



The Challenge of Women's Empowerment in Japan

—A preliminary report of the Nikkei-CSIS VT Working Group
on Women's Empowerment in Japan

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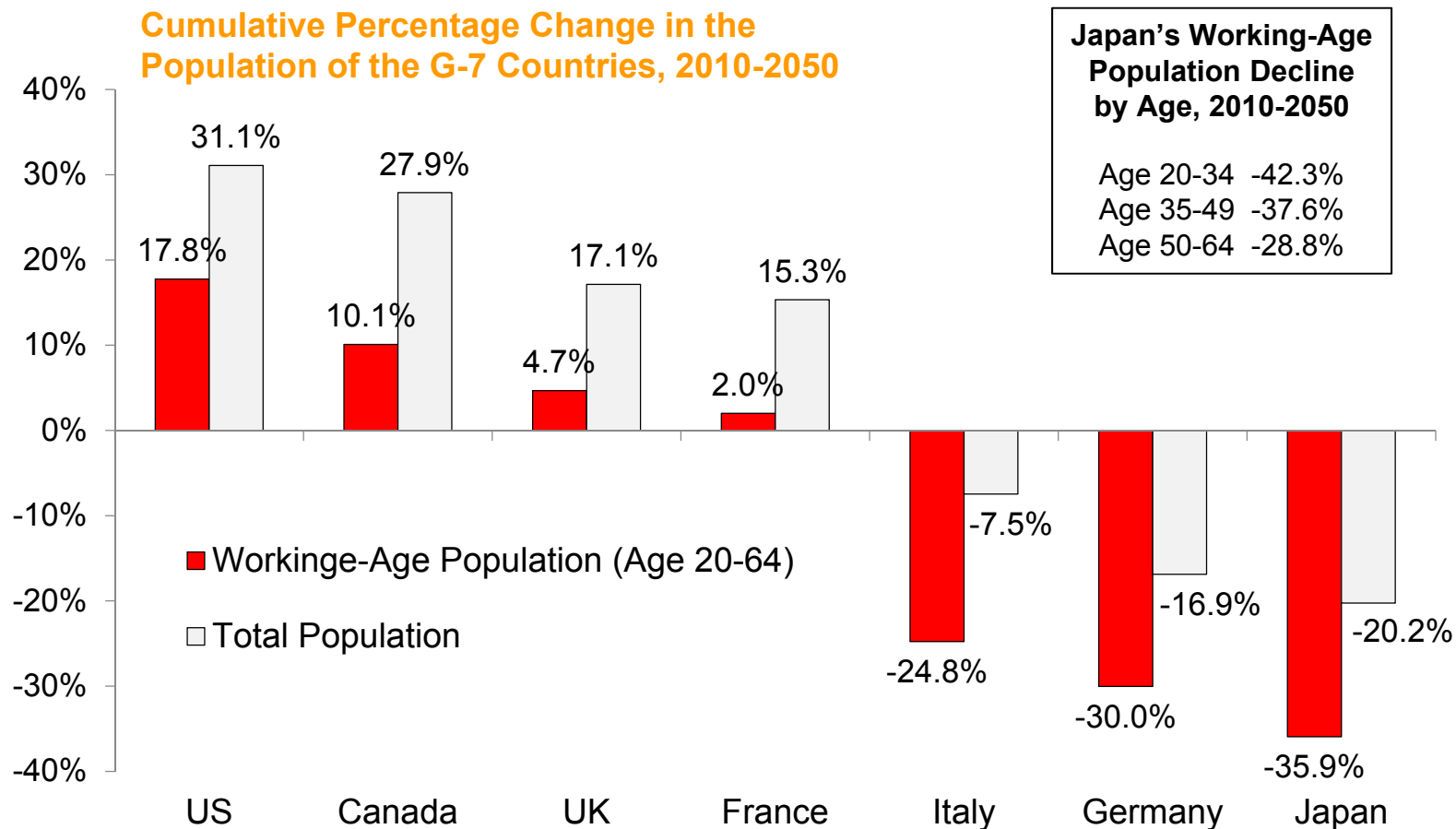
1. The Current State of Women's Empowerment in Japan
—There's clearly individual's and society's needs for the Japanese women's more active participation in labor force.
2. Identifying Obstacles for Female Workers in Households, Communities, Workplaces, and Institutions
—More critical ones are found in workplaces and institutions.
3. Evaluating the Abe Administration's Policy Efforts
—His leadership to shed light on and prioritize these issues are certainly to be welcomed. However, more comprehensive and bold measures are necessary.
4. Critical Perspectives for the Way Forward
—A work-life balance should be achieved regardless of age, sex, and other attributes. The government needs to strike a right balance between the American and the European models in supporting women's empowerment. The key is how to persuade and incentivize corporate executives/managers.

