

## Causes of Recent Migration from Rural Japan and the Significance of the Gender Aspect

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### Summary

In rural areas of modern Japan a rapid decrease in population has continued unabated, in spite of the improvement in job opportunities and starting salary levels since the 1980s. The population decline has been the result of a net outflow of young people after graduation from high school. This outflow actually consists of two types of migration, one of job-seekers and one of college/university entrants. Behind the phenomenon lies the generally negative attitude of both young people and their parents toward future permanent settlement in rural areas. This attitude arises from problems such as poor earning prospects and so-called employment mismatching. By middle age a deficit in the monthly household budget usually occurs as parents have to shoulder the full economic burden of their children's education. Everyday life can begin to get really uncomfortable, especially for middle-aged women. Among some groups of migrants who feel drawn to a life in their rural native places the desire to return there comes only after a few years of living in an urban area. In fact it is exceedingly difficult for them to realize their dreams of returning, mainly for the following reasons: firstly, there is a lack of job opportunities and job information for people with special qualifications (especially women), and secondly, salary levels for those hired in mid-career remain very low. Besides this, the absence of privacy in rural areas becomes unbearable for those who have experienced the anonymity of urban life. This notwithstanding, even a few successful returnees tend to have a positive effect on the rate of decline in depopulated areas. Accordingly, the most pressing tasks would seem to be the provision of up-to-date information on jobs and living conditions, the creation of further

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varied/qualified job opportunities for both men and women, and the inauguration of some form of compensation scheme for middle-aged citizens in depopulated areas.

**Keywords:** migration, rural areas, depopulating, rural women, income-compensation

## 1 Purpose

Since the 1960s a large-scale migration out of rural areas and into urban ones has been observed throughout Japan, and this trend is still much in evidence. Worst hit have been the already depopulated mountain and island areas, where we are today witnessing an alarming ageing of the population and a near total collapse of the local community<sup>(1)</sup>. Unlike European countries showing similar tendencies, the process of rural depopulation in Japan has been characterized by rapid migration on a large scale, which has now brought about a striking imbalance in the age-component. Furthermore, many European governments have adopted income-support schemes for those living in so-called handicapped areas<sup>(2)</sup>; local governments have been given wider powers, including greater control over their own budgets<sup>(3)</sup>. In contrast, there has never been an income-support policy in Japan, where most financial control remains in the hands of central government in Tokyo<sup>(4)</sup>. The main reaction of the national government to the problem of rural depopulation has been to offer financial support for the construction of roads and public facilities<sup>(5)</sup>. However, the main beneficiaries of this policy have been construction companies, and it has failed to have any tangible effect on the long-term settlement of young people<sup>(6)</sup>.

Judging by the findings of past research, the main reasons for migration are national/regional income-imbalance, as well as the uneven distribution of job opportunities. Certainly, migration in the Japan of the 1960s was caused by strong demand for labour in developed metropolitan industrial centres. Since the 1980s, however, job opportunities in rural areas and provincial towns have increased concurrently with business penetration. Such business penetration has sometimes been voluntary, sometimes motivated by incentives offered for local industrial development and sometimes the result of public works projects<sup>(7)</sup>. Starting-salary levels have also risen because of a shortage of younger workers.

Nevertheless, the basic trend of younger-aged people abandoning rural areas has continued unabated. Many local governments in depopulated areas have been trying to stem the outflow, but these trial efforts have so far not proved very successful.

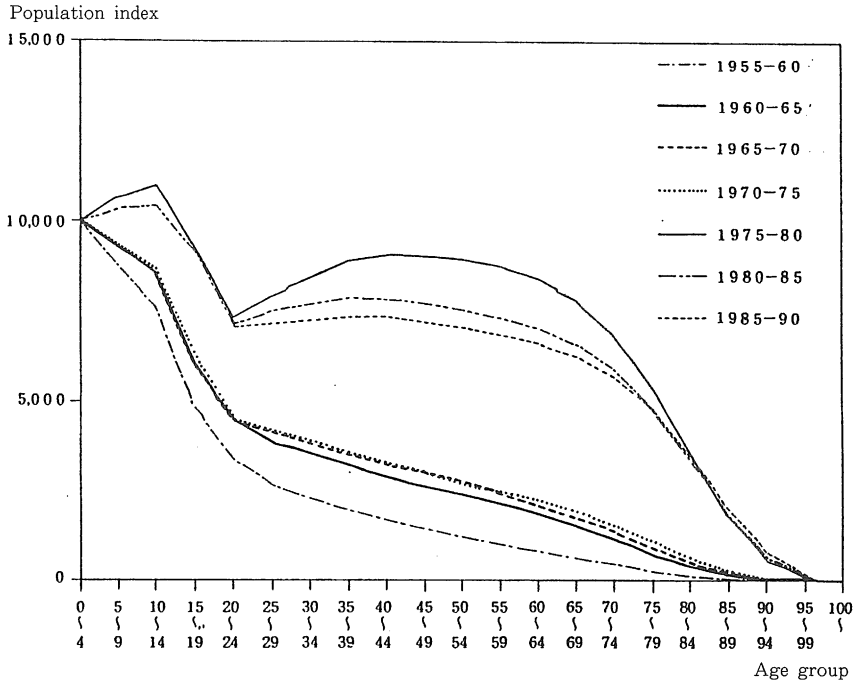
The main aims of this paper are to analyze the causes of recent migration from rural areas, with particular attention to the aspect of gender, and to consider policies likely to be effective in slowing down this rural population decline.

## 2 Recent tendency of population-decline in rural areas

Population decline in rural areas is directly affected by the following five factors: (1) a population outflow; (2) a decrease in the number of people returning to their rural native places; (3) the very few migrants into rural areas; (4) a decline in the crude birth rate; (5) a rise in the crude death rate. Among these factors, the decline in the birth rate can be attributed to the lower share of young people in the overall population, and the rise in the death rate to the increased proportion of senior citizens. Therefore, for analyzing rural population decline it is essential to monitor both the outflow of younger people and the influx of returnees. The problem of few migrants into rural areas will be considered in connection with the population returning.

For the observation of population decline in rural areas, cohort analysis by age-group is useful. **Chart 1** gives an indication of cohort fluctuation since the 1960s in rural Japan. All curves on the graph are based upon the assumption that the number of people in age-group 0-4 was 10,000 and after that the rates of cohort fluctuation observed during each successive period have been adapted to all cohort up to age 100. This chart clearly indicates differing tendencies between the 1960s and the 1980s. In the 1960s, the fall in the cohort population was caused not only by a remarkable decline in age-groups 15-19 and 20-24 years but also by a decline in the number of people in their 30s. In the beginning of 1980s, however, although a decline in age-groups 15-19 and 20-24 could still be observed, increase-tendencies for age-groups 25-29, 30-34 and 35-39 were also in evidence. Nevertheless, the increase in the number of those in their 20s and 30s had been completely reversed by the end of the 1980s.

**CHART 1** Population fluctuation curve by age group  
(Rural areas in Japan)



Source: 'Report on survey of and research into current conditions and proposed tasks to counter ageing in depopulated areas', the planning section of the Director's Secretariat, Ministry of General Affairs, Tokyo, 1993, p. 5

Consequently, recent population decline in rural Japan appears to be closely related to the outflow of high-school-graduates, fewer returnees to rural native places and continued low interest in migration into rural areas amongst city-dwellers in their 20s and 30s.

**Table 1** indicates a younger cohort fluctuation (closely related to high-school-graduate outflow) over the period 1985 to 1990, as well as the prospective population for the year 2020 in rural areas of every prefecture (=largest regional administrative areas in Japan). According to this table, a rapid decline in the number of younger people in rural areas has been observed throughout the country. A further drastic decline in future rural population would also seem to be indicated and consequently

it is possible to foresee the emergence of some strikingly ageing local communities in years to come.

