
School-to-Work Transition and Employment of Youth in Non-Metropolitan Areas

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In this research paper, we discuss the notable features of the patterns of School-to-Work Transition and Employment of Youth in non-metropolitan areas that are revealed by comparing the trends for senior high-school graduates in two non-metropolitan areas, Nagano and Hokkaido Prefectures, and the trends for their counterparts in Tokyo. Each of the three regions represents one of the three types of labor markets that we classified for the purpose of this research. From our research, we found that the Type 2 market, represented by Nagano, offers the prospect of the most steady career among the three due to the relative abundance of job offers from manufacturers, followed by Type 1 (Tokyo) and Type 3 (Hokkaido) in that order. We also found that the link between educational attainment and career prospects is weaker in Hokkaido and Nagano than in Tokyo. In Hokkaido, higher education does not promise a job amid a chronic shortage of job offers, while senior high-school graduates have a good chance of joining the ranks of regular employees in Nagano, where most employers are manufacturers (with demand for workers equipped with skills typically available from high-school graduates). In the meantime, senior high-school graduates find it difficult to obtain a steady job in Tokyo, where the university enrollment rate is particularly high and the services industry commands a dominant presence in the labor market. As such region-specific factors have significant implications for the school-to-work transition process, it is important to review the traditional research approach of narrowing the focus on metropolitan-area youth.

I. Perspective on Issues and Problems and Key Points of the Survey

1. Perspective on Issues and Problems

This research paper seeks to identify and explain the patterns of School-to-Work Transition and Employment of Youth in non-metropolitan areas through comparison with the trends in metropolitan areas.

The 2008 edition of the OECD Employment Outlook, while noting an improvement in the overall employment condition for youth in OECD countries, concluded that disparities remained in employment prospects and the quality of job opportunities according to educational attainment, initial job experience and local labor market condition. This conclusion is in line with the results of a study conducted by the Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training (JILPT), which indicated that the level of educational attainment, the first job and the condition of the local labor market are the critical factors as to whether a smooth school-to-work transition is assured (a JILPT study conducted in 2005). From the results of previous studies, we may assume that specific groups of young people, rather than all youth, face an uphill struggle in getting on and climbing the career ladder. Consequently, when

conducting research on career formation for youth, we must delve into the potentially constraining social trends and factors.

A number of studies have already examined the patterns of youth employments and the school-to-work transition process. However, most of them focused on educational attainment and gender as critical factors for career formation for youth. Among the few studies that gave consideration to region-specific factors are those that examined the regional gap in the university enrollment rate (Sasaki 2006) or in the non-employed rate (which represents the rate of people who neither become employed nor advance to higher education after leaving school) among senior high-school graduates (Mimizuka 2000). These studies invariably indicated that the situation differs significantly from region to region.

The findings of these studies show the employment trend for new entrants into the labor market. As for the employment trend for people with several years of practical job experience, the JILPT's research in 2005 looked at it from the viewpoint of the *freeter* rate (*freeter* refers to a new type of non-regular worker; a more detailed definition to be provided later) and the NEET (not in employment, education or training) rate on a prefecture-by-prefecture basis.

However, most of the past studies have neglected the task of shedding light on the whole transition process including the experience of non-regular employment, as opposed to focusing on entry or some other fixed points of the process. The analysis by Genda (2008) of the government's Employment Status Survey (2002), which is among the few studies that examined the whole process, showed that it is easier for non-regular workers to shift to regular employment in the Hokuriku/Tokai and Chugoku/Shikoku regions than in the Kanto region, while in the Kinki region, more regular workers shift to the non-regular status than vice versa. Genda's analysis also found that in the whole of Japan, as much as 17.0% of non-regular workers in their 20s switched to a regular job. However, this research is based on too broad a regional division to enable an adequate analysis of local trends. According to a survey conducted in 2007 by the Osaka City's Citizens' Affairs Bureau, 11.7% of youth in Osaka shifted from non-regular to regular employment. Although this survey research provides valuable insight, it was exclusively metropolitan in scope as it focused on Osaka youth. For its part, JILPT has studied trends for Tokyo youth in its Survey on Working Style of Young People. Also, in a study in 2003, JILPT conducted case studies of the transition process for non-metropolitan-area youth. However, these studies are not sufficient to provide the full picture of the school-to-work transition process.

