

Why is the Gender Gap in Time Spent on Housework Still So Wide?

From the 2015 NHK Japanese Time Use Survey

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*This article is based on the same authors' article "Danzyo no Kajizikann no Sa ha Naze Okiimama nanoka ~2015nen Kokuminseikatsujikan chosa no Kekka kara~[Why Dose the Gender Gap in Housework Time Remain Wide?] ,originally published in the December 2016 issue of "*Hoso Kenkyu to Chosa* [The NHK Monthly Report on Broadcast Research]". Full text in Japanese may be accessed at

http://www.nhk.or.jp/bunken/research/yoron/pdf/20161201_6.pdf

Abstract

The 2015 Nippon Hoso Kyokai (Japanese Broadcasting Corporation: NHK) Japanese Time Use Survey revealed that, in the long run, although the time spent on housework is increasing among adult men and decreasing among adult women, there still remains a 3-hour gap per day, on weekdays, with 4 hours, 18 minutes for women and only 54 minutes for men. To discover why this gap has remained so wide, sample data of weekday activities for men and women aged 20–59 were extracted and analyzed. First, the research examined activities that might influence housework hours, revealing a negative correlation between time spent on housework and time spent at work. However, the research observed that the time spent on other activities had little influence. Based on this, relations between housework and work were then compared at different life stages. Results demonstrated that alterations in life stages had greater impact on time spent on housework among women than men, especially after marriage, which served as a type of threshold that separated men and women into gender-specific roles since men are expected to work and women to keep house. This was even more so after childbirth.

Further, factors for chronological changes in housework time were investigated. For women, time spent on housework has been on a steady decrease due to social changes, such as decreasing marriage rate, decreasing birth rate, increased numbers of working women, and improved efficiency in basic chores including cooking, cleaning, and laundry. Such a downward trend was impeded only by a continued increase in time spent on child-rearing. As for men, despite a growing awareness of gender equality that prompted more of them to share housework, men increasingly working long hours actually prevented the expansion of the percentage of men who perform housework; thus, this resulted in slower growth in housework time as a whole.

Introduction

More women were encouraged to join or remain in the workforce when the “Act of Equal Employment Opportunity for Both Sexes,” which prohibits gender discrimination at the workplace, was first enacted, exactly 30 years ago in 1986. Women’s roles in society have also widened since introduction of the “Act on Promotion of Women’s Participation and Advancement in the Workplace” in April

2016.

On the other hand, not much change in the role a woman is expected to fulfill in a family is observed. According to an international comparative study conducted by the International Social Survey Program (ISSP) in 2012, while only 4% of Japanese men do housework over 20 hours a week, 65% of women do the same, making this the second largest gender difference among the 31 countries/regions surveyed.¹⁾ It is believed that Japanese men’s long working hours is the reason for this situation.²⁾

Based on results of the 2015 NHK Japanese Time Use Survey—conducted once every five years—and its comparison with past data, this study provides a detailed analysis regarding the time spent on housework by both genders to reveal why such a wide gap

remains.

The first chapter examines relations between life stages, housework, and work to understand how this time difference in housework between men and women has occurred. Subsequently, the second chapter analyzes factors of chronological changes in housework time.

For an abstract of this study, please refer to the May issue of this journal.³⁾

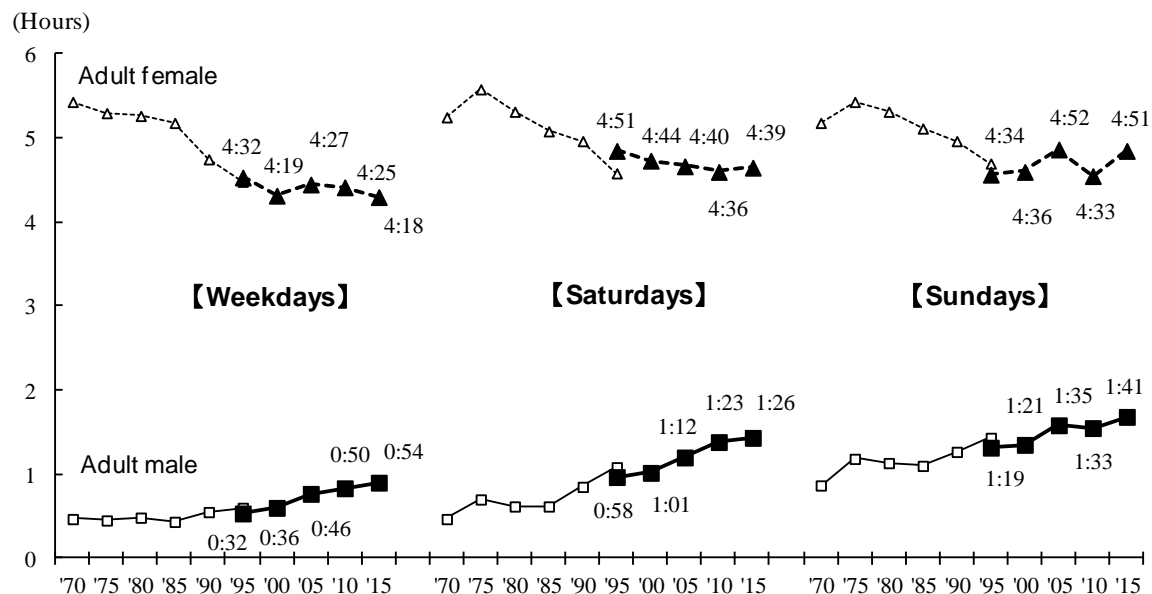
1. The Current Status of Housework According to Gender

(1) Chronological Changes in the Time Spent on Housework for Adult Men and Women

For this study, the term “housework” is defined as a combination of “cooking/cleaning/laundry,” “shopping” (window shopping excluded), “child-rearing,” and “other miscellaneous family chores” (tidying up, car-washing, going to the bank or government office, and caring for someone other than a child/caring for elderly/nursing the sick among other related purposes).⁴⁾

In 2015, the average time spent on housework by an adult female was 4 hours, 18 minutes on weekdays; 4 hours, 39 minutes on Saturdays, and 4 hours, 51 minutes on Sundays—all exceeding 4 hours (Figure 1). For an adult male, however, the average time spent on housework was 54 minutes on weekdays; 1 hour, 26 minutes on Saturdays; and 1 hour, 41 minutes on Sundays. Both males and females spent more time on housework on weekends than during weekdays.

Figure.1 Chronological change in overall average time spent on housework by gender
(3 parts of the week, adult)



Note) The method of the Time Use Survey was changed in 1995. Hence, data from 1970–95 (small symbol/white) were collected using the old, previous method and data from 1995–2015 (large symbol/black) were collected using the new, current method. The two datasets are presented for a better view of chronological change, but the figures cannot be directly compared.

