score)
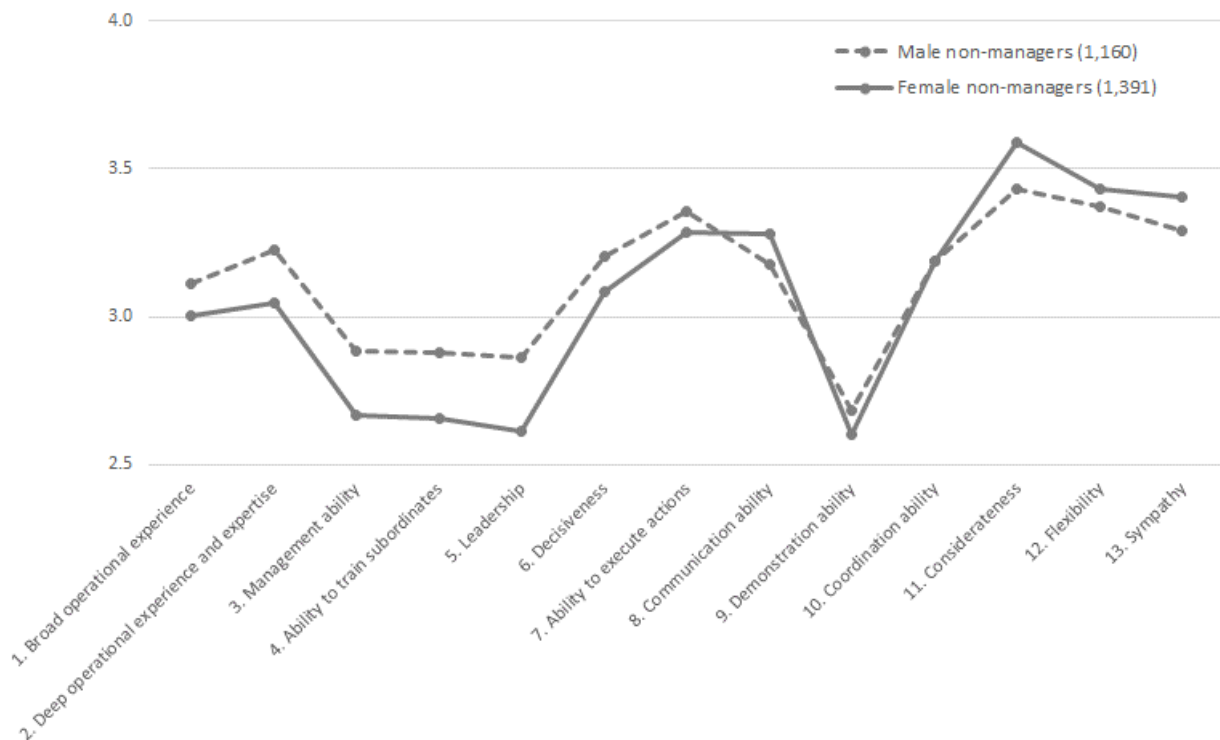
Note: The score is a weighted average based on the responses to each attribute: "high ability" (5 points); "somewhat high ability" (4 points); "don't know" (3 points); "somewhat low ability "
Source: Mitsubishi UFJ Research and Consulting. (2014). Survey on Female Managers: Training and Appointment.

In supporting women's training and careers, it is important to take measures that change the traditional workplace environment, where women have had fewer opportunities than men have had to be trained as management candidates, and that give women confidence in their skills.

For example, for women management candidates, the author organizes action learning seminars that provide opportunities to exercise leadership in identifying and solving workplace issues and managing projects. Such opportunities have been difficult to gain through on-the-job training.

The female participants are those who are close to management positions, have substantial skills and experience as operational employees, are considerate to superiors and junior colleagues, and are willing to contribute to the workplace. Seeing things only through operational employees' perspective, workers can conceptualize only situations surrounding their tasks in identifying issues and therefore can only devise measures as an extension of their daily work. For this reason, their on-the-job experience is not sufficient for gaining the skills and experience necessary for management candidates.

The author therefore reminds the seminar participants, in lectures or individual follow-up sessions, to identify issues by shifting focus from their assigned work to the operation of their division and solve issues not by tackling them alone, but by involving others including superiors.

If the task is simple problem solving, the female seminar participants, who have substantial know-how and experience, can perform it more quickly than their junior colleagues. In fact, seminar participants occasionally mention inefficiency and inconvenience in passing tasks to junior colleagues. However, by overcoming such

disadvantages and thoroughly playing the role of leaders, female participants gain skills necessary for management positions, which leads to their increased confidence.

The survey also asked male and female managers why they decided to seek a management position (Figure 4). The result shows that women are more likely than men to point to wanting to contribute to the company by utilizing their knowledge and experience, receiving high evaluations from the company or superiors, and being persuaded or encouraged by superiors to become a manager. It seems that women are more likely than men to become motivated for promotion if their work is highly evaluated by superiors or the company in a concrete manner or if they are expected by superiors or the company to become managers.

Figure 4: Managers' reasons for seeking a management position (multiple responses allowed)
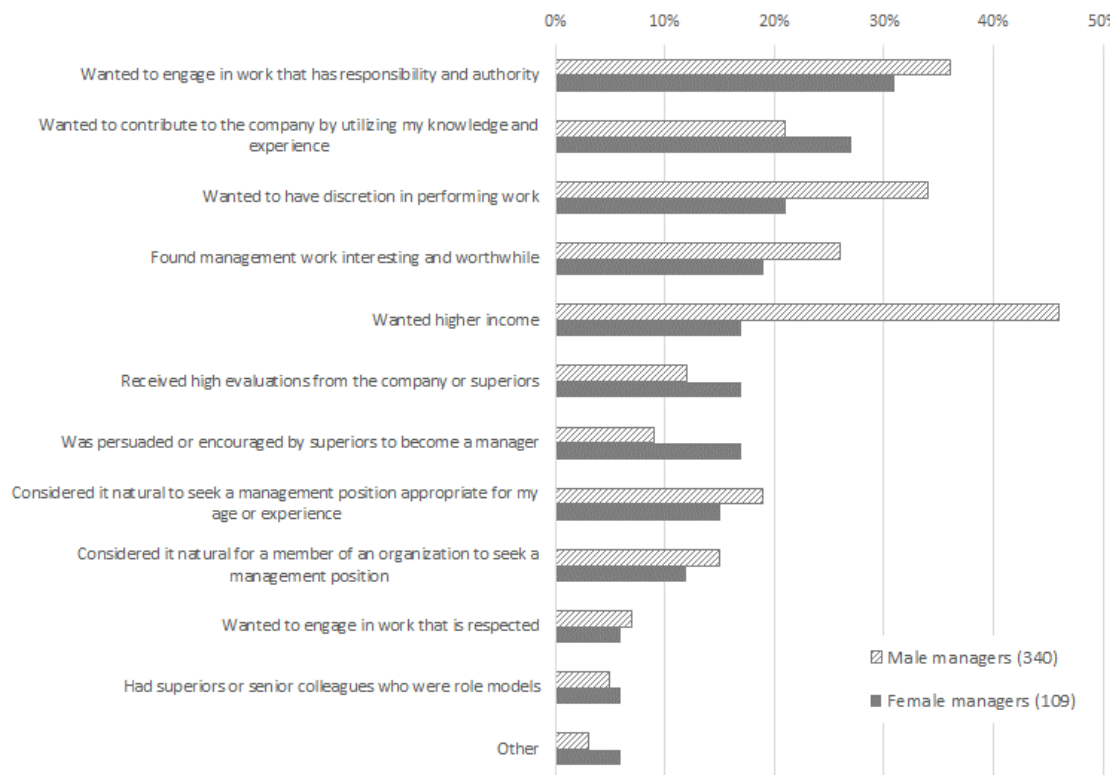
Source: Mitsubishi UFJ Research and Consulting. (2014). Survey on Female Managers: Training and Appointment.

In organizing seminars for women management candidates, the author invites their superiors to participate. One reason is that superiors are a key to increasing women's willingness to be promoted. Another reason is that superiors often have concerns because they lack experience in training women to become managers. The important goals of the seminars therefore include not only deepening superiors' understanding about factors that have hindered women from becoming managers through lectures and group discussions, but also improving the abilities of superiors (as managers) in human resource development through exercises in which they support the professional growth of female subordinates.

3.2 Creating a Workplace Where Both Men and Women Can Perform to Their Full Potential

By offering not only career design seminars and action learning seminars, but also positive opportunities for women (e.g., active hiring of women managers from outside the company), companies can increase the number of women managers in the short run and can create further movement within their organization to promote women's active participation.

Many current women management candidates may be those who have been able to work full-time and overtime regardless of whether or not they have children. If most of the women appointed to management positions have worked in such a manner, other women following their footsteps may consider them to be special cases. This would make it difficult to sustain an increase in the number of women managers.

Companies will have to aim at not simply increasing the number of women managers, but developing and appointing women managers based on employment management that enables women to continue working, perform to their full potential, and develop their careers. This goal requires the creation of a human resource pipeline that continuously produces management-caliber female workers. Through such a pipeline, both men and women at each occupational rank are trained without gender distinction, and high-potential workers are then appointed to higher positions. An important factor in this process is the creation of a workplace where both men and women can perform to their full potential.

There are three key elements in creating such a workplace: (1) various ways of working and taking leave in accordance with life events, (2) work reform that increases productivity per unit of time, and (3) professional experience and superiors' actions that promote employees' personal growth. Needless to say, various types of harassment must be prevented.

3.2.1 Various Ways of Working and Taking Leave in Accordance with Life Events

Many companies have introduced and developed programs that support work-family balance. There are also companies, mainly large ones, that have further expanded such programs. However, both companies and employees will have to pay attention to utilization of the program, not expansion of the program.

The ability to flexibly choose from various ways of working and taking leave according to life events helps employees to continue working. However, with the utilization of programs (e.g., working short hours for childrearing) for longer periods, program users gain less professional experience and training opportunities than full-time employees. Such disadvantages affect program users' career development.

Women's work is more likely to be affected by childbirth, childrearing, and other life events than men's work. Oftentimes, women have no choice but to maintain work-family balance. It is crucial for companies to (1) provide program users and their superiors with training for returning to work after childcare leave and training for supporting subordinates' return to work, respectively, so that employees can wisely utilize a support program, focus on work-family balance, and perform to their full potential even during the period when their working hours are constrained and (2) encourage dialogue between program users and their superiors regarding intended future program use and details of work.

Another issue is that as the number of program users increases, the resulting burden on full-time employees can become excessive. Consequently, some short-hour employees may have concerns about returning to full-time work or may become distressed as they are unable to gain the understanding of colleagues regarding their use of a support program. To eliminate such situations and facilitate employees' use a support program as deemed necessary, companies need to consider work reform that increases productivity per unit of time.

3.2.2 Work Style Reform That Increases Productivity per Unit of Time

Traditional corporate management has required regular employees to work full-time and overtime and has centered on male employees who can continuously handle this way of working. Despite daily overtime work, these employees have kept spending a substantial amount of time, as if an unlimited amount of time existed, to handle large quantities of work rather than improving operational efficiency or solving the issue of excessive product quality.

As workers' circumstances and values have diversified, a growing number of employees, be they male or female, have juggled work with childrearing, family caregiving, or self-improvement. Also, given that the negative health effects of working long hours have become issues, there must be a shift in the assumption of work and time management from employees having to work full-time and overtime to employees not having to work overtime.

Work and time management that is based on the assumption that employees do not have to work overtime is aimed not at increasing the total amount of work performed, but at generating maximum value added for a given amount of time. To achieve this goal, it is important for employees to share necessary operational information with others in the workplace and perform work while taking the priorities of tasks and time management into consideration.

When providing consultations on work style reform, the author recommends that companies utilize scheduling software that is already installed at the companies as a way to efficiently share operational schedules. Each division is advised to set a method for entering schedules and identifying events (e.g., meetings, appointments with representatives from external organizations, and work plans) for specific tasks. In addition, employees are asked to learn time management techniques, be aware of time available in a day, a week, and a month, and plan tasks backwards, starting from goals to be achieved at the end of a work day or various deadlines.

In the case of telecommuting, employees can share the status of their work progress (along with information on hours worked, tasks performed, etc.) with their superiors and colleagues as they would at the workplace. Also,

utilization of the telephone and Internet-based communication services enables telecommuters to participate in meetings from home and therefore mitigates the potential lack of communication associated with telecommuting.

To sustain work style reform measures as opposed to briefly implementing them, the employee evaluation system must reward ways of working that increase productivity per unit of time. Even if there is no issue with evaluation standards themselves, evaluators who consider longer working hours as a greater contribution to the company would give low ratings to time-constrained employees, regardless of the quality or results of their work, for the unfair reason that they work short hours. Work reform would end up being a temporary action if employees who can contribute to the process of producing good results with a small input of resources are not properly evaluated and compensated.

The term work style reform might invoke an image of large-scale measures. However, small-scale measures, if continued, can realize work-life balance for all employees, including those in management positions, and encourage women to continue working. Companies where women still tend to leave because of childbirth or childrearing should engage in work style reform before expanding programs for supporting work-family balance.

3.2.3 Professional Experience and Superiors' Actions That Promote Employees' Personal Growth

Issues involving training women to become management candidates include those related to employment management (e.g., broadening the scope of women's jobs) and those related to on-the-job training (e.g., assignment of tasks and roles by superiors).

Many companies have reexamined their employment management systems for different career tracks as a measure to broaden the scope of women's jobs. Some companies have abolished the career-track system. However, even if companies retain the system, they often expand the roles that fixed-region management-track employees and clerical-track employees are expected play, broaden the scope of their jobs, and make it possible for them to be promoted to management positions.

Companies with regional branches may require managerial-track employees to relocate. Since it is often difficult for married women to relocate, they may hesitate to shift from the clerical track to the management track even if they have necessary skills and abilities. If employees' inability to relocate prevents them from growing professionally and performing to their full potential, companies cannot effectively utilize their human resources. Also, as the number of two-income households and the number of workers who face the issue of maintaining balance between work and family caregiving have increased, there have been cases in which not only women but also men are reluctant to relocate.

An increase in the number of employees who cannot relocate makes it difficult for companies with branches in distant regions to open more branches, secure necessary personnel, and effectively perform organizational management. However, if companies expand operational fields in which fixed-region management-track employees and clerical-track employees can play active roles, employees with various personal and family backgrounds can work at the current location, and their contribution and loyalty to their company may increase.

Broadening the scope of women's jobs often involves the issue of whether or not they can relocate. Issues related to relocation policies cannot be solved immediately. However, as workers' values have diversified, the time has come for companies to examine how to handle employee relocation in the future from the standpoint of employee retention and employees' active participation.

In on-the-job training, superiors' discretion plays a significant role. If superiors assign tasks based on the idea of gendered division of labor, women will have fewer opportunities to exercise leadership and perform work. As discussed above, women's desire for promotion is more likely than men's to be influenced by superiors' or the company's expectations or approval. In order to provide comprehensive on-the-job training to both men and women, top management must present policy on women's active participation and provide managers with guidelines so that they can assign tasks and roles to men and women according to their individual abilities without gender distinctions and check the status of each employee's professional development as deemed necessary.

