

Column

Working Hours under the COVID-19 Pandemic in Japan: Reviewing Changes by Situation Phase during and after the 2020 State of Emergency Declaration

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I. Introduction

This column discusses how working hours changed by COVID-19 spread during the State of Emergency Declaration (April 7–May 25) and up to July in 2020. The Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training (JILPT) examined the changes by situation phase based on a series of questionnaire survey “Survey on the Impact That Spreading Novel Coronavirus Infection Has on Work and Daily Life.”¹ It especially focused on the decreases in working hours that hit bottom during the declaration and subsequent delays in recovery as economic activity returned.

Up to the end of 2020, no broad increase in the unemployment rate was observed as the COVID-19 pandemic’s impact on employment and labor according to official statistics. However, the number of employed persons at work (i.e., the population of people actually working) temporarily fell significantly, as, for example, a large increase was seen in that of employed persons not at work which peaked in April 2020.²

Shortened working hours is also a major aspect. For one thing, overtime work was drastically curtailed as a way of adjusting company employment, and a decreasing trend on overtime work continues even after the end of the declaration.³ In addition, there were cases in which working hours were significantly reduced due to the shortening of not only overtime but also scheduled working hours per day and to reduced workdays.⁴ There were also not a few workers, especially female workers, being forced to reduce their working hours due to the

school closures.

Such reductions in working hours had a major impact on working people’s daily living with reduced pay and other consequences.⁵ It also has a direct impact on their health and welfare in such areas as psychological well-being. Thus, whether or not working hours were maintained should be discussed in terms of decent working conditions under the COVID-19 related recession. The discussion of this column is based on the analysis of the August data from the abovementioned survey. The results show that hours worked decreased significantly in April and May 2020 and later entered a recovering trend up until the last week of July that year, but they have not yet returned to their pre-pandemic level. Who suffered significant decreases in working hours? And who experienced sluggish recovery? This column considers these questions by focusing on people who were employed full-time before the pandemic.



II. Overall trends of hours worked for full-time employees

Taking a look at hours worked per week from April up until the end of July 2020 based on the surveys’ data, let us examine how the distribution of working hours has changed for those who worked full-time (namely, people whose hours worked per week were 35 hours or more) before the pandemic. The data provides information of hours worked at five time points according to the May and August surveys (Figure 1).⁶

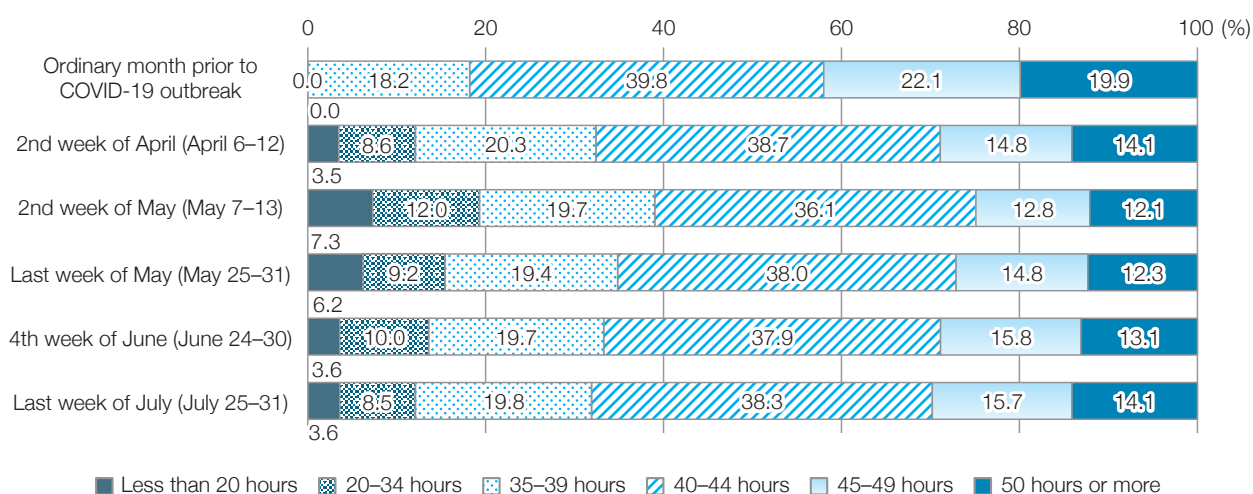


Figure 1. Distribution of hours worked among pre-COVID full-time workers (N=1,785)

