

Non-standard Forms of Employment in Japan: Classifications and Statistics

April 25, 2025

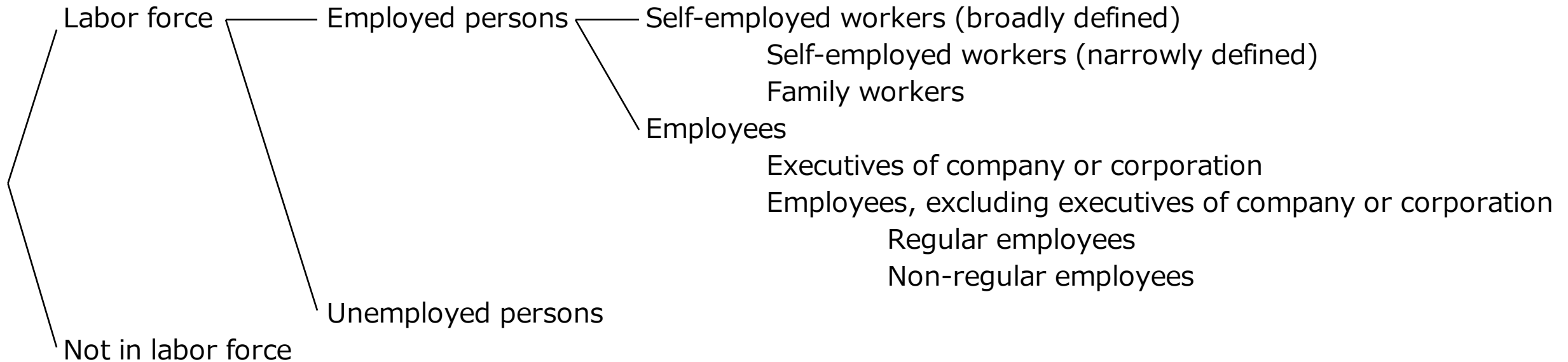
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1. Terms used in *Labour Force Survey*



- “Employees, excluding executives of companies or corporations” are individuals working under an employment contract, whereas “self-employed workers (broadly defined)” are those working without such a contract.
- “Self-employed workers (broadly defined) include, for example, farmers, forestry workers, fishers, small shop owners, small factory owners, truck and taxi drivers, carpenters, artists, actors, and writers.
- Among “self-employed workers (broadly defined),” there are those called “freelancers,” who are self-employed workers but neither hire employees nor own stores (excluding farmers, forestry workers, and fishers).
- The “Freelance Act” (The Act on Ensuring Proper Transactions Involving Specified Entrusted Business Operators) was enacted in 2023 to protect protecting persons working as freelancers (JILPT 2024).

- The definition of “non-regular employees” in the *Labour Force Survey* is based on the classification of workers within each company or corporation. Generally, part-time, fixed-term contract, or temporary agency (dispatched) workers are classified as “non-regular” employees in many companies/corporations. However, under the Japanese-style employment system, the term “non-regular” employees refers to individuals performing supplementary tasks with less stability, whereas regular employees typically hold long-term employment. (Takahashi 2023)
- Non-regular employees include married women whose husbands are regular employees, young people, part-time student workers, and those working after reaching mandatory retirement age.
- “Not in labor force” includes children, older people, students, and homemakers.

2. Changes in the number of workers in Japan

Composition of the population aged 15 years old and over (million people)



Source: Author calculated combining the “basic tabulations” and “detailed tabulations” of the Labour Force Survey (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications).

Note: Actual numbers are available in the appendix.

- Traditionally, the workforce primarily comprised “regular employees” who worked full-time, held permanent contracts, and were under the direct control of their employers.
- However, since the 1990s, the number and proportion of non-regular employees have increased, and the disparity in working conditions, such as job security and compensation between regular and non-regular employees, has become a severe social problem.
- The number and proportion of “self-employed workers (broadly defined)” are expected to decline in the long term, primarily due to the decline in agriculture, forestry, and fisheries, as well as the closure of small family businesses.

