

**Support for Balancing Work and Childcare:
Cooperation among Companies, Families, and Communities**

Summary

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Research Period

Fiscal year 2004 to 2005

Objective of Research

The Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training is conducting the “Research on Establishment of Social System That Brings Harmony between Work and Life” as a project research for the fiscal year 2003 to 2006. This report is an interim report on the “interrelation among companies, families, and regional communities in providing support for workers to realize both work and childcare,” which is one of the topics of the project research. To clarify the current state of support systems for balancing work and childcare and future challenges, review of preceding studies and secondary analysis of existing data is carried out in the report. Based on the results, we would like to show that coordination among companies, families, and communities is important in improving the support systems.

Balancing work and childcare is possible when support is provided from many different parties including companies, families, and communities. For companies, the childcare leave system makes up the core of their measures for providing support. Preceding studies have also shown that the childcare leave system is effective in increasing the rate of women who continue to work after giving birth, and spreading the childcare leave system remains an important problem.

Nevertheless, there are still many women who quit their job after childbirth. On the other hand, women who want to continue working do not marry nor have children, which are accelerating the trend not to marry or to marry late in life. Moreover, marital fertility is also on the decline in recent years. Many women are faced with making a choice of continuing job without having children or quitting job to have children. To get out of this either-or situation and make the new option of “both work

and childcare” more common, there is a need to further improve the support systems in addition to the progress of the childcare leave system.

On this point, the Child-care and Family-care Leave Law, “the Act on the Welfare of Workers Who Take Care of Children or Other Family Members Including Child Care and Family Care Leave” obligates employers to adopt one of the measures of a shorter working hours system, flex-time system, exemption from overtime, late starting and early finishing time of work, or establishment and operation of a day-care facility as “Measures including Shortening of Working Hours.”

In this report, we analyze the interrelation among the support measures for balancing work and childcare, focusing mainly on the childcare leave system and measures including shortening of working hours. The gist of the current state and future challenges of these support systems implied by the results of the analysis are illustrated below.

Outline of the Research Results

1. Outline of the results of analysis

In this report, we conduct secondary analysis on a number of existing data and cross-sectionally examine the living environment of women who give birth, companies’ employment management and perceptions, workers’ awareness, and so on. The key points of the results of the analysis can be summarized as follows:

- (1) There is a large number of women who quit their job after childbirth even today.
To enable them to stay on the job after childbirth, further improvement in the support system is required.
- (2) For companies, the childcare leave system is the core of their support systems.
The future challenge for them is to implement the measures including shortening of working hours in addition to the childcare leave system.
- (3) As regards measures including shortening of working hours, there may be a gap between woman workers’ needs and companies’ response over implementation of the each system.
- (4) Workers’ needs vary widely depending on the family and regional environment.
It is important to increase and improve companies’ measures in ways that it will create a synergy effect with the support environment of families and regional communities.

The main points of the chapters in which these results were obtained are shown below.

2. Summary of each chapter of the report

Chapter 1. Problems of policies and study on companies' support systems

By sorting out the support systems taken by companies to balance work and childcare and by reviewing preceding studies, we identify the problems in improving those systems.

Companies' systems for supporting workers to balance work and childcare have expanded mainly based on the childcare leave system. The most significant point today is that through the Childcare Leave Law (currently the Act on the Welfare of Workers Who Take Care of Children or Other Family Members Including Child Care and Family Care Leave) that came into effect in 1992, the workers' rights to take childcare leave are legally guaranteed. Moreover, the law obligates employers to implement one of the measures of a shorter working hours system, flex-time system, adjustment of the late starting and early finishing time of work, exemption from overtime, establishment and operation of a day-care facility, or a similar convenience (an allowance for the cost of babysitters, etc.), as a measure for supporting workers to rear their children. Among a wide range of support systems implemented by companies for balancing work and childcare against the declining birthrate in recent years, promoting the childcare leave system and measures including shortening working hours are top priority.

