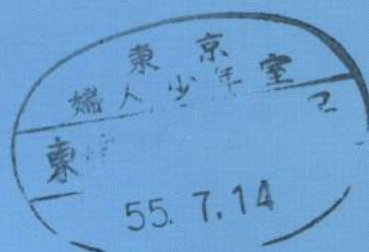


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# THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN JAPAN



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WOMEN'S AND YOUNG WORKERS'  
BUREAU, MINISTRY OF LABOR  
JAPAN

1980



## PREFACE

The Women's and Young Workers' Bureau in the Ministry of Labor of the Japanese Government herewith presents the "Status of Women in Japan, 1980".

This is a report on the status and activities of Japanese women who are playing ever greater roles in the rapidly changing society.

It is hoped that this report will be of some use of those who are interested in the around-the-world progress of women.

June 1980

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## INTRODUCTION

During the years after World War II the Japanese society experienced drastic changes in many fields and one of them was the freedom and equality attained by women.

In prewar days women's position was kept decisively lower than that of men both in family life and in society. But the war years more or less undermined the old order and paved the way for the emancipation of women. The shortage of manpower during the period made it imperative for women to take over the jobs hitherto performed by men and they carried out the task quite adequately, proving that there should be no discrimination in whatever form on grounds of sex.

After the war the emancipation of women has been taken up as a national responsibility. The Constitution of Japan promulgated on November 3, 1946 says in Article 14:

"All of the people are equal under the law and there shall be no discrimination in political, economic or social relations because of race, creed, sex, social status or family origin."

Accordingly, various legislative measures were enacted to place women legally on the same level as men, and several governmental bodies were established for the improvement of the actual status of women, including Women's and Young Workers' Bureau in the Ministry of Labor. Realizing the national expectation thus evinced, women have endeavored on their part to improve their life and contribute to the national good through individual or organized efforts. In fact with many-sided abilities disclosed they have done good deal in these years.

Furthermore, under the influence of the economic growth of the nation, women's life is now going through far-reaching changes, which would lead to the further improvement of their status.

And in recent years the International Women's Year has made a tremendous impact on the Japanese scene in the form of a renewed awakening towards the right and liberation of women. Nationwide campaigns of the Government for the theme of the International Women's Year in cooperation with non-governmental organisations were carried out with remarkable effect.

However, there are not a few unsettled problems left for women. It is impossible to remove overnight the age-old social customs and pre-

judices, and we have had yet a short time for women to get over them and for men to admit women fully into the fields where they monopolized the privileges. The manifold problems confronting women will be solved only step by step and to this end women of Japan are making ever persistent efforts.

## I. WOMEN AND POLITICS

### Elections

The Election Law was revised in December 1945, and one of the major objectives of the action was the establishment of equal rights of men and women in the political field. Accordingly, the right to vote in national elections was first granted to women of 20 years of age and above, thus realizing the aim of the woman suffrage movement continued for the past seventy years. The women of Japan exercised their newly acquired right to vote for the first time on April 10, 1946, in the general election for the House of Representatives.

Table 1. Eligible voters, votes cast and voting rates by sex and the number of successful women candidates  
(General Elections of House of Representatives)

Election	Eligible Voters (millions)		Votes Cast (millions)		Voting Rates (%)		Women Elected (1)
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
22nd General Election (Apr. 10, 1946)	16	21	13	14	78.5	67.0	39
23rd " (Apr. 25, 1947)	20	21	15	13	74.9	61.6	15
24th " (Jan. 23, 1949)	20	22	16	15	80.7	67.9	12
25th " (Oct. 1, 1952)	22	24	18	18	80.5	72.8	12
26th " (Apr. 19, 1953)	22	25	18	17	78.4	70.4	9
27th " (Feb. 27, 1955)	24	26	19	19	78.0	72.1	8
28th " (May 22, 1958)	25	27	20	20	79.8	74.4	11
29th " (Nov. 20, 1960)	26	28	20	20	76.0	71.2	7
30th " (Nov. 21, 1963)	28	30	20	21	72.4	70.0	7
31st " (Nov. 29, 1967)	30	33	23	24	74.8	73.3	7
32nd " (Dec. 27, 1969)	33	36	23	25	67.9	69.1	8
33rd " (Dec. 10, 1972)	36	38	25	28	71.0	72.5	7
34th " (Dec. 5, 1976)	38	40	27	30	72.8	74.1	7
35th " (Oct. 7, 1979)	37	41	26	28	67.4	68.6	11

Source: Election Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs

Note: (1) 466 seats in total, up to 26th General Election

467 in total, up to 30th

486 in total, 31st, 32nd

491 in total, 33rd.

511 in total, 34th 35th

## (General Elections of House of Councillors)

Election	Eligible Voters (millions)		Votes Cast (millions)		Voting Rates (%)		Women Elected (1)
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
1st General Election (Apr. 20, 1947)	20	21	13	12	68.4	54.0	11
2nd " (Jan. 4, 1950)	21	23	16	12	78.2	66.7	12
3rd " (Apr. 24, 1953)	22	25	15	14	67.8	58.9	19
4th " (July 8, 1956)	24	26	16	15	66.9	57.7	15
5th " (Jan. 2, 1959)	26	28	16	15	62.6	55.2	13
6th " (July 1, 1962)	27	29	19	19	70.1	66.5	17
7th " (June 4, 1965)	28	31	19	21	68.0	66.1	17
8th " (July 7, 1968)	32	34	22	24	68.9	69.0	13
9th " (June 27, 1971)	34	37	20	22	59.1	59.3	13
10th " (July 7, 1974)	36	40	27	29	72.7	73.6	18
11th " (July 10, 1977)	38	40	26	28	67.7	69.3	16

Source: Election Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs

Note: (1) 252 seats in total

Since the first election of 1946, women have taken part in 14 elections for the House of Representatives and 11 for the House of Councillors (the Upper House) of the Japanese Diet. In all these elections, the percentage of women voters at the polls have been approximately 60~70 percent of the total number of eligible women voters. Since 1968 the voting rate of women has exceeded that of men's. The attitude of women towards elections is no longer negligible both in number and their choice.



## Women in Public Office

The discrimination between the sexes regarding the right to hold public office was completely eliminated after the war and, the revised Election Law for Public Offices granted women of 25\* years of age and above the right to be elected in all elections.

Women have been occupying 20 or more seats in the National Diet all through these years since 1946. In the local autonomous bodies they are also active as members of local assemblies, though the proportion of the seats they occupy are smaller than in the National Diet.

Furthermore, women have entered various appointive or commissioned public offices. For instance, in 1979 3,670 women were mediation commissioners of family courts, representing some 39 percent of the total membership, and 61,677 women were public and child welfare commissioners (37 percent). Also a considerable number of women have been appointed or commissioned to be civil liberties commissioners (1,253 women – 11 percent of the total), social education commissioners (133 women – 13 percent), and members of the board of education (29 women – 10 percent).

Two women have been seated in the Cabinet: one served as the Health and Welfare Minister (from July to December, 1960) and the other as the Minister of State for Science and Technology (from July 1962 to July 1963). Several women have been appointed parliamentary vice-ministers.

**Table 2. Number of Assembly Members of Local Public Bodies**

Years	(Persons)					
	Prefectural assemblies		Municipal assemblies		Town or village assemblies	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1955	2,436	32	21,240	158	114,015	455
1960	2,607	36	17,724	190	63,699	275
1965	2,565	41	17,732	198	56,712	311
1968	2,659	37	17,786	225	52,894	272
1971	2,705	26	20,133	350	49,453	198
1975	2,796	32	19,807	360	48,003	217
1977	2,734	34	19,557	414	47,381	233
1979	2,846	34	19,576	428	47,278	259

Source: Election Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs

\*) For a member of the House of Councillors and a headman of the prefecture the eligible age to be elected is full 30 years of age and over.

## II. WOMEN AND EDUCATION

Under the prewar educational system, although there was no discrimination in the compulsory education, co-education was seldom seen in higher levels, and women were not admitted to public universities except in rare cases, though some private schools accepted women in certain departments.