3. Worker protection and social security

Eligibility for worker protection and social security schemes

	Labor Standards Act (LSA)	Employment Insurance	Pension and Health Insurance	Labor Union Act (LUA)	Industrial Accident Compensation Insurance
Regular employee	○	○	○ (Automatically enrolled by employer*)	○	○
Non-regular employee	○	△ ("Scheduled working hours is 20 hours or more per week" and "period of employment is 31 days or longer" and "not a student")	△ (Automatically enrolled by employer*/Need to apply for themselves)	○	○
Self-employed (in a broad sense)	×	×	× Need to apply for themselves	△ (Definition of "labor" is slightly broader in LUA than in LSA)	△ (Self-employed workers can apply for the insurance through "special" procedure)

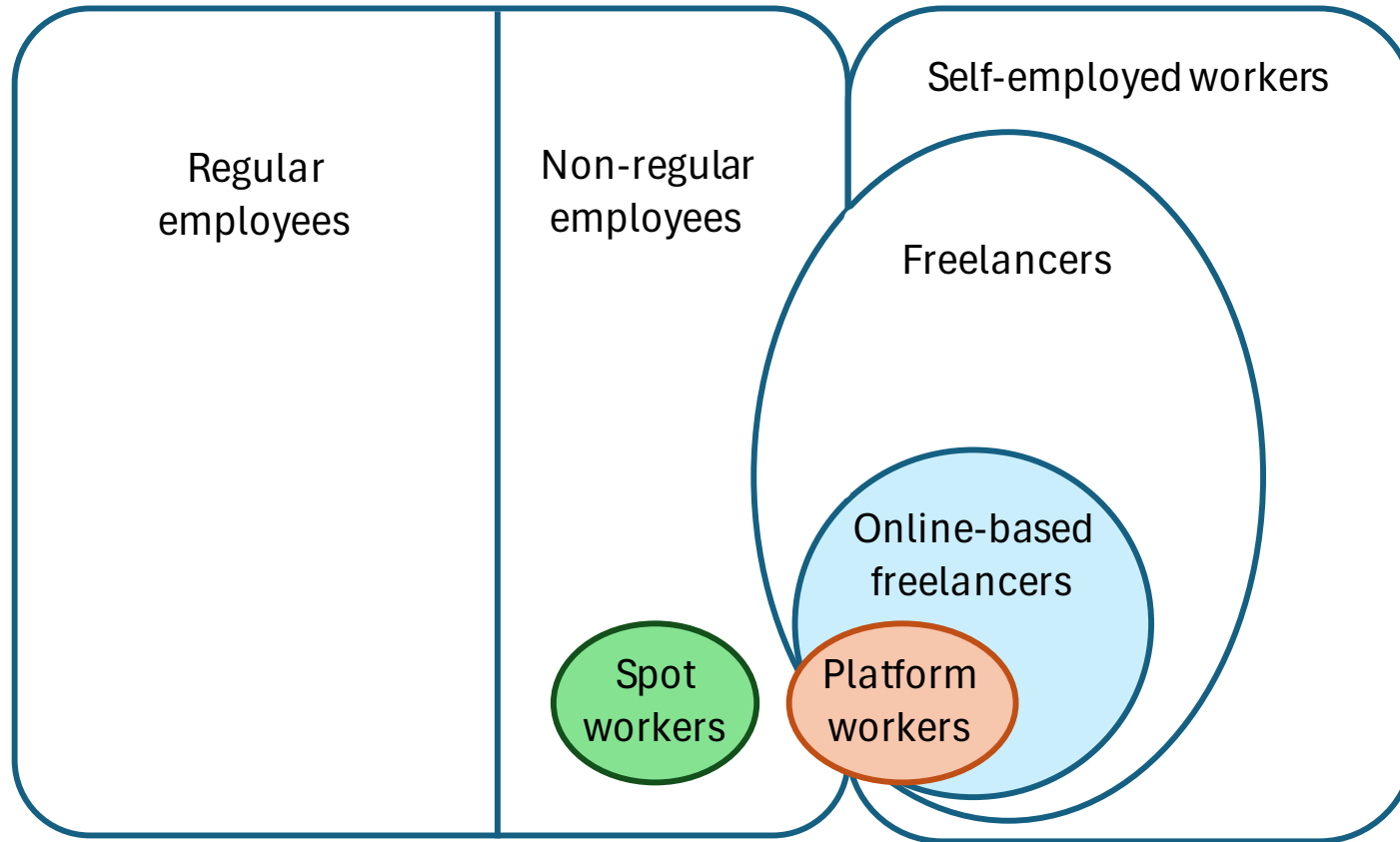
*If the scheduled working hours is 20 hours or more.