The author previously conducted interviews with women executives and managers about their career history. What was remarkable was the impact of their superiors on their continued employment and career development.

These women started working around the time when the Equal Employment Opportunity Law was implemented; however, women at that time had difficulty actively working while experiencing life events. The interviewed women said that they had planned to quit their jobs after getting married. However, because of the way in which their superiors assigned daily tasks and provided opportunities to work on challenging tasks, they became interested in their work, recognized their contribution to the company, and started to want to continue working even after marriage or childbirth.

The women talked about things they learned from their superiors and about their superiors' encouragement to tackle challenging tasks. One woman said that she was thankful to her supervisor because even though she had gotten frustrated at his repeated orders to rewrite a single-page document, she had learned how to convey her main points in writing in a short amount of time. Another woman said that when she had become a skilled operational employee her supervisor had recommended her to take a promotion examination, saying, "There is a limit to what one person can do, and it's time for you to take on bigger jobs by leading subordinates."

As the above episodes imply, superiors' actions play an important role in women's continued employment and career development. The interviews revealed another fact: The women did not passively accept the daily tasks assigned or opportunities provided by their superiors, but instead actively contemplated the significance of the tasks and opportunities, devised ways to meet expectations, and put ideas into action.

In discussions on developing women managers, many women raise the concern that they do not know how to approach their career design since they do not have role models. But, does the absence of role models really make it difficult for women to examine their own careers? Every woman has different values and a different life background. Even if women follow the footsteps of successful forerunners, they do not necessarily obtain the same results.

Women can build careers that suit them by being aware of a wide range of issues, actively learning from others around them and from daily tasks, and internalizing the lessons learned. This way of building a career is probably better than one that is based on searching for and following preeminent role models. Managers supervising female subordinates who have concerns about their future careers and future promotion to management positions should provide them with advice and follow-up consultation while keeping in mind the relevant issues discussed above.

4. Conclusion

This paper argues that the lack of female managers is attributable not only to women's attitudes toward work, but also largely to employment management methods that are based on the idea of full-time work, overtime, and men playing the central role and to the way in which tasks and responsibility are assigned by superiors. These factors are the product of long-lasting organizational culture and affect workers' views on employment. Therefore, it is not easy to immediately resolve relevant issues and create an environment where women can become managers without facing unnecessary obstacles.

As the number of two-income households have increased along with the likelihood of facing the issue of maintaining balance between work and family caregiving, even men are becoming no longer able to spend as much time and energy at work as they used to. Making efforts to promote women's active participation and develop and appoint women managers would produce a workplace where both women and men can easily continue working and gain satisfaction from their work.

Different companies have different issues involving women's active participation and the development and appointment of women managers. However, listing excuses and doing nothing would make it difficult for companies to secure human resources that contribute to their value creation.

The issues of promoting women's active participation and developing and appointing women managers require prompt action by management. Companies must swiftly produce substantial results by accelerating women's active participation through various opportunities provided to them and by changing their organization into one where both men and women can perform to their full potential.

The author hopes that the content of this paper will be helpful in creating organizations that promote the development and appointment of women managers and enable every employee to play an active role.

Endnotes

1. Companies that prepared and submitted their action plans and are successfully promoting women's active participation can apply to a prefectural labor bureau to receive certification from the Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare.
2. Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare. (2016). Basic Survey on Wage Structure.
3. Cabinet Office. (2017). Whitepaper on Gender Equality.
4. Industry-Specific Visualization Tools for Promoting Positive Action, which are provided by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (https://www.mhlw.go.jp/topics/koyoukintou/2012/03/13-01.html), show trends in employment management, including information on salary management, hiring, personnel assignment, and compensation, for 12 industries.
5. One can search the Database of Companies Promoting Women's Active Participation (http://positive-ryouritsu.mhlw.go.jp/positivedb/) for companies' published information and action plans.

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Report

Employee Relocation Systems from the Standpoint of Diversity Management: Issues and Future Directions

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Companies are coming to a crossroads in terms of employee relocation systems. During Japan's high-growth era, three important systems—lifetime employment, seniority-based salaries, and company-based unions—were established, and Japanese companies have utilized employee relocation, along with these three systems, as a means to make personnel adjustments in response to growth. Subsequently, companies began using employee relocation for personnel training and screening of management candidates. Companies today have employee relocation policies that have multiple purposes. Lately, however, companies facing pressure to reexamine their employee relocation policies. It goes without saying that relocation has a significant impact on both employees' work and their personal life. Although issues involving compatibility with employees' life plans and financial problems resulting from solo relocation (i.e., relocation with no accompanying family members) have long been pointed out, new issues have recently emerged involving diversity management. This paper considers how employee relocation has been conducted in the past and discusses the role of employee relocation systems and their impact on broader personnel systems. It then clarifies typical issues concerning employee relocation and issues newly arising from the standpoint of diversity management, summarizes measures to solve them, and proposes employee relocation policies that companies should adopt in the future.

1. Introduction

On March 30, 2017, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare published Hints and Methods for Employment Management Related to Employee Relocation. With well-organized key points for relocation-related employment management, the publication is intended to provide information that is helpful for companies in reexamining their employee relocation policies. The Japanese government has been promoting work reform programs that facilitate various ways of working and the realization of a society in which all people actively participate. Needless to say, these programs are a result of Japan's shrinking labor force due to population aging. One way to compensate for the shrinking labor force is to allow various ways of working and to invite various workers into the labor market at the same time. In general, diversity management refers to a series of actions aimed at increasing corporate value by utilizing various workers and providing them with opportunities to perform to their full potential.

One of the recent issues involving the promotion of diversity management is relocation systems. As considered here, employee relocation refers to employee transfer that requires residential relocation. Employee relocation has a significant impact on both employees' work and their personal life. Due to the difficulty of adjusting one's life plan to relocation, it has been a hurdle in promoting women's active participation. Employee relocation is an issue that needs to be urgently reexamined not only in the context of women's issues, but also from the standpoint of accepting diverse workers and various ways of working.

This paper first reviews how employee relocation has been conducted in the past to clarify the social background of current employee relocation systems. It then discusses the role of employee relocation systems and their impact on broader personnel systems. The information on employee relocation systems used in this paper was obtained from the Research Project on Promotion of Work-Life Balance and Workplace Diversity conducted at the Chuo Graduate School of Strategic Management and from surveys conducted by Mitsubishi UFJ Research and Consulting. After clarifying issues involving today's employee relocation systems based on their actual status and historical background, this paper summarizes measures to address these issues and proposes employee relocation policies that companies should adopt in the future.

2. Historical Background and Functions of Employee Relocation Systems

2.1 Historical Background of Employee Relocation Systems

Studying the history of employee relocation systems in Japan reveals that their widespread adoption coincided with the country's period of rapid economic growth and the development of its unique employment systems. After the economic boom triggered by the Korean War and the Jinmu Boom in 1955, Japan entered a period of rapid economic growth that lasted for about 20 years. Notable characteristics of this growth period include a shift in industrial structure from an economy based on primary industry to a more sophisticated economy based on secondary industry and growth in the machinery industry driven by rising exports. Also, enhanced international competitiveness and subsequent increases in exports in the heavy chemical industry, in which facility investments expanded, contributed to Japan's increased exports and current account surplus. Such structural changes certainly affected employment systems and the ways in which people worked. As a result, Japanese-style employment systems emerged and became firmly established, and many Japanese companies

still follow them today.

Japanese-style employment systems are symbolized by three important elements: seniority-based salaries, lifetime employment, and company-based unions. The rest of this section considers how each of these elements emerged during the period of rapid economic growth and how it affected employee relocation systems.

Seniority-based salaries emerged from the system of annually recruiting new graduates (*shinsotsu ikkatsu saiyo*) that became widely adopted by many companies as the secondary industry expanded. The origin of the new-graduate recruitment system is said to be the periodic recruitment that Mitsubishi conducted from 1879. Subsequently, Japan saw the creation and termination of an industry–university–government agreement on recruitment of university graduates (*shushoku kyotei*), increased starting salaries of new graduates due to growth of the war industry during the Sino-Japanese War, equalization of starting salaries of new graduates at each company to curb this trend, and establishment of the system of annual recruitment of new graduates, which began to be widely adopted during the economic boom caused by the Korean War and continues today. Companies during the period of rapid growth, particularly large manufacturers, needed to secure a large number of employees in order to meet production plans. It was rational for companies to hire a large group of new graduates who had just completed their studies if the goal was to efficiently acquire a substantial amount of somewhat homogeneous human resources. Also, as companies expected to expand their production sites due to economic growth, they needed to be able to flexibly transfer employees without limitations on where they could work and what types of work they could perform. These circumstances led to a situation where workers improved their skills through a series of transfers and relevant on-the-job training that took place according to corporate production plans, and companies compensated them with seniority-based salaries. The longer employees worked at a company, the more compensation they received as they were considered to have higher-level skills. The strict conditions for firing employees which were unique to Japanese companies along with seniority-based compensation led to the establishment of lifetime employment. Japanese companies have faced strict restrictions on the firing of regular employees, as seen in the four conditions for restructuring-related employment termination that are currently followed in Japan. Because of such restrictions on employment termination, companies needed to continue their workers' employment as long as possible. Also, because the seniority-based compensation system did not guarantee that an employee's salary was proportional to his or her contribution during a given period of time (i.e., younger employees tended to receive low salaries relative to their contribution, while older employees tended to receive high salaries relative to their contribution), employees wanted to continue working until their retirement so that salaries would be ultimately balanced with work contribution. The employee relocation systems played an important role here. It was essential for companies to internally coordinate the supply and demand for human resources in order to continue employing a large number of employees until their retirement regardless of business conditions. Companies therefore started to flexibly transfer employees using their relocation systems. In sum, employee relocation systems evolved in combination with the practice of lifetime employment. These historical developments show why companies have strengthened their authority over personnel matters. Put another way, companies have discretion over a wide range of labor conditions in exchange for continued employment. In addition, company-based unions emerged to coordinate employer–employee relations in closed internal labor markets. In the history of employer–employee relations, companies have held discussions with their workers about the improvement of labor conditions, which sometimes led to

conflict.

As discussed above, employee relocation systems were established in combination with the practice of lifetime employment, which was indirectly related to the seniority-based compensation system. Another important factor was the male-breadwinner model. According to the Cabinet Office, in 1980 there were 11.14 million households with a full-time housewife (i.e., male-breadwinner households) in Japan. Therefore, it was relatively easy for many families to relocate: when the husband was ordered by his company to transfer to an office in another location, his full-time housewife simply moved with him. The number of male-breadwinner households, however, declined to 6.64 million households by 2016. In contrast, the number of two-income households increased from 6.14 million to 11.29 million over the same time period. Two of the three important elements of Japanese-style employment systems—lifetime employment and seniority-based salaries—still exist as part of companies' personnel policies, but often without substance. In fact, it is no exaggeration to say that factors that supported employee relocation as an effective employment management tool have been collapsing.

2.2 Functions of Employee Relocation Systems

With the establishment and evolution of relocation systems as described in the previous section, the current purposes of companies' relocation systems can roughly be divided into the following four categories.

1. Reassignment of personnel (including the filling of vacant positions)
2. Training of personnel (through experience with geographically diverse workplaces and associated personal relationships)
3. Training and development of new managers and evaluation of their aptitude for management (through the combination of the above two activities)
4. Prevention of falling into a professional rut and fraud

The first two purposes were discussed in the previous section. Companies expect employee relocation to be an opportunity for personnel training: they transfer employees to various positions through employee relocation systems to coordinate the internal supply and demand for human resources, and these employees gain experience and skills by dealing with changes in their tasks and in internal and external personal relationships. It should be noted, however, that personnel training does not necessarily require employee relocation. Changes in tasks and personal relationships can also be experienced with a transfer that does not require residential relocation. Therefore, personnel training should be regarded as a positive consequence of employee relocation systems rather than one of their purposes. In some cases, however, greater emphasis is placed on the training aspect of employee relocation systems. According a survey of companies conducted by the Research Project on Promotion of Work-Life Balance and Workplace Diversity of the Chuo Graduate School of Strategic Management, the purposes of employee relocation that companies emphasize vary depending on the age of the relocated employees. For employees in their 20s or 30s, 86.5 percent of companies (the highest percentage) emphasize expanding employees' work experience, describing it as "important" or "somewhat important"; 70.0 percent emphasize managing the needs of regional offices; and 66.5 percent emphasize accelerating employees' professional growth through new experience gained in unfamiliar geographical areas. In other words, for this age

group, companies are most likely to emphasize personnel training and second most likely to emphasize coordination of the supply and demand for human resources as the purpose of employee relocation systems. For employees in their 40s, 82.1 percent of companies (the highest percentage) emphasize managing the needs of regional offices; 75.4 percent emphasize expanding employees' work experience; and 58.7 percent emphasize expanding employees' personal networks that are necessary for business. These survey results show that companies' emphasis varies for different employee age groups.[1]

Does the training aspect of employee relocation work effectively? The aforementioned survey provides some interesting results regarding this question. It asked whether and what kind of work-related differences exist between employees with relocation experience and those in the same employment category without relocation experience. To this question, 42.4 percent of companies answered that the relocated employees have improved work performance; 42.4 percent answered that relocated employees have improved management ability; and 27.8 percent (not a small percentage) answered that there was no particular difference. Also, the higher the proportion of employees with relocation experience, the more likely the company was to report no particular work-related difference. In addition, 43.9 percent of companies that have separate employment management systems for employees available for relocation and those unavailable for relocation, with the latter being about 20 percent or less of all employees, report no particular difference. The survey of workers associated with the above survey asked employees with relocation experience whether their relocation had more positive effects on skill development than a transfer that did not require residential relocation. Of the respondents, 38.5 percent answered that relocation had more positive effects on skill development and 35.0 percent reported no difference between relocation and non-relocation transfer. Neither the company survey nor the worker survey definitively shows that employee relocation has unique training functions compared with non-relocation transfer. Put differently, it is difficult to see clear differences between relocation and non-relocation transfers in terms of personnel training although some people think that relocation transfers function the same as or better than non-relocation transfers for personnel training.

With regard to the third purpose of employee relocation systems (training and development of managers and evaluation of their aptitude for management), companies appoint new managers to vacant posts at branch offices to have them gain management experience and develop personal connections and to evaluate their aptitude for management. In some cases, relocation serves as a touchstone for future managers: some companies include successful relocation experience as one of the requirements for promotion to management positions. In particular, at companies whose headquarters functions are concentrated in one city, employees may have to relocate from regional offices to gain experience in management positions. In such cases, a fundamental question arises as to whether it is rational to make relocation a requirement for management promotion. Though details are discussed later, it is possible to consider that the sole logical rationale for making relocation a requirement for management promotion is that the company has a function qualification system (*shokuno shikaku seido*). According to this view, relocation experience is not a universal requirement for management promotion and is merely a requirement set by companies with a function qualification system.