As indicated above, most of the past studies focused either on the trends for Japanese society as a whole or on the situation in metropolitan areas such as Tokyo and Osaka, or were case studies insufficient to illuminate the full picture of the process. Therefore, the disparity between regions in the pattern of employment and the transition process has remained an unexplored field of research, with particular neglect shown for trends in non-metropolitan areas. While the narrowed focus on metropolitan areas may have helped to give clear-cut findings, the research results may have provided a distorted picture of the

transition process based on factors specific to such areas. Whereas young people in metropolitan areas have access not only to a relative abundance of job offers from companies but also to various other career opportunities, only a limited range of job offers and opportunities are available for their counterparts in non-metropolitan areas. In short, the lack of studies on employment trends for non-metropolitan-area youth is clearly a great problem.

2. Key Points of the Survey

To fill the research void created by the exclusive focus on metropolitan areas, we use the Working Style of Young People in Non-Metropolitan Areas, conducted by the JILPT in February and March 2008, as the basis of our analysis. The regions covered by our research are Hokkaido (Sapporo and Kushiro) and Nagano (Nagano, Chino and Okaya). We compare the trends in these regions with the situation in Tokyo as evaluated on the basis of our past studies.

We selected these regions for the following reasons.

The past two rounds of the Survey on Youth Working Style showed that there was a gap in employment opportunity between senior high-school graduates and higher-education graduates at the beginning of the working career and that this gap tended to persist throughout the career. From the survey results, it is obvious that in Tokyo, senior high-school graduates face a disadvantage in career formation. However, the non-employed rate among senior high-school graduates is not necessarily high in all regions, as shown by the research on this subject that we referred to earlier. In some regions, people with senior high-school or lower levels of education have a chance to get off to a steady start in a career, while the situation is more challenging in other regions. In light of this, if we are to gain useful insight into the patterns of employment by youth and the transition process, we should turn our attention to the school to work transition process for senior high-school graduates.

Therefore, we give consideration to social trends that could affect the transition for senior high-school graduates. Critical factors for the transition for senior high-school graduates include (i) the condition of the local labor market, (ii) the framework for career guidance provided by senior high schools (the size of a cohort of senior high-school graduates seeking employment in a region is particularly important) and (iii) the size of employer companies (JILPT research in 2008). While these factors are interconnected, the condition of the local labor market is a particularly significant influencing factor. As it is impossible to study the transition process in all regions, we classified regions into three types according to the features of the local labor market for senior high school students and looked at each type.

The following are the three types of labor markets as classified according to the supply-demand balance, the specifics of jobs offered and the level of labor mobility, based on a survey and analysis conducted in 2009 on the employment trend for senior high-school

Table 1. Classification of Labor Market for Senior High-School Graduates

	Labor mobility	Supply-demand balance	Specifics of jobs offered	FY2007 survey area
Type 1	Net inflow	Favorable/neutral	Services, sales	Tokyo, Saitama, Osaka
Type 2	Balanced	Favorable/neutral	Manufacturing	Nagano, Niigata
Type 3-(1)	Balanced	Unfavorable	Services, sales	Aomori, Kochi, Hokkaido
Type 3-(2)	Net outflow	Neutral/unfavorable	Manufacturing	Shimane, Oita, Akita

Source: The Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training (2008).

graduates (see Table 1).

The Type 1 market, which is typically a metropolitan area, provides a relative abundance of job offers, attracting an inflow of job seekers from other regions. Jobs offered in the Type 1 market are mostly related to services and sales.

The Type 2 market is characterized by balanced supply and demand, with the demand for labor satisfied by local supply. Another notable feature of Type 2 is the dominant presence of manufacturers as employers.

The Type 3 market is challenging for job seekers because of the paucity of local employers. Except for Hokkaido, the regions that fit this category are suffering from an exodus of job seekers to other regions. The Type 3 market is sub-divided into Type 3-(1), in which jobs offered are mainly related to services and sales, and Type 3-(2), in which job offers come primarily from manufacturers.

