

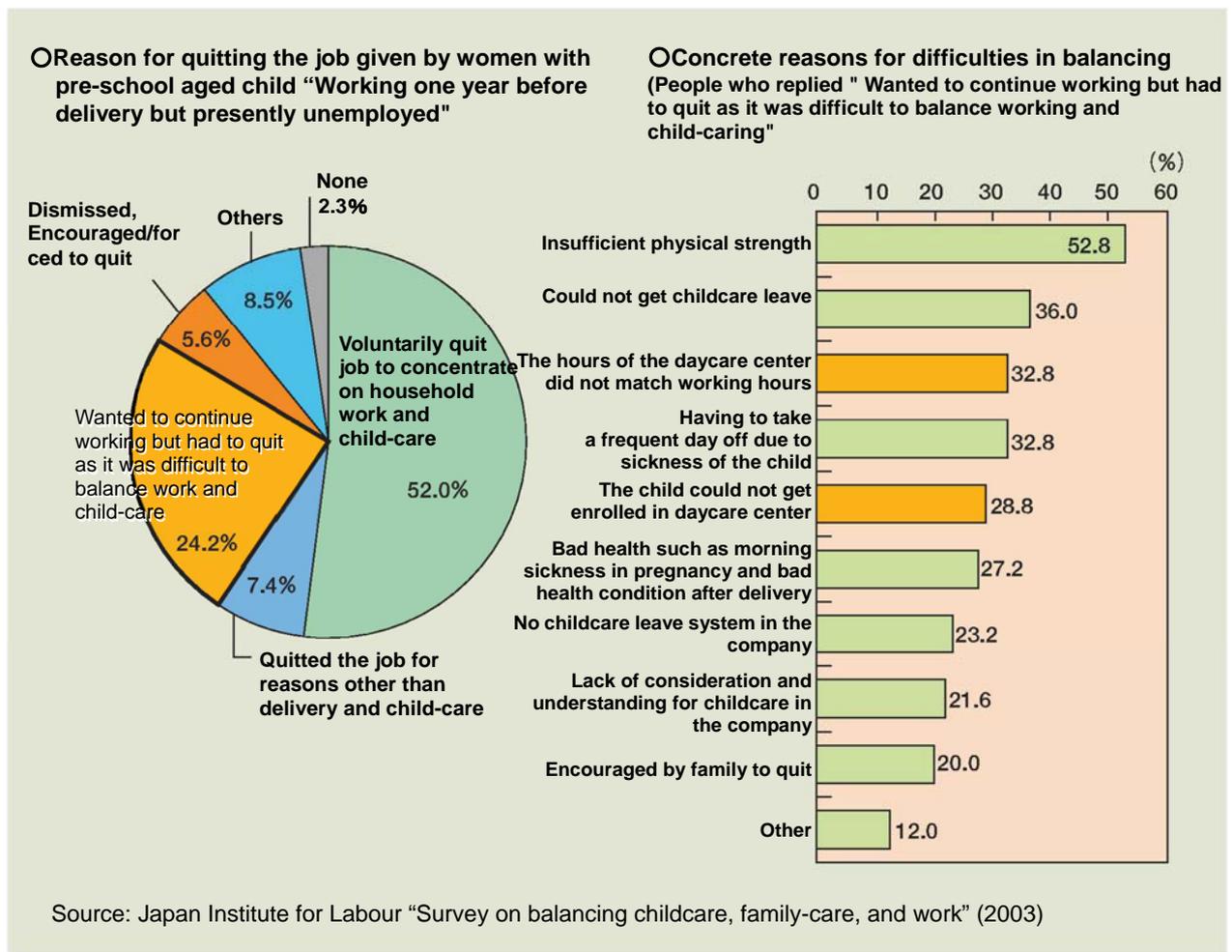
# Chapter 3 ‘Work-Life Balance’ Promotion

