

Influence of husbands' homecoming time on the falling birthrate

(From the study of the falling birthrate by Economic and Social Research Institute, Cabinet Office)

Influence of husbands' homecoming time on the falling birthrate
(From the study of the falling birthrate by Economic and Social Research Institute, Cabinet Office)

The Economic and Social Research Institute, Cabinet Office has been studying and surveying the causes and background of the falling birthrate, examples of foreign countries' measures, and ideal measures, in order to utilize for policy planning.

In 2013, to analyze the work and living environment that have influence on married couples' motivation to have childbirth, it surveyed 25 to 39 year-old married women and summarized the results of analysis¹.

http://www.esri.go.jp/jparchive/e_dis/e_dis311/e_dis311.html

From the above survey, we describe here irritations of women with preschool children, which influence their motivation to have childbirth, and also the influence of husbands' late homecoming exerting on the family life.

■ Influence of burdens ("irritations") that exert on the motivation to have childbirth

Although most of the women who are raising a preschool child answer that they enjoy childrearing most of the time, the rate of irritations is higher than those with no child. Such irritations are not so serious enough that they feel "troublesome to do anything" or "depression and gloom," but they appear to be

under chronic stress. The women who feel irritations during childrearing are as follows:

- Those who work as a fixed-term employee or jobless rather than regular employees
- Those who work fulltime while engaging alone in housework and childrearing
- Those who have a 3-year old child
- Those who devote themselves to their child education
- Those who feel that their husbands are tense and under strain, such as husbands' late homecoming (refer to the bottom)

The survey also revealed that women's irritations during childrearing can significantly reduce the pleasure of childrearing, affecting the motivation to have an additional childbirth.

■ Influence of husband's late home-coming on family life

According to the above study, one of the causes of growing irritations is that "husbands are tense and under strain." When husband's home-coming time passes 10 p.m., the percentage that a wife feels that her husband is tense and under strain rapidly increases (see Fig. 9)

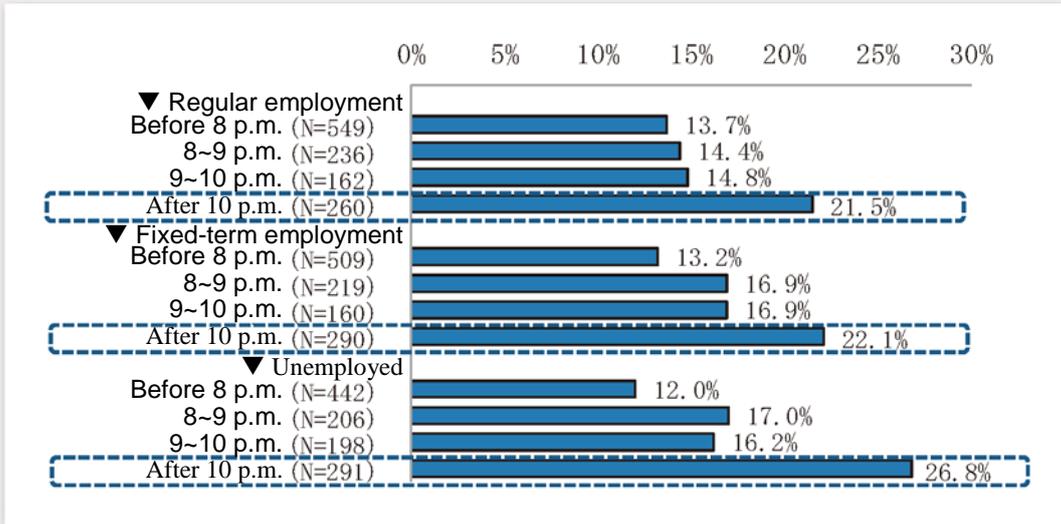
It is pointed out that if husband's home-coming time passes 9 p.m., his participation in childrearing drastically decreases.²

That the husband's home-coming time passes 9 p.m. or 10 p.m. is more likely to spoil the quality of family life for childrearing, therefore this problem, including long-working hours, should be considered in the whole society

1. Discussion Paper Series No.311 "Analysis of married women's living environment, work, childbirth and childrearing" --by using individual data of "Falling birthrate and attitude survey of married couples' working and living environment"--
2. Shigeki Matsuda (2002) "Transformation of father's participation in childrearing" edited by National Institute of Population and Social Security Research: "Childrearing support in the falling birth rate society", University of Tokyo Press, pp. 313-330

