

Gender differences in well-being over the life course: a case in Japan

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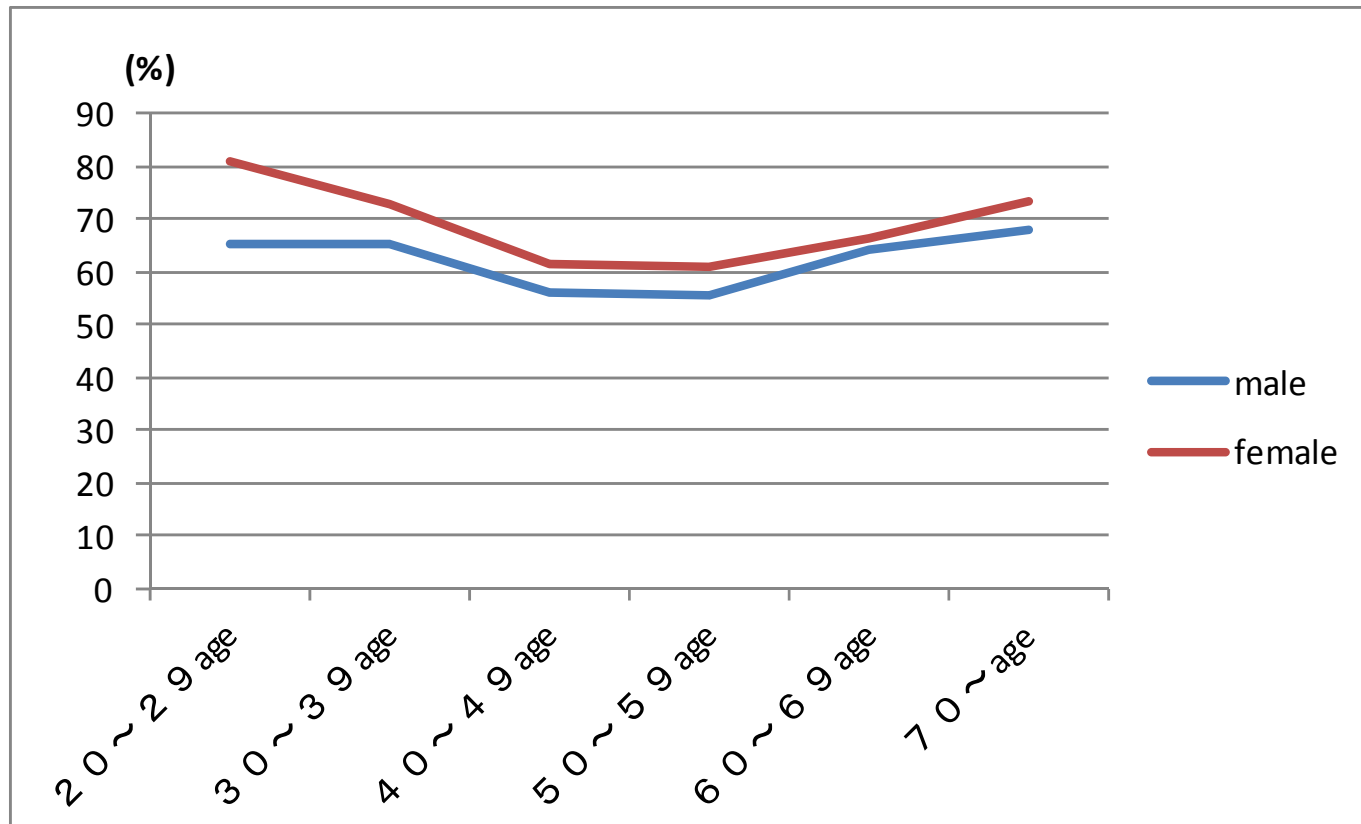
Changes in life satisfaction by age in the West

- According to the previous studies in Western nations, life satisfaction over the life course shows U shape, in which 30's is the lowest. Blanchflower,D.G. and A.J.Oswald(2004) "Well-being over Time in Britain and the USA," *Journal of Public Economics*,88,pp1359-1386. Frijters,P et.al(2001) "The Value of Reunification in Germany: An Analysis of Changes in Life Satisfaction, Tinbergen Institute.
- Based on cross-sectional analysis data, Esterlin pointed out that the relation between life satisfaction and age varied. Easterlin,R.A.(2001) "Income and Happiness : Toward a Unified Theory," *Economic Journal*,111,pp.465-484.

