The “Network of the opposite sex for unmarried people in the workplace” which affects their willingness to go out with and marry
(Excerpt from the survey on the declining birth rate of the Cabinet Office Economic and Social Research Institute)

It is said that there is a rise in the percentage of unmarried people as a background of the long-lasting declining birth rate trend. In fact, the percentage of men and women who did not get married in their lifetime which stood at 1.5% and 1.4% in 1950 respectively has increased to 20.1% for men and 10.6% for women in 2010 and the trend is expected to continue and further increase. On one hand, unstable employment and low income have been considered to be behind the declining marriage rate, but on the other hand, some point out that the number of opportunities to encounter people near to them, in particular, in their workplace may be decreasing. In order to analyze the trend of the declining birthrate and the situation of unmarried people, the Cabinet Office Economic and Social Research Institute performed a secondary analysis of the “14th Japanese National Fertility Survey (Survey on Singles)” (2010), and conducted its own survey (“Attitude Survey on Marriage and Work of Unmarried Men and Women”) to unmarried men and women of 25 to 39 years old to wrap up the results of the survey analysis.

In the present study, we present the situation and effect of the encounters of men and women and the network of unmarried people in the workplace (“Network of the opposite sex for unmarried people in the workplace”).

Situation of encounters with the opposite sex

Hope and motivation of unmarried people to get married are still high also today. In the “14th Japanese National Fertility Survey (Survey on Singles)” (2010), 86.3% and 89.4% of unmarried men and women in the age group between 18 and 34 years responded “Intend to marry someday,” respectively, that is, nearly 90% of them responded that they would marry eventually. Why on earth has the percentage of never married people risen? Several reasons can be considered. To start with, the relationship with the opposite sex is at a low level. In the present survey, 73.9% and 57.1% of unmarried men and women responded that they were not in relationship with the opposite sex. Incidentally, the lifelong unmarried status rate is the unmarried status rate at 50 years old, which is calculated as the simple average of unmarried status of people from 45 years old to 49 and from 50 to 54.

1. National Institute of Population and Social Security Research, “Population Statistics (2016 edition)”. Incidentally, the lifelong unmarried status rate is the unmarried status rate at 50 years old, which is calculated as the simple average of unmarried status of people from 45 years old to 49 and from 50 to 54.

2. National Institute of Population and Social Security Research, the“14th Japanese National Fertility Survey (Survey on Singles)” (2010). The survey was conducted in 2010 to unmarried men and women in the age group of 18 to 49 years old. The number of valid responses and the valid response rate were 10,581 and 74.3%, respectively.

3. The survey was conducted to 10,000 unmarried men and women in the age group of 25 and 39 years living in Japan of people who were registered as monitors in an internet survey company. The survey was conducted between January 13 and February 9, 2015. A questionnaire was composed so that no divergence from the Population Census (2010) in terms of employment status (regular employment, non-regular employment, unemployed), gender and residential area.


5. The percentage of people other than “those who have relationship with the opposite sex.” Incidentally, the number of “those who have relationship with the opposite sex” is the sum of “Have a fiancé/fiancée”, “In a relationship with a person of the opposite sex as lovers” and “In a relationship with a person of the opposite sex as friends.”
people had a relationship with the opposite sex, 89.6% of men and 90.8% of women responded that they would eventually get married, and in the case where unmarried people did not have a relationship with the opposite sex, only 62.0% of men and 68.5% of women responded that they would eventually get marry. It is considered that the opportunity to have relationship with the opposite sex affects the hope for marriage and the marriage itself.

Meanwhile, of unmarried people who do not have relationship with the opposite sex, 70.4% of men and 85.4% of women responded that they wished to go out with the opposite sex, but remained unmarried because they had not met an appropriate partner yet. This was the most favored response. In the “14th Japanese National Fertility Survey (Survey on Singles)” (2010), the most frequent reason for being unmarried among the whole of unmarried people in the group of 25 to 34 years old was that they had not met an appropriate partner, and 46.2% of men and 51.3% of women selected this response. There are a number of unmarried people who felt that the opportunity to meet people of the opposite sex is scarce as a whole, and it is seen that this fact affects marriage.

