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# THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN POSTWAR JAPAN



WOMEN'S AND MINORS' BUREAU  
MINISTRY OF LABOR  
JAPAN  
1956

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The Diet Building in Tokyo



Women voters and women  
referees at the poll



(Offered by The ASAHI Press)



A woman worker in a textile factory

Telephone operators



A nurse at a day-nursery

Farm women  
setting out  
rice-plants



Farm women picking tea-leaves

A farm girl cropping mandarin oranges



(Offered by "IENOHKARI" Institute)



Housing project in Tokyo



A house-wife busy at work



(Offered by "IENOHKARI" Institute)



"Recreation Center for Working Women" in Fukuoka, established by Women's & Minors' Bureau



Chorus of working girls

A kindergarten



Women's conference,  
sponsored by Women's  
& Minors' Bureau



A mass meeting of women



## PREFACE

The Women's & Minors' Bureau in the Ministry of Labor of the Japanese Government herewith presents, to commemorate the tenth anniversary of women's suffrage, a new report on the Japanese women who have had the most stimulating and challenging experience through the transition period of the postwar years. It aims to picture the various phases of the life of Japanese women who are now equipped with full citizenship and equal rights and opportunities with men, so different a picture from the one in prewar Japan.

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

March 1956

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Setsu Tanino".

Setsu Tanino  
Director, Women's & Minors' Bureau  
Ministry of Labor

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## I. INTRODUCTION

During 10 years after the World War II Japanese society has experienced the changes unprecedented in its history, the whole structure of which being completely dissolved and reorganized to the democratic one. And one of those remarkable changes is the freedom attained by the Japanese women.

In the prewar period, the strong holds of feudalism exerted a powerful influence to keep the position of women servile, both in the family life and in society. But the war years had more or less broken down this barrier and paved the way for the emancipation of women. The shortage of manpower during the period made it imperative for the women to take over the jobs hitherto performed by men and they carried out the task quite adequately, and proved that there should be no excuse for discrimination in whatever form because of sex.

In the democratic society of postwar Japan the emancipation of women has been taken up as the national responsibility. It was embodied in the set-up of the new constitution and the various legislative measures and the establishment of administrative organs for the benefit and improvement of women's life. The position of Japanese women was placed on the same level as that of men under the law. All forms of the old discrimination were eliminated. And several governmental bodies were established for the improvement

of the actual status of women, including Women's & Minors' Bureau in the Ministry of Labor. Realizing the national expectation thus shown for them, women have endeavored, on their part, to improve their life through individual or organized efforts. In fact with many-sided abilities disclosed during these years after the war they have been much contributing to the good and development of the nation. Thus the Japanese women of to-day are enjoying the free and significant life uncomparable with that of prewar women.

On the other hand, however, there are not a few unsettled problems left for women. It is impossible to remove overnight the age-old social customs, and ten years are a short time for women to get over them and for men to admit women into the fields where they monopolized the privileges. Also the very nature of the national economy sets much limitation on the life of women. The manifold problems caused by these factors would only be solved by the development of the country at large, as well as by the warm understanding and cooperation of the whole population, not to mention of the undaunted effort of women towards the actualization of the equal rights as provided by various legislative measures.

## II. LEGAL STATUS OF WOMEN

A most drastic change of women's status was carried out in the legal side. Japanese women were emancipated soon after the end of the War, from the burden of feudalistic family system and

were assured the full citizenship and equal rights and opportunities with men.

The "Constitution of Japan", promulgated on November 3, 1946, says, in the 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, the Japanese women above full twenty years of age were granted the right to vote. Also, the opportunity to be legislators which was hitherto closed for women was made open for them. Thus all the public offices either by election or appointment including Member of Board of Education, Civil Liberties Commissioner, Member of Mediation Committee of Family Courts, Public Welfare Commissioner, Social Education Commissioner, Member of Advisory Committee on Employment Security are now free for the access of women.

In 1947 the new educational system was initiated based on the Basic Law of Education with the principle of co-education and equal opportunities of education for boys and girls. And now women are free to proceed to the higher education if so they want.

In the field of labor no occupation is shut for women now except those which are physically unsuitable and forbidden by law for the protection of motherhood. That law is Labor Standards Law which was set up in 1947 for the protection of Japanese workers stipulating the minimum conditions of working. One of the fundamental and important articles in it is the definite avowal of the principle of equal pay for men and women. It clearly indicated that the employer should not discriminate women against men concerning wages by reason of the workers being women. The protection of women workers is also provided concerning to their working hours, maternity leave, etc. (Such provisions are in concur-



rence with the International Labor Convention and sometimes even higher than that.)

The revised Civil Code has brought about many big changes to the family life of women. The most important point is that it abolished the old patriachal family system and provided women with right of property, right of inheritance, right of marriage and divorce, the right to govern children, etc. in equal terms with men. No partial solution is to be made any more on the family matters: the Family Court, a governmental agency, is to solve the family disputes instead of the old family councils consisting of close relatives. In the Family Courts placed in 49 places all over the country, with 232 branches, there are quite many women commissioners to judge or mediate various family troubles.

Women as citizens, also have the rights for property, suit, nationality, speech, and association, and all other possible civil rights on the equal term with men.

Thus the Japanese women of to-day hold the full citizenship and their political right, among them, was confirmed more definitely by the nation when she ratified the International Convention on the Political Rights of Women in 1955.

But, of course, it takes quite a long time for the population to fully understand those reforms and even longer time to realize them in the full context. And there is even some sign of retrogression in certain phases of the social legislation. For instance, the revision of Civil Code to revive some form of family system has been referred to on the ground that the provisions of the present Civil Code, especially those provisions regulating equal right of inheritance among children are unsuitable with the general conditions of the people. Nevertheless, in spite of such tendency, the Japanese women have already stepped forward, and it is presumed nobody

could crash this strong stride.