Looking at hours worked in the second week of April, which was during the state of emergency declaration, hours worked decreased greatly overall, with the percentages of “45–49 hours” and “at 50 hours or more” which decreased markedly in comparison with the pre-pandemic ordinary month before the pandemic. The other characteristic is that those whose working hours fell under 35 hours per week (“under 20 hours” and “20–34 hours”) are seen in a certain percentage, and they increased in the second week of May.⁷

The state of emergency declaration was lifted in stages with the final phase ending on May 25. While a recovery trend in working hours is observed within the overall trend following the declaration’s end, working hours did not returned to their pre-pandemic levels at the last week of July. Its recovery is still on the way.

III. Differences in fall and recovery of hours worked due to personal attributes and work characteristics

Then, which groups saw their working hours fall most notably during the pandemic in 2020? The following discussion focuses on differences that come from personal attributes and work characteristics. Table 1 shows the average hours worked per week before the pandemic (ordinary

month) and the amount of change in working hours compared to the pre-pandemic ordinary month (difference in hours worked per week) at five time points (“second week of April,” “second week of May,” “last week of May,” “fourth week of June,” and “last week of July”).

Not everyone experienced the same number of decreases in working hours. There are groups with large decreases in working hours and groups with almost no decreases. Specifically, differences in the fluctuation of working hours can be seen depending on sex, the existence of minor children (dependent children under the age of 18),⁸ educational attainment, type of employment, industry, occupation, size of enterprise, possession of managerial position, individual annual income before the pandemic, and region of residence. For example, looking at difference in industries, major decreases are observed particularly in April and May in industries such as “accommodations, eating and drinking services” and “services.” Looking at difference in occupations, decreases are large particularly for workers engaged in “sales,” “service,” and “transport and machine operation.” And looking at difference in regions, decreases are large in the “Tokyo metropolitan area (four prefectures)” and the “Kansai area (three prefectures)” in comparison with “others.”

Looking at difference regarding categories of

Table 1. Hours worked per week before the pandemic (ordinary month) and differences with pre-pandemic working hours at each time point during the pandemic (people who were employed full-time before the pandemic) (N=1,785)

