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Working Conditions and the Labor Market

Severe Employment Conditions Continuing

The unemployment rate in 1994 averaged the 2.9 percent, the highest ratio since the Management and Coordination Agency began compiling statistics in 1953, according to a Agency report. Joblessness is spreading not only among middle-aged persons but also among youths in their 30s and below, the Agency pointed out. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Labour said the average effective job openings to job applicants ratio in 1994 stood at 0.64, down 0.12 percentage points from the 1993 figure, indicating that the employment situation remains severe.

Under these circumstances, Nissan Motors Co. Ltd., the nation's second largest auto manufacturer, formulated its reconstruction program to be carried out over the next 3-year period. It will pare down the 49,000-strong work force at the end of March 1995 by 6,000-7,000 through restrictions on new hirings and temporary transfers and by changes in permanent employment place of record, in order to slash personnel costs by about 40 billion yen annually. It will reduce costs of raw materials, such as parts and components, by 240 billion yen and other fixed costs by 80 billion yen, thus making rationalization and streamlining efforts amounting to 10 percent of total costs, or approximately 360 billion yen. Salespersons at domestic sales outlets will increase by about 3,000 to 30,000. Demand for new cars has bottomed out but the business environment is still severe due to further appreciation of the yen. Therefore, the company will endeavor to increase sales, while strengthening cost competitiveness. Nissan's rationalization program is expected to be the largest in scale among all Japanese carmakers'.

Foreign-capitalized corporations, which have contributed to the increase in jobs in Japan, have taken a variety of management rationalization measures in order to respond adequately to the difficult economic environment. At IBM Japan, Ltd., a shade over 1,300 employees quit as a result of relocations implemented between October 1994 and January 1995. Those who retired cited "fear of job changes" and "inability to change work" as reasons for leaving the firm. The company introduced lucrative packages for those wanting to retire through relocation. An employee 50 years or older will be offered allowances equal to 21 months' pay plus retirement allowances and those 49 years or younger will receive 24 months' pay plus retirement allowance to be paid for to those leaving for personal reasons.

In October 1994, IBM Japan launched a program of "reallocating staffers to a strategic investment field," in which about 1,000 employees in indirect divisions, including those in the

head office's administrative division, were shifted to the frontline of the sales business division and the systems engineering division. The firm also moved its employees from other divisions to new jobs. Over 1,000 employees were ordered to take up new assignments, bringing the total number of retirees, including those who were transferred to affiliated firms, both male and female, to 1,300.

The Japan offices of Scandinavian Airlines Systems(SAS), which had seen its business performance continue to deteriorate, has set forth a plan to force all 141 Japanese employees, both ground-service staffers and cabin attendants, retire early. Of the 25 employees who did not accept the company's offer of an early-retirement package, seven forced the firm to retract its advance notice of dismissal but the remaining 18 were notified of dismissal. Job security for workers is taken for granted in Japan. Thus, many Japanese were appalled at the matter-of-fact payroll-cutting measures being promoted by SAS.

Labor Management Relations

The Dismal 1995 *Shunto*

This year's *shunto* (spring labor offensive) peaked on March 23 and 24, making it almost certain that pay raises on an all-industry basis will drop below 3 percent, down from the record low of 3.13 percent set last year.

The present labor bargaining pattern was inaugurated in 1956. All enterprise-based labor unions across the country present their demands to the company almost simultaneously in the spring for discussion. Industry-level federations organize a unified struggle to strengthen their demands based on the announcement of enterprise-based labor unions, with the national center coordinating the wage-hike strategies to achieve industry-wide uniformity. The year 1995 marked the 40th anniversary of the inauguration of *shunto*. This year labor unions faced a series of unforeseeable occurrences in their collective bargaining activities. First, labor unions of the public-interest industries such as electric power companies, private railway companies and telegraph and telephone companies were obliged to "abandon their usual strike option" during wage talks because of the January 17 Great Hanshin Earthquake. Workers of unions in public-interest industries were involved in recovery and relief operations to restore essential services and infrastructure. Second, in previous wage talks unions of public-interest industries always negotiated only after settlements in the metal working industry. But because of the urgent need to step up reconstruction in the stricken Kobe area, Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Corp (NTT) on March 3 concluded its wage talks unusually early agreeing to a small 2.8 percent increase settlement. The yen's sharp rise against the

dollar which began in early March had a grave impact on bargaining between management and labor in the metal working industries, as this came close to the time of final settlements.