Changes in life satisfaction by age in Japan

- The result of the Osaka University COE Study(2004) showed that feeling of happiness declined with aging, in which 30's was the highest. Fumio Ohtake et.al. Happiness in Japan, Nihonhyoronsha, 2010.
- However, the recent survey on life satisfaction conducted by Cabinet Office showed U shape, in which 40's and 50's were the bottom.
- Such differences may be caused by the way of asking questions.

Satisfaction with the present life by gender and age



Source:Cabinat Office :Survey on People's Life ,2013

Mid-life crisis

- 40's and 50's are difficult time for both men and women. In general, men are in a position of middle-management who are given pressures from the top and the bottom. In Japan, the suicide rate is the highest among men in their early 50's.
- Many women experience “the empty nest syndrome,” after their children have grown up and also menopause.
- In Japan, 50's is the most difficult time for the family budget because of the high cost of sending children to college or university and also repaying mortgage.

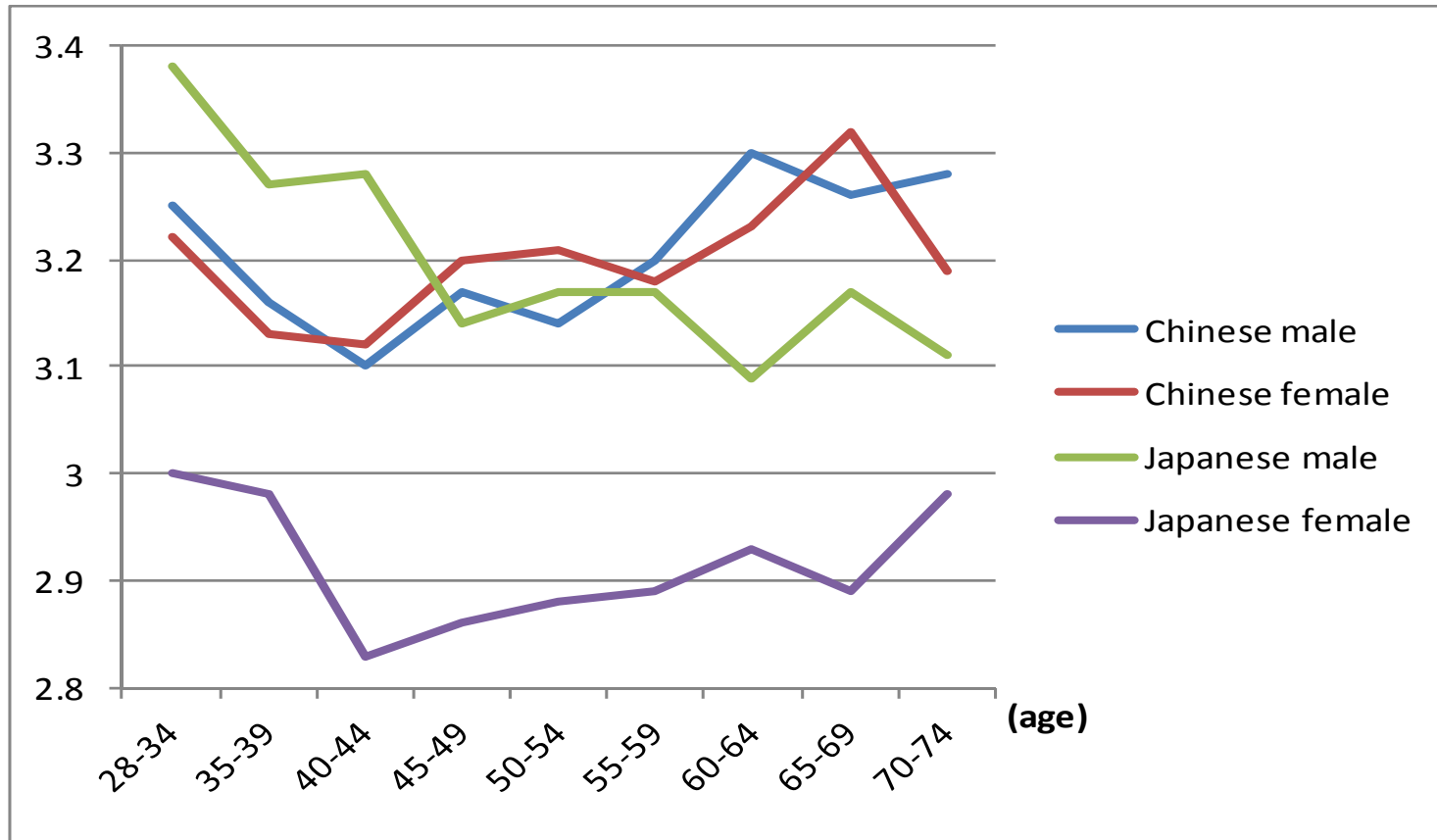
the Burden of the Sandwich Generation

- Recently, young people do not or cannot find a decent job. They depend on their parents even after they have graduated from college.
- In addition to supporting the grown-up children, the middle-aged are responsible for taking care of the parents who live longer and longer. Average life expectancy at birth for male was 79.94, and for female was 86.41 in 2012.

Marital Satisfaction

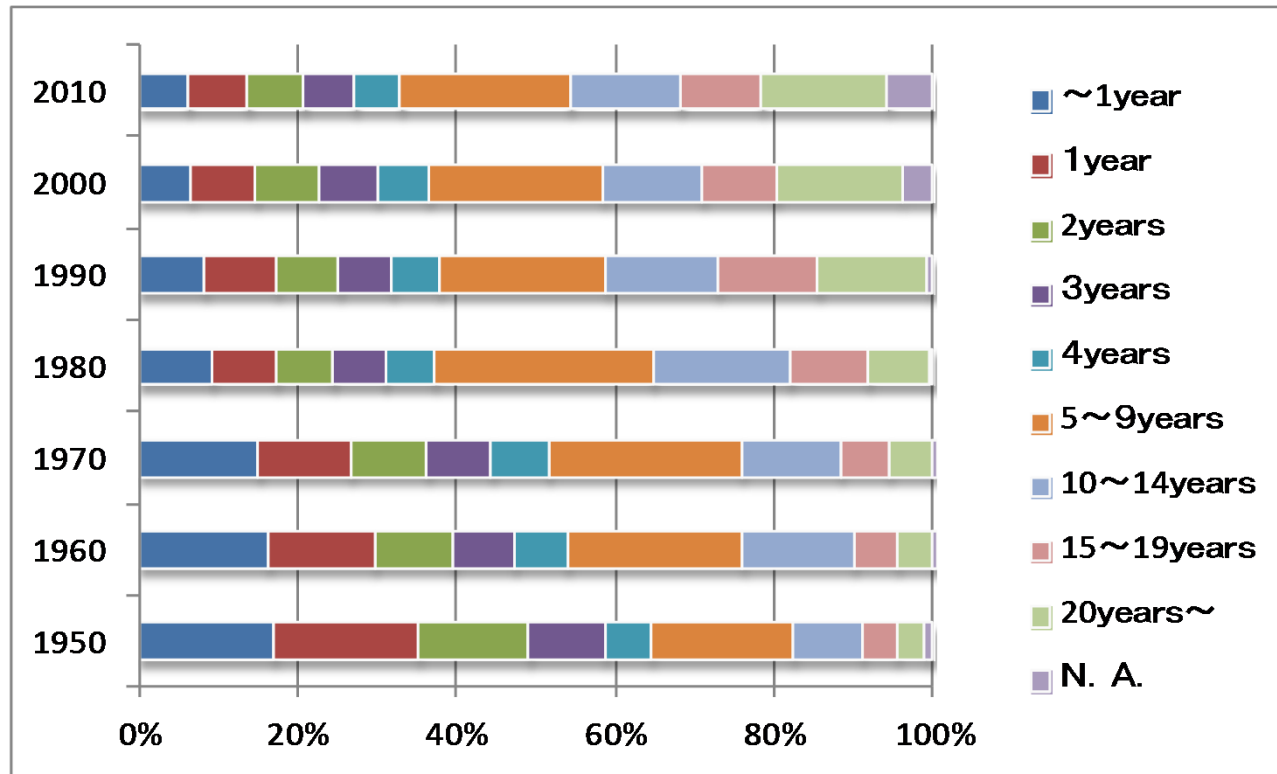
- Life satisfaction of Japanese females is higher than males, which is similar to other countries.
- However, their marital satisfaction is very low (the lowest in their 40's); that is, though they are satisfied with their daily life, they are not satisfied with their husband.
- Gap between husband and wife caused by lack to communication often results in so-called “mature-age divorce.”

