

News

Aiming to Raise Implementation Rate of Measures for Securing Job Opportunities until Age 70 to 40% or Higher: MHLW Formulates New Basic Policy for Measures for the Stabilization of Employment for Elderly Persons, etc.

On March 31, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare formulated the new Basic Policy for Measures for the Stabilization of Employment for Elderly Persons, etc., which covers the four year-period between FY2026 and FY2029, and the application of the policy started on April 1. The policy is based on the Act on Stabilization of Employment of Elderly Persons. The new policy has adopted additional policy targets intended to increase job opportunities for elderly persons and set the target of raising the implementation rate of measures for securing job opportunities until age 70 to 40% or higher. In addition, in order to further promote measures for stabilizing employment for elderly persons, the new policy also includes the further expansion of measures for securing job opportunities until age 70 and the strengthening of advice and guidance in line with companies' actual circumstances, and subsidy programs in order to improve the treatment of elderly workers.

Background to the formulation of the Basic Policy

New policy formulated in response to the expiration of the current policy

The Basic Policy for Measures for the Stabilization of Employment for Elderly Persons, etc. is formulated by the Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare under Article 6, Paragraph 1 of the Act on Stabilization of Employment of Elderly Persons (Act No. 68 of 1971). Based on the employment and job situation of elderly persons, the Policy sets concrete targets for increasing job opportunities for

elderly persons, such as employment rates, and formulates the basic framework for measures concerning the employment stability of elderly persons and others.

As the five-year period, from FY2021 to FY2025, of the previous policy was set to expire, the government formulated the new policy to be applied from FY2026. Following deliberations at the Subcommittee on Basic Employment Measures of the Labour Policy Council in January, the new policy was referred for consultation to both the Subcommittee and the Employment Security Committee on March 11, and was approved as appropriate. The new policy was announced on March 31, 2026, and took effect on April 1 of the same year.

Specifics of the new policy

Indicating the basic approach to jobs and employment for elderly persons widely to the public

The new policy, like the previous one, specifies the "Policy Purpose" at the beginning, and, based on Article 6, Paragraph 2 of the Act on Stabilization of Employment of Elderly Persons, is composed of the following four items: "Item 1: Matters related to developments in the employment of elderly persons"; "Item 2: Matters related to targets in increasing job opportunities for elderly persons"; "Item 3: Matters that should serve as guidelines on the development of various conditions to be implemented by employers"; "Item 4: Matters that should constitute the basics of measures for stabilizing the employment of elderly persons."

The Act on Stabilization of Employment of Elderly Persons has been amended based on the provisions of the Act Partially Amending the Employment Insurance Act and Other Acts, which was enacted at the 201st ordinary session of the Diet in 2020 in order to develop the environment for the empowerment of elderly persons (this act shall be hereinafter referred to as the Amended Act on Stabilization of Employment of Elderly Persons). Specifically, employers are obligated to make efforts to secure job opportunities until age 70, for example.

In light of the objectives of the Amended Act on Stabilization of Employment of Elderly Persons, the “Policy Purpose” stipulates that the new policy “seeks to ensure the stabilization of employment, promote reemployment and secure diverse job opportunities for elderly persons, for example by showing, widely to the public, including labor and management, the targets and basic approach to measures related to jobs and employment for elderly persons and by indicating guidelines on the development of various conditions to be undertaken by employers.”

Further promoting initiatives to secure job opportunities until age 70 and improve the treatment of elderly workers

At the end of March 2025, the existing transitional measure to allow the application of the eligibility criteria of a continued employment system based on labor-management agreement expired, and starting in April of the same year, measures for securing employment until age 65—for which all workers who wish to continue to be employed are eligible—were fully put into effect (namely, raising the formal retirement age, introducing a continued employment system, or abolishing formal retirement by age).

In response, the “Policy Purpose” pointed out that it is “necessary to conduct initiatives to securely implement the measures.” As for the future policy course, given that many people belonging to the generation who experienced the so-called “employment ice age”—when prolonged economic stagnation caused companies to freeze their hiring of new graduates—are set to enter their senior years in

the coming years, it stated that “it is necessary to conduct support initiatives with an eye to the future,” indicating the need to further promote initiatives to secure job opportunities until age 70 and improve the treatment of elderly workers.

The new policy covers the four-year period from FY2026 to FY2029 (the period has been set so as to maintain consistency with the government’s General Principles Concerning Measures for the Aging Society, authorized by a cabinet decision on September 13, 2024). However, as the policy is predicated on the Amended Act on Stabilization of Employment of Elderly Persons that was in effect when it started to be applied, it is stipulated that “revisions may be made when necessary” in light of developments in the situation of employment of elderly persons and systems regarding labor supply and demand adjustments.

Item 1. Matters related to developments in the employment of elderly persons

One in 2.9 people are expected to be 65 years old or older in 2040

“Item 1: Matters related to developments in the employment of elderly persons” introduces the situations of the jobs and employment of elderly persons, the employment system, and work-related accidents.