		Hours worked per week before the pandemic (ordinary month)	Difference with pre-pandemic working hours at each time point (number of hours)					N
			2nd week of April	2nd week of May	Last week of June	4th week of July	Last week of July	
Total		45.5	-3.6	-5.7	-4.9	-3.9	-3.6	1,785
Age group	20-29 years old	45.0	-4.8	-6.7	-6.6	-4.6	-3.9	227
	30-39 years old	46.0	-4.4	-6.3	-5.3	-4.3	-4.1	384
	40-49 years old	46.0	-3.3	-5.4	-5.1	-4.3	-3.8	577
	50-59 years old	45.5	-3.2	-5.6	-3.9	-3.1	-2.7	460
	60-64 years old	43.4	-2.8	-4.4	-3.4	-3.1	-3.1	137
Sex	Male	46.4	-3.4	-5.1	-4.0	-3.3	-3.0	1,190
	(with minor child)	47.0	-3.4	-4.8	-3.5	-2.9	-2.7	(386)
	Female	43.7	-4.2	-6.9	-6.7	-5.2	-4.7	595
	(with minor child)	43.1	-4.3	-6.2	-10.0	-7.8	-7.5	(109)
Educational attainment	Junior high school/high school graduate	45.5	-3.1	-5.3	-4.5	-3.9	-3.6	529
	Specialized training college/Junior college graduate	45.4	-4.0	-6.9	-6.6	-5.5	-5.2	340
	University/Graduate school graduate	45.6	-3.8	-5.5	-4.5	-3.3	-2.9	916
Type of employment	Regular employees	46.1	-3.5	-5.4	-4.6	-3.7	-3.4	1,535
	Non-regular employees	42.0	-4.3	-7.6	-6.5	-5.2	-4.4	250
Industry	Construction	46.5	-2.3	-3.1	-2.3	-1.4	-1.4	133
	Manufacturing	45.4	-2.9	-4.9	-4.7	-4.4	-4.5	548
	Electricity, gas, heat supply and water	46.6	-1.4	-2.7	-3.8	-3.9	-4.2	32
	Information and communications	44.7	-2.3	-3.3	-2.7	-2.6	-2.1	130
	Transport	47.8	-3.4	-6.1	-5.8	-4.7	-4.5	133
	Wholesale and retail trade	45.8	-4.6	-6.5	-5.3	-4.3	-3.6	210
	Finance and insurance	45.4	-5.0	-8.6	-6.0	-3.2	-2.3	109
	Real estate	45.2	-5.0	-7.9	-3.9	-2.3	-2.0	42
	Accommodations, eating and drinking services	46.8	-9.0	-15.1	-11.0	-8.1	-6.7	36
	Medical, health care and welfare	43.6	-1.1	-1.3	-2.6	-2.4	-2.3	157
	Education, learning support	43.3	-4.8	-7.7	-5.6	-4.1	-2.5	32
	Postal services, cooperative associations	41.6	-0.3	-0.3	-3.8	-3.8	-3.8	17
	Services	45.9	-6.9	-10.4	-7.7	-5.4	-4.2	206
Occupation	Administrative and managerial workers (section manager level or higher)	46.6	-3.0	-4.9	-2.6	-1.6	-1.4	243
	Professional and engineering workers	45.8	-2.6	-3.3	-3.4	-3.2	-2.8	346
	Clerical workers	43.4	-2.7	-5.2	-4.8	-3.9	-3.5	478
	Sales workers	47.2	-6.2	-8.6	-7.0	-5.1	-4.1	242
	Service workers	45.7	-8.1	-11.2	-8.0	-5.5	-4.4	119
	Security workers	48.3	-3.8	-4.2	-3.8	-2.9	-1.7	12
	Production/skilled workers	44.9	-3.1	-6.1	-6.0	-5.6	-6.0	209
	Transport and machine operation workers	50.0	-5.0	-7.6	-8.1	-7.4	-6.5	51
	Construction and mining workers	48.8	-3.0	-3.4	-1.3	0.0	-0.4	28
Carrying, cleaning, and packaging workers	46.2	-1.4	-3.7	-3.8	-3.9	-4.1	57	
Size of enterprise	29 or fewer employees	46.0	-3.4	-5.1	-3.9	-3.4	-3.4	349
	30-299 employees	45.5	-3.7	-5.9	-5.3	-4.6	-3.9	599
	300-999 employees	45.2	-3.1	-5.4	-4.9	-3.8	-3.4	261
	1,000 or more employees	45.5	-4.0	-6.0	-5.1	-3.7	-3.4	576
Years of continuous service	Fewer than 5 years	45.1	-3.8	-5.8	-5.1	-4.0	-3.4	456
	At least 5 but fewer than 10 years	45.9	-4.3	-6.4	-5.9	-4.6	-4.4	370
	At least 10 but fewer than 20 years	45.7	-3.9	-6.1	-4.8	-4.0	-3.5	493
	At least 20 years	45.5	-2.8	-4.7	-3.8	-3.3	-3.1	466
Possession of managerial position	No managerial position	45.0	-3.7	-6.0	-5.3	-4.3	-3.9	1,286
	In Managerial position	46.8	-3.5	-5.0	-3.7	-2.9	-2.8	499
Individual annual income before the pandemic	Less than 3 million yen	43.6	-4.3	-6.8	-6.4	-5.0	-4.5	505
	3 million to less than 5 million yen	45.9	-3.2	-5.3	-4.6	-3.8	-3.4	650
	5 million to less than 7 million yen	46.8	-3.8	-5.8	-3.8	-3.0	-2.7	347
	7 million yen or more	46.7	-3.4	-4.6	-4.2	-3.5	-3.4	283
Area of residence	Tokyo metropolitan area (4 prefectures)	46.0	-4.7	-6.7	-5.6	-4.1	-3.6	514
	Kansai area (3 prefectures)	45.5	-4.6	-7.1	-5.5	-4.1	-3.8	236
	Others	45.3	-2.9	-4.9	-4.4	-3.8	-3.5	1,035
Hours worked per week before the pandemic (ordinary month)	35-39 hours	37.5	-2.7	-4.8	-1.8	-1.0	-0.7	325
	40-44 hours	42.5	-2.4	-4.1	-3.0	-2.2	-1.9	711
	45-49 hours	47.5	-4.0	-6.1	-5.7	-4.3	-4.0	394
	50 hours or more	56.8	-6.8	-9.4	-10.4	-9.6	-9.1	355

Source: The author, based on JILPT (2020a).