Fig. 9

**Percentage of cases that “husband is tense and under strain”
—By husbands’ home-coming time and form of women’s
employment— (women with one child)**



Source: The Economic and Social Research Institute, Cabinet Office “Discussion Paper Series No.311” “Analysis of married women’s living environment, work, childbirth and childrearing” —by using individual data “Falling birthrate and attitude survey of married couples’ working and living environment”
Tomohiro Takami “Women’s burdensome feeling during childrearing and husbands’ participation--‘in case of women with a single child’--”p.119

Extension and expansion of “The Act on Advancement of Measures to Support Raising Next-Generation Children”

To improve an environment where babies who will bear the next generation can be born healthy and developed soundly, “The Act on Advancement of Measures to Support Raising Next-Generation Children” (hereinafter referred to as “Act on Next Generation”) has been enforced from April 1, 2005 and clarifies the responsibilities of local governments, companies and people.

The Act stipulates that companies shall formulate “General employer action plans” and report to the Prefectural Labor Bureau (mandatory for companies with more than 101 employees and duty to make efforts for those with fewer than 100).

Also, to urge companies’ voluntary efforts to support the development of the next generation, the Minister of Health, Labor and Welfare gives a Kurumin certificate to the companies that achieved targets of their action plans upon application. As of March 2015, the number of certified Kurumin companies is 2,138.

The Act on Next Generation was enacted as a fixed-term act valid until the end of 2014. However, to further improve the environment where babies can be born healthy and develop

soundly, the Act was revised in 2014 to extend by 10 years, and a special Platinum Kurumin certification system was newly established.

The Platinum Kurumin certification is given (from among the certified Kurumin companies) to those that are making a higher level of efforts and satisfy certain criteria. Such companies can receive a special certification mark (nicknamed “Platinum Kurumin”) and attach it on their products. However, they have to make public “the implementation status of the support for next generation,” instead of being exempted from obligations of action plan certification and notification.

Under the revised Act on Next Generation, Kurumin marks have been renewed. Kurumin and Platinum Kurumin marks can be attached to advertisements, products, name cards, job offer slips, etc. By doing so, the certified companies can appeal that they are supporting childrearing, which will serve to boost a corporate image, recruit excellent employees, and raise employees’ retention. For information of the certified companies, click <http://www.positive-ryouritsu.jp/> for the site of “comprehensive support for women’s success and work-life balance.”



[Kurumin marks]



[Platinum Kurumin marks]

Examples of efforts made by a company

● Support to enable employees to balance work and child-rearing in light of the employees' needs

A company in Matsue City, Shimane Prefecture, which was established before World War II and has survived since then and now engages in painting and waterproofing as its primary businesses (number of employees: 27 (including 7 women)), is making efforts to provide supports that will enable young employees to balance work and child-rearing, so that its employees, including younger employees, can flexibly work according to their individual needs. Such efforts started after a statement made by a veteran employee who was near retirement age said that the company could not survive unless it developed young carpenters. This is a traditional company, but if it fails to employ young employees while veteran employees retire, the technologies it has accumulated may be lost. Being aware of such concerns, the company has proceeded with the development of a work environment in which each employee can flexibly work according to his/her needs; this way, individual employees can exercise their capabilities from the viewpoint of the longer employment and development of young employees who can inherit and utilize the skills and experiences of veteran carpenters.

This company has a system that allows its employees to take five days of paid leave per year (in 30 minute increments) for each child who has yet to graduate from upper-secondary school as a provision of time off to care for sick or injured childcare. This system was established in light of the actual living conditions of employees and their opinions, which is very beneficial for them. For example, if an employees' child suddenly had a fever, the employee can take the minimum amount of leave necessary to provide the child medical care at a hospitals or in the care of a



nursery, and then return to work. The company has also established a system of adjusting starting and finishing times and a creating a shorter work week for those who are child-rearing, and allows its employees to take annual paid leave in one-hour increments. Finally, the company provides a benefit package, including perks such as paying a 100,000 yen birth allowance, and subsidizing one third of parents' child-care fees.

The company employs creative ideas for developing an environment in which employees need not hesitate to use their leave. The company also has employees share information about the dates on which they desire to take leave, which makes it easier to establish mutual back-ups. Furthermore, the company tries to assign tasks to teams rather than to individuals so that tasks can be done even if an employee happens to take leave before the task is finished.