For example, Kochi and Shimane prefectures have the highest number of senior citizens aged 65 and over as a proportion of their overall populations, i.e. 21.8% and 21.6% respectively in 1990. When observing the cohort fluctuation from the 15-19 age-group in 1985 to the 20-24 age-group in 1990, we see that index numbers declined from 100 to 65.8 in Kochi and from 100 to 61.7 in Shimane. As a direct consequence of the rapid fall in the number of younger people, the index for citizens below the age of 45 in the year 2020 is expected to decline from 100 (1990 value) to 42 in Kochi and 43 in Shimane, while the population share of those aged 65 and over is forecast to rise to 39.5% and 37.4% in each prefecture respectively.

**Table 2**, which shows the above-mentioned indices related to local communities (Jap. "cho" = the smallest regional administrative area), is a stern admonition to us that many districts are facing a drastic decline in the number of people under 45 as well as the prospect of an alarming rate of ageing in the near future.

### **3 Causes of high-school-graduate outflow and drop in number of returnees**

#### **3-1 A survey on citizens' attitudes towards settlement in rural areas**

In order to analyze causes of recent population-decline in rural Japan, it is important to inquire into the real feelings of citizens in rural areas and those migrants with a desire to return to their rural native places. With this in mind, from 1990 to 1992 "Young Person's Settlement Survey"<sup>(8)</sup> was carried out in Shimane prefecture, which is one of the most depopulated and ageing provinces of Japan.

This survey covered the age-group 15-44 among citizens living in the following three types of rural areas, as well as persons temporarily resident in their rural native places at the time of the survey: type A, rural areas far from regional urban centres; type B, rural areas at a moderate distance from urban centres; type C, rural areas close to urban centres and within commuting distance. The number of available respondents was 4,551, of which 3,545 were permanent residents (i.e. 35.0% of the

**TABLE 1** Cohort fluctuation and prospective population in rural Japan  
(rural districts by prefecture)

Prefecture	Index of cohort	Index of population in 2020		65-years proportion	
	fluctuation (1985=100)	overall pop.	under 45 years	of overall population	
	15-19(1985) => 20-24(1990)	(1990=100)	(1990=100)	in 1990 (%)	in 2020 (%)
Hokkaido	65.8	56	37	15.1	34.9
Aomori	61.6	57	35	15.7	37.0
Iwate	68.4	76	56	15.8	31.2
Miyagi	73.0	61	45	15.5	30.3
Akita	63.3	61	42	17.5	35.7
Yamagata	68.6	66	52	18.6	31.7
Fukushima	70.2	75	58	16.9	29.0
Ibaraki	75.2	50	38	12.9	27.0
Tochigi	87.9	103	81	13.8	23.8
Gunma	85.0	99	76	14.3	25.8
Saitama	93.2	108	81	10.2	23.1
Chiba	88.5	153	122	13.8	22.9
Tokyo	99.4	110	78	12.0	25.8
Kanagawa	99.9	122	91	11.2	25.1
Niigata	68.8	73	57	17.8	30.3
Toyama	77.8	80	62	15.9	29.4
Ishikawa	83.9	83	63	15.1	27.8
Fukui	84.7	85	68	16.5	27.2
Yamanashi	87.6	113	92	15.8	23.0
Nagano	75.7	81	65	18.5	29.5
Gifu	82.4	87	67	14.7	27.0
Sizuoka	85.2	95	73	14.4	26.8
Aichi	97.1	108	82	10.7	23.8
Mie	79.6	89	71	15.8	27.6
Shiga	90.9	108	90	13.7	22.3
Kyoto	82.7	97	77	15.3	26.5
Osaka	80.1	45	33	10.1	27.6
Hyogo	73.3	86	67	16.7	28.0
Nara	93.1	120	95	13.0	24.7
Wakayama	72.7	74	57	18.1	30.5
Tottori	68.0	70	56	19.3	31.2
<b>Shimane</b>	<b>61.7</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>21.6</b>	<b>37.4</b>
Okayama	71.2	75	60	19.6	31.9
Hiroshima	64.3	46	32	18.4	36.4
Yamaguchi	60.9	64	46	20.9	37.8
Tokushima	68.8	72	54	17.6	32.0
Kagawa	77.1	84	66	17.3	29.5
Ehime	59.2	61	42	19.5	37.1
<b>Kochi</b>	<b>65.8</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>21.8</b>	<b>39.5</b>
Fukuoka	83.5	89	68	14.7	28.3
Saga	75.2	80	63	16.3	28.3
Nagasaki	56.8	63	43	16.4	33.0
Kumamoto	70.6	74	54	17.7	32.7
Oita	61.5	58	41	20.8	37.2
Miyazaki	75.9	80	61	16.0	29.3
Kagoshima	56.0	63	46	20.5	34.5
Okinawa	78.7	103	77	12.1	24.4

Source : calculated based upon 'Population Census' and 'Population Dynamics Statistics'

**Table 2** Cohort fluctuation and prospective population in rural areas of Shimane-prefecture

Local Municipalities	Index of cohort fluctuation (1985=100) 15-19(1985)=>20-24(1990)	Index of population in 2020		65-years proportion	
		overall pop. (1990=100)	under 45 years (1990=100)	of overall population	
				in 1990 (%)	in 2020 (%)
Hirose	75.3	63	50	22.2	37.5
Hakuta	81.9	78	71	21.9	31.4
Nita	58.3	65	54	22.7	35.4
Yokota	41.1	58	39	22.4	43.0
Daito	65.2	66	52	19.7	33.3
Kamo	64.8	78	66	19.2	31.4
Kisuki	67.4	68	56	19.6	32.4
Mitoya	63.8	82	78	19.8	26.7
Yoshida	113.8	62	53	22.0	33.9
Takeya	56.7	58	43	21.2	37.5
Tonbara	85.1	74	72	28.0	38.1
Akagi	34.1	54	45	24.8	38.0
Hikawa	78.7	100	85	16.1	25.8
Sada	68.5	73	72	20.9	26.1
Tagi	62.0	69	53	20.8	35.8
Koryo	67.1	85	77	19.9	29.2
Taisha	61.8	67	52	19.6	34.5
Yunotsu	44.1	44	37	31.5	38.9
Nima	49.3	60	50	26.9	36.9
Kawamoto	29.5	39	26	25.0	45.0
Ouchi	36.5	43	27	29.6	49.7
Daiwa	60.7	37	23	30.5	52.4
Hasumi	42.2	33	16	33.3	61.0
Mizuho	46.6	62	42	29.1	42.7
Iwami	36.2	54	36	26.0	42.4
Sakurae	41.1	47	38	29.5	40.6
Kanagi	80.2	71	64	22.0	31.8
Asahi	49.7	69	48	27.7	36.6
Yasaka	114.7	39	34	29.7	46.7
Misumi	45.6	47	36	22.8	39.3
Mito	43.4	109	22	41.6	85.2
Hikimi	35.3	27	7	31.1	67.9
Tsuwano	41.0	46	33	23.1	43.1
Nichihara	48.4	50	42	24.7	36.7
Kakinoki	86.0	59	47	25.3	38.6
Muikaichi	63.2	55	34	28.4	48.2
Saigo	47.7	63	41	19.3	38.6
Fuse	225.0	108	202	31.8	17.5
Goka	65.5	83	78	26.9	32.5
Tsuma	67.9	65	51	27.3	40.1
Ama	26.6	44	28	26.6	49.0
Nishinosima	46.0	39	20	25.2	53.9
Chibu	266.7	41	27	35.4	51.8

Note : excluding 8 cities and 8 districts adjacent to the two main centres of Matsue and Izumo  
Source : 'Population Census' and 'Population Dynamics Statistics'

total population aged 15-44 in these places were surveyed), and 1,006 were only temporary residents.

