

## **Japan - Mating And Marriage, Gender Roles, Masculinity And Men's Suicide, Decreasing Number Of Children - Leave for Working Parents, Conclusion**

The concept of the modern family—one in which biological parents give birth to, love, and nurture children—was introduced in Japan in the early twentieth century, after the nation opened itself up to international diplomacy under Emperor Meiji in 1868. A nationwide registration system was established at the end of the nineteenth century under the Meiji government. Until that time, people who did not belong to aristocratic, warrior, or landlord families did not register with the state or regional legal systems. Most of the people who did not fall in these categories were registered in the Buddhist temples of the local area.

Before the Meiji government, the term *family* did not include only biologically related people, but was far broader. Workers who lived in and subsisted on their labor in one village were regarded as one family. This changed after Japan entered the international scene; the Japanese Imperial Constitution of 1889 legally defined family in a written law as formed by blood lineage, with a father as head of the household.

Until 1945, when Japan was defeated in World War II and a new constitution was promulgated, polygamy was still legal. Multiple wives, their children by one father, and their relatives were regarded as one family. After World War II, a reconstruction of Japanese society occurred under the new constitution, and a nationwide family registration system was established. The concept of family was

understood in a modern way. However, the registration system that existed since the nineteenth century was preserved as *koseki* (family registration), with the individual registered under the family line headed by the father. *Koseki* still functions in the same way as the previous feudalistic system. People's origins can be traced back to the late nineteenth century. In this patriarchal system, a woman is supposed to enter the husband's family line and separate from her original family.

Under the democratic constitution, marriage was supposed to be based on equal relations between the man and woman. Polygamy was prohibited, and a family was formed under the father as a head of household. The contemporary Japanese family, however, is changing rapidly because of lower birth rates, longer life expectancies, an increase in the number of one-person households, and later age at marriage. In 2000, the average number of children for women in their reproductive years was 1.35. The average life expectancy in 1999 was 84 for women and 77 for men. The second most predominant household (after household with parents and unmarried children) is the single household. The percentage of single households among total households increased from 18.2 percent in 1975 to 24.1 percent in 2000. Among one-person households, those made up of older women and unmarried youths are increasing in number. The average age of first marriage for women in 2000 was 27 years, for men 28.8 years; the age of marriage in general, including second and third marriages, was 28.2 for women and 30.4 for men (White Paper on Women 2001).

In 1998, the revised Equal Employment Opportunity Law included parental leave for one year for fathers and mothers. Mother can take paid maternal leave for childbirth, but leave for childcare is not covered and wages are not paid by the employer. In 99 percent of the cases, mothers take parental leave to stay home for the children. Fathers rarely take parental leave.

## Conclusion

The Japanese family is changing rapidly. More women want to be economically independent. Men are showing some flexibility toward taking part in domestic activities. In the twenty-first century, the Japanese family is developing into a more individualistic, gender-equal family.

*See also:* [ANCESTOR WORSHIP](#); [ASIAN-AMERICAN FAMILIES](#); [BUDDHISM](#); [CONFUCIANISM](#); [ETHNIC VARIATION/ETHNICITY](#)

## *Bibliography*

Higuchi, K., et al., eds. (1999). *Genndai Jyosei*. (Women of Modern Days). Tokyo: Toyo Keizai Shinpousha Japan.

Huber, K. R. (1992). *Women in Japanese Society, An Annotated Bibliography of Selected English Language Materials*. New York: Greenwood.

Inoue, T., et al. (1999). *Jyosei no Data Book* (Data book on women). Tokyo: Yuhikaku.

*International Comparative Research on Family and Work*. (1994). Tokyo: NHK ( Japan Broadcasting Association).

Ishida, A. (1989). "Women and the Family: Post-Family Alternatives." *Review of Japanese Culture and Society* 3(1):79–95.

Japan Statistical Yearbook. (2002). Tokyo: Ministry of Public Management, Home Affairs.

Jyoseino Kurashi To Seikatsu Ishiki Data Shu (Women's Living and Attitude Research Result Data). (2001). Tokyo: JYUOHOU SENTAA.

*Kokuminn Seikatsu Hakusho* (White paper nation's life). (1999). Tokyo: Gyousei.

Nihon Rodo Kyokai, ed. *Problems of Working Women. 1981 and 1986*. Tokyo: Japan Institute of Labor.

Ministry of Public Management. Home Affairs, Statistics Bureau. (1995). *Youth and Their Life, Basic Attitudinal Research*. Tokyo: Ministry Report.

Ueno, C. (1988a). "Genesis of the Urban Housewife." *Japan Quarterly* 34(2):130–142.

Ueno, C. (1988b). "The Japanese Women's Movement: The Counter-Values To Industrialism." In *The Japanese Trajectory: Modernization and Beyond*, ed. Gavan McCormack and Yoshio Sugimoto. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Yokohama Women's Forum, ed. (1997). *Zuhyou Demiru onna no Gennzai* (Data on women of today). Kyoto: Minerva Shobou.

JUNKO KUNINOBU

**Japan - Mating And Marriage**

**Japan - Gender Roles**

**Japan - Masculinity And Men's Suicide**

**Japan - Decreasing Number Of Children**

**Japan - Seniors**

**Japan - Divorce**

**Japan - Women's Vulnerable Economic Base**

**Japan - Single Mothers At The Poverty Level**

**Japan - Family Wage System**

**Japan - Domestic Violence**

**Japan - Birth Control And Abortion**

Jealousy - Dual-factor Conceptualization, Types Of Jealousy, Correlates Of Jealousy, Responses To And Coping With Jealousy [[next](#)] [[back](#)] [Jamaica](#)

## Citing this material

Please include a link to this page if you have found this material useful for research or writing a related article. Content on this website is from high-quality, licensed material originally published in print form. You can always be sure you're reading unbiased, factual, and accurate information.

Highlight the text below, right-click, and select “copy”. Paste the link into your website, email, or any other HTML document.

[Japan - Mating And Marriage, Gender Roles, Masculinity And Men's Suicide, Decreasing Number Of Children - Leave for Working Parents, Conclusion](http://family.jrank.org/pages/994/Japan.html)