Notes: 1. Indicators concerning employment and living conditions (type of employment, industry, occupation, size of enterprise, years of continuous service, position, and area of residence) are as of April 1, 2020.

2. "Possession of managerial position" is identified by working in a management position equivalent to assistant manager or higher.

3. "Individual annual income before the pandemic" is based on "your own annual wage income (pretax) during the past one year" in the RENGO-RIALS April survey (conducted during April 1 through 3).

4. "Hours worked per week before the pandemic (ordinary month)" is a response item on the questionnaire. However, in handling responses in terms of numbers of hours, the author calculated "35-39 hours" as 37.5 hours and "60 hours or more" as 62.5 hours.

hours worked per week before the pandemic, groups that had long working hours, such as “50 hours or more,” had large decreases during the pandemic, and this trend has not changed even at the last week of July. This shows that companies made large cutbacks in overtime work as a means of adjusting their employment due to the pandemic. It can be interpreted that this situation of curtailed overtime remains unchanged through to the end of July.

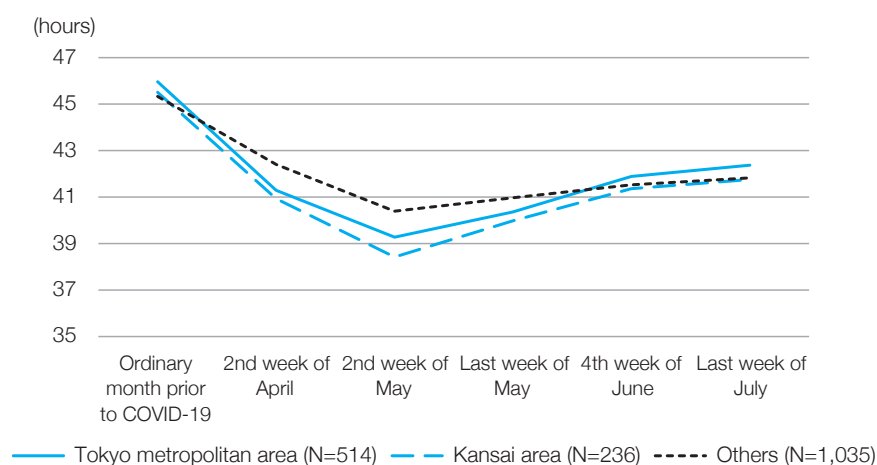
The following discussion explores in detail changes in hours worked by some of specific attributes based on figures shown in Table 1. Looking first at individual regions of residence (Figure 2), decreases in working hours in the second week of April and the second week of May, which occurred during the state of emergency declaration, were large for residents of the Tokyo metropolitan area and the Kansai area in comparison with other regions. However, if we look at the average values for the last week of July, these values can be interpreted as showing that regional differences have disappeared.

Looking at the situation by sex (Figure 3), the decreasing trend for women is larger than it is for men even as we recognize that a gender gap in working hour levels existed before the pandemic. In particular, for women with minor children (women of child-rearing households), the decrease in working hours continues after the last week of

May, when the state of emergency declaration was lifted. After schools reopened in the first half of June, shortened school hours and constraints on the use of afterschool childcare services placed significant restrictions on the labor supplied by those women and hindered their full-time employment.⁹

