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# **WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT AMONG FEMALE EMPLOYEES AND SOCIAL PROTECTION : THE EXAMPLE OF JAPAN**

**Université Rennes 2**

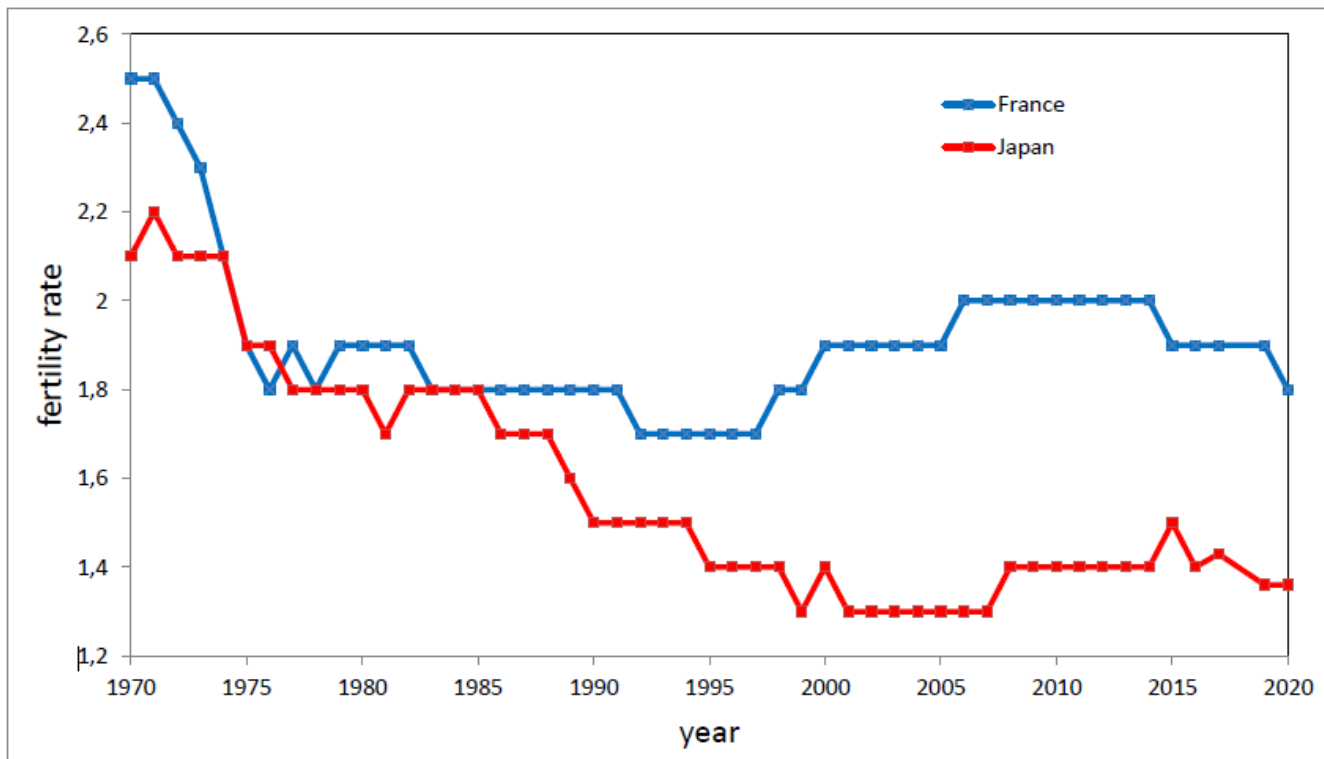
**LiRIS**

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# WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT AMONG FEMALE EMPLOYEES AND SOCIAL PROTECTION : THE EXAMPLE OF JAPAN

**Figure 1. Fertility rate  
in Japan and in France 1970-2020**



**Table 1. Fertility rate in Japan**

year	fertility rate
2005	1.26
2010	1.39
2015	1.45
2020	1.36

The population aged 60 and over accounts for 28,8%, while the population under the age of 15 amounts to only 12 % in 2020.

# WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT AMONG FEMALE EMPLOYEES AND SOCIAL PROTECTION : THE EXAMPLE OF JAPAN

## There are multiple causes of this situation

- The age of marriage in Japan has increased, or sometimes people never marry.  
(Average Age at First Marriage : men 31,0 years old, women 29,4 years old, *Census*)
- The gender gap in higher education is narrowing.  
(57.7% men and 50.9% women in 2020, *School Basic Survey* )
- The number of precarious employments is rising.
- Young men's earnings have declined.
- Women still encounter difficulties in reconciling work and family life.

# WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT AMONG FEMALE EMPLOYEES AND SOCIAL PROTECTION : THE EXAMPLE OF JAPAN

In 1997

The Council on Population Problems stated :

“The factors of declining birth rates are the fixed division of labour between men and women, and employment practices giving the highest priority to work”.

In 2007

The "Work-Life Balance Charter" and the "Guidelines to Promote Work-Life Balance“ were signed by the government.

Since 2013

Former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has put forward a policy aimed at the increase of women's position in the labour market.



the demographic challenge: the total fertility rate up to 1.8.

# The general place of women in employment in Japan --- work-family balance

## The employment rate of women and the "M" curve

Table 2.

**Female labour force participation rate (ages 15-64)**

<b>1985</b>	<b>53.3 %</b>
<b>1990</b>	<b>56 %</b>
<b>1995</b>	<b>56.5 %</b>
<b>2000</b>	<b>56.8 %</b>
<b>2005</b>	<b>58.2 %</b>
<b>2010</b>	<b>60.1 %</b>
<b>2015</b>	<b>64.7 %</b>
<b>2020</b>	<b>70.6%</b>

Table 3.

**Labour force participation rate (ages 15-64)  
in 2020**

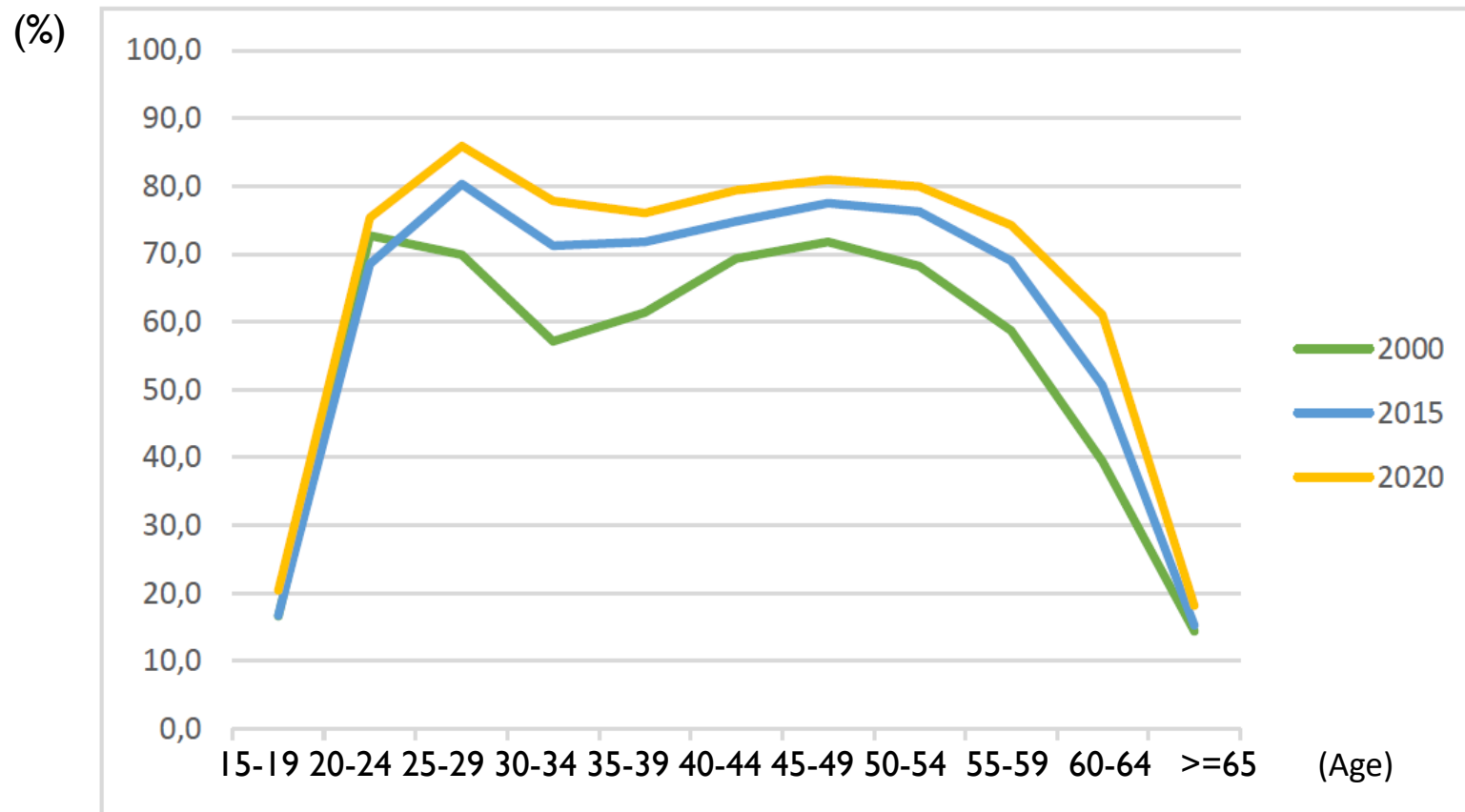
<b>men</b>	<b>women</b>
<b>83.8 %</b>	<b>70.6 %</b>