It has been pointed out that the childcare leave system has the effect to increase the job continuity of women after childbirth, and the system will remain the core of companies' support measures. Nevertheless, there are still many women who quit their jobs after childbirth, while many women avoid giving birth. Also, there has been little progress in men's participation in childcare.

Therefore, further enhancing balance of work and childcare, it is necessary to identify support measures including shortening working hours that will have a synergy effect with the childcare leave system. The kind of support provided by companies that workers actually need varies depending on their family and regional environment. What is important is to clarify measures that are highly effective within the context of the interrelation among companies, families, and communities.

Chapter 2. Women's Job Continuity after childbirth and the childcare leave system

We analyze the relation between job continuity after childbirth and the childcare leave system and show that, in addition to the progress of the childcare leave system, further enhancement of support systems is necessary for women to continue to work after childbirth.

Figure 1. Women’s Life Course after Childbirth and Rate of Women Who Continue Working

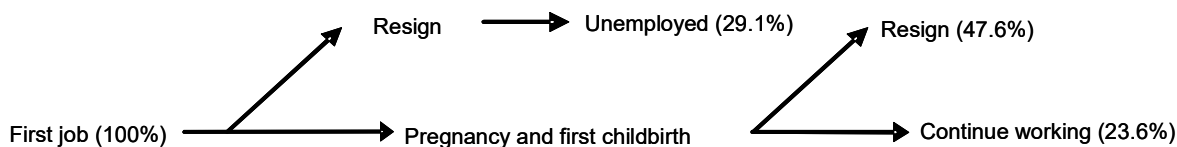
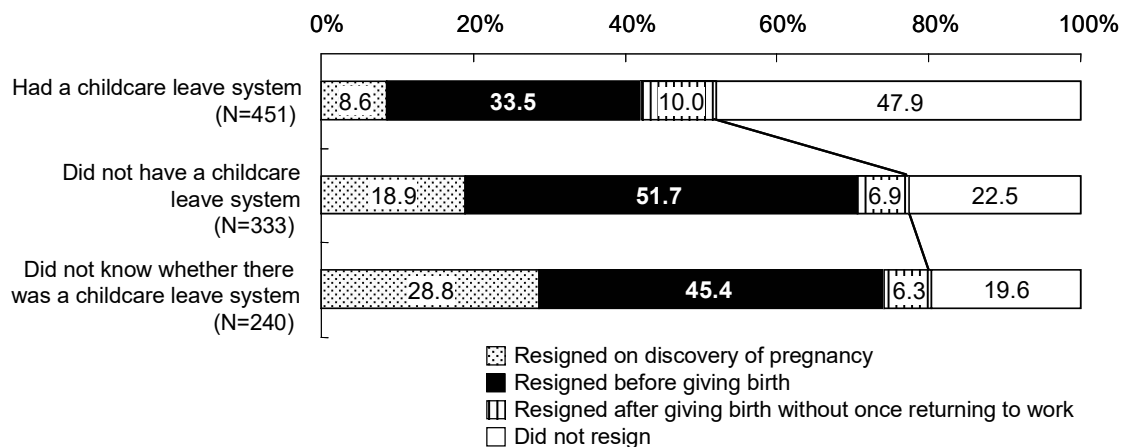


Figure 2. Job Continuation/Quitting after First Childbirth by Availability of the Childcare Leave System at the Companies



Data: “Survey on Women’s Work and Family Life” (the Japan Institute of Labour 2001) for both Figures 1 and 2.

Figure 1 shows the process in which women who have experience of childbirth and who were the subjects of the “Survey on Women’s Work and Family Life” (Japan Institute of Labour 2001) were employed in their first job, gave birth to their first child, and either continued to work or left work thereafter. Out of all women workers at 100 percent, the number of women who continued to work after their first childbirth was 23.6 %, and nearly half, or 47.6 percent, left their job at the stage of their first childbirth. Even today, childbirth is still a major cause making those women to quit their job.