### III. WOMEN AND POLITICS

With the revision of the Election Law in December 1945 the Japanese women of above full twenty years of age were admitted suffrage for the first time in their history, after seventy years of suffrage movement, and the first general election for the House of Representatives after the War took place on April 10, 1946. In

Voting Rates & Number of Successful Women Candidates in  
General Elections of House of Representatives

Elections	Voting Rates		Women's seats in 466
	Male	Female	
	%	%	
22nd General Election (Apr. 10, 1946)	78.5	67.0	39
23rd " " (Apr. 25, 1947)	74.9	61.6	15
24th " " (Jan. 23, 1949)	80.7	67.9	12
25th " " (Oct. 1, 1952)	80.5	72.8	12
26th " " (Apr. 19, 1953)	78.4	70.4	9
27th " " (Feb. 27, 1955)	79.9	72.1	8 (in 467)

Source: Election Division, Local Autonomy Agency

Voting Rates & Number of Successful Women Candidates  
in General Elections of House of Councillors

Elections	Voting Rates		Women's Seats in 250
	Male	Female	
1st General Election (Apr. 20, 1947)	%	%	
	68.4	54.0	11
2nd " " (Jun. 4, 1950)	78.2	66.7	12
3rd " " (April 24, 1953)	67.8	58.9	15

Source : Election Division, Local Autonomy Agency

this election the Japanese women exercised their first ballots for which they had been fighting for such a long time. The result was that 67% of 20,558,000 eligible women voters went to the poll, and 39 women were elected, occupying nearly 10% of the total number of the seats in the House of Representatives. Following this, in October of 1947 women also took part in the election of the members of the local assemblies and successful women candidates amounted to approximately 790 which increased to 980 in the second election in 1951.

In these post-war years we have observed six general elections in all for the House of Representatives, and three for the House of Councillors, the Upper House. And number of women legislators elected for these Houses has indicated fairly big fluctuation, that is, the seats in House of Representatives greatly decreased from 39 at the first election to 8 in the latest one, but that of the Upper House conversely increased from 11 to 15. At any rate, women have been occupying more than 20 seats in the Diet (both Houses) all through these years since 1946.

As to women member of Board of Education elected for the local

communities the number amounted to more than 2,000 in 1952, which means about 10% of the male members.

Since the initiation of women suffrage the number of eligible women voters have always exceeded that of men, and in the latest election the former outnumbered the latter by more than 2 million. So, though the percentage of women who show up to the poll out of the total number of women holding right of voting is always nearly 10% less than that of the men voters, the actual number of ballots cast by both sexes is almost same at every election. It means the Japanese political conditions can be greatly determined or at least greatly influenced by women population if women voters exert their ballots according to their will. But as the matter of fact several surveys have indicated that not a small number of women are influenced by the political inclination or persuasion of the male members of their family or community leaders, showing that there are many women who do not fully realize the importance of their ballots or too much occupied by family matters to improve the social interest. Nevertheless, there is every sign that women have become more and more conscious in using their ballots thus increasingly becoming a strong pressure for politicians.

The number of women in political party is not definitely known, but each big party has women's department which engages in the enlightenment of political consciousness of women from the standpoints of the respective political creeds. Women do not occupy as yet the important position within the party except for the Socialist Party where women are elected as the members of the central executive committee.

Up to the present (1955) there have been several women appointed as the parliamentary vice-ministers in government but no woman has ever been found in the cabinet.

### III. WOMEN AND EDUCATION

Even since the school education system was started in 1872, just after Japan threw out the feudalistic social order under Shogunate to build a modern country, the Japanese people have been quite eager to give schooling to their children, both boys and girls. Already in 1904, the percentage of school attendance of girls in primary schools was over 90%, and the actual rate in 1953 excluding those of long absence of over 50 days is 98, the same with boys. According to the national survey in 1948 on people's ability to write and read (from 15 to 64 years old) the rate of illiteracy among women was 2.8% as against 0.7% of men. This high standard of fundamental education among nation may be counted as one of the biggest reasons why women have attained a rapid advance in the post war program of social progress.

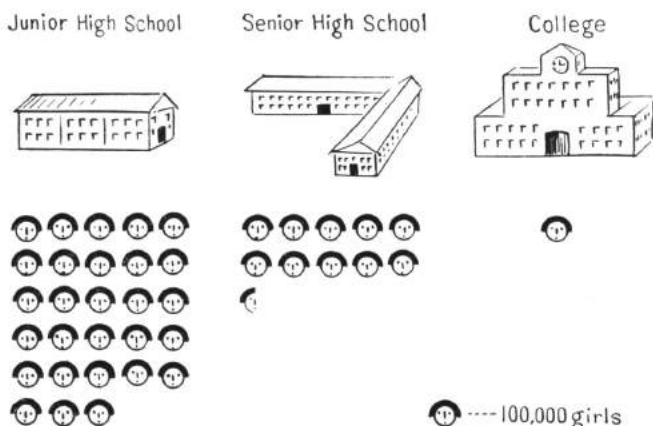
And yet under the prewar educational system, women were not admitted to the public universities except for a very limited cases, and co-education was seen only in the primary schools. By the adoption of new system, the so-called 6-3 system, in 1947, the compulsory education was extended from six to nine years, six years of elementary school and three years of lower secondary school. And, without discrimination as to sex, every child was made entitled to advance into an upper secondary school of three years and a college or university of four years according to his or her ability.

For those boys and girls who cannot attend school regularly as ordinary full-time students or desire to study while working, night schools, education by correspondence, and other forms of study were made available, and with the same credits as the day-time schools.

Once the opportunity for the higher education was made open, the number of women attaining education in colleges and universities is showing a surprising increase. The number of girls studying in the higher educational institutions in 1954 amounts to about 100,000. This is nearly three times as many as that at the time the new system started. And we can say that out of 100 girls of college age (19-22) 3 girls are attaining higher education. The ratio between the sexes, however, is 1 girl per every 5 boys. At the level of upper secondary school, the disparity is very small, 1 girl being found per every 1.4 boys.