If we focus on the place of encounters as a reason for making marriage difficult, the decrease in the first marriage rate for the past 30 years can be explained by the decrease in the number of arranged marriage and marriage between coworkers (marriage between people who work in the same place or in the same job), and some point out that about 40% of the decrease is explained by the decrease in marriage between coworkers. According to the “14th Japanese National Fertility Survey (Survey on Married Couples)” (2010), about 30% (29.3%) of the opportunity of encounter of married people is the office, but its percentage is on a decrease. In order to understand more in detail the situation of encounters in the office, we cite the content of “Relationship between the encounters in the workplace and the willingness to marry” (Shigeki Matsuda) in Chapter 1 in Part 2 of “Analysis of Declining Birth Rate and Women’s Life Environment” to check the situation of the “Network of the opposite sex for unmarried people in the workplace” formed around the workplace.

### Network of the opposite sex for unmarried people in the workplace

The “network” here means a connection among people. A network does not only bring a variety of information, but also monetary and non-monetary help or profit. Here, we focus on the “Network of the opposite sex for unmarried people in the workplace” which is a network of unmarried people in the workplace of respondents. This network can be understood in terms of quantity (size) and quality (characteristics). Here, we mainly focus, however, on the size.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid responses</td>
<td>7,847</td>
<td>86.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response rate</td>
<td>78.5%</td>
<td>90.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We measured the size of the network by asking for the number of people of “unmarried opposite sex up to about 40 years old in daily contact in the workplace”. 38.1% of men and 37.4% of women, that is, about 40% of both men and women responded that there was nobody. Other than this, 18.5% responded “1 to 2”, 11.1% “3 to 4”, 17.4% “5 to 9” and 15.2% “more than 10” between men and women. The Chart 1 shows the average number of people by employment status, by size of workplace, by region. The overall average number is 3.2 people. Those categories of people who tend to fall below the average are non-regular employees, people who work in a small workplace and people who live outside the Kanto area.

### Relationship between the Network of the opposite sex for unmarried people in the workplace and the presence or absence of a person with whom one has a relationship or willingness to marry

Chart 2 shows the relationship between the size of a network of the opposite sex for unmarried people in the workplace and the presence or absence of a person with whom one has a relationship or willingness to marry. According to this Chart, the larger is the size of a network, the higher is the percentage of persons with whom one has a relationship or willingness to marry.

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6. The largest reason why unmarried people who had a person to go out with was that they had not sufficient money to get married and 39.2% of men and 26.1% of women chose this response.
7. Miho Iwasawa and Fusami Mita (2005), “The rise and fall of workplace marriage and increase in unmarried people,” “Japanese Journal of Labour Studies,” No. 535, pp16-pp28. Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training. About 50% and 40% of the decrease in the first marriage for the past 30 years can be explained by the decrease in the number of arranged marriage and the decrease in the number of workplace marriage, respectively.
8. National Institute of Population and Social Security Research, the “14th Japanese National Fertility Survey (Survey on Married Couples)” (2010). The survey was conducted in 2010 to married couples whose wife was under 50 years of age. The number of valid responses and the valid response rate were 7,847 and 86.7%, respectively.
9. See the footnote 4.
10. Professor of the Department of Modern Sociology at Chukyo University
This relationship is seen in men (both in regular employees and non-regular employees) and in women (in regular employees). In addition, Chart 3 shows the relationship between the size of a network of the opposite sex for unmarried people in the workplace and the willingness to marry (the percentage of people who responded that they would eventually marry). According to this Chart, the larger is the size of a network, the higher is the percentage of the willingness to marry.

The need to support marriage for people of younger generations

As described above, it has been found in the present survey that a network of unmarried people close to them as in the workplace affects the presence or absence of a person with whom one has a relationship or willingness to marry, and that the size (magnitude) of the network is important. In addition, aside from the importance of the size of a network of the opposite sex for unmarried people in the workplace, it has been found that the size differs depending on the employment status, the number of employees in the workplace, residence area and the like.