Table.1 Number of subjects by gender and age group (weekdays, aged 20–59)

	(People)				
	'95	'00	'05	'10	'15
Men in their 20s	1,865	279	526	257	424
Men in their 30s	1,948	329	711	329	650
Men in their 40s	2,462	338	731	351	905
Men in their 50s	2,016	468	969	329	724
Total for Men Aged 20–59	8,291	1,414	2,937	1,266	2,703
Women in their 20s	2,034	366	576	232	437
Women in their 30s	2,184	361	924	396	678
Women in their 40s	2,436	358	817	377	933
Women in their 50s	2,239	487	1,086	405	802
Total for Women Aged 20–59	8,893	1,572	3,403	1,410	2,850

Year of Survey	Days Surveyed (October)	People Surveyed [Whether or not divided by prefecture]	Total Number of Subjects	Efficacy Rate
'95	14 days from 12th–25th weekdays × 10, Saturdays and Sundays × 2 each	All citizens aged 10 or above	25,200 people	76.1%
'00	8 days from 12th–22nd weekdays × 4, Saturdays and Sundays × 2 each	All citizens aged 10 or above [divided by municipality]	45,120 people (7,200 people in national sample)	73.1%
'05	14 days from 11th–24th weekdays × 10, Saturdays and Sundays × 2 each	All citizens aged 10 or above	12,600 people	61.3%
'10	8 days from 14th–24th weekdays × 4, Saturdays and Sundays × 2 each	All citizens aged 10 or above	7,200 people	68.1%
'15	14 days from 13th–26th weekdays × 10, Saturdays and Sundays × 2 each	All citizens aged 10 or above	12,600 people	62.6%

When compared with historical data from 1970, although the time spent on housework by adult female had steadily declined since 1970 for weekdays and 1980 for weekends, such a decline essentially stalled for weekdays and Sundays after 2005. For Saturdays, the decline had also ended when this study was conducted. On the other hand, despite an increase in the time spent on housework on weekends in 1975, overall housework time for adult males remained fairly steady throughout the 1980s until after 1990, when the figure began to climb slowly again for both weekdays and weekends. Even though the gender gap in housework

time has been collapsing a little at a time, in 2015, there was still a time difference of more than 3 hours for weekdays, Saturdays, and Sundays.

Why has this gender gap in time spent on housework remained so wide? To consider the latest situation of those still actively involved in the workforce or child-rearing, this analysis has limited its sample to people aged 20–59 (see Table 1 for sample number).⁵⁾ Furthermore, to highlight any correlation between work and housework, only data from weekdays were considered.

(2) Life Stage Changes, Relations between Housework and Work

Negative Correlation between Time Spent on Housework and Time Spent on Work

First, the study sought all activities that might affect the amount of time spent on housework. In observing the correlation coefficient between average time spent on housework and average time spent on other activities by all subjects (Table 2), the study noticed that items that exceeded an absolute value of 0.3 were, for males, work (−0.336), and for females, work (−0.592) and commuting (−0.404), all of which showed a significance level of 1%.

For both males and females, while other activities demonstrated little influence, the amount of time spent at work appears to be indirectly proportional to the amount of time spent on housework.

Increased Working Hours for Married Men

The relation between housework and work is particularly volatile for women undergoing life stage changes. To demonstrate this, the study divided all men and women into three categories of “unmarried,”⁶⁾ “married without child/ren,” and “married with child/ren”⁷⁾ so that the average time spent on housework and work, as well as the overall ratio of those who perform housework⁸⁾ may be compared among groups (Figure 2).

Table.2 Correlation coefficient of overall average time spent on housework and each of these activities by gender (weekdays, people aged 20–59, 2015)

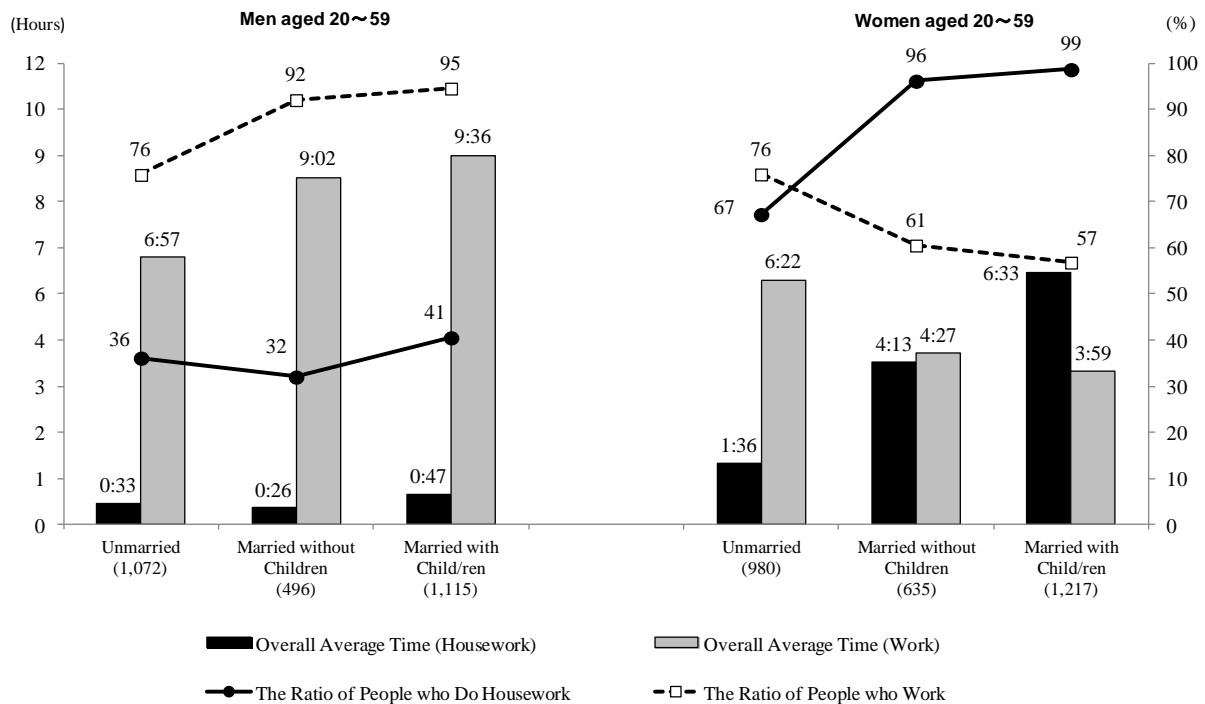
	Sleep	Meals	Personal chores	Medical treatment or recuperation	Work	Work-related association	Commuting to work	School work	Commuting to school	Social obligations	Conversation/Personal association
Men Aged 20–59	0.001	0.031	0.020	0.016	-0.336**	-0.053**	-0.179**	-0.033	-0.050**	0.019	-0.001
Women Aged 20–59	-0.095**	0.066**	-0.103**	-0.019	-0.592**	-0.080**	-0.404**	-0.115**	-0.124**	0.040*	-0.033

	Exercise and Sports	Outings/Walks	Hobbies/Entertainment/Cultural activities	Internet as a hobby or for entertainment and cultural activities	TV	Radio	Newspapers	Magazines/Comic Books/Books	CDs/Tapes	Videos/HDDs/DVDs	Rest
Men Aged 20–59	0.032	0.087**	0.037	0.033	0.066**	0.016	0.013	0.026	0.017	0.056**	-0.002
Women Aged 20–59	-0.011	-0.013	-0.012	-0.064**	0.133**	0.016	0.082**	-0.020	-0.039*	0.083**	0.011

**Both with significant level of 1%

*Both with significant level of 5%

Figure.2 The overall average time spent on housework and work by gender/life stage
(weekdays, people aged 20–59, 2015)



The size of the sample is indicated inside (), same for graph below.

First, when the average time spent on housework by male groups is compared according to life stages, the study discovered that “married without child/ren” recorded the shortest time, at 26 minutes, while “married with child/ren” recorded the longest time at 47 minutes. Overall, males who were “married without child/ren” spent less time on housework than males who were “unmarried,” while males who were “married with child/ren” spent more time on housework than those in “unmarried” and “married without child/ren” categories.

Of the percentage of people who do share housework, less than half of the men surveyed actually take some time each day to do housework. Among those, 41% are “married with child/ren,” which is higher than both “unmarried” and “married without child/ren,” indicating that men with child/ren are more likely to share housework.

As for the average time spent on housework by those who actually share housework,⁸⁾ “unmarried” was 1 hour, 32 minutes; “married without child/ren” was 1 hour, 20 minutes; and “married with child/ren” was 1 hour, 55 minutes. Although all groups averaged between 1 and 2 hours, the “married with child/ren” group again reported more time than others.