Therefore, we look at the effect of the childcare leave system on women’s job continuity. Figure 2 illustrates the percentage of women who quit or continued working at the pregnancy or birth of their first child by availability of the childcare leave system, from the “Survey on Women’s Work and Family Life.” It must be noted that all the women surveyed gave birth to their first child after the childcare leave law had come into effect. This means that all these women were allowed to take childcare leave regardless of whether their companies provided for a childcare leave system or not. The point is that even though all the women could have obtained the leave, the rate of job continuity was higher among those women whose companies “had a childcare leave system” than among women whose companies “did not have a childcare leave system” or those who “did not know whether there was such a system.” Therefore, even today when

the acquisition of a childcare leave is guaranteed by law, it is important that individual companies provide for the childcare leave system in order to increase the job continuity after childbirth.

It cannot be overlooked, on the other hand, that about half of women workers left their job even at companies that provided for a childcare leave system as shown in Figure 2. This means that the childcare leave system alone is not sufficient to prevent women from quitting their job after childbirth. To make it easier for women to continue working after childbirth, further enhancement of support measures is necessary as well as promoting the child care leave system.

Chapter 3. Companies' implementation of support systems

We examine the situation regarding companies' implementation of support measures and show the importance of providing for the childcare leave system as well as of flexible implementation of three measures: a shorter working hour system, exemption from overtime, and late starting and early finishing time of work.

Figure 3 shows the percentage of companies that have provided for the childcare leave system, as indicated in the "Basic Survey on Employment Management for Women 1999" (Women's Bureau, Ministry of Labour 1999). The percentage of companies' establishments that had provided for the childcare leave system was 53.5%. Figure 4, also taken from the "Basic Survey on Employment Management for Women," illustrates the percentage of business places that adopted measures including shortening working hours. It shows that 40.6 % of business establishments implemented some measures and that the highest percentage of businesses adopted the shorter working hours system. In addition, the percentage was also high for exemption from overtime and late starting and early finishing time of work in comparison with other measures.

Besides how individual measures had been adopted, an important point here is that many business offices that provided for the childcare leave system also had implemented measures including shortening working hours. Table 1 shows the situation regarding the simultaneous implementation of the childcare leave system and measures including shortening working hours. Although adoption of the childcare leave system and measures including shortening working hours depended on the companies' size and type of industry, 36.8 % of all business offices implemented both the childcare leave system and measures including shortening working hours.

Figure 3. Implementation of the Childcare Leave System (ground total)

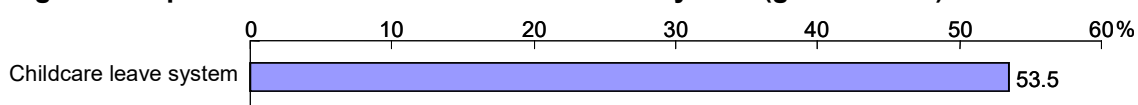
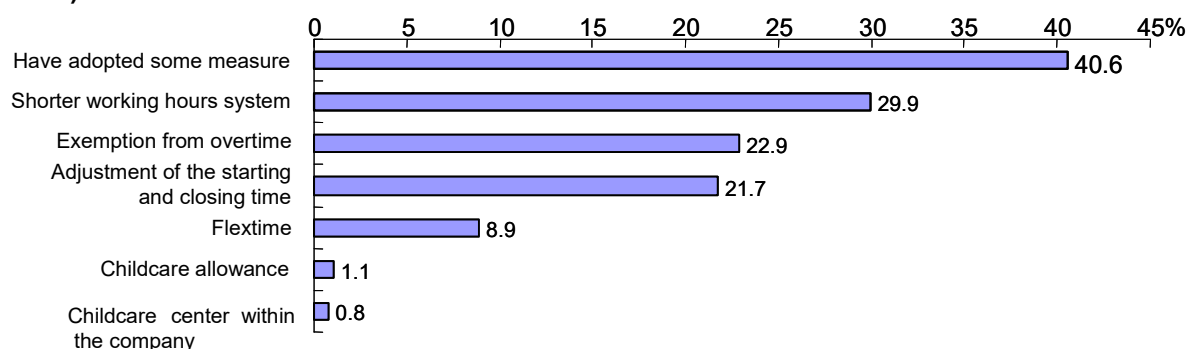


Figure 4. Implementation of Measures including shortening working hours. (ground total)



Data: The Basic Survey on Employment Management of Women (Ministry of Labour 1999) for both Figures 3 and 4
 Data: The Basic Survey on Employment Management of Women (Ministry of Labour 1999) for both Figures 3 and 4

Table 1. Simultaneous Implementation of the Childcare Leave System and Measures including shortening working hours.