Average point of Marital Satisfaction by age and gender



China Family Survey 06 : National Family Research of Japan 03

Percentage of divorce by the length of living together



Source:Ministry of Health and Labour;Vital statistics

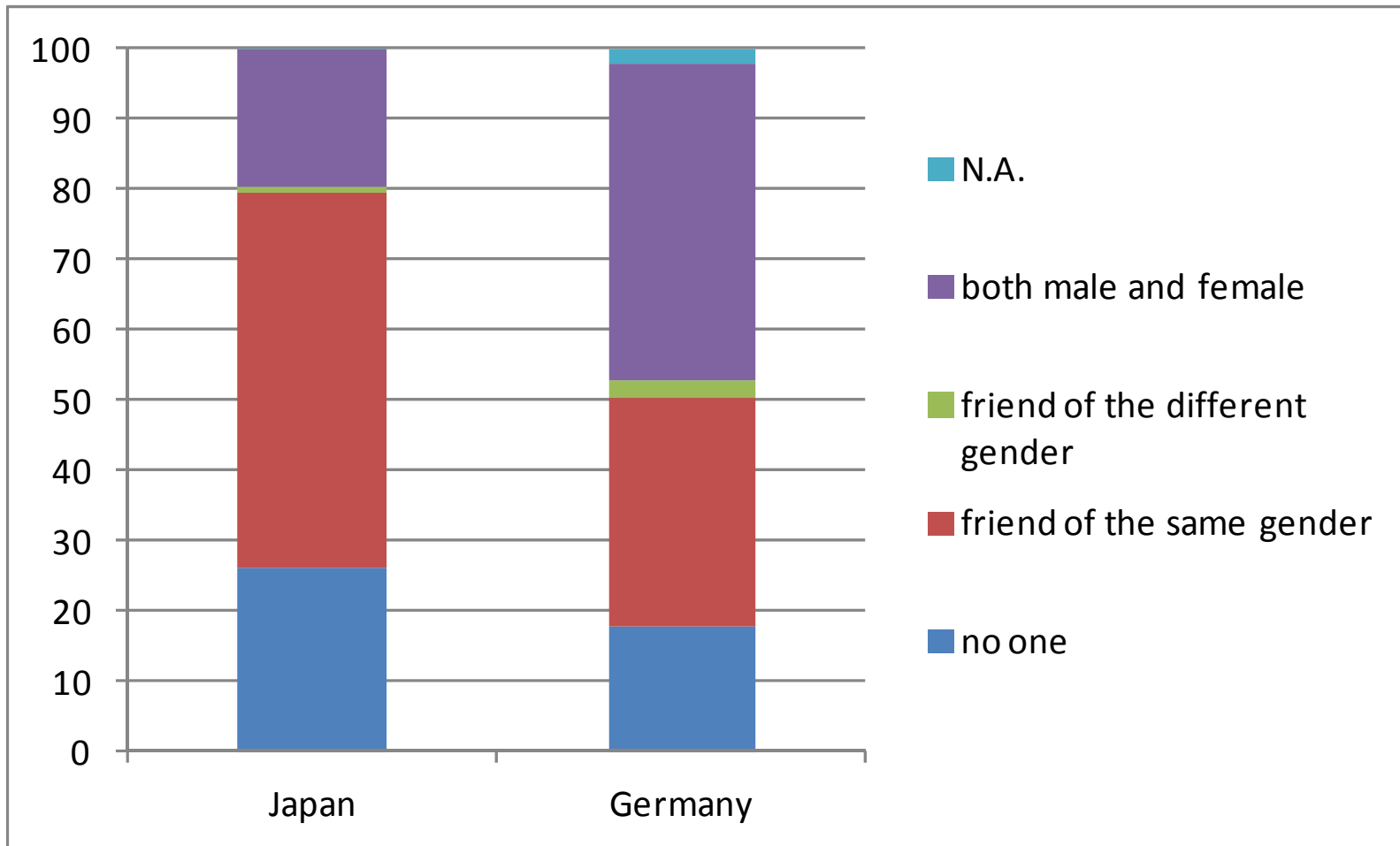
Difficulties in Old Age

- In old age, especially after the death of the spouse, women face financial difficulty and men face social isolation.
- In the gender role segregated society like Japan, there is a norm that men should work outside home while women should stay at home.
- Most Japanese women work now, but they work short period of time with low wage, which makes their old-age pension very low. Average old-age pension for female is about a half of that for male even if they worked until the retirement age.