Thus the women equipped with higher education are increasing and they are often showing high ability in various phases of academic

Educational Opportunities for Women, 1954



Source: Research Bureau, Ministry of Education

works. But the trouble is that it is quite difficult for those girls to find suitable jobs after graduation. The recent statistics show only half of women graduates from higher educational establishments found employment at graduation. As a matter of fact the male graduates of newly established universities of the postwar years are so numerous that it is rather natural for the employers to hesitate

Number of Students in Colleges and Universities 1949~1954

Year	Male	Female	Rate of Male as against one female
1949	323,773	35,542	9.1
1950	354,314	36,373	9.7
1951	371,969	48,188	7.7
1952	434,231	67,681	6.4
1953	452,336	83,751	5.4
1954	483,074	97,569	5.0

Source : Research Bureau, Ministry of Education

to employ women graduates who are new-comers in labor force. But, of course, it is hoped this is a transitional phenomenon and soon women will be finding many jobs which require high professional qualification.

Teaching is one of the oldest profession for women, and yet the number of women teachers also has increased in the postwar years. Moreover, those who hold important position in school administration have remarkably increased. At present there are nearly 130 women principals in the elementary and lower secondary schools established by the national and local governments, while before the war there were a few women holding headship in public schools. As to private colleges and universities, as many as 1,300 women could be counted in 1954 in the faculties as well as 40 presidents.



In addition to the school education, the adult education has become available for women, especially for housewives who have less opportunities for improving themselves. For them the summer courses in universities, mothers' classes, or various meetings such as free discussions, seminars, or exhibitions have been set up by the local and national governments, and been very much appreciated and made much use of by them.

In the Boards of Education, post-war institution aiming at the decentralization of educational authority, installed in cities, towns, and villages all through the country, women commissioners number more than 2 thousands out of 37,000 and are supervising the important business of establishment of local schools, selection of teachers, or the overall development of the culture in the respective communities.

## V. WOMEN WORKERS

It was in the late 19th century that Japan took a great stride into industrialization. It was initiated in textile industry, both silk and cotton, followed by the heavy industries with the special encouragement of the government. The mechanized textile industry provided the first opportunity for women to work in factories, which still remains to be the main industry of the country and big labor market for women.

At present Japan is a highly industrialized country producing all kinds of machines as well as consumers' goods of such items as

requested in the modern country. But with so much shortage in natural resources the country depends much on the import of raw materials, not to speak of foods, which is apt to make the industries of the country not too stable. Another characteristic of the industrial structure of the country is that there are so many small enterprises. More than 97% of the firms are found hiring less than 100 employees. And quite a big proportion of them are run as solely family enterprise without using any workers other than the family members.

The last war worked to damage the industries of the country to a great extent along with her loss of territory and the changes in the world market situation. The great national effort has been made toward the recovery of industries, but the road to economic self-support still seems rather difficult.

Now, it dates back to 1872 that women were employed as workers in factories for the first time in the Japanese history, and women have been gradually gaining steady positions in many occupational fields ever since. But it was during the period of the last war that a great number of women distinguished themselves, working in place of men in every field of industries.

Since the end of the war, partly because of the destitution of households prevalent in the nation after the war, and also due to the increase of women who want economic independence, women's productive activities have been expanding every year. A study of labor force conducted by the Statistics Bureau of Prime Minister's Office reveals that the number of women-workers increased from 13,410,000 of 1948 to 16,340,000 in 1954. The proportion of labor force population in the population of productive age also climbed up from 47.4% to 52.3%. And women in employment occupy around 40% of the total population in employment.

The greatest percentage of the Japanese women labor force,

# Women in Labor Force 1948~1954

Unit: 1,000 persons

	Population of Productive Age	Labor Force Population	Percentage of Labor Force Population in population of Productive age
1948	28,470	13,500	47.4%
1949	28,710	14,610	50.9
1950	28,870	14,230	49.3
1951	29,650	14,480	48.8
1952	30,170	15,040	49.9
1953	30,540	16,220	53.1
1954	31,130	16,580	52.3

Source: Labor Force Survey: Statistics Bureau, Prime Minister's Office

## Trend of Female Labor Force Population and Productive Age Population



Source: Labor Force Survey:  
Statistics Bureau, Prime Minister's Office

however, is occupied by family workers. That is, more than 60% of the total women in employment is found to be those workers who engage in the family enterprise without regular payment, and almost all of them, over 80%, are engaged in the agriculture and forestry, greatly outnumbering those who engage in the modern industries as paid employees.

Number of Employed Persons, 1954  
(by Status of Employment)

Unit: 1,000 persons

	Male	Female
All employed	23,230	16,340
Self-employed	8,050	2,250
Family Workers	4,290	9,800
Employees	10,900	4,290

Source: "Monthly Report on the Labor Force Survey"  
Statistics Bureau, Prime Minister's Office

Number of Employed Persons, 1954  
(by Industries)

Unit: 1,000 persons

	Male	Female
All employed	23,230	16,340
Agr. & Forestry	8,200	8,460
Fisheries	460	90
Mining	530	60*
Construction	1,470	180
Manufacturing	4,440	2,510
Wholesale. etc.	3,530	2,780
Transportation, etc.	1,610	240
Service	1,940	1,820
Government	1,050	200

Note: Figures marked with \* are subject to large sampling error.

Source: "Monthly Report on the Labor Force Survey"  
Statistics Bureau, Prime Minister's Office

The heightened productive activities of women in the post-war years may be perceived most remarkably in the increase in the number of women workers in paid employment. The labor-force survey shows that the number of women employees which totaled 3,290,000 in 1948 rose to 4,290,000 in 1954. The percentage of women in the total number of employees went up from 25.8% of 1948 to 28.3% in 1954. The distribution of employees in all industries in 1954 is shown in the table.

Number of Gainful Employees, by Industry and Sex (1954 Average)

Unit: 1,000 persons

Industry	Male	Female
Total	10,900	4,290
Agriculture & Forestry	390	170
Fisheries	190	20*
Mining	510	60*
Construction	1,010	170
Manufacturing	3,390	1,600
Wholesale & Retail Finance, Insurance, Real estate	1,610	870
Transportation, Communication and other Public Utilities	1,530	240
Services	1,220	980
Government	1,050	190

Note: Figures marked with \* are subject to large sampling error.

Source: Labor Force Survey; Statistics Bureau, Prime Minister's Office.

