

How to Improve Japan's Economy: Give Women Choices



Keizai Koho Center Lesson Plan
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Bellringer—THINK, INK, LINK

Take 5 minutes to answer the following questions using complete sentences in your notebook:

1. Historically, what has caused fear or concern about women working outside the home in the US? Do you think other countries have a had similar perspectives about women and work?
2. In any society, what measures are necessary to make it possible for women to work outside of the home?

When directed, find a partner to share your thoughts.

Did you gain any new insight from talking with your partner?

Today's Objectives

- ❖ Students will identify primary factors impacting Japan's economy.
- ❖ Students will analyze women's role in helping improve Japan's economy.
- ❖ Students will compare and contrast the opportunities and challenges women face in the workforce in Japan and the US.

Introduction

Japan faces three commonly understood demographic and economic issues:

1. Declining population
2. Aging population
3. Weakening economy

Is there a common link between these three issues? Is there a common solution?

Yes→Create opportunities for women in Japan to be both mothers (improve the population crisis) and career women (bolster the economy).

Do women in the US face similar dualistic roles in society?

Evidence of a Need for Change

World Economic Forum—Global Gender Gap Report 2015

Ranks countries according to how well they are utilizing their female workforce based on “economic, educational, health-based and political indicators”¹

Japan ranks **101st** out of **145** economies ranked by the World Economic Forum

This is up from 104th out of 142 countries in 2014²

International comparison

US is ranked 28th (2015)

Iceland is ranked 1st (2015)

Yemen is ranked 145th (2015)

Japan's Current Economic Status

Japan has one of the largest economies in the world

Slow & steady decline → alarming for the government

Root causes

Population decline

Aging population

Japan's government has tried to relegate women to more traditional spheres of motherhood and homemaking to address the economic & population concerns

Ineffective

Counter productive

Women in the Workforce: Solution to a Longstanding Problem

Womanaomics

“The idea that companies run by women, or with a lot of women in senior positions, are more likely to be successful, and to avoid the risk-taking which caused the banking crisis of 2008.”¹

Phrase coined by Kathy Matsui→Chief strategist at Goldman Sachs in Tokyo

Matsui identified 115 Japanese businesses that had the potential to benefit from women entering the workforce and gaining more purchasing power.²

Policies & Practices

There are legal provisions in place to help women gain momentum in the workforce:

Japan's constitution prohibits gender discrimination¹

Workplace discrimination based on sex banned by 1985 law

Companies also required to give women the same opportunities as men²

Equal Opportunity Employment Law³

Cultural barriers still exist that prevent women from being able to be both good mothers and good employees

Stigmas and stereotypes maintained by both men and women

2014 poll shows that the majority of 20-somethings in Japan believe women should prioritize

What Women Need to go to Work

Think back to the bellringer questions...

What do women need from their employers, the government, and even their own families to be able to successfully participate full-time in the workforce?

Affordable and accessible daycare

A place to nurse

Adequate leave time for both mother AND father

Support at home → partner who participates in raising children and organizing the home¹

Women have to be given assurances that their needs as mothers and as employees will be simultaneously met in order to fully implement their talents and abilities in

Complete the video guide worksheet as you watch...



The Economist Article & Graphic Organizer

Read the article: *Japanese women and work—Holding back half the nation*

Complete the graphic organizer

Be prepared to share your thoughts on the article

The graphic organizer is a rectangular form with a dashed border, divided into several sections:

- Title of Document:** _____
Author: _____
Date Written or Published: _____
- Author's Thesis Statement:** _____

- Facts/Concepts for Support:**
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
- List Key People & Identify Their Role:** _____

- What is your biggest take away from the article?** _____

- Other sections:**
 - Create an illustration that reflects something about what you read. (Large dashed box)
 - Caption: _____
 - Your Name: _____
Block: _____
Date: _____

Discussion Questions

What is the biggest challenge Japanese women face in trying to participate in the workforce?

Do you think that the Japanese government's efforts to include women in the workforce will be effective?

What needs to change in Japanese culture for women to have a better work-life balance?

What could Japan's government & employers do to better meet women's needs?

Do you think the US could learn anything from Japan regarding women in the workforce? Do we still share similar problems or have we overcome them?

Exit Ticket—Yes/No/Why?

Directions:

1. Read the statement on the right.
2. Identify whether you agree or disagree with the statement.
3. On the index card provided, write “Yes, I agree that…” or “No, I do not agree that…” followed by a “because statement” to explain your rationale

The government of any country should seek ways to make it possible for women to participate in the workforce and be mothers if they desire both.

Extension

Interview a woman in a career field that you might be interested in pursuing in your future or a female family member. You should ask the following questions, but are not limited to only these questions:

Did she face gender-specific challenges at any point in her career?

Did she feel supported as a woman in the workplace by her employer and family?

If she is a parent, how did she personally balance her family and career?

Does she believe employers and/or the government could do more to help women have careers in the US?

Write two paragraphs comparing and contrasting what you learned from your interview with the experiences you learned about for women in Japan.