

May 30, 2008

Rich Women Pay for Time

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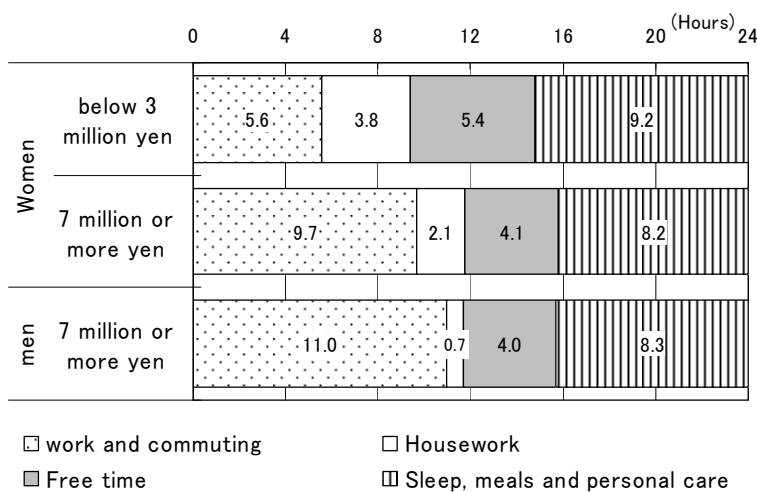
Women with economic power are on the increase. Many women with high income work full time. They have money, but they have little free time. As Japanese men work longer hours than their western counterparts, it is usually the women who adjust their working hours in order to do the housework and take care of the children. How, then, do women with economic power manage their time in order to enjoy the little free time that they have? Below are the findings of a “questionnaire survey on consumption and savings,”* conducted in 2007.

Use of Time-Saving Services

Let's define, here, women with an annual income of 7 million yen or more as those in the “high-income group.” These women are compared with people in two other groups, one group consisting of women with an annual income of less than 3 million yen (which we will define as “low-income women,”) and the other consisting of men with an annual income of 7 million yen or more.

The comparison reveals that the way the “high-income women” spend their time has the following two characteristics. First, they spend less time on housework than low-income women. While the latter spend an average of 3.8 hours on housekeeping on weekdays, high-income women spend an average of only 2.1 hours (Figure.1).

Figure1. Time Use on Weekdays by Annual Income



The second characteristic is that compared with men who earn as much as they do, these women spend fewer hours on the job and more time on housework. Regarding as hours spent on work plus hours spent on housework as “total working hours”, there is no difference in “total working hours” between these men and women, but the weight of housework is heavier for the women.

* A survey via the Internet, covering men and women in the 25-54 age bracket. The number of effective responses was 2,470. The survey was conducted in November 2007 by the Study Group on “Women Change the Economy and Finance,” under commission from the Trust Sixty Foundation.

The amount of time women spend on housework depends on the composition of their households. Married women spend more time on housework than single women, and women with children spend even more time on housework (Table.1). In the case of those earning 7 million yen or more a year, married women spend 1.6 times more hours on housework than single women, and women with children spend 2.5 times more hours on housework than single women. Even so, compared with lower-income women with the same family composition, they spend 1.5-2.0 hours less per day on housework.

Table1.
Time Spent on Housework and the Ratio of Users of Time-saving Products

		Average time spent on housework on weekdays (minutes)		Ratio of users (%)			Ratio of Internet Users(%)	
		Wife	Husband	Dish-washer	Delivery	House-cleaning	Banking	Trading
Single	Below 3 million yen	99	–	12.6	9.0	0.9	61.3	5.4
	3-7 million yen	77	–	14.4	10.4	1.0	76.2	17.4
	7 million or more yen	95	–	21.7	15.1	4.8	78.9	34.9
Married	Below 3 million yen	271	40	40.3	21.5	1.8	60.0	11.1
	3-7 million yen	147	51	40.4	24.4	2.0	70.8	22.0
	7 million or more yen	154	–	44.6	25.9	7.2	77.1	32.5
With children	Below 3 million yen	322	45	40.8	24.5	1.1	58.2	10.3
	3-7 million yen	177	62	44.1	36.0	3.6	71.2	18.0
	7 million or more yen	237	–	62.3	36.1	8.2	77.0	34.4

Notes:

- 1 With children denotes women with children who are in middle schools or younger.
- 2 Time spent on housework for wives and husbands does not mean the time spent on housework for a couple married to each other. These figures are averages for all female respondents and for all male respondents in each category.
- 3 Delivery denotes home delivery of everyday items.
- 4 Banking denotes making savings deposits, transfers and settlements.
- 5 Trading denotes stock trading.

What, then, do high-income women do to be able to spend fewer hours on housework? Their husbands are no more helpful around the house than the husbands of lower-income women. Since the present questionnaire did not yield a sufficient number of samples of men whose wives earn 7 million yen or more, we compared the hours spent on housework by men whose wives earn less than 3 million yen a year with the hours spent by men whose wives earn 3-7 million yen a year. The higher the annual income of the women, the longer their husbands spend on housework. The difference, however, is negligible. In both cases, they spend less than one hour per day on housework. It should also be noted that the percentage of women living with their mothers, who help them with housework, is not necessarily high for the high-income group.

This suggests that the women depend on goods and services to do the housework for them. The higher the incomes of the women, the higher are the ratios of those who use electric dishwashers, home delivery services for everyday items, and house-cleaning services. The demand for these goods and services is particularly high for married women and women with children. A quarter of women, even in the low-income group, use home delivery services for everyday items, if they have children.

The Internet also helps women save time. With respect to financial transactions, the higher the income, the higher is the ratio of women who use the Internet for making savings deposits, transfers and settlements, regardless of the composition of their households. Although the ratio of those who use the Internet for trading shares is still low, here again, the higher the income, the higher is the ratio of those who trade shares via the Internet. This may be due to the fact that higher incomes provide more money for investment, but the fact that the Internet allows the placing of orders at any hour of the day also appears to be a factor.

Aggressive in Self-Development and Leisure Activities

As to how holidays are being spent, women with economic power finish housework quickly and make full use of their free time.

The women in the high-income group spend two hours more on housework on a holiday than on weekdays, but here again, they spend less time on housework than the low-income women. The characteristic of the way the high-income women spend their free time is that they spend as much as 1.5 hours on study and research. They spend as much time as men on these activities, but given the fact that they have less free time than men, it shows how much importance they attach to self-development.

They are also actively taking lessons. Asked whether they had taken lessons in the past year, nearly 60 percent of those in the high-income group answered “Yes.” On average they spent 270,000 yen on these lessons. The amount was 1.7 times greater than that for the low-income group.

The most popular lessons are sports lessons for all income groups. High-income women are different from those with lower income in going to school often to study languages, acquire professional qualifications or attend universities and graduate schools. Forty percent of these women answered that these activities were for the advancement of their careers. Even in taking lessons in culture or arts as hobbies or to become “cultured”, they are not behind the women in the low-income group.

With respect to leisure activities, the higher the annual income is, the more frequent are overseas or domestic trips. Thus, women with economic power are creating time by buying services offered in the market in order to fully enjoy their free time, be it spent on study or on pleasure. As women increasingly take jobs outside of their homes, the demand for services that create time for them will become greater.

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