The above distribution formula has been same, with some modification, in each succeeding year since the end of the war. The largest number of gainfully employed women, that is around 40% of them, work in "manufacturing" industries, especially in the textile industry where women occupy nearly 70% of the total employees. The next big percentages of women go to "wholesale and retail trades", "finance and insurance" and "service trade". That is,

approximately 80% of women-employees are working in these industries.

Though women employees have been steadily growing in their number each year, women employees show certain characteristics which interfere with the move to raise their position as workers.

First of all, the age of women employees is fairly young, and as of April 1954, the average age of women is 25.4 years old. This is noticeably younger, though a bit older than that of previous years, compared with the average of men which is 33.2 years old. The proportion of youngsters under 18 years of age is 13 in every 100 women workers while it is only 4 with male workers.

The above fact is directly related with the fact that they do not stay long in service. It has been noted in a survey done by Labor Ministry that women employees stay in the same job only for 3.6 years on an average, or less than one half of the average service years of men which is 7.2 years. This is because many women take up jobs, after graduation from schools, only to stay for a few years until they get married and to be replaced by younger generation. Recently, women employees tend to stay long in job, even after marriage, but only 10.9% of the women employees in all industries are counted as married as yet.

The younger age of women employees, combined with the shorter service, means lower education and less skill than men on an average. According to a survey, the percentage of primary school graduates among women workers is 75.0%, whereas that of college graduates is only 0.7%, which compares unfavorably with the corresponding percentage of 8.9% in the case of men.

A survey made by Women's & Minors' Bureau, which covered enterprises employing 50 or more women, indicates 10.4 persons in 100 men were holding responsible posts in 1952, while the cor-

responding number was only 0.6 with women. These facts naturally affects their wage rate. The average wage has never reached to 50% of the average wage received by men, though it has been climbing up considerably since the end of the war.

These figures do not give an engaging picture, but still this is a marked progress from prewar situation which hardly gave opportunity for women to engage in any responsible position and allowed the average wage for women only about 30% of men's average. And, due to realization by women of their own standing, and the improvement of their education and skill, coupled with increasingly deeper understanding of the general public in the move for emancipation of women, there has been recently a gradual increase in the number of women rising to hold supervising or controlling position in industries, as well as those engaging in the professional occupations.

Trend of Cash Earnings of Male and Female Workers  
Since the end of the War (1947~1954)

Year	Average monthly Cash Earnings		Percentage of Female's earnings as against Male's
	Male	Female	
1947	¥ 2,241	¥ 972	43.4%
1948	6,133	2,640	43.0
1949	9,980	4,488	45.0
1950	11,143	5,184	46.5
1951	14,051	6,496	46.2
1952	16,782	7,533	44.9
1953	19,560	8,617	44.1
1954	20,825	9,252	44.4

- Note: 1. Figures for respective earnings of male and female workers in June, July and September, 1950 being unavailable, the average of earnings in the remaining 9 months is given above for the year.
2. Due to a change in the method of monthly survey, no direct comparison is possible between the three years preceeding 1950 and the years following.

Source: Monthly Labor Survey; Ministry of Labor.



The Labor Standards Law, a fundamental law proving the principle of equal pay for men and women for equal work, provides various maternity protection measures as well, in addition to the general protection on working conditions. For instance, women are kept from midnight labor with a few exceptional cases; women can take maternity leave of 6 weeks before and after the childbirth and those nursing babies less than one year old can take nursing rest, twice a day, each at least thirty minutes during the working hours, besides the regular recess. Recently a bill on providing substitute teachers for those who take maternity leave has passed the Diet. It specifies for the local governments to provide teachers to substitute the women teachers while they are taking maternity leave in order to protect them as well as to maintain the regular classes.

As for the labor union activities of women, a marvellous progress was made in the postwar Japan. Before the war, the number of women who belonged to union were only about 13,000, whereas after the war, they increased to 1,500,000. Women members are found in the greatest number in industries for textile goods, clothing and accessories where 70% of the union members are women. The union women show a considerable growth in a short period of time since the end of the war and they make influential pressure group for the betterment of the working conditions and status of women workers at large.

Thus the women workers of today are found, as a whole, in far better conditions than in the prewar days. There are, however, many points yet to be improved. For instance, social provisions for working mothers and labor education for working women and their employers.

Moreover, under the pressure of the national economy, difficulty of getting positions is serious in the present Japan, especially for

women graduates of higher educational establishments. The way of women workers is by no means an easy one, and they will have to make further efforts in order to realize practical equality with men as provided in law.

## VI. WOMEN IN FAMILY LIFE

Article 24 of The Constitution reads :

“Marriage shall be based only on the mutual consent of both sexes and it shall be maintained through mutual cooperation with the equal rights of husband and wife as a basis. With regard to choice of spouse, property rights, inheritance, choice of domicile, divorce and other matters pertaining to marriage and the family, laws shall be enacted from the standpoint of individual dignity and the essential equality of the sexes.”

This is a provision which initiated a completely different order in the family life of postwar Japanese society.

The old rigid Family System characterized by a powerful patriarchy and idea of confucianism and shintoism was legally thrown out to the effect that the drastic change in Civil Code was brought about in 1948.

Under the old order, family interest preceeded everything, and the head of family had most great authority on his family members, which could cover the far relatives as long as they were regislated on his Family Registration. There women had extremely little right.

As a daughter she had no right to inherit her father's estate or to choose her spouse, and as a wife she was legally an incompetent person, had no saying on her own children and had very limited cause for divorce. On the other hand she was very easily divorced by her husband or by other man who was the head of the family with little compensation.

The new Civil Code put her up on an entirely new stand, providing her every possible right equal with a man in family life, as provided by the said article of Constitution. Along with the revision of the law, democratization of human relation in family life has been welcomed and encouraged by the society.

Thus a remarkable change of order has been taking place in the way of living and pattern of the Japanese family life. Predominance of man have been lessened. The type of home where new married couple live separate from the parents of husband has been getting quite common. Also, along with the release of inhibition on the association of boys and girls, the love marriage has increasingly been taking place of the old way of arranged-marriage.