There is a strong correlation between the labor market types as classified above and the non-employed rate (which represents the rate of senior high-school graduates who neither become employed nor advance to higher education). We see several notable trends in the career paths for people who graduated from senior high school in March 2007 as shown in Table 2. First, the non-employed rate is higher in the Type 1 market than in Type 2, despite a relatively good supply-demand condition in the former. While this may reflect an attitude to employment that is specific to metropolitan-area youth, we cannot also ignore a structural factor—the concentration of labor demand in services- and sales-related jobs. Moreover, among the regions belonging to Type 3, there is a disparity in the non-employment rate: in Shimane, Oita and Akita Prefectures, where job offers come primarily from manufacturers, the non-employment rate is lower than in Aomori, Kochi and Hokkaido, where jobs offered are related mainly to services and sales.

In other words, the non-employment rate tends to be low in regions where job offers come primarily from manufacturers requiring skilled worker (Type 2 and Type 3-[2]), which

Table 2. Career Paths for March 2007 Graduates
(from local senior high-schools)

		Employed ratio	Non-employment rate*
Type 1	Tokyo	8.8	9.5
	Saitama	15.2	5.8
	Osaka	14.4	7.0
Type 2	Nagano	18.1	3.8
	Niigata	21.8	3.6
Type 3-(1)	Aomori	37.1	4.8
	Kochi	25.1	5.4
	Hokkaido	22.3	7.8
Type 3-(2)	Shimane	29.4	4.2
	Oita	33.6	2.3
	Akita	35.6	4.4

Source: Partial excerpt from JILPT survey in 2008.

* The rate of senior high-school graduates who neither become employed nor advance to higher education.

are provided mainly by senior high-school graduates. The abundance or dearth of job offers from manufacturers is a critical factor for the school-to-work transition process for senior high-school graduates, as such offers facilitate the process.

The role of the Public Employment Service varies among the three types of labor market (JILPT research in 2008), although we do not discuss this matter in detail in this paper.

For our analysis of these three types of labor markets, we looked at Tokyo as an example of Type 1. Type 2 is represented by Nagano Prefecture (Nagano City and the Suwa region, where manufacturers are heavily concentrated) and Type 3 by Hokkaido (Sapporo and Kushiro). We selected those regions because, as a result of the past studies, there is already some analysis data accumulated concerning trends and factors specific to them, which is useful for our research. In addition, we conducted a new round of the Survey on Youth Working Style that covered those regions.

3. Methodology of the Survey on Working Style of Young People

We designed the survey sheet so as to enable consistent analysis between the past two rounds of the Survey on Youth Working Style, conducted by the JILPT on Tokyo youth in 2001 and 2006, and the new survey.

As we already mentioned, the new survey covered Hokkaido (Sapporo and Kushiro), Nagano (Nagano City and the Suwa region) and the whole of Tokyo. Except for the case of Kushiro, for which random sampling of subjects from the register of voters was possible,

Table 3. Key Points of the Survey

Date	Area	Age group	Sampling method	Sample size
Feb.-Mar. 2006	Tokyo	18-29	Area sampling	2,000
Feb.-Mar. 2008	Hokkaido			
	Sapporo	20-34	Area sampling	600
	Kushiro	20-34	Random sampling	Valid response gained from 113 of 240 selected subjects (response rate: 47.1%)
Feb.-Mar. 2008	Nagano			
	Nagano	20-34	Area sampling	500
	Suwa	} 20-34	Area sampling	500
	Chino			
	Okaya			

we adopted area sampling, a method which has recently grown popular because of the declining availability of registers of voters for public inspection (see Table 3).

In area sampling, sample subjects (who are asked to cooperate with the survey by the visiting survey team) are selected from among residents in the survey areas determined on the basis of the Population Census or other relevant data so as to ensure that the sample composition matches the composition of the entire population of concern. Specifically, our survey teams visited every third house in the survey areas, which were located at equal intervals in terms of population density, as they moved in a counterclockwise direction, until they secured a sufficient sample group of willing subjects (one subject at each house) with a gender and age group mix (early 20s group, late 20s group and early 30s group) that matched that of the entire population of concern. The response rate was not calculated.

Area sampling was also used in the second round of the Survey on Youth Working Style, which was conducted on 2,000 people aged 18 to 29 (excluding students enrolled in regular university courses and full-time housewives) in Tokyo (excluding the island areas) in February and March 2006.

