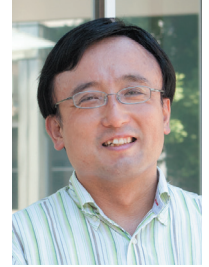


Women’s Employment Rate Nearing Highest Level Since End of War



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Percentage of Women Among Employed at 45.5% for 2024

Ten years have passed since the “Act on the Promotion of Women’s Active Engagement in Professional Life” to promote recruitment of women to corporations was passed in 2015. The correction of wage disparities between men and women and promotion of recruitment to managerial positions were stated, but according to newspaper reports, the government looks to be aiming to submit a bill to an ordinary Diet session in 2025 to revise this law.

The presence of women in the Japanese labor market has been growing year after year. According to the “Labor Force Survey” (Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications), the percentage of women among employed persons in 2024 was 45.5%. Compared to 37% during the mid-1970s, the percentage has risen significantly.

The expansion in female labor force participation is more apparent when looking at the employment rate, which divides employed persons by population aged 15 years old and over. *Chart 1* uses

long-term time series data from the Labor Force Survey to illustrate the long-term trend in women’s employment rate (Okinawa Prefecture was not included in the data prior to 1972). The highest female employment rate since the end of the war was 55.4% in 1955, but it had risen to 54.2% in 2024. In particular, it has been rising sharply since 2012 (46.2%).

Women’s Labor Force Participation Moved Employment Rate until Early 1990s

After the mid-1950s, women’s employment rate started to decline and dropped to 45% in 1975 and 1976, the lowest since the end of the war. It began rising again by the early 1990s, and in 1992 it peaked at 49.6%. It then began to fall again and bottomed out at 46.2% in 2012, before sharply rising again.

As mentioned, the employment rate is employed persons divided by the population aged 15 years old and over. It can also be shown by the labor participation rate (= labor force ÷ population aged 15 years old and over) multiplied by the percentage of employed

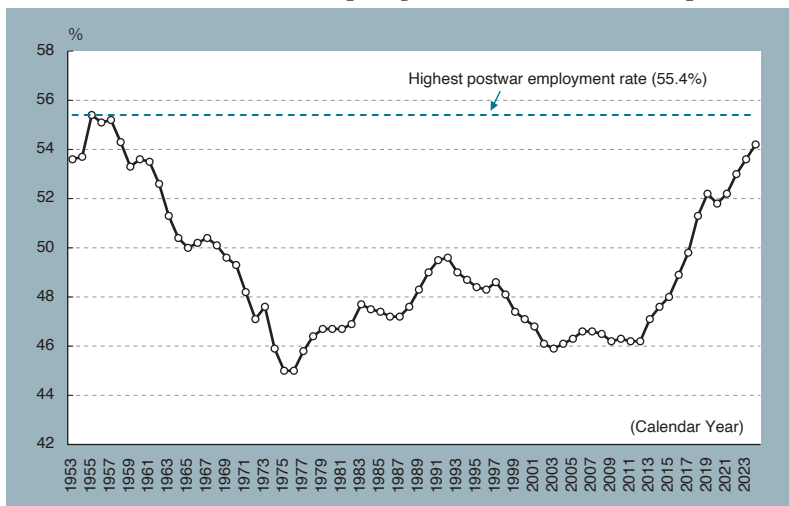
persons in the labor force, which is impacted by the economy. Further, since the percentage of employed persons in the labor force can also be shown as “1 – unemployment rate”, the relationship will be this: if the unemployment rate rises with an economic downturn it will fall, and alternatively if unemployment falls it will go up. Based on this, comparing women’s employment rate, labor participation rate, and unemployment rate for 1955, 1975, 1992, 2012 and 2024, it will look like below:

1955	55.4%	56.7%	2.3%
1975	45.0%	45.7%	1.7%
1992	49.6%	50.7%	2.2%
2012	46.2%	48.2%	4.0%
2024	54.2%	55.6%	2.4%

The fall in women’s employment rate from 1955 to 1975 can be explained almost entirely by the decline in the labor participation rate. The

CHART 1

Trend of female employment rate in Japan



Note: Excluding Okinawa Prefecture before 1972.

Source: Labor Force Survey, Statistics Bureau of Japan

unemployment rate fell and led to a rise in the employment rate. During this time, family workers as a percentage of female employed persons dropped from 53.1% to 25.7%. Family workers are family members of self-employed persons, and they are those affiliated with the businesses of the self-employed persons without pay. During the period of high growth, the number of self-employed decreased, and this was a period when single incomes were established, with men working as employees while women were housewives taking on household work.

