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# Female Japanese Entrepreneurship

Emily Julius

**Abstract:**

This exploratory study intends to investigate and analyze the current obstacles that Japanese female entrepreneurs face as well as propose solutions to these challenges, specifically in terms of e-commerce and small business models.

**Japanese Business Culture and Entrepreneurship:**

- A traditional Japanese management system includes aspects such as lifetime employment, seniority systems, and enterprise unions. It also embraces the Japanese business culture, which is group-oriented and risk-adverse.
- Japanese entrepreneurship appears to be a paradox in itself. Entrepreneurship “tends to center around Western values of individualism, materialism, and competitiveness”, all of which is contrary to the primary principles of the Japanese business culture.
- A female Japanese entrepreneur only further extends that paradox. Japanese female traditional roles exist within the “ry\_ysai kenbo ideology—that of the good wife and wise mother... espoused by educators, media, politicians, and the greater Japanese society”. Moreover, in the workplace, inequality and gender discrimination continue “due to assumptions about the sexual division of labor”.

**Womenomics:**

- The primary goal of Womenomics is to have women occupying 30 percent of all leadership positions, such as heads of local government, members of parliament, and corporate executives, by 2020.
- A law enacted in August of 2015 “obliges companies with 301 or more employees to map out and publicize action programs to promote women, including through the setting of numerical targets for female managers, by April 2016”.
- In December of 2015, the Japanese government abandoned its primary goal of women in 30 percent of management roles by 2020 and approved a new gender equality road map that decreased original targets. While the Cabinet Office insists the 30 percent figure remains the general goal, the drastic lowering of expectations acknowledges poor progress to date in areas such as government service.

**Overview of Japan:**

The 2015 Global Gender Gap Report by the World Economic Forum provides interesting quantitative data on the equality women in Japan face. Japan has a GDP of 4779.54 billion in United States dollars and a total population of 127.13 million. Japan has a -.16 percent population growth. Japan currently ranks 101<sup>st</sup> out of 145 countries and .67 on the equality scale, with 1 being complete equality. For comparison purposes, the United States ranks 28<sup>th</sup> out of 145 countries and .74 on the equality scale, with 1 being complete equality. According to the report, Japan performs weakest in economic participation and opportunity as well as political empowerment.