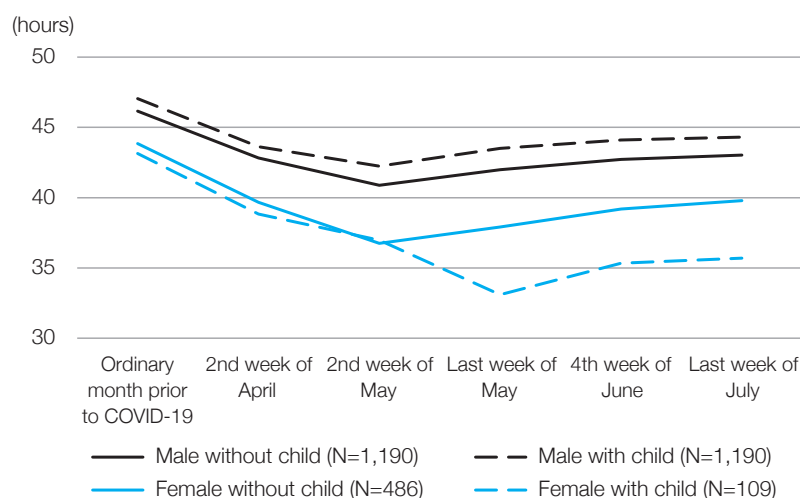
IV. Who experienced sluggish recovery after the end of the state of emergency?

Whose working hours drastically fell during the 2020 State of Emergency Declaration? And whose working hours were recovering sluggishly? It is difficult to draw simple conclusions here as various factors are intertwined—among them, industrial and occupational characteristics as well as regional and household circumstances. There is a possibility that the major factors of working hours fluctuation shifts slightly depending on the time point. In April and May, regional differences in the spread of infection as well as requests from the local government in response to the declaration possibly meant that decreases occurred primarily in the Tokyo metropolitan area and the Kansai area and that certain industries and occupations were hit particularly hard. However, with the lifting of the state of emergency declaration and as the social situation changes, a shift may be underway away from the state whereby effects are concentrated in



Source: The author, based on JILPT (2020a).

Figure 2. Changes in average hours worked per week: by region (full-time workers before the COVID-19 pandemic) (N=1,785)



Source: The author, based on JILPT (2020a).

Figure 3. Changes in average hours worked per week: by sex and existence of minor children (full-time workers before the COVID-19 pandemic) (N=1,785)

certain regions and industries/occupations. Instead, each worker's position (strong position/vulnerable position) in the labor market is coming to the fore as a main factor relating to the maintenance of working conditions. Specifically, it is thought that the concentration of effects on non-regular employment, women (of child-rearing households), low-income earners, and other attributes is becoming clear.

To test this hypothesis, I conducted OLS regression on working hours at five time points beginning from the second week of April, setting change (in number of hours) from the pre-pandemic ordinary month as the explained variable. The explanatory variables are age group, sex, with/without minor children, interaction term of woman and existence of minor children, educational attainment, type of employment, industry, occupation, size of enterprise, years of continuous service, possession of managerial position, pre-pandemic working hours, pre-pandemic annual income, and region of residence.¹⁰

Let us look at the results (Table 2). Because making detailed comparisons of the five time points is complicated, I interpret changes with focus on the "second week of May," which is during the state of emergency declaration, and the "last week of July," which represents the point after the state

of emergency. The following points concerning changes in the determinants are uncovered.

The first is regional differences. Looking at results from the duration of time that the state of emergency declaration was in effect (the second week of April and the second week of May), the coefficient values (B) for the Tokyo metropolitan area and the Kansai area show negative effects in comparison with other regions. Thus, it can be interpreted that their decreases in working hours were large. In particular, in the second week of May, working hours in the Tokyo metropolitan area fell by 1.484 hours in terms of average compared to other regions. However, statistical significance disappeared in the fourth week of June and last week of July. We can say that the regional differences seen in April and May were on their way to being eliminated.

Next, let us look at differences in terms of industry and occupation. Like regional differences, it is confirmed that particularly large decreases in working hours occurred in the industrial categories of "finance and insurance," "accommodations, eating and drinking services," and "services," and in the occupational classifications of "sales workers," "service workers," and "production/skilled workers," most notably in the second week of May.