On the basis of the above fact, it is naturally important for non-regular employees, people who work in a small workplace and people who live outside the Kanto area who have less opportunities or are disadvantaged in finding a person with whom to go out or marry to make their own efforts to find such a person if they want to get married, but it is also important for the society as a whole to increase the number of opportunities for them to find their spouses outside the workplace. In particular, in consideration that the size of the network of the opposite sex for unmarried people in the workplace tends to be small in non-regular employees, people who work in a small workplace and people who live outside the Kanto area who have difficulties in using private-sector services, it can be said that it is important to enhance nationwide marriage support.

Chart 1
Size of network of the opposite sex for unmarried people in the workplace (The number of unmarried opposite sex up to about 40 years old in the workplace)
Chart 2  Presence or absence of a person in the opposite sex with whom to go out by the size of the network of the opposite sex for unmarried people in the workplace

Chart 3  Willingness to marry by the number of people of the network of the opposite sex for unmarried people in the workplace
Efforts to eliminate wait-listed children

The Abe Cabinet positioned the problem of wait-listed children as the most immediate priority and published the “Acceleration Plan for Reducing Wait-listed Children” in April 2013. In the Acceleration Plan for Reducing Wait-listed Children, it was proposed to secure infrastructure for accommodating 400,000 children by the end of FY 2017 to eliminate wait-listed children and the capacity for childcare has been increasing accordingly (Fig. 1).

On the other hand, the number of applications for the use of childcare has significantly increased with the greater participation of women in work and with the implementation of the Comprehensive Support System for Children and Child-rearing (Fig. 2), and the number of wait-listed children as of April 2015 increased for the first time in five years (Fig. 3).

For this reason, the target number based on the “Acceleration Plan for Reducing Wait-listed Children” has been increased from 400,000 to 500,000 in “Measures to be urgently implemented towards the realization of One Hundred Million Total Active Society” published in November 2015.

Situation of wait-listed children and the situation of the Acceleration Plan for Reducing Wait-listed Children

Fig. 1  Changes in the volume expansion of childcare

*The volume expansion of childcare in FY 2015 is the expected value at the end of FY 2015 measured as of May 29, 2015.
Figs. 1 to 3: Data of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare are partly rectified.
In addition, on March 28, 2016, the “Measures to be urgently implemented towards the elimination of wait-listed children” was published as an urgent effort to eliminate wait-listed children. In addition, it has been decided that kindergartens will actively deal with the current problem of wait-listed children according to the respective local situation and that small sized childcare service and temporary custody service will be promoted to enhance both the “child-rearing support” and “support for keeping a balance between work and child-rearing.”
In order to increase the capacity for childcare, it is important to secure childcare personnel for providing childcare. The job-offer to job-seeker ratio of a nursery staff in Hello Work (Public Employment Security Office) is more than two times higher and it is an urgent problem to secure childcare personnel. According to an attitude survey implemented by Hello Work on job seekers who do not wish to work as a childcare worker, it was shown that the percentage of people who feel anxious about the weight of responsibility and accidents, that they feel anxious about a break for re-employment, and that the salary does not meet their expectations (Fig. 5) is high. In the circumstances, the government is poised to address in a comprehensive manner the issues of securing new acquirers of the qualification of nursery staff, continuous employment support, support for re-employment of unemployed people and use of a variety of human resources, and implements a variety of measures, including the expansion of student loans, support for the employment of auxiliary nursery staff, improvement in work efficiency by the use of ICT, and the support for re-employment through the provision of subsidy for outfit allowance and childcare fee, among other measures. With respect to the improvement in payment for nursery staff, an improvement equivalent to 3% in the benefits of the nursery staff has been made since FY 2015 by using the consumption tax. In addition, in consideration of the recommendation by the National Personnel Agency, the benefits of the nursery staff has been improved in an amount equivalent to 2% in the supplementary budget of FY 2014 and in an amount equivalent to 1.9% in the supplementary budget of FY 2015 (Fig. 6). In the future, the government will not only make an improvement in benefits in an amount equivalent to 2% as part of further “improvement in quality,” but also will make an additional improvement in benefits for those staff who have acquired skills and experience as nursery staff so as to eliminate wage difference between them and female workers in other industries.