Labor at first had intended to secure larger wage increases than last year's amid expectations that the economy will pick up and that companies will see better business performances. However, they were unable to counteract the grim realities of the nation's business environment caused by the Great Hanshin Earthquake and the sharp appreciation of the yen. It seems very likely that management took advantage of the "pacesetting" by NTT's 2.8 percent settlement, making it the best indicator for the wage boost in this year's *shunto*. Thus most labor unions are likely to agree to wage increases of between 2.8 percent and 2.9 percent. Their initial goal in this year's *shunto* was to effectively eliminate the trend of "lower hikes than the previous year" for the fourth year running. Their scenario, however, went awry although the increase, excluding the 2 percent automatic raise, exceeded the increase in consumer prices for 1994.

The 1995 wage round, under the impact of the Kobe quake which could be said to be a force majeure, seems to have three implications for altering the traditional *shunto* landscape. The first implication is that Rengo (Japanese Trade Union Confederation), the national center, turned out to be unable to act as a strategy coordinator, only standing back and watching "pacesetting" NTT take a small settlement. This was, it is fair to say, the foremost reason why most of labor unions gave up on negotiated wage hikes by accepting only a token raise or retreated to the sidelines. Rengo, inaugurated in 1989, is likely to be asked to strengthen its leadership to cope with the situation.

The second implication is the problem of the strong yen crisis and its effect on relative wage levels. Japanese wages, calculated in dollars, are already the highest level in the world, and continuing wage increases would make it difficult to maintain international competitiveness of the nation's export industries, insists Nikkeiren (Japan Federation of Employers' Associations). Nikkeiren thinks that to improve living standards of workers, deregulation should be promoted to lower the country's higher price levels than those of Western nations'. The impact of the strong yen crisis during wage talks forced Kinzoku Rokyo (IMF-JC) to fight a difficult wage struggle, dashing hopes for a large wage boost among its labor leaders. It is highly probable that trade-industry workers will lean toward lower prices rather than a wage raises and will confront public-interest industry workers.

The third implication is the issue involving employment practices and the changing wage system. Individual firms are tackling problems stemming from the seniority-based wage scheme with the greater possibility of determining wages according to an individual's

achievement and ability. With review of employment and wage and benefit systems underway, it is safe to say that the effectiveness of the current wage-hike system is being questioned. The traditional *shunto* pattern is that the pay raises are kept in accordance with conditions in private industry, which responds sensitively to trends in the market economy. Thus, wage hikes in major private industries set the pattern for other industries, including the public-interest and tertiary industries, as well as for smaller firms. Also public-sector pay is revised according to changes in private sector's wage level; and workers' purchasing power is improved, thus playing a significant role in sustaining the Japanese economy. Now is the time, it seems, for the effectiveness of the traditional *shunto* pattern to be debated.

Public Policy

Vocational Ability Development of White-Collar Workers

On March 20, Ministry of Labour Study Group (Head: JIL Research Director General Akira Takanashi) completed a report calling for the consolidation of comprehensive facilities for career development and training of white-collar workers.

Increasing numbers of workers are engaged in white-collar jobs due to the changing industrial structure. To respond adequately to recent trends, vocational-ability development is becoming an important issue to be tackled. On-the-job training(OJT) will continue to be the major pillar of vocational ability development, but in future years off-the-job training(OFF-JT) will play a significant and complementary role in enabling white-collar workers to acquire general-purpose and widely applicable professional abilities. Furthermore, in the recent economic slowdown there are calls for expanding opportunities for middle-aged and older white-collar workers to actively redevelop and put to good use their professional abilities. This is due to growing awareness of the expensive and bloated middle-aged and elderly white-collar workers who receive relatively high salary under the seniority-based wage system.

