

**Childbirth/Childcare and Job Continuity**  
**—Addressing Job Mobility and 24-hour Society—**

**Authors**

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**Research Period**

FY2007-2011

**Research Objectives**

Over the past 20 years since the Childcare Leave Act was put into effect in 1992 to support women's job continuity at the stage of childbirth/childcare, a growing number of enterprises have included childcare leave systems into their work regulations and an increasing number of women have taken childcare leave. Still, a great number of women quit their jobs during the childbirth and childcare period. In a bid to find factors behind this situation, our institute conducted "a Study on Policy Effect of Job Continuity" as a sub-theme of a FY2007-2011 project study titled "Research on the way of Establishing Working Conditions towards Response to Diversification of Employment Formats and Realization of Work-Life Balance." This report represents the final compilation of the study.

An analysis of profile data for women aged between 30 and 44 in Japan suggested that the high mobility of young labor force and the expansion of night work have a negative influence on job continuity during the childbirth and childcare period. Childcare leave and other work-life balance support systems have been advanced, improving the environment for women workers who hope to continue working at their companies without switching to others. However, those who switch to other companies have limited opportunities to ascertain the work-life balance support conditions available at those companies, which contributes to increasing uncertainties about their job continuity. In order to overcome the situation, our analysis indicates that ensuring increased information for individual workers about work-life balance support measures is important, as well as enhancing companies' support efforts. Meanwhile, women who enter the childbirth and childcare period as

regular employees at enterprises with childcare leave systems may also have difficulties in retaining their jobs after their childcare leave if their scheduled closing hours are 6 p.m. or later. It is important to design and operate these systems from the viewpoint of restricting night work in order to increase the effects of the shorter working hour system that became mandatory in 2010. In addition, support for transportation to and from childcare centers contributes to reducing the job quitting rate for women employees after their childcare leave. In this respect, our analysis also suggests that promoting men's participation in childcare is also an important challenge. Young people's job changes and night work have tended to increase. In this sense, the promotion of work-life balance support measures responding to the diversification of working styles is an important challenge to help women workers retain their jobs during and after the childbirth and childcare period.

Analysis results that led to these findings are described below:

## **Outline of Analysis Results**

### **1. Overview**

We analyzed occupational careers before, during and after the first childbirth and childcare period and considered challenges to increase the number of women who can retain their jobs while bearing and raising children. Analysis results are summarized as follows:

(1) At small enterprises with less than 100 employees and for non-regular employees, the absence of childcare leave systems and maternity leave systems, which are the premise for the former, has made it difficult for women employees to retain jobs. At small enterprises, however, the provision of information to individual employees about work-life balance support measures is likely to contribute to lowering women's job quitting rate during the pregnancy and childbirth period. Meanwhile, for about 70% of non-regular women employees upon their first pregnancy, their first jobs were regular ones, meaning that their switch from regular jobs to non-regular ones has contributed to increasing the job quitting rate for all women.

(2) More than 40% of women who had switched from their first regular jobs before their first pregnancy switched to become non-regular employees when entering the pregnancy and childbirth period. The percentage of women who could switch from their first jobs to new regular jobs at enterprises with childcare leave systems is low (Figure 1). This tendency is remarkable for women who started their occupational career at enterprises with no childcare leave system. Over recent years, however, the proportion of women who switch from enterprises without childcare leave systems to those with such systems retaining their regular employee status has been rising.