**Fig. 5**  Reasons why people do not wish to work as nursery staff (Multiple answers)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weight of the responsibility and anxiety about accidents</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuation of the employment</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult relationship with parents</td>
<td>24.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissatisfaction about the work and working hours</td>
<td>26.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working hours do not match the expectations</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The job content does not fit</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Re-employment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult to find a new job and proper work and earnings</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worry about own health and physical fitness</td>
<td>39.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvement in working environment</td>
<td>30.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publicity for necessity of nursery staff</td>
<td>57.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social recognition towards the work</td>
<td>43.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worry about the renewal of a limited-term employment contract</td>
<td>22.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>18.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare

1. Including staff of licensed nursery centers and kindergartens under the Comprehensive Support System for Children and Child-rearing
Securing of childcare personnel

- The number of nursery staff working in nursery centers is 378,000.
- It is the aim to secure the total number of nursery staff which will be newly required in Japan by the end of FY 2017 (about 90,000).

**[Securing of 69,000]** (Based on the increased capacity up to 400,000)

- Securing of new acquirers of childcare qualification
  - FY 2015: Implemented in 4 prefectures (National Strategic Special Zones)
  - FY 2016: Implemented in 46 prefectures and 1 ordinance-designated city
- Provision of student loans, etc.

**[Securing of about 20,000]** (Based on the increased capacity up to 500,000)

- Increase of the provision of student loans (15.5 billion yen in the supplementary budget of 2015 / Subsidy rate 9/10)
- Support for continued employment of nursery staff
  - Improvement in payment → 3% improvement by using the consumption tax
  - Rent of boarding houses for nursery staff etc.
- Support of unemployed people for re-employment
  - Matching support through support centers of nursery staff and nursery centers as well as the Hello Work

**Use of a variety of human resources**

- Reduction of burden by flexible application of the personnel arrangement requirements of nursery staff in the morning and evening [Revision of the regulations: From FY 2016]

**Support of unemployed people for re-employment**

- Support of unemployed nursery staff for finding re-employment through the provision of outfit allowance and a part of childcare fee (5.8 billion yen in the supplementary budget of 2015 / Subsidy rate 9/10)

Source: Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare
In April 2016, the “Nationwide Forum for Marriage Support - A new cooperation to realize the hope of as many people as possible –” (hosted by the Cabinet Office and the Tokyo Metropolitan Government and sponsored by the Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry) was held in order to promote the government support for the enhancement of support for marriage on the part of local governments, chambers of commerce and industry and others. About 150 people including representatives of nationwide local governments, organizations entrusted with marriage support business, companies belonging to local chambers of commerce and industry in charge of marriage support activities in communities, and people of experience or academic standing who can be opinion leaders participated to share information and build the momentum for the further enhancement of marriage support business. In the forum, keynote speeches on the social background of the increase in unmarried people were delivered and presentation of cases of advanced marriage support was made. A panel discussion was also held by experts and people engaged in the actual field. In addition, five representatives of local governments and people engaged in the actual field on behalf of the participants stated their enthusiasm and goals in the future as the “Action Declaration” to build the momentum.

- New efforts for cooperation
As a new initiative, the local government of Fukui Prefecture presented a case of marriage support in which local companies were urged to actively establish links with other companies. The Federation of Corporate Associations of Ehime Prefecture introduced a new effort in which a number of small and medium companies in the region held events together. In the meantime, experts proposed that local governments would engage in marriage support in cooperation with companies and schools. In addition, a case of efforts beyond the boundary of local governments was presented.