It is hard to say, however, that ability development of white-collar workers is well systematized at public or private training institutions. Thus, the report recommends that "planned life-long ability development programs will be important in the years to come and that toward this end, consolidation of a center for vocational ability development for white-collar workers is necessary." The report says that the proposed Center for white-collar workers must be able to perform the following functions. First, gathering information on vocational ability development of white-collar workers, conducting research and development using mid-and long-term perspectives and providing information and research results

accumulated at the Center. Second, implementing those model and "pioneer" training programs and training programs for separated workers and job-hoppers which are unavailable at private institutions and offering education and training programs using satellite communication networks in order to close the gap between regions in training opportunities. Third, developing and carrying out a check and evaluation system for vocational ability. What is more, the Center's aim is to be an "open facility," that will be made actively available to corporate and private training organizations, in particular. To give full play to its functions, the Center will need to conduct effective and flexible training programs in close cooperation with education-related institutions, public employment security offices and industrial employment security centers, to assure that trainees find re-employment.

First Ministry Proposal for Sex Bias Case

In response to a request by a group of seven women working at Sumitomo Metal Industries, and Equal Employment Opportunity Law (EEOL) committee under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Labour's Osaka Women's and Minors' Office came up with a mediation proposal urging the company to offer promotion opportunities to both sexes in accordance with their job abilities. In October 1994, the committee began to seek mediation in a case in which seven claimants asked the company to raise their status to one comparable to male workers, on the basis of the EEOL.

The mediation proposal, based on Article 15 of the EEOL, was the first since enforcement in 1986 of the Law. In the mediation proposal presented on February 20, the committee urges the following: First, introduction and smooth implementation of a system under which workers, regardless of sex, can switch their path away from *ippanshoku* (those in positions with limited promotion opportunities and pay hikes) to *sogoshoku* (those in positions with promotional opportunities to managerial and executive levels) at a certain appropriate stage of their careers on the basis of their will to work and ability. Second, assuring that both men and women have equal opportunity for other comprehensive training programs than educational programs to see that training of women workers is substantiated as occasion demands. Third, making the need to invigorate female workers known thoroughly to those in management posts and carrying out training programs for managers to insure that they foster opportunities of women workers.

Sumitomo was asked to reply to the above details of the mediation plan by March 20 specifically as to whether it will accept them or not. The seven women workers had asked for specific separate improvements in their treatment, while on the other hand, the mediation

proposal only asked for improvement in the firm's personnel system and training programs as well as a "revolution in consciousness" of managers. The woman said that male colleagues with the same high school diplomas received nearly twice the annual income they received and that women were given lower job evaluations than men regarding promotion potential. They based all this on sexual discrimination. The seven claimants had thus asked the committee to raise their status to that comparable to male workers.

The company praised the mediation plan, noting that the Ministry fully acknowledged its claim that no sexual discrimination exists nor does the alleged violation of the Law. "We will reply as to whether we will accept or decline the Ministry proposal after we have reviewed the realities of the work place", the company officials said. The company plans to adopt the two-track personnel management system which groups women into two categories, *sogoshoku* and *ippanshoku*, starting this year and expects that it can follow the instructions of the proposal.

Meanwhile, one of the seven claimants said: "The Ministry proposal did not touch on the specific complaints made by the women and is not worth praising. The proposal, the first of its kind since enforcement in 1986 of the Law, could not meet the expectations of working women across the nation. It is humiliating." The lawyer for the seven women expressed the view that "the existence of discrimination against female workers at Sumitomo is the very reason for the proposal calling for improved seminars for prospective women managers" and that "the company is grossly erroneous in the way it praised the Ministry proposal."

Special Topic

Japanese Production Workers in Small Business

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Introduction

In Japan, there is a myriad of small to medium-sized business. Each large manufacturer in Japan has transactions with many parts suppliers and sub-contracting manufacturers. Some analysts call this characteristic of industrial organization "flexible specialization." What kinds of production workers are in these small and mid-size manufacturing companies? Who

are the skilled workers, who act as leaders of these production workers? Here we introduce part of my research on this topic which I conducted at the Tokyo Metropolitan Labour Research Institute in 1994.