Thus the modernization of the family life has been and is on the go, without question, especially among the younger generation in urban districts.

And yet the trend has not been so comprehensive as to cover the whole population. Especially the people in the farming villages have been often left behind. (See the Chapter on Farm Women)

Besides, the drastic change of order has upset the value system of some people and caused much confusion and maladjustment, which often lead to the breaking up of family life.

One of the reasons for the increase of divorce cases may be due to this maladjustment of people to the new situation. Also increase of sexual delinquency may be attributed to the confusion

of morals. The increased number of unmarried women may also be counted as a factor working for the instabilization of home life. Population of the country in 1954 indicates 44,914,000 women as against 43,379,000 of men, women exceeding men by 1,535,000. And the most disproportionate age groups between the two sexes is 30-34 in which the rate of men per 100 women is 80.8, which naturally make a great number of women left unmarried.

Also with the dissolution of family system, the support of the aged and disabled or other needy people, which was under the responsibility of the head of the family under the old system, has made a big problem. Under the present law, all children have the duty to support their parents, instead of one eldest son under the old system. But the misconception of the present law to the effect that children have no duty to support at all is rather often. Also the economic hardship of the individual families have been preventing people to afford supporting any additional persons, and the social security system has not yet developed to cover all the poor old people. Thus there is a big anxiety among people as to their own old age. This anxiety causes keen interest in development of social security program, but sometimes it leads to the idea to revive the old family system.

Those troubles concerning family life are taken care of by Family Courts all over the country, with very simple procedure and almost free of charge. Quite many women serve as the mediators and councillors of the courts.

Now turning to the daily life of women in family, there is much disparity between those in city and in rural area, and even in city between those in workers' families (both white collar and manual) and those in families who run small shops and plants.

As a whole the women in cities are enjoying easier life, with much freedom and convenience, than women in rural area which

is dealt with in the following chapter.

The urban women in households of small shops and plants usually engage in the enterprises as family workers, leading quite busy life. And yet they, especially wives, seem to have much more of the status of co-ownership of the enterprises and authority in housekeeping if compared to that of rural women.

Women in families of salaried men are usually most advantaged in human relation and regularity of way of living. As her husband stays out of home for a greater part of the day, the responsibility and authority of home management is much put on wife. The family budget is usually in the hand of wives, rather than that of men as in the case of farm households. A survey made by Women's & Minors' Bureau indicates that the husbands usually (85.5% of husbands in the surveyed families) hand their wages solely over to their wives, and it is chiefly wives who make plan and manage housekeeping.

But, so far, the time they take for housekeeping is altogether very long. The surveys show that the household work and the care of children take so much time of housewives, almost 10 hours a day, leaving very little time to read newspaper, to attend the social activities and lesser time to work outside or do piece works. Women leaders are conscious of the fact and voicing the rationalization of housekeeping works, so that housewives may get much more free time to improve themselves.

Also the low standard of real wage troubles the housewives in workers' families. The average income of workers is often short to compensate the expenditure of their households, though, with the additional income from the work of other members of the families, eventually both ends are found meeting in the family budget.

Thus the wives who want to work outside or engage in industrial home works is ever increasing. To meet the situation the govern-

ment has recently installed the centers for the industrial home-works.

Income & Expenditures of Families  
All Urban

Year	1951	1952	1953	1954
Average family size	persons 4.68	persons 4.78	persons 4.79	persons 4.80
Receipt	yen 24,802	yen 31,465	yen 37,809	yen 41,017
Total Income	16,531	20,822	26,025	28,283
Wages or Salaries	15,527	1,9539	24,237	26,305
" from head of households	13,793	17,320	21,341	23,030
" from other family members	1,734	2,219	2,896	3,275
Income from other sources	8,271	10,643	11,784	12,734
Disbursements	24,802	31,465	37,809	41,017
Total Expenditures	16,235	19,991	24,687	26,428
Total Living Expenditures	14,401	17,851	21,727	23,067
Food Expenditures	7,554	8,766	9,773	10,501
Taxes & Others	1,834	2,140	2,960	3,361
Other Expenditures	8,567	11,474	13,122	14,589
Balance between Wages or Salaries of Head of Household and Exp.	-2,442	-2,671	-3,346	-3,398
Rate of the above	-15.1%	-13.4%	-15.7%	-14.8%
Consumer price index	100.0	105.0	111.9	119.1

Source: "Consumers' Price Index; Family Income and Expenditure Survey"  
Division of Labor Statistics and Research, Ministry of Labor

## VII. RURAL WOMEN

While Japan is highly industrialized on one part, it has farm

population of 38,000,000, 44% of total population (1953), and the labor force in agriculture and forestry also counts 41% of the total labor force in Japan.

Up to the end of the war, the hierarchical relationship between landowners and tenants was the absolute order governing the farm society, along with the very strict patriarchal family system.

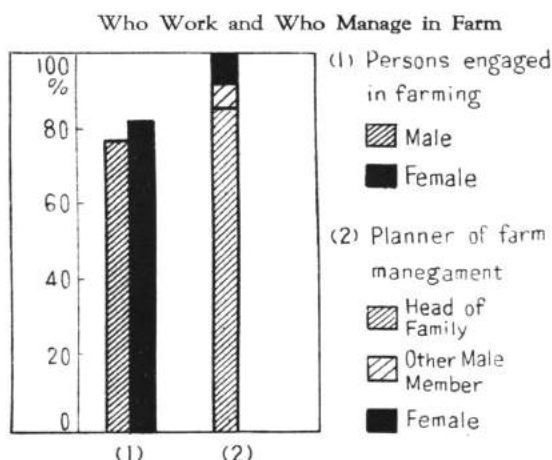
The land reform which was initiated after the war incidentally transformed nearly 90% of 6 million farm households to be the ownerfarmers which occupied only 50% previously. But it did not change the characteristics of the Japanese agriculture, that is its small scale as well as intensive farming. And now the average cultivating land for a farming household is about 2.5 acres. Not only farmers but the rest of the 80 million population have to subsist on the output of these small lands. Therefore, almost all of farms have two or sometimes three crops a year, besides sericulture or market gardening, which with little machinery but the human hands including women's and children's. Hence the most intensive labor on the part of farm people.