In 1947 the new educational system was initiated on the Basic Law of Education, incorporating the principles of co-education and equal opportunities of education for both sexes. Under this new system, compulsory education was extended from six to nine years; six years for elementary school and three years for junior high school, and every child, without discrimination as to sex, was made entitled to advance into a senior high school of three years and then a college or university of four years according to his or her ability.

### Compulsory Education

Compulsory education is provided free in publicly maintained schools. Only a small minority of children attend private schools. In general, both sexes are taught same subjects, except some small modification on the practical side.

Since the school education system was started in 1872, the Japanese people have been quite eager to give schooling to children, both boys and girls. Already in 1904, the percentage of school attendance of girls in primary schools was over 90 percent of the population of the primary school age. Today under the nine-years' compulsory education system the school attendance of both sexes is virtually 100 percent.

### Secondary Education

The compulsory education is followed by the senior high school. Owing to the lowering down of the birth rate after World War II 'baby crop', the number of senior high school students has tended to decrease since 1965. But, more and more students advanced to the senior high school when they completed their compulsory education.

This is particularly true for girls.

Of 692,127 girls who finished the junior high school in March 1979, 9 out of 10 girls entered the senior high school. The comparable figure for 1955 was 5. Since 1969 the percentage of girls entering senior high schools has exceeded that of boys.

Girls occupied a half of the students in senior high schools all through the country in May 1979 (50% for girls and 50% for boys), in contrast to one-third for twenty years ago.

**Table 3. Percentage of boys and girls entering senior high schools (%)**

Year	Boys	Girls
1950	48.0	36.7
1955	55.5	47.4
1960	59.6	55.9
1965	71.6	69.6
1970	81.6	82.7
1975	91.0	93.0
1979	93.0	95.0

Source: "Report on School Statistics" Ministry of Education  
Note: Include those attending night classes while employed.

## Higher Education

Since the initiation of the new educational system, the number of women in institutions of higher education has shown a surprising increase every year. As of May 1979, total enrollments of women were about 738,750 representing 33 percent of all students, about 32-fold increase as compared with the 1950 figure of 23,202.

**Table 4. Percentage of those entering higher education (%)**

Year	4-year institutions		2-year institutions	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
1955	2.6	1.9	2.4	13.1
1960	3.0	1.2	2.5	13.7
1965	6.7	2.7	6.7	20.7
1970	11.2	2.0	6.5	27.3
1975	19.9	2.6	12.5	40.4
1979	20.9	2.1	12.2	39.3

Source: "Report on School Statistics" Ministry of Education.  
Note: Included those attending night classes while employed.

$$\text{Percentage} = \frac{\text{those entered junior college, college or university}}{\text{those completed junior high school three years before}} \times 100$$

**Table 5. Enrollment of women in institutions of higher education – 1979**

(Persons)

Type of Institution	Total	Women		
		Number	Percent Distribution	As percent of total
Total	2,220,364	738,750	100.0%	33.3%
4-year institutions	1,846,368	407,937	55.2	22.1
Public	450,107	98,867	13.4	22.0
Private	1,396,261	309,070	41.8	22.1
2-year institutions	373,996	330,813	44.8	88.5
Public	33,207	19,434	2.6	58.5
Private	340,789	311,379	42.1	91.4

Source: "Report on School Statistics" Ministry of Education.

**Table 6. Number of female students in 4-year institutions by department – 1979**

(Persons)

Department	Total	Women		
		Number	Percent Distribution	As percent of total
Total	1,754,343	392,753	100.0%	22.4%
Literature	239,359	141,323	36.0	59.0
Law, Politics, Economics & Industrial management	716,171	58,587	14.9	8.2
Science	54,578	8,499	2.2	15.6
Engineering	339,760	4,468	1.1	1.3
Agriculture	59,569	6,353	1.6	10.7
Medicine, Dentistry, Pharmacy & Nursing	109,748	34,421	8.8	31.4
Home economics	33,881	31,681	8.1	93.5
Teachers training	133,931	73,259	18.7	54.7
Arts	44,146	27,616	7.0	62.6
Others	23,200	6,546	1.7	28.2

Source: "Report on School Statistics" Ministry of Education.

As regards their curricula, by far the largest number of women major in literary courses, followed by teachers training. Compared with men students, there are fewer women majoring in such subjects as engineering, law, politics and economics, though more and more women students tend to choose these subjects for their future career.

After graduation most of these women take up their career, though sometimes with considerable difficulties in finding employment suitable to their qualifications and abilities. Out of all women who completed their higher education in March 1979 some 69 percent found employment by the time of their graduation, while the comparable figure for men was 77 percent. Those women who continued their studies at a still higher level were 2 percent of all the female graduates.

### Adult Education

In addition to school education, the new educational system emphasizes adult education for men and women. Under the Social Education Law special programs such as summer courses in universities, mother's classes, exhibitions and various types of gatherings are organized for women in general and particularly for house-wives by national and local government.

Besides, many governmental organs and related bodies conduct under their jurisdiction various educational activities for women; especially the Women's and Young Workers' Bureau of the Labor Ministry carries out a number of campaigns and other activities in its programs for the promotion of the status of women and the highlight is the Women's Week.

Also women's organizations are active in this field, and in addition, all media of mass communication, such as newspapers and magazines and in particular radio and television, are keenly engaged in their respective programs of such activities.

### III. WOMEN WORKERS

The rapid expansion of economy and progress of industrialization in postwar Japan had a great impact on the economic activities of women. The number of women workers had drastically increased, and the range of their occupations has been extended. The most marked features of the employment of women in recent years are the rise in the labor force participation of mature and married women and the change in their work patterns. The number of part-time workers (less than 35 hours a week) has been increasing gradually, and in 1979 it counted 2,360,000. Besides, it is estimated that almost 1,240,000 women are engaged in industrial home work within their homes.

#### Women in the Labor Force

The number of women in the labor force is 21,600,000 in 1979. This figure represented 39 percent of the country's entire labor force and 48 percent of the female population of 15 years of age and over.

The labor force participation rate of women had been decreasing for a long time, but it has been showing increase since 1976. The participation of women in the age group of 40 to 54 years has been increasing year after year. As to younger generations more and more girls are seeking the higher level of education and their participation in the labor force has shown considerable decrease.

Table 7. Women in the Labor Force 1960-1979(women 15 years of age and over)

	(10,000 persons)			
	Population	Labor Force	Labor Force Participation rate	As percent of total labor force
1960	3,370	1,838	54.5	40.7
1965	3,758	1,903	50.6	39.8
1970	4,060	2,024	49.9	39.3
1975	4,342	1,987	45.8	37.3
1979	4,536	2,160	47.6	38.6

Source: "Annual Report on the Labor Force Survey", Prime Minister's Office.

**Table 8. Women in the Labor Force by Age Group**

(10,000 persons)

	Number		Participation rate	
	1960	1979	1960	1979
Total	1,838	2,160	54.5%	47.6%
15 ~ 19 year olds	219	73	49.0	18.6
20 ~ 24	277	276	70.8	69.9
25 ~ 29	217	233	54.5	48.2
30 ~ 34	216	237	56.5	47.5
35 ~ 39	200	271	59.0	58.2
40 ~ 54	457	731	59.0	62.4
55 ~ 64	162	246	46.7	45.4
65 and over	80	92	25.6	15.6

Source: "Annual Report on the Labor Force Survey", Prime Minister's Office.

**Table 9. Employed Women - 1979**

(10,000 persons)

	Number	As percent of total employed
Total	2,117 (100%)	38.6%
Agriculture and forestry	292 (13.8)	51.4
Fishery, aquatic-culture	10 ( 0.5)	22.2
Mining	2 ( 0.1)	16.7
Construction	74 ( 3.5)	13.8
Manufacturing	508 (24.0)	38.1
Wholesale, retail trade	565 (26.7)	46.0
Finance, insurance	85 ( 4.0)	45.9
Real estate		
Transportation, communication	40 ( 1.9)	11.5
Electricity, gas water	5 ( 0.2)	15.2
Services	496 (23.4)	50.6
Government	36 ( 1.7)	17.9

Source: "Annual Report on the Labor Force Survey", Prime Minister's Office.