Table 2. Determinants of Change in working hours at each time point compared to pre-pandemic ordinary month (OLS)

Explained variable: change in working hours compared to pre-pandemic ordinary month (number of hours)										
Explained variable	[2nd week of April]		[2nd week of May]		[Last week of May]		[4th week of June]		[Last week of July]	
	B	Standard error	B	Standard error	B	Standard error	B	Standard error	B	Standard error
Constant	9.849	1.864**	11.695	2.407**	22.866	2.451**	21.825	2.135**	21.057	2.094**
Age	.036	.022	.025	.028	.065	.029*	.041	.025	.040	.025
Female	-1.264	.531*	-2.151	.685**	-2.346	.698**	-1.868	.608**	-1.726	.596**
With minor child	.045	.513	.305	.662	.670	.674	.664	.587	.726	.576
Female with minor child [interaction term]	-.590	.977	-.037	1.261	-5.234	1.284**	-4.171	1.119**	-4.357	1.097**
Educational attainment (ref. junior high school/high school graduate)										
Specialized training college/junior college graduate	-.765	.555	-1.440	.716*	-1.630	.730*	-1.196	.636	-1.366	.623*
University/graduate school graduate	-.921	.487	-1.057	.629	-1.107	.640	-.443	.558	-.406	.547
Non-regular employee	-.805	.633	-1.524	.817	-1.878	.832*	-2.011	.725**	-1.614	.711*
Industry (ref. manufacturing)										
Construction	.464	.869	.962	1.122	1.319	1.143	2.151	.995*	2.280	.976*
Electricity, gas, heat supply, and water	1.391	1.439	1.579	1.857	.706	1.891	.362	1.648	-.028	1.616
Information and communications	.718	.816	.904	1.053	.934	1.072	.560	.934	.830	.916
Transport	-.398	.970	-1.165	1.252	-.730	1.274	.429	1.110	.475	1.089
Wholesale and retail trade	-.683	.728	-.559	.940	.215	.958	.482	.834	.805	.818
Finance and insurance	-1.269	.876	-3.068	1.131**	-.801	1.151	.908	1.003	1.684	.984
Real estate	-1.698	1.296	-3.053	1.672	.134	1.703	1.248	1.484	1.409	1.455
Accommodations, eating and drinking services	-3.645	1.487*	-7.710	1.919**	-4.848	1.954*	-2.908	1.703	-1.935	1.670
Medical, health care and welfare	1.868	.795*	3.334	1.027**	1.627	1.045	1.238	.911	1.058	.893
Education, learning support	-1.609	1.458	-2.590	1.882	-1.101	1.916	-.222	1.670	.945	1.637
Postal services, cooperative associations	1.094	1.984	2.800	2.560	-1.770	2.607	-1.600	2.271	-1.534	2.228
Services	-3.256	.736**	-5.063	.950**	-3.084	.967**	-1.233	.843	-.315	.827
Occupation (ref. clerical workers)										
Administrative and managerial workers (section manager level or higher)	-.566	.814	-1.091	1.051	1.331	1.071	2.470	.933**	2.670	.915**
Professional and engineering workers	-.495	.614	.526	.793	.602	.808	.609	.704	.769	.690
Sales workers	-2.802	.682**	-3.081	.880**	-1.690	.897	-.448	.781	.133	.766
Service workers	-3.861	.901**	-3.567	1.162**	-1.010	1.184	.194	1.031	.610	1.011
Security workers	1.522	2.351	4.758	3.035	3.877	3.090	2.879	2.692	3.201	2.641
Production/skilled workers	-1.356	.769	-2.374	.993*	-2.129	1.011*	-1.599	.881	-2.200	.864*
Transport and machine operation workers	-1.921	1.378	-1.808	1.778	-2.149	1.811	-2.167	1.578	-1.518	1.547
Construction and mining workers	-2.035	1.700	-1.345	2.194	.658	2.234	2.213	1.946	1.978	1.909
Carrying, cleaning, and packaging workers	1.203	1.215	1.249	1.568	1.090	1.597	.316	1.391	-.278	1.364
Size of enterprise (ref. 29 or fewer employees)										
30-299 employees	-.797	.556	-1.488	.717*	-2.011	.730**	-1.439	.636*	-.680	.624
300-999 employees	-.084	.681	-.893	.879	-1.661	.895	-.727	.780	-.309	.765
1,000 or more employees	-.739	.610	-1.254	.787	-1.601	.801*	-.446	.698	-.239	.685
Years of continuous service	-.015	.024	-.024	.030	-.069	.031*	-.060	.027*	-.058	.026*
Managerial position	.145	.585	1.059	.755	.497	.769	.076	.670	-.285	.657
Pre-pandemic working hours	-.232	.029**	-.283	.038**	-.545	.039**	-.538	.034**	-.529	.033**
Pre-pandemic annual income (ref. 3 million to less than 5 million yen)										
Less than 3 million yen	-1.309	.532*	-1.159	.687	-1.633	.699*	-.977	.609	-.913	.597
5 million to less than 7 million yen	-.905	.570	-1.247	.736	.318	.749	.344	.653	.347	.640
At least 7 million yen or more	-.436	.720	.189	.929	-.626	.946	-1.201	.824	-1.364	.809
Area of residence (ref. other regions)										
Tokyo metropolitan area (4 prefectures)	-1.502	.457**	-1.484	.590*	-1.413	.601*	-.542	.523	-.444	.513
Kansai area (3 prefectures)	-1.569	.571**	-1.937	.737**	-1.172	.751	-.417	.654	-.336	.641
F-value		6.488**		7.41**		9.429**		9.807**		9.644**
R ² squared		0.127		0.142		0.174		0.18		0.177
Adjusted R ² squared		0.107		0.123		0.156		0.161		0.159
N		1,785		1,785		1,785		1,785		1,785