Titled A Report on the Veteran Production Workers, my research is based on a questionnaire administered in September 1992 to production workers at Tokyo-based small manufacturing enterprises. I analyzed replies which were received from the 894 males and females with the longer years of service at the surveyed enterprises.

1. Male Production Workers

Occupational Career and Skill Formation

With the increased level of education among Japanese young people, the tendency is strong for them to eschew manufacturing jobs. As there is a large gap in working conditions between big and smaller enterprises, smaller-scale manufacturers worry about lack of young worker. This has prolonged the service-age of their production workers. Skilled workers, with average ages of 48.6 years and 30.6 years on the job, have been working in their current firms on average for a continuous period of 22.9.

The common view is that the Japanese labor market is dual-structured and that workers at smaller-scale companies do not benefit from the lifetime employment system and frequently move between corporations. In actuality, to say the least, core workers stay at the same company for a long period of time.

Skilled workers have higher educational background. While many skilled workers 40 years or older have nine years schooling alone they have received intra-firm training. The percentage of those 40 years or younger who have high school degrees is high, and especially, for those 34 years or below the percentage with industrial high school degrees is high. Noteworthy is the fact that, the more skilled the workers are, the higher the percentage with intra-firm training experience. Also, the percentage of those with technical high school education is rather high.

Japanese skilled workers are said to have a strong sense of loyalty to their companies. Presently, those skilled workers who have thought the manufacturing jobs were their ideal job when they were students account for a mere 12 percent of the total. Even so, they get involved in their jobs once they enter the company. This can be supported by the fact that many, or 45.1 percent of those surveyed cited as a reason for staying long in their present firm that "my job is fit to me." In addition, 40.6 percent replied that they stayed at the same company for a long time "because I can give full play to my knowledge and skills on the job." This suggests that

Japanese corporations have well fostered those new recruits who first joined their firm reluctantly, enabling them to acquire knowledge and skills and this engendered pride in the utilization of these skills.

Workers can be categorized into two major groups, those who have switched to a more difficult job after entering the company(45.9%) and those who have continued to do the same job(40%). The percentage who said they moved to a more difficult job is high in areas of supervision and training education, production planning and product design and engineering. These multi-skilled workers constitute leaders of the small business world.

Of those skilled workers who have worked for over 15 years and have switched to more difficult jobs, a high of 35.8 percent said they have learned at off-the-job training courses at their own expense. Furthermore, many of them noted: "Can do kaizen;" "Can always use judgment properly;" and "Can improve my ability on the job." Moreover, the percentage of those who said: "Can set up machines;" "Can train junior workers;" "Can operate machines properly;" "Can make suggestions;" "Can act for the supervisor" is higher than the rest who said otherwise.

In many cases, at small-and medium-sized enterprises skilled workers are promoted to management positions, with approximately 40 percent of those in the 40-54 age bracket in management positions. The recognition that even those hired in midcareer can get promotions is higher among workers.

Manual Workers as Knowledge Workers

The desire for production workers to earn qualifications and acquire official additional skills is generally strong regardless of age. The percentage of those wanting to acquire qualifications and skills which are trans-corporate useful is high in such fields as maintenance, quality control and production planning (46.2%), design and engineering(36.2%) and supervision and training (35.9%). The percentage of those who are learning skills useful for their jobs at their own expenses is high in product design and engineering (25.9%) as well as in supervision and training (21.9%).

More often than not, it is said that work requiring special knowledge and manual production work are differentiated but many male skilled workers consider their jobs strongly intellectual. 59.3 percent said they can improve on their own jobs; 56.6 percent noted they can see the results and achievement of their work and 49.9 percent remarked they constantly need to use judgment to perform their work adequately. Furthermore, 24.5 percent said their work involves much change and the same percent said they can improve their ability through

their job.

Work Load

It is undeniable, however, that the environment in which they work is worse than that in other industries as well as in large manufacturing firms.