When tabulating the result, a classification into three types of citizen living in rural areas was adopted: (1) had lived whole life in rural areas (type MX <male> and type FX <female>); (2) had job in metropolitan area after graduation from high-school before returning to rural native place (type MY <male> and type FY <female>); (3) had job in metropolitan area after graduation from college/university before returning to rural native place (type MZ <male> and type FZ <female>).

### 3-2 Difficulties when settling in rural areas

**Table 3** shows some reasons for difficulties when settling in rural areas. Both permanent citizens and temporary residents answered that the main reasons for difficulties in settling down in rural areas were (1) "lack of desirable employment", and (2) "low levels of income". Although job opportunities have increased in rural areas or provincial towns since the 1980s, such employment has tended to involve unqualified manual tasks in manufacturing or construction industries. In addition, even though starting-salary levels after graduation from high-school have almost reached those of urban areas because of the lack of young people, salary levels for middle aged people and those in mid-career remain very low<sup>9)</sup>.

Furthermore, answers (12) "very few leisure facilities or cultural institutions", and (13) "meddlesome atmosphere, no privacy", were also at a relatively high level. Concerning type A (rural areas located in the mountains far from urban centres), the percentage of respondents choosing (11), "worries about living conditions", was higher than for (12) and (13). Moreover, in the case of type C (close to urban centres), the number of those citing (15) "poor road conditions and public transportation" was higher than for (13). When comparing the alternative answers by gender, the percentage of women citing (12) and (13) was at a much higher level than that of men in all types of rural area. For women, a lack of leisure/cultural facilities and the meddlesome atmosphere of rural areas were the greatest difficulties, together with the problems of finding desirable employment and reasonable levels of income.



**TABLE 3** Reasons for difficulties when settling in rural native place  
(max. 5 answers)

1. Lack of desirable employment
2. Low levels of income
3. Long working hours
4. Few free days
5. Housing shortage
6. Spouse's employment prospects (esp. wife's)
7. Spouse's negative attitude towards settlement or returning (esp. wife's)
8. Co-existence with own or spouse's parents
9. Few people of same age
10. Few public informational services
11. Worries about living conditions (incl. access to good medical treatment or educational facilities etc.)
12. Very few leisure facilities or cultural institutions
13. Meddlesome atmosphere, no privacy
14. Shortage of free time for participation in regional events
15. Poor road conditions and public transportation
16. Miscellaneous

Notes:

Type A=rural area far from urban centre; settlement of young people at very low level

Type B=rural area at moderate distance from urban centre; settlement of young people at medium level

Type C=rural area close to urban centre and within commuting distance; settlement of young people at relatively high level

Type MX=male, lived whole life in rural area

Type MY=male, had job in urban area after graduation from senior high school before returning to rural native place

Type MZ=male, had job in urban area after graduation from college or university before returning to rural native place

Type FX=female, lived whole life in rural area

Type FY=female, had job in urban area after graduation from senior high school before returning to rural native place

Type FZ=female, had job in urban area after graduation of college or university before returning to rural native place

Res=Residents

Ptr=Persons temporarily resident in their rural native place at the time of this survey; mid-August, which marks a peak in such homecomings

Source: "Young Persons' Settlement Survey", The Shimane Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (Shimane Prefecture), June, 1992, the planning section of the Director's Secretariat, op.cit., Ministry of General Affairs, Tokyo, 1993, p.78

(number, percent)

	Type A		(Ptr)		Type B		(Ptr)		Type C		(Ptr)	
	(Res)				(Res)				(Res)			
1	449	64.9	190	70.9	740	61.5	264	66.3	1044	63.3	219	64.4
2	340	49.1	133	49.6	740	61.5	211	53.0	929	56.3	185	54.4
3	65	9.4	27	10.1	140	11.6	28	7.0	180	10.9	37	10.9
4	96	13.9	48	17.9	253	21.0	50	12.6	309	18.7	52	15.3
5	41	5.9	15	5.6	71	5.9	20	5.0	120	7.3	34	10.0
6	61	8.8	25	9.3	98	8.1	46	11.6	99	6.0	32	9.4
7	48	6.9	20	7.5	75	6.2	25	6.3	78	4.7	22	6.5
8	83	12.0	12	4.5	174	14.5	20	5.0	207	12.6	22	6.5
9	101	14.6	46	17.2	136	11.3	58	14.6	244	14.8	59	17.4
10	47	6.8	24	9.0	89	7.4	63	15.8	197	11.9	30	8.8
11	208	30.1	89	33.2	221	18.4	62	15.6	202	12.2	64	18.8
12	176	25.4	68	25.4	341	28.3	134	33.7	462	28.0	87	25.6
13	164	23.7	45	16.8	311	25.8	87	21.9	315	19.1	69	20.3
14	70	10.1	28	10.4	262	21.8	52	13.1	257	15.6	40	11.8
15	119	17.2	53	19.8	184	15.3	83	20.9	398	24.1	106	31.2
16	12	1.7	6	2.2	6	0.5	6	1.5	18	1.1	10	2.9
Total	692	100.0	268	100.0	1204	100.0	398	100.0	1649	100.0	340	100.0

	Type MX		Type MY		Type MZ		Type FX		Type FY		Type FZ	
1	108	59.7	172	72.0	51	73.9	57	66.3	113	72.9	58	76.3
2	104	57.5	163	68.2	49	71.0	47	54.7	110	71.0	54	71.1
3	25	13.8	35	14.6	11	15.9	7	8.1	24	15.5	5	6.6
4	33	18.2	68	28.5	13	18.8	16	18.6	37	23.9	13	17.1
5	11	6.1	9	3.8	8	11.6	3	3.5	9	5.8	3	3.9
6	8	4.4	24	10.0	2	2.9	12	14.0	19	12.3	7	9.2
7	7	3.9	12	5.0	6	8.7	3	3.5	15	9.7	4	5.3
8	20	11.0	29	12.1	12	17.4	12	14.0	33	21.3	14	18.4
9	27	14.9	31	13.0	8	11.6	16	18.6	19	12.3	12	15.8
10	16	8.8	19	7.9	9	13.0	15	17.4	7	4.5	10	13.2
11	27	14.9	50	20.9	9	13.0	10	11.6	31	20.0	20	26.3
12	52	28.7	69	28.9	23	33.3	31	36.0	39	25.2	23	30.3
13	30	16.6	58	24.3	18	26.1	23	26.7	45	29.0	36	47.4
14	36	19.9	47	19.7	21	30.4	9	10.5	29	18.7	22	28.9
15	35	19.3	37	15.5	8	11.6	17	19.8	20	12.9	13	17.1
16	1	0.6	2	0.8	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	1.3	1	1.3
Total	181	100.0	239	100.0	69	100.0	86	100.0	155	100.0	76	100.0

**3-3 Time for first thought of permanent or future settlement in rural areas**

In spite of the lack of desirable employment and low income levels in rural areas, some people have settled there and some migrants in urban areas are thinking about future settlement in their rural native places. **Table 4** indicates the time when permanent citizens or temporary residents first thought about future/permanent settlement in a rural area. According to this table, among type MX and type FX who had lived their whole lives in rural areas, those citing answers (1) "in childhood" and (4) "not sure" were in the majority. However, among types MY, MZ, FY and FZ, who had returned to their rural native places after living in urban centres, the number of those citing (1) was fewer, while the per-