The population of elderly persons aged 65 or older is estimated to increase from approximately 36.03 million in 2020 to approximately 39.28 million in 2040, representing an increase of around 3.25 million over a 20-year period, with one in every 2.9 persons aged 65 or older. Meanwhile, among elderly persons, the employment rate in 2024 reached high levels, at 74.3% for those aged between 60 and 64 (a rise of 13.6 percentage points compared with 2014) and at 53.6% for those aged between 65 and 69 (a rise of 13.5 percentage points compared with 2014).

The 30% range of companies have taken measures for securing job opportunities until age 70

As for the situation of the employment system, as of June 1, 2025, when “measures for securing

employment until age 65 for all elderly persons who wish to continue working” was fully put into effect, among companies with 21 or more regular employees, 99.9% had taken the measures. On the other hand, the percentage of companies that had taken measures for securing job opportunities until age 70 was 34.8%. Regarding the wage level for elderly workers continuing to work after reaching the formal retirement age, in 2024, it was higher than 80% of the level before retirement at 39.6% of all companies (a rise of 15.1 percentage points compared with 2019).

Regarding work-related accidents, while people aged 60 or older accounted for 19.1% of all employees in 2024, the percentage of such people among those who suffered work-related deaths or injuries resulting in four or more days of leave was as high as 30.0%. Accordingly, the new policy noted that “the incidence rate of work-related accidents is high among elderly persons, with the risk of a work-related accident tending to rise in line with the advance of age.”

Item 2: Matters related to targets in increasing job opportunities for elderly persons

Adopting new targets, such as raising the employment rate for people aged between 60 and 64 to 79.0% or higher by 2029

“Item 2: Matters related to targets in increasing job opportunities for elderly persons” first describes measures for increasing job opportunities. After pointing out the importance of increasing the employment opportunities of elderly persons and promoting the treatment of elderly workers based on job duties and competences suited to companies’ actual situations, it stipulates that, based on the Amended Act on Stabilization of Employment of Elderly Persons, the government will “support the empowerment of elderly persons by strengthening various initiatives to further spread measures for securing job opportunities for elderly persons until age 70 among companies and also by strengthening support measures for companies striving to improve treatment based on job duties and competences.”

Moreover, the new policy includes numerical

targets similar to the policy targets indicated in the General Principles Concerning Measures for the Aging Society. Specifically, it upholds the following targets: raising the employment rate for those aged between 60 and 64 to 79.0% or higher (up from 74.3% in 2024) by 2029; raising the employment rate for those aged between 65 and 69 to 57.0% or higher (up from 53.6% in 2024) by 2029; and raising the implementation rate of measures for securing job opportunities for elderly persons until age 70 to 40.0% or higher (up from 34.8% as of June 1, 2025) by 2029.

Item 3: Matters that should serve as guidelines on the development of various conditions undertaken by employers

Prescribing the improvement of work facilities with due consideration for elderly persons and the implementation of support measures for those who desire reemployment

“Item 3: Matters that should serve as guidelines on the development of various conditions undertaken by employers” lays down basic guidelines on the three areas of responsibilities to be undertaken by employers: (i) developing various conditions; (ii) supporting reemployment; and (iii) supporting the design of vocational life.

Regarding the first responsibility, “developing various conditions,” the new policy prescribes that employers should make efforts to develop various conditions under sufficient labor-management consultations in order to secure job opportunities for elderly persons in accordance with their motivations and competencies. Specifically, it cites the need to “improve work facilities” with due consideration given to a decline in physical functions in order to prevent elderly persons with weakened physical strength from being excluded from workplaces, to “expand the scope of jobs” so that elderly persons’ knowledge, experiences and competencies can be fully utilized, and to “promote assignment and treatment that enables the utilization of knowledge and experiences” through a mechanism to evaluate vocational competencies and a qualification system.

As for the second responsibility, “supporting reemployment,” the new policy stipulates that when elderly workers who are set to leave due to dismissal or for other reasons wish to be reemployed, employers should proactively “strive to support reemployment through active assistance” regarding job search activity and vocational skills development before they leave while giving consideration to the “implementation of reemployment support measures (e.g., education and training)” and “active use of support by Public Employment Security Offices or other organizations.”

Regarding the third responsibility, “supporting the design of vocational life,” the new policy lays down that in order to enable workers they employ to continue leading a fulfilling vocational life until advanced age, employers should “make efforts to provide effective support for the design of vocational life in advanced age” by “providing information and consultation necessary for designing a vocational life” and by “supporting career development based on the design of vocational life.”