As for the fourth purpose of employee relocation systems (prevention of falling into a professional rut), companies relocate employees in order to maintain or stimulate their motivation by resetting their tasks and relevant personal relationships. There have been many cases in recent years in which employees suffer mental

health issues because of poor interpersonal relationships. Companies therefore have a point in changing such employees' circumstances through relocation. Also, in some industries such as the financial industry, companies may conduct regular employee transfers (including relocations) in order to prevent fraud made possible by the same employees working on a fixed set of tasks over a long period of time. However, companies probably can expect similar effects from on-site transfers instead of relocations. In addition, extended leave can substitute for employee relocation in preventing fraud.

3. Effects of Employee Relocation Systems on Personnel Systems

An employee's relocation can cause substantial risk and cost to the employee and his or her family. Therefore, companies often provide extra pay to employees available for relocation. In general, such companies have separate employee categories—location-unrestricted employees who are available for relocation nationwide (*zenkoku kinmu shain*) and location-restricted employees who are unavailable for relocation (*gentei kinmuchi shain*)—and set a pay difference between them. The pay difference is called the relocation premium, which is a common concept in personnel management.

Based on the author's consulting experience, it seems that the relocation premium is about 10 to 20 percent of a position's monthly salary. However, it is difficult to simply compare companies' relocation premiums because their compensation designs vary. The relocation premiums are set mainly with the following methods.

1. Incorporating it in the level of the base salary
2. Incorporating it in regular pay increases
3. Setting an upper limit for promotion of location-restricted employees

First, the relocation premium can be set by creating upper or lower limits for the base salary. For example, a company may create an upper limit of 350,000 yen for location-unrestricted employees and another upper limit of 310,000 yen for location-restricted employees. The ability of location-unrestricted employees to reach higher salary levels results in a pay difference.

Second, the relocation premium can be built into pay increases. For example, location-unrestricted employees may receive a raise of 4,000 yen, whereas location-restricted employees with the same evaluation rating may receive a raise of 3,500 yen. Normally, the rationale for this difference is as follows: location-unrestricted employees receive higher pay raises because they gain more skills through a wider range of professional experience including those from relocation.

Third, the most easy-to-understand upper limit is one that does not allow location-restricted employees to be promoted to management positions. The common, fundamental idea is that managers gain skills by experiencing operations of multiple offices and having contact with various customers and employees. Also, one cannot deny the possibility that such an upper limit reflects a fixed idea of loyalty where managers rush to wherever they are needed whenever the company gives the order. However, there has been a trend in recent years to reexamine and change existing systems so that location-restricted employees can be promoted to management positions. For example, in 2016, AEON Co. Ltd. completely changed its personnel system and made it easier for location-restricted employees to be promoted to upper management positions (division manager, large-store

manager, or higher). The company had previously used a function qualification system, which had made it easy for location-unrestricted employees to gain experience as managers of small regional stores and consequently get promoted to upper management positions. Therefore, in effect, a ceiling existed to location-restricted employees' promotion. In response, the company introduced a post qualification system (*yakuwari tokyu seido*) in an attempt to eliminate the promotion gap resulting from whether employees had relocation experience.
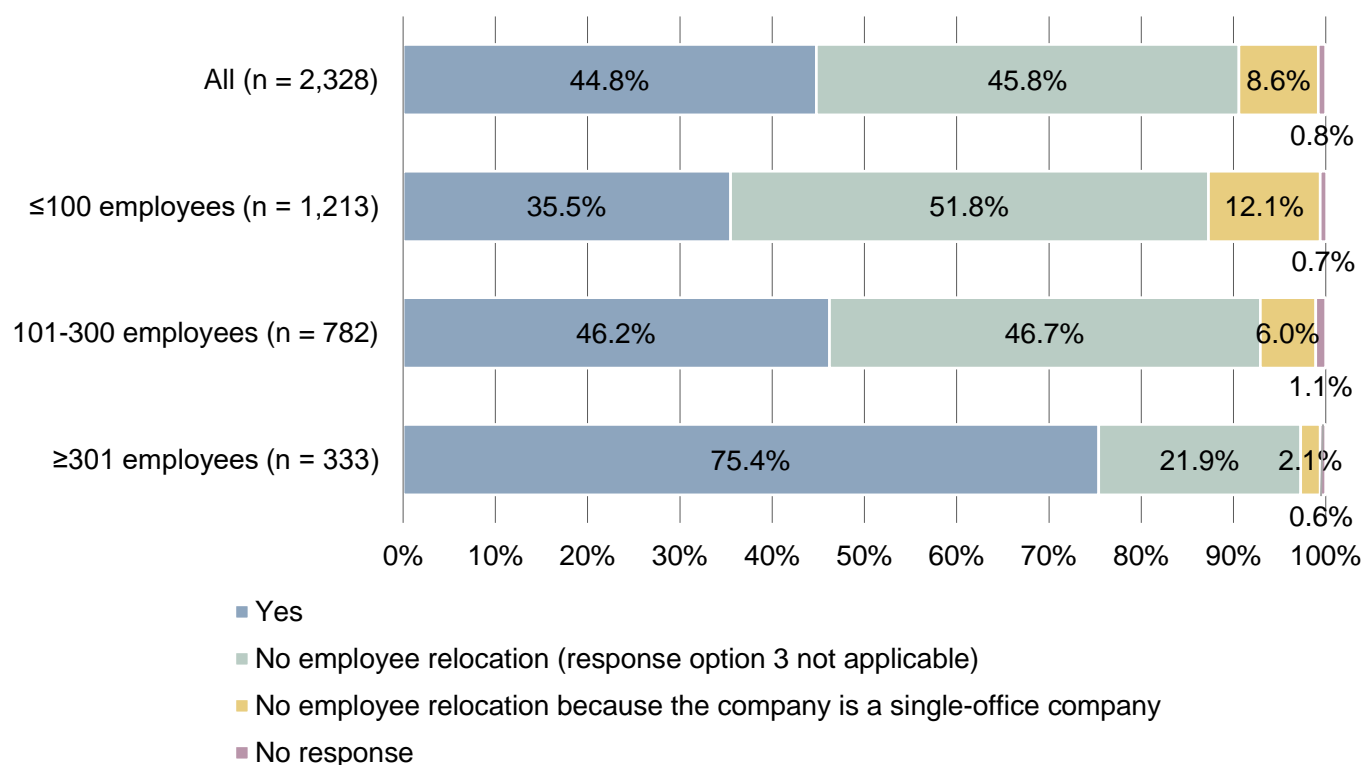
As AEON's case shows, the compensation gap between employees with relocation experience and those without it actually arises from the function qualification system. Under the system, employees are ranked based on their ability and are promoted as their skills grow. Since employees' skills grow as they gain work experience, the system tends to be advantageous to location-unrestricted employees who have many opportunities to gain a wide range of work experience through relocations. Based on the premise that location-unrestricted employees gain experience in exchange for risks associated with relocation, companies can provide a rationale for a difference in the level of the base salary and a gap in regular pay increase. This premise does not hold if a post qualification system is used instead of a function qualification system. The post qualification system is based on the idea that employees are rated according to the level of responsibility attached to their corporate positions. With this system, employees are evaluated based on what roles they play and whether they fulfill their roles, instead of what experience or skills they have gained. Therefore, the traditional rationale for the compensation gap between location-unrestricted employees and location-restricted employees can no longer be used. In other words, whether or not employees have had relocation experience can no longer be considered as a cause of the compensation gap, and the gap would be attributable to companies' personnel management policies. It may be possible to argue that the compensation gap does not arise from personnel management policy and is a premium to compensate for relocation risk. However, the use of allowances is more appropriate than base salary modification in compensating for the risks associated with life change or psychological pressure associated with relocation. The reason is that the base salaries reflect corporate ranks that are determined based on personnel management policy.

4. Actual Status of Employee Relocation and Issues Related to Work-Life Balance

According to a questionnaire survey of companies conducted by Mitsubishi UFJ Research and Consulting in 2016, 44.8 percent of companies conduct employee transfers that require residential relocation. Figure 1 shows that many companies use employee relocation as an employment management tool, though there are differences between companies of different sizes.[2]

Since employee relocation systems have significant impacts on employees and their families, issues related to work-life balance have long been pointed out. The following discusses the main issues.

Figure 1: Employee relocation

Category	Yes	No employee relocation (response option 3 not applicable)	No employee relocation because single-office	No response
All (n = 2,328)	44.8%	45.8%	8.6%	0.8%
≤100 employees (n = 1,213)	35.5%	51.8%	12.1%	0.7%
101-300 employees (n = 782)	46.2%	46.7%	6.0%	1.1%
≥301 employees (n = 333)	75.4%	21.9%	2.1%	0.6%

- ■ Yes
- ■ No employee relocation (response option 3 not applicable)
- ■ No employee relocation because the company is a single-office company
- ■ No response

Source: Mitsubishi UFJ Research and Consulting (2017). 2016 Survey Project to Understand Work-Family Balance: A Report and results of a Questionnaire Survey of Companies.

4.1 Impacts on Life Plan Design

Since employee relocation entails residential relocation, which is a significant life event, employee relocation often conflicts with employees' individual life plans. For example, when employee relocation coincides with a significant life event, such as marriage, childbirth, childrearing, or family caregiving, employees must choose between relocation and finding a new job. Another issue is that it is difficult for employees to make life plans because their companies do not explicitly specify how long they will work at their new offices. This often poses difficult in life plans, such as whether to choose solo relocation (i.e., relocation with no accompanying family members) or relocation with family members, whether to continue renting a residence, and whether to buy a house.

4.2 Economic Burdens of Solo Relocation

In the past, when male employees with families were ordered by their companies to relocate, they often chose to do so without accompanying family members. As noted above, most households are two-income households, and this fact gives rise to a new set of issues. If the husband and wife both work and if, say, the husband is ordered to relocate, the wife may have to move with him by taking temporary leave or giving up her job. If the couple decide that neither option is desirable for the wife's career development, then the husband has to relocate alone. Solo relocation, however, entails heavy economic burdens, including higher expenditures for housing, food, and health-related items. Although companies provide financial support in the form of solo

relocation allowances, solo relocation would likely have a major negative impact on family finances.

4.3 Decreased Family Communication

Another problem of solo relocation is that having separate residences can lead to decreased family communication and resulting deterioration of family life. Having come back to their original residence after living alone in a distant area for work for a long period of time, many employees find that they have failed to build good relationships with their now-grown children. A similar situation arises in the relationship between the husband and the wife, and many employees and their spouses struggle to picture their retirement life. Since sole relocation entails loss of space and time shared with family members, it significantly impacts the lives of relocated employees and their families.

5. Diversity Management and Employee Relocation Systems

Besides the traditional issues involving employee relocation systems discussed in the previous section, attention has been paid to new issues in recent years as an increasing number of companies have started diversity management, which has led to acceptance of diverse workers and various ways of working. This section discusses new issues arising from employee relocation systems from the standpoint of diversity management and examines ways to deal with them.

5.1 Issues Involving Employee Relocation Systems and Diversity Management

5.1.1 Women's Continued Employment and Career Development

The term "M-shaped curve" has been used to describe the employment situation of women. The term comes from a graph that plots women's employment rate against age group: the employment rate dips for age groups in which women often get married or have children, but is higher for age groups in which childrearing is typically less demanding. As seen in Figure 2, the dip in the M-shaped curve has become smaller and smaller in recent years. The reasons are considered to include expanded corporate measures for supporting work-life balance, an increase in the proportion of unmarried women, and the declining birth rate. Also, it should be noted that women's employment rate has increased for all age groups.

The increase in women's employment rate adds another aspect to relocation issues. As discussed above, the number of two-income households has increased, which has given rise to the problem that workers may have to quit their job because of their spouses' relocation. Even if companies have established mechanisms to support employees' childbirth and childrearing, companies cannot recoup resources invested in such support if these employees quit due to their spouses' relocation to distant areas. For women who continue working after a period of childbirth and childrearing and other women who hope to continue working like them in the future, some plan their career development and want to be promoted to management positions. Following the trend of promoting women's active participation, companies should aim for women to advance their careers. However, employee relocation stands in the way here, too. For women, especially those with children, relocation is a major obstacle to continued employment. Therefore, women's promotion is in effect restricted at companies that emphasize

employee relocation as part of personnel training or that use relocation to evaluate employees' aptitude for management.

In fact, data show a gender difference in terms of whether or not employees have relocation experience. According to a survey conducted by Mitsubishi UFJ Research and Consulting in December 2016, 28.3 percent of male regular employees have post-marriage relocation experience, whereas 12.3 percent of female regular employees have such experience. The government has set a goal of increasing the proportion of women in management positions to at least 30 percent by 2020. However, there is still a long way to go to achieve this goal as the proportion is 12.1 percent as of FY 2016 according to the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare.

Figure 2: Women's employment rate by age group
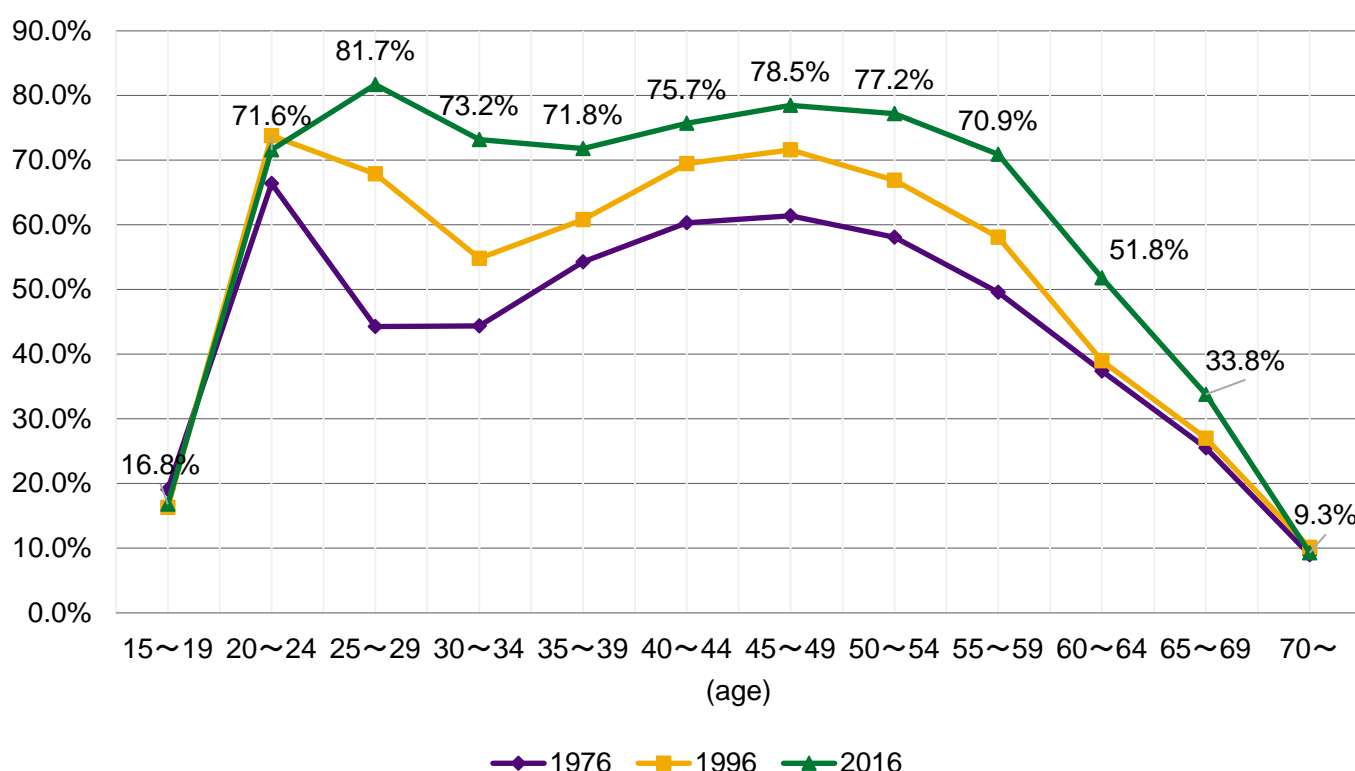
Source: Cabinet Office Gender Equality Bureau (2017). FY 2017 Whitepaper on Gender Equality

5.1.2 Limits to Addressing Employees' Individual Circumstances

Relocation issues are not limited to women. As population aging advances, a growing number of issues involving nursing care will arise as a direct result. Middle age is the time when people may need to provide care for their elderly parents. At the same time, middle-aged workers are often in management positions or are responsible for leading or training subordinates and are important to their companies. It is therefore not hard to imagine that more and more middle-aged employees will avoid relocation because of their need to provide family care. In addition, there will be employees who want to avoid relocation for other reasons such as their chronic illness, family responsibilities other than childrearing and family caregiving, and life plan design. According a survey conducted by the Research Project on Promotion of Work-Life Balance and Workplace Diversity of the Chuo Graduate School of Strategic Management, 45.1 percent of companies (the highest percentage) point to an

increased number of employees whose individual circumstances must be addressed as an issue in conducting employee relocations (Figure 3). Many companies already consider employees' circumstances and wishes when they decide to order employees to relocate, but companies still tend to prioritize their own situations. It is expected that as the number of employees whose individual circumstances need to be addressed increases, companies will reach a point where they can no longer waive relocation for employees with special circumstances.