This company succeeded in meeting the certification criteria stipulated in the Act on the Advancement of Measures to Support Raising Next-Generation Children, and was the first company ever in Shimane Prefecture to earn the "Kurumin" certification mark. The positive outcomes of this system has enabled employees to balance work and child-rearing, significantly reducing the number of resignations and achieving the longer employment and development of young employees. For example, the number of the company's 18 to 39 year-old employees increased from six to thirteen in 2015. Furthermore, the number of employees who were rearing children increased from zero, in 2002, to thirteen in FY 2015. Finally, in FY 2013, this system had created additional positive outcomes, such as the assignment of a female site supervisor in her 20's, and an increase in the number of orders received.



C O L U M N

Efforts utilizing a subsidy for the strengthening of regional countermeasures to the falling birthrate

For the purpose of providing seamless support for marriage, pregnancy, childbirth, and child-rearing and in order to respond to Japan's fertility crisis, the "Grant for Strengthening Countermeasures to the Falling Birth Rate" was established using the FY 2013 supplementary budget to support local governments that conduct pioneering efforts according to community circumstances. Using the Grant, local governments were to formulate plans involving the following four goals and conduct projects.

- 1) Build a mechanism to provide seamless support for marriage, pregnancy, childbirth, and child-rearing
- 2) Provide information on marriage
- 3) Provide information relating to pregnancy and childbirth
- 4) Develop environments toward forming communities where there is no worry about marriage, pregnancy, childbirth, or child-

rearing

All prefectures applied for the Grant, which indicated the increased momentum of regional countermeasures to the falling birthrate according to community circumstances.

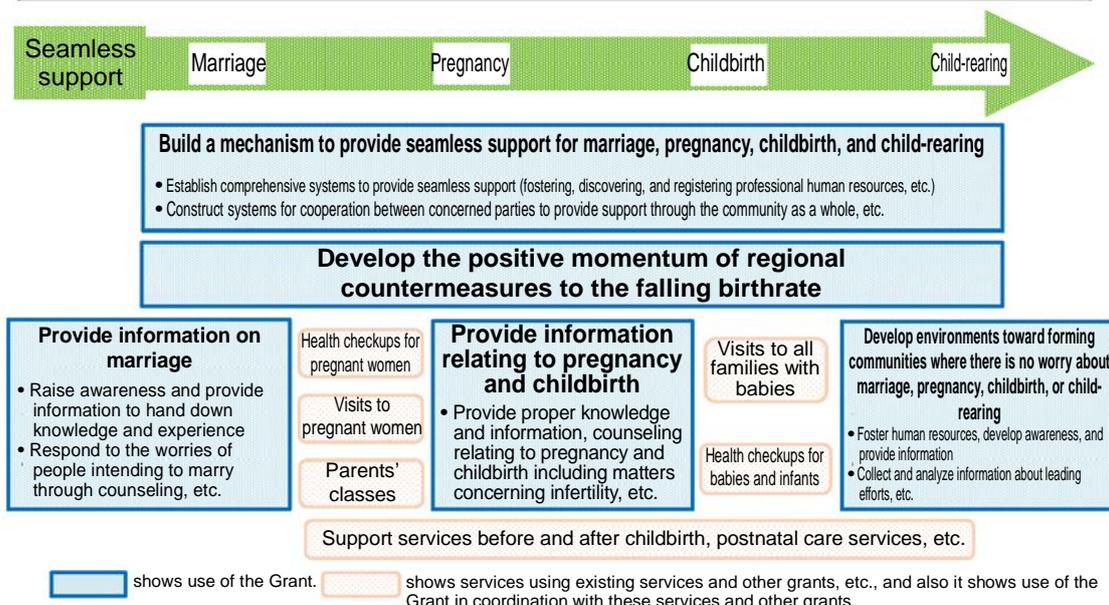
In addition, budgetary measures for the Grant were taken also in the FY 2014 supplementary budget. The Grant shall continue to support local governments that conduct pioneering efforts according to community circumstances, and the following goal was added to the plans in addition to the above four goals:

- 5) Develop the positive momentum of regional countermeasures to the falling birthrate.

This column introduces services utilizing funds from the Grant appropriated in the FY 2013 supplementary budget.