Area sampling was partially adopted in the surveys conducted in Hokkaido and Nagano in February 2008. As for the survey in Hokkaido, we found 600 subjects willing to cooperate through area sampling in Sapporo, while in Kushiro, the questionnaire was sent to 240 people selected from the register of voters, of which 113 agreed to cooperate (which translates into a response rate of 47.1%). In Nagano Prefecture, we found 500 subjects willing to cooperate in each of Nagano City and the Suwa region. Although there was an interval of two years between the Hokkaido and Nagano surveys, the employment condition remained little affected by cyclical fluctuations of the economy and continued to be favorable during the two-year period, a fact which presumably validates an inter-regional comparison based on the two surveys.

As for the sampling accuracy, we may presume that the results of the Nagano and Hokkaido surveys properly reflect the trends for the entire population of concern given that the distribution of educational attainment of their subjects mostly corresponds to that of the subjects of the nationwide Employment Status Survey, which was conducted in October 2007. However, it should be noted that in the Tokyo survey, people with senior high-school or lower education may have been somewhat over-represented because students enrolled in regular university courses were excluded from the sample.

This research paper is organized as follows.

In Section II, we classify career paths into several categories and provide an inter-regional comparison. In Section III, we provide an analysis of the path to and exit from the *freeter* status. In Section IV, we sum up our findings and point out their implications.

II. Career Paths for Non-Metropolitan Area Youth

In this section, we classify career paths for youth and discuss regional disparities.

1. Classification of Career Paths for Youth

Table 4 shows the categories of career path as classified from three viewpoints: current employment status, employment status immediately after graduation or dropout and the transition after the first job.

People working as a regular employee are represented by the categories “staying in a regular job” (people who have retained the status of regular employee at a single company since leaving school), “regular job→regular job” (people who have switched employers but have retained the status of regular employee), “regular job→non-regular job→regular job” (people who entered the labor market as a regular employee and who, after working temporarily as a non-regular employee or as a self-employed person, have returned to regular employment) and “other status→regular job (people who obtained a non-regular job, became a self-employed person or remained non-employed immediately after graduation but who now work as a regular employee). People working as a non-regular employee are represented by the categories “continuing in non-regular jobs” (people who obtained a non-regular job or remained unemployed immediately after graduation and who now work as a non-regular worker) and “regular job→non-regular job” (people who obtained a regular job immediately after graduation but who are now employed as a non-regular worker. We also adopted two other categories, “self-employed/family work” and “non-employed.”

Let us begin by looking at the situation in Hokkaido (see Table 4). Among men, “staying in a regular job” is the most common career path, followed by “continuing in non-regular jobs,” “other status→regular job” and “regular job→regular job” in that order. Among women, “continuing in non-regular jobs” is most common, followed by “staying in a regular job” and “regular job→non-regular job” in that order. Compared with the results of the Tokyo survey, the ratio for “continuing in non-regular jobs” is 9 percentage points

Table 4. Classification of Career Paths

	Hokkaido			Nagano			Tokyo		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Total (N)	216	208	424	305	286	591	923	851	1,774
(%)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Staying in a regular job	25.5	22.1	23.8	46.2	39.2	42.8	32.6	30.9	31.8
Regular job→regular job	9.3	5.3	7.3	9.8	6.6	8.3	7.5	6.1	6.8
Regular job→non-regular job→regular job	5.1	1.4	3.3	6.2	2.4	4.4	4.7	3.8	4.2
Other status→regular job	13.9	12.5	13.2	13.1	11.2	12.2	14.7	9.4	12.2
Continuing in non-regular jobs	33.3	39.9	36.6	14.1	19.2	16.6	23.6	32.1	27.7
Regular job→non-regular job	4.6	13.5	9.0	4.3	16.1	10.0	6.3	11.5	8.8
Self-employed/family work	4.2	1.9	3.1	3.0	2.8	2.9	7.2	2.1	4.7
Non-employed	3.7	2.9	3.3	3.3	2.4	2.9	3.4	3.9	3.6
Others	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.2	0.2

higher and the ratio for “staying in a regular job” is 8 percentage points lower in Hokkaido. The disparities reflect the relatively dim career prospect for youth in Hokkaido as exemplified by the low ratios of people who obtained a regular job immediately after graduation and people who are now working as a regular employee.