Social Isolation of Japanese Old Men

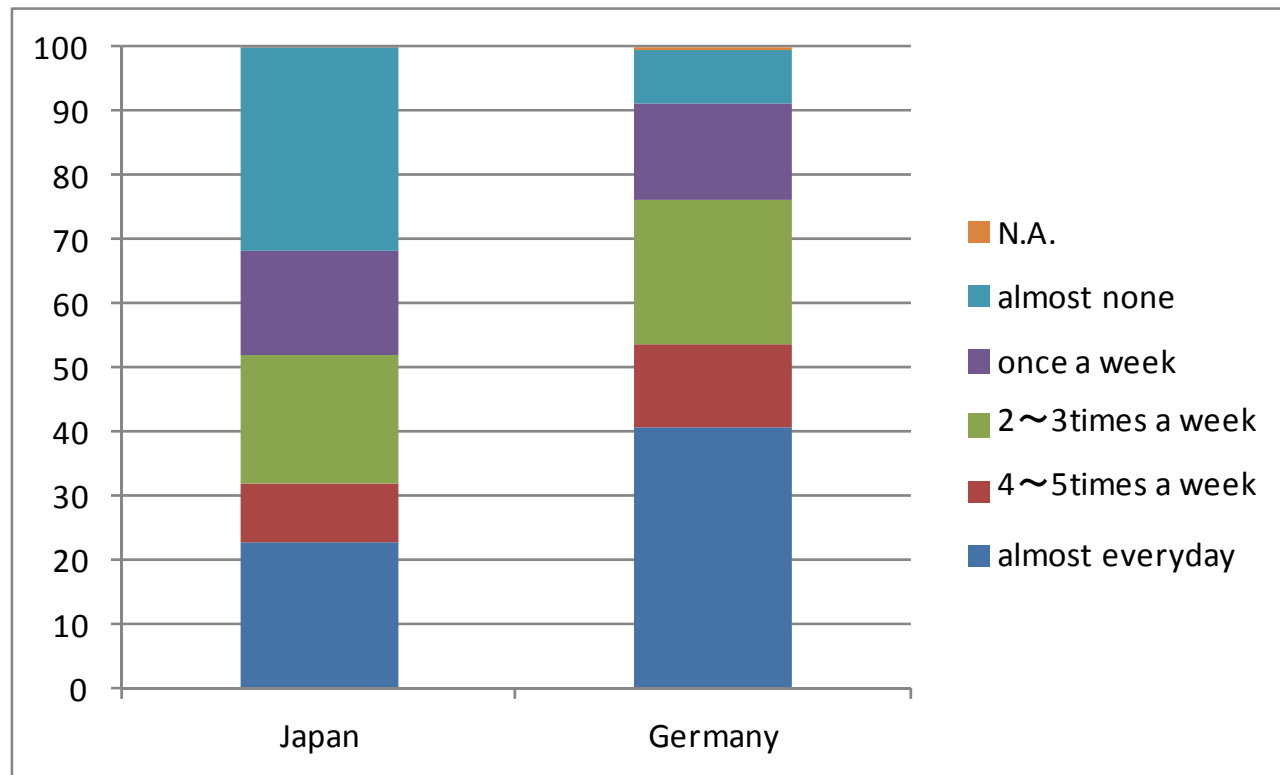
- Compared with other countries, Japanese old people have less social contact, especially among males.
- Until recently typical Japanese employed men spend most of their time at work and they have no place at home (often they are called “big trash”) as well as in community.
- After retirement, they are likely to be isolated, which often cause “isolated death.” People are found dead after several days or weeks.

Do you have close friends whom you can rely on other than your family?