The grant for strengthening countermeasures to the falling birthrate (3.01 billion yen)

The Grant supports local governments that conduct pioneering efforts according to community circumstances to provide "seamless support" for marriage, pregnancy, childbirth, and child-rearing to respond to Japan's fertility crisis.



The grant for strengthening countermeasures to the falling birthrate (FY 2014 supplementary budget)

Training projects and preparation of curricula to foster human resources through cooperation with universities (Hyogo Prefecture)

They established and conducted systematic training programs for support covering marriage through child-rearing for supporters in bases of support for child-rearing because issues for communities and individuals vary and differ, and comprehensive guidance covering marriage through child-rearing is necessary.

They have tried to develop human resources for support and also to improve their capabilities by establishing training programs and conducting highly professional training for leaders and staff for support for child-rearing, with the full support of the Hyogo Universities' Group for Child and Family Empowerment (HUG CaFé), which consisted of scholars at universities in Hyogo Prefecture who have profound knowledge on support for child-rearing.

In such training, the human resources learn ways to realize "seamless support" for marriage, pregnancy, childbirth, and child-rearing, by, for example, learning about the roles of supporters for child-rearing, the purposes and ways of understanding the characteristics and needs of the target persons and finding out about available resources, the purposes and ways of analyzing consultations, and ways of providing individual support.

And the formulated training programs are leveraged to develop human resources for support more broadly by publicizing them through the prefecture's website and other media to allow municipalities to use them freely for their training.

In order to implement highly professional training and develop versatile programs, the project was conducted in cooperation with approved specified nonprofit corporations which have effective training potential including HUG CaFé.

In the future, the project is expected to foster human resources broadly in each community through the released training programs, to hand down experience and knowledge mainly to persons who have completed the training, and to expand according to the actual situations of communities.



A scene during training

Marriage hunting support project, Egao (smiles filled with love in Ehime) (Ehime Prefecture)

The mean age of the users of the Ehime Marriage Support Center, which was established in November 2010, and the people who reported their marriages is around 35 years old, notably showing an increase in the number of people who marry later in life. And there are many people who can't successfully find a mate, can't decide to start marriage hunting, or have no confidence in themselves. Therefore, it is necessary to improve the skills and change the attitudes of each single person before he or she participates in events to meet a potential mate.

Meanwhile, although the Center has various kinds of data which it has acquired over six years such as records of cases of people who have wed and records on good advice, it couldn't share them with the users and couldn't fully use them for activities geared toward marriage.

In response to such situations, the Center has held basic and advanced lectures for awareness such as keynote lectures by experts, the implementation of workshops to improve communication skills, and the introduction of cases of good advice to improve skills for successful marriage hunting and cases in which people have wed, for singles and marriage hunting supporters in communities. In addition, it has analyzed big data and related data which have been accumulated in the marriage support system at the Ehime Marriage Support Center, compiled example cases for attaining marriage and good advice for improving skills for marriage hunting, and released information through its website and brochures. Furthermore, it has found and fostered organizations supporting marriage hunting in order to support seamless marriage hunting in communities.

For the actual implementation of such measures, the Center was able to objectively analyze data and build an accurate database of supporting information for marriage support by getting support from local universities and national research institutions.

Also in the future, the Center will proceed with activities together with all people in the prefecture and private organizations, keeping the Ehime Marriage Support Center as its core.



A keynote lecture

The town maternity dissemination and enlightenment project (Uozu City, Toyama Prefecture)

In Uozu City, awareness of the Maternity Mark was low, and many people found out about it for the first time when they received a Maternal and Child Health Handbook.

Therefore, the city formed a survey team including mothers-and-children-health promoters and mothers who were raising children, had the team suggest effective and desirable places for better public relations on the Mark at public facilities and sightseeing facilities frequently used by many parents and children, and enlightened people about the Mark, for example, by posting the Mark and notes to introduce the Mark.

Also, the survey team patrolled the city, surveyed the sites and details of facilities that were friendly to pregnant women and child-rearing, for example, those with diaper changing tables and toilets for children installed in places such as shopping centers, parks, children's centers, and sightseeing facilities, and made and distributed a booklet titled City Map for Children and Pregnant Women, which clearly introduced the results of the survey.

They also tried to have not only pregnant women and mothers but also fathers proactively use the City Map for Children and Pregnant Women to promote their involvement in caring for their children. They also distributed the City Map to people concerned with support for child-rearing, facilities in the city, and companies to deepen their understanding and interest about pregnancy and childbirth.