		Measures including shortening working hours. (%)	
		Available	Not available
Childcare leave	Available	36.8	16.8
	Not available	4.0	42.4

*As regards the measures including shortening working hours., they are considered "available" when some sort of measures was implemented.

Therefore, in improving the support system from now on, it is important that companies set provisions for the childcare leave system as well as flexibly implement the three measures of the shorter working hours system, exemption from overtime, and late starting and early finishing time of work.

Chapter 4. Utilization of companies' support systems

We analyze the situation regarding the utilization of companies' support systems by focusing on the interrelation between the childcare leave system and measures including shortening working hours, and show that the shorter working hours system, exemption from overtime, and late starting and early finishing time of work have higher rates of implementation than other measures but progress has not been made in the utilization of such measures even though they have been implemented as systems.

If we examine the utilization of the shorter working hours system, exemption from overtime, and late starting and early finishing time of work in relation with workers taking childcare leave, we find that in many cases, workers would not utilize the measures if they have taken the childcare leave or they would not take childcare leave if they are taking advantage of the other support systems. The relation between the utilization of the individual measures and of the childcare leave system varies

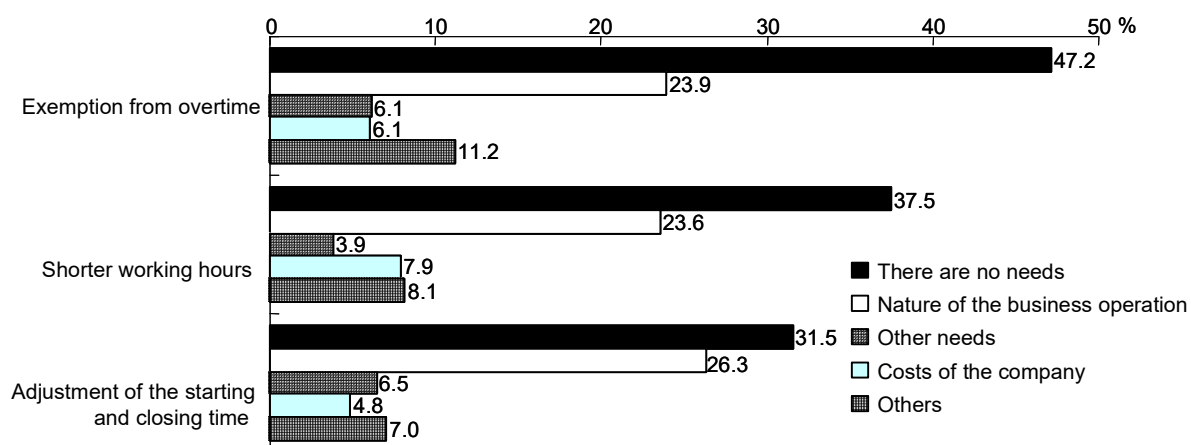
depending on company size and industry. With regard to company size, in particular, the smaller the enterprise, the higher the percentage of workers who take advantage of the individual measures without taking childcare leave; in contrast, the larger the enterprise, the higher the percentage of workers who take childcare leave without availing themselves of the other support measures. The rate of implementation of both the childcare leave system and other individual measures is high in larger companies, but workers at such large companies with a high rate of implementation often do not take advantage of the measures if they take childcare leave.

Chapter 5. Gap between workers' needs and companies' response

One of the reasons that utilization of such support measures as the shorter working hours system, exemption from overtime, and late starting and early finishing time of work has not advanced may be that companies are not implementing measures that meet the needs of workers.