The women play very important role in the agricultural economy of the country. Of the persons engaged in agriculture and forestry more than 50% (19,000,000 persons) are women who work as family workers.

Since farm labor depends chiefly on manual work of family members, the farm households still remain to be consisted of a big family including many children and two or three adult generations. In 1950 the average family size in farming area was 5.9 persons while the national average was 5.1 persons. Over such membership the family head exerts his power and carries out the whole responsibility of the family, thus still keeping the patriarchal pattern to a considerable extent.



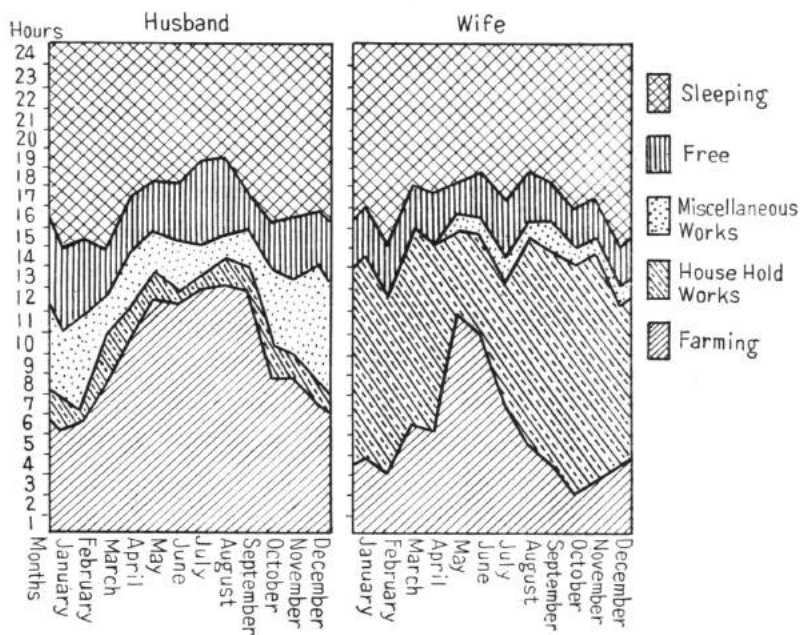
With such conditions as backgrounds, the life of women in rural area is not an easy one. Women, particularly young wives, tend to suffer from the pressure of hard labor both in farming and housekeeping, the farming with so little machinery and the housekeeping with so inconvenient equipments, and so many family members to take care of. A survey made by Women's & Minors' Bureau tells us that farm women usually work 13 hours a day, 8 hours in farming



Source: "Survey on Farm Women, 1950" Women's & Minors' Bureau,  
 Ministry of Labor.

and 5 hours in housekeeping, which sometimes extend to 15 hours, whereas men work 10 hours in farming only. In spite of the fact, women are economically dependent on their husbands or other male members of the families. They are usually not allowed to take part in planning of farm management. Consequently they have little or sometimes absolutely no influence on the financial matters of their home management, which is characteristically intermingled with that of farm management. One reason is that the harvest of rice, the main source of farmers' income, comes in autumn, and they have to pre-

Yearly Distribution of Farm Labor



Source : "Yearly Distribution of Farm Labor" by Y. Teruoka

serve this income through the year and distribute them appropriately in order to secure the necessary means for the next crop. And the profit they get is generally small so that the requirement of farm management preceeds anything. Thus the financial matters are all in the hand of the planner of farm management, that is of men who, moreover, are the owners of the lands.

Besides, farm women are often suffering from the complex human relation within family especially between wife and mother-in-law, as well as the conventionalism of the local communities. Their social life is found very limited. The above survey indicates that their range of association includes only several families within their own village units. It naturally makes them rather unconscious of the movement

outside their daily contact. The equality of men and women, the right of property, or acquisition of suffrage, and so many other rights often seem to sound rather remote words to them, and yet the voting rate of rural women sometimes far exceeds that of urban women. There lies a problem.

However, much effort has been done to improve the life of farm women in the last ten years.

One of the direct influences may have come from the field work of Home Demonstration Officials, who are to give guidance, under the supervision of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, for the improvement of the rural home life. This system was first initiated in 1948 with some 300 officials and their number has increased to nearly 1,600 by 1955, being stationed all over the country. They visit homes of farmers and make advices on the housekeeping problems or hold lecture meetings, and demonstrate the home improvement program in rural life.

The initiation of health center system with public nurses going round every house with expectant mother and sick people to attend and nurse them, along with the general improvement of public health programs, has helped improving the health of farm women and children to a great extent.

To the same effect, National Health Insurance Scheme (which facilitated the voluntary participation of communities) has worked much, making all members of the family eligible for the medical treatment.

Also with the popularization of mass communication and the adult education, the mind of the farm women has turned to the thought of their well-being in their daily lives and the social problems at large.

The women of farmhouseholds have been also mostly organized

as members of the agricultural cooperatives or regional women's organizations, and the meetings or lectures held under the sponsorship of these institutions are affording much opportunity of social training for them. Through the election of officials or management of budget, or discussions on the various projects to be carried out in each organization, they are learning much and improving the consciousness as organic member of the society, which is to be enlarged to the consciousness as member of the nation.

Nevertheless the fundamental problem remains in the fact that, to say nothing of the absolute poverty of the Japanese farmers, as long as the present type of farming continues, it will be all but improbable that the hard labor of the farm women should be lessened than present.

## VIII. SOCIAL WELFARE FOR WOMEN

In prewar Japan the social security as an uniform system was not established, but some public assistance schemes for the destitutes and such social insurance systems as National Health Insurance and Welfare Pension Insurance for the workers were available.