Women in the labor force are divided roughly into three categories; paid employees, family workers and self-employed. The biggest portion was occupied by paid employees representing 62 percent in 1979, followed by 24 percent for family workers and 14 percent for self-employed. 44 percent of family workers belong to agriculture and forestry. In 1950, nearly 60 percent of women workers were employed as family workers in agriculture. However, because of the high and rapid economic growth and

modernization of industry in last two decades, the number of women workers has increased remarkably in paid employment, in sectors other than agriculture. In 1979 the majority of the women workers, about 86 percent, were paid employees in non-agricultural industries.

Table 10. Women in Paid Employment 1960 - 1979

Year	Number	(10,000 persons)
		As percent of total employees
1960	738	31.1%
1965	913	31.8
1970	1,096	33.2
1975	1,167	32.0
1979	1,310	33.8

Source: "Annual Report on the Labor Force Survey", Prime Minister's Office.

### Women Paid Employees

Since the end of the last war the number of women in paid employment has been on the constant increase. In 1979 it counted 13.1 million, representing 34 percent of the total number of paid employees.

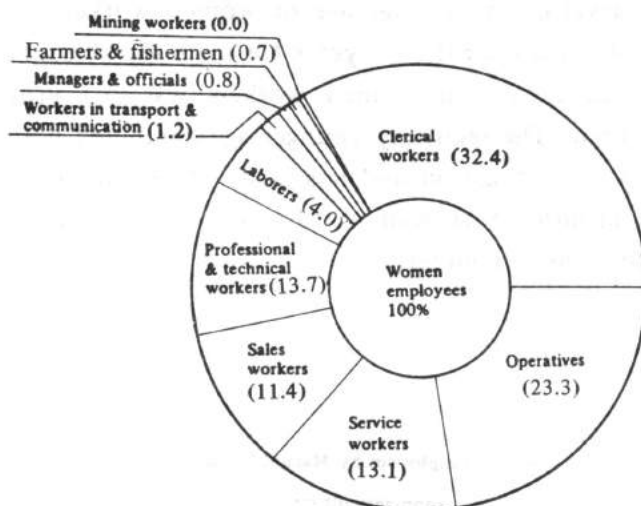
Table 11. Women Employees by Age Group

	(10,000 persons)					
	Number		Percent Distribution		As percent of total employees	
	1960	1979	1960	1979	1960	1979
Total	738	1,310	100.0%	100.0%	31.3%	33.8%
15 ~ 19 year olds	157	66	23.4	5.0	50.0	52.0
20 ~ 24	265	246	39.6	18.8	35.7	49.8
25 ~ 29		168		12.8		29.7
30 ~ 34	116	139	17.3	10.6	22.3	25.6
35 ~ 39		156		11.9		30.3
40 ~ 54	127	409	19.0	31.2	21.6	33.4
55 ~ 64		101		7.7		32.5
65 and over	5	24	0.7	1.8	17.2	25.3

Source: "Annual Report on the Labor Force Survey", Prime Minister's Office.



**Diagram 1. Women Employees by Occupation – 1979**



Source: "Annual Report on the Labor Force Survey", Prime Minister's Office.

Traditionally participation rate of women in paid employment had been high only in younger generation. The tendency in recent years has been towards the increase in the number of older women workers.

As for the marital status of women employees, the recent trend is a marked increase of married women in paid employment. It is significant that the net increase of some 3 million in the number of women employees that took place in this last decade was due to the increase in the number of married women workers. In 1979 57 percent of all women workers were married and 33 percent were single. An additional 10 percent were widowed or divorced. This is a considerable change from the situation in 1962, when only 33 percent of all women workers were married and 55 percent were single.

The increase in the number of older and married women workers has led to the higher level of the average age of women workers, which marked 34.1 years in 1978 (as against 37.2 years for male workers).

Average duration of service of women workers was 6.1 years as against 11.1 years for men. The relatively younger age combined with the shorter service means lower education and less skill, which directly leads to limited chances of promotion as well as to lower wage level for the female workers than their male counterparts.

**Table 12. Women Employees by Marital Status**

	(non-agriculture)		(10,000 persons)	
	1962		1979	
	Number	Percent distribution	Number	Percent distribution
Total	802	100.0%	1,300	100.0%
Single	443	55.2	432	33.2
Married	262	32.7	737	56.7
Widowed and divorced	96	12.0	132	10.2

Source: "Annual Report on the Labor Force Survey", Prime Minister's Office.

## Women's Employment by Industries and Occupations

In recent years the increase in women's paid employment has been most conspicuous in wholesale and retail and in service industries. Though manufacturing industries had the greatest share of the female labor force in paid employment, the number of women workers has continuously declined in the textile industry, which formerly was the typical employment field for women. The number of women workers has steadily increased in heavy industries such as metal and machine manufacturing.

During the 12 years from 1967 to 1979 the absolute number of female workers most notably increased in wholesale and retail trade, and service industries. Increasing rates were high in wholesale and retail trade as well as service industries.

In 1979 the largest group of women in paid employment worked in services (29%), followed by manufacturing (29%) and wholesale and retail trade (26%), and women who worked in these categories of industries occupied more than 80 percent of total women workers.

Table 13. Number of Women Employees by Industry

Industry	Number (10 thousands)		Percent distribution		Percent of all employees	
	1967	1979	1967	1979	1967	1979
Total	1,004	1,310	100%	100%	32.7	33.8%
Agriculture, Forestry and hunting	15	9	1.5	0.7	32.6	30.0
Fishery and aquiculture	3	1	0.3	0.2	13.0	14.3
Mining	2	1	0.2	0.1	8.0	8.3
Construction	44	57	4.4	4.4	15.0	13.7
Manufacturing	362	373	36.0	28.5	34.2	33.7
Wholesale and retail trade	221	335	22.0	25.6	41.0	42.1
Finance, Insurance and real estate	57	80	5.7	6.1	44.2	46.8
Transport and communication, Electricity, gas, water and steam	37	38 5	3.7	2.9 0.4	12.0	11.5 15.2
Services	239	374	23.8	28.5	48.3	49.0
Government	25	36	2.5	2.7	15.9	17.9

Source: "Annual Report on the Labor Force", Prime Minister's Office.

A considerable change has taken place in recent years in the occupational distribution of women workers. In 1979, 32 percent of all women workers were clerical – the highest among the major occupational groups of women – followed by operatives (23%) and service workers (13%).

On these three categories are concentrated 69 percent of all women workers.

The number of women in professional and technical occupations has increased faster than that of men. In 1979, women in such occupations accounted for 49 percent of all workers in these categories and 13 percent of all women workers.

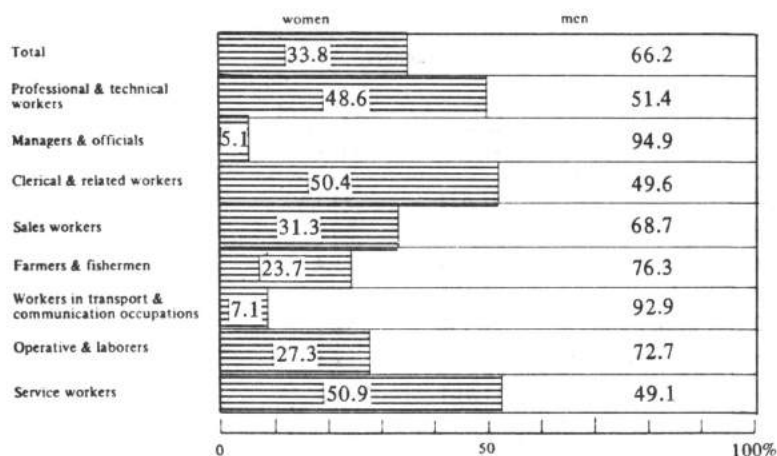
Teaching is one of the most traditional professions for women. According to the Report on Basic School Statistics of 1978 women teachers at all levels counted some 487,754 which represented 42 percent of the total number of teachers. As to those in administrative post, in 1978 there were 439 women principals in elementary schools, 17 in junior high schools, while before the war there were few women holding headship in public schools.