Of the male skilled workers, 44.9 percent complained they have eyestrain; 33 percent noted they carry heavy things; 22.8 percent said they feel tension and fatigue; 21 percent remarked there is danger involved; and 20 percent said the job is demanding. The more skilled the workers are, the more highly do they evaluate the internal values of their own work. But at the same time, they strongly tend to point out the heavy work load.

The highly skilled workers are better innovators in their work, better judges of how the work will turnout, better users of their own experience and achievers of what they are involved in. On the other hand, they have more chance to carry heavy objects, feel more tension and fatigue and feel their work is more demanding and dangerous. Highly evaluated internal values of their work do not complement lack of its external values. Rather, those who highly evaluate internal values of their work more strongly tend to harbor doubts on their external working conditions.

Now that the younger generation have come to shun manufacturing jobs, smaller manufacturers are forced to endeavor to improve the work load, the working environment and conditions in order to secure young workers.

Those who are considered more highly skilled point out rather drastic changes occurring recently at the work place in a variety of matters. The more skilled the workers are, the busier they get with fewer young men available. They noted, however, the following: The employer has come to take better care of the employees; holidays were increased with labor hours shortened; elderly people are re-evaluated; the work environment has improved; and automation has further progressed.

Participation in Management

Japanese small- and mid-size companies have a low unionization rate. Only 5.8 percent said they can express their views and opinions through the labor union, but this does not mean that without the labor union skilled workers cannot voice their views to management. A majority large number, or 51.1 percent, of the surveyed said their suggestions were heard by management. Twenty-one percent participate in quality control circles and self-management committees. Team activities are widespread also in smaller-scale enterprises.

2. Women Production Workers

Factors behind Long Years of Service

Lifetime employment is supposedly one of the characteristics of the Japan employment structure, but women are said to be generally ruled out of this practice. In actuality, however, some women have been long on the job. In the survey, I conducted research on women production workers.

Those production workers have been on the job for an average of 14.7 years. 25.8 percent had long wanted to have production jobs, lower than the 38.7 percent for male do manual jobs. But 42.6 percent of them 34 years old or younger said they love to work on the production floors, indicating that many young women are not forced choose to do manual jobs. In particular, those who strongly wish to earn marketable skills and qualifications willingly choose production jobs. An increasing number of women, it seems, avoid jobs at big businesses where sex discrimination is rampant and choose to work in production jobs where their skills are more fairly evaluated.

More women production workers than their male counterparts cite "the workplace is close to my home" as reasons for long-term employment. Women have more domestic and childcare duties than men. They give up the idea of searching better jobs far away from home.

Sixty-six percent of the skilled women workers surveyed once thought of quitting. They thought of leaving labor market several times in the long process of their career but got over it. They have been making a hard choice between the two options: to quit or to continue working, and have leaped over the hurdles at stages of their life. I asked the respondents about when and why they were tempted to quit work. The age at which they thought of stopping working was averaged for each reason.

Table: Reasons Why and Average Age at Which Women Production Workers Thought of Quitting

(Only those who thought of quitting; only reasons which were cited by 5 respondents or more)

Reason	age (years old)
Marriage	25.6
Childbirth	27.8
Child care	29.8
Looking for other job suited to me	31.0
Long working hours or long commuting time	34.4
Dissatisfaction with wages	35.9
Disparity in treatment between the sexes	39.8
Bad work environment	40.6
Illness	40.7
Bad interpersonal relations at the firm	40.9
Demanding job	43.0
Caring for elderly and sick family members	43.2
Child education	44.8
Has reached a certain specific age	45.2
Was asked by the family to quit	48.7

The Table shows that women production workers marry at around 26 years of age, give birth and raise an infant between the age of 28 and 30. These are the major reasons young women workers thought about stopping work. After clearing those hurdles, they wanted to find an ideal job at around the age of 31. This, however, will lead them to feel dissatisfied with working hours and commuting time at about 34 when their first child attends primary school. At about 36, when they probably plan to earn money for their children's education to purchase housing, they express dissatisfaction over low wages. At around 40, when they find educational as well as housing costs are enormous, they feel a gap in treatment between the sexes. Furthermore, they are made aware of the bad work environment, illness and bad interpersonal relations at the company at around 41 as well as demanding jobs at about 43. Changes are also perceived in stages of the family life. At about 43, they may have to care for elderly or sick family members and think of children's education at around 45. Simultaneously, they feel tempted to quit work at 45. When they reach 50, they are asked by the family to quit.