City Map for Children and Pregnant Women

Project for promotion of *Ikumen* (men who are proactive and supportive in raising their children) Company Alliance activities, which promotes the involvement of men in child-rearing (Hiroshima Prefecture)

Although the ratio of men taking child-care leave in the prefecture was higher than the national average, the gap with that of women was still large. Therefore, it was necessary to promote the involvement of men in child-rearing and to reduce women's burdens in the household and child-rearing in order to develop an environment that would enable women to give birth to and rear more babies without anxiety while balancing work and child-rearing.

Meanwhile, it was found that there were many companies with negative attitudes toward men taking child-care leave in preparatory research conducted through visits to companies, which Hiroshima Prefecture conducted for companies in the prefecture in FY 2013. They answered that men were busy with their duties, as one of the reasons why the ratio of men taking child-care leave had not risen.

It is essential for company owners to understand that such change is necessary, in addition to awareness-raising by men themselves, in order to involve men in child-rearing. Therefore, it is necessary to enlighten people to incorporate the involvement of men in child-rearing into the cultures and systems of each company under the owners' leadership.

Responding to these issues, the *Ikumen* Company Alliance (an alliance of company owners who support *Ikumen*), which was established in March 2014, has developed activities and initiated actions to aim for innovations in ways of working at workplaces, proactively led by company owners. And they have promoted awareness-raising by men and changes in their behavior also throughout all of society and implemented efforts to create a society in which men can also proactively participate in child-rearing by asking for help with their efforts from other companies' owners and establishing a wider network.

Also in the future, they will enhance the activities of the *Ikumen* Company Alliance and proceed with efforts to have not only company owners but also company managers become *ikubosses* (bosses who are proactive and supportive in raising children). And also they will promote the involvement of men in households and child-rearing and proceed with the development of an environment enabling both men and women to balance work and child-rearing.



Ikumen Company Alliance's site

Examples of efforts for marriage support projects made by local governments

As countermeasures against the tendency of Japanese youth to marry later in life or not at all, which is a major factor in the nation's declining birthrate, and also as a way to support measures for making Japanese youth more independent, the local government of Hyogo Prefecture decided that society needs to support matchmaking and marriage. Thus, in FY 1999, they launched an association called "*Konotori no kai*," which provides opportunities for matchmaking between men living in rural areas and women living in urban areas within the prefecture. Also, in 2006, the local government established the "Hyogo *Deai* Support Center (matchmaking support center)" as the prefectural center for providing opportunities for matchmaking and marriage support services, and from that time various projects have been organized in response to the various needs of people living in the prefecture. This section will introduce their various efforts.

Hyogo Matchmaking Project (project for individually introducing potential marriage partners) (since February 2011)

This is a project which provides single men and women with opportunities to meet potential marriage partners in a one-on-one situation. By registering as a member (submitting personal details, creating a profile and paying a registration fee of 5,000 yen per year), they will be able to search the profile of potential marriage partners and meet them at local *Deai* Support Centers that are located at ten sites in different areas of Hyogo Prefecture.

The project has proceeded smoothly since its inception, and 403 couples had gotten married as a result of the project as of the end of 2014.

"*Deai* Support" event project

This is a project that provides single men and women with opportunities to meet potential marriage partners through events in which they can freely participate. By registering as a member (for free), they will be able to participate in events planned by supporting organizations including hotels, restaurants and travel agencies from within the prefecture. Local *Deai* Support Centers offer planning information on a wide variety of events that can help the participants easily communicate with each other, such events

include parties, hiking, cooking lessons, and attending sporting events. Meanwhile, matchmaking events for men living in rural areas and women living in urban areas still continue to be held.

Activities by "*Konotori* ambassadors"

"*Konotori* ambassadors" (matchmaking support volunteers) are appointed to support single men and women in each area and to help them meet potential marriage partners. These ambassadors also widely conduct awareness-raising activities on the Center's projects throughout the prefecture.

Approximately 600 ambassadors, all of whom have received entrustment from the prefectural governor, are currently working on such activities as volunteers in each area of the prefecture.

Implementation of the Step-up Lecture for Marriage Hunting, the Life Planning Seminar for University Students, and other programs

Indirect support is also provided by holding a "Step-up Lecture for Marriage Hunting," with the aim of improving communication skills, social manners, and other skills necessary for marriage, and a "Life Planning Seminar for University Students," for developing students' own views about marriage and family so as to design their own life plan at an early stage.