In contrast, the rise from 1975 to 1992 can be explained by the rise in the labor participation rate. The rise in demand for female workers with the servitization of economic activities and enactment of the Equal Employment Opportunity Law in 1986 is also thought to have contributed to this. On the other hand, the fall in women's employment rate between 1992 and 2012 was largely impacted by the rise in the unemployment rate due to long-term stagnation of the economy. Moreover, it can be seen that both the rise in the labor participation rate and the fall in the unemployment rate have had a positive impact on the rise since 2012.

Striking Rise in Employment Rate of Middle-Aged to Elderly Women after 2012

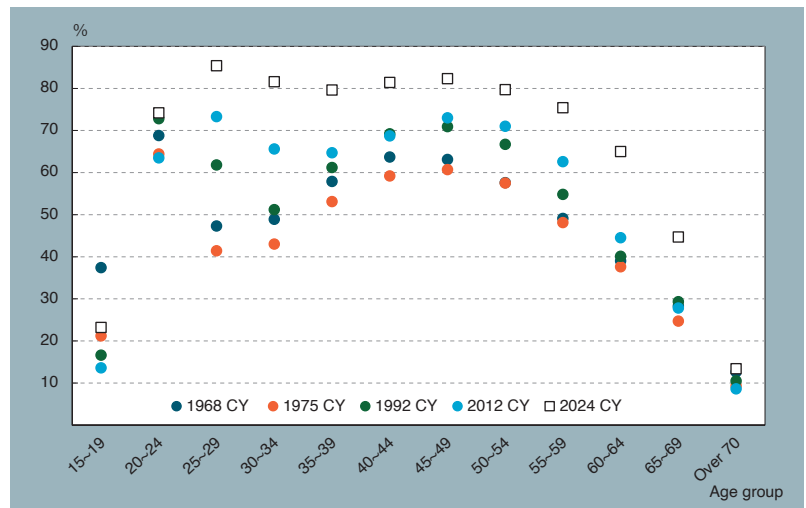
Chart 2 illustrates changes in women's employment rate by age groups in 1968, 1975, 1992, 2012 and 2024. To note, since this data is only available after 1968, the actual rate for 1968 is used instead of 1955. From 1968 (blue) to 1975 (red), the employment rate fell for almost all age groups. Later, employment rises sharply until 1992 (light green) for age groups 20 to 24 (64.4%→72.8%) and 25 to 29 (41.4%→61.8%). It fell for age group 15 to 19 (21.2%→16.6%), but it is thought that the rise in university enrollment rates also had an impact.

Later, by 2012 (purple) age groups 25 to 29 (61.8%→73.3%) and 30 to 34 (51.2%→65.6%) saw sharp rises in the employment rate but age group 20 to 24 (72.8%→63.5%) saw a decline. During this time, men's employment rate for age group 20 to 24 declined (71.7%→61.5%) and it can be said that the impact of economic stagnation led to difficulty in finding jobs for new university graduates.

From 2012 to 2024 (white), women's employment rate for all age groups rose. The rise in the employment rate for the middle-aged to elderly is striking, and the width of increase for those in their 60s is large, even when compared to the past.

CHART 2

Trend of female employment rate by age group



Source: tbc

Employment Expansion Around Medical, Health Care & Welfare?

Female employed persons rose by 4.24 million people from 2012 to 2024 when the employment rate rose sharply. Looking by industry, the increase in medical, health care and welfare was 6.86 million people, by far the greatest. The percentage of women employed in medical, health care and welfare is 22.3%, and higher compared to men at 6.4%. It can be speculated that employment at care-giving facilities is expanding.

Such bias by industry is also thought to be linked to the high percentage of female part-time staff and employees among employed persons excluding executive officers. It was 22.5% for men in 2024 against 52.1% for women. While it is on a declining trend, it is twice the percentage of men. This may be linked to the wage disparity between men and women, and it should be closely watched whether this disparity will be resolved from now on.

Note: This article was written based on information available as of Jan. 31, 2025.