World Economic Forum's Gender GAP Index 2014

	Japan (104th)				United States (20th)			
	Rank	Female	Male	Female / Male Ratio	Rank	Female	Male	Female / Male Ratio
Economic Participation and Opportunity	102				4			
Labor Force Participation	83	64%	84%	0.75	47	67%	78%	0.86
Wage Equality for Similar Work (Survey)	53				65			
Legislators, Senior Officials, and Managers	112	11%	89%	0.12	16	43%	57%	0.75
Educational Attainment	93				39			
Health and Survival	37				62			
Political Empowerment	129				54			
Women in Parliament	126	8%	92%	0.09	83	18%	82%	0.22
Women in Ministerial Positions	98	11%	89%	0.13	25	32%	68%	0.47

Source: World Economic Forum (2014)

Along with aging populations, many developed countries will have stagnant or contracting ones.



Source: UN Population Division (2011)

The slowdown in workforce will translate into slower growth in GDP.

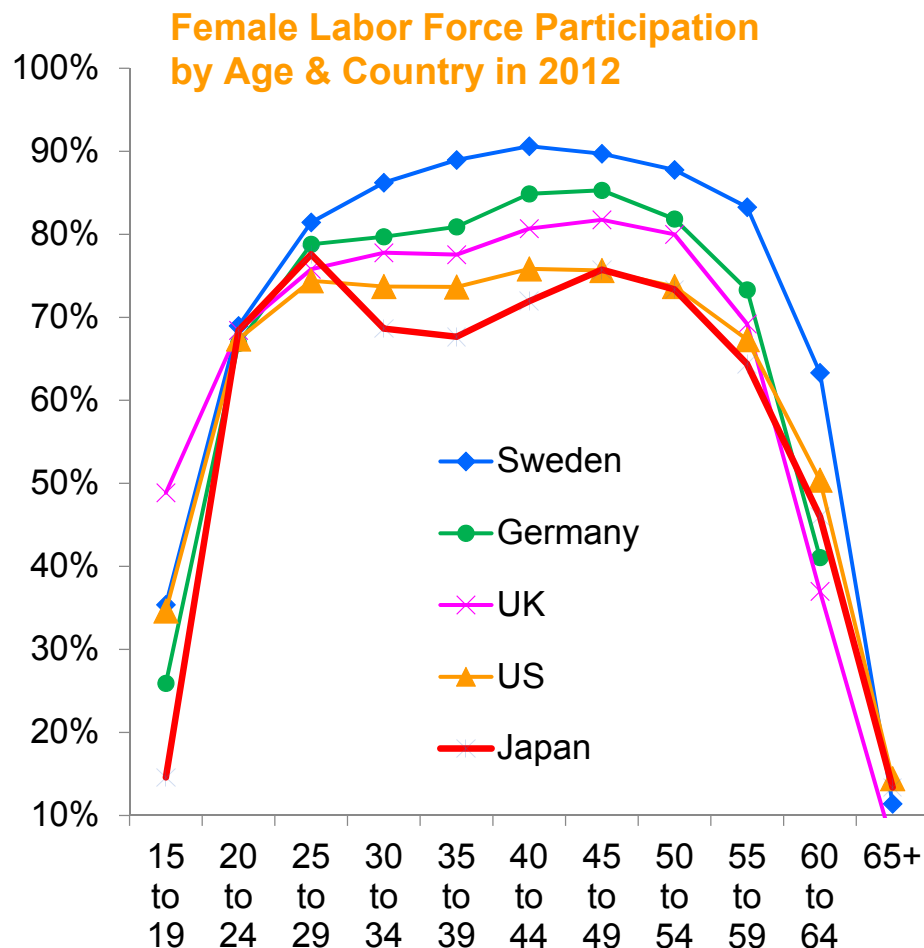
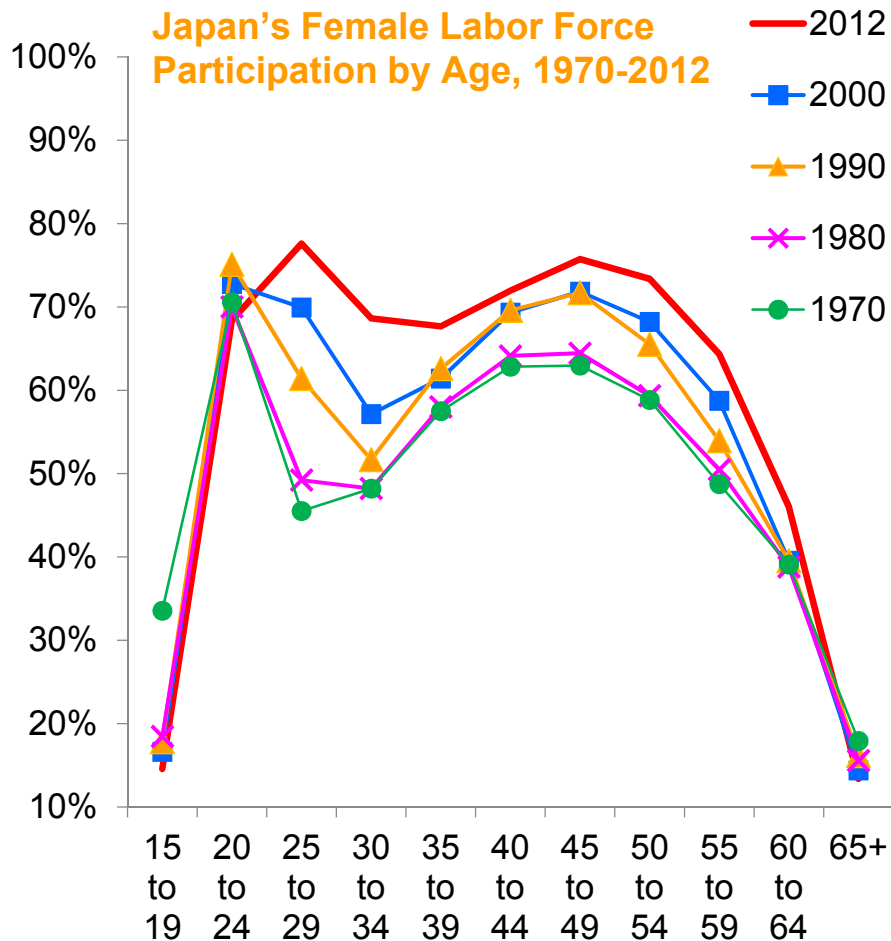
Average Annual Growth Rate in the Working-Age Population (Aged 20-64), by Decade, 1980s-1940s