The same is then repeated for time spent at work. The average time was between 6 and 7 hours for “unmarried,” and more than 9 hours for both “married without child/ren” and “married with child/ren.” It appears that males spend even more time at work after marrying and having child/ren. The percentage of men who work was 76% for “unmarried,” while both “married without child/ren” and “married with child/ren” were above 90%. This is because many males included in the “unmarried” group were actually students with less available time. Once students were excluded from the “unmarried” group, the percentage of working men

became 82%, with an average time of 7 hours, 38 minutes spent at work, still less than married men.

Hence, even though working hours for men lengthened after marriage, such a life stage alteration did not result in any major difference in their housework time.

Substantially Increased Housework Time for Females as a Result of Marriage and Child-Rearing

Next, the status of women is examined according to life stages. The average time spent on housework was 1 hour, 36 minutes for “unmarried”; 4 hours, 13 minutes for “married without child/ren”; and 6 hours, 33 minutes for “married with child/ren.” It seems housework time lengthens as life stages progress.

Of the percentage of people who perform housework, “unmarried” females stood at 67%, while both “married without child/ren” and “married with child/ren” recorded more than 90%.

The average time spent on housework by those who actually perform housework was 2 hours, 23 minutes for “unmarried”; 4 hours, 23 minutes for “married without child/ren”; and 6 hours, 38 minutes for “married with child/ren.” Each life stage alteration seems to include more than 2 hours to housework time. Thus, for women, more than 90% were responsible for housework after marriage, while time spent on housework became even longer after childbirth.

On the other hand, the average time spent on work was approximately 6 hours for “unmarried” females, and this figure is indirectly proportional to housework time, which increased as life stages progressed. Additionally, the percentage of working women dropped from 76% for “unmarried” to approximately 60% for married people.

These percentages show that alterations in life stage impacted females more than males for time spent on housework. Particularly after marriage, which separates males and females into gender-specific roles (men are expected to work and women are expected to become housekeepers), while the time each gender spends in their presumed roles becomes even longer after childbirth. This division of gender-specific roles, which is prevalent even today, is considered the fundamental reason for the current gender gap of more than 3 hours in housework time.

However, it is worth noting that data presented here should not be viewed as a comprehensive argument for a causal relationship between marriage/childbirth and increased working hours for men, even though it *does* suggest that men worked the longest hours during the child-rearing period. As for women, results indicate less time spent at work and significantly more time spent on housework after marriage and childbirth.

2. Changes in Housework Time for Both Genders

Next, factors influencing chronological changes in the time spent on housework by both genders are examined.

(1) Chronological Change in Housework Time for Females

Decline in Housework Time due to an Increase in Unmarried and Working Women

For chronological changes in housework time among female subjects aged 20–59 (Table 3), the study found that for the percentage of women who actually performed housework, the average time spent by them declined from 1995 to 2000. In fact, during that period, the average time spent on housework by all female subjects declined. Although no significant change has been observed since then, results of the 2015 survey reached the lowest level in 20 years. The women who performed housework comprised 87%, and they spent an average of 4 hours, 56 minutes. All females spent an average of 4 hours, 18 minutes. This implies that the decline in housework time among females for the last 20 years was largely brought on by the substantial change between 1995 and 2000, which saw a decrease in the number of women who actually did housework and a decrease in the time they spent on doing it, thus contributing to decreased housework time overall.

Table.3 Chronological changes in the ratio of people who do housework, and the average time spent on housework by those who do housework and by all subjects
(weekdays, women aged 20–59)

	'95	'00	'05	'10	'15	
Ratio of People Who Do Housework (%)	90	> 87	89	89	87	—
Average Time Spent on Housework by Those Who Do Housework (%)	5:14	> 5:00	5:06	5:05	4:56	—
Average Time Spent on Housework by All Subjects (Hours : Minutes)	4:43	> 4:22	4:32	4:30	4:18	—

<,> indicates that, when compared to the previous survey, there is a statistically significant difference.

"+, —" indicate that, when compared to data from 2015 to data from 1995, there is a statistically significant difference.

(Same for below)

Table.4 Chronological changes in the ratio of people who do housework, and the average time spent on housework by those who do housework and by all female subjects according to age (weekdays, women aged 20–59).

The ratio of people who do housework (%)

	'95	'00	'05	'10	'15	
Women in their 20s	67	> 60	62	61	57	—
Women in their 30s	96	> 91	88	87	90	—
Women in their 40s	98	< 99	> 97	97	> 92	—
Women in their 50s	97	96	98	98	96	—

The average time spent on housework by those who do housework (Hours : Minutes)

	'95	'00	'05	'10	'15	
Women in their 20s	4:13	4:02	4:12	3:52	3:29	—
Women in their 30s	6:49	> 6:10	6:00	6:10	6:06	—
Women in their 40s	5:00	5:08	5:15	4:59	4:55	
Women in their 50s	4:39	4:32	4:38	4:39	4:30	

The average time spent on housework by all subjects (Hours : Minutes)

	'95	'00	'05	'10	'15	
Women in their 20s	2:50	2:25	2:37	2:22	1:59	—
Women in their 30s	6:31	> 5:37	5:15	5:23	5:29	—
Women in their 40s	4:52	5:06	5:03	4:51	4:31	—
Women in their 50s	4:32	4:21	4:31	4:32	4:19	

From 1995 to 2000, according to age group (Table 4), the percentage of females who performed housework and the average time they spent on housework decreased significantly among those in their 30s; further, this can be seen as a major factor for the overall decline. Additionally, the percentage of females who actually performed housework decreased among females in their 20s, falling below 60%, according to this latest survey. Of females in their 40s, the percentage of those who performed housework showed a significant decrease from 2010, at 92%, while the same ratio for females in their 50s marked another decline from both 1995 and 2005, falling to just 96%. In short, the percentage of females who actually performed housework has decreased in all age groups. Among females in their 20s and 30s, the average time by those who actually performed housework has decreased. Finally, for females in their 40s or younger, the average time spent on housework has decreased.

Next, the study examines correlations between housework time and attributes other than age, in particular, whether the decrease in housework time is actually linked to demographic changes in certain attributes.

First, with regard to life stage, Chapter 1 has already verified that the percentage of people who performed housework was higher among married people than among unmarried people. In addition, the average time spent on housework by those who did housework was lengthiest among people “married with child/ren,” followed by people “married without child/ren,” and then by “unmarried” people.

Here, employment (working or non-working) and household composition (living alone or with family members) are considered within each life stage. However, because 99% of married people live with family members, only unmarried people were subject to comparison for household composition.

First, people in each life stage were differentiated depending on whether they were working or not working. The percentage of people who actually performed housework (Figure 3) stood at approximately 60% for “unmarried” and 95% or above for both “married without child/ren” and “married with child/ren,” regardless of employment. Meanwhile, the average time spent on housework by those who actually performed housework (Figure 4) was shorter for working females at all life stages.