Source : Ministry of International Affairs and  
Communications, *Population census*, 2021

# The general place of women in employment in Japan --- work-family balance

## The employment rate of women and the "M" curve

**Figure 2 : female labour force participation rate by age**



Source : Ministry of International  
Affairs and Communications,  
*Population census, 2021*

## The general place of women in employment in Japan --- Work-family balance

73% of married Japanese women were employed before childbirth, but 47% of women left their job after the birth of their first child.

Source : *National Institute of Population and Social Security Research*, 2010-2014

Employment rates for mothers with children younger than three

Japan 30 %  
OECD average 52 %

Source : *OECD Employment Outlook*, 2014

## The general place of women in employment in Japan --- Work-family balance

### non-regular employees

In 2020

<b>Males</b>	<b>21.8 %</b>
<b>Females</b>	<b>54.4 %</b>

Source: Ministry of International Affairs and Communications, *Population census*, 2018

**Table 4 : Regular and Non-regular Employment**

**\*Percentage of female non-regular employees in total female employment**

year	total (million persons)	Regular employees (million persons)	Non-regular employees (million persons)	Percentage of non- regular* (%)
1985	14.6	9.9	4.7	32.1
1995	19.0	11.5	7.4	38.4
2005	21.4	10.1	11.2	52.4
2015	23.8	10.4	13.4	56.3
2020	26.1	11.9	14.2	54.4



## The general place of women in employment in Japan --- Work-family balance

Table 5. Average monthly wage by sex in Japan (2020)

Males	Females
338800 yen (2820 USD)	2518000 yen (2098 USD)

Wage inequalities between men (=100) and women (=74.3)

### **Motherhood is associated with lower wages**

- Japanese working mothers earn about 53% less than their husbands
- Japanese working mothers in irregular jobs earn 60% less than their husbands.

Source : The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, *Basic Survey on Wage Structure*, 2021

## The general place of women in employment in Japan --- Work-family balance

**1992 The childcare leave law**

**1995 Plan Angel**

**2000 New Plan Angel**

**2005 Act on Advancement of Measures to Support Raising Next-Generation Children**

**2007 Work-Life Balance Charter**

**2007 Action Policy for Promoting a Good Work-Life Balance**

**2012 Act on Child and Childcare Support**

**2019 Act on Promotion of Women's Participation and Advancement in the Workplace**

## The place of women in the “traditional” model: Japanese employment practices

- Japanese employment system 
  - lifetime employment
  - seniority-wage system
  - enterprise unionism

became more structured during the period of strong economic growth between 1955 and 1970.