	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010s	2020s	2030s	2040s
US	1.3	1.2	1.1	0.4	0.2	0.5	0.4
Canada	1.7	1.1	1.2	0.4	-0.2	0.2	0.2
France	1.0	0.4	0.7	-0.1	0.0	0.0	0.1
UK	0.6	0.4	0.7	0.3	0.1	0.0	0.0
Germany	1.1	0.3	-0.2	-0.5	-1.2	-1.1	-0.8
Italy	0.9	0.2	0.4	-0.2	-0.6	-1.2	-1.0
Japan	0.7	0.4	-0.4	-1.0	-0.7	-1.4	-1.4

Source: UN Population Division (2011)

1. The Current State

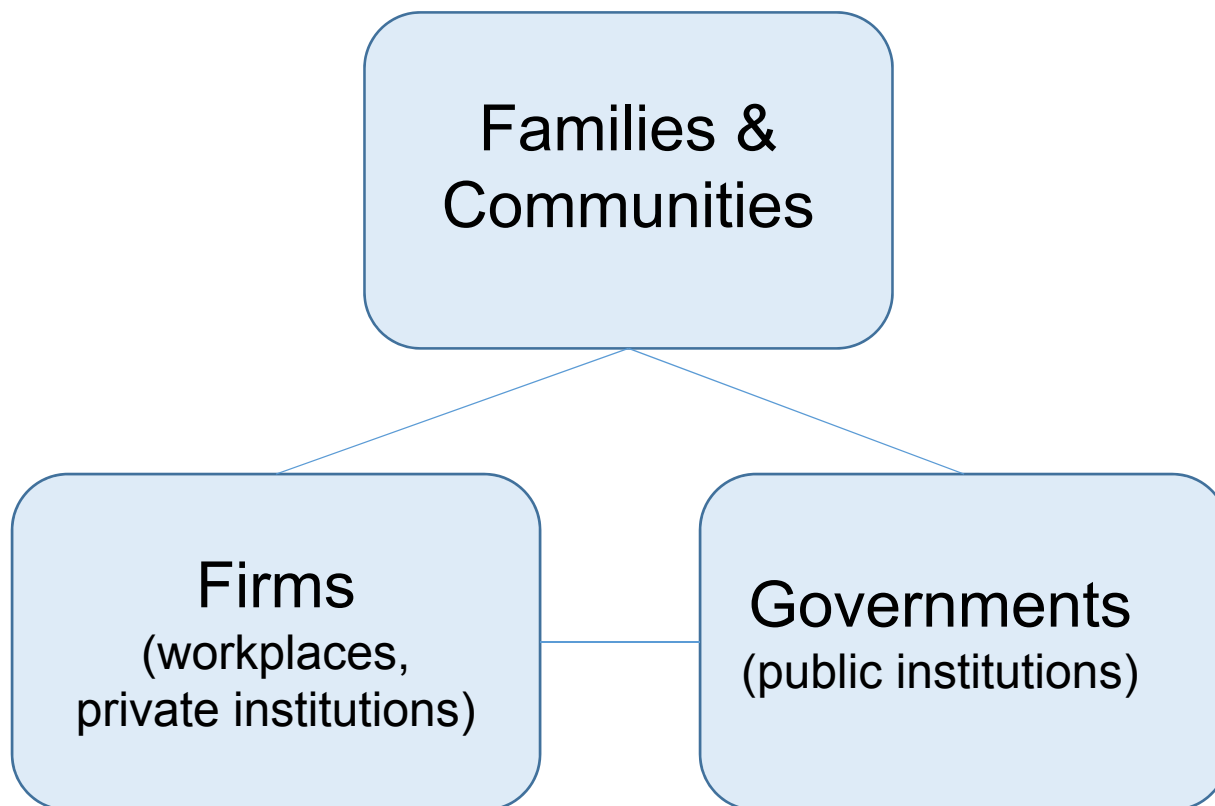
Japan's "M-shape" female labor force participation has been improved, but it still lags behind other developed countries.



Source: OECD.stat

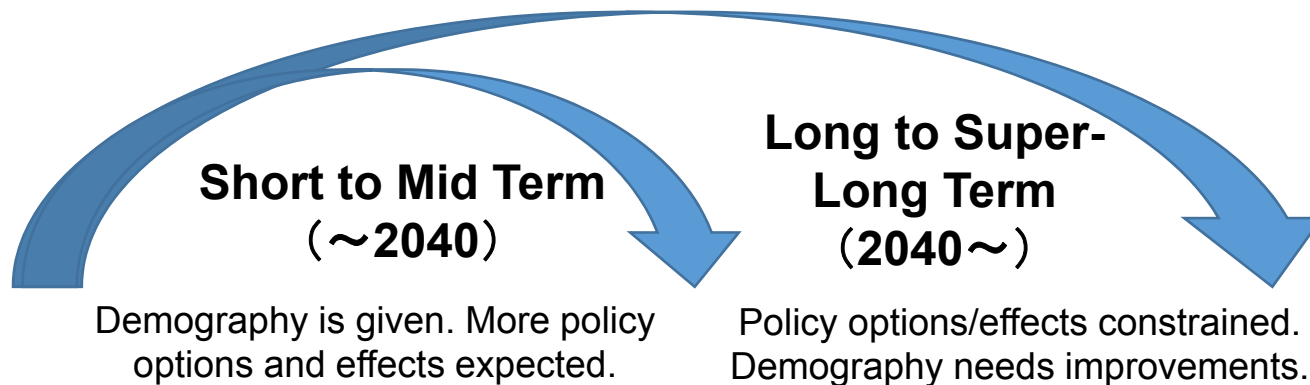
2. Identifying Obstacles

More critical obstacles for women's active participation in labor are found in workplaces and institutions.