Figure 3: Issues that companies consider problematic in conducting employee relocations
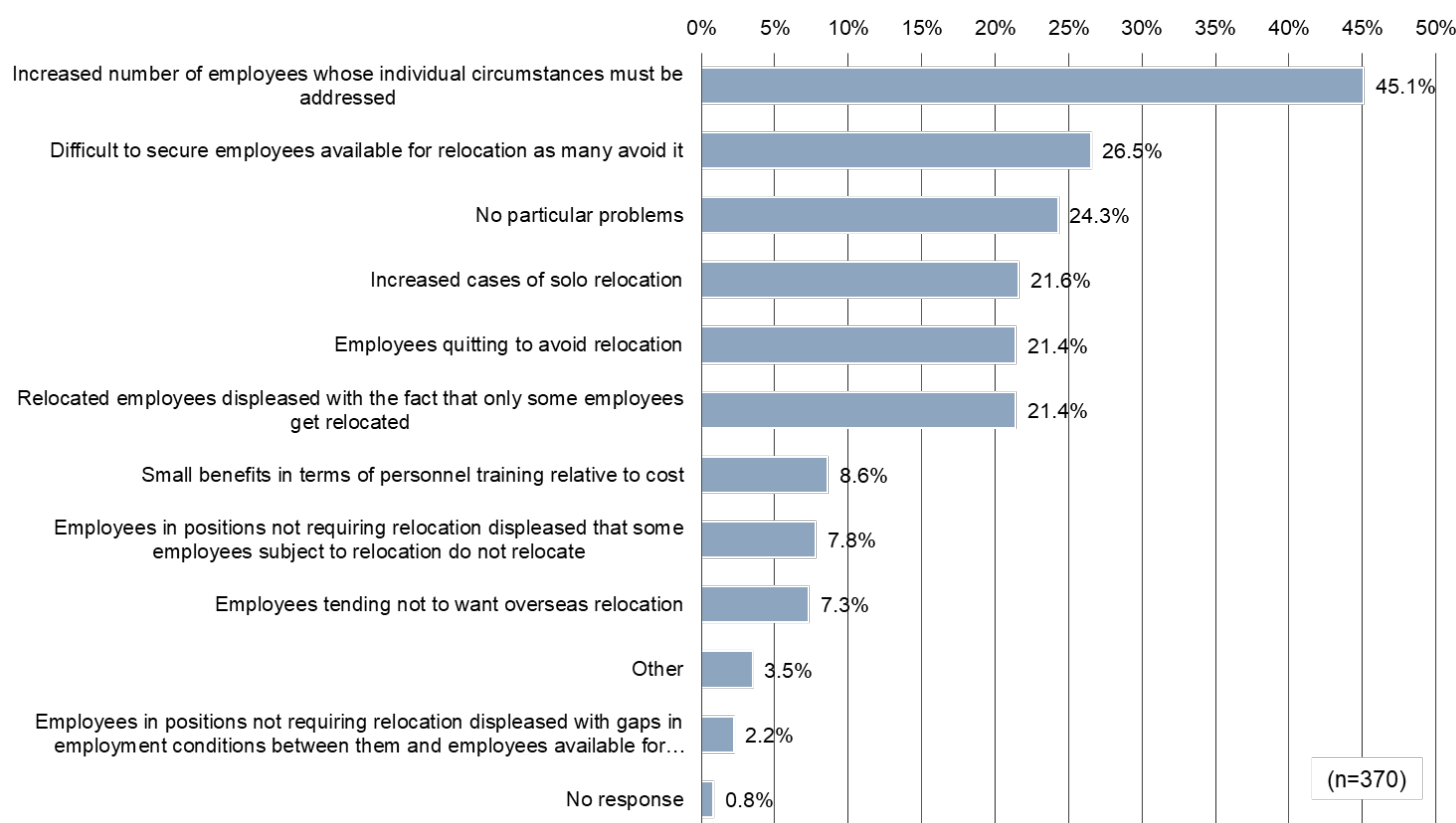
Source: Chuo Graduate School of Strategic Management, Research Project on Promotion of Work-Life Balance and Workplace Diversity (2017). Examination of Employee Relocation Policies Required for Promoting Diversity Management: A Research Outline and Questionnaire Survey Results.

5.2 Measures to Make Employee Relocation Systems Compatible with Diversity Management

What measures can companies take to make employee relocation systems compatible with diversity management? Various measures can be considered, ranging from fundamental measures including reexamination of employee relocation systems to small measures such as rule-making for addressing employees' individual circumstances.

5.2.1 Change in Personnel Management Policy

As discussed above, the fact that promotion or appointment to management positions requires relocation experience is strongly attributable to personnel management policies based on a function qualification system. As AEON's case shows, if companies shift from a function qualification system to a post qualification system and stop evaluating employees based on their relocation experience, they can eliminate a major obstacle to women's career advancement or promotion to management positions. However, the shift to a post qualification system cannot completely eliminate the need for relocation. At a company with multiple domestic production sites, for example, a person may need to have worked at several production sites in order to take on the role of general manager of production with responsibility for the operation of all of a company's factories. However, such posts requiring relocation experience are considered to be limited to upper management positions. Therefore, shifting to a post qualification system would be an effective measure that helps women overcome the relocation issue, develop their careers, and get appointed to management positions.

5.2.2 Reexamination of the Purposes of Employee Relocation Systems

How can companies deal with limitations to addressing employees' individual circumstances? Suspending relocation of some employees and accommodating employees' wishes concerning relocation periods, which are discussed below, are reasonable measures; however, it is not realistic to address the circumstances of all relevant employees if most of a company's employees are subject to relocation. To deal with the issue, companies can reexamine and change the number of employees who must be available for relocation. As discussed earlier, companies emphasize personnel training as a purpose of employee relocation systems, but this emphasis may be the main reason why so many employees are subject to relocation. If employee transfer without residential relocation can, to some extent, substitute for employee relocation in terms of personnel training, then the number of employees subject to relocation should become smaller.

Limiting the number of employees available for relocation means restricting the company's ability to internally coordinate the supply and demand for human resources. One way to solve this problem is to increase the number of location-restricted employees. As more and more workers today do not want to be relocated, having separate employment management systems for employees available for relocation and those unavailable for relocation would also be effective as a hiring strategy.

5.2.3 Multiple Career Path Systems

As discussed above, separate employment management systems can be set up for employees available for relocation and those unavailable for relocation. Such a mechanism is referred to as a multiple career path system. Companies commonly have two relevant categories: location-unrestricted employees and location-restricted employees. Some companies have additional categories that are set based on the geographical scope of relocation destinations, such as global employees who are available for overseas relocation and fixed-region employees who are available for relocation within a certain region. If a company adopts a multiple career path system, its employees can request assignment to their preferred path. In adopting a multiple career path system, companies need to implement ways to switch paths and ensure fair compensation across all career paths in order

to convince their employees that the system works fairly for all career paths. Even if a company adopts a post qualification system, it would need to put in place a monetary incentive for employees available for relocation (the aforementioned relocation premium) to compensate them for relevant risks and costs. In such cases, however, it would be desirable for companies to consider providing additional compensation to employees once they have actually relocated, instead of the traditional method of changing base salaries for different career paths.

5.2.4 Relocation Waivers

Companies can also suspend relocation orders for employees who have valid reasons such as childrearing, family caregiving, and health problems. Interested employees submit a request for a relocation waiver, and receive approval if the company deems the reason to be valid. If a company adopts this system, it should consider compensation differences between employees approved for a relocation waiver and employees who have actually been relocated. Also, if a company has adopted a multiple career path system and has set a compensation difference between location-unrestricted employees and location-restricted employees, how should it set the compensation of location-unrestricted employees who are approved for a relocation waiver? The company may temporarily provide the same compensation as location-restricted employees' or may continue with the compensation set for location-unrestricted employees if those approved for a relocation waiver have relocated at least once. Companies need to adjust differences in compensation so that they are consistent with other systems in place.

5.2.5 Accommodating Employees' Wishes and Presenting Projections Concerning Relocation Periods

Companies should listen to employees regarding periods when they are willing to be relocated as well as period when they do not want to be relocated. A fair number of companies consider relocation candidates' individual circumstances before they issue relocation orders. However, this is different from listening to all employees subject to relocation and learning about their circumstances. If companies know about employees' life plans in advance, that knowledge would be useful when they select employees to be relocated in the process of coordinating the supply and demand for human resources.

It should be noted that employees often want some guidelines that would enable them to foresee potential future relocations. In the case of overseas relocation, companies often specify the duration of the job assignment. But, in the case of domestic relocation, companies often do not explicitly set the duration of the job assignment or often extend it indefinitely. If companies can provide employees with information on how long a typical temporary relocation lasts or how many times employees typically relocate by a certain age, it would reduce employees' concerns and would make it easier for them to maintain balance between work and their life plans.

5.2.6 Internal Application Systems

Companies can set up an internal application system through which employees can apply for transfer to desired vacant posts. This approach is completely different from the existing notion of employee transfer. Traditionally, authority over personnel affairs resides in companies, and companies issue relevant orders to

employees. The internal application system, however, shifts the source of initial action: employees proactively indicate that they are interested in being transferred. From the standpoint of diversity management, this system is one that respects individual employees' preferences. At the same time, however, it must be noted that the system places limits on the scope of companies' discretion.

6. Future Employee Relocation Systems

As discussed in the previous sections, employee relocation systems in Japan effectively operated due to the country's rapid economic growth, the three symbols of Japanese-style corporate management (seniority-based salaries, lifetime employment, and company-based unions), function qualification systems, and the male-breadwinner model. Today's Japanese economy, however, is significantly different from one that existed during the period of rapid growth. Some observers say that having gone through a period of expansion and a period of maturity, the economy has entered a period of gradual decline. Consistent with this view, today's economic situations are completely different from those of the period when employee relocation systems supported Japan's economic growth. As workers' values and attributes become diverse, it is essential for companies to properly perform diversity management so that every employee can perform to his or her full potential. Personnel management has shifted from the one-track approach of the male-breadwinner era to the individual-oriented approach of the present, in which two-income households are prevalent. In the past, Japanese companies had substantial authority to issue relocation orders through the systems of seniority-based salaries and lifetime employment. However, now that the economy has matured and childrearing and family caregiving have become serious issues, the balance of power between companies and employees has shifted.

Employee relocation systems will continue to be essential mechanisms for coordinating the supply and demand for human resources. If companies intend to create environments that accept diverse human resources, it is difficult for them to continue the such coordination with the continued assumption that many employees relocate. A similar argument applies to the training aspect of employee relocation systems. Although employee relocation can play a role in professional training, companies cannot apply a training plan that assumes relocation of a wide range of employees. Today, as the trend shifts toward an individual-oriented approach to personnel management, companies have come to a point where they should examine the purpose and rationality of their employee relocation systems. Companies should also reconsider the role of the relocation premium when they reexamine their personnel management systems that assume employee relocation. If the number of employees in positions not requiring relocation increases, there would be an impact on personnel systems. In some cases, it may be more appropriate to shift from a function qualification system to a post qualification system to eliminate the compensation gap resulting from employees' availability and unavailability for relocation. Even if a company continues with a function qualification system, they should reduce disadvantages faced by employees unavailable for relocation, such as the promotion ceiling. To shift away from personnel management systems that assumes employee relocation, companies need to design systems that take into account the circumstances of employees unavailable for relocation.

The advantages of employee relocation systems cannot be completely set aside because of their disadvantages. In order to have diverse human resources, companies must accept various ways of working. The disadvantages of employee relocation reflect its strong influence on employees' lives and ways of working.

Fundamental measures to mitigate this influence include changing personnel management policy, reexamining the purposes of employee relocation, and limiting the number of employees subject to relocation. If companies find it difficult to take such fundamental measures, they should start with gradually setting rules that allow employees to exercise their right to choose. Companies should shift from order-based relocation systems to collaborative systems in which they actively, rather than passively, consider employees' circumstances and wishes and make decisions accordingly. By doing so, companies can make a fundamental shift to individual-oriented personnel management that accommodates employees' values and life plans. If companies can successfully realize individual-oriented personnel systems, they can then develop the foundation of diversity management.

Not every employee can relocate. Though this is an obvious truth, traditional relocation policies have not necessarily addressed it in a serious manner. The time has come for companies to operate under the new concept of diversity management, take a fresh look at the role of employee relocation, and explore new employee relocation systems and appropriate personnel management methods.

Endnotes

1. The company survey asked the respondent companies about their branch offices. The relevant question was answered by only companies that have domestic or overseas offices that need personnel transfers (requiring residential relocation) from the headquarters. The question asking about the importance of different reasons for employee relocation had two response sections—one for employees in their 20s or 30s and another for employees in their 40s.

2. Whether or not companies have employee relocation systems depends on their number of employees and thus on the number of offices. Since employee relocation occurs between two offices that are geographically separated, there is no employee relocation at single-office companies. It is natural that companies with more employees have more offices, and this is why companies with more employees are more likely to conduct employee relocations.