## Section 1 Importance of ‘Work-Life Balance’

### 1 Problems Involved in Working Style.

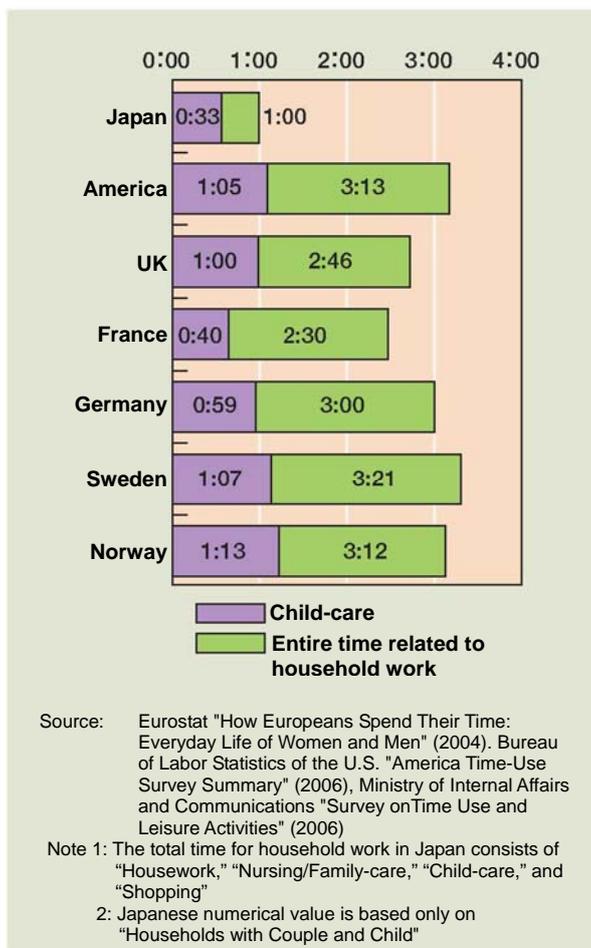
- The major reason behind the rapid fall in the birthrate is the situation whereby women have to choose between either continuing to work or quitting working and having children. The cause of this comes from many problems such as not being able to choose various working styles, the increase in temporary employees, and long working hours, as the number of two-income families is on the increase. Hence, it is very difficult for the Japanese to achieve the lifestyle and the working style they wish.
- The first problem is the working conditions of women before and after bearing children. Approximately 70% of women who had jobs one year before bearing children lost their jobs half a year after delivery.
- According to the Japan Institute for Labour’s Survey on Balancing Child-care and Family-care and Work [2003], the reasons behind quitting jobs before and after bearing children were, ‘quitting due to difficulties in balancing work and child-care’ [24.2%] and ‘being laid off, or encouraged to quit’ [5.6%], and approximately 30% left their jobs saying that the environment enabling a balance between working and child-caring did not exist.

**Diagram: Reasons for difficulties in balancing work and having a child.**



- The second problem in working style is that men cannot secure enough time for household work and childcare due to long working hours and difficulty in taking leave, as work is given priority.