Item 4: Matters that should constitute the basics of measures for stabilizing the employment of elderly persons

Collection of cases of companies improving the treatment of elderly workers through the revisions of wage and personnel management systems

“Item 4: Matters that should constitute the basics of measures for stabilizing the employment of elderly persons” lays down principles regarding the following three categories of initiatives: (i) initiatives for ensuring the smooth implementation of measures for securing the employment of elderly persons; (ii) initiatives for promoting the reemployment of elderly persons; and (iii) initiatives for otherwise stabilizing the employment of elderly persons.

Regarding the first category, “initiatives for ensuring the smooth implementation of measures for securing the employment of elderly persons,” the new policy adopted additional measures mainly with respect to the matters that had already been mentioned in the previous policy, such as securing employment

until age 65, securing job opportunities until age 70, and securing appropriate treatment of elderly workers continuing to be employed.

Specifically, the new policy stipulated that in order to ensure the implementation of “measures for securing employment until age 65 for all workers who wish for continued employment,” which were fully put into effect since April 2025, active efforts should be made to raise awareness and provide guidance. It also stipulated that efforts should be made to collect and effectively provide good practices of companies making efforts to improve treatment of elderly workers through the revisions of wage and personnel management systems, and to strengthen subsidy programs for employers undertaking initiatives to improve treatment of elderly workers.

Strengthening subsidy measures to achieve policy targets

With respect to measures for securing job opportunities until age 70, the new policy lays down that Prefectural Labour Bureaus and Public Employment Security Offices should once again make thorough efforts to raise awareness about the purpose and specifics of relevant systems. It also stipulated that active efforts should be made to provide advice and guidance in accordance with companies’ actual circumstances and that subsidy measures to support the achievement of policy targets should be strengthened. Regarding measures to support business start-ups, etc., not based on an employment contract, based on the provisions of the Amended Act on Stabilization of Employment of Elderly Persons, thorough guidance should be provided to ensure compliance with the Guidelines on Implementation and Enforcement of Measures to Secure Job Opportunities for Elderly Persons, which was amended in line with the amendment of that law, and with the Freelance Act (formally called the Act on Ensuring Proper Transactions Involving Specified Entrusted Business Operators), which was put into force in 2024. Moreover, in order to make diverse job options possible in accordance with the characteristics and needs of elderly persons, the use of those measures should be further expanded by collecting

and effectively providing information, including good practice cases in which implementation and planning are conducted appropriately based on labor-management agreement.

As for the securing of appropriate treatment of elderly workers continuing to be employed, the new policy additionally stipulated that regarding the Guidelines for Equal Pay for Equal Work (formally called the Guidelines on the Prohibition against Unreasonable Treatment of Part-Time Workers, Fixed-Term Workers, and Dispatched Workers), which will be revised for further clarification through more substantial descriptions of various types of treatment based on judicial precedents, awareness should be raised and guidance should be provided regarding the revisions to be made.

Meticulous matching support suited to the needs provided through Lifelong Active Worker Support Desk

Regarding the second category, “initiatives for promoting the reemployment of elderly persons,” the new policy adopted additional measures, mainly with respect to reemployment support by Public Employment Security Offices, which had already been mentioned in the previous policy.

Specifically, while indicating the need to provide appropriate vocational guidance, including support for the preparation of resumes (CVs), job placement services, and individualized job development in order to enable the earliest possible reemployment, the new policy stipulates that “intensive reemployment support should be provided for elderly persons, mostly those who are 60 years old or older (particularly those who are 65 years old or older) through meticulous matching suited to diverse needs” at the Lifelong Active Worker Support Desk established at major Public Employment Security Offices across the nation.

In light of the increasing number of elderly persons who consider the types of jobs and conditions

available to be inadequate, the new policy also indicated the need, mainly for employment and life support advisors, to provide careful career consulting support tailored to elderly persons with respect to the redesigning of vocational life.

Promotion of a safe and secure workplace environment and use of Silver Human Resource Centers

Regarding the third category, “initiatives for otherwise stabilizing the employment of elderly persons,” the new policy adopted additional measures mainly with respect to a safe and secure workplace environment and the securing of employment and job opportunities by Silver Human Resource Centers (job placement centers for elderly persons).

Regarding a safe and secure working environment, the new policy stipulates that measures for elderly persons, such as preventing work-related accidents, maintaining sound health, and controlling working hours should be promoted. In particular, it indicated the need to disseminate and provide guidance to employers about the guidelines based on the Act to Partially Amending the Industrial Safety and Health Act and the Working Environment Measurement Act, which was promulgated in 2025 (to be gradually put into force starting in 2026).

As for the securing of diverse employment and job opportunities by Silver Human Resources Centers, the new policy stipulates that for elderly persons who wish to work temporarily or on a short-term basis after reaching the formal retirement age, the use of the Silver Human Resources Center program to provide diverse jobs closely associated with everyday lives of local communities should be promoted in order to “expand the scope of activities so that a broad range of opportunities for employment and social activity can be provided by matching elderly persons’ diverse needs for employment and social activity with the human resource needs of various industries and regional challenges.”