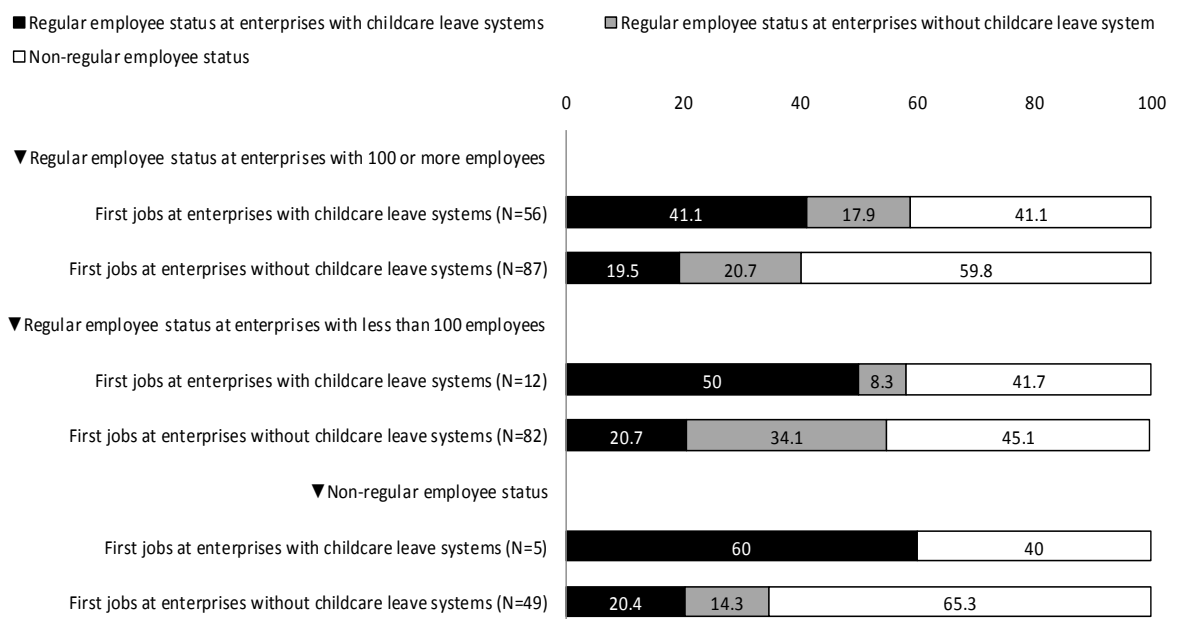
(3) If female workers' normal closing hours (normal time work finishes) are 6 p.m. or later, the rate of their job quitting during the pregnancy and childbirth period is higher. Furthermore, even after resuming work, women employees gradually leave such enterprises during the childcare period after childbirth. Women's job quitting rate is lower if they have access to shorter working hour system or support from family member for child transportation to and from childcare centers. Also, night work

with an even later closing hour is an impediment to childbirth. The expansion of night work has offset the positive effect of the childcare leave system on choices in childbirth.

The conclusion is that support responding to the high mobility of young workers and the expansion of night work is an important future challenge. In response to the high mobility, efforts should be made not only to encourage enterprises to support the work-life balance but also to provide more information to individual workers. As for the problem of night work expansion, night work should be reviewed from the viewpoint of harmony between work and family life. In addition, support should be enhanced for child transportation to and from childcare centers, particularly for transportation to home. In this respect, husbands’ participation in childcare should be promoted.

Figure 1 Share for women working as regular employees at enterprises with childcare leave systems upon their first pregnancy

—By first-job enterprise size, by employee status, by presence or absence of childcare leave systems— (Women who changed jobs before their first pregnancy)



## 2 Outline of Each Chapter

### Chapter 1 Working conditions before/after childbirth and work-life balance support

A comparison of job quitting rates at the pregnancy/childbirth of first child for past periods indicates that the rate is on a decline. However, the expansion of childcare leave as a pillar of work-life balance support measures has worked to decrease the job quitting rate only for women who work as regular employees at enterprises with 100 or more employees. As for non-regular employees, the

rate of employees taking childcare leave has also been rising but still remains low. For regular employees at enterprises with less than 100 employees, the rate of women taking childcare leave has leveled off, and the job quitting rate has not been on a decline, either. The expansion of support focusing on small enterprises with less than 100 employees and non-regular employees is a future challenge.