Source: Prepared by the author.

- The Labor Standards Act, the most basic employment regulation, is only applicable to employees.
- Employment insurance is available to employees working 20 hours or more per week and the terms of employment would continue 31 days or longer, with the exception of students.
- Employees working 20 hours or more per week are automatically enrolled in pension and health insurance by their employers. Employees working fewer than 20 hours per week and self-employed workers need to apply on their own.
- Both employees and certain self-employed workers have the right to join labor unions and are eligible for industrial accident compensation insurance.

4. New forms of employment in Japan

A sketch of “new forms of employment” in Japan



- (1) Online-based freelancers
- (2) Platform workers (app workers)
- (3) Spot workers

are among the most recognized new forms of employment in Japan.

(1) Online-based freelancers

- Among “freelancers,” some find jobs or undertake tasks through matching websites. *Crowdworks*, *Lancers*, and *FreelanceBoard* are popular examples of such websites.
- IT tasks, website design, typing, and questionnaire responses are popular jobs/tasks outsourced through such matching websites.
- The individuals undertaking such jobs or tasks are classified as self-employed; however, their working conditions are similar to those of non-regular employees.

Images citation: <https://crowdworks.jp/>

クラウドソーシング・仕事依頼・求人情報は日本最大級のクラウドワークス

クラウドワークス 仕事を探す クラウドワーカーを探す ログイン 会員登録（無料）

新規会員登録
メールアドレスを入力してください
例: mail@crowdworks.co.jp
今すぐ会員登録する（無料）

Googleではじめる
Yahoo! JAPAN IDではじめる
Facebookではじめる
利用規約および個人情報の取り扱いについて同意の上、登録してください。
働きたい方はこちら

フリーランス登録数 No.1
その仕事、できる人
すぐ見つかる

記事執筆・編集
アンケート
動画作成・編集
音声入力
Webデザイン
ロゴ・イラスト作成
翻訳・通訳
データ入力
シスアド開発

※クラウドソーシングを専門に取り扱っている企業（上場企業）において、フリーランス登録数がNo.1（会社発表内資料比較）

YoutubeやTikTok、アニメ、MVも。
動画編集・制作
短尺動画の場合
納期：最短3日
10,000円から

企業サイトやメディア、EC構築など。
ホームページ作成・サイト構築
デザインから
コーディングまで
納期：約1か月
200,000円から

オウンドメディアやブログ記事に。
記事制作・ライティング
専門記事やSEOも！
納期：5日前後
1記事2,000円から

ビジネスサービスから飲食店のロゴまで。
納期のコンペ
ロゴ作成
平均70提案
10,000円から

サイトの構築だけではなく、
保守・運用も。
システム管理・
保守・運用
管理・保守・運用
100,000円から

大勢の人の声を大量に集められる。
アンケート調査・モニター
最短1時間
約200人からの回答が集まる
1回答50円から

キャラクターやゲームイラストも。
イラスト・漫画作成
コンペなら平均20提案集まる
納期：10日前後
30,000円から

スマートフォンアプリや
業務システム開発も。
ソフトウェア・
アプリ開発
納期：約1か月
300,000円から

名簿入力も、アンケートの集計も。
データ入力
最短納期
当日発注・当日納品
1件10円から

(2) Platform workers (app workers)

- The number of platform workers (app workers) working under the control of algorithms embedded in smartphone apps increased during and after the Covid-19 pandemic.
- *Uber Eats* (food delivery) and *Demae-can* (food delivery) are the two largest platforms in Japan.
- Most platform workers fall into the category of “freelancers.”
- Notably, ridesharing (taxi) platforms are rare in Japan.