- Since the 1990s, lifetime employment has been widely questioned.
- Large companies have not completely abandoned the idea of continuing their practices by encouraging long-term employment for some of their employees.

## The place of women in the “traditional” model: Japanese employment practices

In the Japanese employment system, permanent employees must work flexibly according to the needs of the company: excessive hours, unpaid overtime, work during holidays, workplace transfers.

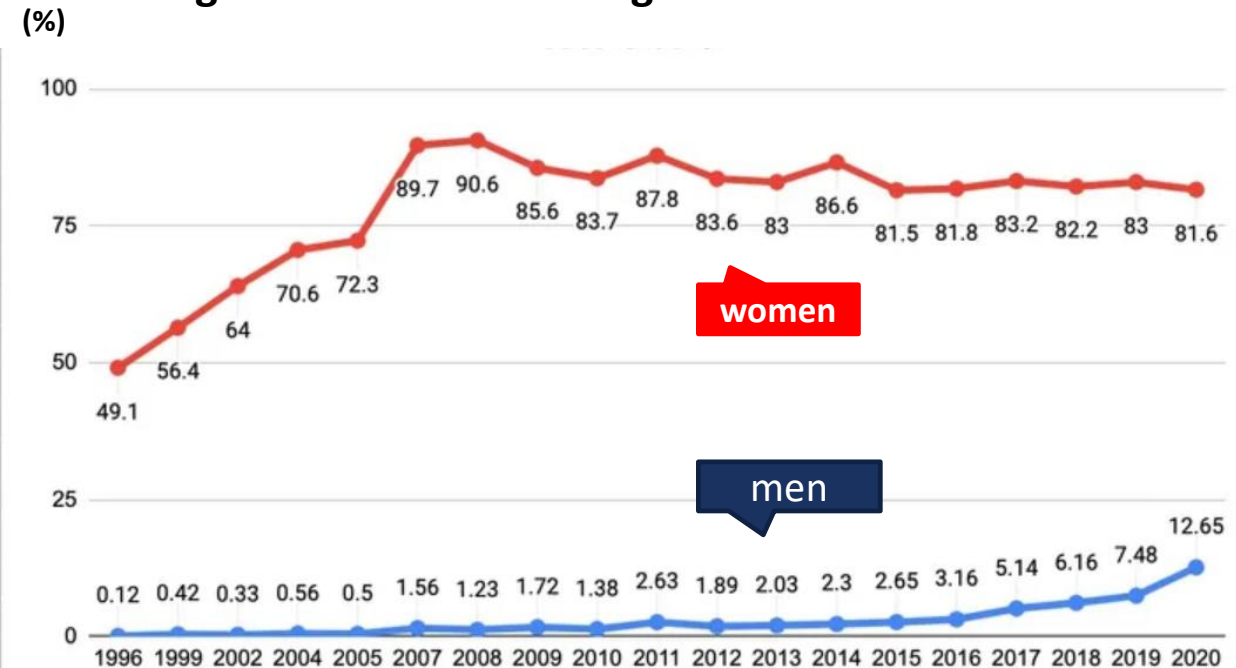


**Japanese employment practices** are closely related to the promotion



A penalty for women

**Figure 3 : Workers taking Childcare Leave**



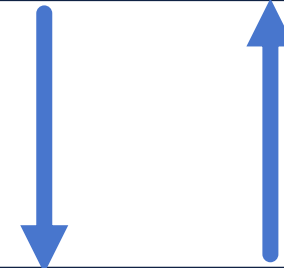
Source : The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, *White Paper on social security*, 2020

## The place of women in the “traditional” model: Gendered division of domestic labour

Table 6.  
**Time spent on housework per day**  
(ages 15-64, in 2020)