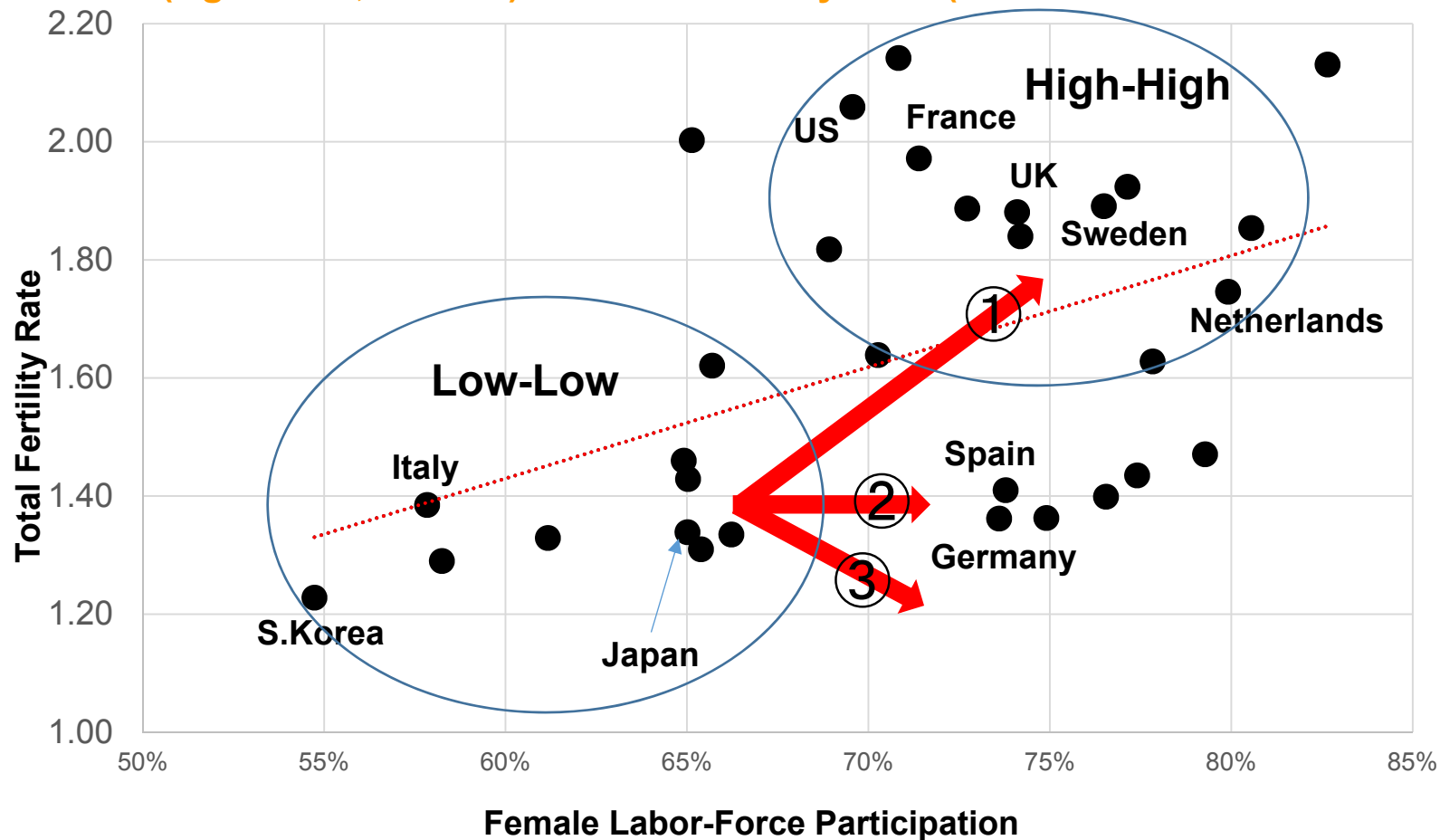
3. Evaluating the Abe Administration's Policy Efforts

1. His leadership to shed light on and prioritize women's empowerment issues are to be welcomed.
2. However, more comprehensive and bold policy measures and more inclusive political processes are necessary.
 - A unisex work-life balance or a diversity management approach is necessary to fundamentally change the current systems, customs, and cultures of workplaces.
 - To make any policy measures effective, they should be carried on beyond the current administration for the decades to come.



3. Evaluating the Abe Administration's Policy Efforts

OECD Countries' Female Labor-Force Participation Rate (Age 15-49, in 2010) vs. Total Fertility Rate (2005-2010)



Source: OECD.stat (2014), UN Population Division (2014)

Critical Perspectives

1. A unisex work-life balance or a diversity management approach is necessary to fundamentally change the current systems, customs, and cultures of workplaces.
2. There's a close and important relationship between women's empowerment in labor force and raising fertility rates.
3. The government will need to take a middle course between the “European” model and the “American” model.
4. The key is how to persuade and incentivize corporate executives/managers.

Ideas to be Explored

1. A quota system in governments and large corporations to improve recruitment and promotion of female workers.
2. A more flexible application of the childcare system—Allow shorter working hours and matching an income decrease by childcare benefits.
3. Create and achieve the *Kaizen* and *Kanban* system in non-manufacturing sectors, particularly in white-collar workplaces.