Next, when household composition was considered for unmarried people, the study

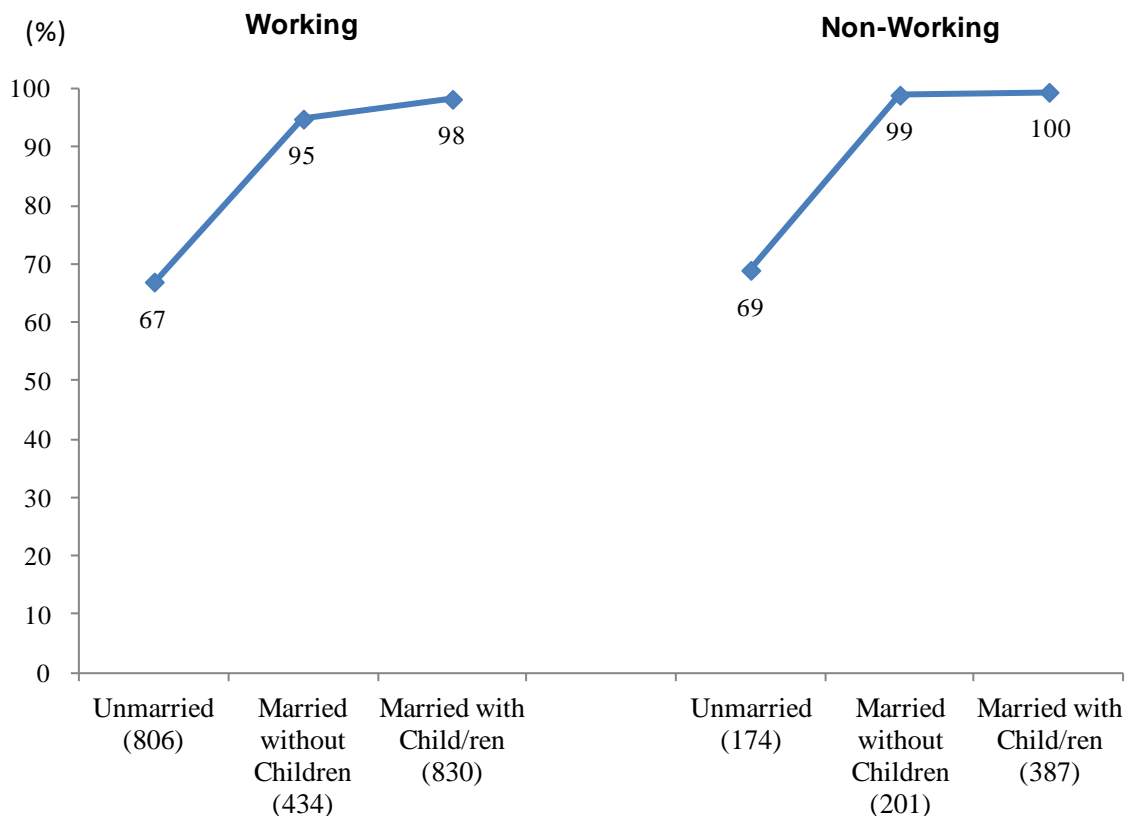
discovered that the percentage who performed housework was lower for those “living with family members” (65%) than for those “living alone” (81%). On the contrary, the average time spent on housework by those who did housework was longer for those “living with family members” (2 hours, 29 minutes) than those “living alone” (1 hour, 57 minutes). Hence, while unmarried people living with family members could be separated into those who did housework and those who did not do housework, those who did housework tended to spend more time on it than people living alone.

In short, the difference in the percentage of people who performed housework seemed to be caused by marriage status and household composition. The difference in average time spent on housework by those who did housework was caused by whether they had child/ren or worked, as well as by their household composition.

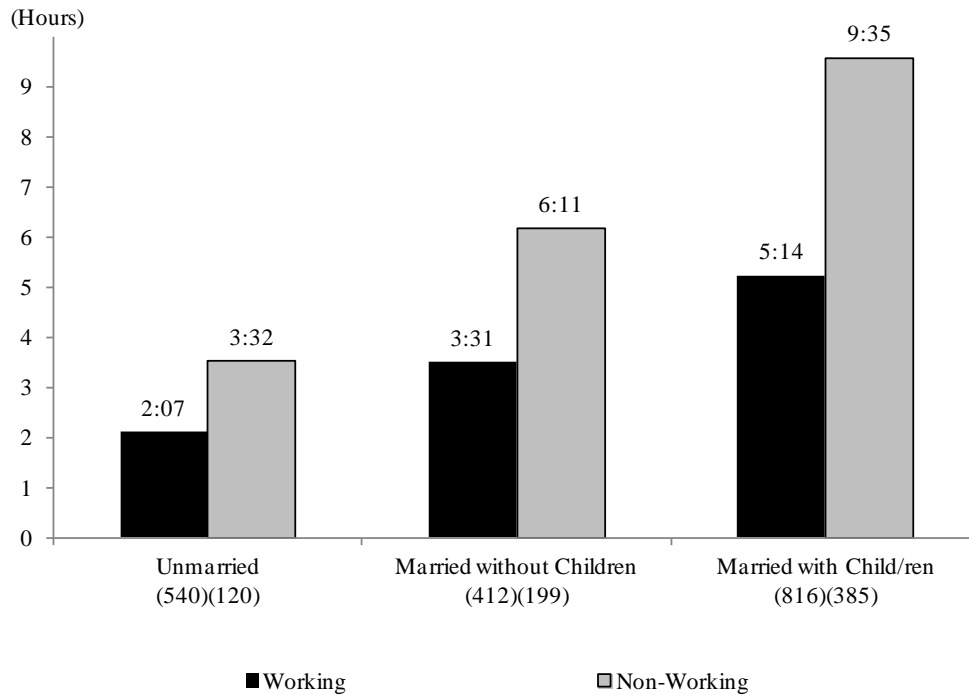
Facts presented above suggest that the decrease in percentage of females who actually did housework could be caused by an increase in unmarried people and unmarried people living with family members. On the other hand, the decline in average time spent on housework by those who performed housework could be a result of a decrease in people with child/ren and an increase in employed people and unmarried people living alone.

Figure.3 The ratio of people who do housework and the average time spent on housework by these people according to life stage and employment status
(weekdays, women aged 20–59, 2015)

【Ratio of People Who Do Housework】



【Average Time Spent on Housework by Those Who Do Housework】



Working: Agriculture,forestry or fishery self-employed, sales, service providers, work requiring craft skills or manual labor, factory operators, administrative officers, technical professionals, business owners, business managers, professionals, freelancers, and others.

Non-working:housewives,unemployed,students,and no response(same for below).

The study then looked further into the chronological changes in all unmarried people and their family composition, along with the percentage of those married with child/ren (Table 5). The number of unmarried females has increased over the last 20 years for all age groups, in particular from 1995 to 2000, for those in their 30s, and from 2010 to 2015, for those in their 40s and 50s. For unmarried women in their 30s–50s, people living alone and people living with family members had increased over the past 20 years, while for those in their 20s, only an increase in people living with family members was observed. Moreover, the number of those married with child/ren decreased among females aged 40 or under.

The chronological change in employed people is shown in Table 6. According to this data, the number of working females in their 30s and 50s has been increasing since 1995.

In other words, it is prudent to assert that the decrease in the percentage of those who actually did housework among women in their 20s–50s was largely due to an increase in unmarried people, especially those living with family members. In addition, for women in their 20s and 30s, the decline in average time spent on housework by those who actually did housework was predominantly affected by an increase in unmarried and employed people, as well as a decrease in the number of people with child/ren.

Table.5 Chronological changes in the ratio of people who are unmarried, unmarried and living alone, and unmarried and living with family, and the ratio of people who are married with child/ren (supplementary question, women aged 20–59).

