

CARER LEAVE POLICIES IN JAPAN



The Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training

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Caring for family members alongside paid work is increasingly common and the global longevity revolution means this will continue. Combining care work and paid work has well-known consequences for carers, their employers, the labour force and economies. Some governments have introduced strategies that let carers take time away from their jobs to fulfill care responsibilities while still being able to return to their job afterwards. To inform development of carer leaves in the UK, an international policy scan was carried out in nine other countries (Australia, Canada, Finland, Germany, Italy, Japan, Poland, Slovenia and Sweden) as part of the Sustainable Care program.

This Policy snapshot provides an overview of carer leave initiatives in Japan. These policies and their implications for working carers are part of a forthcoming edited book J Fast, J Heyes, and K Hamblin, **Combining Work and Care**, that will be published by Policy Press.

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JAPAN'S POLITICAL CONTEXT

Japan's government is centralized. Most labour market regulations (including carer leaves) are made by central ministries and implemented by local authorities.

Traditionally, Japan has been a familist welfare state. After 20 years of government efforts to de-familize elder care through Long-term Care Insurance, financial constraints on the supply of insured care services has policymakers looking again to co-residential family care.

Employers assume substantial responsibility for employee welfare. Increasing numbers and diversity among employed carers threatens labour market sustainability and has resulted in an enhancing carer leave system in Japan.

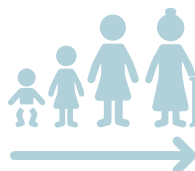
JAPAN'S ECONOMIC, LABOUR MARKET AND SOCIAL CONTEXT



Labour force participation rate reached a low of 61.5% in April 2020 during the global COVID19 pandemic, but has recovered, reaching 62.2% in August 2021.



2.4% unemployment rate in February 2020 (pre-pandemic), rose to a peak of 3.1% in October 2020, and is 2.8% as of August 2021.



Japan is the world's fastest ageing country with 28.7% of the population aged 65+. By 2036, one-third of the population will be aged 65 and over, with many centenarians.



65.3% of men and 49.3% of women in the labour force also provided family care in 2017. Increasing diversity among carers makes it a universal issue for employers.

TIME OFF FOR CAREGIVERS LEAVE

INTENT

Allows workers to take time off work to care for eligible family members with an injury, physical or mental disability and associated issues.

DURATION

Workers who take care of eligible family members in need of care can take up to five days off a year (10 days if there are two or more such family members).

The worker can take the leave in one hour increments or one whole day.

BENEFITS

The worker is not paid or otherwise compensated for a loss of earnings during the leave.

Workers whose work makes it difficult for them to take time off in one hour increments can enter a labour-management agreement to take their leave in one-day increments.

Applies to all employees, excluding day laborers.

Worker taking the leave must be caring for a spouse, parents, children, parents-in-law, grandparents, siblings, or grandchildren.

Care is needed because of an injury, illness, physical or mental disability that requires at least two weeks of constant care.

"Associated issues" refers to accompanying the said family member to medical appointments, and arranging for the family member to receive nursing care services.

Workers covered in labour-management agreements are not eligible for the leave IF:

- The worker has been employed at the current workplace for less than 6 months.
- The worker works two scheduled days or less a week.
- The worker is engaged in jobs unfit for time off in an hour increment.

The worker is protected from disadvantageous treatment such as dismissal because they applied for taking time off.

Workers must apply in writing (or call on the day if you are unable to apply in advance).

FAMILY MEMBERS

Family member includes partner (including common-law partner), parents, children (in a legal parent-child relationship including adopted children), parents of the partner, grandparents, siblings and grandchildren.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

FEATURES

NOTICE

CAREGIVER LEAVE (FAMILY CARE LEAVE)

INTENT

Allows workers to take time off work to take care of family members who need care due to injury, illness, or physical or mental disability that requires more than two weeks of constant care.

Maximum of 93 days per family member can be taken for the leave.

DURATION

The 93 days can be split into one, two or three installments.

BENEFITS

The worker is not paid as usual during their leave, but rather receives compensation of up to 67% of their normal salary through employment insurance.

Applies to all employees, excluding day laborers.

Worker taking the leave must be caring for a spouse, parents, children, parents-in-law, grandparents, siblings or grandchildren who need more than two weeks of constant care because of an injury, illness, or physical or mental disability.

For workers with fixed-term contracts to be eligible, the worker must:

- have worked at the current workplace for a year or more.
- have at least 93 days plus six months left on their contract from the starting date of the caregiver leave.

Workers covered in labour-management agreements are not eligible for the leave IF:

- The worker has been employed at the current workplace for less than a year.
- The worker works two scheduled days or less a week.
- The worker's contract ends within 93 days after application of the Family Caregiver Leave.

FEATURES

The worker is protected from disadvantageous treatment such as dismissal because they applied for or took the leave.

NOTICE

The worker shall apply in writing to their employer at least two weeks before the planned start date of the leave.

The worker can defer the leave once within the scope of the 93 days by applying at least two weeks before the planned ending date of the leave.