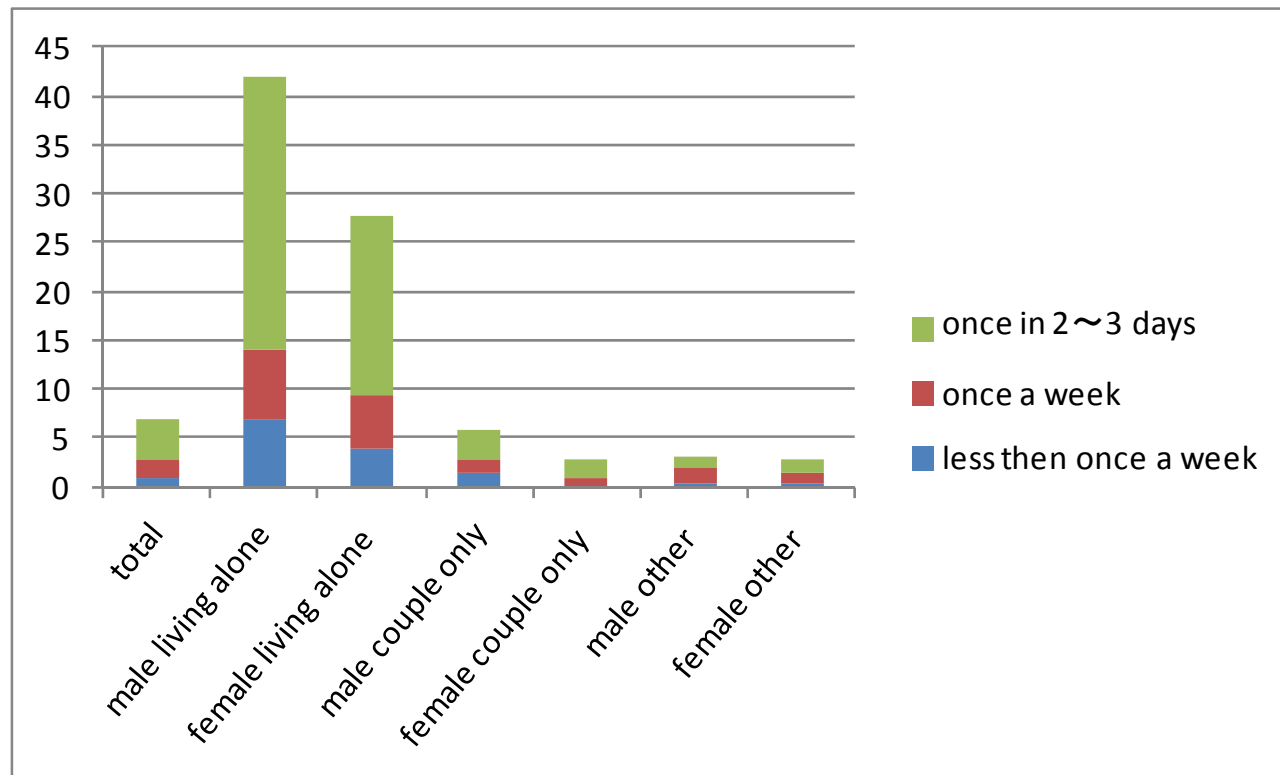
Source: Cabinet Office ;Cross –national comparison of life and attitude of the elderly ,2010 ,males and females over 60

Frequency of communication (other than greeting) with neighbors



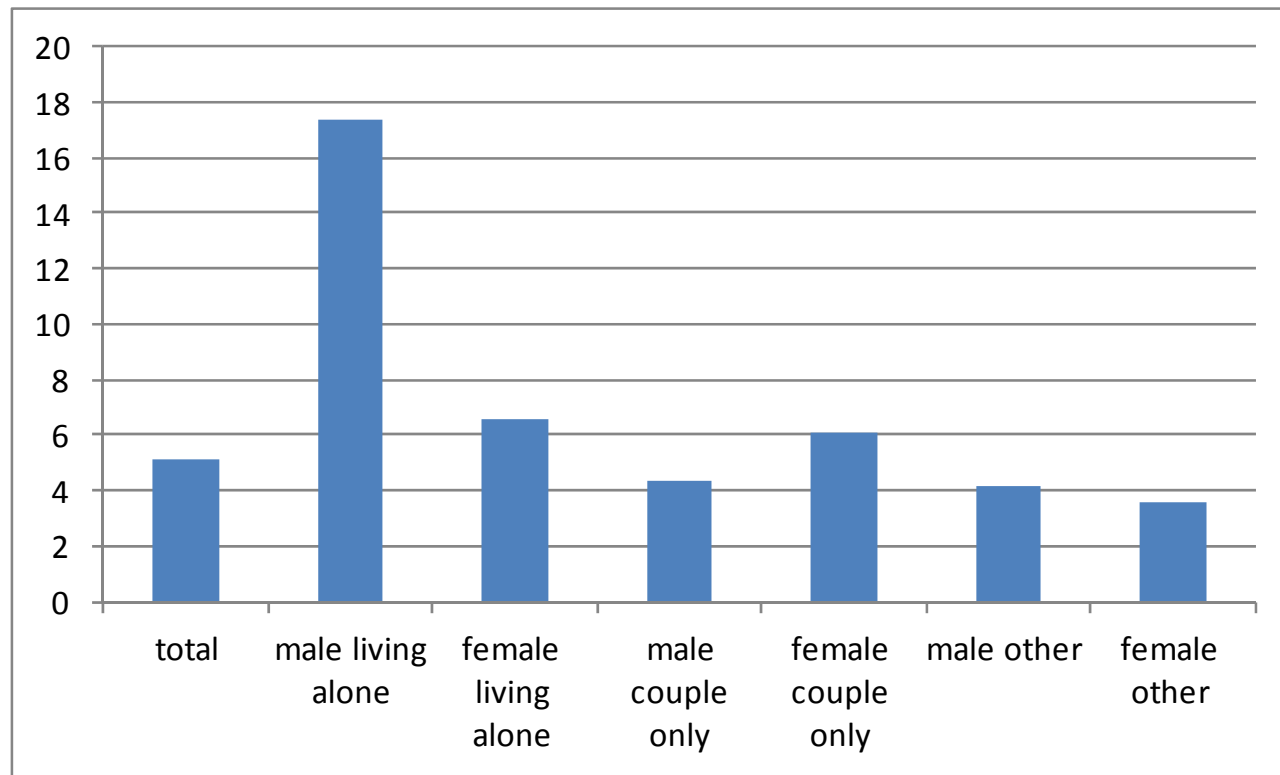
Source: Cabinet Office ;Cross-national comparison of life and attitude of the elderly ,2010 ,males and females over 60