As for the situation in Nagano Prefecture, “staying in a regular job” is the most common career path among men, trailed in order by “other status→regular job” and “regular job→regular job.” Among women, “staying in a regular job” is most prevalent, followed by “regular job→non-regular job” and “continuing in non-regular jobs.” Among both men and women and in both Nagano City and the Suwa region, the three most common career paths accounted for more than 70% of the total. Men tend to switch from a non-regular job to a regular job, while women are liable to shift to a non-regular job. Comparison with the results of the Tokyo survey shows that the ratio for “staying in a regular job” is approximately 10 percentage points higher and the ratio for “continuing in non-regular jobs” is around 10% lower in Nagano Prefecture.

The difference in the career path trend between the two regions reflects the difference in the trend at each stage of the career path, from the status in the period immediately after leaving school to the current job.

2. Correlation between Academic Attainment and Post-Graduation Career

Next, we provide an analysis of the correlation between academic attainment and the career path.

(1) Hokkaido

“Staying in a regular job” (see Table 5) is the most common career path among male university and junior college graduates and female university graduates. This path is least common among school dropouts, both male and female. On the other hand, “continuing in non-regular jobs” is particularly prevalent among school dropouts, with more than half of female dropouts and around 40% of male dropouts on this path. This finding underscores the disadvantage that dropouts have in career opportunity, over the long term, compared with graduates.

In the case of men, although there is not a significant disparity between different types of higher education in the ratio of people “staying in a regular job,” the ratio is somewhat lower for graduates of specialized training colleges and other non-university institutions. As for women, some distinct trends are observed regarding university graduates. For one thing, the ratio for “staying in a regular job” is significantly higher for female university graduates than for graduates of other higher-education institutions. Moreover, compared with graduates of other higher-education institutions, few female university graduates who were initially employed as a regular worker have shifted to a non-regular job and those who were initially employed as a non-regular worker switched to a regular job in many cases. The finding suggests female university graduates’ strong preference for regular employment.

Table 5. Career Path Categories by Academic Attainment (Hokkaido)

	Hokkaido				
	Senior high grads	Non-univ. higher education (incl. vocational school) grads	Univ./graduate school grads	Dropouts	Total
Men total (N)	86	45	57	27	216
(%)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Staying in a regular job	23.3	31.1	36.8	0.0	25.5
Regular job→regular job	12.8	6.7	10.5	0.0	9.3
Other status→regular job	16.3	8.9	10.5	22.2	13.9
Continuing in non-regular jobs	34.9	24.4	29.8	48.1	33.3
Regular job→non-regular job	3.5	11.1	0.0	7.4	4.6
Others	9.3	17.8	12.3	22.2	13.4
Women total (N)	72	97	28	11	208
(%)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Staying in a regular job	13.9	23.7	42.9	9.1	22.1
Regular job→regular job	4.2	7.2	3.6	0.0	5.3
Other status→regular job	13.9	7.2	21.4	27.3	12.5
Continuing in non-regular jobs	47.2	37.1	25.0	54.5	39.9
Regular job→non-regular job	18.1	13.4	7.1	0.0	13.5
Others	2.8	11.3	0.0	9.1	6.7

Compared with the results of the Tokyo survey (see Table 7), the ratio for “continuing in non-regular jobs” is high and that for “staying in a regular job” is low in Hokkaido. The regional disparity in these ratios is particularly large regarding male university graduates: the ratio for “continuing in non-regular jobs” among male university graduates in Hokkaido is 16 percentage points higher than the ratio among their counterparts in Tokyo and the ratio for “staying in a regular job” is 16 percentage points lower. From this, we may say that in Hokkaido, the advantage that male university graduates have over male graduates of other higher-education institutions is relatively small in terms of the chance of obtaining the status of regular employee. In both Hokkaido and Tokyo, the ratio for “continuing in non-regular jobs” and that for “other status→regular job” were relatively high among people who dropped out of school, suggesting that the record of dropout has a considerable lasting impact on the career prospect of youth, either in metropolitan areas or in non-metropolitan areas.

