

Worst of Times

According to economic indexes, Japan is one of the world's richest countries. Yet many Japanese have no sense of living an affluent life.

One reason is high prices for just about everything, not least the exorbitant price of land and housing in big cities. But a lack of sufficient leeway in their daily life is also responsible. (See this issue's Topics column). People do not feel affluent no matter how much money they have if they

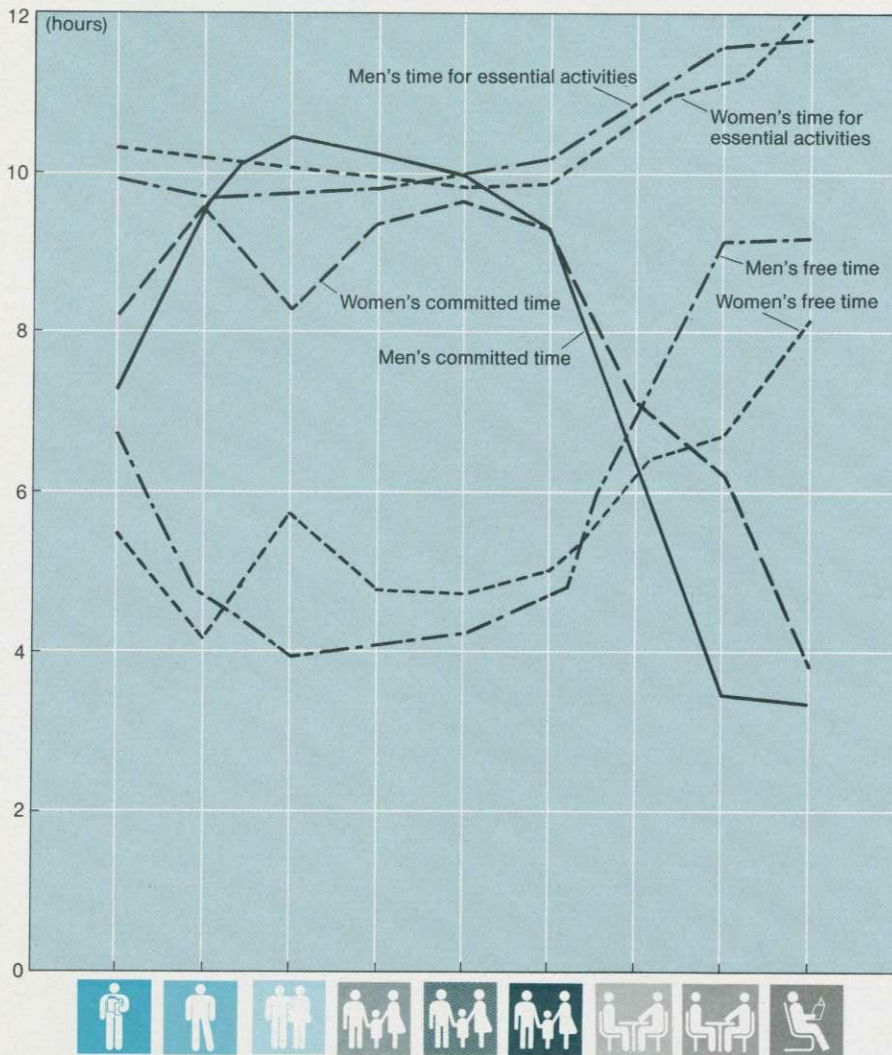
do not have enough time to enjoy life.

The 1989 Annual Report on the National Life, compiled by the Economic Planning Agency (EPA), attempts to analyze the leeway in the life of the Japanese people in nonmaterialistic terms. It concludes that men in their prime of life are noticeably lacking in free time. In fact, most Japanese men do not get enough free time until they reach retirement age at 60. By then they are so conditioned to

working that they are at a loss how to use their new freedom. Many say they would rather just keep on working.

The EPA annual report suggests that unless the Japanese people get more time for themselves, they will never be able to live a rich life or deal with the increase in the proportion of elderly people in Japanese society.

How Different Age Groups Spend Their Time on Weekdays



- Students at junior college, college, university or graduate school
- Single workers (20-24)
- Households of husband and wife (25-29) without children
- Households of husband and wife (30-39) with children
- Households of husband and wife (40-49) with children
- Households of husband and wife (50-59) with children
- Households of husband and wife (60-64)
- Households of husband (over 65) and wife (over 60)
- Households of single persons over 70

Notes: 1. Compiled from "A Basic Survey on Social Life," 1986, Management and Coordination Agency
 2. Time for essential activities means time for sleeping, eating and other essential activities.
 Committed time means time for employment, housework, commuting and schooling.
 Free time means time for watching TV, studying, relaxing at home, socializing or engaging in sports and other recreational activities.