**TABLE 4** First thoughts of permanent settlement in rural area

1. In childhood
2. At junior or senior high school
3. When in 20s or 30s
4. Not sure
5. Never thought about it
6. Other time

	Type A				Type B				Type C			
	(Res)		(Ptr)		(Res)		(Ptr)		(Res)		(Ptr)	
1	89	12.9	19	7.1	150	12.5	37	9.3	202	12.2	38	11.2
2	24	3.5	10	3.7	76	6.3	22	5.5	60	3.6	14	4.1
3	143	20.7	37	13.8	306	25.4	35	8.8	270	16.4	45	13.2
4	109	15.8	41	15.3	248	20.6	59	14.8	335	20.3	70	20.6
5	139	20.1	35	13.1	198	16.4	63	15.8	364	22.1	69	20.3
6	75	10.8	36	13.4	120	10.0	53	13.3	173	10.5	32	9.4
N.A.	113	16.3	90	33.6	106	8.8	129	32.4	245	14.9	72	21.2
Total	692	100.0	268	100.0	1204	100.0	398	100.0	1649	100.0	340	100.0

	Type MX		Type MY		Type MZ		Type FX		Type FY		Type FZ	
1	42	23.2	27	11.3	8	11.6	16	18.6	10	6.5	2	2.6
2	20	11.0	8	3.3	3	4.3	9	10.5	4	2.6	2	2.6
3	21	11.6	74	31.0	30	43.5	7	8.1	50	32.3	26	34.2
4	46	25.4	54	22.6	15	21.7	28	32.6	35	22.6	14	18.4
5	35	19.3	42	17.6	3	4.3	19	22.1	34	21.9	18	23.7
6	5	2.8	17	7.1	6	8.7	0	0.0	14	9.0	10	13.2
N.A.	12	6.6	17	7.1	4	5.8	7	8.1	8	5.2	4	5.3
Total	181	100.0	239	100.0	69	100.0	86	100.0	155	100.0	76	100.0

centage citing (3) “when in 20s or 30s” turned out to be the highest. Moreover, among these groups, those citing (2) “at junior or senior high school” were very few. These tendencies were especially in evidence among women. This means they had never thought about future settlement during childhood or after graduation from high school. Among migrants, the first thoughts of future settlement in their rural native places appeared after some years of urban life, when they had had time to re-evaluate the quality of rural life.

#### 4 Problems related to job, domestic finance and living conditions in rural areas

Against the background of high-school graduate outflow and a drop in the number of returnees, there are negative feelings among citizens regarding their sons’ or daughters’ settlement in rural areas. **Table 5** indicates the feelings of citizens on this matter. The percentage of citizens in favor of their sons’ or daughters’ staying where they were was 23% of men and 17% of women respectively. In contrast, the total percentage

**TABLE 5** Feelings about the desirability of your son’s or daughter’s settlement locally

1. They should stay here.
2. They should take advantage of better prospects elsewhere.
3. They should make up their own minds.
4. Other

	Type A (Res)		Type B (Res)		Type C (Res)	
1	126 18.2		265 22.0		312 18.9	
2	86 12.4		94 7.8		107 6.5	
3	291 42.1		556 46.2		809 49.1	
4	29 4.2		14 1.2		18 1.1	
N.A.	160 23.1		275 22.8		403 24.4	
Total	692 100.0		1204 100.0		1649 100.0	

	15-24(Mal)	25-34(Mal)	35-44(Mal)	15-24(Fem)	25-34(Fem)	35-44(Fem)
1	40 15.9	115 21.7	231 25.0	9 3.6	80 16.3	150 23.1
2	11 4.4	40 7.6	74 8.0	17 6.7	39 7.9	63 9.7
3	116 46.2	280 52.9	379 41.0	144 56.9	302 61.4	316 48.7
4	4 1.6	2 0.4	13 1.4	11 4.3	10 2.0	5 0.8
N.A.	80 31.9	92 17.4	227 24.6	72 28.5	61 12.4	115 17.7
Total	251 100.0	529 100.0	924 100.0	253 100.0	492 100.0	649 100.0

of those responding that (2) "they should take advantage of better prospects elsewhere", plus (3) "they should make up their own minds", was 54% of men and 67% of women. These results show that a great number of women do not desire their sons' or daughters' settlement in rural areas. Generally speaking, mothers' ideas influence their children's feelings more strongly than those of fathers.

Next we have to consider why many women should not desire their sons' or daughters' future settlement in rural areas. **Table 6** gives us suggestions regarding this question. The three biggest problems related to job or domestic finance are identified as (1) "limited variety of occupation", (4) the "low levels of income" and (8) "educational expenses disproportionately high in relation to income levels". When comparing the answers of women with those of men, we have come across three serious problems relating to female employment, i.e. (2) a "lack of attractive jobs for women", (3) "few job opportunities for qualified women" and (6) the "added burden of commuter fatigue". Additionally, concerning the problem domestic finance, not only "educational expenses" but also (11) "extra expenditure for local association memberships and ceremonies" have been a major burden for middle aged women in particular. The percentage choosing these two answers is higher among middle aged women than others. The number of those going on to higher education after high school graduation has also risen in rural Japan. For example, 60% of all high school graduates entered college, university or a special vocational school in the whole of Japan in 1994 (cf. 50% in Shimane prefecture). The results of the survey tell us that, taken together, low income levels, few good job opportunities, the heavy burden of educational expenses and the extra expenditure for local association memberships, etc. have all served to make life exceedingly difficult for middle-aged women in rural areas.

Furthermore, it is also interesting to note some other problems besides those related to jobs and domestic finance. **Table 7** shows the response to a question on "problems related to living conditions, customs or limited public awareness". The five most common answers among women aged 25-44 were ① "no privacy and tendency to act accordingly" (15), ② "worries about medical services, education or living conditions" (12), ③ "lack of low-cost and easily accessible cultural, sports or leisure

**TABLE 6** Problems related to job or to domestic finance (max. 3 answers)

1. Limited variety of occupations, and difficulties when attempting to change occupation
2. Lack of attractive jobs for women (esp. women with children)
3. Few job opportunities for females with special competency/qualifications; few young women able to return to rural native place
4. Low levels of income
5. Long working hours, few holidays
6. Added burden of commuter fatigue (esp. in winter driving conditions)
7. Shortage of good low-rent public housing for nuclear families or single people
8. Educational expenses disproportionately high in relation to income levels
9. High prices for goods and services
10. High prices for agricultural or marine produce
11. Extra expenditure for local association memberships and ceremonies

	Type A (Res)			Type B (Res)			Type C (Res)		
1	360	52.0		550	45.7		863	52.3	
2	69	10.0		138	11.5		233	14.1	
3	138	19.9		238	19.8		266	16.1	
4	166	24.0		408	33.9		424	25.7	
5	59	8.5		156	13.0		190	11.5	
6	115	16.6		228	18.9		527	32.0	
7	26	3.8		58	4.8		43	2.6	
8	157	22.7		293	24.3		425	25.8	
9	53	7.7		128	10.6		185	11.2	
10	34	4.9		49	4.1		60	3.6	
11	123	17.8		261	21.7		240	14.6	
Total	692	100.0		1204	100.0		1649	100.0	

	15-24(Mal)		25-34(Mal)		35-44(Mal)		15-24(Fem)		25-34(Fem)		35-44(Fem)	
1	146	58.2	292	55.2	453	49.0	148	58.5	250	50.8	316	48.7
2	22	8.8	62	11.7	79	8.5	39	15.4	131	26.6	93	14.3
3	33	13.1	105	19.8	164	17.7	47	18.6	110	22.4	146	22.5
4	70	27.9	189	35.7	304	32.9	56	22.1	147	29.9	167	25.7
5	26	10.4	69	13.0	122	13.2	33	13.0	46	9.3	70	10.8
6	81	32.3	123	23.3	196	21.2	86	34.0	146	29.7	156	24.0
7	11	4.4	31	5.9	29	3.1	9	3.6	19	3.9	22	3.4
8	27	10.8	111	21.0	256	27.7	29	11.5	125	25.4	224	34.5
9	15	6.0	37	7.0	100	10.8	20	7.9	60	12.2	81	12.5
10	5	2.0	15	2.8	34	3.7	4	1.6	27	5.5	37	5.7
11	20	8.0	80	15.1	177	19.2	16	6.3	80	16.3	157	24.2
Total	251	100.0	529	100.0	924	100.0	253	100.0	492	100.0	649	100.0

facilities" (13), ④ "lack of free time to spend with family because attendance required at local events" (16), and ⑤ "little time to enjoy urban leisure or culture, and a lack of personal liberty as a result of excessive consideration for parents' feelings" (14).