Increased Diversity

It was found, however, that the consciousness and behavior of women production workers are more diverse than those of male counterparts. Analysis of factors behind long-term employment reveals five different types of women workers. The first type are the "career-conscious elite" who cited as reasons for long tenure of employment: "My ability was recognized;" "the boss is fine;" "the company will have trouble without me;" and "I got promotions." The second type of women workers are those who attribute working long years to short-time labor. They said they could stay long in the company thanks to many holidays that are given, little overtime and shorter hours. Also, they noted "to quit working does not pay." The third type are women workers who demonstrated their ability to a full extent. Women of this type think they could stay long at the firm because they could give full play to their knowledge and skills and they received a high salary. The fourth type are rather negative about long term employment, citing "the workplace is close to my house" and "could somehow work long" as reasons for long years of service. The fifth type of female production workers stress the following: "there were many good coworkers;" "the job is less demanding;" "the job fits me;" and "could earn overtime pay." They are the women who adapted well to a comfortable work place.

Analysis of factors behind why they work now also shows that female skilled workers may be classified into several different groups. First is the group of women who work to find something to live for. They noted: "Can find in work something to live for;" "To continue working as long as possible is my ideal;" "Want to be worthwhile in society;" "Want to give full play to knowledge and expertise;" "Find it delightful to go to work with friends at hand;"

"Good for the health;" "Want to earn money to prepare myself for life in old age;" "Want to spend my money to enable children and grandchildren to live in comfort." Second is the house holding group of women who work to support themselves and their family. The third group are women who supplement their family incomes and want some money for themselves alone. The fourth group are those who are on the move somehow as they feel socially inferior if they do nothing.

Work and Life

Some women production workers with long employment tenure have a "work ethic" that it is ideal to work while they are able to do so. This, however, does not sum them up as work-aholics. Many consider both the workplace and outside the workplace to be important, and the percentage of female skilled workers who think matters outside of the work place important is higher than male counterparts who think so.

Regarding the way they cope with domestic chores which would constitute an impediment to work, 37.7 percent said they manage all by themselves, followed by 22.8 percent who noted "My spouse helps me out;" 20 percent said "My children give me a helping hand;" and 11.9 percent replied "My parents assist me." Thus, it seems that the family's cooperation is extremely important to prolong their service ages.

Occupational Career and Skill Formation

The average age of women production workers is 48.4. In the period of 30.4 years after graduating from school, they have been working for an average of 22.4 years, and for 11.7 years of the whole 22.4-year period, they have been in their present firm.

They are engaged in unskilled jobs more frequently than male production workers. But they expressed the opinion that they "can see how my work turns out to be" (43.1%), "can do the job without any expertise" (41.3%) and "can elaborate a plan to do the job easily and well." (41.2%) Women skilled workers, it seems, do not necessarily perform the classic mind-numbing tasks and in fact many seem to be engaged in the tasks which allows them to think out and judgment themselves.

Many women production workers (45%) have been at the same job ever since they started their career. Yet 34.5 percent consider they have moved on to a more difficult job gradually. Only 4 percent have a managerial job, while 18.2 percent hold a non-managerial supervising job and 17.9 percent have a group-leader-function. 5.6 percent said they can do every job in the factory and 28.9 percent remarked they can do several function of the shop-floor jobs. One out of every three said they can do other jobs than their present ones. Thirty-nine percent

noted they do anything their managers and supervisors ask them to do.