The number of women teachers in elementary schools increases each year, occupied 56% of the total number of elementary school teachers in 1978.

Nursing is another traditional profession for women. There were also many career women among pharmacists and doctors even before the last world war.

A number of women hold administrative posts in government service, and there are increasing numbers of women lawyers, judges, architects, designers, accountants, etc. active in their respective fields, which were almost exclusively monopolized by men before the war.

Diagram 2. Participation Rate by Occupation - 1979



Source: "Annual Report on the Labor Force Survey", Prime Minister's Office.

Table 14. Employed Women in Selected Occupation

Selected occupation	Number (Persons)		As percent of total employed	
	1960	1975	1960	1975
Technicians	2,400	14,600	0.7%	1.8%
Teachers	277,970	464,100	34.6	40.5
Physicians	9,610	13,000	9.6	9.6
Pharmacists	13,940	35,700	39.5	51.4
Nurses	194,260	385,400	98.3	97.3
Artists	6,990	38,100	15.0	24.5
Scientists	2,280	3,900	7.0	5.1
Judges, Prosecutors, Lawyers	120	400	1.2	2.5
Kindergartner	24,350	73,800	84.2	94.6
Nursery nurses	45,000	171,800	100.0	100.0
Social workers	5,150	40,200	34.2	58.9
Managerial workers (non-governmental)	29,330	98,800	5.4	8.8
Clerks	978,910	2,612,300	32.5	44.2
Stenographers, Typists	66,990	76,600	95.9	97.2
Operatives (electric machinery)	159,460	383,000	40.8	43.8
Operatives (yarn, thread and fabric mills)	868,530	531,600	75.3	66.0
Service workers (except household)	1,252,790	1,960,700	68.7	64.3
Household workers	308,200	105,800	99.1	97.5
Civil servants in managerial posts	600	1,100	0.8	0.9
Telephone operatives	118,400	125,900	94.9	97.1
Farmers	7,114,640	3,361,700	54.8	52.8
Accounting clerks	616,500	1,639,900	48.5	65.4
Saleswomen and sales clerks	1,276,970	1,991,500	56.1	53.4
Garment and related textile fabrics workers	605,590	959,100	71.7	79.9

Source: "Population Census", Prime Minister's Office.

Table 15. Women Teachers and Principals in Schools - 1978

	Teachers		Principals	
	Number (Persons)	As percent of total teachers	Number (Persons)	As percent of total principals
Kindergarten	91,821	94.1%	3,538	44.2%
Elementary Schools	251,059	56.3	439	1.9
Junior High Schools	77,674	31.4	17	0.2
Senior High Schools	41,134	17.6	126	2.7
Colleges (2-year institution)	6,124	38.2	54	15.3
Universities (4-year institution)	8,278	8.4	19	4.5
Others	11,664	40.3	9	1.4

Source: "Report on Basic School Statistics", Ministry of Education

### Wages and Working Hours

The average wage of women workers working in enterprises employing 30 regular workers and over in 1979 was 158,825 yen and that of men 289,052 yen per month. The highest wage was earned by women in services, the second transport & communication and these wages exceeded the average wage over 47,465 yen. On an average, women's wages are about 55% of men's wages, but this does not mean that women get 55% of men in equal job. Actually, in 1947 the principle of equal wage for equal work for men and women was established by the Labor Standards Law, and in 1967 Government of Japan ratified the ILO Convention No.100 "Equal Remuneration". This comparatively low wage is derived from the particular employment and wage system prevalent in the present Japanese economy. The wage is generally based on seniority of workers under the life employment system of each firm. That is to say, there is hierarchy of wages according to the age, duration of service, besides the skills of workers of that particular firm. And women workers are generally young, that is, many are in the starting stage of the wage scale, and short in duration of service as well as a great number of women are engaged in unskilled works. These factors cause lower wage of women than that of men on an average. For instance, the starting wages of new graduates of various school level indicate little or at least not much difference by sex.

Working hours of women in 1979 were 165 hours per month. As a tendency working hours have been decreasing for both men and women.

Table 16. Wages by Industries (Major Group)-1979  
(Establishments employing 30 regular workers and over)

Industry	Total cash earning per month (yen)	
	Men	Women
Total	289,052	158,825
Mining	278,514	140,053
Construction	256,350	118,346
Manufacturing	273,248	122,743
Wholesale & retail	281,109	141,589
Finance & insurance	415,235	193,944
Real estate	313,069	146,253
Transport & communication	276,153	192,903
Electricity, gas & water supply	342,361	187,220
Services	327,175	206,290

Source: "Monthly Labor Survey," Ministry of Labor.

### Trade Union Activities

Since the introduction of the Trade Union Law in 1945, a marked progress has been made in the trade union activities of women. As of June 1979, 3,340,000 women workers were members of the trade unions. This figure represented 26 percent of all women workers and 27 percent of the total union membership. Out of all the women member 25 percent are recruited from those working in the "manufacturing" industries. Though only a few women are as yet placed in a position to take the leadership of union activities, still we cannot overlook the significant part union are playing for the betterment of the working conditions and status of women workers at large.

### Legislative Measures Concerning Women Workers

From the viewpoint of promoting equality between sexes, review of special legislation for women workers in the light of scientific knowledge and technological advances was recommended by the tripartite Advisory Committee on Women's and Young Workers' Problems in Oct. 1976. This line was confirmed by the National Plan of Action for Women in January 1977. The Report<sup>\*)</sup> of the Labor Standards Law Study Group, an advisory body to the Minister of Labor, was submitted in November 1978.

About that time, the tripartite Advisory Committee on Women's and Young Workers' Problems has been deliberating on the basic direction for policies, including legislative measures, to achieve equality of opportunity

and treatment in employment.

The Expert Group on Equality of the Sexes was established by the Ministry of Labor in December 1979 and has been studying to clarify guidelines for what constitutes discrimination in employment.

\*) The outline of this report is as follows:

“(a) Need of enactment of a law to ensure equality between men and women

In order to secure equality between men and women in employment, urgently needed are not only judicial remedies but also speedy administrative remedies through the enactment of a law explicitly prohibiting sex discrimination with regard to opportunities and treatment in employment.

(b) Review of the protective measures for women

For enacting the statutory provisions to ensure equality of the sexes, it is necessary to clarify the extent and scope of discriminatory treatment based on sex. For this purpose, the special prospective measures for women should be limited to reasonable minimum required by such justifiable reason as protection of maternity and other difference in biological functions of men and women.

(c) Repletion of Maternal Protection

As regards the maternity protection relating to pregnancy and confinement, its replenishment is important not only to protect women workers themselves but also to promote the healthy growth of children who will carry on the future society and has become necessary due to the recent increase of married women workers.”

The existing laws are as follows:

A. *The Labor Standards Law*, promulgated in 1947 provide protections mainly related to maternity. It covers all industries except for industrial home work and domestic service at home, regulates the minimum standards of working conditions. It establishes principle of equal remuneration for men and women and contains some special measures for the protection of women and minors.

(1) *Principle of Equal Pay for Men and Women*: Equal wages should be paid to men and women for work of equal value. The article provides that “the employer shall not discriminate women against men concerning wages by reason of the worker being a woman.”

(2) *Working Hours and Rest Days of Women*: The employer shall not employ women above full 18 years old overtime more than 2 hours a day, 6 hours a week, and 150 hours a year, and not employ them on rest days in principle.

(3) *Prohibition of Night Work*: The employer must not employ women during hours between 10 p.m. and 5 a.m. in principle. But this stipulation does not apply to the jobs specified by Ordinance as superintendent of a women's dormitory, air-stewardess, as well as women workers in agriculture, forestry, fishery, telephone operator, etc.



(4) *Restrictions on Dangerous and Harmful Jobs*: The employer must not employ women in dangerous or harmful jobs specified by Ordinances, nor in jobs which require the conveyance of heavy goods beyond 20 kg (30 kg for intermittent work).

(5) *Ban on Underground Labor*: The employer must not employ women in underground labor.