In rural Japan, the social and domestic position of women would still

**TABLE 7** Problems related to living conditions, customs, or limited public awareness (max. 5 answers)

1. Inconvenient for shopping
2. Poor road conditions
3. Lack of public transportation
4. Access to public facilities difficult for private gatherings
5. Few opportunities for mothers to socialize outside the home
6. Few opportunities to interact with other areas
7. Lack of parks for children
8. Expensive public day-care
9. Local administration settlement policy not encouraging enough  
Local administrators, often distant from ordinary people, provide too few incentives
10. Shortage of potential spouses
11. Few people of the same generation; oppressive atmosphere
12. Worries about medical services, education or living conditions
13. Lack of low-cost and easily accessible cultural, sports or leisure facilities
14. Little time to enjoy urban leisure or culture, and a lack of personal liberty as a result of excessive consideration for parents' feelings
15. No privacy and tendency to act accordingly
16. Lack of free time to spend with family because attendance required at local events

	15-24(Mal)		25-34(Mal)		35-44(Mal)		15-24(Fem)		25-34(Fem)		35-44(Fem)	
1	79	31.5	126	23.8	170	18.4	101	39.9	137	27.8	154	23.7
2	69	27.5	129	24.4	221	23.9	53	20.9	96	19.5	99	15.3
3	28	11.2	56	10.6	108	11.7	37	14.6	42	8.5	52	8.0
4	18	7.2	31	5.9	60	6.5	23	9.1	28	5.7	42	6.5
5	13	5.2	57	10.8	62	6.7	21	8.3	92	18.7	78	12.0
6	40	15.9	66	12.5	89	9.6	34	13.4	37	7.5	62	9.6
7	19	7.6	92	17.4	151	16.3	42	16.6	162	32.9	129	19.9
8	14	5.6	147	27.8	174	18.8	15	5.9	194	39.4	142	21.9
9	26	10.4	93	17.6	218	23.6	22	8.7	63	12.8	121	18.6
10	44	17.5	114	21.6	210	22.7	36	14.2	50	10.2	116	17.9
11	63	25.1	71	13.4	74	8.0	51	20.2	68	13.8	45	6.9
12	34	13.5	122	23.1	270	29.2	38	15.0	148	30.1	210	32.4
13	88	35.1	170	32.1	225	24.4	115	45.5	164	33.3	168	25.9
14	52	20.7	78	14.7	135	14.6	57	22.5	78	15.9	114	17.6
15	76	30.3	173	32.7	284	30.7	90	35.6	189	38.4	241	37.1
16	29	11.6	135	25.5	246	26.6	17	6.7	92	18.7	152	23.4
Total	251	100.0	529	100.0	924	100.0	253	100.0	492	100.0	649	100.0

seem to be much lower than that of men. Among women, fatigue and stress have accumulated because of overwork, a lack of free time and few leisure opportunities. Therefore it is natural that women in rural areas do not desire their children to settle down in the countryside in spite of a strong sense of insecurity about their own futures.

It has to be concluded that the main reasons for the depopulation trend in rural areas are the following:

- (1) many young people after high-school graduation have no inclination to settle there because of a lack of attractive job opportunities, low levels of income and various other reasons;
- (2) young people who have a desire to return to their rural native place cannot realize their dream, mainly because of a shortage of varied/qualified job opportunities for both sexes and the exceedingly low levels of income for middle-aged people;
- (3) poor living conditions, old customs, invasions of privacy by local elders and serious problems relating to jobs and domestic finance among rural citizens (especially women) leave them feeling disenchanting about their children's future settlement, hence the desire that their sons or daughters should not stay there.

## 5 Actual situation of young people returning

In spite of the difficulties of rural life, some people have returned to their rural native places. Why they have returned should be analyzed.

At the outset, it is interesting to know their feelings prior to returning. We have noted the very few returnees who had had a positive will to return and settle down in their rural native places in **table 8**. Among men only 12.7% of returnees had actually been enthusiastic, while 41.6% had either had a "wavering desire" or "no desire to return". It is rather mysterious that they decided to return in spite of their strong reluctance.

Next we have to look at their motivation for returning. In **table 9**, it is indicated that on the one hand they evaluated highly the nature in rural areas, but on the other hand showed little enthusiasm for the rural life itself. For example, in response to a question regarding the fascination of rural life, 55.2% of male returnees responded that the greatest attraction was the natural environment, i.e. (1) "the beautiful environment,



**TABLE 8** Feeling prior to returning to one's rural native place

1. The will exists to return and settle down in rural native place.
2. Desire wavering
3. No desire to return
4. No answer

	Type A				Type B				Type C			
	(Res)		(Ptr)		(Res)		(Ptr)		(Res)		(Ptr)	
1	44	24.7	37	20.8	114	24.7	67	24.4	85	22.5	61	27.2
2	72	40.4	67	37.6	204	44.3	105	38.2	179	47.5	73	32.6
3	51	28.7	60	33.7	127	27.5	80	29.1	98	26.0	68	30.4
4	11	6.2	14	7.9	16	3.5	23	8.4	15	4.0	22	9.8
Total	178	100.0	178	100.0	461	100.0	275	100.0	377	100.0	224	100.0

		Type MY	Type MZ		Type FY	Type FZ
1		31 13.0	8 11.6		12 7.7	13 17.1
2		61 25.5	23 33.3		22 14.2	14 18.4
3		30 12.6	14 20.3		22 14.2	15 19.7
4		117 49.0	24 34.8		98 63.2	33 43.4
Total		239 100.0	69 100.0		155 100.0	76 100.0

closely observable seasonal variations and access to clean water and fresh air". However, the table shows little or very little response to the other items concerning rural life itself such as (2) "safe and delicious foods", (4) "calm daily life free of stress and time constraints", (8) "plenty of opportunities to enjoy leisure", (11) "potential for free life-

**TABLE 9** What is the fascination of one's rural area (max. 3 answers)

1. The beautiful environment, closely observable seasonal variations, and access to clean water and fresh air
2. Safe and delicious foods
3. Good characteristics and warm-heartedness of inhabitants
4. Calm daily life free of stress and time constraints
5. Good environment for raising children
6. Pleasing memories of a childhood close to nature
7. Cheerful and active life of parents or inhabitants
8. Plenty of opportunities to enjoy leisure
9. The existence of traditional cultures, customs and events
10. Mutual support among neighbours
11. Potential for free lifestyle
12. Pursuit of individual dreams and enhanced job potential
13. Comfortable and relaxed living on familiar territory
14. No idea
15. Other reasons
16. No fascination felt