Males	69 minutes
Females	278 minutes

Japanese employment system



The gender division of labour  
"men work, women are at home"

Source : NHK, *The National Time Use Survey on Life Hours in Japan, 2020*

The place of women in the “traditional” model:  
Social policy: the male breadwinner model

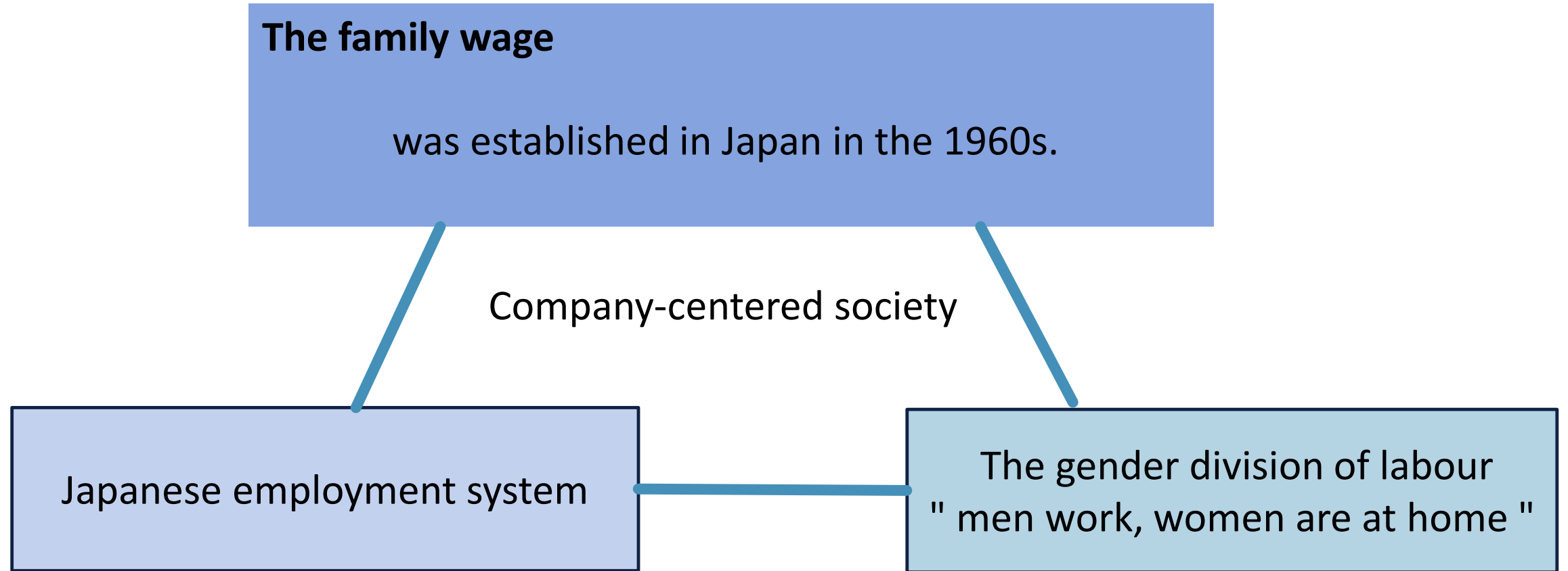
**The family wage**

was established in Japan in the 1960s.

Company-centered society

Japanese employment system

The gender division of labour  
"men work, women are at home"



## The place of women in the “traditional” model: Social policy: the male breadwinner model

- The social protection system was based on a "standard" family model: husband (worker) + housewife (non employed) + child
- In this model, the tax system provides benefits to married couples if a spouse earns less than a certain amount.

If a part-time worker is married and earns less than **¥1,300,000 (10,800 USD)** in a year, she or he can avoid paying social security or health insurance premiums, while still remaining eligible to receive the health insurance.

The types of the social insurance schemes in Japan differ according to whether the enrolees are self-employed, employees, or unemployed. Premiums and benefits also differ according to the insurance schemes.