(6) *Maternity Leave*: The employer must not employ a woman for 6 weeks before childbirth when she requests rest days during the period. The employer must not employ a woman within 6 weeks after childbirth. However, when the woman requests to work after 5 weeks, it is permissible to assign her to a job that doctor pronounces unharmed to her. The employer must not dismiss a woman who is on maternity leave during the period and 30 days thereafter.

When a pregnant woman requires, the employer shall place her to a lighter job.

In 1955, a law was promulgated making it mandatory that a replacement be found for women teachers taking pregnancy leave. It specifies for the local governments to provide teachers to substitute the women teachers while they are taking maternity leave, in order to protect motherhood as well as to maintain the regular classes.

(7) *Nursing Period*: A woman nursing a baby less than one year old may request nursing time, twice a day, each at least 30 minutes during the working hours, besides the ordinary recess.

(8) *Menstruation Leave*: The employer must not employ a woman who suffers heavily from menstruation or a woman engaged in jobs injurious to menstruation if she requests a menstruation leave.

B. *Working Women Welfare Law*, established in July 1, 1972, aims at furthering the welfare and improving the status of working women by taking appropriate actions to help them reconcile their dual responsibilities of work and home, or to enable them to develop and make best use of their abilities.

Briefly the law stipulates the following items:

(1) Clarification of the fundamental idea concerning the welfare of working women, and the responsibility of employers, the State and local public bodies to promote the welfare of working women.

(2) The State and local public bodies shall organize campaigns to promote understanding for working women's welfare.

(3) The Labor Minister shall draw the basic guide line of actions for the welfare of working women.

(4) The State and local public bodies shall take appropriate measures to promote the vocational guidance and training.

(5) An employer shall endeavor to make arrangements for health control of his female employees who are pregnant or after childbirth, including time off for health examination.

(6) An employer shall endeavor to provide conveniences for child care for his female employees including the approval of child care leave. Child care leave is the scheme, which enables a woman worker with an infant to stay at home for a certain period without losing her employment status at the enterprise and with the guarantee of returning to employment on completion of the leave. To promote introduction of the child care leave among enterprises, the Government is giving an administrative guidance with incentive bounty to employers.

(7) The local public bodies shall endeavor to establish "Welfare Center for Working Women". The local public bodies have endeavoured to establish "Welfare Center for Working Women" under the assistance of the national government. The function of the centers, which will count 122 in the end of fiscal 1980, is to provide various programs for women workers as comprehensive regional facilities.

(8) The Labor Minister, with a view to administering the law successfully, shall undertake necessary surveys, and also is entitled to request the cooperation of the administrative agencies concerned in presentation of necessary information and materials.

*C. Child-Care Leave Law:* A long demanded Child-Care Leave Law was adopted on July 3, 1975. The law applies to women teachers of public kindergarten, primary schools and junior and senior high schools. It also applies to medical nurses and day-nursery nurses in public institutions. The law, effective from April 1, 1976, allow mothers with children under twelve months to take up to one year's leave if they wish to do so. During their leave, they are not paid, but are assured of returning their former posts.

In connection with this law, from January 1978 another kind of bounty is prepared for employers of the private medical institutions who have adopted child care leave scheme and paid certain percentage of salaries to the nurses, midwives, etc. who took the leave.

D. *The Employment Security Law*, promulgated in 1947, provides all people with opportunities to get jobs suitable to their abilities. For the enforcement of this law about 481 Public Employment Security Offices have been established throughout the country, and women who got placements through these offices in 1979 were 1,034,501 (except part-time workers and these who graduated from school in that fiscal year).

E. *Vocational Training Law*, established in 1958 and revised in 1969 and 1978, is to foster skilled workers needed for manufacturing and other industries by providing vocational training and conducting trade tests in order to enable workers to acquire and improve necessary skills, and thereby to assure the security of employment and the improvement of the worker's status as well as contribute to the development of the national economy.

There were about 404 Vocational Training Centers in 1979, where a number of training opportunities are opened to men and women equally providing assistance for them to acquire skills necessary for jobs.

However, most women trainees are enrolled in a relatively limited group of occupations, e.g. garment and textile fabrics work, sewing and knitting machine operation, clerical work, typewriting, and printing or service works such as barber and beautician.

F. *The Industrial Homework Law*, established in 1970, provides for those matters which are considered most fundamental and imminent for the improvement of the working conditions of homeworkers. They include the guarantee of the minimum amount of homework wages, safety and hygiene, a system of homeworkers' pocketbook, etc.

G. *The Trade Union Law*, promulgated in 1949, aims at promoting the status of workers by establishing equal standing for both workers and employers in their bargaining, and protecting workers on their collective activities.

H. *Legislations Concerning Social Security for Women Workers*: The welfare of women workers are also protected by other social insurance laws which cover all workers.

These laws assure workers of benefits resulting from accident sickness, unemployment, old age, etc.

*Workmen's Accident Compensation Insurance Law*, established in 1947, provides a worker with prompt and equitable protection against his or her injury, invalidity or death due to the causes of occupational

accidents or diseases for which the employer has an obligation to compensate according to the stipulation of the Labor Standards Law. The law also regulates to establish the necessary institutions for the welfare of the worker in occupational accidents or diseases.

*The Health Insurance Law*, established in 1922, provides for the payment of benefits to insured persons and to persons supported by them in case of sickness, injury and death attributable to causes of sources outside of their employment. This law contains maternity benefit provisions as stated in Chapter VI *Social welfare for women*.

*The Employment Insurance Law*, established in 1975, grants an unemployment insurance benefit to the insured person when he or she is out of job. An insured person who is out of job and cannot be employed in spite of his or her will and ability to work, is paid 90 days in minimum, 300 days in maximum of 60% to 80% of his or her average daily wage in proportion to his or her total period of insured employment.

I. *The Welfare Pension Insurance Law*, established in 1941 and revised in 1954 provides for the payment of benefits in case of old age, invalidity, death or retirement of a worker and contributes to the stabilization of livelihood and the promotion of welfare, of a worker and his or her survivors.

### **Specific Measures for Promoting Employment of Women**

A. Women's and Young Workers' Bureau initiated a special vocational training system for women who generally find greater difficulty in obtaining suitable jobs.

*Industrial Home Work Consulting Centers and Women's Employment Assistance Centers*: The aim of these centers is to provide women who encounter with difficulty in doing gainful work outside their homes, with information, consultation, reference and other conveniences, and thus help to solve problems concerning industrial home work. 16 of the Homework Consulting Centers were reorganized to the Womens' Employment Assistance Centers and 2 Women's Employment Assistance Centers were newly established in the fiscal year between 1977 and 1979. Altogether there are 50 centers which were established since the fiscal year of 1955. The Women's Employment Assistance Centers will count 27 in the end of fiscal 1980. The Women's and Young Workers' Bureau subsidized these centers with one-third of expenses and gives necessary guidance and supervision as to their management and services.

B. In order to promote employment of widows with children under 20 years of age, the Women's and Young Workers' Bureau is endeavouring to improve comprehensive counselling and guidance for employment and upgrade vocational training for them. Countermeasures for widows are as follows:

Comprehensive counselling and guidance, as well as practical training are provided for widows who wish to find employment. Widows who receive this training receive skill acquisition allowance (Average of 87,380 yen a month) and commutation allowance (maximum ¥1,470/day).

The vocational counsellors are assigned for the betterment of vocational guidance and counselling for widows in main Public Employment Security Offices.

Vocational training allowance is paid to widows who attend workshop adaption training as well as to those who receive public vocational training (Average of 87,380 yen a month).

An incentive bounty is paid to employers who employ widows continuously through the placement of the Public Employment Security Office (15,000 yen a month per one widow).

And Employers who carry out workshop adaption training receive allowance for this training (Monthly allowance is 14,000 yen).

## IV. WOMEN IN FAMILY LIFE

### The Status of Women in Family Law

Based upon the Constitution of 1946 the Civil Code was revised in 1947, and the revision effected a revolutionary change in the legal status of women in the family.

