

Economic empowerment

Japan: households with dual incomes and presence of women in non-regular employment

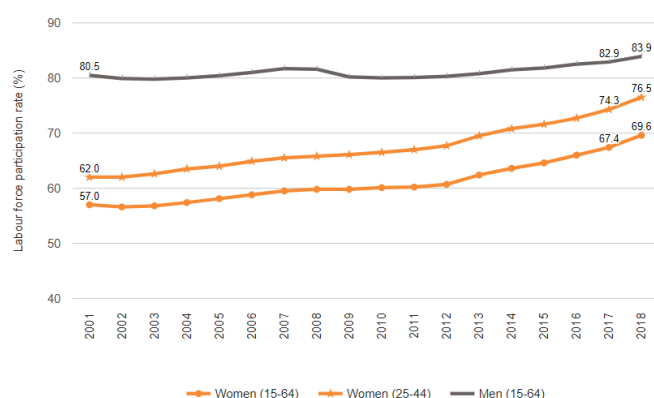


Key points

- Labour force participation rates in Japan have increased since 2001, particularly among women aged 15–64 (70%) and 25–44 years (76%) as of 2018.
- During the period 1980–2018, the share of dual-income households doubled, while the share households with working men and economically inactive women declined by almost half.
- 55.3% of women in dual-income households work as non-regular employees; they constitute 68.1% of total non-regular employees as of 2019.
- Large gender gaps are observed in the responses of women and men aged 34–54 among their reasons for choosing non-regular work, including "working at a convenient time", "supplementing family income" and "handling housework, childcare and nursing care work."
- Although non-regular employment facilitates flexible working arrangements, it is one of the main factors contributing to the gender pay gap in Japan.

In 2015, the Government of Japan passed the "Act on the Promotion of Female Participation and Career Advancement in the Workplace"¹ to promote women's participation in the labour force. Data for 2018 show a significant increase in the female labour force participation rate since 2001, which reached almost 70% among all working-age women (ages 15–64) and 76% among prime-age working women (25–44) and resulted in a gender gap in participation of 14 and 8 percentage points, respectively. These data represent an improvement from 2001, when the gender gap for the two age groups was 23 and 18 percentage points, respectively (see figure I).

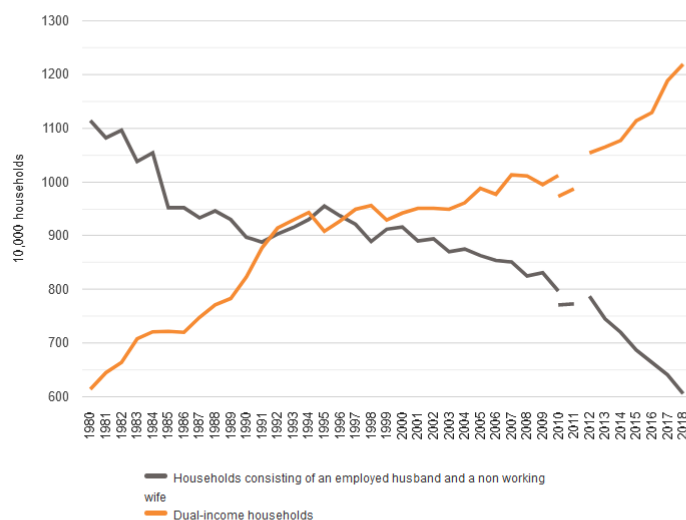
Figure I: Labour force participation rate by sex and age group: 2001–2018 (Percentage)



Source: I Government of Japan, Cabinet Office of Japan, Gender Equality Bureau, White paper on gender equality 2019, and Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, Basic Tabulation of the Labour Force Survey, Tokyo, 2019 (correspondence with the Office of Director-General for Policy Planning on Statistical Standards, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, on 1 October 2020) (http://www.gender.go.jp/english_contents/index.html).

The growth in the number of dual-income households since 1980 is evidence of progress in increasing women's participation in the labour force. Over this time period, the number of dual-income households doubled in size while the number of households with working men and economically inactive women fell at the same ratio (see figure II).

Figure II: Number of dual-income households and households with working men and economically inactive women: 1980-2018