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Report

Trends in LGBT Policy and Corporate Responses to LGBT Issues

By Yasushi Hattori, Analyst

Abstract

This paper aims to clarify the way gender diversity is and will be addressed in Japan. To achieve this aim, this paper describes trends in LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) policy and corporate responses to LGBT issues, and examines future prospects and challenges. Section 2 discusses LGBT policies at the national and local government levels since the early 2000s. LGBT policies have traditionally prohibited discrimination within the framework of protection of human rights and gender equality. Yet, as recent examples show, policy measures are now being implemented not only to prohibit discrimination but also to provide support for LGBT people, and LGBT policies are being managed within the framework of respecting diversity in some cases. Section 3 focuses on corporate responses to LGBT issues and discusses the needs of LGBT workers and relevant efforts made by companies. Companies should address LGBT issues in terms of LGBT employees' feeling of being discriminated against and their willingness to work. Although some companies promoting diversity in the workplace have made progress in responding to LGBT issues, in general LGBT workers have not enjoyed what they want for their workplace. More case studies should be conducted to investigate what and how various measures may be implemented in a concrete manner. In particular, studies should focus on finding out what prompts companies' responses to LGBT issues. Government policies and corporate responses should be planned carefully so that they will not be based on misunderstanding and unfavorable to LGBT people. The first step in seeing things from their perspective would be to accept gender diversity. An important question is how our society faces the fact that gender identity is not limited to men and women.

Introduction

This paper aims to clarify how gender diversity is addressed in Japan and how it will be addressed in the future. To achieve this aim, this paper describes trends in LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) policy and corporate responses to LGBT issues and examines future prospects and challenges. Section 1 discusses main concepts related to gender diversity and provides basic relevant information. Section 2 discusses LGBT policies at the national and local government levels since the early 2000s and examines future prospects and relevant research topics. Section 3 focuses on corporate responses to LGBT issues and discusses the needs of LGBT workers and relevant efforts made by companies.

1. Gender Diversity

Besides physiological sex, concepts relevant to gender issues include gender identity (psychological gender), sexual orientation (a pattern of sexual attraction to people of a certain gender or genders), and expressed gender (one's chosen pattern of behavior and self-presentation). There can be unlimited gender identities depending on how these factors are combined.

Among them, the majority are men who identify as male and are attracted to women, and women who identify as female and are attracted to men. Other people with different gender identities are called sexual minorities. LGBT people, that is, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people, are sexual minorities.[1] Lesbian women are attracted to other women; gay men are attracted to other men; bisexual people are attracted to both men and women; and transgender people have a gender identity different from their assigned physiological sex.

In the legal and policy fields, the term "LGBT" is not often used in Japan. The terms "sexual orientation" and "gender identity" are used instead, and laws and policies prohibit discrimination based on people's sexual orientation and gender identity. It should be noted, however, that the term "LGBT" is sometimes used in public administration.

Research institutes and private-sector companies have conducted studies with LGBT people and other sexual minorities in recent years. A survey conducted by the Diversity Lab of Dentsu Inc. in 2015 shows that 7.6 percent of 69,989 respondents were LGBT people. Also, a survey conducted by the Japan LGBT Research Institute shows that 8.0 percent and 5.9 percent of 89,366 respondents were sexual minorities and LGBT people, respectively. Based on results like these, it is estimated that about one in thirteen people is a sexual minority or an LGBT person—a proportion similar to the prevalence of left-handedness or type AB blood.

2. Trends in LGBT Policies

How have Japan's policies addressed LGBT issues? This section first discusses policies that the national and local governments have implemented to support LGBT people. It then summarizes the characteristics of recent trends in local government policies and their future prospects and considers how the national government positions LGBT policies.

2.1 LGBT Policies at the National Government Level [2]

The Act on Special Cases in Handling Gender Status for Persons with Gender Identity Disorder., which was enacted in 2003, is one of the legislative responses to LGBT issues. Before the law was created, people with a medical diagnosis of gender identity disorder who had undergone sex reassignment surgery demanded the right to change the gender listed in their family register (*koseki*). The law allows such changes under certain conditions, such as "permanently lacking functioning gonads" due to sex reassignment surgery. Once the registered gender is changed, the person can marry a person of the other gender. From 2004 to 2016, there were 7,134 applications for change of the registered gender, and 6,906 applications were approved.[3] Incidentally, the terms "gender identity" and "sexual orientation" were not used in the law. It seems that the law was primarily intended to avoid legal confusion and resulting difficulties rather than accepting gender diversity.

The government has addressed LGBT issues within the framework of protecting human rights and gender equality. With regard to human rights, the Basic Plan for Human Rights Education and Awareness, which was created based on the Act on the Promotion of Human Rights Education and Human Rights Awareness-Raising., states that various measures will be considered for addressing issues involving sexual orientation, including discrimination against gay, lesbian, and bisexual people. That statement, however, appears in the "others" section concerning human rights protection, which seems to suggest that the government places low priority on sexual orientation issues, and that addressing LGBT issues is not an established policy area.

The framework of gender equality also addresses LGBT issues. The Third Basic Plan for Gender Equality, which was created in 2010, states that "consideration from the perspective of respecting human rights is needed in relation to people, whether men or women, who face hardships due to issues like their sexual orientation or gender identity disorder. This means we will promote measures like human rights education." According to the plan, the Cabinet Office, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), and related agencies conducted studies to understand the current situation and promote human rights education. In addition, as the ministry in charge, the Ministry of Justice promotes awareness-raising, consultation, and support activities to prevent prejudice and discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. In the Fourth Basic Plan for Gender Equality, which was created in 2015, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW) became one of the ministries in charge.

Measures taken by the Human Rights Bureau of the Ministry of Justice involve awareness-raising and consultation. To raise awareness of gender issues, the bureau has created booklets and has organized symposiums in recent years. In April 2015, the bureau published a 30-minute educational video on LGBT issues, which included a dramatization of issues that would arise in school and workplace settings.[4] According to the bureau's website, when the bureau is consulted about an incident in which a person's human rights may be violated because of his or her sexual orientation or gender identity, the bureau investigates the incident and takes appropriate actions.

Regarding education, the Fourth Basic Plan states that the government shall improve schools' ability to provide consultation to students with gender identity disorder or other gender-related issues and develops government support systems in cooperation with relevant organizations. MEXT conducted a survey of schools to understand how they addressed issues related to gender identity disorder and published in April 2016 a guideline entitled, "Implementing Detailed Measures for Students Concerning Gender Identity Disorder." The guideline not

only discusses measures to address issues involving gender identity disorder, but also explains sexual orientation and calls for consideration to be given to gay, lesbian, and bisexual people.

In the area of employment, in August 2016, the MHLW amended its sexual harassment guideline (Guidelines Concerning Measures to be Taken by Employers in terms of Employment Management with Regard to Problems Caused by Sexual Harassment in the Workplace). The amended guideline explicitly states that it applies to workplace sexual harassment regardless of the victim's sexual orientation or gender identity, and thereby clarifies that sexual harassment applies to derogatory comments and unwanted behavior of a sexual nature toward LGBT people.

2.2 LGBT Policies at the Local Government Level

Local governments, too, have addressed LGBT issues within the framework of protecting human rights and gender equality. As local governments of various regions amended their basic policies on human rights measures and ordinances concerning promotion of gender equality, they began to use terms such as "sexual orientation," "gender identity," and "sexual minorities" in these policies and ordinances and showed their intention to prohibit discrimination and protect people's rights.

Initial efforts for protection of human rights included the use of terms such as "homosexuals," "gender identity disorder," and "sexual minorities" in, for example, the Tokyo Prefecture Basic Policy on Human Rights Measures (implemented in 2000), the Aichi Prefecture Action Plan Concerning Human Rights Education and Awareness-Raising (implemented in 2001), the Osaka Prefecture Basic Policy on Promoting Human Rights Measures (implemented in 2001), the Sagamihara City Guideline on Promoting Human Rights Measures (implemented in 2001), and the Hokkaido Prefecture Basic Policy on Promoting Human Rights Measures (implemented in 2002). By March 2015, protection of the human rights of LGBT people was mentioned in 34 prefectures' basic policies on promoting human rights.

While the protection of human rights was merely mentioned as a policy stance in basic policies and plans such as those listed above, prohibition of discrimination against LGBT people and protection of their rights tended to be explicitly stated in ordinances concerning gender equality. For example, Sakai City in Osaka Prefecture enacted an ordinance on creating a gender-equal society in 2002. It explicitly lists points that should be considered with regard to the human rights of men, women, people with gender identity disorder, intersex people (people born with ambiguous sexual characteristics), and other people. Miyakonojo City in Miyazaki Prefecture enacted an ordinance on creating a gender-equal society in 2003, clarifying the city's intention to protect the rights of LGBT people, stating that the human rights of all people should be respected regardless of their sex or gender identity. (In passing, the Miyakonojo City ordinance was amended in 2006, and the expression "regardless of their sex or gender identity" was removed; however, the phrase "the human rights of all people" has been used to this day.[5])

In addition to declaring the rights of LGBT people and their protection in ordinances and action plans, local governments have implemented concrete measures since the spring of 2015. As the forerunner in this trend, Shibuya Ward issued the Shibuya Ward Ordinance for Promoting a Society That Respects Gender Equality and Diversity and began to officially recognize partnerships between same-sex couples by issuing certifications to

them. The ordinace states that relationships registered in this way are essentially equivalent to marriage between a man and a woman. Following suit, Setagaya Ward began to issue "Partnership Oath" certificates as a measure to recognize same-sex partnerships. Setagaya Ward's action is not based on an ordinance, but is based on the Outline of the Partnership Oath Process in Setagaya Ward. Other municipalities that recognize same-sex partnerships include Iga City, Takarazuka City, Naha City, and Sapporo City. By November 2017, Shibuya Ward had issued partnership certificates to 24 couples, and Setagaya Ward had issued certificates of partnership oath to 56 couples.

Besides recognizing same-sex partnerships, local governments have taken other concrete measures. The Shibuya Ward Action Plan for Promoting a Society with Gender Equality and Diversity, which was created in 2017, states that the municipality promotes human rights education, raises teachers' awareness of relevant issues, and provides training to local government employees in order to promote people's understanding of LGBT issues. Setagaya Ward explicitly states prohibition of discrimination against LGBT people in its contracts with various contractors.

Even if they do not officially recognize same-sex partnerships, some local governments provide training to their employees, declare support for LGBT people, provide consultations, or run LGBT community spaces. Also, because of the guideline for addressing LGBT issues at schools that was issued by MEXT in 2016, an increasing number of local governments have organized training seminars for educators or have distributed informational materials to them.

Table 1: LGBT measures by local governments since 2016

	Local government	Measure taken
April 2016	Iga City, Mie Prefecture	Registered same-sex partnership certification program
	Mie Prefecture	The education board distributed LGBT-related instructional materials to teachers.
	Kunitachi City, Tokyo Prefecture	Organized LGBT seminars for city employees and city assembly members
June	Takarazuka City, Hyogo Prefecture	Started a registered same-sex partnership certification program
July	Fukuoka Prefecture	Started a domestic violence hotline for men and LGBT people
	Naha City, Okinawa Prefecture	Started a same-sex partnership certification program
	Osaka City	Expanded progressive LGBT-related efforts to all departments as part of new measures for protecting human rights
August	Seki City, Gifu Prefecture	Declared support for LGBT people
September	Takasaki City, Gunma Prefecture	The board of education organized LGBT seminars for principals of the elementary schools and junior high schools.
October	Mito City, Ibaraki Prefecture	Organized LGBT seminars for city employees
November	Chiba City, Chiba Prefecture	Started to allow city employees with same-sex partners to take marriage leave
	Miyazaki City, Miyazaki Prefecture	Organized LGBT seminars for city employees
January 2017	Urasoe City, Okinawa Prefecture	Declared support for LGBT people
	Okinawa City, Okinawa Prefecture	The Social Welfare Council opened an LGBT consultation center.
	Naha City, Okinawa Prefecture	Organized LGBT seminars for the principals and teachers of all elementary and junior high schools in the city
	Fukushima Prefecture	An amendment proposal for the Basic Plan for Gender Equality, which included concrete measures such as creation of a consultation channel and implementation of school education programs for better understanding of LGBT issues, was approved.
	Gunma Prefecture	Created booklets on LGBT issues and distributed them through schools
	Niigata City, Niigata Prefecture	Organized LGBT seminars mainly for counter-service employees
February	Miyagi Prefecture	The Basic Plan for Gender Equality explicitly mentions consideration given to LGBT people.
	Itoman City, Okinawa Prefecture	Organized LGBT seminars for city employees
	Kochi City, Kochi Prefecture	The board of education organized LGBT seminars.
April	Bunkyo Ward, Tokyo Prefecture	Created service guidelines for city employees and teachers so that sexual ministries do not receive discriminatory comments or treatment at municipal service counters and schools
June	Sapporo City, Hokkaido Prefecture	Started a partnership oath program
August	Toyoaki City, Aichi Prefecture	Declared support for LGBT people

Source: *Oriigin* (2017, Spring) and LGBT-related news (Out Japan)

Table 2: The number of registered partnership certificates issued (as of November 2017)

Municipality	Number of couples receiving certificates
Shibuya Ward	24 couples
Setagaya Ward	56 couples
Iga City	4 couples
Takarazuka City	0 couple
Naha City	18 couples
Sapporo City	31 couples

Source: The survey report on Shibuya Ward registered partnership certification (Shibuya Ward, 2017)

2.3 LGBT Policies at the Local Government Level: Characteristics and Future Prospects

There are two major characteristics of LGBT policies implemented by local governments since the spring of 2015. First, the concreteness of measures has changed. Traditional measures called for prohibition of discrimination or gave consideration to sexual minorities, but lacked concrete actions to ensure comprehensive widespread implementation. In recent years, however, as national government agencies widely disseminate information and prepare training materials, it has become possible for local governments to provide training for their employees and educators. As employees' understanding of relevant issues improves, local governments can provide more direct support to sexual minorities, including setting up consultation services and organizing community spaces. Recognizing same-sex partnerships is also considered a specific measure to take. It is expected that local governments will continue to implement concrete measures to prohibit discrimination and promote understanding within the limits of their authority.

Second, the positioning of LGBT policies has changed. As discussed above, LGBT issues were traditionally addressed as part of measures to protect human rights and promote gender equality. However, recent LGBT policies are somewhat different. For example, the aforementioned Shibuya Ward ordinance addresses LGBT issues based on the principle of respecting diversity, albeit within the framework of gender equality. Municipalities such as Iga City and Naha City have used the term "gender diversity." LGBT policies are increasingly positioned within the framework of promoting the social principle of respecting diversity.

The fact that LGBT policies have come to be associated with the concept of diversity is related to the increasing prevalence of the idea of respecting various types of diversity at the government level or to the wide acceptance of diversity policies. Also, in a limited number of cases, local governments promoting LGBT policies reorganized organizational structures under the theme of diversity.[6]

In the future, if LGBT measures become more concrete and a set of measures are developed, addressing LGBT issues will become an established policy area, and local governments will not be able to set up proper systems within the existing framework of gender equality between men and women. In such cases, local governments can introduce the concept of diversity in their policies as Osaka City and Shibuya Ward did; however, its advantages and disadvantages will need to be discussed.