Unmarried (All)

(%)	'95		'00		'05		'10		'15	
Women in their 20s	71		75		74		79		80	+
Women in their 30s	14	<	24		29		31		36	+
Women in their 40s	12		15		15		19	<	26	+
Women in their 50s	12		15		16		14	<	20	+

Unmarried and Living Alone

(%)	'95		'00		'05		'10		'15	
Women in their 20s	8		9		7		7		9	
Women in their 30s	2		3		2		4		4	+
Women in their 40s	3		3		2		4		5	+
Women in their 50s	4		3		5		3	<	6	+

Unmarried and Living with Family Members or Relatives

(%)	'95		'00		'05		'10		'15	
Women in their 20s	63		65		67		72		71	+
Women in their 30s	12	<	21		26		27		31	+
Women in their 40s	9		12		13		15	<	22	+
Women in their 50s	8	<	12		11		11		15	+

Married with Child/ren

(%)	'95		'00		'05		'10		'15	
Women in their 20s	20		16		19		17		14	—
Women in their 30s	78	>	68	>	61		56		54	—
Women in their 40s	68		71		69		69	>	62	—
Women in their 50s	16		17		17	<	27		27	+

Table.6 Chronological change in the ratio of working people by age
(supplementary question, women aged 20–59)

(%)	'95		'00		'05		'10		'15	
Women in their 20s	68		71		67		67		69	
Women in their 30s	56		59	<	66		67		69	+
Women in their 40s	75		73		74		73		77	
Women in their 50s	64		66		65		66		72	+

Less Time Spent on Cooking/Cleaning/Laundry and More Time on Child-Rearing

Regarding this aspect, the study identified major factors for the decline of housework time within certain demographic changes. However, the alteration in the time spent on housework was also caused due to a change in awareness of housework among women themselves.

Moreover, when the study examined housework time to reveal the tasks for which women allocated more time, a trend was identified (Table 7). Results revealed that time spent on cooking/cleaning/laundry has decreased over the last 20 years for all age groups, while women aged 40 or under had also reduced time spent on miscellaneous family chores. In contrast, time spent on child-rearing increased from 1995 onward for women in their 40s; despite a continuous downward trend for women in their 30s from 1995 to 2000, the amount of time they spent on child-rearing also began to increase after that period.

In terms of cooking/cleaning/laundry and child-rearing, the study focused on females in their 30s and 40s; the two age groups are more likely to have experienced volatile changes in their lives, and the average time spent on these tasks by those who actually did housework (Figure 5). For cooking/cleaning/laundry, time reduction of more than 40 minutes and 20 minutes were observed for women in their 30s and 40s, respectively, over the past 20 years. On the other hand, time spent on child-rearing increased by more than an hour for women in both age groups. This means that, during the last 20 years, women have allocated more time for child-rearing by reducing time spent on cooking/cleaning/laundry.

For women, therefore, time spent on housework has been steadily decreasing due to social changes, such as the decreasing marriage rate, decreasing birth rate, and increased numbers of working women, along with improved efficiency in basic chores, including cooking, cleaning, and laundry. Such a downward trend was impeded only by a continued increase in time spent on child-rearing.

Table.7 Chronological change in overall average time spent on housework by age and chore (weekdays, women aged 20–59)

Cooking/Cleaning/Laundry

(Hours : Minutes)	'95		'00		'05		'10		'15
Women in their 20s	1:13	>	1:02		1:03	>	0:49		0:42 —
Women in their 30s	3:06	>	2:35	>	2:11		2:12		2:12 —
Women in their 40s	3:07		3:00		2:53		2:46	>	2:31 —
Women in their 50s	2:49		2:40		2:44		2:35		2:36 —

Shopping

(Hours : Minutes)	'95		'00		'05		'10		'15
Women in their 20s	0:22		0:19		0:24		0:22		0:23
Women in their 30s	0:34		0:36	>	0:30		0:33		0:34
Women in their 40s	0:35	<	0:41		0:37		0:34		0:35
Women in their 50s	0:37		0:39		0:38		0:36		0:37

Caring for children

(Hours : Minutes)	'95		'00		'05		'10		'15
Women in their 20s	1:09		1:01		1:11		1:18		0:56
Women in their 30s	2:41	>	2:17		2:27		2:34		2:51
Women in their 40s	0:25	<	0:44		0:53		1:03		1:07
Women in their 50s	0:13		0:09		0:11		0:13		0:13

Miscellaneous

(Hours : Minutes)	'95		'00		'05		'10		'15
Women in their 20s	0:22	>	0:16		0:17	>	0:09		0:08
Women in their 30s	0:57	>	0:46		0:39		0:41		0:36
Women in their 40s	0:56		0:58		0:58		0:52	>	0:38
Women in their 50s	1:00		0:57		1:06		1:16	>	0:59

Figure.4 Chronological change in average time spent on cooking/cleaning/laundry by those who do housework among women in their 30s and 40s (weekdays).

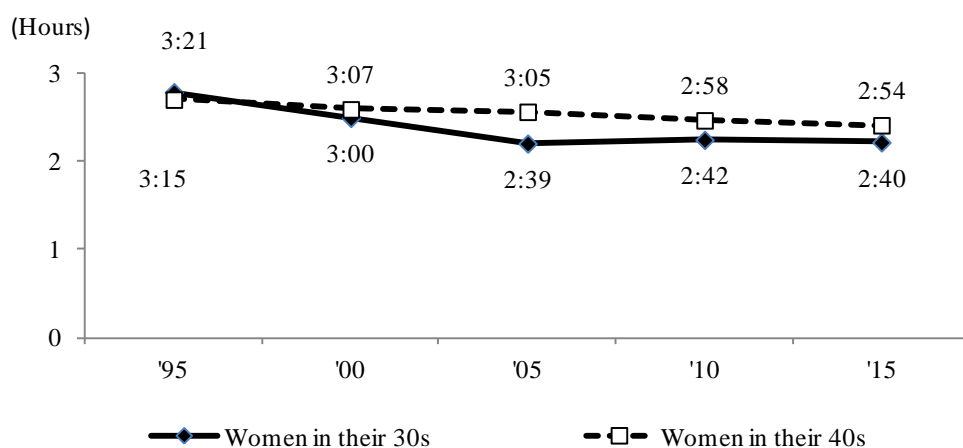
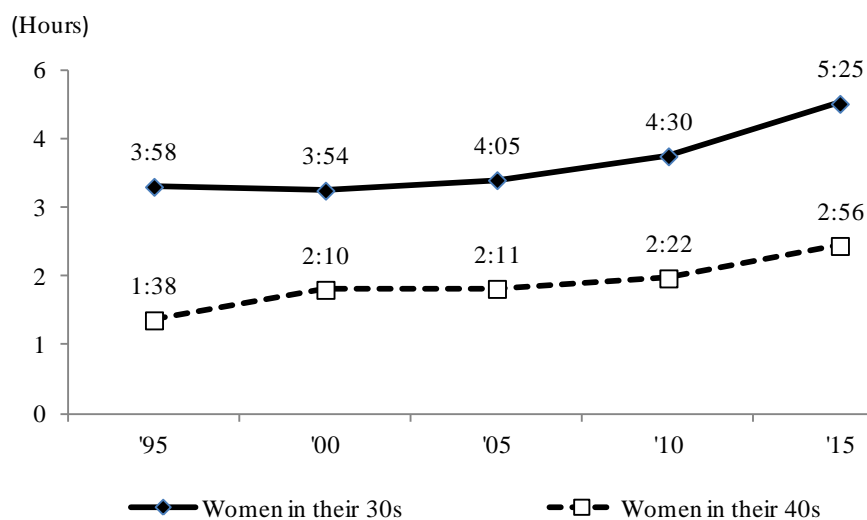


Figure.5 Chronological change in average time spent on Caring for children by those who do housework among women in their 30s and 40s (weekdays).



(2) The Change in Time that Men Spend on Housework

Reason for Increase in Housework Time Not Found in Change of Demographic Attributes

The same analysis, or comparison, was repeated for men. First, the study examined chronological changes in the percentage of those who actually performed housework, the average time spent, and the overall average time spent on housework for men aged 20–59 (Table 8). Results revealed a gradual increase in the percentage of males who actually performed housework, especially in 2010 and 2015, with a surge to 37%. The overall average time spent on housework also increased in 2005 and 2015, reaching 37 minutes.