Article translated from the original Japanese by Mio Uchida **JS**

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Calendar year, Quarter and Month	Real GDP		Nominal GDP		IIP rate of increase over previous year/term (month) (%)	CPI (All terms, less fresh food) rate of increase over previous year/the same term (month) of the previous year (%)
	Amount (trillion yen)	Rate of increase over previous year/term (%)	Amount (trillion yen)	Rate of increase over previous year/term (%)		
2017	551.2	1.7	553.1	1.6	3.1	0.5
2018	554.8	0.6	556.6	0.6	0.6	0.9
2019	552.5	-0.4	557.9	0.2	-2.6	0.6
2020	529.5	-4.2	539.6	-3.3	-10.4	-0.2
2021	543.8	2.7	553.1	2.5	5.4	-0.2
2022	548.9	0.9	560.5	1.3	-0.1	2.3
2023	557.0	1.5	591.9	5.6	-1.3	3.1
2024	557.4	0.1	609.3	2.9	-2.3	2.5
2024/1st Qtr.	552.3	-0.5	595.4	-0.1	-5.2	2.5
2nd Qtr.	556.4	0.7	608.2	2.1	2.7	2.5
3rd Qtr.	558.7	0.4	612.8	0.7	-0.3	2.7
4th Qtr.	562.5	0.7	620.5	1.3	1.1	2.6
2024/May	—	—	—	—	3.6	2.5
June	—	—	—	—	-4.2	2.6
July	—	—	—	—	3.1	2.7
Aug.	—	—	—	—	-3.3	2.8
Sep.	—	—	—	—	1.6	2.4
Oct.	—	—	—	—	2.8	2.3
Nov.	—	—	—	—	-2.2	2.7
Dec.	—	—	—	—	-0.2	3.0
Sources	"SNA (National Accounts of Japan)", Cabinet Office				"Indices of Industrial Production", Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry	"Consumer Price Index", Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications

Calendar year, Quarter and Month	Foreign Trade Statistics									
	Exports amount (trillion yen)	Exports rate of increase over previous year/ the same term (month) of the previous year (%)	Imports amount (trillion yen)	Imports rate of increase over previous year/ the same term (month) of the previous year (%)	Exports amount to US (trillion yen)	Exports to US rate of increase over previous year/ the same term (month) of the previous year (%)	Imports amount from US (trillion yen)	Imports from US rate of increase over previous year/ the same term (month) of the previous year (%)	Exports amount to EU (trillion yen)	Exports to EU rate of increase over previous year/ the same term (month) of the previous year (%)
2017	78.3	11.8	75.4	14.1	15.1	6.9	8.1	10.5	7.1	9.5
2018	81.5	4.1	82.7	9.7	15.5	2.4	9.0	11.4	7.7	7.8
2019	76.9	-5.6	78.6	-5.0	15.3	-1.4	8.6	-4.2	7.4	-3.0
2020	68.4	-11.1	68.0	-13.5	12.6	-17.3	7.5	-13.7	6.3	-15.1
2021	83.1	21.5	84.9	24.8	14.8	17.6	8.9	19.6	7.7	21.4
2022	98.2	18.2	118.5	39.6	18.3	23.1	11.8	31.9	9.4	22.0
2023	100.9	2.7	110.4	-6.8	20.3	11.0	11.6	-1.7	10.4	10.9
2024	107.1	6.2	112.4	1.8	21.3	5.1	12.7	9.5	10.0	-3.9
2024/1st Qtr.	25.1	8.8	26.8	-5.1	5.0	13.8	3.1	6.2	2.5	10.0
2nd Qtr.	26.5	8.8	27.9	6.9	5.4	14.0	3.4	24.5	2.4	-8.5
3rd Qtr.	27.1	4.5	28.7	6.8	5.4	1.4	3.1	8.6	2.5	-7.7
4th Qtr.	28.5	3.2	28.9	-0.5	5.5	-5.3	3.0	0.1	2.5	-7.6
2024/May	8.3	13.5	9.5	9.4	1.7	23.9	1.2	29.8	0.7	-10.1
June	9.2	5.4	9.0	3.3	1.9	11.0	1.1	14.8	0.8	-13.4
July	9.6	10.2	10.2	16.5	1.9	7.3	1.2	21.6	0.9	-5.3
Aug.	8.4	5.5	9.1	2.2	1.6	-0.7	1.0	-2.0	0.7	-9.1
Sep.	9.0	-1.7	9.3	1.9	1.9	-2.4	1.0	6.4	0.8	-9.0
Oct.	9.4	3.1	9.9	0.5	1.8	-6.2	1.0	-0.6	0.8	-11.3
Nov.	9.2	3.8	9.3	-3.8	1.7	-8.0	1.0	-0.6	0.8	-12.5
Dec.	9.9	2.8	9.8	1.7	2.0	-2.1	1.0	1.4	1.0	0.5
Sources	"Trade Statistics of Japan", Ministry of Finance									