**Diagram: Household working time and child-caring time for husbands with children less than 6 years old (Entire week)**



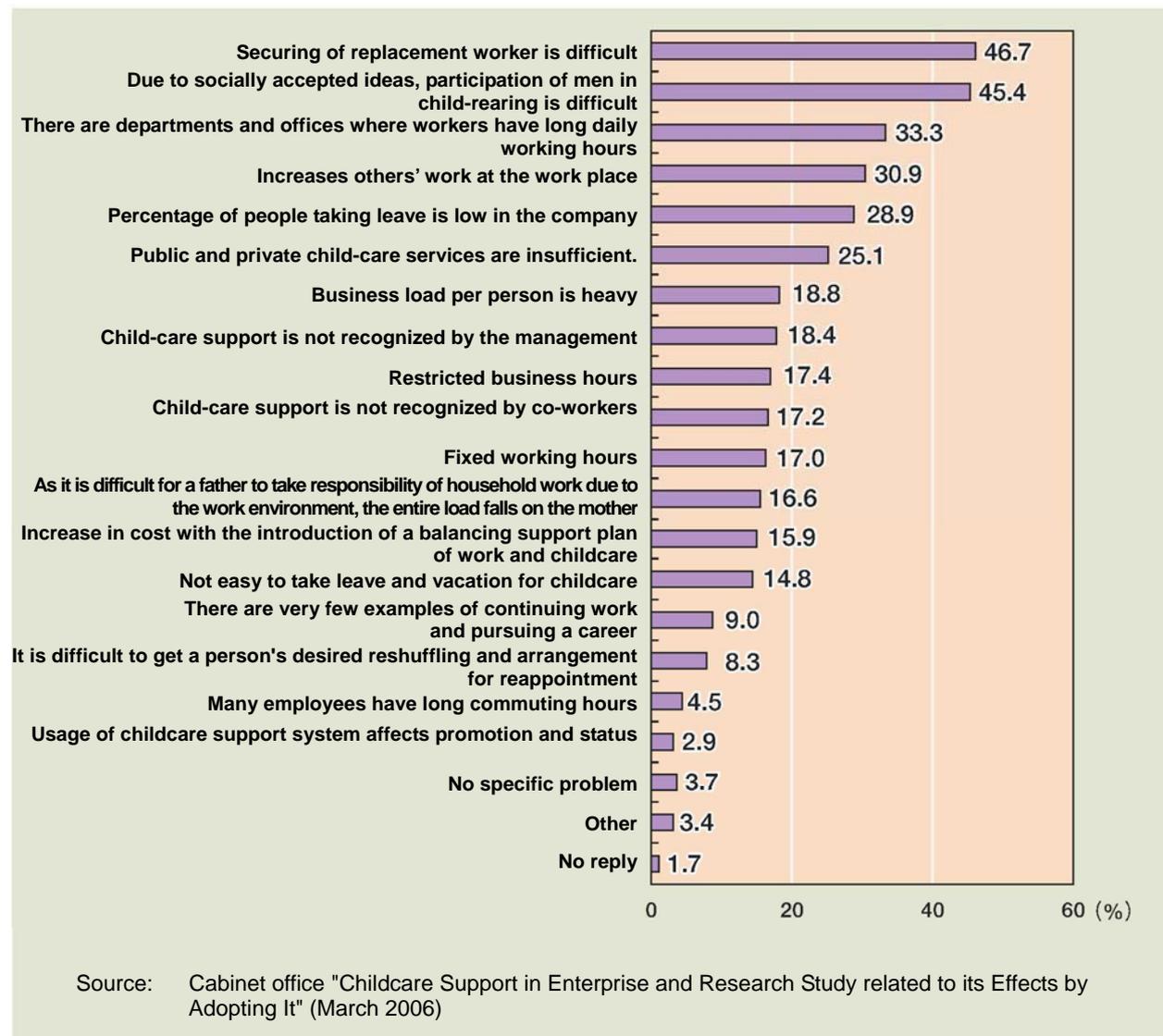
- According to the Low Birthrate and Basic Principles of Ensuring Gender Equality Survey conducted in 2006 by the Low Birth Rate and Basic Principles of Ensuring Gender Equality Survey Committee of the Basic Principles of Ensuring Gender Equality Meeting, approximately 80% of men have a desire to put more weight on household work and private life and treat them as equally, or more, important than their work. In reality, however, more than 50% of them have work as their priority, and there is a big gap between desire and realization.
- The third problem in the working style is that, even though the balance-support systems are better and better prepared, they are difficult to use, since working styles do not allow people to balance their work and life at their workplaces.

## 2 Proposal for Improving Working Style

- The reforms which aim at achieving a balance between work and life change the trend of the falling birthrate in our country and promote participation of young people, women and senior citizens in the labour market. As it is a top priority problem in order to secure the long-term stability and sustainability of the social economy, it is important to take countermeasures against the falling birthrate and also promote the improvement of enterprise management,

economic productivity and gender equality.