	Type A				Type B				Type C			
	(Res)		(Ptr)		(Res)		(Ptr)		(Res)		(Ptr)	
1	420	60.7	123	45.9	723	60.0	209	52.5	961	58.3	163	47.9
2	111	16.0	38	14.2	193	16.0	61	15.3	213	12.9	42	12.4
3	78	11.3	29	10.8	147	12.2	52	13.1	220	13.3	36	10.6
4	74	10.7	39	14.6	130	10.8	49	12.3	155	9.4	43	12.6
5	116	16.8	43	16.0	267	22.2	45	11.3	350	21.2	49	14.4
6	67	9.7	32	11.9	158	13.1	61	15.3	222	13.5	46	13.5
7	13	1.9	3	1.1	24	2.0	11	2.8	27	1.6	9	2.6
8	4	0.6	5	1.9	13	1.1	7	1.8	22	1.3	13	3.8
9	14	2.0	4	1.5	27	2.2	8	2.0	50	3.0	1	0.3
10	40	5.8	9	3.4	68	5.6	13	3.3	52	3.2	7	2.1
11	60	8.7	21	7.8	90	7.5	18	4.5	93	5.6	20	5.9
12	10	1.4	4	1.5	16	1.3	2	0.5	15	0.9	3	0.9
13	212	30.6	53	19.8	423	35.1	89	22.4	494	30.0	89	26.2
14	64	9.2	27	10.1	179	14.9	34	8.5	291	17.6	55	16.2
15	16	2.3	9	3.4	18	1.5	5	1.3	33	2.0	13	3.8
16	54	7.8	14	5.2	60	5.0	15	3.8	127	7.7	16	4.7
Total	692	100.0	268	100.0	1204	100.0	398	100.0	1649	100.0	340	100.0

	Type MX		Type MY		Type MZ		Type FX		Type FY		Type FZ	
1	100	55.2	132	55.2	38	55.1	60	69.8	104	67.1	52	68.4
2	18	9.9	25	10.5	5	7.2	14	16.3	24	15.5	13	17.1
3	24	13.3	26	10.9	6	8.7	10	11.6	22	14.2	5	6.6
4	15	8.3	21	8.8	10	14.5	7	8.1	17	11.0	9	11.8
5	18	9.9	51	21.3	11	15.9	15	17.4	46	29.7	22	28.9
6	28	15.5	37	15.5	9	13.0	20	23.3	27	17.4	8	10.5
7	1	0.6	5	2.1	1	1.4	1	1.2	4	2.6	0	0.0
8	2	1.1	1	0.4	1	1.4	0	0.0	1	0.6	0	0.0
9	6	3.3	7	2.9	4	5.8	0	0.0	5	3.2	1	1.3
10	12	6.6	14	5.9	5	7.2	6	7.0	6	3.9	1	1.3
11	17	9.4	21	8.8	12	17.4	7	8.1	6	3.9	2	2.6
12	6	3.3	5	2.1	1	1.4	1	1.2	0	0.0	0	0.0
13	92	50.8	99	41.4	30	43.5	47	54.7	74	47.7	41	53.9
14	23	12.7	34	14.2	13	18.8	13	15.1	30	19.4	12	15.8
15	1	0.6	2	0.8	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	1.9	2	2.6
16	13	7.2	18	7.5	2	2.9	3	3.5	5	3.2	5	6.6
Total	181	100.0	239	100.0	69	100.0	86	100.0	155	100.0	76	100.0

style” etc. The response to these alternatives, revealed a higher rate of indistinct feelings, with no less than 57.1% of returnees choosing (13) “comfortable and relaxed living on familiar territory” or the (14) “no idea” option. Among women, although similar tendencies were observed, the level of fascination with the natural environment was higher than for men at 71.9%. In addition, women valued a (5) “good environment for raising children” rather highly (29.4%). It must be concluded that

**Table 10** Reasons for returning to or settling in one's (or spouse's) rural native place (max. 3 answers)

1. Uncomfortable living in urban area because of strained human relationships, cramped and expensive accommodation, long hours spent commuting, poor living environment, handicap of one's country dialect etc.
2. Good environment for bringing up children
3. For health of family and self
4. For the sake of career change
5. For a more cheerful and pleasurable life in a rural area
6. To realize one's dreams or try out various possibilities
7. Returning on the advice of friends or relatives
8. To be ready to help parents in their old age
9. Strong desire of my parent(s) for me to return home
10. Have never thought about the exact reason for returning
11. Other reasons

	Type A				Type B				Type C			
	(Res)		(Ptr)		(Res)		(Ptr)		(Res)		(Ptr)	
1	28	15.7	10	5.6	104	22.6	30	10.9	91	24.1	28	12.5
2	21	11.8	9	5.1	58	12.6	36	13.1	54	14.3	33	14.7
3	18	10.1	13	7.3	55	11.9	28	10.2	47	12.5	23	10.3
4	15	8.4	1	0.6	47	10.2	11	4.0	52	13.8	7	3.1
5	3	1.7	6	3.4	3	0.7	3	1.1	7	1.9	5	2.2
6	9	5.1	3	1.7	23	5.0	6	2.2	14	3.7	7	3.1
7	8	4.5	6	3.4	29	6.3	4	1.5	28	7.4	8	3.6
8	98	55.1	55	30.9	179	38.8	102	37.1	162	43.0	70	31.3
9	49	27.5	14	7.9	162	35.1	40	14.5	98	26.0	28	12.5
10	16	9.0	26	14.6	32	6.9	36	13.1	16	4.2	47	21.0
11	42	23.6	21	11.8	83	18.0	34	12.4	65	17.2	31	13.8
Total	178	100.0	178	100.0	461	100.0	275	100.0	377	100.0	224	100.0

	Type MY	Type MZ	Type FY	Type FZ
1	25 10.5	7 10.1	15 9.7	15 19.7
2	9 3.8	5 7.2	4 2.6	8 10.5
3	16 6.7	3 4.3	6 3.9	7 9.2
4	16 6.7	4 5.8	0 0.0	6 7.9
5	1 0.4	0 0.0	15 9.7	0 0.0
6	5 2.1	8 11.6	3 1.9	0 0.0
7	10 4.2	3 4.3	3 1.9	5 6.6
8	51 21.3	27 39.1	23 14.8	21 27.6
9	48 20.1	23 33.3	19 12.3	11 14.5
10	4 1.7	0 0.0	2 1.3	1 1.3
11	14 5.9	5 7.2	9 5.8	5 6.6
Total	239 100.0	69 100.0	155 100.0	76 100.0

**Table 11** Case records of women's living conditions and limited awareness in rural areas (Village A in Shimane prefecture, 1993)

Case No.	Age	Family	Living place & situations	Occupation	Own income	Domestic duties and child care
1	30s	HBD. 3 CHDn. PiL (70s).	VLG A. Born elsewhere. Married in urban area. Accompanied HBD returning to RNP.	Family retail business employee (shop assistant).	Nothing for herself. Management information under control of FiL.	MiL & herself. No expectation of HBD & FiL
2	30s	HBD. 4 CHDn. PiL (60s) living nearby.	VLG A.	Engaged in AGR. HBD public official.	No independent income. Crops only for home consumption. HBD 5 million Yen per annum.	Her responsibility entirely as daughter-in-law.
3	30s	HBD. 3 CHDn.	VLG A(her RNP). Married into this FMY.	Housewife.	Wholly dependent on HBD's income. Domestic account separate from PiL.	All by herself. Her FMY doesn't live with PiL because FiL has built a new house for them.
4	30s	HBD. CHD (infant). PiL (50s, living in next house).	VLG A. Born elsewhere. Married in urban area. Accompanied HBD returning to RNP.	Housewife. HBD: public official. PiL: farming.	Wholly dependent on HBD's income.	All by herself
5	40s	HBD. 3 CHDn (2 of them living in urban areas).	VLG A. Born elsewhere. Married in urban area. Accompanied HBD returning to RNP.	Rice farming with HBD.	Wholly dependent on HBD's income. Only pocket money. All income managed by HBD.	All by herself, thinking this to be a woman's lot.