Table.8 Chronological changes in the ratio of people who do housework, and the average time spent on housework by people who do housework and by all subjects
(weekdays, men aged 20–59)

	'95	'00	'05	'10	'15	
Ratio of People Who Do Housework (%)	26	27	28	< 33	< 37	+
Average Time Spent on Housework by Those Who Do Housework (Hours : Minutes)	1:34	1:29	< 1:51	> 1:36	1:41	
Average Time Spent on Housework by All Subjects (Hours : Minutes)	0:25	0:24	< 0:31	0:31	< 0:37	+

Nonetheless, even though the percentage of males who performed housework and the average time spent on housework by all men increased over the last 20 years, limited change was observed for the average time spent on housework. In other words, men's increased housework time was spurred by an increase in people who performed housework.

Next, the percentage of males who performed housework was examined by age group (Table 9). In 2010, there was an increase to 40% for men in their 30s. For men in their 40s, an increase was first observed in 2000, and eventually rose to 37% in 2015, while the percentage for men in their 50s also increased in 2005 and 2015, despite a temporary dip in 2000. In short, the percentage of men aged 30 or over who actually performed housework had increased over the last 20 years and has now exceeded 30%.

Table.9 Chronological change in the ratio of men who do housework by age
(weekdays, men aged 20–59)

(%)	'95	'00	'05	'10	'15	
Men in their 20s	26	29	23	< 32	29	
Men in their 30s	32	30	32	< 40	44	+
Men in their 40s	24	< 32	28	33	37	+
Men in their 50s	24	> 19	< 27	26	< 36	+

To understand how this increase occurred, the study considered correlations between housework and attributes other than age. As described in Chapter 1, in terms of the percentage of people who performed housework, there was no significant difference between the “unmarried” and the “married without child/ren” groups, while the figure for the “married with child/ren” group was slightly higher.

For employment status and household composition, since 98% of married men were employed and living with family members or relatives, the study focused on unmarried people living alone. With regard to the employment status, the percentage of men who actually performed housework was 35% for unmarried/working men and 40% for unmarried/non-working men, showing little difference between the two groups. As for household composition, the percentage of men who actually performed housework was 53% for those unmarried and living alone, much higher than the figure for unmarried men living with family members (31%).

Hence, it can be asserted that the percentage of males who actually performed housework was much influenced by whether a married man had child/ren, and whether an unmarried man lived alone.

In other words, the increase in percentage of men who performed housework was most likely caused by an increase in married men with child/ren and unmarried men living alone.

The study thus looked further into demographic changes in both the “unmarried/living alone” group and the “married with child/ren” group (Table 10). The result revealed that, over the past 20 years, the number of men in their 40s increased in the “unmarried/living alone” group, while the number of men in their 50s had increased in both groups. In contrast, the number of men in their 30s and 40s decreased in the “married with child/ren” category.

Therefore, while a change in general attributes can be observed to be a factor for the increase in the percentage of those who actually performed housework among men in their 50s, results are not conclusive enough to depict the same observation for men in their 30s and 40s. What else could be considered a factor?

Table.10 Chronological changes in the ratio of men who are married with child/ren or unmarried and living alone by age (supplementary question, men aged 20–59).

Married with Child/ren

(%)	'95	'00	'05	'10	'15	
Men in their 20s	12	12	15	11	10	
Men in their 30s	64	> 54	53	51	45	—
Men in their 40s	76	73	> 66	62	> 55	—
Men in their 50s	32	33	34	35	39	+

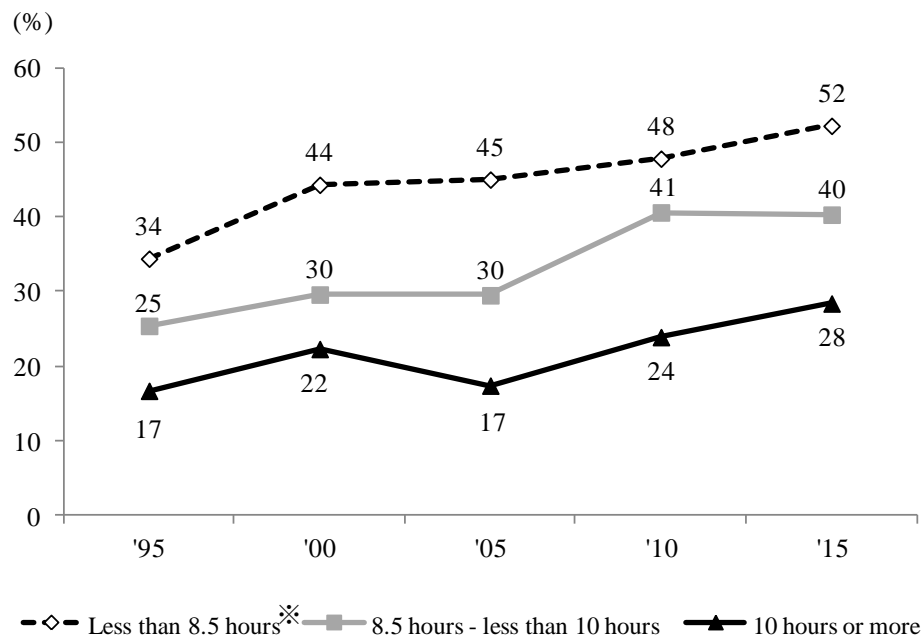
Unmarried and Living Alone

(%)	'95	'00	'05	'10	'15	
Men in their 20s	16	14	12	12	17	
Men in their 30s	7	8	7	8	9	
Men in their 40s	4	6	5	3	< 7	+
Men in their 50s	3	4	6	7	6	+

Housework Prevented by Long Working Hours

First, the relation between work and housework was examined. As mentioned in Chapter 1, a negative correlation between time spent at work and time spent on housework is observed. Hence, the study attempted to compare the percentage of people who actually performed housework against hours spent at work among men aged 30–49 (Figure 6), for whom a change in attributes did not bear any significance on such percentage. Moreover, the percentage of men who performed housework decreased as the time spent at work increased. For instance, for men who worked less than 8 hours, 30 minutes, the ratio exceeded 50%, but for men who worked 10 hours or more, the ratio did not reach even 30%. In other words, the percentage of men who did housework was restrained from further increase by long working hours. However, regarding chronological changes, the overall percentage of men who performed housework has risen over the past 20 years, regardless of the amount of time spent at work. Such an increase was particularly prominent for men working less than 8 hours, 30 minutes between 1995 and 2000, and for men working from 8 hours, 30 minutes or more to less than 10 hours, or 10 hours or more between 2005 and 2010.