※出前館で初めて配達業務をされる方が対象となります。※キャンペーン対象エリアでの配達のみ有効です。

Images citation: <https://www.uber.com/jp/ja/deliver/>
https://service.demae-can.co.jp/gig_personal/

(3) Spot workers (short-period part-time workers)

- Smartphone apps that connect employers with job seekers are becoming increasingly prevalent. Job seekers find jobs through these apps and work part-time for very short periods (e.g., one day). They are classified as non-regular employees, both legally and statistically.
- *Timee* and *Sharefull* are well-known examples of such apps.
- Jobs in delivery, packaging, food service, and office support are available through these apps.

Images citation: <https://timee.co.jp/>

The screenshot shows the Timee app interface. At the top, it says 'Timee' and 'スキマバイトマガジン タイミー体験記'. Below this, there's a blue button that says '求人掲載無料! 求人担当者さまはこちら'. The main part of the app shows a list of job listings with details like location, date, and pay. A large 'No.1' ranking is prominently displayed. There are also icons for 'お金は即日入金' (Money is paid the same day) and '面接履歴書なし' (No interview/resume needed). At the bottom, there are links to download the app on the App Store and Google Play.



【大手運送会社】☆未経験者歓迎☆発送仕分け・トラックへの積み込み補助
16:00～19:00 ¥3,860



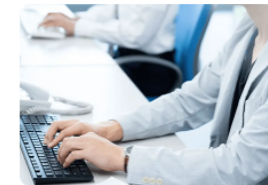
大手海鮮居酒屋でのキッチン補助のお仕事
11:00～15:00 ¥5,300



☆未経験者歓迎☆食品専門スーパーの品出しスタッフ募集
16:00～20:00 ¥5,300



【人気ファーストフード店】デリバリースタッフ募集!
<※デリバリー経験者限定>
19:00～23:00 ¥4,888



【未経験可・休憩あり】書類の整理やPC入力など事務作業のお仕事
10:00～16:00 ¥8,000



【未経験歓迎・休憩あり】荷物の運搬など、イベント準備のための作業!
11:30～17:30 ¥7,100



パーティー・懇親会のセッティングや料理の提供、片付けなどの作業スタッフ募集
10:30～16:00 ¥7,925



介護施設での介護スタッフ募集
<※初任者以上の有資格者限定>
13:00～16:00 ¥4,220

5. Statistics on new forms of employment

- There are no official statistics on the number of workers of new forms of employment in Japan.
- For now, the lack of specific laws and regulations regarding new forms of employment limits the government's willingness to keep track of the number of workers in new forms of employment.
- However, a few survey results and estimates are available.

Freelancers

- According to the *Basic Survey on Employment Status* conducted in 2022 by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, the number of freelancers (both traditional and online-based) is estimated at 2.57 million (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications 2023).
- This figure drops to 2.09 million when limited to those for whom freelancing is their “main job,” representing 3.0% of the labor force.

Online-based freelancers

- According to a survey conducted by the Japan Institute for Labor Policy and Training in 2017, the number of online-based freelancers was estimated at 3.1 million.
- However, this figure dropped to 0.2 million (comprising 0.3% of the labor force) when limited to those for whom online freelancing was their “main job” (Takahashi 2018).
- Although the number is presumed to have increased since then, its proportion remains well below that of China.

Platform workers (app-workers)

- The Freelance Association estimates the number of food delivery platform workers (app workers) as of 2021 to be “between 0.2 and 0.3 million people.”
- However, this figure drops to “between 40,000 and 60,000 people (below 0.1% of the labor force)” when limited to those for whom food delivery is their “main job” (Freelance Association 2024).