How often do you have contact with other persons(by gender and living arrangements)?



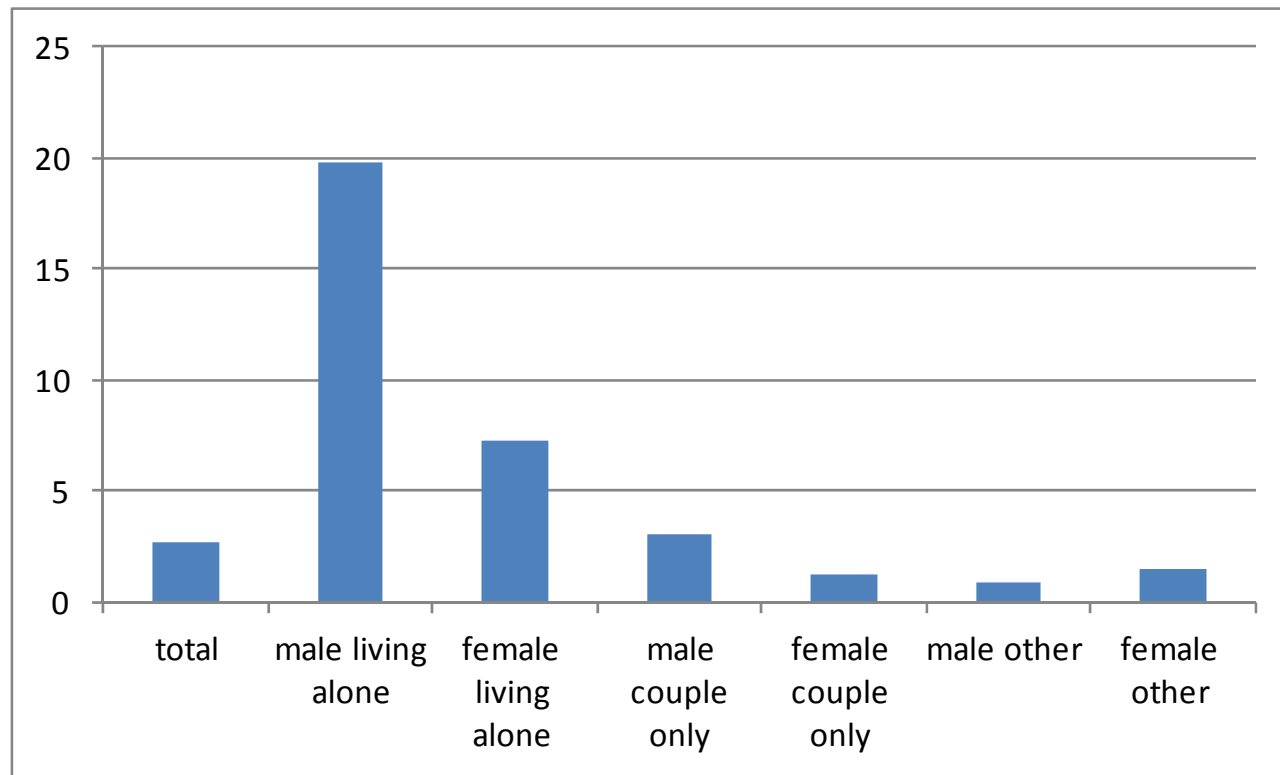
source: Cabinet Office ;Survey on Housing and Living Environments of the Elderly 2010