Source: The planning section of the Director's Secretariat, op. cit., Ministry of General Affairs, Tokyo, 1993, pp.66-68

Leisure activities	Human contact in the region	Privacy invasions	Purpose of life	Children's future
Volleyball with women's group.	Sometimes communicating with other returnees.	No privacy. Almost all information about her known to local people.	No answer.	She doesn't desire them to have the same kind of life.
None. Little pocket money	Alomost none.	No privacy living with PiL. No chance to relax.	Only that the CHDn should grow up healthy.	She doesn't want to live with CHDn in later life.
Nothing in particular. Occasional visits to nearby city as nuclear FMY.	Contact with others through CHDn's school relationships etc.	Living in a separate house from PiL to maintain certain degree of privacy	Raising CHDn. Otherwise no firm convictions perhaps consequence of little active social life.	No answer
Not at present. Previously skiing.	Almost no contact with others owing to isolated location & poor public transportation.	No answer.	Nothing in particular. <i>" If I found life worth living, I would be happy! "</i>	No answer.
Practice "SAMISEN" (musical instrument). Attends social dance classes with HBD.	Contact through home tea gathering with only a few familiar women.	No privacy. She doesn't wish to maintain contact with local people for fear of prying.	Growing AGR produce.	Hopes second son will be FAM heir.

most male returnees had no strong motivation for returning, and that only a few of them had re-evaluated rural life after experiencing urban life.

So exactly why have they come home in spite of their negative feelings for returning to their rural native places and the lack of strong (or obvious) motivation? **Table 10** indicates the reasons for their returning and settling down. The two strongest reasons were (8) “to be ready to help parent(s) in their old age”, and (9) a “strong desire of their parent(s) for them to return home”. Japan is far behind some developed countries in Europe in the field of social welfare for old people. Because of insufficient public services for the elderly, family members (especially women) generally have to take care of their ageing parent(s) themselves. Therefore the first-born sons or daughters (normally sons) have been compelled to return or have returned voluntarily to help their elderly parent(s). Incidentally, it has to be mentioned that there are often marriage problems among these young male returnees.

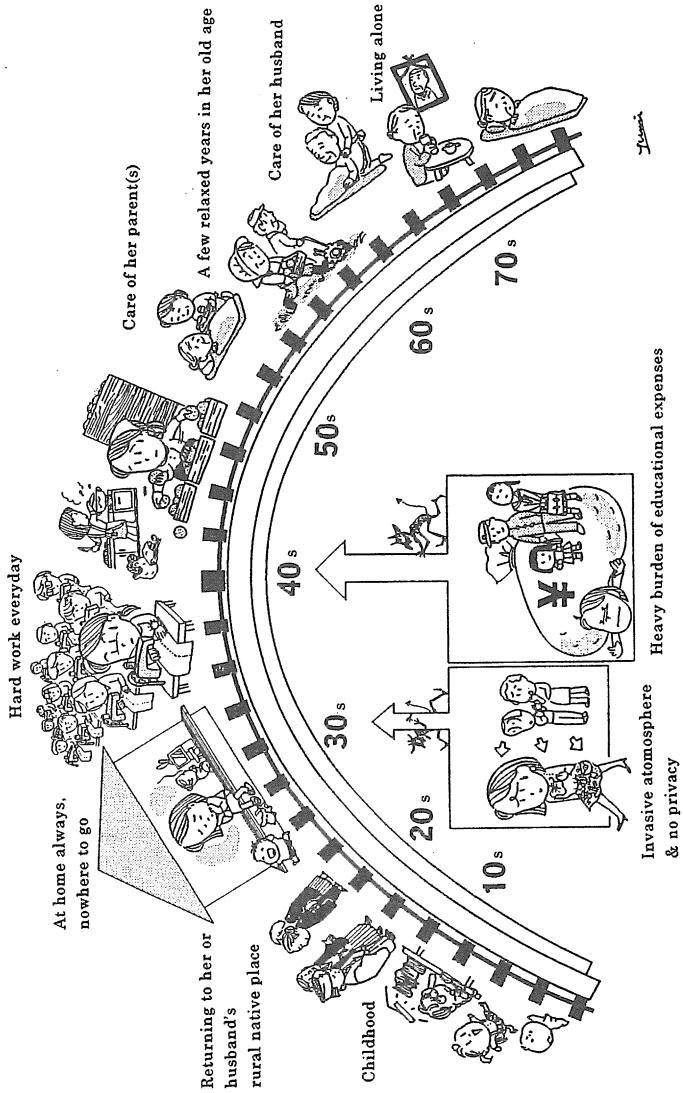
As a result of the self-sacrificial lifestyle of rural middle-aged women (see **table 11** and **chart 2** <by Ms. Yumi Yamane, Illustrator> on “A woman’s whole life in a rural area”), they usually do not desire their own sons or daughters to return or settle down in rural areas in the future, at least while they themselves are relatively young. Consequently, the current decline in the number of returnees looks set to continue along with the increase in the number of middle-aged people who have no strong desire for their sons or daughters to return.

## **6 Income support and job-creation as population boosting**

As a result of our analysis, we have seen that the population decline in rural areas has mainly been caused by a lack of income and/or shortage of varied/qualified job opportunities for returnees and middle-aged rural citizens, especially for women. There is one small village which has been trying to control population decline through income support and the promotion of job opportunities for middle-aged citizens.

This is the village of Kakinoki which has around 2,000 residents and is located in the mountains of Shimane prefecture. It used be fairly representative of districts in Japan with declining population, but now the local government there has initiated some projects to support extra income

CHART 2 A woman's whole life in a rural area



and create varied job opportunities for middle-aged citizens and returnees as a policy of overriding priority based upon future projected population size<sup>80</sup>.

The system for generating extra income for local citizens consists of two main projects at present: one is active support for organic farming and the other is the promotion of mushroom cultivation.

Although the demand for organic farm products has been increasing, management of the farming is not easy because it is a time-consuming job with limited income. Therefore most male workers have switched occupation from organic farming to manufacturing or other industries because of inadequate income at middle age. The local government of this village has encouraged redundant female workers to manage the farming work in return for extra income using the following support systems: firstly, securing a stable supply of organic fertilizer through the construction of a compost-making plant; secondly, the construction of a value-adding farm-product processing plant; and thirdly, the establishment of a new market/price-maintenance mechanism. Through these support systems, each producer is able to freely select types and quantities of products according to prevailing demand and the farmer's own circumstances. The average extra income from this production adds up to nearly one third of average annual household income, and organic products accounted for 30% of all farm products in this village in 1995. Compared with 1990, organic rice-output there had increased tenfold by 1995.

With regard to mushroom production, the village authority invested in the construction of a plant for biochemical technical support and the establishment of a distribution/marketing company. When individually cultivating mushrooms, producers face a lot of risks because of difficulties with cultivation techniques, marketing and price maintenance. Producers in Kakinoki can freely purchase ready-made spores directly from the biochemical plant according to their needs, and the marketing of their products is then carried out by the special marketing company instead of by the producers themselves. The average extra income from mushroom cultivation also amounts to around one third of annual household income. Producers can increase the amount of cultivation if they have extra labour. The authorities are planning to add other kinds of jobs.