(2) Nagano

As for the category of “staying in a regular job” (see Table 6), the higher the level of educational attainment is, the higher the ratio of people fitting this category. Among school dropouts, the ratio of people who get on this path is zero or negligible. “Other status→regular job” and “continuing in non-regular jobs” are the most common paths among dropouts. (The ratio for “other status→regular job” is relatively high among people who dropped out from higher education institutions, while “continuing in non-regular jobs” is common among dropouts from secondary education schools.) Among women, the lower the level of educational attainment is, the higher the ratio for “regular job→non-regular job” is.

Compared with the situation in Tokyo (Table 7), “staying in a regular job” is a more common path for school leavers (as opposed to school dropouts) in Nagano, at any level of educational attainment. In Tokyo, the ratio for “continuing in non-regular jobs” is high among women with lower educational attainment, whereas the Nagano survey shows an insignificant disparity between different levels of educational attainment, with the ratio for that category low across the board, although the ratio is relatively high among female senior high-school graduates. For school dropouts, “continuing in non-regular jobs” and “other status→regular job” are the two most common paths in both Tokyo and Hokkaido, indicating a considerable lasting impact of the record of dropout on the career prospect of youth, in metropolitan areas and non-metropolitan areas alike.

III. Path to and Exit from the *Freeter* Status

In this section, we discuss the path to and exit from the *freeter* status.

The word *freeter* came into use in the latter half of the 1980s to refer to young people who depend on odd jobs to scrape a living as a freelance worker of sorts. In good economic times, the *freeter* style of working became popular, particularly in urban areas, because of its freedom from the straitjacket of permanent affiliation with the employer. However, as the economy has remained in a prolonged slump since the latter half of the 1990s, the public perception of *freeter* has changed from something associated with “freedom” to a symbol of “insecurity.”

The *freeter*, as generally defined, refers to a part-time/odd-job worker aged between 15 and 34 who is not enrolled in school (being single is also a criterion in the case of women). In our research, we treated people who declared to be a *freeter* as such (our survey asked the sample subjects about their experience of working as a “*freeter*”). Little difference was observed between the perception of the *freeter* by self-declared *freeters* and the generally accepted definition of the word.

The Tokyo survey in 2006 found that the experience of working as a *freeter* was fairly widespread. According to our new Hokkaido survey, 43.9% of men in their early 20s and 46.4% of women in the same age group replied that they had the experience of working as a

Table 6. Career Path Categories by Academic Attainment (Nagano Prefecture)

	Nagano Prefecture						Total
	Senior high grads	Vocational school grads	Non-univ. higher education grads	Univ./graduate school grads	Secondary education dropout	Higher education dropout	
Men total (N)	109	74	14	72	23	11	305
(%)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Staying in a regular job	45.9	47.3	57.1	63.9	8.7	0.0	46.2
Regular job→regular job	10.1	14.9	14.3	6.9	4.3	0.0	9.8
Other status→regular job	11.0	12.2	7.1	9.7	21.7	45.5	13.1
Continuing in non-regular jobs	13.8	10.8	0.0	8.3	39.1	36.4	14.1
Regular job→non-regular job	3.7	4.1	7.1	5.6	4.3	0.0	4.3
Others	15.6	10.8	14.3	5.6	21.7	18.2	12.5
Women total (N)	92	56	72	45	9	12	286
(%)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Staying in a regular job	34.8	42.9	44.4	53.3	0.0	0.0	39.2
Regular job→regular job	8.7	12.5	4.2	2.2	0.0	0.0	6.6
Other status→regular job	4.3	12.5	8.3	20.0	11.1	41.7	11.2
Continuing in non-regular jobs	22.8	8.9	16.7	8.9	77.8	50.0	19.2
Regular job→non-regular job	22.8	14.3	16.7	11.1	0.0	0.0	16.1
Others	6.5	8.9	9.7	4.4	11.1	8.3	7.7

Table 7. Career Path Categories by Academic Attainment (Tokyo)