## The place of women in the “traditional” model: Social policy: the male breadwinner model

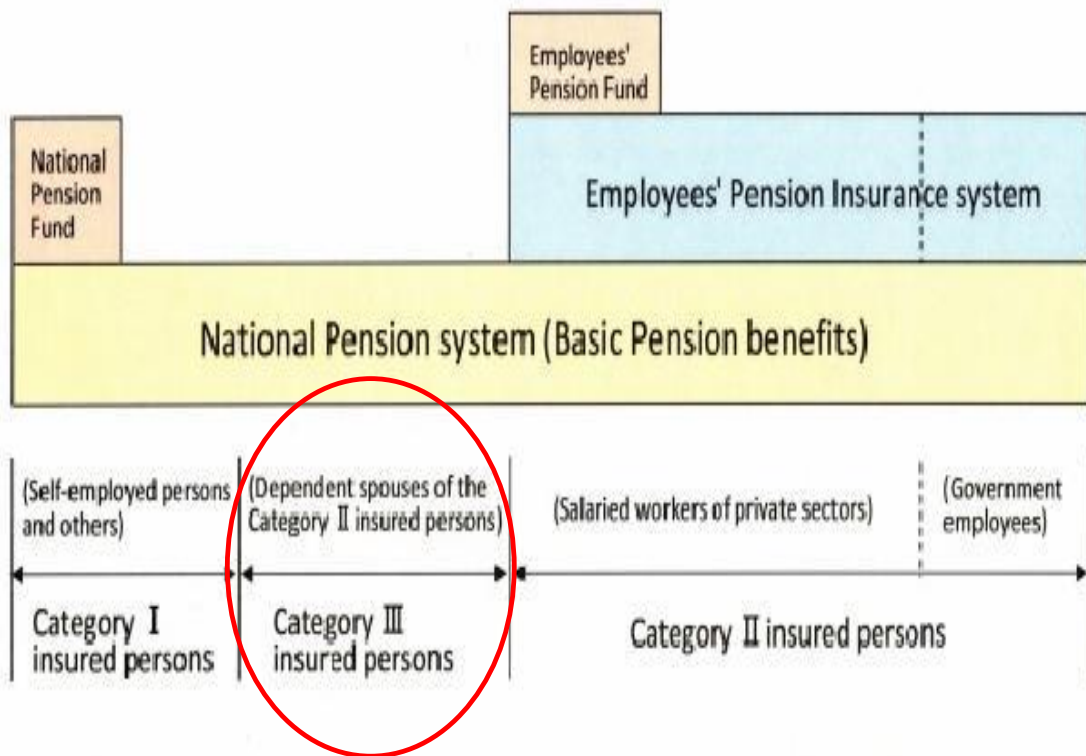
Workers earning up to **¥1,030,000 (8,600 USD)** per year do not pay taxes on their income, and, if they are married, their spouse may claim a dependent deduction from income taxes and may receive a dependent allowance from the employer.



This tax and compensation structure creates a significant financial incentive for married women to work part-time and earn less than the income threshold.



## The place of women in the “traditional” model: Social policy: the male breadwinner model



The pension system also is profitable to full-time housewives or married part-time workers who earn less than **¥1,300,000 (10,800 USD)** in a year. They can be regarded as a dependent, as Category 3 insured persons, and thus can receive a full Old-age Basic Pension at the age of 65 without ever having contributed to the National Pension fund.



These measures make it attractive for many married women not to work or to work only part time.