Percentage of those who rarely contact with neighbors by gender and living arrangements



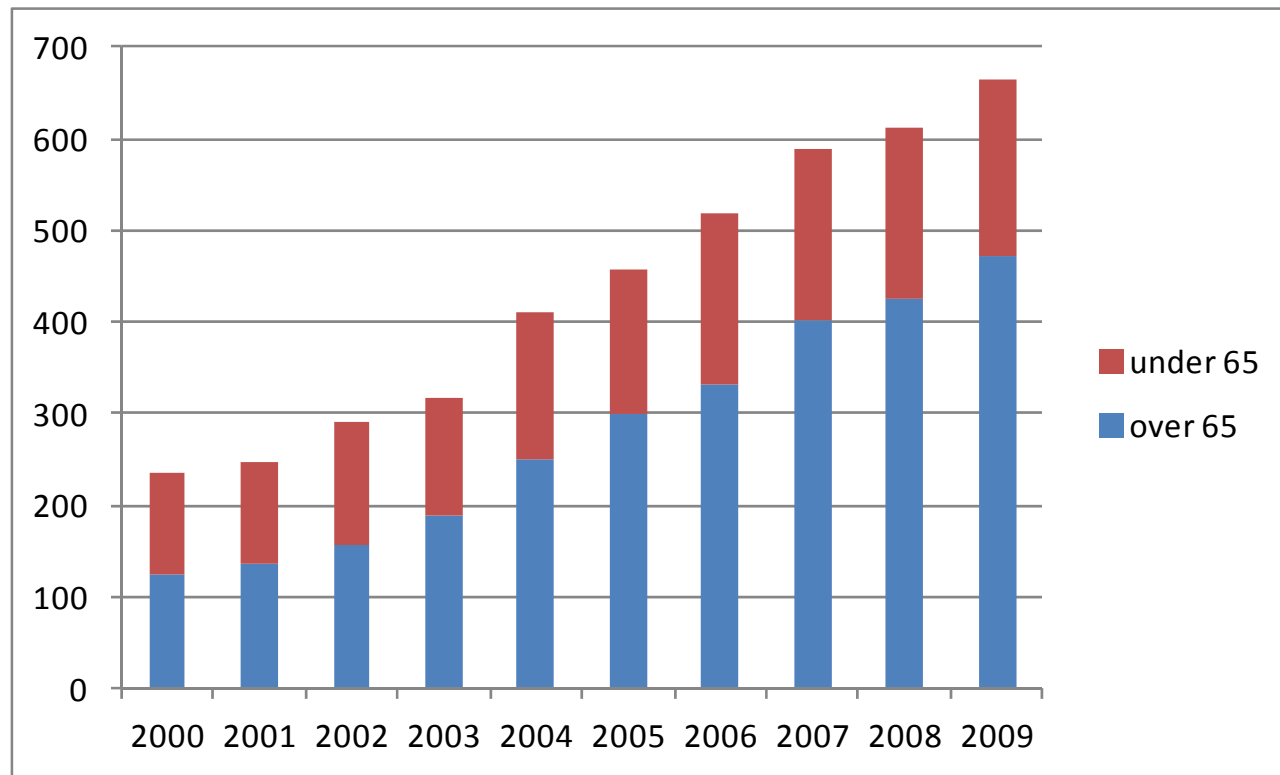
source: Cabinet Office; Survey on Housing and Living Environments of the Elderly 2010

Percentage of those who have no one to rely on when they are in trouble



source: Cabinet Office ;Survey on Housing and Living Environments of the Elderly 2010

The number of “isolated death” at the apartments managed by Urban Renewal Organization



Source: Urban Renewal Organization: Annual Report

Solving the Problems in Old Age

- In order to solve the poverty of older women and social isolation of older men, gender role segregated social structure and norms should be abolished.
- Equality at work as well as at home will eventually solve such problems.
- The gender role segregated norm is deeply rooted in the patriarchal stem family system which China, Germany and Japan have the common tradition.
- It will be attained through socialization process from childhood.