These middle-aged women, who have extra income and valuable information through their jobs, seem to be enjoying their lives to the full in their free time, pursuing such pastimes as traveling, exercising and learning. In addition, public day-care costs are quite moderate there, and a



public scholarship system has been prepared by the local authority<sup>10</sup>.

These income support systems are characterized by the fact that (1) producers can freely select the kinds and number of extra-income jobs undertaken in accordance with their own needs and working capacity; (2) producers can avoid the disadvantages of small-scale business and reduce the level of management risk; (3) although the local government invests in companies and facilities, the actual management remains in private hands, which means the public extra-income-support system is only indirect.

When it comes to the creation of job opportunities, varied/qualified occupational categories have been created within the income support system. For supporting citizens' active production, auxiliary services are necessary such as those for research and development, manufacturing, transportation, technical support and marketing. Even though these auxiliary services are essential for successful production, small private-sector businesses generally cannot assign/devote labour to them because of the high risks of the overall enterprise. The local authorities in Kakinoki decided to invest in this semi-private sector and dispatched staff from the public sector to get things moving. In Kakinoki, 24 people have now been employed in these new services including 9 full-time (5 male and 4 female) and 15 part-time (female) workers. The number and diversity of the jobs created is expected to gradually increase with the introduction of other projects such as the planned expansion of these new productive businesses and the development of a health/welfare service system. In spite of the limited number of jobs created annually owing to current financial limitations, these measures have proved effective in controlling population-decline.

When observing population-fluctuations between 1990 and 1995, those aged 15~44 decreased from 697 to 562 (-19.37%), while the population estimated by the regular cohort-fluctuation method, in which cohort fluctuation from 1985 to 1990 was presupposed to continue after 1990, was as low as 533 in 1995 (-23.55%). This indicates that the aforementioned projects seem to be having a favourable effect on population decline in the absence of any other factors likely to influence it, although the difference between the number of people actually surveyed and those estimated is small.

## 7 Conclusion

Rapid industrial development in Japan has brought about big regional

differentials; rural areas have become impoverished while metropolitan areas have made great economic strides. On the one hand, urban concentration of qualified job opportunities, along with an increase in the number of highly qualified people, has inevitably led to the bulk of the population being centralized in metropolitan areas. On the other hand, a wave of rapid population-decline and ageing has advanced in rural areas throughout Japan. Consequently, some depopulating areas have seen an alarming, almost total collapse of local communities as the result of a continuous decline in the number of young people in the absence of effective countermeasures.

After analysis of recent population decline in rural Japan, we have identified three main causes: i.e. outflow of high school graduates, a decrease in the number of returnees, and the very limited influx of migrants from urban areas. The mechanism of depopulation in rural areas analyzed by our survey is based upon attitudes toward permanent rural settlement among young people.

The outflow of high-school-graduates consists of job-seekers and students entering college, university or vocational school. When considering the causes of the outflow among young people, the attitudes toward their permanent settlement have to be analyzed. Our survey showed that not only young people but also their parents (especially mothers) have had negative attitudes toward their future settlement. We may safely assume that these attitudes are directly linked to the lack of desirable employment and low levels of income. Although these two disadvantages had already been identified in earlier research<sup>10)</sup>, some more serious problems were also revealed by our survey.

Since the 1980s in rural Japan, in spite of improvements in job opportunities within commuting distance, as well as starting salary levels for high-school graduates, young people and their parents have had negative attitudes toward permanent settlement there. The results of our analysis point to these negative attitudes being closely related to working and living conditions among middle-aged citizens (and especially women) in rural areas.

Although the incomes of these middle-aged people are at a low level, domestic expenditure suddenly increases at middle-age because of educational expenses, and extra spending on local association memberships,

ceremonies etc. In this situation, it is exceedingly difficult to get sufficient extra income because of the limited range of jobs and quite low wage levels for middle-aged women. As well as working hard under tough terms of employment, women have to do nearly all domestic chores and sometimes have to take care of their ageing parent(s). There is almost no free time or leisure activity for middle-aged women in rural areas. Furthermore, there seem to be tendencies to follow a fixed pattern of behaviour pre-determined by old customs/ideas in the communities and there is seemingly little or no room for privacy.

These self-sacrificial lifestyles of rural middle-aged women adversely affect their attitudes toward their sons' or daughters' permanent settlement there. The women's attitudes also have a negative influence on the thoughts of young people about future settlement. Furthermore, the severe living conditions for women tend to encourage an increase in the number of young people who reach a higher level of education. It accelerates the outflow of young people from rural areas and makes middle-aged women's work even harder. Therefore the outflow of young people will continue to rise unless the working and living conditions of middle-aged citizens, especially women, are improved.

The measures which need to be taken most urgently would seem to be the provision of job information for women, the creation of further varied job opportunities (especially for women), and an income-support system for middle-aged citizens with adequate financial aid for settlement in depopulated areas and the provision of scholarships to promote further education. It is also important to create low-cost and easily accessible cultural, sports or leisure facilities/opportunities, not only for visitors from urban areas but also for citizens of both sexes and all age-groups actually living in rural areas.

Next, we have considered the problems facing those who do return to their rural native places. Among those who migrate to metropolitan areas for the purpose of higher education or job-seeking, there are some who re-evaluate the good aspects of rural life such as the beautiful natural environment and favourable conditions for raising children, and then tend to have a desire to return home. Nevertheless, it is exceedingly difficult for them to realize their dreams because of very limited qualified job opportunities (other than those in the public sector). Also, salary

levels for those hired in mid-career are too low. Even if the men find jobs, it is hardly possible to find qualified jobs for their spouses. In addition, problems of living conditions deter them from returning; these include invasions of privacy, a shortage of free time, expensive public day care and a lack of parks/facilities for children. These problems are common to both returnees and migrants born elsewhere.

Consequently, measures needed to encourage returnees and first-time migrants are as follows:

firstly, the provision of up-to-date information on job, housing and living conditions;

secondly, the creation of some diversity when it comes to qualified job opportunities for both men and women (even a few successful returnees or migrants tend to have a positive effect in counteracting population decline or ageing);

thirdly, the inauguration of some form of compensation scheme to help offset income loss when returning to or migrating into rural areas;

fourthly, the creation of a support system for child-raising women with employment in rural areas.

We should also seek to make the most of the returnees' natural affinity with country life through active public support for local recreational activities involving the whole family.

Population outflow from rural areas and the concentration of people in metropolitan areas would seem to be indispensable for the development of urban industries. However, effective population control could help slow down the population-decreasing tendencies in rural areas. EU countries have adopted income-support schemes and an advantageous subsidy system (for agricultural or guesthouse management as side-businesses) for people living in so-called handicapped areas in mountainous locations or along frontiers. The aims of these policies are threefold: (1) the prevention of population decline; (2) the raising of income levels among farm households; and (3) maintenance of the rural landscape.

In contrast, there are no income-support systems for people managing as best they can in depopulated rural areas of Japan. It is manifestly evident that there are serious disadvantages in the low income levels of people living in such secluded spots as mountain or island locations. Hence, it is imperative for the government to act in the nation's interest

by raising the income of such people for the promotion of national land maintenance and population-stability.

Although on the one hand, central government in Japan should adopt direct income support systems for those living in depopulated areas, it is also essential to apply indirect income-support systems and measures to stimulate and diversify job-creation. However, these last two measures would have to allow local governments a certain flexibility because prevailing industrial and job/income conditions vary so much from district to district. Therefore central government should merely focus on creating the necessary financial framework for those with local specialist knowledge to act in the interest of their local communities.

Experiences gained from such practical measures ought to provide useful background information for the consideration of future problems in developing countries now themselves caught up in the process of rapid economic growth.

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