As the results of these efforts, 171 couples got married in 2014, and the total number of marriages exceeded 1,000 couples as of April 2015.

In addition, a variety of other projects will be developed so as to respond to various needs in other areas of Japan. For example, the Tokyo branch office of the *Deai* Support Center will be opened in FY 2015.



Raising awareness about medically and scientifically accurate knowledge concerning fertility treatment, pregnancy and childbirth

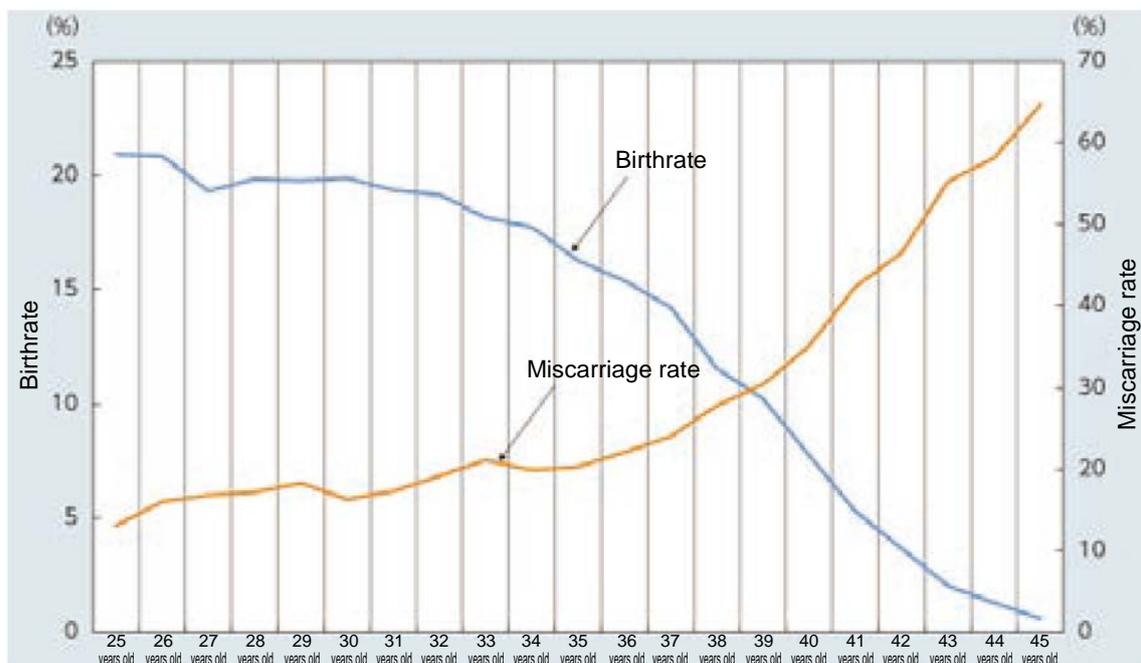
Research shows that both men and women have an optimal age at which they are medically suitable for pregnancy and childbearing. For example, after their mid-30s, women have higher risks of developing various complications associated with pregnancy, such as pregnancy-induced hypertension and placenta previa, in addition to miscarriage, stillbirths, and an overall decline in birth rate.

In recent years, in Japan, as the age of marriage, pregnancy, and childbearing has risen and as medical technology has advanced, the number of women receiving fertility treatment, including external fertilization, has been increasing year by year. Yet, it has been found that the birth rate still continues to decline as age increases, despite fertility treatment. Among those who have undergone fertility treatment, some did so postpone after having already deferred their pregnancy and childbirth, and others found it difficult to successfully obtain results from

fertility treatments due to having delayed the start of treatment, because they did not know these facts.

Ultimately, however, it is each individual's decision as to whether or not she will have children and the age at which to do so.

However, it is important to have medically and scientifically accurate knowledge about pregnancy so that women can make informed choices about when to become pregnant. The Guidelines on Measures for the Declining Birthrate (approved by the Cabinet on March 20, 2015), therefore, stated that the government shall enhance efforts for educating citizens and providing them with information on medically and scientifically accurate knowledge concerning pregnancy and childbirth, and that such education will occur at school and at home, throughout all regions, and to all working age adults.



Source: Prepared by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, based on the 2010 data from the Japan Society of Obstetrics and Gynecology