### **Chapter 2 Enterprise size and childbirth-related job quitting—Focusing on small enterprises with less than 100 employees**

Determinants of regular employees' quitting jobs at the first pregnancy and childbirth period differ depending on the enterprise size. At enterprises with 100 or more employees, the spread of announcement about childcare leave systems among employees and the integration of jobs for men and women can be cited as factors behind the job quitting rate fall. At enterprises with less than 100 employees, the introduction of childcare leave systems is still a problem in itself, but women employees' contacts with information about work-life balance support measures outside their companies lead to the rise in their job continuity. In order to effectively raise the job retention rate at small enterprises, it is important not only to encourage these enterprises to introduce work-life balance support measures, but also to expand information provision to individual workers about available work-life balance support systems.

### **Chapter 3 Increasing non-regular young employees and job quitting for childbirth**

Childcare leave and even childbirth leave are still unavailable for a high percentage of non-regular employees. About 70% of pregnant non-regular employees had regular jobs as their first ones. Women's switch from their first regular jobs to non-regular ones contributes to boosting the childbirth-related job quitting rate for all women. As well as allowing non-regular employees to take childbirth and childcare leave, restricting women's switching to non-regular jobs before their pregnancy and childbirth period is important. To this end, women should be helped to find first jobs at enterprises with childcare leave systems. In addition, women switching jobs with their work-life balance taken into account should be supported to choose to "take childcare leave and continue working", instead of "becoming non-regular employees before suspending jobs". In this respect, it is important to provide job seekers with information on work-life balance support measures available at enterprises where they want to find jobs.

### **Chapter 4 Working hour-related factors affecting job continuity during and after childbirth/childcare period—Focusing on regular employees**

In order to support women's job continuity during the childbirth and childcare period from the viewpoint of working hours, we should pay attention not only to the length of working hours but also to the level of personal discretion over their work and working time zones. In order to

effectively operate work-life balance support systems, which include childcare leave and shorter working hours, daily work volume and work schedules should be made more discretionary. Where the closing hours (normal time work finishes) is 6 p.m. or later, it may be difficult for women, even if they were able to take childcare leave, to retain jobs during the childcare period thereafter. In order to limit job quitting during the childcare period, the shorter working hour system should be implemented to reduce night work and move up the closing hours. In addition, husbands' participation in childcare should be promoted to enhance support for child transportation to and from childcare centers.

### **Chapter 5 First job types and choice in childbirth—Focusing on night work**

First jobs of both regular and non-regular employees have come to include night work at a higher percentage. Regular workers who have night work tend to bear children at higher ages, offsetting the effect of childcare leave systems on childbirth choice. Furthermore, childcare leave is frequently unavailable for non-regular employees. As a growing number of women start their working career as non-regular employees, while work-life balance support measures still remain insufficient and night work has been increasing, more and more workers have difficulties in achieving their work-life balance. An important challenge is to consider desirable night work systems from the viewpoint of helping young workers to form families.

#### Outline of “Survey on Women’s Working Styles and Family Life”

##### (1) Purpose

The survey looks into work, marriage and childbirth/childcare conditions, enterprises' employment management, regional community services, family support, etc. to specify challenges regarding work environments and social support that would allow women to retain jobs.

##### (2) Main Survey Categories

- 1) Occupational career
- 2) Marriage experience
- 3) Childcare experience
- 4) Domestic work sharing between family members
- 5) How work-life balance support measures are used
- 6) Present working conditions including income
- 7) Consciousness of work, career, life, etc.

##### (3) Survey Scope

2,000 women aged between 30 and 44 nationwide

##### (4) Survey method

- 1) Sampling: Stratified two-stage sampling method
- 2) Survey method: Questionnaire delivery and collection

(5) Survey period

November 18-December 12, 2010

(6) Survey implementation

The survey was contracted out to a research firm (Central Research Services, Inc.)

(7) Questionnaire collection

1,240 questionnaires (Collection rate: 62.0%)