Source: The author, based on JILPT (2020a).

**Significant at 1% level, *significant at 5% level

For example, in the second week of May, working hours in “accommodations, eating and drinking services” fell by a remarkable 7.710 hours in terms of average compared to manufacturing. We can say that decreases in working hours were largely skewed toward certain industries and occupations at that time. However, if we look at subsequent changes, the only industry or occupation in the last week of July that shows a negative effect is “production or skilled workers.” This suggests that differences in decreases in working hours that are dependent on industries and occupations were diminishing, and that the situation is not one in which effects are concentrated in certain industries and occupations.

As these regional differences and disparities among industries and occupations have shrunk, other disparities have come to the fore. One is a gender gap. Large decreases in working hours are seen for female in comparison with male at each time point beginning the second week of April, and this situation has not changed even after the state of emergency declaration was lifted. Another point that becomes conspicuous is that the interaction term “female with minor children” shows statistically negative values beginning with the last week of May. Particularly, at the last week of July, the working hours of female of child-rearing households fall by about 6.083 hours ($1.726 + 4.357$) on average compared to males without children. Women in general faced consistently adverse circumstances through the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, the above shows that, despite a trend toward recovery after the state of emergency declaration’s end, women of child-rearing households were in a position whereby working hours tended not to return even at the end of July. This is likely an effect of their double burden in terms of housework and child-rearing.

Next, it deserves noting that the “non-regular employee” variable shows a negative effect from the last week of May. A possible interpretation here is that, until the end of the state of emergency declaration, the main focus of the pandemic’s effects was on specific industries and occupations,

and no clear disparities depending on the type of employment appeared; but, later, the working hours of regular employees returned but the recovery of non-regular employees has been sluggish. In other words, the differences among types of employment in April and May (during the state of emergency declaration) seen in Table 1 could be mostly explained as differences in industry and occupation. However, it can be seen that type of employment-based differences in companies’ employment adjustment are coming to the forefront as the situation changes.

As trends, differences based on pre-pandemic income levels are somewhat difficult to explain. However, the “less than 3 million yen” group shows a strong trend toward decreased working hours at the second week of April and last week of May. Although its statistical significance disappears at later time points, the fact that income groups’ influence has a strong correlation with type of employment also plays a role.¹¹

It should be noted that “pre-pandemic hours worked” consistently show negative effects. From this, it can be read that the tendency whereby working hours decreased more for people who originally had longer working hours, which means cutting overtime work, was continuing.¹²

V. Conclusion

In this column, we examined which groups were severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic from the aspect of working hours in 2020. While working hours decreased markedly during the pandemic in terms of overall trends, the degree of decrease largely depended on workers’ attributes and positions in labor market.

Who experienced shortened working hours? From the results of analysis, it was confirmed that decreases during the state of emergency declaration primarily occurred in the Tokyo metropolitan area and the Kansai area as well as in certain industries and occupations (e.g., eating and drinking establishments, entertainment). As far as can be seen from the aspect of working hours, the pandemic was a major blow to certain regions and

certain industries/occupations during this period.

Such differences in region and differences based on industries/occupations have been diminishing following the state of emergency declaration's end. In their place have arisen delays in recovery for certain groups—namely women (and especially those of child-rearing households) and non-regular employees.