2.4 Research Topics Related to National LGBT Policies

At the national level, the Third Basic Plan for Gender Equality specifies measures to eliminate discrimination attributable to sexual orientation or gender identity. However, whether the national government should maintain the current positioning of LGBT policies is topic of future discussions.

Why was the concept of gender identity or sexual orientation included in the framework of gender equality in the first place? One answer to the question is that women's rights and LGBT people's rights were treated in a similar manner in the context of eliminating prejudice and discrimination based on prevailing ideas about gender in a male-centric society.[7] However, another answer could be that people tended to mix up male-female issues with LGBT issues due to their poor understanding of LGBT issues.

If the reason why LGBT issues are addressed in the framework of gender equality is to shift away from common ideas about gender in a male-centric society, focus is put on comparison between typical men and others, rather than on understanding gender diversity.[8] Also, if people treat male-female issues and LGBT issues in the same manner because both are gender-related issues, they have a poor understanding of gender diversity.

Another question concerning the policy-making process is whether consensus was reached among people with different values. For example, at the local government level, when Miyakonojo City amended the relevant ordinance in 2006, there were criticisms against treating women's rights and homosexuals' rights equally.[9]

Another issue that needs further examination is whether LGBT policies can be implemented effectively and sufficiently in the framework of gender equally. The existence of the double-minority problem can explain the theory behind the positioning of LGBT measures in the framework of gender equality.[10] For example, among LGBT people, lesbian women are disadvantaged relative to both straight and gay men, and are also disadvantaged relative to heterosexual women. It is therefore thought that promoting gender equality leads, albeit partially, to advancement of the rights of LGBT people. However, current policies do not seem to be intended to partially or indirectly support LGBT people through efforts to realize gender equality. For example, the Fourth Basic Plan for Gender Equality distinguishes the case in which people face difficulties because of their sexual orientation or gender identity from the case in which women face difficulties for being female.[11]

It seems impossible to use only the framework designed for male-female issues to sufficiently examine measures that address issues specific to LGBT people. There should be a policy framework that can deal with gender diversity in order to address issues surrounding official recognition of same-sex partnerships and children of same-sex couples, support for children of LGBT people as well as the parents of these children, and supporting elderly people who are sexual minorities and live alone. Further consideration is required for this issue.

**3. Corporate Measures for Addressing LGBT Issues**

LGBT people tend to face difficulties in the workplace. What kind of workplace is friendly to gender diversity? What are obstacles to creating such a diversity-friendly workplace?

3.1 Needs of LGBT People

What are workplace issues involving LGBT people and their relationships with non-LGBT people? A survey
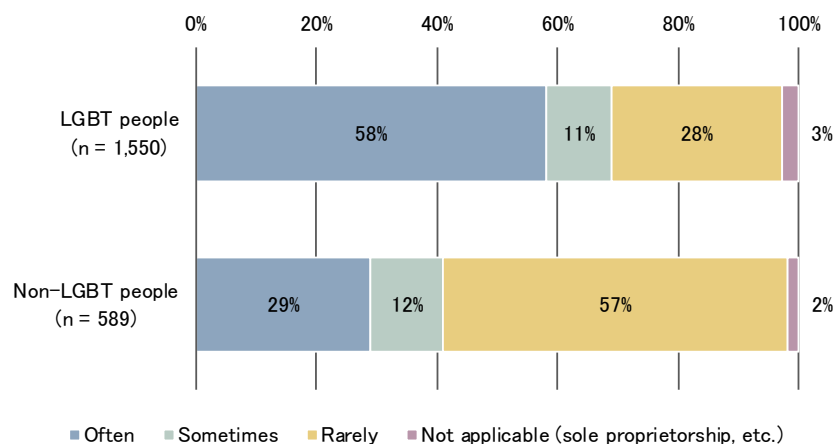
conducted by Nijiiro Diversity, an incorporated NPO, in cooperation with the International Christian University Center for Gender Studies makes it possible to compare workplace-related matters between LGBT people and non-LGBT. Figure 1 shows the level of work motivation of these people. The proportion of people with a low level of motivation is 14 percent for non-LGBT people, 24 percent for LGB people and others, and 27 percent for transgender people. Figure 2 shows the frequency of hearing a discriminatory comment or seeing a discriminatory act. Of the non-LGBT people, 57 percent answered "rarely," whereas 58 percent of LGBT people answered "often." This result reflects an awareness gap (i.e., comments and acts that non-LGBT people do not consider discriminatory are perceived as discriminatory by LGBT people) and the difference between LGBT people and non-LGBT people in terms of sensitivity to discriminatory comments and acts. The survey also reveals that workers find it difficult to discuss workplace discrimination with colleagues or superiors.

Figure 1: Work motivation of LGBT people and non-LGBT people
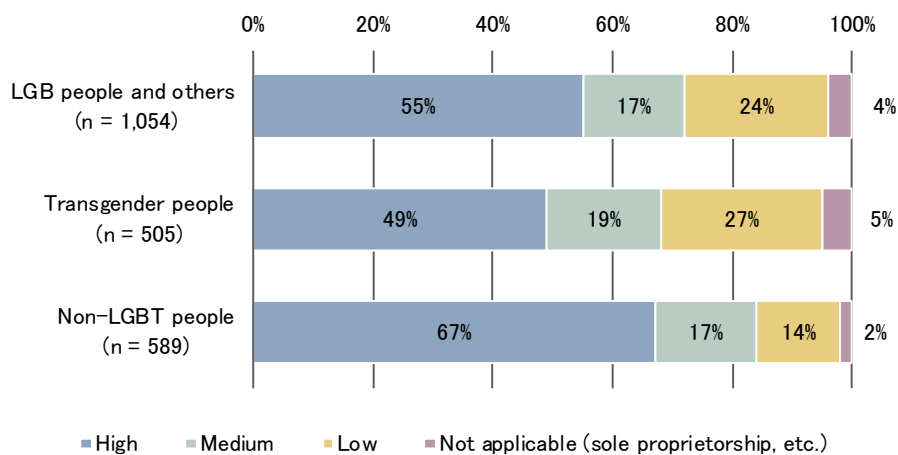
Source: 2016 Questionnaire Survey on Workplace Conditions Related to LGBT Issues (Nijiiro Diversity and International Christian University (ICU) Center for Gender Studies, 2016)

Figure 2: The frequency of hearing a discriminatory comment or seeing a discriminatory act (LGBT people, non-LGBT people)

Source: Nijiiro Diversity and ICU Center for Gender Studies (2016)

9

Figure 3 shows LGBT people's wishes for their workplace. Overall, LGBT people most want their same-sex partners to be treated as spouses for corporate benefit purposes, followed by an explicit written statement about prohibition of discrimination and management's pledge of support and consideration given to transgender employees including people with gender identity disorder.

Figure 3: LGBT people's wishes about their workplace
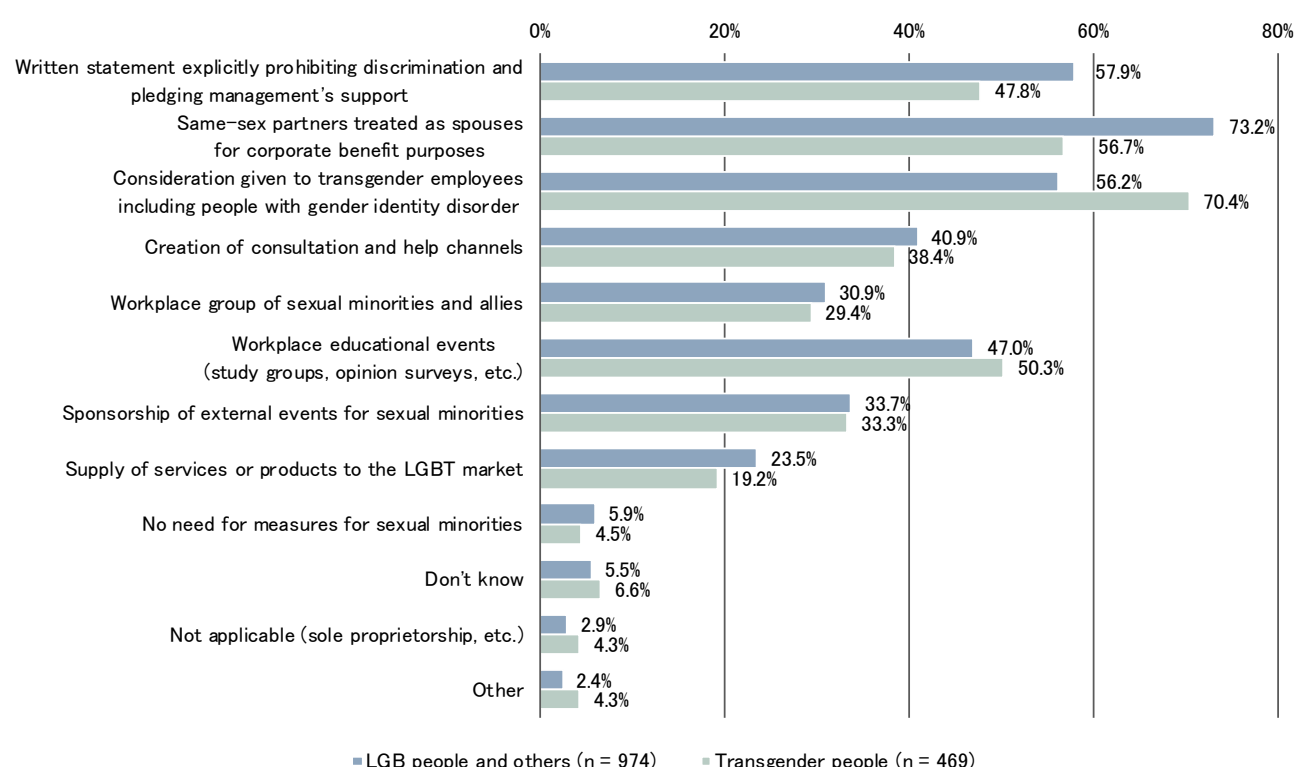
Source: Nijiiro Diversity and ICU Center for Gender Studies (2016)

3.2 Ideal Corporate Measures to Address LGBT Issues

What kinds of measures should companies take? The following discusses the PRIDE indices proposed by "work with Pride," a voluntary group of private-sector companies and incorporated NPOs. The PRIDE indices were created to evaluate companies' and other organizations' efforts to support LGBT people, and awards are given to progressive companies based on the indices. The five major indices are (1) "policy" (for action plans); (2) "representation" (for sexual minority communities); (3) "inspiration" (for educational activities); (4) "development" (for personnel systems and programs); and (5) engagement/empowerment (for social contributions and public relations activities). These indices can also be applied to corporate efforts such as promotion of women's active participation, diversity management, and employee-health management, which shows that addressing LGBT issues is not a special management measure.

The group presents examples of concrete measures to be taken by companies, which mainly focus on issues specific to LGBT people. They include clarifying prohibition of sexual harassment and discrimination based on sexual orientation; declaring a policy to create an LGBT-friendly workplace and provide LGBT-friendly customer

services; implementing a program in which employees can declare to be "allies" of (or express their support for) LGBT people on the corporate social networking service; supporting employees' voluntary effort to create a community of LGBT people and their allies; setting up internal and external consultation channels; organizing training sessions led by an internal or external lecturer; including same-sex partners in the definition of spouses who are covered by company benefits; and creating a comfortable workplace which includes restrooms that can be used in a stress-free manner.

3.3 Situations Involving Corporate Measures for Addressing LGBT Issues

How have companies actually implemented measures to address LGBT issues. Between December 2016 and February 2017, Mitsubishi UFJ Research and Consulting sent survey questionnaires on diversity promotion to 3,693 listed companies and received 168 valid responses. The questionnaires asked how companies understand diversity issues and promote diversity and how they meet the needs of workers with various attributes.

Figure 4 shows corporate policies regarding LGBT employees. The proportion of companies taking active measures for LGBT people was 3.6 percent, whereas the proportion of companies merely complying with legal requirements was 27.4 percent. Of the companies, 23.2 percent are considering future plans or planning to start them (Figure 5). The result shows that although corporate efforts to address LGBT issues have just begun, there are a certain number of companies that feel the necessity to take proper actions.

Figure 4: Situations involving corporate measures for addressing LGBT issues
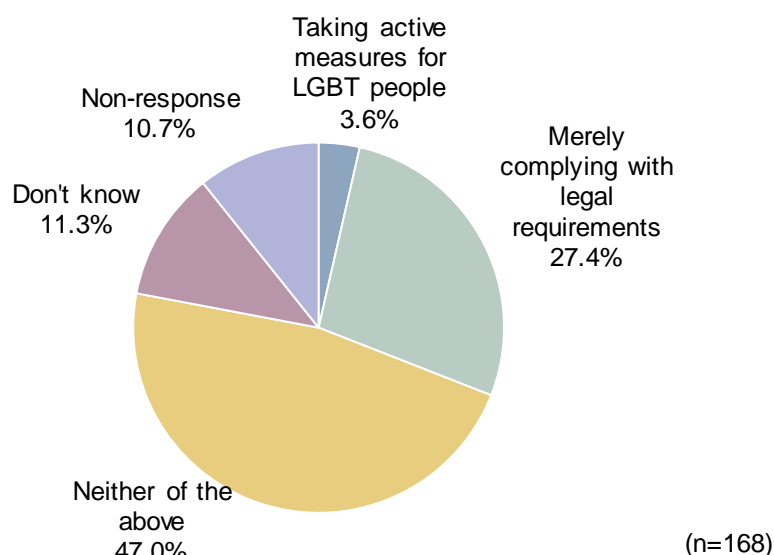

Source: Questionnaire Survey on Diversity Promotion by Companies (Mitsubishi UFJ Research and Consulting, 2017)

Figure 5: Future corporate measures for addressing LGBT issues

(n=168)

Source: Mitsubishi UFJ Research and Consulting (2017)
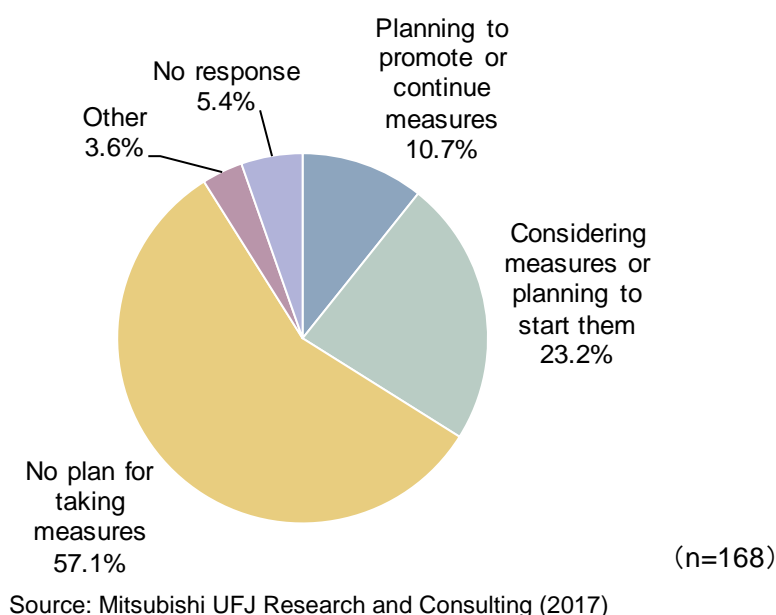
Many of the companies addressing LGBT issues tend to be highly conscious of diversity promotion. As Figure 6 shows, the level of corporate efforts to address LGBT issues depends on whether companies use the term "diversity" in their workplace policies and measures.[12] As discussed above, in cases of local governments, there is a connection between LGBT policies and the principle of respecting diversity. Similarly, companies' efforts to address LGBT issues seem to be highly correlated with their efforts to promote diversity.