- Utilization of data
Experts not only gave advice on how to deal with a mismatch arising from the divergence between conditions required by people who wish to get married and actual conditions, but also argued the importance that local governments are to provide marriage support under full understanding of the actual local conditions including data on unmarried people. In addition, the participants shared the necessity and importance of providing young people with knowledge and information support for building a life plan including marriage, pregnancy, childbirth, childcare and work. With the present forum as a kick-off, more forums are planned to be held and the holding of these forums is expected to be expanded nationwide.
(Reference)

Photo session among representatives of the local governments and people engaged in the actual field, who made the “Action Declaration,” and the host and sponsors
Efforts to provide marriage support in regions
- Examples of application of the grant for strengthening regional measures against declining birthrate -

The government provided budgetary provision in the supplementary budget of FY 2013 and FY 2014 for the grant for strengthening regional measures against declining birthrate in order to support local governments that make pioneering efforts to deal with regional circumstances with a view to providing “seamless support” to marriage, pregnancy, childbirth and child-rearing to cope with the critically declining birthrate in Japan. This grant was distributed to all 47 prefectures in the past two years enabling each local government to launch new services to counter the declining birthrate. As a result, it has become evident that efforts to provide marriage support have been advanced.

On the other hand, from the perspective of division of roles among several ministries and from the perspective of the implementation of appropriate verification of benefits, and in consideration of the points made in the annual public review in Autumn in 2015 “Autumn Review,” the target fields were narrowed down to the following in order to focus on main support service for the supplementary budgets in 2015 and 2016:
- Efforts for marriage matching
- Efforts for creating a community receptive to child-rearing focused on marriage, pregnancy/childbirth and babyhood and building a momentum.

In addition, it was decided not only to obligate local governments to improve the efficiency of the support services, but also to establish a KPI (Key Performance Indicator) and to implement quantitative verification of benefits to allow them to choose services which may produce better results and benefits and review benefits of implemented services (the name of the grant was also changed to “the grant for promotion of strategic measures against declining birthrate”).

We present here main services implemented so far in various regions in utilization of the present grant.

1. See the Cabinet Office commissioned study "Survey research and effect verification of the seamless support services for marriage, pregnancy, childbirth and child-rearing in regions, and an investigative report on advanced cases" (December 2015)

2. Incidentally, the grant for promotion of strategic regional measures against declining birthrate in the supplementary budget of FY 2015 was targeted at pioneering efforts and efforts requiring urgent support of local governments, while the grant for promotion of strategic regional measures against declining birthrate in the original budget of FY 2016 is targeted at the application of excellent cases found in the past efforts.
“Development of marriage supporters and network building” (Ibaraki Prefecture)  
(Supplementary budget of FY 2013)

– Matching promotion by improving skills of marriage supporters and strengthening cooperation among them –

In Ibaraki Prefecture, the “Ibaraki Encounter Support Center” was opened in 2006 to develop a variety of service focused on marriage support services. In addition, the prefectural government provides marriage support across the prefecture by commissioning the setting and arrangement of encounters to “marriage supporters” who provide marriage support in various areas as volunteers. The marriage supporters above cooperate with one another by explaining their respective efforts to each user. On the other hand, there was a problem with a fact that the cooperation among marriage supporters of different areas was not sufficient.

In the circumstances, in order to improve skills, dig up new supporters, and share information on marriage, not only an exchange meeting among marriage supporters of wide areas was held, but also consultation meetings were held in various areas in cooperation with municipal governments for unmarried people and their relatives who had worries about marriage in which improved skills of marriage supporters were tested. As a result of these efforts, the number of marriage supporters have increased by 127 people (from 699 at the end of FY 2013 to 826 at the end of FY 2014) since the implementation of the services. As a result of the exchange of the profiles of unmarried people by marriage supporters through the newly created network, the matching of 72 couples was successfully made. Moreover, a total of 850 people participated in the consultation meetings held in various areas. Thanks to the improvement in skills of marriage supporters and sharing of information among them, not only the direct matching has been promoted, but also thanks to the digging up of new supports and implementation of consultation meetings, the marriage support services of the prefectural government has become well known. In fact, while the overall number of marriage in Ibaraki Prefecture has decreased (from 14,323 in 2013 to 13,800 in 2014), the number of marriage concluded in the centers has increased (from 178 in FY 2013 to 204 in FY 2014).