After the war, however, there was, on one side, the chaotic confusion of economy with the shooting up of inflation, acute shortage of food and houses all over the country, especially in cities, making many people deprived of their means to live, and there was, on the other side, the nation's wish to make a welfare state. Thus the New

Constitution reads : " All people shall have the right to maintain the minimum standards of wholesome and cultured living. In all spheres of life, the State shall use its endeavors for the promotion and extension of social welfare and security, and of public health." (Art. 25) And a great effort has been extended ever since for the promotion of social welfare of the nation. In 1946, the Livelihood Protection Law (amalgamating several former public assistant laws including Protection Law for Mother and Child) was established to give aids both in money and in kind to those unable to make living. With the setting up of this law the right of people to maintain the minimum standard of living, even though not enough for wholesome and cultural living as stipulated in the Constitution, was to be fulfilled.

Unemployment Insurance Law initiated in 1947 has also made a great step for the stability of workers' life. Child Welfare Law, promulgated in 1948, voiced definitely the responsibility of the nation in the healthful development of children in both body and mind, and for the protection of mothers too. With this law many social welfare institutions, such as Homes for Infants, Day Nurseries, Maternity Homes, Homes for Mother and Children, and other installments have been set up, as well as the governmental organs like Consultation Office for Children. By this law, women are also secured of proper medical guidance and care during pregnancy, child-birth, and for the nursing of children.

There is as yet no national scheme of old age pension to cover the whole population, though there are Homes for Old People open for those who have no relatives to support them. With the increase of old people, the demand for more of such facilities is getting keen. However, if a women is applied to the Welfare Pension Scheme, which is compulsory for the workers of firms which employ more than 5 workers, either as workers or as dependants of workers,

Social Facilities for Children's Welfare<sup>1)</sup>

Years	Homes for Infants		Day Nurseries		Homes for Mothers and Children	
	Number	Persons Admitted	Number	Persons Admitted	Number	Persons Admitted
1949	42	781	2,353	216,887	260	16,978
1950	N. D.	N. D.	2,871	249,166	N. D.	N. D.
1951	97	1,908	3,799	221,798	319	19,886
1952	114	2,289	4,588	310,123	423	24,808
1953	128	2,696	5,685	440,605	481	28,709
1954	128	2,734	6,956	520,318	517	31,132
1955 <sup>2)</sup>	135	2,920	7,771	627,788	579	32,842

1) Data as of December

2) As of February

Source: Children's Bureau, Ministry of Welfare

she can get the annuity when she attains the age of 55 years (60 years for men) on the condition that the contribution has been paid for more than 25 years.

The war left a great number of widows. A survey made in 1950 on households of women heads estimated that they were about 1,710,000 households of this kind, and 76% of these households were of widows, among which more than 20% were widowed by this war, that is, there were about 330,000 war widows who were more or less responsible with the lives of family members. The majority of the war widows were predominantly young, 73% of them were under 30 years old, and they often had small children. And it was about these war widows with small children that the most urgent counter-policy was needed, because a greater part of them fell into poverty, suddenly deprived of their husbands, the supporters of the family. The protection by the state was not too quick, except the Livelihood Protection, and the Pension for the Survivors of the Dead and Injured by the War was not initiated until 1952.

To-day widows with children are safeguarded to a considerable

extent. They are entitled to live in the Homes for Mothers and Children, and are also entitled to the deduction of certain amount from income tax.

Another important welfare measure for widows with children are enforcement of Law Concerning Welfare Loan for Mother and Child in 1953. This law ensures government loans for mothers to maintain their business, to acquire training, to supplement their livelihood, etc. and also for their children to attend school or to acquire vocational training. As the vocational aid for the unskilled widows the Training Center for Home Helps and Centers for Industrial Home Work are just set forth by the government.

As to the health of children and expectant mothers, the health center had much to do. This system was reorganized and expanded in 1947 to set up one health center for every 100,000 residents, with the purpose to make medical examination and health guidance of the community residents as well as to improve the public health of the community. The medical examination or any consultation on health conditions is given with free charge for every resident, and charges for the treatment are only for actual expenses. Especially much emphasis has been put on the health guidance for expectant mothers and infants, dispatching public health nurses for those homes with pregnant women or infants. Its achievement is quite evident in the definite drop of the death rate of infant.

Women, like men, can get child-birth benefit and sick benefit besides the free medical treatment if they are affiliated to the Health Insurance, a compulsory insurance scheme covering the workers of firms which employ more than 5 people. They can also get the half-free medical treatment as the dependants of the workers who are insured by the scheme. For those who are not covered by the Health Insurance, the National Health Insurance is available on the

### Trends in Vital Statistics

Year	Infant death rate per 1000 live births	Death rate of new born per 1000 live births	Death rate of pregnant women per 1000 births	Natural increase rate per 1000 population
1947	76.7	32.3	16.0	19.7
1948	61.7	28.2	15.7	21.6
1949	62.5	27.6	15.9	21.4
1950	60.1	27.4	16.1	17.2
1951	57.5	27.5	15.7	15.4
1952	49.5	25.5	15.5	14.4
1953	49.1	25.5	16.3	12.5
1954	44.7	24.2	16.6	11.8
Actual No. 1954	Persons 78,895	Persons 42,726	Persons 3,240	Persons 1,044,313

Source ; Division of Statistics and Research, Ministry of Welfare

voluntary participation of the respective local autonomic bodies. In April 1955 the Scheme covered about 26 million people. There are, however, about 30 million people who are not covered by any social health insurance. Women as workers are also insured against the industrial injuries. Almost all of the health centers have eugenic center, based on the Eugenic Law enforced in 1948, to give consultation on marriage on the eugenic standpoint and make guidance on the proper method of birth control.

Speaking of birth control, it has caught much interest of people and nation in these years. The yearly increase of population over 1 million is not a small number considering the limited space of land and scarcity of natural resources, difficulties of the national economy and poverty of individual families.

According to the survey on human productivity in 1954, the couples who are practising at present or have practised formerly the birth control is only 33.2% of the total couples, while the abortion cases mounts up to 1,000,000 a year. The same survey indicates that the extent of practice in rural districts with people of agricultural and



fishery occupations (30.4%) is much less than the urban people, chiefly of salary earners (37.2%). But farmers are no less suffering from over-population and from the potential unemployment. What they need is correct education on the method of birth control, and the easier access to the contraceptives. The government is now starting a new policy for family planning by providing the contraceptives free of charge for the needy families and running courses on birth control. Any way the last several years showed a rapid drop of birth rate from 28.1 per mileage in 1950 to 20.0 in 1954, and it is expected to drop more. Nevertheless the balance will be on the increase for the coming 20 years, the statistics tell, until the total population mounts up to 100,000,000.