Figure 6: Situations involving measures for addressing LGBT issues (by type of diversity promotion)
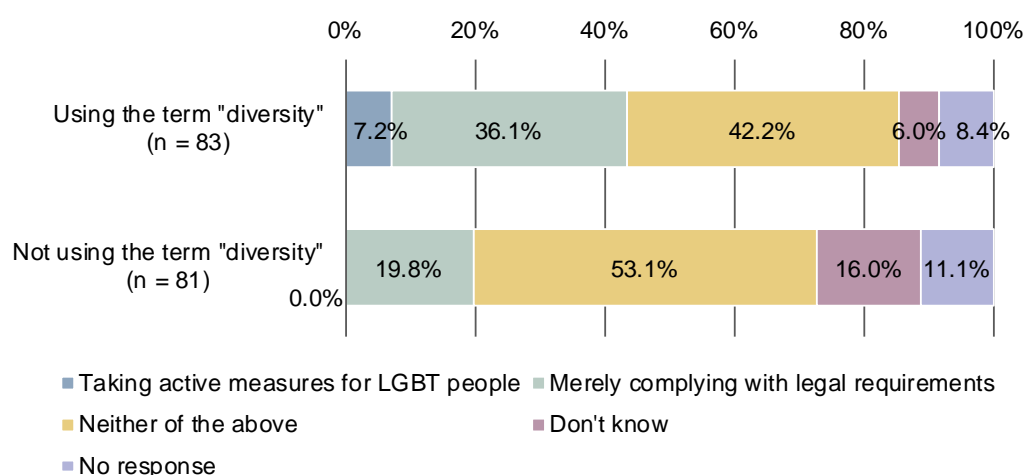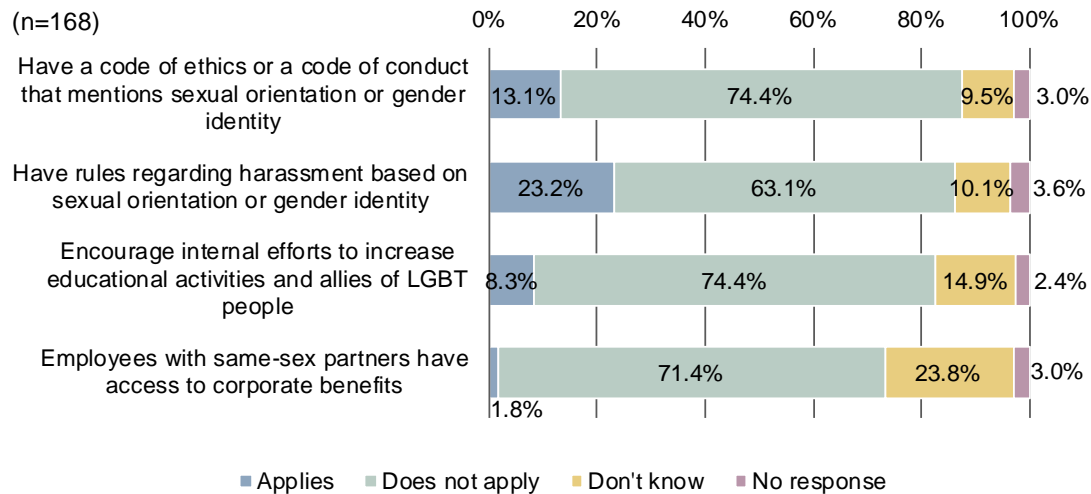

Source: Mitsubishi UFJ Research and Consulting (2017)

Figure 7 shows concrete LGBT measures taken by companies. According to the same survey conducted by Mitsubishi UFJ Research and Consulting, 3.1 percent of companies have a code of ethics or a code of conduct that mentions sexual orientation or gender identity, and 23.2 percent of companies have rules regarding harassment based on sexual orientation or gender identity. Also, in-house educational activities or efforts to

increase the number of allies of LGBT people are conducted at 8.3 percent of companies, and employees with same-sex partners can receive benefits at 1.8 percent of companies.

Figure 7: LGBT measures taken by companies

(n=168)

Measure	Applies	Does not apply	Don't know	No response
Have a code of ethics or a code of conduct that mentions sexual orientation or gender identity	13.1%	74.4%	9.5%	3.0%
Have rules regarding harassment based on sexual orientation or gender identity	23.2%	63.1%	10.1%	3.6%
Encourage internal efforts to increase educational activities and allies of LGBT people	8.3%	74.4%	14.9%	2.4%
Employees with same-sex partners have access to corporate benefits	1.8%	71.4%	23.8%	3.0%

■ Applies ■ Does not apply ■ Don't know ■ No response

Source: Mitsubishi UFJ Research and Consulting (2017)

Among the various measures, there are differences in terms of implementation. A relatively large proportion of companies address LGBT issues in their code of conduct, corporate rules, and anti-harassment rules, partly because their sexual harassment guidelines explicitly state that they apply to sexual harassment against LGBT people. In contrast, a relatively small proportion of companies implement measures that cannot be administered solely by staff in charge of personnel affairs. In-house educational activities require people who take the initiative, be they LGBT people or allies. Also, decisions concerning whether corporate benefits cover same-sex partners require coordination between various corporate programs and the needs of relevant workers. Treating same-sex partners as spouses for corporate benefit purposes is most wanted by LGBT people but is the most difficult issue for companies.

3.4 Future Corporate Measures for Addressing LGBT Issues

What is difficult in addressing LGBT issues is the fact that these workers are often "invisible." Workplace colleagues of an LGBT person often do not know whether someone is a sexual minority, and the personnel department would have trouble figuring out who are LGBT employees. Unless LGBT people speak up, their issues will not be recognized as workplace issues. Many LGBT people, however, find it difficult to discuss these issues with colleagues or superiors. In such situations, there seem to be two ways in which workplace measures for addressing LGBT issues can be initiated.

First, management and the personnel department start examining the workplace environment, assuming that there are "invisible" LGBT employees. To accept gender diversity, companies should take into account the potential existence of "invisible" LGBT employees and implement various relevant measures, even if a company thinks that it does not have any LGBT employees. Though this approach, companies can actually amend relevant

rules and organize successful training seminars.

Second, in a more realistic scenario, something may trigger dialogue between a company and its LGBT employees. At many companies that take measures to address LGBT issues, LGBT people and their allies often get involved in these measures. There have been cases in which a company started treating same-sex partners as spouses after receiving requests from LGBT people. Case studies are needed to understand how dialogue starts among management, LGBT employees, and allies at companies that promote measures to address LGBT issues.

4. Conclusion

This paper aimed to clarify the way gender diversity is and will be addressed in Japan. To achieve this aim, this paper described trends in LGBT policies at the national and local government levels and corporate responses to LGBT issues and examines future challenges. This paper's analysis shows that at the both societal and corporate levels, addressing LGBT issues is deeply connected with the question of how to approach respect and promotion of diversity.

Since the early 2000s, the government has presented guidelines on LGBT policies which include prohibition of discrimination under the banner of protecting human rights. In more recent years, the government has increasingly implemented concrete measures. In some cases, local governments have shifted away from the traditional policy framework and have promoted LGBT policies under the principle of respecting diversity. Future studies should organize points of discussion and investigate policies promoted under the framework of protecting human rights and gender equality and policies promoted under the principle of respecting diversity.

As for companies' efforts to address LGBT issues, the reality is that companies have not met the needs of LGBT people. However, a certain number of companies consider it necessary to properly address LGBT issues, and the number of companies starting to take relevant measures is expected to increase in the future. It is hoped that as more and more companies put in place measures, there will be successes in terms of the nature and process of measures and their effects on LGBT people and the entire workplace. Case studies should be conducted in the future to understand, in particular, what initiates measures to address LGBT issues.

Endnotes

1. LGBT is an initialism based on sexual orientations and gender identity, but this paper uses it in reference to sexual and gender minorities, including LGBT people, in the context of policies related to gender diversity.
2. Discussions on national and local government policies in this section are based on information from the website of the Japan Alliance for LGBT Legislation.
3. The data are from the Association of People with Gender Identity Disorder and Gender Dysphoria (gid.jp).
4. The Human Rights Bureau used examples typically seen at schools and workplaces, where LGBT people tend to face difficulties as they must interact with others.
5. The examples of Sakai City and Miyakonojo City are from Eidome (2008).
6. For example, in 2013 in Osaka City, the Human Rights Office of the Citizens Affairs Bureau was reorganized

into the Diversity Promotion Office which is now in charge of addressing LGBT issues. In Shibuya Ward, with the enactment of the relevant ordinance in 2015, the position responsible for promoting gender equality was transformed into the position responsible for gender equality and diversity, and the central facility was renamed from the Center for Women to the Center for Gender Equality and Diversity.

7. Eidome (2008) discusses the situation involving local government policies, but not national government policies.

8. Here, the term "typical men" refers to those who identify themselves as male and are attracted to women.

9. Eidome (2008).

10. The double-minority problem refers to a situation in which an individual faces greater difficulties for being a minority in terms of multiple underlying factors such as gender, race, nationality, physical and mental health, and religion. Examples include a black gay person and a foreigner with a disability.

11. The Fourth Basic Plan for Gender Equality has a section on creating an environment where women and others facing difficulties due to their poverty, advanced age, and disabilities can live without concerns. The section discusses cases in which women face additional difficulties for being female, besides difficulties that they already experience because of their sexual orientation, gender identity, disabilities, being foreigners living in Japan, being Ainu, or the *dowa* problem (a discrimination problem in Japan). The section does not discuss cases in which women face greater difficulties for being female in addition to being lesbians or having gender identity disorder, though the difference might be small.

12. In the survey, corporate measures to support active participation of various workers are divided into different types from two perspectives in order to analyze companies' efforts to promote workplace diversity. First, measures are categorized based on the use of the term "diversity" to see if companies promote diversity. Second, measures are also categorized based on the comprehensiveness of the targets of measures to see whether companies take measures for various worker groups (so that individuals with various attributes can perform to their full potential) or limit their measures to specific groups such as women.

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Report

Crucial Points in Work Style Reform in the White-Collar Workplace Compared with the Blue-Collar Workplace

By Satoshi Tsukada, Senior Analyst

Abstract

Work style reform has attracted significant public attention in recent years. Such reform follows two main directions: (1) making working hours more appropriate through productivity improvements and (2) allowing greater flexibility in work styles. In Japan, productivity in the white- collar sector, which accounts for 70 percent of all employers, is considered to be particularly low, and productivity improvements in this sector are therefore essential for work style reform to be effective. Although many companies have begun efforts toward work style reform and productivity improvements, some of these companies and their employees are not experiencing positive results. One reason is that companies' current efforts do not sufficiently take into account the characteristics of the white-collar work style. One characteristic of white-collar work is that, compared with blue-collar work, it requires workers to perform tasks in more diverse and autonomous ways. In reforming the white-collar work style, it is important that, based on such characteristics, companies not only induce employees to improve their time management at their discretion, but also have them experience small successes in shared, non-specialized tasks relevant to all departments, such as devising new ways to conduct meetings or prepare documents. Also, in allowing more flexible work styles, it is effective to test new ways of working, including telecommuting, in some divisions and then implement them company-wide after examining the test results.

1. Current Status of Work Style Reform at Japanese Companies

1. What Is Work Style Reform?

The current Japanese administration has positioned work style reform as one of the biggest challenges in reviving the Japanese economy. The Action Plan for the Realization of Work Style Reform, which was approved in March of 2017, includes a plan to fix the problem of long working hours. By addressing the problem, the plan aims to ensure workers' health; improve work-life balance and thereby increase labor force participation of women and older adults; improve productivity based on based on workers' changing jobs to or getting re-employed in high value-added industries; and realize various ways of working, such as having a side job.

According to the 2017 White Paper on Prevention of Karoshi (death from overwork), which was prepared by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, the number of annual claims for worker's compensation related to cerebrovascular disease, ischemic heart disease, and the like caused by excessive workload has been in a range roughly between 750 and 950 for 15 years. Also, according to the 2015 Comprehensive Study on Worker Safety and Health Focusing on Death from Overwork and Preventive Measures, which was prepared by the Research Center Overwork-Related Disorders of the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health, 93.0 percent of worker's compensation claims are approved for the reason of long-term overwork. Long working hours, a cause of death from overwork, have been a serious social problem, and companies are increasingly scrutinized in terms of compliance.[1]

There is also the problem of the declining number of working age adults, reflecting the aging of Japan's population. The country's working age population has constantly declined since 1997, falling by about 6.5 million to 76.65 million over a 30-year period from 1986 to 2016. In addition, more and more workers are constrained in terms of time and place of work, including those who continue working while providing childcare or family care and those who continue to work while having an illness or injury. Furthermore, aside from the problem of long working hours, there are high hopes for various ways of working that enable workers to choose when and where to work. In short, companies, workers, and society as a whole are interested in work style reform.

What does the term "work style reform" specifically refer to? The Action Plan for the Realization of Work Style Reform discusses concrete measures in three areas: improving compensation (wages, salaries, etc.), reducing constraints (time, place, etc.), and supporting career development. For improving compensation, the plan proposes providing equal wages for equal work and allowing non-regular employees to become regular employees. For supporting career development, it suggests providing professional training and expanding employment opportunities for job switchers and people re-entering the job market. For reducing time and location constraints, it proposes addressing the problem of long working hours, creating mechanisms that facilitate flexible ways of working, promoting employment of people with disabilities, promoting balance between work and medical care, childrearing, or family caregiving, hiring foreign workers, and creating an environment where women and young workers can perform to their full potential. Among these measures for work style reform that are discussed in the plan, this paper focuses on measures for making working hours more appropriate and measures for allowing greater flexibility in work styles.[2]

1.2 Current State of Work Style Reform at Japanese Companies

Let us first summarize the current state of work style reform at companies. There are companies that have engaged in reform and have achieved positive results. The Japan Business Federation released, in September 2017, Examples of Work Reform which described the cases of 15 member companies that had proactively engaged in work style reform. The Study Report on Elimination of Long Hours and New Ways of Working prepared by the Business Policy Forum (2016) discusses the cases of eight companies as well as results of questionnaire surveys of general employees and managers. In addition, a number of cases of companies engaging in work style reform are presented by the Cabinet Office (on its website for promoting work-life balance) and by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (on its website on improving ways of working and leisure).