The new legislation provides women with every possible rights — property rights, inheritance rights, the right of marriage and divorce, parental rights, etc. — resulting in various changes in the way of living and pattern of family life. The following is a brief survey of the status of women in family law and actual practice thereon.

(Marriage) The mutual consent of both sexes is the only requirement for contracting marriage, and the consent of the parents is necessary only in the case the parties to the marriage are minors (that is, below 20 years of age). The minimum age of marriage is 16 for women and 18 for men (The average age of contracting marriage in 1978 was 25.1 years for women and 27.6 years for men). The only formality required for entering into marriage is the official registration thereof, which must be conducted by the parties concerned and two or more adult witnesses, either orally or with document.

The parties to a marriage may settle their property rights before marriage by entering into contract and registering it. However, such cases are rare in actual practice. Almost in every case, the parties to the marriage leave their property rights on the “statutory property system”, under which all property owned by one party previous to the marriage and all property acquired in his or her name during marriage become his or her personal property; however, any property, in regard to which it is uncertain whether it belongs to husband or wife, is presumed to be the property in their co-ownership. As to the expenses of the marriage life, both husband and wife assume a share of such expenses, taking into account their property, income and all other circumstances.

(Divorce) Besides the “Judicial Divorce” permitted by court trial in case certain causes exist as perscribed in the law, the legislation provides for the “Divorce by Agreement”, under which a divorce can be obtained when mutual agreement of both parties is formally notified

to the registrar. In the "Judicial Divorce" there is no discrimination between the sexes with regard to the causes for seeking divorce. In actual practice, about 90 percent of all the divorces are "divorces by agreement".

In case the parties fail to come to agreement, either party may apply to the family court for mediation. The court makes all efforts in close contact with parties and others concerned, to get at a conclusion for the best of the parties. In 1978, 10 percent of all the divorces were "divorces through mediation" by the family courts (The family courts are established in 1949 all over the country to take care of all sorts of troubles concerning family life with very simple procedure and almost free of charge, dealing at the same time with cases of juvenile delinquency).

There is no institution of alimony, but a woman (or man), when divorced, may demand distribution of property from the husband (or the wife), though the actual amount of such distribution is generally very small because the husbands are seldom in possession of much property.

For some time after the war, the divorce rate was conspicuously high, but it soon began to decline, and therefore the last few years it has remained without much fluctuation. The rate is getting high in these years. The number of actual cases was 135,000 or 1.17 cases per 1,000 population, in 1979.

In spring 1976, the Civil Code was amended, responding to the strong demand for equality of men and women by women's organisations, to the effect that the divorced persons may use sur-name during marriage continuously after the divorce, upon application within 3 months after the divorce, which can be done without consent of the other party of the broken marriage. Prior to this amendment, the persons who had changed sur-name upon marriage, in most cases women, were required to resume their previous sur-name after divorce.

(Parental Rights) Both parents exercise their parental authority in concert; they are absolutely equal with regard to rights and duties to their children.

In case of dissolution of marriage, the parental rights may be taken over either by the father or the mother, or by both when there are more than two children, according to the mutual agreement or through media-



tion of the family court. In actual cases the mothers very often take over the parental rights after divorcement.

(Inheritance Rights) The prewar inheritance system based on the principle of the sole inheritance by the eldest son has been abolished. The new Civil Code provides for the joint inheritance of the children, both male and female, in equal shares, and the wife always has the right to inherit her husband's property, regardless of whether or not he has left a will. The share of the spouse in an intestate succession is as follows: one-third in the case of the spouse and his (her) children being successors; one half in the case of the spouse and his (her) parents being successors; and two-thirds in the case of the spouse and his (her) brothers and sisters being successors. The Civil Code has been amended and the share of the spouse will be one-half, two-thirds and three-fourths, respectively in the above-mentioned cases, on and after January 1st, 1981.

### Changing Patterns of Family Life

In recent years certain social factors have been developing to effect further changes in family life. One of the factors is the drastic decrease in the average childbirth expectancy per one couple. It dropped from more than 5 in the prewar years to 2 in 1979. In consequence, the vital statistics show that the nation's birth rate decreased from 28.1 persons per 1,000 population in 1950 to 14.2 persons in 1979. At the same time, child bearing ages tend to concentrate during the period from 25 to 29 years of age. Also, the life expectancy should be noted; in 1978 it was 72.9 years for men and 78.3 for women — four years extension during the past ten years.

Table 17. Trends in Vital Statistics, 1930–1979

Year	Population in thousands	Live Birth rate (per 1,000)	Death rate (per 1,000)	Natural increase rate (per 1,000)	Marriage rate (per 1,000)	Divorce rate (per 1,000)
1930	64,450	32.4	18.2	14.2	7.9	0.80
35	69,254	31.6	16.8	14.9	8.0	0.70
50	83,200	28.1	10.9	17.2	8.6	1.01
55	89,276	19.4	7.8	11.6	8.0	0.84
60	93,419	17.2	7.6	9.6	9.3	0.74
65	98,275	18.6	7.1	11.4	9.7	0.79
70	103,119	18.8	6.9	11.8	10.0	0.93
75	111,251	17.1	6.3	10.8	8.5	1.07
79	115,464	14.2	6.0	8.3	6.6	1.17

Source: Vital Statistics, Ministry of Health and Welfare.



Besides, the mode of living is changing as a result of the introduction and wider use of modern household appliances such as electric washing-machine, refrigerators, vacuum cleaners, electric pans, etc. Furthermore, the mass production of various sorts of instant food, ready-made clothes and other daily necessities has much facilitated women's house-work.

Due to these changes in living conditions, women have been spared much of the time and energy spent on their housework, and now they enjoy much more free time at their disposal. According to a survey (1975), the average hours spent by housewives for social, cultural and recreational activities are about 7 hours — twice as many as those in prewar years. The time spent by housewives for housework is 7 hours and 46 minutes.

All these changing circumstances have much to do with the increasing number of married women who want to undertake gainful work. About a half of all married women are in the labor force. 6 out of 10 married women workers have children under 18 years of age. One out of 5 have children under 6 years of age.

According to the Annual Report on the Labour Force Survey 1979, the number of married women working out of their homes was 7.4 million, occupying 2.5 percent of all married women. Over 1 million of these married women workers have children under 6 years of age. In 1979, there are 21,264 day nurseries (13,001 in public and 8,263 in private) all over the country which accommodate about 1.9 million children under 6 years of age (1.2 million in public and 761 thousand in private). However, a new problem has arisen from such a situation — how to successfully combine their family responsibilities with their working life.

Another feature of the changes in the pattern of the family in recent years is the increase of nuclear families, unlike the traditional type of the Japanese family where the husband's parents and other relatives used to live together. This fact, while generally welcome to the wife, presents sometimes a certain difficulty to the family. That is, when the wife is sick in bed or in confinement, there is nobody to take over the housekeeping work in her place, and frequently the husband takes off from his work to do the housework, or the wife tries to do the chores though she is supposed to be in bed, thus causing much unstableness in the family life.

## V. RURAL WOMEN

### Increased Participation in Agriculture

The employed persons in agriculture and forestry, being on the decrease in recent years, accounted for 10 percent of the total labor force in 1979 while women occupied 51 percent of the whole agricultural labor force.

With the rapid expansion of industry, an increasing number of farm people, especially family members with small farm lands, are entering factories and firms as paid workers. Statistics indicate that in 1979 about 87 percent of the total farm households have one or more members engaged in paid employment or some independent enterprises other than farming. Not only younger sons and daughters but often heads of the families or eldest sons leave home, though in most cases families keep on their farming enterprises. The consequence is that in these families women, especially wives are obliged to take up ever greater part in farming, in many cases even the sole management of the enterprises.

Thus with increased participation in farming, women are assuming greater authority and responsibility in the family as well as in the community. But the same circumstance has made it necessary for them to increase their time in farm labor even though new methods of farming with machinery and chemicals have been introduced.

### Women in the Family

With higher standards of living attained in recent years for farming households and as a result of modernization of housekeeping facilities, housekeeping work has been getting less and less toilsome. With the use of electric appliances such as washing-machines and electric pans, and other improvements in domestic facilities, farm women have been relieved of the hardship of their housework to a considerable extent.