As Zhou (2021) pointed out, the pandemic had major impacts on female employment. Women have consistently been in a tough position as a result of the pandemic. In this column, it can be seen that after the end of the state of emergency declaration (rather than during it, when many people, including men, were affected), child-rearing duties continue to make it difficult for women to participate in the labor market full-time, and thus women are becoming conspicuous as a group “left behind” by the recovery in working hours.

Differences depending on the type of employment are also beginning to appear in the post-declaration situation. During the declaration period, economic activity was artificially restricted as a so-called emergency measure. However, as economic activity resumes following the declaration's lifting, companies experiencing worsening performance or those who saw an uncertain future had to continue adjusting their employment. This is being reflected in fluctuations in working hours. Moreover, a look at survey data for the end of July showed that type of employment has become a factor determining the degree of recovery in working hours; it reveals the possibility that companies undertook adjustment to bring scheduled working hours back to their original level for regular employees first.

Differences in strength or weakness of position in the labor market may urge amplify income disparities during crisis. It is necessary to continue identifying groups that are severely affected by the COVID-19 crisis and to consider ways of supporting them.

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1. For the survey's design and overall aggregation, see JILPT (2020a).
2. “Employed persons not at work,” as understood by the MIC's *Labour Force Survey*, are defined as “persons with jobs but did not work during the reference week.”
3. According to the MHLW's *Monthly Labour Survey*, non-scheduled working hours, which express overtime work and the like, decreased markedly by 30.7% year-on-year in May. A company survey conducted by JILPT (JILPT 2020b) in June also revealed that the percentage of companies that “curtailed overtime” as a means of adjusting employment for regular employees reached 35.4% in April and 36.6% in May.
4. According to reports, a considerable number of instances were seen whereby employees were furloughed on a rotating basis (i.e., each employee's number of weekly workdays was reduced) in factories, public transport, etc. There were also cases in which, in addition to reducing workday numbers, companies reduced per-day scheduled working hours or took other steps in the interest of shortening business hours or as a means of reducing employee commuting.
5. According to *Monthly Labour Survey*, non-scheduled earnings (indicating overtime pay, etc.) in May fell 26.3% compared to the same month of the previous year. This was the largest drop on record. The link between COVID-19-caused losses in working hours and reduced wages is verified in Takahashi (2020).
6. The sample used in this column's analysis consists of people who responded to all of the surveys of April, May, and August and who continued to work for the same employer during this period. In this respect, cases in which working hours were reduced as a result of changes in employment (for example, cases in which people shifted to part-time employment), becoming unemployed, or dropping out of the labor force are not included in the analysis. Accordingly, this column does not attempt to grasp COVID-19-caused decreases (losses) in working hours throughout society as a whole, but rather analyzes changes in working hours among people whose employment at the same company was maintained.
7. In this column, people whose hours worked amounted to zero hours are aggregated into the “less than 20 hours” group. As portions of the analysis sample (N=1,785), respondents who indicated that their hours worked per week amounted to zero hours made up 0.0% in the second week of April, 1.3% in the second week of May, 2.2% in the last week of May, 1.0% in the fourth week of June, and 0.9% in the last week of July. So long as employment continued, I considered zero hours as having only a small qualitative difference with extremely short working hours (less than 20 hours) and treated such responses without distinction in this column.
8. The indicator of whether or not minor children exist is based on the age of the youngest child of respondents in this analysis.
9. A detailed analysis of the COVID-19-caused employment crisis for women as a whole, including unemployment, temporary leave (“furlough”), decreases in wages, and reduced working

hours for part-time workers, etc., is provided in Zhou (2021).

10. All of the explanatory variables concern the situation before the pandemic or as of April 1, 2020.

11. In fact, when the type of employment variable is excluded, the “less than 3 million yen” group becomes negative and statistically significant at each time point, and it becomes clear that the tendency for working hours to decrease with lower income groups can be explained to a certain degree in terms of differences in the type of employment.

12. It should be noted that the trend toward decreased overtime hours is thought to be related to not only company policy (i.e., curtailment of overtime) but also the fact that work levels (the amount of work) have not recovered to the point that overtime becomes necessary.

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