**Diagram: Issues in promotion of utilization for balancing support plan**



- The first report of the Labour Market Reform Investigation Committee of Specialists held under the Economy and Fiscal Policy Council (April, 2007) aimed at providing flexibility in the labour market where anyone who wants to work regardless of age and sex can work. It also specified how basic efforts should be taken to achieve a balance between an individual's work and personal life and indicated a numerical target for the next 10 years.
- The report of the Investigation Committee of Specialists Concerning the Balance between an Individual's Work and Personal life (Work-Life Balance), set up under the Gender Equality Conference, (July, 2007) laid out efforts for social infrastructure to achieve a balance between an individual's work and personal life. The report also indicated management reforms for the enterprise and organization management to achieve high value addition from various human resources.
- In the mid-term report of the Main Strategy Examination Conference (June 2007), it was assumed that relevant ministries and local governments should take comprehensive and systematic measures together.
- In the Basic Policy 2007 of Economic and Financial Reforms (June, 2007), it was stated clearly that the Work Life Balance Charter (tentative name) and Principles to Change Japan, to Change Working Styles' were to be drawn up within a year.

## Outline of “Balance between an Individual’s Work and Personal Life (Work-Life Balance) Charter ” and “Principles for Promoting the Balance between an Individual’s Work and Personal Life”

### 1 Deciding the Charter and Principles

- In July 2007, with the Chief Cabinet Secretary as Chairperson, a committee of the government and top cabinet was formed with representatives of cabinet ministers, the economic world, the labour world, local governments etc. In August of the same year, under the top cabinet meeting, a sectional meeting to draw up Principles to Change Japan, to Change Working Styles (provisional name), and discussion and examination were carried out. The charter and the principles were decided on 18th December, the same year, and it was also reflected in the strategic report Japan Assisting Children and the Family drawn up on the same day.

### 2 Nature and Significance of Charter and Principles

- The Charter presents the nationwide directional movement to achieve a balance between an individual’s work and personal life. Under the charter, the principles indicate an effective approach of the enterprises, and of the workers and of the citizens. It also indicates in detail the measures of the policy of the country and the local governments with a numerical target.