One of the influences to this end may have come from the Living Improvement Projects taken up by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery since 1948, which aim at improving rural home life. At present about 2,235 officials — all women — are at work in this field throughout the country. They visit homes of farmers and give advices on housekeeping problems or hold lecture meetings and demonstrate home improvement programs in rural life.

Furthermore, in many districts women have succeeded in organizing cooking centers and day-nurseries on cooperative basis.

The initiation of health center system with public nurses visiting houses with expectant mothers or sick people, along with the general improvement of public health programs, has helped to improve the health of farm women and children to a great extent. The National Health Insurance Scheme has worked much to the same end, making all members of the family eligible for medical treatment.

The general use of radio and television sets in rural areas has contributed in a large measure to leveling off the cultural standards in different parts of the country. Also the increasing participation of rural resident in modern industries in urban areas has paved the way for the modernization of the way of living in rural households.

These changes in rural life, however, has caused a substantial increase in household expenses. It is not seldom that housewives themselves work in factories during slack seasons or are engaged in homework, in order to supplement their family income or to pay for children's education. Farm women are having less and less free time.

### **Organization Activities**

With the prevalence of mass communication and adult education, the mind of farm women has gradually turned to the thoughts of their well-being in the daily and social problems at large.

Most women in farm households have been organized themselves into members of agricultural cooperatives or regional women's clubs. Those who have children of school age are members of P.T.A. (Parents and Teachers Association) organized in every school. Lecture meetings and workshops held under the sponsorship of these institutions afford them opportunities for social training. Also there are increasing number of women organized in small groups with their specific purposes. All these organizations, large or small, are contributing in their respective ways to the welfare of the community and the betterment of daily life, and through the participation in organization activities women are learning much and improving the consciousness as organic members of community.

## **VI. SOCIAL WELFARE FOR WOMEN**

Due to the cooperative efforts made by the Government and voluntary organizations, social welfare services and security system of Japan have made a considerable progress in recent years, though there still remains much to be accomplished. Below is given a brief survey of the social welfare schemes now in effect to be applicable to women.

### **Public Assistance**

Public assistance program is carried out under the Daily Life Security Law to give aids both in money and in kind to those families unable to make living. The Law set up in 1946, in accordance with the provision of Article 25 of the Constitution, established the responsibility of the Government to see that all the people shall have a minimum standard of living and shall be eligible for assistance, if in need. According to a survey, of all the families receiving benefits under this law nearly one half are headed by women, mostly widowed or divorced.

### **Mothers' Welfare Fund Loans**

The Law for Maternal and Child Welfare of 1964 ensures government loans for widowed and divorced mothers to open or continue business, to acquire training, etc., and for their children to attend school or to prepare for a new job.

### **Child Rearing Allowance**

The Child Rearing Allowance Law was enacted in 1961. The allowance given to low-income fatherless families in accordance with the number of children.

Fatherless families are protected by several measures besides those mentioned above. They are entitled to live in the Homes for Mothers and Children, and the Tax Law provides for a certain reduction from their income tax and also for the payment of a lower local tax.

### **Children's Allowance**

Based on the Children's allowance Law enacted in January 1972 (Law No. 73, May 1971), Children's Allowance Scheme was established

as the last measure of social security in Japan.

The responsible body for administration is the Ministry of Health and Welfare. This scheme is contribute to the stability of family life as well as to promote the healthy growth of children who will carry on the future society by granting the allowance to the persons who bring up their children. There are approximately 2 million requisite children to be granted the allowance.

### **Child Welfare Institutions**

Child Welfare Law of 1948 proclaims the nation's responsibility for healthy development of children both in body and mind, and for the protection of mothers too. Under this law many social welfare institutions, such as Homes for Infants, Day Nurseries, Children's Homes and various institutions for handicapped children, Maternity Homes and Homes for Mother and Children have been set up, as well as governmental organs such as Child Guidance Centers. In 1979 there were about one million children under 6 years of age in 21,264 authorized day-nursery centers, of which 13,001 were public institutions and 8,263 were private.

### **Health Insurance**

Under the health insurance schemes the insured and their dependents are provided with medical care at very low costs.

In case working women thus insured give birth to a child, they are entitled to the benefit of a certain amount for confinement expenses. Also, they are paid an amount equal to 60 percent of their daily remuneration for a period of 84 days, as well as a nursing allowance.

### **Health Centers**

Health Centers established under the Health Centers Law have much to do with the health of children and expectant mothers. The network of health centers was reorganized and expanded in 1947. In 1980, there were 855 health centers, in order to give free medical examination and health guidance to the community residents, as well as to improve the sanitation of the community. Special emphasis is put on the health guidance for expectant mothers and infants, and such activities may be ascribed to the definite drop of the infantile death rate in recent years.

It undertakes advisory services on marriages from the eugenic standpoint, and also gives guidance on the proper method of birth control, which has had a great effect on the birth rate of the nation, as we have seen already.

In 1958, Health Centers for Mothers and Children were initiated to take care of mothers and children in rural areas. Especially they are designed to extend protection to pregnant mothers, and are provided with adequate facilities for confinement. As of 1980 they have been established in 682 villages across the country.

### **Old Age Pension**

The Welfare Pension Scheme established in 1942 covers all workers in enterprises with more than 5 employees. Under the scheme female workers can get an annuity on attaining the age of 55 (60 for men) on condition that contribution has been paid for more than 20 years. The wife of a beneficiary is entitled to an annuity on her husband's death.

Those who are not covered by the Welfare Pension Scheme are covered by the National Pension Scheme, set up in 1955. Under this system any man or woman who made contribution for more than 25 years is to receive an annuity on attaining the age of 65. As a provisional measure men and women above the age of 70 are entitled to receive an annuity, with no liability of contribution, and so are widows with children (Widows' Pension).

## VII. WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS

After World War II, the aspiration among women for the betterment of life has created a great number of women's clubs aimed at improving women's status in general or the attainment of their specific purposes, and this was furthermore encouraged by the national policy to foster spontaneous civic activities of women.

The increased spare-time in the daily life of women and the rise in their educational attainment have much stimulated women to take active part in community life, while the rapidly changing situation of the community has made women's contribution to the society indispensable.

### Various Types of Women's Clubs

There are about 51 regional women's clubs, whose total membership counts 6.5 million. The unit clubs in villages, towns, or cities affiliate to the prefectural federations, which in turn affiliate to the National Council of Federation of Regional Women's Clubs. Each regional club deals with problems in its own region, but the purposes common to all these organizations are to achieve higher standards of women's status and develop the welfare of communities.

The second largest membership is found in the women's department of agricultural cooperatives, counting about 2.7 million in about 4,000 units. Each unit organization affiliates to the prefectural federation which in turn affiliates to the National Council of Women's Organizations of Agricultural Cooperatives. These organizations try to elevate the economic and social standards of rural women through the activities of agricultural cooperatives. Although they deal chiefly with local problems, the National Council adopts certain general themes to be stressed for each year and recommends them to the unit organizations; for instance, education programs on farm management and improvement of health, etc.

Apart from these regional organizations, there are a number of women's clubs working for specific purposes. Among the well-known organizations of this kind are National Widows' Association, Young Women's Christian Association, Women's Christian Temperance Union, Association of University Women, League of Women Voters, Housewives' Association and others. Some of these organizations have a long history of brave



struggle, though their membership is not so large. For instance, the Women's Christian Temperance Union, the oldest among the Japanese women's organizations, was founded in 1886, with the purpose of promoting peace and social welfare based on christianity, especially by prohibition of alcohol. They have always been active to improve the status of women. Especially their constant efforts to abolish the licensed prostitution system in prewar times are most highly appreciated.

The League of Women Voters of Japan has a brilliant record in the struggle for political rights of women. Its original organization was established in 1924 by progressive women who fought courageously for the realization of woman suffrage. They worked persistently and did not overlook the slightest opportunity to present a bill granting women the right to vote, until the organization was forced to dissolve by the government in 1940. After the war it was reorganized to engage in the political education of women with the newly granted voting rights, and also to enlarge the opportunities for women to work in public office. Now it has a membership of about 6,000 in all.

