

The New-Old and Social Participation



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In 2010, a post-WWII generation (born after 1945) reached age 65, and the elderly will account for more than 25% of the Japanese population. Being recipients of post-war democratic education, the post-WWII generation will constitute a new generation of the elderly whose values are different from those of their older peers.

Japanese people have long assumed that once one grows old, he/she will retire from work, retire from the forefront of the society and become dependent on the family and society. The new generation of the elderly, however, is capable of actively contributing to the society and many desire to do so.

About 30% of older people aged 65 and over are willing to work over lifetime. More than half of older people expect themselves to retire at 65 and over (7-1).

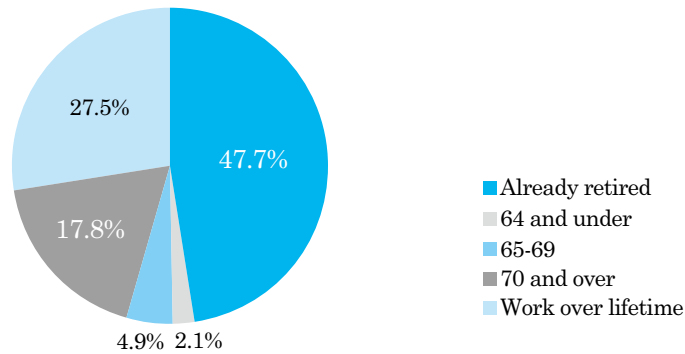
In fact, almost 30% of men aged 65 and over are in the labor force, much higher than in European countries and even USA. Japanese women also lead the world in labor force participation. (7-2)

A plenty of older Japanese are healthy and have rich time available for social contributions and volunteer activities. The specific activities range broadly, from neighborhood association operation, NPO management, volunteering at social welfare facilities, to environment protection and overseas volunteering etc.

There are a growing number of older people who have intention toward social contribution activities (7-3). As to 2011, the percentage of the 60s who reported an intention toward social contribution activities reaches 71.4%, which is 25 points up from 1983. Even for people aged 70 and over, more than half of them show willingness to participate social contribution activities.

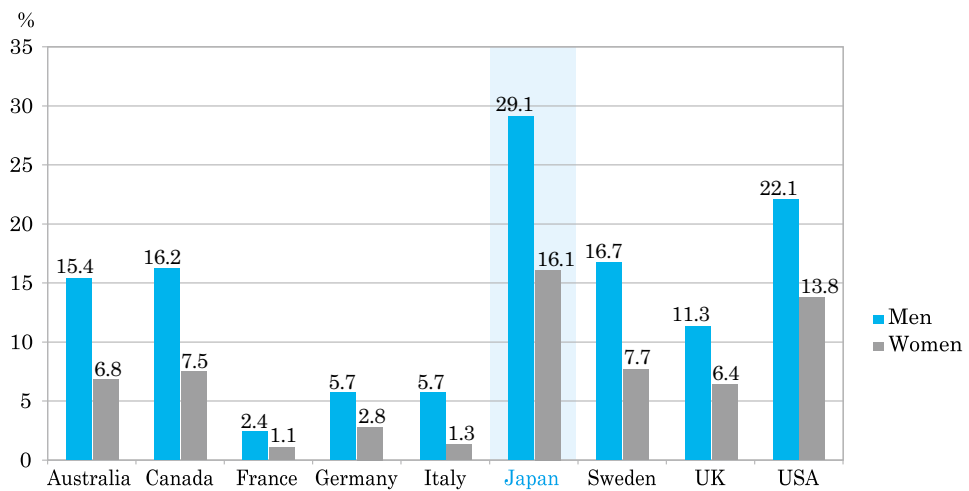
The actual participation rate of social contributions, however, is not so high. Despite of their high motivation toward social contributions, many older Japanese still find it hard to access information or being out of the volunteers' networks.

7-1 Expected Retirement Age of Japanese Elderly (65 and over)



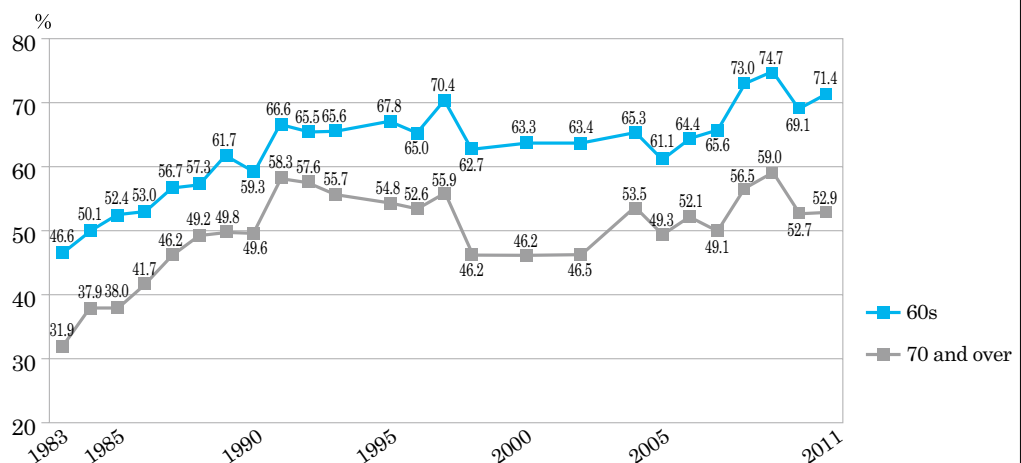
Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training (JILTP), Survey about the Employment and Work of Elderly Persons, 2009

7-2 Labor Force Participation Rates of 65 and Over by Sex (%)



OECD, *Stat Extracts*, 2010

7-3 Intention Toward Social Contributions (%)



Cabinet Office, Survey of Public Opinion Concerning Social Awareness, 1983-2011

Note: Data of years 1994, 1999, 2001 and 2003 is absent.

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In a society where elderly people constitute a large portion of the population, it is not practical for them to be dependant on society without contributing back simply because they are elderly. Such thinking is tantamount to the denial of their potential and agism.

This new conception of the elderly as active contributors to society was expressed in ‘General Principles Concerning the Measures for the Aged Society’ formulated in 2002. It is summed up in the following three points:

- 1) A fair and energetic society where people can be ensured of the opportunity to participate in diverse social activities or work throughout their lives.
- 2) The formation of a community based on both independence and social connectedness.
- 3) An affluent society where people can live peacefully and with fulfillment throughout their lives.

In a new framework of an unprecedented super-aged society, it is hoped that the elderly will actively participate in the society and even be the driving force of the society.