The Child-care and Family-care Leave Law does not guarantee workers' claims to individual measures including shortening of working hours. Workers can only take advantage of the systems that their company implemented from a number of options. In this context, if we examine the individual measures that have been implemented, the measures that actually meet the needs of workers may not have been implemented.

Figure 5. Reasons Companies have not Implement the Measures including shortening working hours.



Source: "Survey on Balancing Child/Family Care and Work" (the Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training 2003)

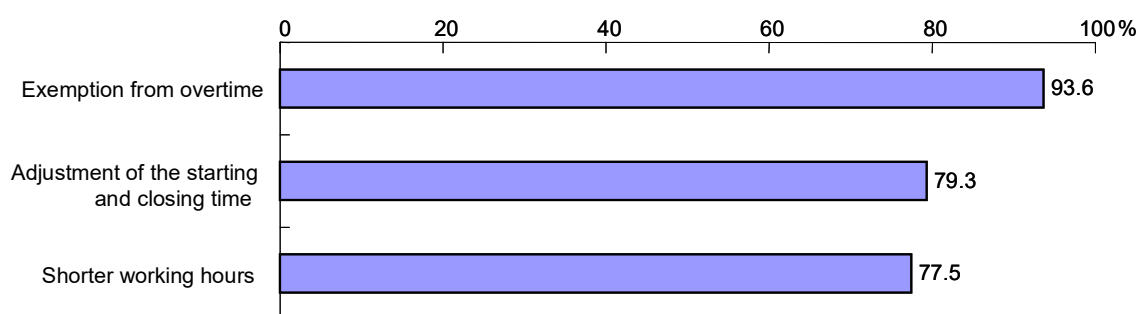
For companies, there are advantages in implementing the three measures of the shorter working hours system, exemption from overtime, and late starting and early

finishing time of work, because the burden on companies in terms of management of working hours and costs is smaller compared to other kinds of measures. Many companies say, however, that the reason they have not implemented these measures nonetheless is that workers do not have the needs for them.

Figure 5 shows the reasons that companies did not implement the shorter working hours system, exemption from overtime, or late starting and early finishing time of work as indicated by the “Survey on Balancing Child-care and Family-care and Work” (the Japan Institute of Labour 2003). For each of the three measures, “there are no needs” was mentioned the most.

On the other hand, we can note that there are strong needs among woman workers for the shorter working hours system, exemption from overtime, and late starting and early finishing time of work. Moreover, it is particularly important to note that, as shown in Figure 6, there are many woman workers who would like to take advantage of such systems, but the systems are not available at their workplaces.

Figure 6. Measures that Woman Employees Would Like to Take Advantage of but are not Available at Their Workplace (Woman Employees with Preschool Child)



*For each measure, the number of woman employees who “did not take advantage of the measures, but would like to if possible” equals 100 percent.

Source: “Survey on Balancing Child-care and Family-care and Work” (the Japan Institute of Labour 2003)

Figure 6 illustrates the percentage of women who mentioned, for each of the shorter working hours system, exemption from overtime, and late starting and early finishing time of work, that the reason for not using the systems even though they would like to was that the systems were not available at their workplaces, as indicated in the “Survey on Balancing Child-care and Family-care and Work”(the Japan Institute of Labour 2003) conducted on employees and workers who had preschool child. The percentage of those who would like to use the systems of exemption from overtime, late starting and early finishing time of work, and shorter working hours but who could not because the systems were not available at their workplaces was 93.6 %, 79.3 %, and 77.5 %,

respectively. It is very much likely that even though there are needs for the individual measures on the part of workers, companies are not implementing the systems in response to such needs.

Chapter 6. Interrelation of support systems of companies, families, and communities

In this chapter, analyzing the interrelation of the support systems for balancing childcare and work provided by companies, families, and communities, we present the problems in realizing better and more comprehensive systems for cooperation of these three life spheres.

Table 2 shows the estimated effects that a combination of companies' childcare leave system, the familial environment of living together with parents and involving the husband in childcare, and the use of regional communities' childcare center had on women's job continuation after giving birth to their first child, from the data of the above "Survey on Women's Work and Family Life."