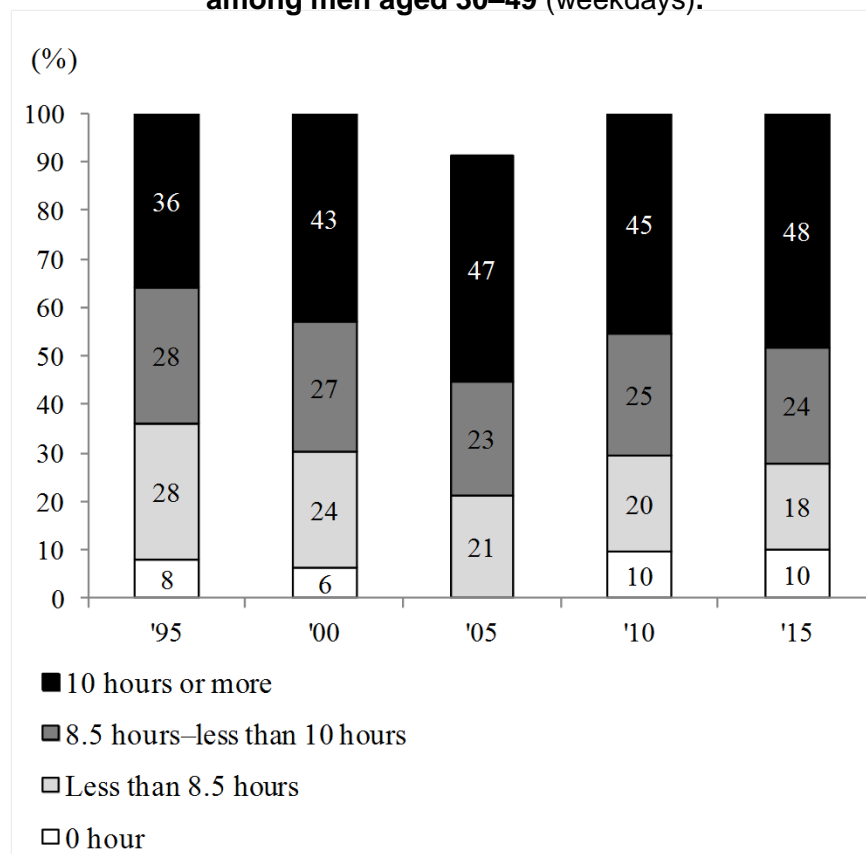
Figure.6 Chronological change in the ratio of people who do housework among men



※15 minutes-8 hours and 15 minutes (same for below).

Given this chronological change in housework time, the percentage of men who actually performed housework should have increased along with the number of men with shorter working hours. Here, the study looked further into the chronological changes with respect to the amount of time spent at work (Figure 7). The result revealed that, over the past 20 years, the number of people working less than 8 hours, 30 minutes or 8 hours, 30 minutes or more to less than 10 hours have decreased, while people working 10 hours or more have increased, making up almost half of all men surveyed. This indicates that a decrease in men with shorter working hours (among whom the percentage of those doing housework is high) and an increase in men with longer working hours (among whom the percentage of doing housework is low) have hindered an increase in the percentage of men who do housework.

Figure.7 Chronological change in the ratio of people in each work hour category among men aged 30–49 (weekdays).



An Increase in Men Who Perform Housework due to Change in Awareness

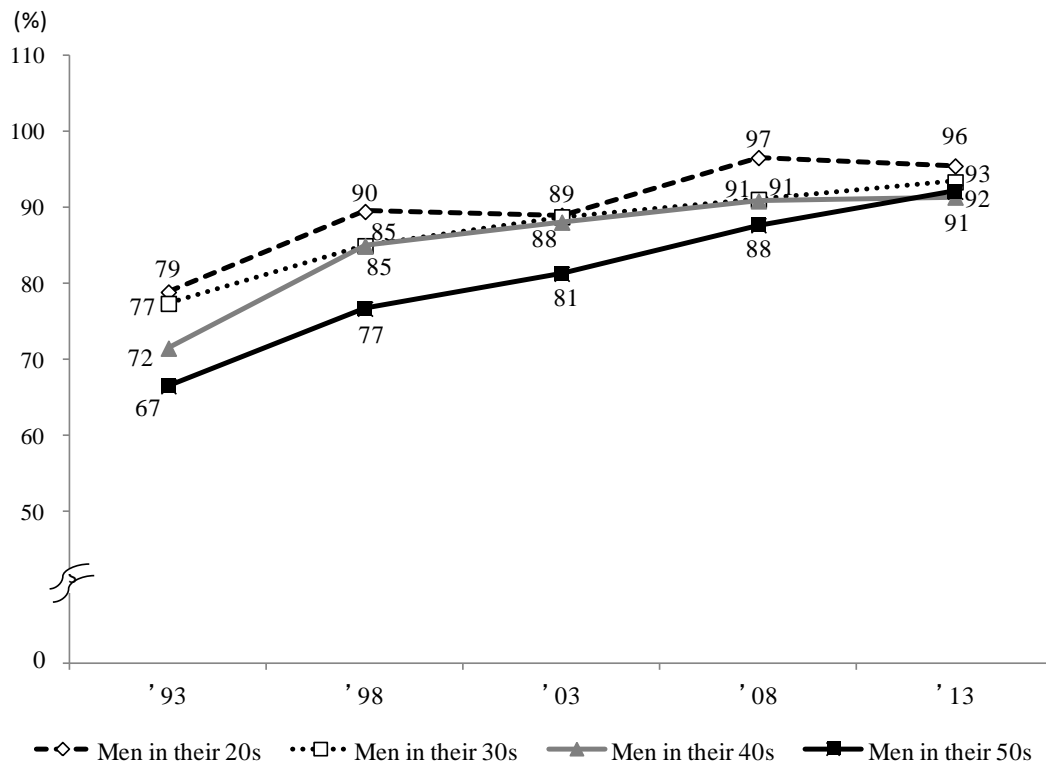
Nonetheless, as the overall percentage of men who do housework has shown a continued upward trend regardless of working hours, the influence of a change in awareness must also be taken into account. Figure 8 shows the percentage of men who answered “yes” to the statement “a married couple should support each other, so it is only natural for a husband to help in the kitchen or take care of child/ren” in the “Japanese Awareness” survey that NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute administers every 5 years.

In 1993, the percentage was approximately 60% for men in their 50s and 70% for men in their 40s, but by 1998, it had increased in every age group. The percentage has continued its steady rise ever since, reaching over 90% for those aged 40 or under by 2008 and for those in their 50s by 2013. This increase in men who think “it is only natural for a husband to help out in the kitchen or take care of child/ren” could be regarded as a reason for the growing percentage of men who do housework.

To summarize, the increased amount of time spent on housework is closely related to an increase in men who actually do housework. Such an increase can be explained by a change in attribute for those in their 50s because more men are living alone or with child/ren, although the same cannot be said for men in their 30s and 40s. For these two age groups, as the number of men who work long hours has increased over the past 20 years, this could probably be considered a suppressing factor for the percentage of men who actually performed housework. On the other hand, as the number of men who believe “it is only natural for a husband to help out in the kitchen or take care of child/ren” has increased in all age groups, this could be a possible reason for the overall increase in those doing housework among men aged 30 or

above, regardless of working hours.

Figure.8 Chronological change in the ratio of people who agreed with the statement "Married couples should support each other so that it is only natural for husbands to help out in the kitchen and to take care of children" by age
("Japanese Value Orientations", men aged 20–59)



Therefore, although the number of men who did housework continued to rise, the number of men working long hours also increased simultaneously; further, the percentage of those who did housework grew only to a limited extent. Moreover, this has restrained the overall increase of men doing housework.

3. Discussion

As demonstrated in Chapter 1, marriage tends to separate men and women into gender-specific roles, in which men are expected to work and women are expected to perform housework, a trend that intensifies after childbirth. This has been identified as the fundamental problem behind the widening gender gap in housework time today. The 2005 survey also concluded that “whether working or not, the stage of marriage denotes “the birth of a housewife = a person who takes care of all chores within the household,”¹⁰⁾ and this situation has not changed.

Chapter 2 (1) then further showed how an increase in unmarried and working people, as well as improved efficiency in housework, have all contributed to a continued decrease in the amount of time females spent on housework, even though that decrease is rather slow-paced

due to the increased time spent on child-rearing.