	Tokyo						Total
	Senior high grads	Vocational school grads	Non-univ. higher education grads	Univ./ graduate school grads	Secondary education dropout	Higher education dropout	
Men total (N)	302	191	22	283	66	57	923
(%)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Staying in a regular job	22.5	33.0	40.9	53.0	6.1	10.5	32.6
Regular job→regular job	7.3	11.0	4.5	7.8	3.0	1.8	7.5
Other status→regular job	15.2	11.0	18.2	10.2	30.3	28.1	14.7
Continuing in non-regular jobs	28.1	22.0	27.3	14.1	28.8	45.6	23.6
Regular job→non-regular job	9.6	5.8	4.5	4.2	7.6	0.0	6.3
Others	17.2	17.3	4.5	10.6	24.2	14.0	15.3
Women total (N)	207	194	160	208	44	37	851
(%)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Staying in a regular job	17.9	29.4	40.0	49.5	0.0	5.4	30.9
Regular job→regular job	3.4	8.2	8.1	7.7	0.0	0.0	6.1
Other status→regular job	4.8	9.3	10.0	9.1	18.2	24.3	9.4
Continuing in non-regular jobs	46.4	25.3	19.4	22.1	68.2	54.1	32.1
Regular job→non-regular job	15.0	15.5	13.1	5.3	4.5	8.1	11.5
Others	12.6	12.4	9.4	6.3	9.1	8.1	10.0

freeter. Overall, more than a third had experienced being a *freeter*.¹

However, the *freeter* style of working is less common in Nagano Prefecture, with only 33.6% of men in their early 20s and 37.8% of their female counterparts having the experience of working as a *freeter*.

We classified *freeters* into three types: the “dreamer” (who takes advantage of the *freeter* status to achieve ultimate success), the “moratorium type” (who seeks a time-out from the rigor of a more disciplined working environment) and the “those in *freeter* type work because of external circumstances” (who works as a *freeter* because there are no other options available) (we omit detailed analysis regarding this classification in this research paper). The “reality dodger” was the most prevalent type in Tokyo, whereas in Hokkaido and Nagano, the bite-the-bullet type was most common. This divergence presumably reflects a difference in the degree of tolerance of the *freeter* status. While it is difficult to obtain a regular job in Hokkaido, the economic environment there is too exacting to tolerate the idea of working as a *freeter*. Meanwhile, *freeters* in Nagano may feel alienated, as workplaces there are dominated by regular employees.

To what extent do people wishing to escape the *freeter* status have a chance to succeed in doing so? (see Figure 1)

In Hokkaido, approximately 60% of men in their early 20s attempted to escape by obtaining a regular job, as did 86.5% of men in their late 20s. As for women, the attempt rate stood at about 50% for those in their early 20s and at 68.6% for those in their late 20s. Of the would-be escapees in their early 20s, about a third succeeded in getting a regular job, among both men and women. Among the would-be escapees in their late 20s, the success rate exceeded 60%.

In Nagano Prefecture, 67.4% of men in their early 20s attempted to switch to a regular job, while more than 80% of men in their late 20s also tried to. Among women, approximately 40% of those in their early 20s made the attempt, as did 66.7% of those in their late 20s. The success rate reached about 50% for people in their early 20s, among both men and women. For people in their late 20s, the success rate was higher, at some 70% among men and at approximately 60% among women.

We may say that compared with their counterparts in Tokyo, *freeters* in non-metropolitan areas tend to attempt to switch to regular employment at a younger age. As for the rate of successful attempts, there is little inter-regional disparity.

We also found that the Hello Work employment support centers played a larger role in transition from the *freeter* status to regular employment in non-metropolitan areas than in Tokyo (detailed analysis shall be omitted here). This underscores the importance of the role of the public sector in non-metropolitan areas in particular.

¹ Although the *freeter* experience rate is lower than in Tokyo, the ratio of people engaging in a non-regular job is higher.