## The place of women in the “traditional” model: Social policy: the male breadwinner model

### The typical household model in Japan is changing

- The median age at marriage has increased steadily
- The number of singles is rising significantly

**Table 7. Proportion of single among men and women aged 35-39 :**

	1980	2000	2020
male	8.5 %	25.7 %	38.5 %
female	5.5 %	13.8 %	26.2 %

Source: Ministry of International Affairs and Communications, *Population census*, 2021

## The place of women in the “traditional” model: Social policy: the male breadwinner model

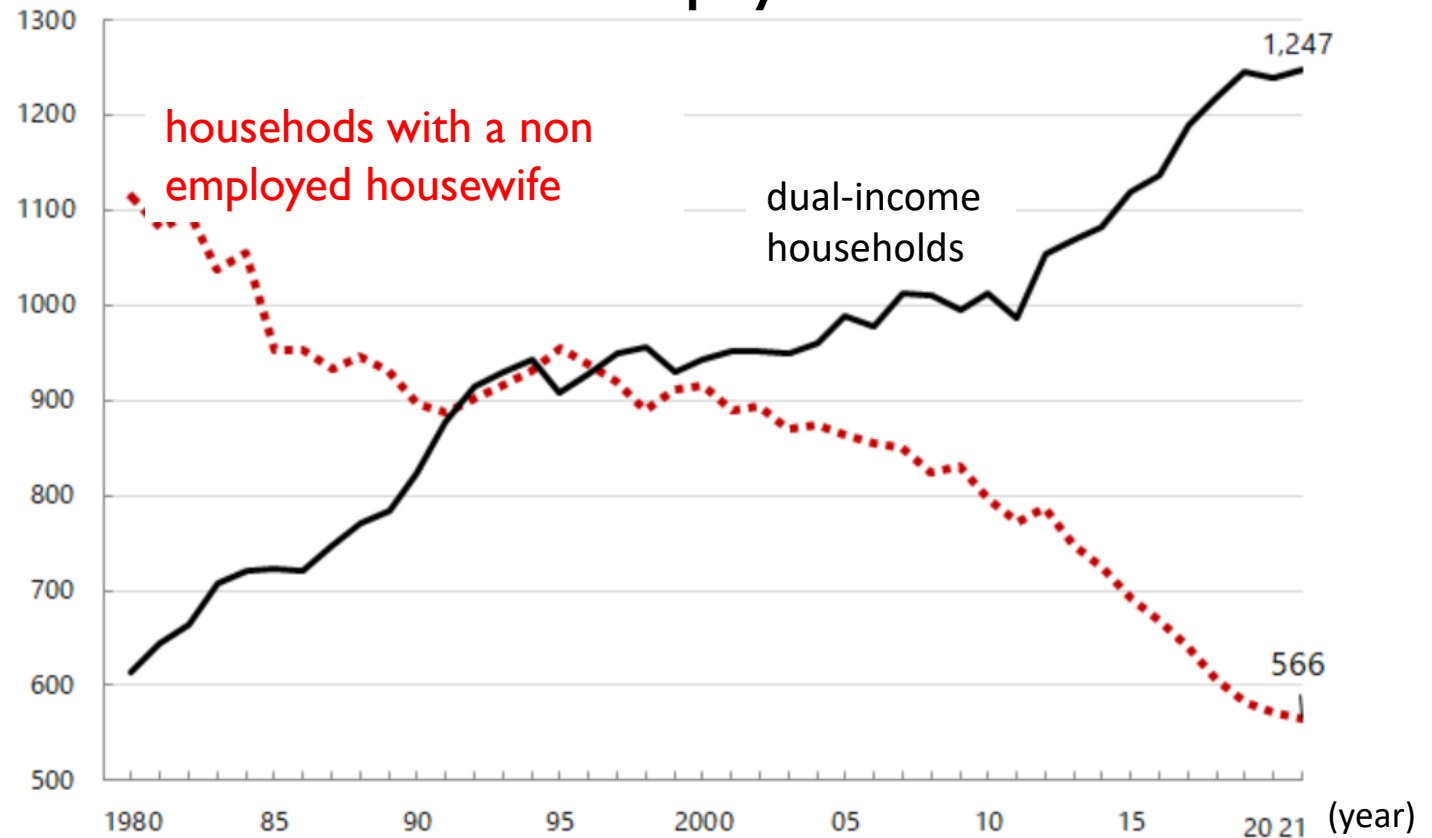
(10 thousand  
households)

The number of households composed of "a worker and a housewife"

- increased from 1955 to 1980.
- was no longer the majority in the 1990s.
- represents 31.2% in 2021.