Besides above-mentioned organizations, there are Women's League for Protection of Human Rights, Women Lawyers' Association. Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs. Women's Democratic Club, Women's League for Peace and Freedom, and others, which are all national organizations.

Some of these organizations are affiliated to international organizations, and send delegates to respective international conferences. Sometimes Japan offers to act as host to such international meetings.

Thus the activities of women's organizations are manifold according to their purposes of establishment, but they often cooperate in order to deal with common problems. For instance, they work hand in hand in the campaigns for cutting down commodity prices, fair and clean elections, or in support of or opposition to certain actions proposed by the government or other authorities. Especially, in May 1956, the united pressure of many women's organizations successfully led to the enactment of the Prostitution Prevention Law, which aimed at punishing exploiters of prostitution and protecting the women needing rehabilitation. Also many of them are keenly interested in the issues regarding atomic and hydrogen bombs and unite their activities in the campaigns for peace.



And in the International Women's Year, over forty organizations worked jointly to extend the campaign throughout the country and in November they had the National Convention of the International Women's Year, the largest non-governmental event of the year attended by more than two thousand three hundred people. In the Convention a resolution was adopted, calling on national and local governments to make every effort to eliminate discrimination against women in every field of society. After that convention, these organizations formed a Liaison Council for the UN Decade for Women. They have been holding regular meetings to support the activities of the United Nations for the Decade, to encourage government in the implementation of the resolution, and to promote and coordinate the programmes of their individual organizations.

Last year, "the Executive committee for Women's Conference at the Turning Point of the UN Decade for Women" was formed out of this Liaison Council for the national conference by non-governmental organizations toward realization of equality and advancement of women's status slated in November 1980. Along with the activities of such nation-wide women's organizations, regional and local non-governmental organizations are also lively all over Japan to achieve the targets of the Women's Decade.

## VIII. DECADE FOR WOMEN

In the beginning of 1975 the proclamation by the Prime Minister to launch the International Women's Year in Japan and the announcement by the Government of its determination to strengthen its efforts to improve the status of women were issued.

A "Resolution on the Enhancement of the Social Status of Women in the International Women's Year" was adopted in June 1975 by both Houses of the Japanese Diet on the initiative of women representatives.

And in September 1975, in line with paragraph thirty-four of the World Plan of Action, adopted in the World Conference of International Women's Year in Mexico, the Japanese Government established within the Prime Minister's Office interdisciplinary and multisectoral machinery with a mandate to implement the recommendations of the Plan. The body, "Government Headquarters for the Planning and Promoting of Policies relating to Women" is headed by the Prime Minister and is composed of representatives of deputy ministers and four civilian advisors, who are all women.

The secretariat of the Headquarters was established within the Prime Minister's Office. A woman was newly appointed as the head of the secretariat and several staff members are assisting her in her job.

At the same time, the Advisory Council to the Prime Minister on Women's Affairs was organized within the Prime Minister's Office. The Council consists of thirty-three members appointed by the Prime Minister in their individual capacities. After a series of discussions, the council made recommendations in November 1976 with regard to the policy items to be included in a national plan of action for improving the status of women.

Having this recommendation in mind the Headquarters made the National Plan of Action in January 1977, taking into consideration the needs and problems peculiar to Japanese women. The National Plan of Action incorporates the Government's basic thinking on matters relating to women, guidelines for policy for the next ten years, which have been declared by the United Nations "The United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace". The five major areas covered in the policy guidelines shown in the outline of the National Plan are (a) improvement of the legal status of women, (b) increased participation of women in political, economic,

social and cultural activities, etc. (c) due consideration for maternity and protection of the health of women, (d) ensurance of economic stability of the ages, and (e) promotion of international co-operation.

For the purpose of promoting the National Plan of Action effectively, the Headquarters announced, in October 1977, priority target areas for the first half of the Decade, as the main targets to be achieve during the first half of the Decade, and has been actively striving for their attainment.

These target areas are: (i) those areas which are especially lagging behind; (ii) the socially disadvantaged; (iii) women's need in the light of changes in the living environment. To attain these targets, the following 11 tasks have been set: (i) promotion of participation in policy decision making; (ii) recognition of the value of the work done by wives as family workers and in the home; (iii) creation of new educational opportunities for women; (iv) a school education suited to the changed social realities; (v) equal rights for men and women in employment; (vi) improvement of the child-rearing environment; (vii) measures for protection of maternity and improved health care for all women; (viii) improvement of welfare for women in agricultural, forestry and fishing communities; (ix) promotion of measures to enable widows, etc., to become self-supporting; (x) security for the aged; (xi) promotion of international cooperation.

Report concering to the implementation of the National Plan of Action was formulated by the Goverment in March 1980.

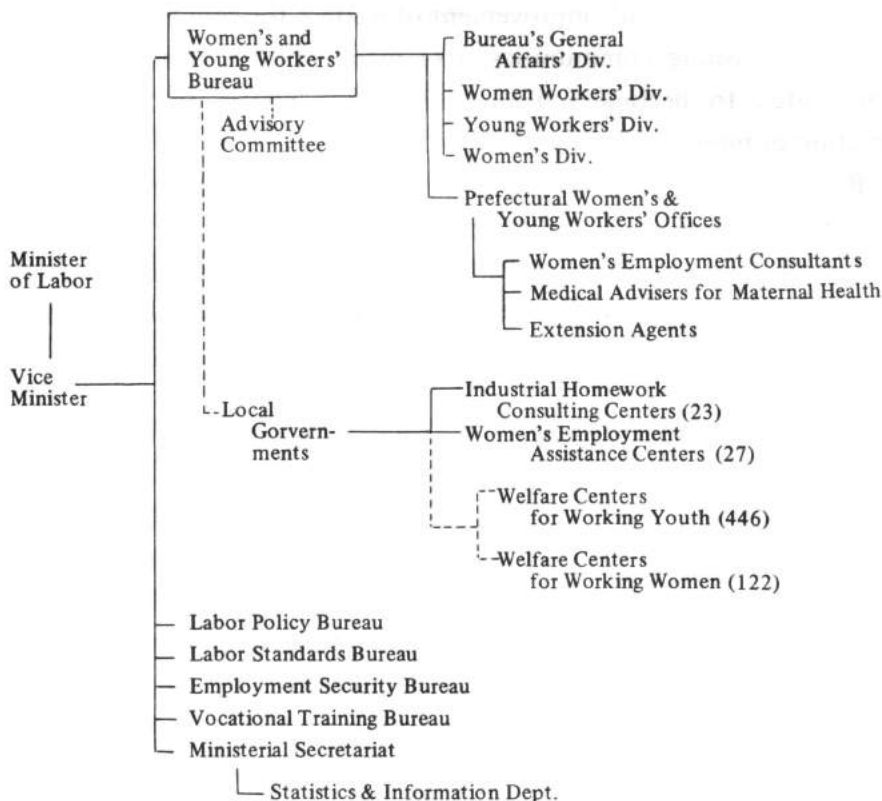
Besides, 200 members of Parliament — men and women — have organized a Parliamentary Group for the UN Decade for Women to promote Parliamentary action to implement policies for the advancement of women in Japan.

## About the Women's and Young Workers' Bureau

The Women's and Young Workers' Bureau, in the Ministry of Labor, is concerned with the responsibilities for the welfare of women and young workers. The Bureau, in addition, is responsible for the improvement of the status of women as a whole.

To discharge these responsibilities, the Bureau undertakes surveys and education campaigns, and offers guidance to local governments, employers and workers. It enforces two laws under its jurisdiction as well, the Working Womens' Welfare Law and the Working Youth's Welfare Law. The Bureau further deals with related stipulations of the Labor Standards Law with special reference to women and young workers. The organizational chart of the Bureau is shown in the below.

Organizational Chart of the Women's and Young Workers' Bureau









WOMEN'S AND YOUNG WORKERS' BUREAU, MINISTRY OF LABOR  
OTEMACHI, CHIYODA-KU  
TOKYO, JAPAN