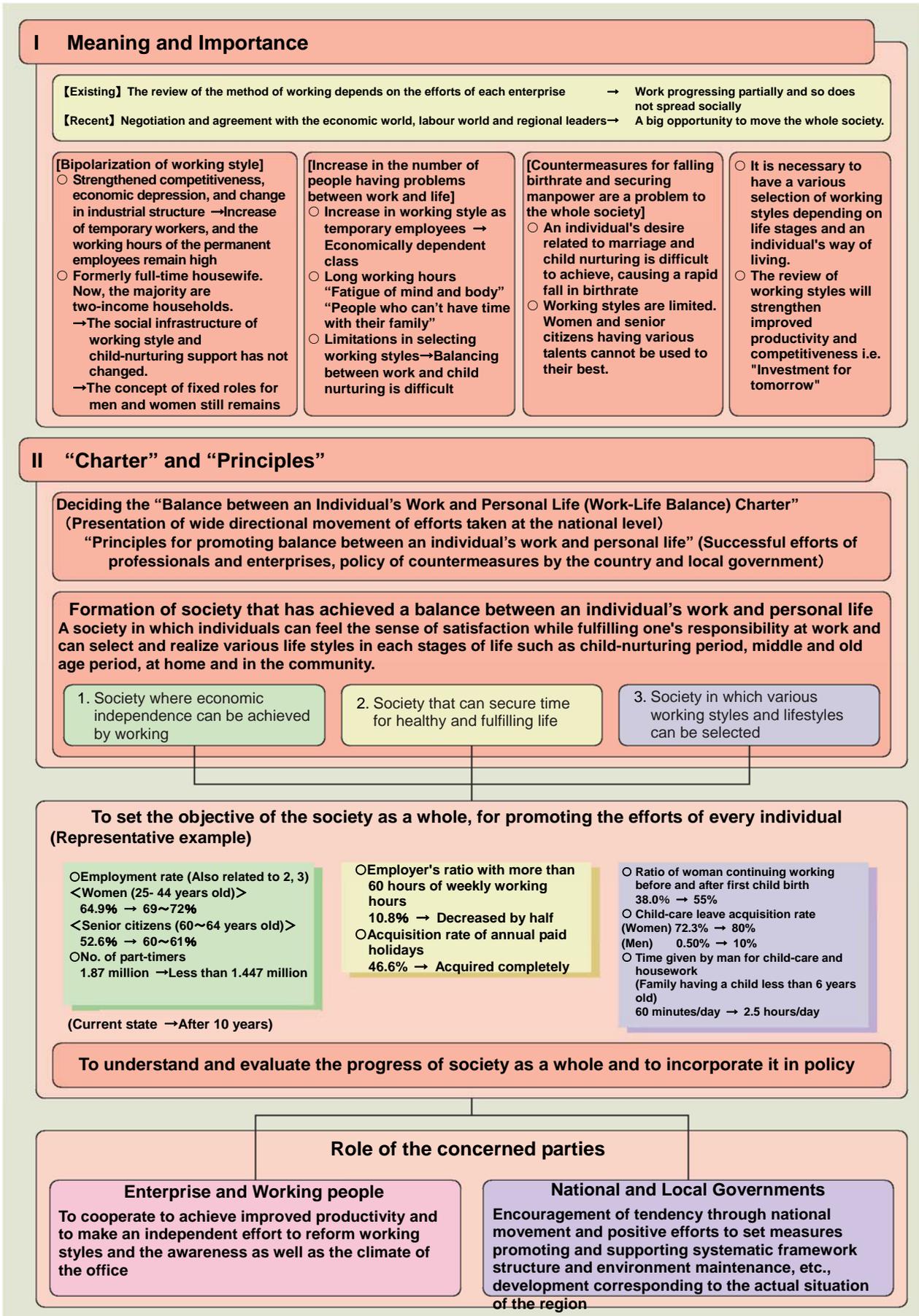
### 3 Outline of Charter

- According to the Charter, what is now required from us is, while achieving the balance between the work and life of an individual, efforts to change the trend of declining birthrate, making it possible for various human resources to take up a job even when there is a decrease in population, and efforts to make sure the society in our country is sustainable and certain. Efforts to achieve a balance between an individual’s work and personal life are also necessary.
- According to the Charter, achieving a balance between an individual’s work and personal life means “a society in which an individual can feel a sense of satisfaction while fulfilling one’s responsibility at work, and can select and realize various life styles in different stages of life, like the child-nurturing period, middle and old age period etc.”
- According to the Charter, to achieve the aim of society, first of all, it is important that people including labour and management, should make efforts positively and that the country and the local government should also support people. The efforts in the enterprise positively taken to encourage the balance between an individual’s work and personal life should be advanced. It is further indicated that it is necessary to expand it as a movement in society as a whole and the respective roles to be played by enterprises, individuals, the nation, and local governments are also indicated.

### 4 Outlines of Principles

- In the Principles, the Charter indicates the various conditions necessary to realize a society considered as a “society that achieves a balance between an individual’s work and personal life.” And in order to achieve this, it sets out effective efforts taken by enterprises and workers and citizens, and policies regarding measures taken by the country and by local governments.
- The basic approach in achieving a balance between an individual’s work and personal life is to discuss between labour and management an effective way for each and every enterprise, and to work independently; but, it is assumed that the country and local governments also proactively support the efforts of enterprises, individuals, and citizens, and that they positively support the building of social foundation for child-nurturing support and nursing that can be adapted to various working styles.

Diagram: Promotion of Balance between an Individual's Work and Personal Life



- According to the Principles, the setting of numerical targets and the achievement index of "Balance between an Individual's Work and Personal Life" are used to understand and evaluate the progress as a whole of realizing 'Work-Life Balance' and it is to be reflected in the policy.
- The Principles, as a goal of the whole society, set a numerical target for the next 10 years for the items on which the policy can have a certain degree of influence.
- The achievement index of "Balance between an Individual's Work and Personal Life" is to quantitatively understand the "Individual Achievement Index" and "Environmental Consideration Index." It should be created so as to understand the extent of achievement of the society in which the balance between work and life is realized.

## **5 Efforts based on Charter and Principles**

- Based on the Charter and Principles, to promote the balance between work and life, the year 2008 was marked as the "First Year of Balance between an Individual's Work and Personal Life," and it was expected that everyone in the nation should understand the idea of the charter and the principles.
- In January 2008, the Office for Promoting Balance between Individual's Work and Personal Life was set up in the Cabinet Office as a core organization for the government to promote the Charter and Principles. It cooperates and works in tandem with the secretariat of the top public and private think tanks, concerned government ministries, labour and management, local governments, etc.