The first important point as regards the results of the analysis is that the childcare leave system alone is not effective in having more women to continue working after their first childbirth. Figure 2 above showed that the percentage of women who continue to work after giving birth was high among women who worked for a company that had implemented a childcare leave system. Preceding studies also indicated that the childcare leave system was effective in having more women continue work after giving birth. Table 2, however, illustrates that "childcare leave system only" was not significantly effective.

The results of the analysis also show that for the childcare leave system to increase the women's job continuity after childbirth, the system needs to be implemented together with family support and childcare services. According to Table 2, a combination of a number of support measures raised the job continuity after childbirth. As for the childcare leave system, when it is combined with family support and use of childcare center as in "childcare leave system and family support," "childcare leave system and childcare services," and "childcare leave system, use of childcare services, and family support," it showed a significant effect.

Analysis of this interrelation of the support systems provided by companies, families, and communities implies that in meeting the needs of workers and enhancing the effectiveness of support, coordination with the support environment of families and regional communities is essential not only for the childcare leave system but also for measures including shortening working hours.

As part of an effort to deal with the nation's declining birthrate, a wide range of issues

have been raised that companies should address in their measures for supporting workers to balance work and childcare, but the priority should be to promote both the childcare leave system and the measures including shortening working hours. And for these systems to be fully effective, it is important to put into place a comprehensive support system that will make coordination among companies, families, and communities possible.

Table 2. Factors Determining Job Continuation after the First Childbirth (logistic regression analysis)

		Job continuation after first childbirth					
		All		Suginami and Edogawa (Tokyo)		Toyama and Takaoka (Toyama Pref.)	
		Effect	Exp (effect)	Effect	Exp (effect)	Effect	Exp (effect)
Age at the time of childbirth		.059**	1.061	.105**	1.111	.029	1.029
Educational background		.149**	1.161	.046	1.047	.181	1.199
Employed as regular employee at the time of childbirth		1.303**	3.681	1.374**	3.950	1.294**	3.649
Region (vs. Toyama and Takaoka)							
Suginami		-1.175**	.309	—		—	
Edogawa		-1.214**	.297	—		—	
Support for childcare (vs. no support)							
Singly	Childcare leave system only	.229	1.258	-.161	.851	.536	1.709
	Living with parents only	.710	2.034	-.462	.630	1.030	2.800
	Participation of husband in childcare only	-.311	.733	-.255	.775	-.394	.674
	Use of childcare services only	1.624**	5.071	1.740*	5.697	.649	1.914
Combination	Living with parents and participation of husband in childcare	1.029*	2.799	1.218	3.382	.979	2.663
	Family support and use of childcare services	2.506**	12.252	2.671**	14.455	2.192**	8.949
	Childcare leave system and family support	1.170**	3.221	.507	1.660	1.540**	4.666
	Childcare leave system and use of childcare services	2.733**	15.383	2.542**	12.699	3.107**	22.348
	Childcare leave system, use of childcare services, and family support	3.573**	35.615	3.654**	38.633	3.240**	25.537
Constant		-5.988**	.003	-7.015	.001	-5.731**	.003
Chi-square		360.584**		204.875**		124.414**	
-2 loglikelihood		812.908		346.629		450.341	
N		939		519		420	

**Significant at 1% level *Significant at 5% level

Source: "Research and Survey on Women's Work and Family Life" (the Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training 2001)

3. Outline of analytic data

The outline of the data used for the secondary analyses of this reports is as follows:

- (1) “ Survey on Women’s Work and Family Life” (the Japan Institute of Labour 2001)
- (2) “Basic Survey on Employment Management for Women 1999” (Women’s Bureau, Ministry of Labour 1999)
- (3) “Basic Survey on Employment Management for Women 2002” (Equal Employment, Children and Families Bureau, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare 2002)
- (4) “Survey on Balancing Child-care and Family-care and Work” (the Japan Institute of Labour 2003)
- (5) “Survey on Balancing Childcare and Work” (the Japan Institute of Labour 2003)
- (6) “Survey on Childcare” (the Japan Institute of Labour 2003)

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