While there are many proactive and successful cases, there are companies engaging in work style reform that have not produced positive results. According to Results of the Survey on Working Hour Management and Efficient Ways of Working and the Survey on the Needs Concerning Working Hours and Ways of Working, which was published by the Japan Institute for Labor Policy and Training (2016), while 92.6 percent of companies have tried to reduce unscheduled overtime, only 52.8 percent have actually succeeded. This result shows that although many companies have engaged in work style reform, not all of them have achieved substantial positive results.

It has been pointed out that the white-collar productivity of Japanese companies is particularly low.[3] According to the Japan-U.S. Comparison of Labor Productivity in Different Industries published by the Japan Productivity Center (2016), manufacturing sector labor productivity in Japan is about 70 percent of that in the United States, and service sector labor productivity in Japan is merely about half of that in the United States. Since workers in the service sector are mosty white-collar workers, it is considered that in Japan, white-collar productivity is relatively low, compared to blue-collar productivity. According to the Labor Force Survey conducted by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (2015), the white-collar sector accounts for 70 percent of all Japanese employees.[4] Successful work style reform therefore requires productivity improvement in that sector. In this context, this paper focuses on white-collar workers and examines crucial points for effective reforms.

2. Work Style Reform for White-Collar Workers

2.1 Characteristics of White-Collar Work

Let us begin by summarizing characteristics of white-collar work and blue-collar work.[5] For blue-collar work, operational processes, including required time for each task, are designed in detail by departments responsible for production technologies. Daily operations are managed based on manuals which specify who produces what, how much or how many, and on which line. Productivity goals are often set since productivity is directly related to production cost. Most of the efforts to improve productivity can be implemented within a division. As for white-collar work, each division has operational discretion. Also, employees have discretion over a wide range of daily operational tasks. With regard to productivity, it is difficult to clearly define output, and it is often the case that attention is paid to limited types of input such as overtime. Also, it is often difficult for a certain division to solely take productivity-related measures because of its relationships with other divisions and customers. In short, white-collar work requires employees to perform tasks in diverse and autonomous ways, whereas blue-collar work is

uniform and standardized. Takeishi and Sato (2011) argue that realizing work-life balance requires changing work management methods, time management methods, and ways of working, and that it is therefore essential for not only managers, who are responsible for workplace management, but also all employees to become highly aware of time spent for work and to reexamine and modify their individual life styles. In other words, they suggest that for white-collar work in particular, heightened time awareness is important in achieving work-life balance.
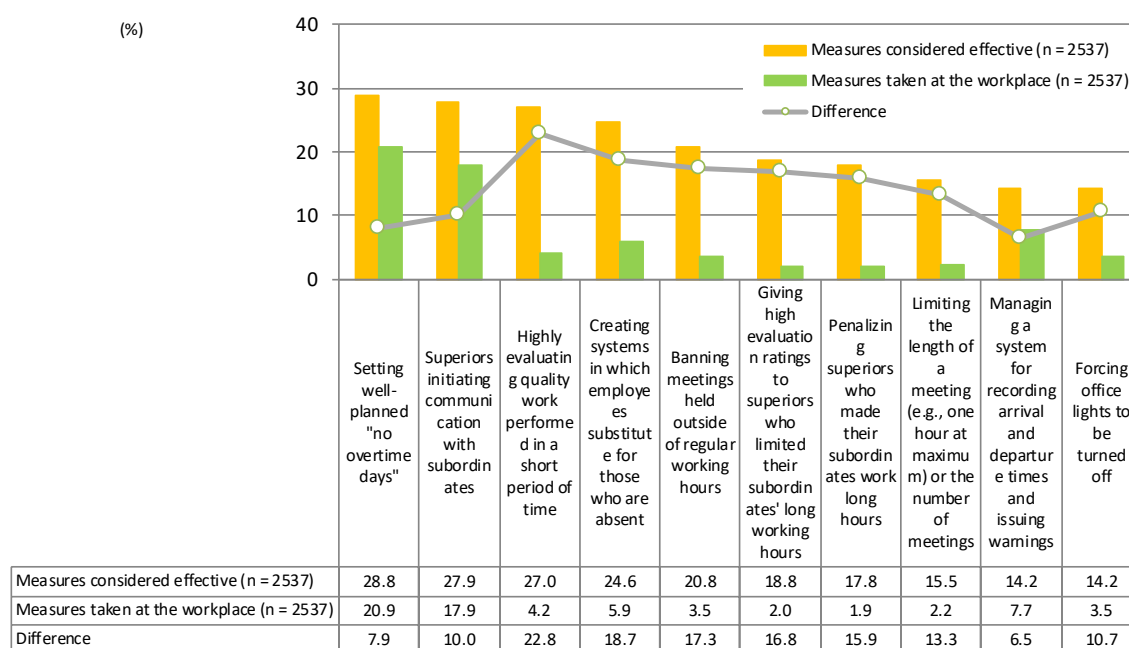
Table 1: Characteristics of white-collar work and blue-collar work

	Blue collar	White collar
Time awareness	Work processes, schedules, and relevant management methods are pre-designed, and employees do not need to be actively aware of time.	Divisions and employees have substantial discretion over time management.
Productivity indicators and goals	Input and output are clearly observable, and there are quantitative indicators and set goals.	It is difficult to define output or have quantitative indicators. Only input-related goals, such as overtime, are set.
Measures to improve productivity	It is often feasible to implement measures, such as process improvement, within a particular division.	It is often difficult for a certain division to take measures on its own because of its relationships with other divisions and customers.

Source: Author.

According to the Surveys of Individuals and Companies on Work-Life Balance conducted by the Cabinet Office (2014), companies seem to rarely make efforts to heighten managers' and employees' time awareness: among various measures that employees consider effective in reducing overtime, companies rarely take measures such as highly evaluating quality work performed in a short period of time, giving high evaluation ratings to superiors who limited their subordinates' long working hours, and penalizing superiors who made their subordinates work long hours.

Figure 1: Measures that employees consider effective in reducing overtime and actual measure

	Setting well-planned "no overtime days"	Superiors initiating communication with subordinates	Highly evaluating quality work performed in a short period of time	Creating systems in which employees substitute for those who are absent	Banning meetings held outside of regular working hours	Giving high evaluation ratings to superiors who limited their subordinates' long working hours	Penalizing superiors who made their subordinates work long hours	Limiting the length of a meeting (e.g., one hour at maximum) or the number of meetings	Managing a system for recording arrival and departure times and issuing warnings	Forcing office lights to be turned off
Measures considered effective (n = 2537)	28.8	27.9	27.0	24.6	20.8	18.8	17.8	15.5	14.2	14.2
Measures taken at the workplace (n = 2537)	20.9	17.9	4.2	5.9	3.5	2.0	1.9	2.2	7.7	3.5
Difference	7.9	10.0	22.8	18.7	17.3	16.8	15.9	13.3	6.5	10.7

Source: Cabinet Office (2014). The Surveys of Individuals and Companies on Work-Life Balance.

Asai (2011) conducted an interview survey of companies and white-collar workers to study how employees work at European companies and Japanese companies. She points to five problems with Japanese ways of working that have made it difficult to realize employees' work-life balance: (1) each employee's range of work being unclear, (2) excessive effort spent on the appearance of documents, (3) presenteeism, (4) frequent and large meetings, and (5) frequent organizational changes.[6] She then propose that Japanese companies implement an European-style delegation system that prearranges work reassignment to prepare for employees' absence. Judging from results of the surveys by the Cabinet Office, it seems that companies rarely set up such a mechanism that is effective in both reducing overtime and encouraging employees to take paid leave. In sum, due to characteristics of white-collar work, heightening workers' time awareness is important for work style reform in the white-collar sector. In reality, however, Japanese companies have not taken relevant measures.

2.2 Crucial Points in Work Style Reform in the White-Collar Sector

With consideration given to characteristics of white-collar work, the following summarizes crucial points in effective work style reform.

2.2.1 Mechanisms for Heightening Workers' Time Awareness

In the blue-collar workplace, work processes, schedules, and relevant management methods are pre-designed, and employees do not need to be actively aware of time. In contrast, productivity in the white-collar workplace does not increase unless employees are actively aware of time. Many companies set "no overtime days" as a way to reduce unscheduled overtime. There are, however, cases in which such measures have become superficial or have increased the amount of take-home work. Measures like "no overtime days" can make employees more aware of time, but may not be effective if they are implemented in a uniform, standardized manner due to incompatibility with the needs concerning white-collar employees' various ways of working.

In the empirical study entitled "Trials of Future Ways of Working"(introduced in "Guide to Promoting Work Reform") that was conducted as part of Google's Womenwill initiative under the supervision of Mitsubishi UFJ Research and Consulting, participants set the ending time of each workday, prioritized tasks, and planned workflows in order to work more efficiently. The result suggests that workers engage in their tasks more actively (by utilizing scheduling tools, etc.) when they set the ending time of the workday by themselves, compared to the case in which the company uniformly sets it. For white-collar workers who often interact with other divisions and customers, effective measures for heightening their time awareness are those that flexibly adjust to workers' dynamic work patterns, not those that set uniform, standardized work schedules.

2.2.2 Looking Outside of Department-Specific Operations

Even if a company wants to promote work style reform for its entire organization, its white-collar departments face difficulties in setting common relevant goals because different departments engage in different work and because their output cannot be easily defined. There are, however, activities that are common across different

departments. Examples include meetings and document preparation, which Asai (2011) regards as sources of problems for white-collar work in Japan. From the standpoint of company-wide efficiency, it is effective to set minimum rules with regard to ways of conducting meetings and the quality of in-house documents. Also, managers are increasingly required to manage various human resources and compliance issues in addition to regular operations. Therefore, in order to create systems that allow managers to concentrate on regular operations, the company needs to ensure sharing of management-related best practices throughout the organization and enable managers to receive support from indirectly related departments.

It may be difficult for white-collar departments to try to improve productivity by themselves because of their responsibility to respond to requests from other departments. Therefore, designating a process owner for each internal operation is effective. For example, a department that requests other departments to submit a report must optimize the process of the reporting operation by listening to the reporting departments and taking relevant burdens on them into account.

After the measures discussed above are implemented, each department should take measures for improving productivity in its regular, value-adding work, with special focus on the quantity and quality of output.

2.2.3. Implementation of New Ways of Working after Test Runs

Telecommuting has attracted attention in recent years. The government has designated July 24, 2020, when the opening ceremony of the Tokyo Olympic Games is planned to take place, as Telework Day and encourages companies to conduct practice runs of company-wide telecommuting. As discussed above, work style reform follows two main directions: (1) reducing working hours through productivity improvements and (2) allowing greater flexibility in work styles. Telecommuting is closely related to the latter as it effectively enables workers to flexibly choose their work location.

According to the Study on People's Awareness of New Information and Communication Services and Technologies Intended for Solving Social Issues published by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, more than 50 percent of employees want to telecommute. However, according to the Study on Revitalization of Regional Economies and Companies' Information and Communication Technologies published by the same ministry, less than 10 percent of companies have adopted telecommuting, and about 40 percent of companies do not have the types of operations that are suitable for telecommuting. The result suggests that many companies cannot incorporate telecommuting into their operations or consider it unnecessary.

The latter study also shows that companies that are considering or interested in adopting telecommuting are more likely than companies that have already adopted it to have concerns about appropriate personnel evaluation, proper labor management, communication between employees, and creation of internal systems for telecommuting. However, more than a few companies actually experience little operational trouble due to telecommuting, despite having various concerns prior to implementing telecommuting systems.

Allowing greater flexibility in work styles often leads to new, nontraditional ways of working. Therefore, companies may have various concerns before moving in this direction. In allowing greater flexibility in work styles, it is effective to conduct trials for a limited time period or with a limited number of divisions and then execute company-wide implementation after examining the results of the trials. In this process of trials and full

implementation, companies tend to limit the use of telecommuting to employees who have childcare or family care responsibilities, or actual users tend to utilize telecommuting for these care-related reasons. Important points in promoting work style reform through telecommuting are that companies should adopt it as a new way of working for all employees, not just those who must provide care to their children or family members, and that companies should conduct a trial involving all employees, including those who do not see the necessity of telecommuting. By actually experiencing telecommuting, employees not only feel its benefits such as less commuting and increased personal time, but also may improve the quality of their work by becoming aware of time and productivity improvement and sharing work progress and other operational information with other employees.

3. Conclusion

Effective work style reform in the white-collar sector requires measures that take into consideration the fact that white-collar workers must perform tasks in diverse and autonomous ways. Companies must create mechanisms to make white-collar workers, who often have discretion over their work procedures, aware of time spent for work. However, uniform, standardized measures such as "no overtime days" are not necessarily effective for white-collar workers. Effective measures for raising awareness of time among these workers' are those that flexibly adjust to their discretion over various aspects of their work.

It is also important that companies start work style reform from common, non-specialized tasks relevant to all departments, and that employees feel the positive effects of the reform by sharing their small successes. Work style reform requires reexamination of daily work performed at the workplace. Not only reexamination of operational processes, but also efforts by individual managers and employees to establish time-conscious work habits are important. Another important point in work style reform is a proper combination of initial top-down initiatives and bottom-up efforts (that is, employees' autonomous efforts to realize their desired ways of working).

Employees' small successes can contribute to greater flexibility in work styles, often leading to new nontraditional ways of working. Managers are key to successful work style reform at the workplace. If not only time-constrained or location-constrained employees, but also managers try flexible ways of working, workers will let go of the notion that systems for work flexibility are not easy to use, and many workers will utilize flexible ways of working that suit their individual needs.

Endnotes

1. The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare provides a guideline for evaluating working hours as part of the process to recognize the existence of long-term overwork, which is one of the criteria for approving claims for worker's compensation related to cerebrovascular disease, ischemic heart disease, and other diseases (notice no. 1063, December 12, 2001). According to the guideline, judgments should be made based on the following premises. (1) If the worker's overtime over a 1- to 6-month period prior to the onset of his or her disease did not exceed about 45 hours per month, the connection between the worker's disease and his or her work is considered weak; however, for overtime exceeding about 45 hours per month, the connection between work and disease is considered to gradually become stronger with the length of overtime. (2) If the worker's overtime during the month prior to the onset of his or her disease exceeded about 100 hours or if the worker's overtime

over a two- to six-month period prior to the onset of his or her disease exceeded about 80 hours per month, the connection between the worker's disease and his or her work is considered strong.

2. In regard to work style reform, Matsuura (2017) points out the need to consider not only narrow reforms that include limiting working hours and allowing more flexible work styles, but also broad reforms that include reexamining and modifying personnel management policies and organizational strategies.

3. While-collar workers are not clearly defined in Japan. This paper follows a document used at the 63rd meeting of the Labor Conditions Committee of the Labor Policy Council of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare. White-collar workers are considered to be specialized and technical workers, workers in managerial positions, administrative workers, and sales workers. This paper compares white-collar workers with blue-collar workers such as production-line workers.

4. The percentage here is the proportion of specialized and technical workers, workers in managerial positions, administrative workers, and sales workers to all employees for 2016 (Labor Force Survey by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications).

5. White-collar work includes repetitive work such as administrative work, but this section considers non-repetitive work.

6. Presenteeism refers to the practice of being at the workplace, sometimes despite a poor physical or psychological condition, leading to less focus on work, low productivity, and mistakes (Asai, 2011).

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