The number of women who are unmarried and do not do housework began its increase in 1980, and this trend then spread among women in their 30s through 2000,¹¹⁾ until 15 years later, when the percentage of unmarried people had also largely increased among women in their 40s and 50s, resulting in a lower percentage of people who performed housework across all middle-age groups. Additionally, the profusion of household electrical appliances and housekeeping services since the 1960s¹²⁾ has continued even today, with an ever evolving provision of greater efficiency in basic house chores. The decline in the time spent on cooking/cleaning/laundry over the past two decades can be explained by an increase in people who utilize items such as dishwashers, dryers,¹³⁾ and processed foods¹⁴⁾ to shorten the amount of time spent on housework. The phrase “the shortening of housework time” also signals an increase in the number of people who perceive value in housework efficiency.¹⁵⁾

Meanwhile, why has there been an increase in time spent on child rearing? Then, the study examined the percentage of women, according to age group, with small child/ren not yet in elementary school. Over the past 20 years, this percentage has decreased for women in their 30s (50% → 44%) but increased for women in their 40s (4% → 11%). This indicates that women are having child/ren in later stages of life. Furthermore, a total fertility rate of 2.07 is necessary for maintaining the current level of population, but at present, the total fertility rate is 1.46, which suggests a further decline in the number of children.

One negative effect of the declining birth rate on education is “over-protective and excessively interfering parents.”¹⁷⁾ Survey results revealed that child/ren are spending more and more time at kindergartens/daycare centers while the birthrate continues to decline and the number of women becoming pregnant in later stages of life increases; further, the number of infants/toddlers playing with mothers had increased while those playing with peers outside kindergartens/daycare centers had decreased by half.¹⁸⁾ Some analyses indicate a desire to “enjoy” childbirth and child-rearing as a form of leisure.¹⁹⁾ Therefore, women are devoting more time to each child as a result of fewer pregnancies and births at a later stage of life, and more people are making efforts to enjoy the time spent with their child/ren; these could all be considered factors for increased child-rearing time.

Chapter 2 (2) showed that the increase in men’s housework time was brought on by increased numbers who did housework. This is largely because more men in their 50s are currently either unmarried and living alone or married with child/ren. A change in awareness toward housework was another possible factor, in that men who consider “it is only natural for husband to help out in the kitchen or take care of child/ren” also increased. However, such an increase in the percentage of men who do housework was limited by a simultaneous increase in working long hours; this in turn prevented men from spending more time on housework.

In addition, as only data from weekdays were analyzed in this study, it is quite possible that men do perform more housework over weekends or holidays. In fact, on Saturdays and Sundays when fewer people are working, the percentage of people who do housework is higher than on weekdays (Saturdays: 53%; Sundays: 59%). Nonetheless, average time spent on housework by all men on Saturdays and Sundays, which stands at 1 hour, 34 minutes and 1 hour, 49 minutes, respectively, is still far shorter than time spent by women (Saturdays: 4 hours, 52 minutes; Sundays: 5 hours, 14 minutes).

Meanwhile, the percentage of men who take care of child/ren on weekdays increased significantly, from 14% to 21% between 2005 and 2010, for men in their 30s, and this figure has remained the same even today (21%). Although close to 50% of men are working 10 hours or more on weekdays, it seems that young fathers are more willing to take part in

child-rearing tasks.

Based on the analysis provided above, to reduce the gender gap in housework time further, it is essential for both men and women to discard conventional thinking toward gender-specific roles and to review the necessity of long working hours, especially for men in their 30s and 40s. These considerations can encourage men to spend more time on housework and lighten the burden of housework on women, allowing more opportunities for married women to advance in society.

(Yoko Watanabe)

Note:

- 1) Hiroko Murata, Hiroshi Aramaki (2015), “Does Satisfaction in Your Family Life Depend on How You Share the Household Work?—From the ISSP Survey on “Family and Changing Gender Roles” ~,” The NHK Monthly Report on Broadcast Research, 2015 December edition
- 2) Shigeki Matsuda (2006), “Standards of Housework and Childrearing Participation by Fathers and Change of Determining Factors in Recent Years,” Japanese Journal of Family Sociology 71: 45-54.
- 3) Chie Sekine, Yoko Watanabe, Masayuki Hayashida (2016) “Decrease in Sleeping Time Stopped, Time Spent for Necessary Activities Increased— From the 2015 NHK Japanese Time Use Survey,” The NHK Monthly Report on Broadcast Research, 2016 May edition.
- 4) For instance, if a subject answers “cooking/cleaning/washing” and “child-rearing” for the same time frame, then each are counted first as separate items and afterward collectively as “housework.”
- 5) For people aged 20–59, the gender gap in housework time is more than 3 hours, similar to the figure for adults aged 20 and over, with changes also observed in similar areas.
- 6) Here, “unmarried” refers to those “not married” or “married but divorced/spouse passed away,” while “married” includes those who are “married” or “married but living separately” (due to spouse’s relocation or spouse’s long-term absence).
- 7) Here, “without child/ren” refers to those who “do not have child/ren” or “have child/ren who are already out of school,” while “with child/ren” includes people “with child/ren not yet enrolled in elementary school” or “with child/ren going to school (elementary, junior high, senior high, or university).”
- 8) Definitions for each specific term are as provided below.

Percentage of people who (actually) do/perform activity: the ratio of people who have engaged in the specified activity for at least a certain amount of time (15 minutes or more) within a given time period (15 minutes/6 hours/24 hours).

* In this study, the (daily) “ratio of people who (actually) do/perform activity” is defined as the percentage of people who have engaged in a specified activity for at least a certain amount of time within a day.

Average time spent on housework by those who do/perform activity: The average amount of time spent on the specified activity by all those who have engaged in that activity for at least a certain amount of time (15 minutes or more).

The overall average time spent on activity: The average amount of time spent on the specified activity by all subjects, including those who did not engage in activity.

- 9) See 8)

- 10) Nakano (2006) “Part II 3 Women’s Living Time” NHK Broadcasting Cultural Research Institute (ed.), 2005 Japanese Time Use Survey, NHK Publishing
- 11) Mitsuya (2002) “Part II 2 Work, Study, Housework” NHK Broadcasting Cultural Research Institute (ed.), 2000 Japanese Time Use Survey, NHK Publishing
- 12) Ibid.
- 13) According to a “Consumer Confidence Survey” by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, the penetration rates of dishwashers (from 21.6% in 2005 to 34.4% in 2016) and dish dryers (from 19.4% in 1995 to 59.1% in 2016) among households have increased.
- 14) According to “Future Estimation of Food Consumption in the Face of Declining Population” by the Policy Research Institute, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries, the percentage of expenditure on processed foods has increased from 44.4% in 1995 to 50.5% in 2010.

Meanwhile, in terms of ready-made foods, the Ajinomoto Monitoring Consumer Survey by Ajinomoto Co., Inc. has shown that the amount of people who answered, “I agree/I do” to “Serving dishes or foods bought from shops as family meals seems to be a negligence, so I try to avoid it” has decreased from 61.8% in 1994 to 40.5% in 2015.
- 15) According to the “Survey on Awareness/Status of Kitchen or Cooking among Women” (interview survey, 2013) by Panasonic Corporation Eco Solutions Company, 85.4% of subjects answered “yes” to “I intend to reduce the amount of time spent on housework so that I could enjoy more private or family time.”
- 16) Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare (2015), yearly total of vital statistics monthly report (approximation).
- 17) Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (2000), “On Declining Birthrate and Education (Report to Central Council for Education).”
- 18) Mieko Sanada (2015) “Give Children the Chance to Interact with a Variety of People”—Changes in Child-rearing Environment over the Past 20 Years as found in Child Life Questionnaire No.5, “Benesse Opinion” (Benesse Educational Research and Development Institute).

<http://berd.benesse.jp/jisedai/opinion/index2.php?id=4775>
- 19) Yuki Senda (2011) “Japanese Modern Family: Where has it come from and where is it going?” (Keiso Shobo).