Source: Ministry of International Affairs and Communications, *Population census*, 2021.

**Figure 4. Number of dual-income households and households with a non employed housewife**

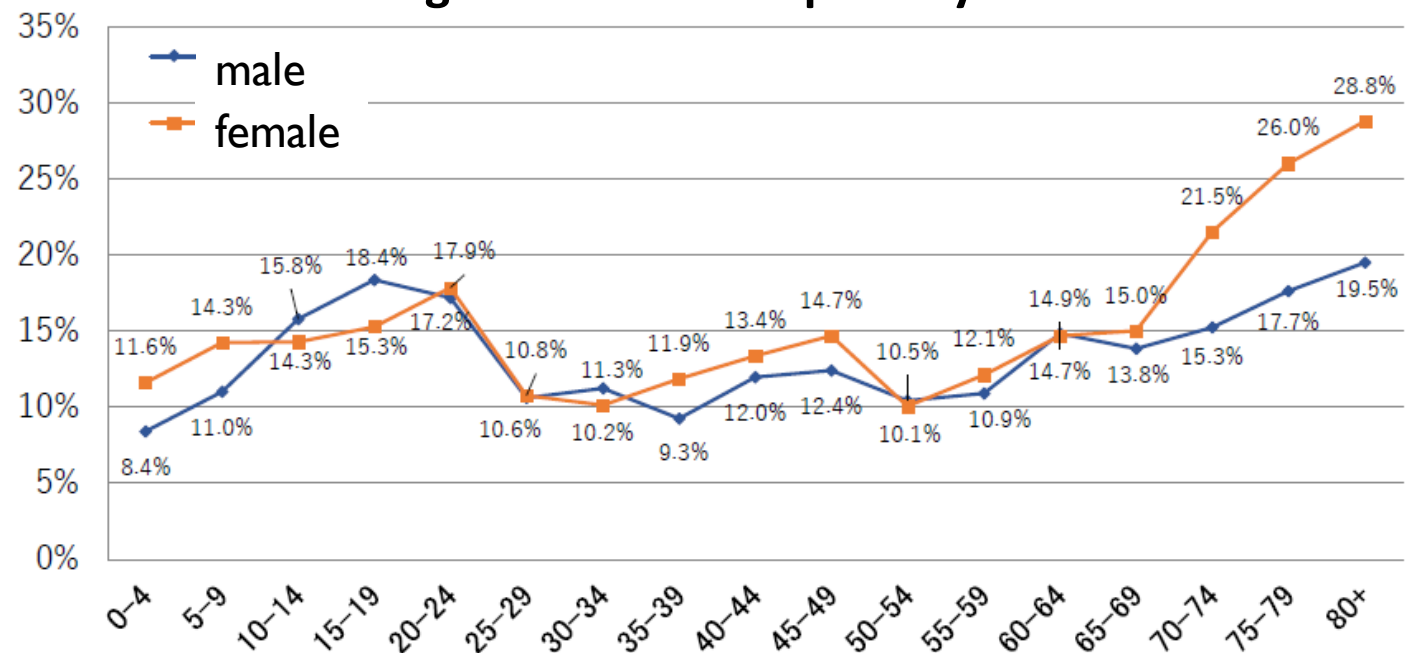


## The place of women in the “traditional” model: Social policy: the male breadwinner model

-- Relative poverty in Japan has risen to a high level  
15.4 % in 2018

-- Poverty particularly affects  
single unmarried women,  
older single women (46.2%),  
single mothers (51.4%).

**Figure 4. Relative poverty rate in 2018**



Source : The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, *Basic Survey on Wage Structure*, 2021

## Conclusion

- To address current challenges such as an ageing society with a declining birth-rate, a more effective safety net against poverty, work-life balance, we must break with a "tradition" forged interdependently by the three factors---employment practices - domestic role - social protection---developed during the period of strong economic growth.
- COVID-19 has a more serious impact on Japanese women, mainly because Japan is largely segregated by gender in the family, the labour market, and in society as a whole.