As to the average life expectancy, the postwar years have seen a rapid extention, and in 1954 it is 62.8 years old for men and 66.8 for women.

## IX. WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS

In pre-war Japan the movement of voluntary organization of women was not popular, except for the limited number of women, chiefly intellectual women with particular purposes, particularly to gain suffrage, which, however, were forced to disband during the war, when all adult women were united to a big national organization. And this national organization of women was dissolved with the cessation of the war, in 1945.

Ever since, aspiration among women for betterment of their life, along with the national policy to encourage spontaneous civic activities of women, brought about the organization of a number of women's clubs with the purpose to develop the women's status in general or to attain specific interests. The number increased each year and now their power has become too great to be ignored.

A report on women's organizations in 1954 indicates that there are 33,000 organizations with membership of 10 million in total all through the country, which means 50% of all women of 20-50 years old, or 40% of women voters, are members of women's organizations one way or the other.

The great majorities of the members are formed in regional organization whose total membership counts 6,800,000, occupying almost 70% of the total membership of all women organizations, and mainly recruiting the women in rural areas. The unit regional organizations in villages, towns, or cities affiliate to the prefectural federations of regional women's organizations, some of whom in turn affiliate to the National Council of Federation of Regional Women's Organizations. Each regional organization has its own purpose to serve the particular conditions of each region, but the general purposes fit to all of organizations are to achieve the higher standard of women's status and develop the welfare conditions of communities. The National Council of Federations make coordination and cooperation between prefectural federations. These organizations, as is the case with the other organizations, are financed by the fee of members. But the trouble for them is that the membership fee is too small to expect really powerful activity; thus necessitating acquiring big membership. The big membership with the tremendous potential power as voters has been the objective of not a small interest for politicians. There lies, in view of their poor financial conditions, the

possible danger for the women's organizations to be influenced by a particular interest of local policy.

The second biggest of the women's organizations is the women's department of agricultural cooperatives whose membership is about 2,660,000 belonging to about 8,300 organizations. Each unit organization (not all of agricultural cooperatives have necessarily women's department) affiliates to the prefectural federation which in turn affiliates to the national council of women's organizations of agricultural cooperatives. As stated in the chapter of Farm Women these organizations try to elevate the living standard of rural women through the activities of agricultural cooperatives, thereby improve their social and economic standard. Although they deal chiefly with the local problems, the national council decides each year a certain subjects of activity to be stressed for the year and recommend them to unit organizations; for instance, joint purchase or sale of goods, education programs on farm management, home improvement, etc.

For the well-known organizations with more specific objectives there are Widow's Organizations, Young Women's Christian Association of Japan, Women's Christian Temperance Union, National Friendship Association, Japanese Association of University Women, Japanese League of Women Voters, Housewives' Federation and others. They are organizations of women with respective common causes and some of them have old and brave history of struggle, though their membership is not so big. For instance, the Women's Christian Temperance Union has the oldest history of the Japanese women's organizations with its foundation in 1886. Its purpose of establishment was to promote peace and the social welfare based on Christianity, especially by prohibition of alcohol. They have always been alert in action to improve the status of the Japanese women, especially nothing can be said without mentioning its campaign to abolish the

licensed prostitution system of the pre-war times.

The Japanese League of Women Voters has also the brilliant record in struggle to achieve the suffrage for women. Its original organization was established back in 1924 by progressive women to fight for achievement of the women's suffrage. They did not look over the slightest opportunity but seized every chance to present the bill to entitle women of franchise equal rights with men or to improve the public mind towards the better understanding of women's social conditions. The organization was forced to dissolve in 1940 by the government, and reorganized after the war to engage in the political education of women with the newly attained voting right, or to enlarge the opportunity for women to work in the public office, etc. It is also the national organization with membership of 3,500.

Besides above, there are Women's League for Protection of Human Rights, Women Lawyers' Association, Women's Democratic Club, Women's League for Peace and Freedom in Japan, and others which are all national organizations. Some of these organizations are affiliated to the international organizations, and occasionally send the delegates to the respective international conferences.

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 the commodity prices, for the enactment of anti-prostitution law or for opposition to the suggested revision of Civil Code. Also many of them are interested in the issues regarding atomic bomb and H-bomb, and unite in the campaigns for peace.

One of the awkward points common to almost all of the organizations is that the age level of the members in responsible positions is often rather high, that is, from 50 years old and upward. And

being too eager for achieving the specific goal set up in each organization the common phenomenon has been the appearance of a few specialized leaders, who are particularly active for the cause. Between the leaders and the general members there tends to be short of understanding which often causes tension between them. Moreover it prevents the due democratic operation of organizations. These facts imply that there are no adequate followers who might take the responsible positions after the present officials retire. It also implies the possible hardheadedness of these top officials and lack of freshness in organization activities.

The women's organization realizes the danger of the fact, and is trying very hard to secure the new, particularly young, members and actually they are increasing.

## X. CONCLUSION

As we look back the steps of Japanese women during these ten years after the war we cannot help admiring. They have experienced the most historic transformation and proved to themselves and to the people in this country as well as other countries what their true selves are and what they are possible to be.

Frankly speaking, to a great majority of Japanese women, those legal rights and opportunities were granted rather suddenly and unexpectedly with the cessation of the war. And it must be admitted that there were some bewilderment and confusion at first. But these

ten years have worked to make them rapidly conscious of their rights and responsibilities. And now they are beginning to be sure of themselves and are thinking in their own terms.

However, in the last analysis, women's position and welfare are necessarily characterised by the political, economic and cultural set-up of the nation as a whole. So improvement of national economy, democratization of the general idea and way of living among the whole population and the establishment of world peace are what Japanese women set their hearts on. And though the somehow retrogressive tendency and the economic hardship as well as international tension in the recent years are apt to disappoint them, the Japanese women, equipped with the full citizenship and sincere consciousness, will keep on their march assiduously.



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