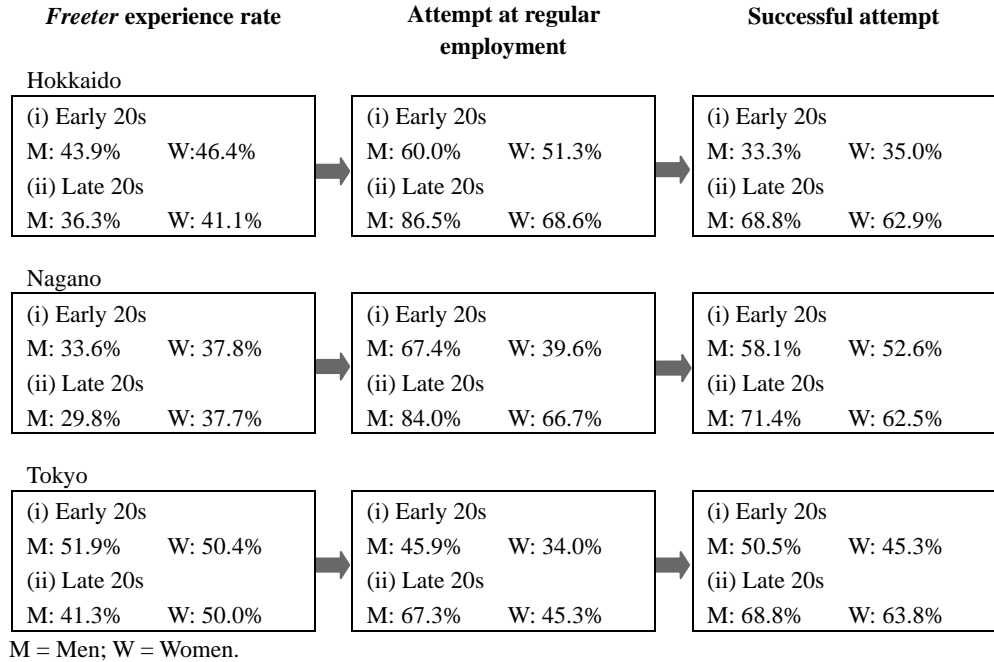


Figure 1. Path to and Exit from *Freeter* Status

IV. Conclusion

Our findings can be summed up as follows.

As for the security of the working career, the Type 2 market (Nagano Prefecture), where job offers come primarily from manufacturers, provides the prospect of the most steady career, followed by Type 1 (Tokyo) and Type 3 (Hokkaido) in that order. Let us take the career path for men in their 20s, for example. In Nagano Prefecture, 46.2% fit the “staying in a regular job” category compared with 32.6% in Tokyo and 25.5% in Hokkaido. As for the “continuing in non-regular jobs,” 33.3% were on this career path in Hokkaido, compared with 23.6% in Tokyo and 14.1% in Nagano Prefecture. Presumably, these figures reflect a chronic shortage of job offers in the labor market of Hokkaido and strong demand for labor in Nagano, particularly in the manufacturing sector. However, even in a Type 2 market area like Nagano, the situation is likely to be challenging when the manufacturing sector is struggling as it is now.

We also found that the strength of the link between educational attainment and the career path varied from region to region, depending on the condition of the local labor market.

Although the Tokyo survey indicated a strong link between educational attainment and the career path, we observed only a weak link in Hokkaido and Nagano. For example, let us look at the ratio of people “staying in a regular job” by educational attainment. In

Tokyo, only 22.5% of senior high-school graduates fit this category, compared with 63.9% for university and graduate school graduates. The disparity between different levels of educational attainment was less conspicuous in Hokkaido and Nagano: 36.8% of university and graduate school graduates versus 23.3% of senior high-school graduates in Hokkaido and 63.9% of university and graduate school graduates versus 45.9% of senior high-school graduates in Nagano.

However, the disparity was small in these two regions for different reasons. In the case of Hokkaido, the reason was the fact that higher education does not necessarily promise a better job prospect there. As for Nagano, the reason was a relatively high chance for senior high-school graduates to obtain a regular job. Meanwhile, as the higher education enrollment rate is especially high in Tokyo, people with lower educational attainment are likely to be put at a particular disadvantage in terms of career opportunity.

In our research, we endeavored to extend the coverage of the analysis of the patterns of employment by youth and the school-work transition process, which has traditionally focused mostly on the situation in metropolitan areas. We believe that this research has reminded readers of the importance of broadening the research focus so as to examine the trends for youth across Japan, both in metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas. By shedding light on the situation in non-metropolitan areas, we have also clarified the constraints imposed by social trends and factors on the school-to-work transition and the career.

The findings based on the surveys on employment trends for non-metropolitan youth underscore the need to reconsider the traditional approach of focusing on metropolitan areas. In the future, it will be essential for us to give consideration to region-specific factors when we study the patterns of youth employment and the school-to-work transition.

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