Labour Shortage and Re-evaluation of Women

Many of the surveyed, or 44.6 percent, said "The Company are not necessarily fair in promotion and pay raise." Only 19.5 percent noted "promotion and pay hikes are possible regardless of sex." In addition, 22 percent said they "experienced discrimination against." The structural shortage of younger workers demands that the management re-evaluate women workers to a fuller extent. Thirty-one point six percent said more work made them busier, while on other hand, a miniscule 8.9 percent remarked there were more people at work. Rather, 47.8 percent said there were no more new recruits and 26.4 percent noted more workers quit. Under these situations, 33.6 percent noted their employer understands anew the ability of women workers."

De-Industrialization Feared

As we have seen, Japan's smaller manufacturers have both male and female production workers of high standards. Utilization of women production workers who had thus far suffered from discrimination was ready to advance a midst the shortage of workers. However, recovery in the economic slowdown, which Japan has been experiencing since 1991 is nowhere in sight. Worse yet, the rapid appreciation of the yen is prompting more companies to shift their production facilities offshore. Fear regarding employment security is widespread among production workers of the nation's small- and mid-size corporations. It is feared that the skills of these workers will remain untapped. What is more, it is also feared that moves to re-evaluate the female work, force and especially moves to achieve re-balancing between family and career, will be bogged down, just as progress has started.

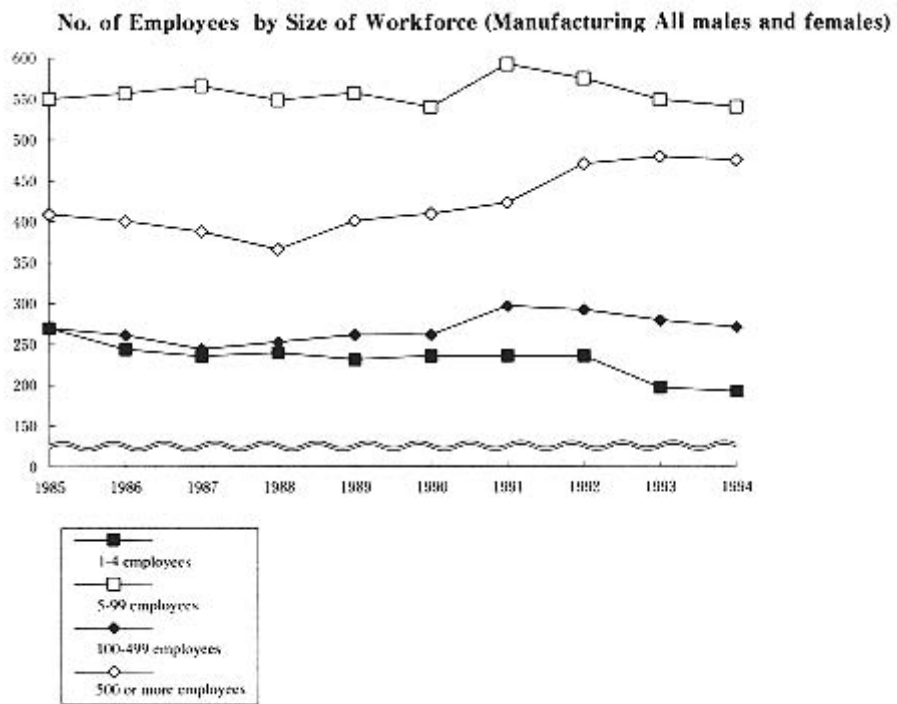
Statistical Aspects

	January 1995	December 1994	Change from previous year
Labor force	6,519(10thousand)	6,587(10thousand)	10(10thousand)
Employed	6,324	6,410	-2
Employees	5,196	5,259	33
Unemployed	195	187	12
Unemployment rate	3%	2.7%	0.2
Active opening rate	0.66	0.65	-0.01
Total hours worked	144.1(hours)	161.8(hours)	1.6
Total wages of regular employees	275.5 (¥ thousand)	281.2 (¥ thousand)	1.8

Source: Management and Coordination Agency, Ministry of Labour.

Notes: 1.*denotes annual percent change.

2.From February 1991, data of "Total hours worked" and "Total wages of regular employees" are for firms with 5 to 30 employees.



Source: Statistics Bureau, Management and Coordination Agency, Special Labour Force Survey