Calendar year, Quarter and Month	Cash salary amount rate of increase over previous year/the same term (month) of the previous year (%)	Active job openings-to-applicants ratio (time(s))	Unemployment rate (%)	M2 rate of increase over previous year/ the same term (month) of the previous year (%)	Balance of payments		Yen/\$ rate (averaged during the term)
					Trade balance (trillion yen)	Current balance (trillion yen)	
2017	0.4	1.50	2.8	4.0	4.9	22.8	112.2
2018	1.4	1.61	2.4	2.9	1.1	19.5	110.4
2019	-0.4	1.60	2.4	2.4	0.2	19.3	109.0
2020	-1.2	1.18	2.8	6.5	2.8	16.0	106.8
2021	0.3	1.13	2.8	6.4	1.8	21.5	109.8
2022	2.0	1.28	2.6	3.3	-15.5	11.4	131.4
2023	1.2	1.31	2.6	2.5	-6.5	22.6	140.5
2024	2.9	1.25	2.5	1.7	-3.9	29.3	151.5
2024/1st Qtr.	1.3	1.27	2.6	2.5	-1.4	6.6	148.6
2nd Qtr.	3.0	1.25	2.6	1.8	-1.2	6.9	155.9
3rd Qtr.	2.9	1.24	2.5	1.3	-1.3	8.9	149.2
4th Qtr.	3.9	1.25	2.4	1.2	0.0	6.9	152.4
2024/May	2.0	1.24	2.6	1.8	-1.1	3.0	156.2
June	4.5	1.23	2.5	1.5	0.5	1.7	157.9
July	3.4	1.24	2.7	1.5	-0.5	3.3	157.9
Aug.	2.8	1.23	2.5	1.3	-0.4	4.0	146.3
Sep.	2.5	1.24	2.4	1.2	-0.4	1.6	143.3
Oct.	2.2	1.25	2.5	1.2	-0.2	2.5	149.6
Nov.	3.9	1.25	2.5	1.2	0.1	3.4	153.8
Dec.	4.8	1.25	2.4	1.3	0.1	1.1	153.7
Sources	"Monthly Labour Survey", Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare	"Employment Referrals for General Workers", Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare	"Labour Force Survey", Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications	"Money Stock", Bank of Japan	"Balance of Payments", Ministry of Finance		Bank of Japan

Calendar year, Quarter and Month	Foreign Trade Statistics									
	Imports amount from EU (trillion yen)	Imports from EU rate of increase over previous year/ the same term (month) of the previous year (%)	Exports amount to Asia (excluding China) (trillion yen)	Exports to Asia (excluding China) rate of increase over previous year/ the same term (month) of the previous year (%)	Imports amount from Asia (excluding China) (trillion yen)	Imports from Asia (excluding China) rate of increase over previous year/ the same term (month) of the previous year (%)	Exports amount to China (trillion yen)	Exports to China rate of increase over previous year/ the same term (month) of the previous year (%)	Imports amount from China (trillion yen)	Imports from China rate of increase over previous year/ the same term (month) of the previous year (%)
2017	8.0	7.0	28.0	13.3	18.6	14.8	14.9	20.5	18.5	8.5
2018	8.8	10.6	28.8	2.9	20.0	7.8	15.9	6.8	19.2	4.0
2019	8.8	0.3	26.6	-7.6	19.0	-5.3	14.7	-7.6	18.5	-3.9
2020	7.8	-12.1	24.1	-9.4	17.2	-9.4	15.1	2.7	17.5	-5.1
2021	9.5	21.8	30.2	25.0	20.7	20.6	18.0	19.2	20.4	16.4
2022	11.4	21.1	36.4	20.6	28.6	37.8	19.0	5.7	24.8	21.9
2023	11.4	-0.2	34.7	-4.6	27.6	-3.4	17.8	-6.5	24.4	-1.7
2024	11.9	3.8	38.0	9.4	28.5	3.5	18.9	6.2	25.3	3.6
2024/1st Qtr.	2.6	0.1	8.8	4.2	6.8	-4.1	4.3	13.3	5.8	-3.6
2nd Qtr.	3.0	2.8	9.2	9.6	6.9	6.9	4.8	11.3	6.2	7.6
3rd Qtr.	3.2	10.1	9.8	12.5	7.5	10.1	4.7	1.5	6.3	5.2
4th Qtr.	3.1	1.9	10.2	11.1	7.3	1.6	5.1	0.7	6.9	5.2
2024/May	1.0	4.6	2.9	11.4	2.3	8.0	1.6	17.8	2.1	12.3
June	1.0	3.7	3.2	7.9	2.3	3.0	1.6	7.2	2.0	0.0
July	1.1	10.7	3.4	19.4	2.7	18.2	1.7	7.3	2.3	20.9
Aug.	1.1	17.2	3.2	14.7	2.3	3.3	1.5	5.2	1.9	-2.3
Sep.	1.0	2.5	3.2	4.2	2.5	9.0	1.5	-7.3	2.2	-1.8
Oct.	1.1	4.0	3.4	11.0	2.6	5.7	1.7	1.4	2.5	5.7
Nov.	1.0	-5.4	3.3	11.5	2.3	-4.5	1.7	4.1	2.3	4.2
Dec.	1.0	7.6	3.5	10.8	2.5	3.7	1.7	-3.1	2.1	5.7
Sources	"Trade Statistics of Japan", Ministry of Finance									