Spot workers

- Although it may be overestimated (even exaggerated), the number of registrants of the largest spot workers' app, *Timee*, exceeded 10 million by the end of 2024 (including those who had never found a job through the app) (Timee 2025).

References

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- Takahashi, Koji (2023) “Non-Regular Employment Measures in Japan,” *Japan Labor Issues*, Vol.7, No.44 (Autumn 2023), pp.52-60. (<https://www.jil.go.jp/english/jli/documents/2023/044-05.pdf>)
- Freelance Association (2024) “The Current Situation and Challenges of the Criteria of Judgment Whether a Freelance (Gig) Worker Is an Employee or Not,” report submitted to a study group of the Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare (<https://www.mhlw.go.jp/content/11201250/001268133.pdf>). (in Japanese)
- Timee (2025) “Press Release” (<https://corp.timee.co.jp/news/detail-4006/>). (in Japanese)

Appendix

Composition of the population aged 15 years old and over (million people)

Year	Not in labor force	Self-employed	Executives	Regular workers	Non-regular workers	Unemployed
1984	33.73	14.84	3.29	33.33	6.04	1.61
1985	34.50	14.75	3.14	33.43	6.55	1.56
1986	35.13	14.58	3.23	33.83	6.73	1.67
1987	35.84	14.64	3.80	33.37	7.11	1.73
1988	36.35	14.53	4.06	33.77	7.55	1.55
1989	36.55	14.27	4.10	34.52	8.17	1.42
1990	36.57	13.95	4.66	34.88	8.81	1.34
1991	36.49	13.48	4.66	36.39	8.97	1.36
1992	36.79	12.99	4.55	37.05	9.58	1.42
1993	37.40	12.32	4.59	37.56	9.86	1.66
1994	37.91	12.03	4.60	38.05	9.71	1.92
1995	38.36	11.81	4.83	37.79	10.01	2.10
1996	38.52	11.47	4.79	38.00	10.43	2.25
1997	38.63	11.48	4.28	38.12	11.52	2.30
1998	39.24	11.28	4.01	37.94	11.73	2.79
1999	39.89	11.10	4.18	36.88	12.25	3.17
2000	40.57	10.71	4.53	36.30	12.73	3.20
2001	41.25	10.18	3.70	36.40	13.60	3.40
2002	42.29	9.75	3.97	34.89	14.51	3.59
2003	42.85	9.56	3.95	34.44	15.04	3.50
2004	43.36	9.46	3.97	34.10	15.64	3.13

Year	Not in labor force	Self-employed	Executives	Regular workers	Non-regular workers	Unemployed
2005	43.46	9.32	4.00	33.75	16.34	2.94
2006	43.58	8.81	3.94	34.15	16.78	2.75
2007	43.75	8.61	3.87	34.49	17.35	2.57
2008	44.07	8.33	3.81	34.10	17.65	2.65
2009	44.46	8.00	3.77	33.95	17.27	3.36
2010	44.73	7.72	3.70	33.74	17.63	3.34
2011	45.18	7.56	3.68	33.55	18.12	3.02
2012	45.43	7.40	3.69	33.45	18.16	2.85
2013	45.10	7.29	3.45	33.02	19.10	2.65
2014	44.94	7.27	3.47	32.88	19.67	2.36
2015	44.79	7.08	3.49	33.17	19.86	2.22
2016	44.30	6.84	3.51	33.72	20.25	2.08
2017	43.79	6.80	3.50	34.34	20.40	1.90
2018	42.58	6.86	3.31	34.92	21.26	1.67
2019	41.91	6.76	3.36	35.15	21.73	1.62
2020	41.97	6.67	3.45	35.56	21.00	1.92
2021	41.71	6.62	3.45	35.87	20.75	1.95
2022	41.28	6.47	3.43	35.88	21.01	1.79
2023	40.84	6.38	3.37	36.06	21.24	1.78
2024	40.31	6.24	3.44	36.45	21.26	1.76

Source: Author calculated combining the “basic tabulations” and “detailed tabulations” of the *Labour Force Survey* (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications).

Thank you for your attention!