(A consultation meeting with a marriage supporter in a local area)
“Smiling Matchmaking Support Services” (Ehime Prefecture (Supplementary budget of FY 2013 and FY 2014))

- Improvement in matching precision due to system improvement -

In 2008, the “Ehime Marriage Support Center” was opened in Ehime Prefecture to provide matchmaking support through marriage meetings consisting of encounter events and the matching system and through “volunteer promoters” that take care of event participants and “love matching supporters” that take care of marriage meetings. The Center, however, has not been able to make effective use of a variety of data having been obtained since its opening, such as concluded cases of marriage, good advices and others by returning the results to users for the fruitful conclusion of matchmaking activities. In the circumstances, by making use of the present grant, the prefectural government of Ehime Prefecture not only held workshops for unmarried people for improving their communication ability and enlightenment seminars to present good examples and successful cases for matchmaking supporters such as volunteer promoters, but also built a new mechanism to analyze the behavior history of users accumulated in the system and to introduce the opposite sex with the highest probability of matching by the matching system and to introduce encounter events with a matching probability by simply participating in them.

Thanks to these efforts, the percentage of users of the matching system that had a marriage meeting which stood at an average of 13% at the start of the operation of the new system in March 2015, the percentage of users of the new function-enhanced matching system increased to about 30% in the first quarter of FY 2015. In addition, because of its high reputation, the number of registered users increased by about 40% compared to the same period of the previous year. Moreover, the number of concluded marriage which was 82 couples between January and December 2014 increased to 111 couples between January and December 2015.

As seen above, the combination of the boosting of the function-enhanced matching system based on the analysis of the accumulated data and the warm human support by volunteer promoters and others has enabled users to keep their willingness for marriage and take actions to get married as early as possible.

A number of local governments across Japan visit Ehime Prefecture to look at these efforts and some local governments have already adopted the system of Ehime Prefecture.

Display screen of the matching system

Introduction of the opposite sex with the highest probability of matching based on the analysis of the behavior history of users accumulated in the system
"Life design seminars to high school students" (Yamagata Prefecture) (Supplementary budget of FY 2013 and FY 2014)

- Development of life design seminars in combination with lecturer training -

In order to enable high school students to make their life design as they desire, it is important for them to acquire knowledge and information as prerequisites at an appropriate time. For example, it is the choice of a person to get married or to have children. In order to realize the desire of having babies, however, it is necessary to make judgment based on medically and scientifically correct knowledge.

In the circumstances, in addition to the career education focused on academic and career counseling which is normally provided, and by taking advantage of the home economics class and the class of integrated studies, the present services were implemented for high school students who are in the age to specifically start to think of their future, including the choice whether to go to college or take a job. The aim of the services was to serve as an occasion to provide them with the opportunity to envisage their future 10 years or 20 years later including life events such as, marriage, pregnancy, childbirth and childrearing with a view to allowing them to make their life plan as better as possible.

According to the results of the questionnaire made to the students who attended the seminars, the number of students who did not know about the appropriate timing for pregnancy and childbirth in medical terms accounted for the majority before the seminars, but all the students responded after the seminars that they acquired fully correct knowledge. Thus, it is seen that they acquired the basic knowledge to make their life designs through the seminars.

In addition, these services were provided in four prefectoral high schools by an expert outside the prefecture as a lecturer in FY 2013 when the services were started. In FY 2014, however, three persons who lived in the prefecture were trained and developed as a lecturer, and the services were provided in eight prefectoral high schools and one university in FY 2015, and in eleven prefectoral and private high schools, three professional training colleges and two universities in FY 2015. It is seen that the number of the services is being gradually expanded, accordingly.

In the wake of the results, other prefectures have shown interest and made inquiries about the specific contents of the seminars and method to adopt them as an overall prefectural effort.

High school students in discussion about making their life plans