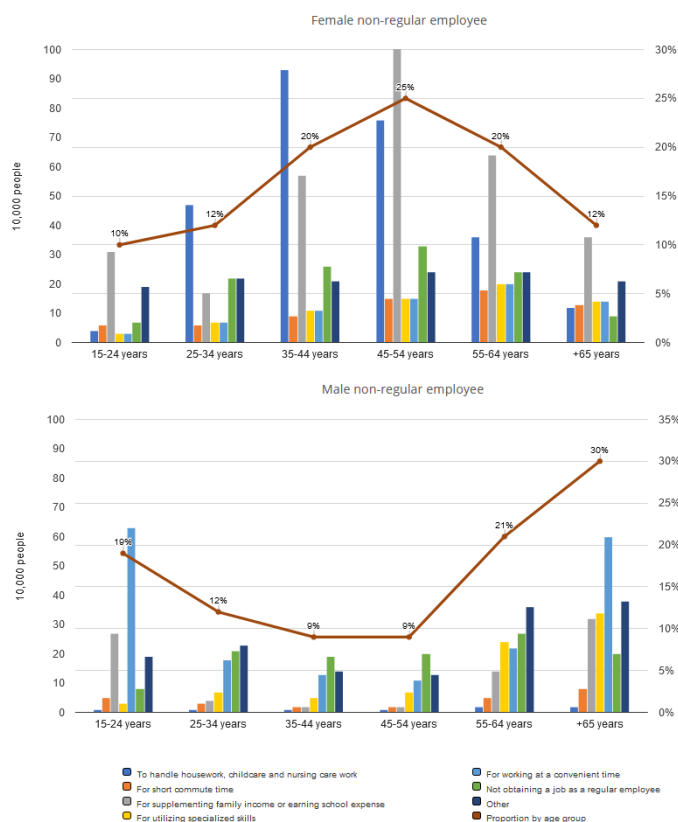


Sources: Government of Japan, Cabinet Office of Japan, Women and Men in Japan 2020, Tokyo, 2020 (http://www.gender.go.jp/english_contents/pr_act/pub/pamphlet/women-and-men20/index.html); data sourced from a specialized survey of the Labour Force Survey and calculated by Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications.

Note: Households consisting of working men and economically inactive women refer to the households in which men are employed in a non-agriculture and forestry sector and women are not employed. Dual-income households refer to the households in which both women and men are employees in the non-agriculture and forestry sectors. Actual numbers in brackets for 2010 and 2011 are nation-wide results, excluding Iwate, Miyagi and Fukushima Prefectures.

Statistics also indicate, however, that 55.3% of women in dual-income households work as non-regular employees.² As of 2019, 68.1% of the total number of non-regular employees were women.³ While the proportion of female regular employees is increasing, it remains at around 44%. In addition, the non-regular employment rate demonstrates opposing trends by sex and age. While the proportion of male non-regular employees reaches the highest point among ages 65 and older (30%), female non-regular employees are generally younger, with the peak observed among those aged 45–54 (25%). Gender gaps are also recorded under “reasons for taking a non-regular employment” (see figure III). The majority of female employees aged 35–54 gave reasons including: “for working at a convenient time”, “to supplement family income” and “to handle housework, childcare and nursing care work”, with significant gender gaps among the reasons given by women and men in the same age group (see figure III).

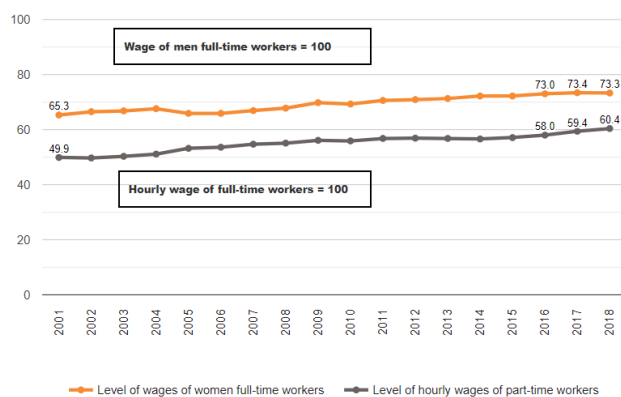
Figure III: Number and percentage of non-regular employees and reasons for taking non-regular employment, by sex and age group: 2019



Sources: Government of Japan, Bureau of Statistics, Labour Force Survey (detailed tabulation) (correspondence with the Office of Director-General for Policy Planning on Statistical Standards, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications on 1 October 2020) (<https://www.stat.go.jp/english/data/roudou/errata.html>).

While non-regular employment allows women to adopt a flexible working style, it is also one of the main factors contributing to the **gender pay gap** (see figure IV). Policies are being implemented to achieve gender equality in the workplace, including the adoption of a plan to promote the transition of working from non-regular to regular employment, the facilitation of **maternity and care leave** and the prevention of sexual harassment in the work place.

Figure IV: Gender pay gap and pay gap between full-time and part-time workers: 2001-2018
(Percentage)



Sources: Government of Japan, Cabinet Office of Japan, Women and Men in Japan 2020, Tokyo, 2020 (correspondence with the Office of Director-General for Policy Planning on Statistical Standards, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, on 1 October 2020) (http://www.gender.go.jp/english_contents/pr_act/pub/pamphlet/women-and-men20/index.html); data sourced from the Basic Survey on Wage Structure and calculated by Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare.

Sources

- Government of Japan, Gender Equality Bureau, Women and Men in Japan 2020, Tokyo, 2020
- Government of Japan, Gender Equality Bureau, White paper on gender equality 2019, Tokyo, June 2019
- Government of Japan, Statistics Bureau of Japan, Labour Force Survey, Tokyo, 2018

About the data

Definitions

- **Proportion of households with dual income:** Share of households in which both women and men work for pay or profit.
- **Proportion of non-regular employees:** Share of workers who are not classified as regular employees in the Japanese Labour Force Survey, and include, inter alia, part-time workers, Arubaito workers⁴ and dispatch workers.

Coverage

Women and men aged 15 and older who live in Japan, with certain exceptions (for example, residents who serve in foreign diplomatic missions).

Availability

Data is derived from the Labour Force Survey, which is conducted monthly.

Footnotes

1. [Act on the Promotion of the Female Participation and Career Advancement in the Workplace, Act No. 64, 4 September 2015.](#)
2. [Government of Japan, Portal of Official Statistics of Japan, Employment Status Survey 2017.](#)
3. [Government of Japan, Statistics Bureau of Japan, Labour Force Survey 2019.](#)
4. [Arubaito, refers to side-workers as a form of employment, Statistics Bureau of Japan, 1997, Employment Structure Survey: explanation of terms \(last accessed on 17 September 2020\).](#)