**Research/Interviews**

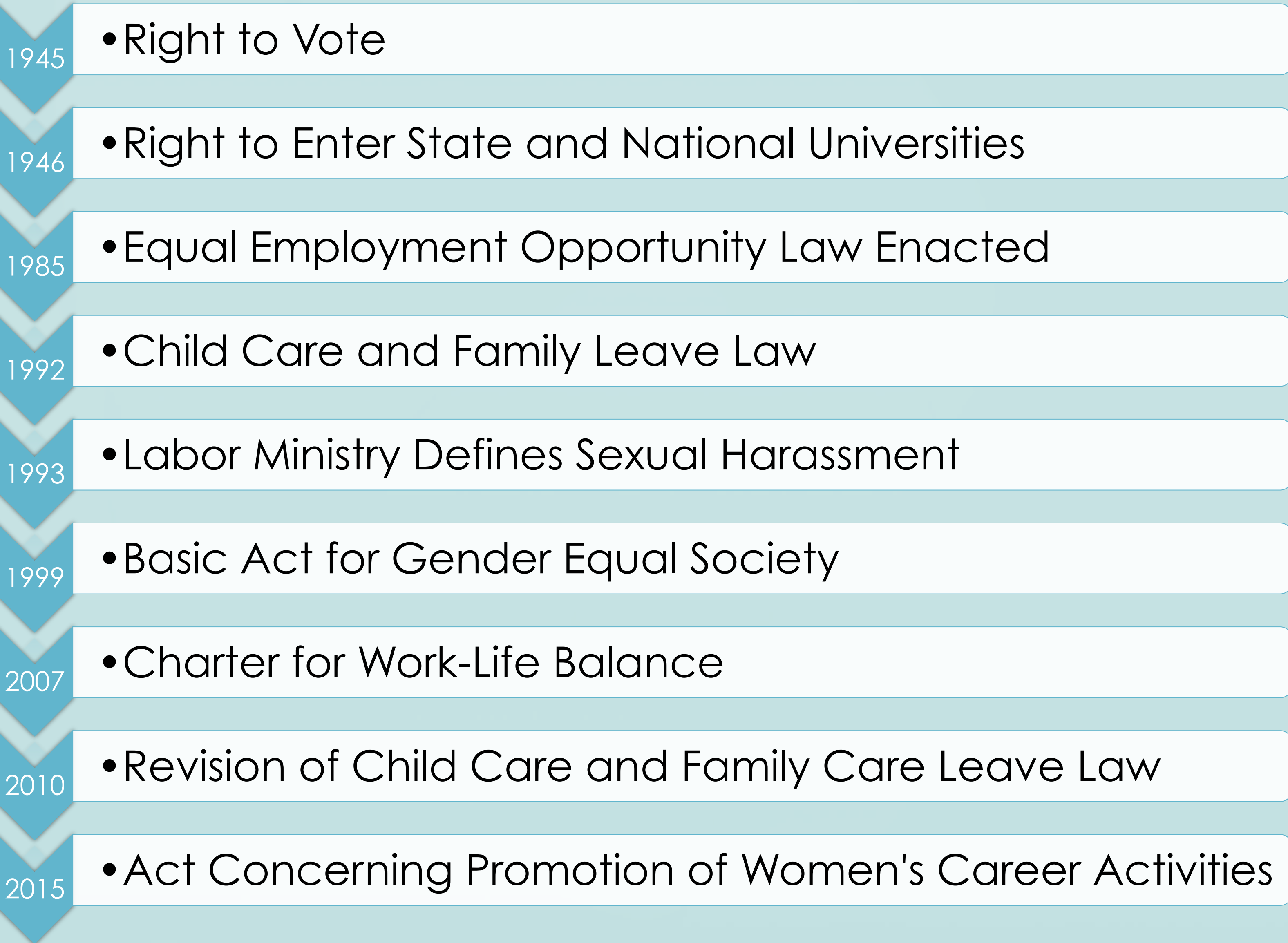
1. Do you feel that you have an opportunity to have a successful traditional business career in Japan?
2. What are the top three constraints that would prevent you from starting your own business in Japan?
3. What would be the method in which you started your own business in Japan? Would you utilize technology or would you utilize a brick and mortar approach?
4. What would help you and your business achieve success in Japan?
5. Age? Marital Status? Children?

Name	Gender	Age	Marital Status	Children	Occupation	#1	#2	#3	#4
Jun Kawabe	Female	50	Divorced	Yes, 3	Assistant Professor, Business Owner (Mirai) (US)	Yes	Financial accessibility, gender	Neither	Networking, visibility, trust, collaboration
Akisa Fukuzawa	Female	48	Married	Yes	Executive Director (JASCO) (US)	No	Financial accessibility, maintaining balance between work and family	Use every network or channel available	Hard work ethic, support from family and friends
Emiko Seki	Female	45	Married	No	Employee at HR Honda (Japan and US)	Yes	Financial accessibility, failure stigma	Online	Offering quality products or services
Naomi Saito	Female	43	Married	No	Employee at Advertising and Print Publisher (Japan)	Dependent on company	Maintaining balance between work and family	Online	Networking, finding a mentor, being educated about the process
Oshiro	Male	35	Married	Yes, 2	Firefighter at Yokota Airbase (Japan)	No	Lack of education, risk of losing job	–	Hard work ethic, making smart business decisions
Aya Bessyo	Female	32	Married	No	Hospital Accountant (Japan)	Dependent on job	–	Online	Networking
Kin	Male	25	Single	No	Firefighter at Yokota Airbase (Japan)	Yes	Lack of education, risk of losing money	Online	Strong business plan, having cash to spend on business activities
Naru Tsunemi	Female	20	Single	No	Student	No	Gender	Online	Uniqueness of business, general accessibility or convenience

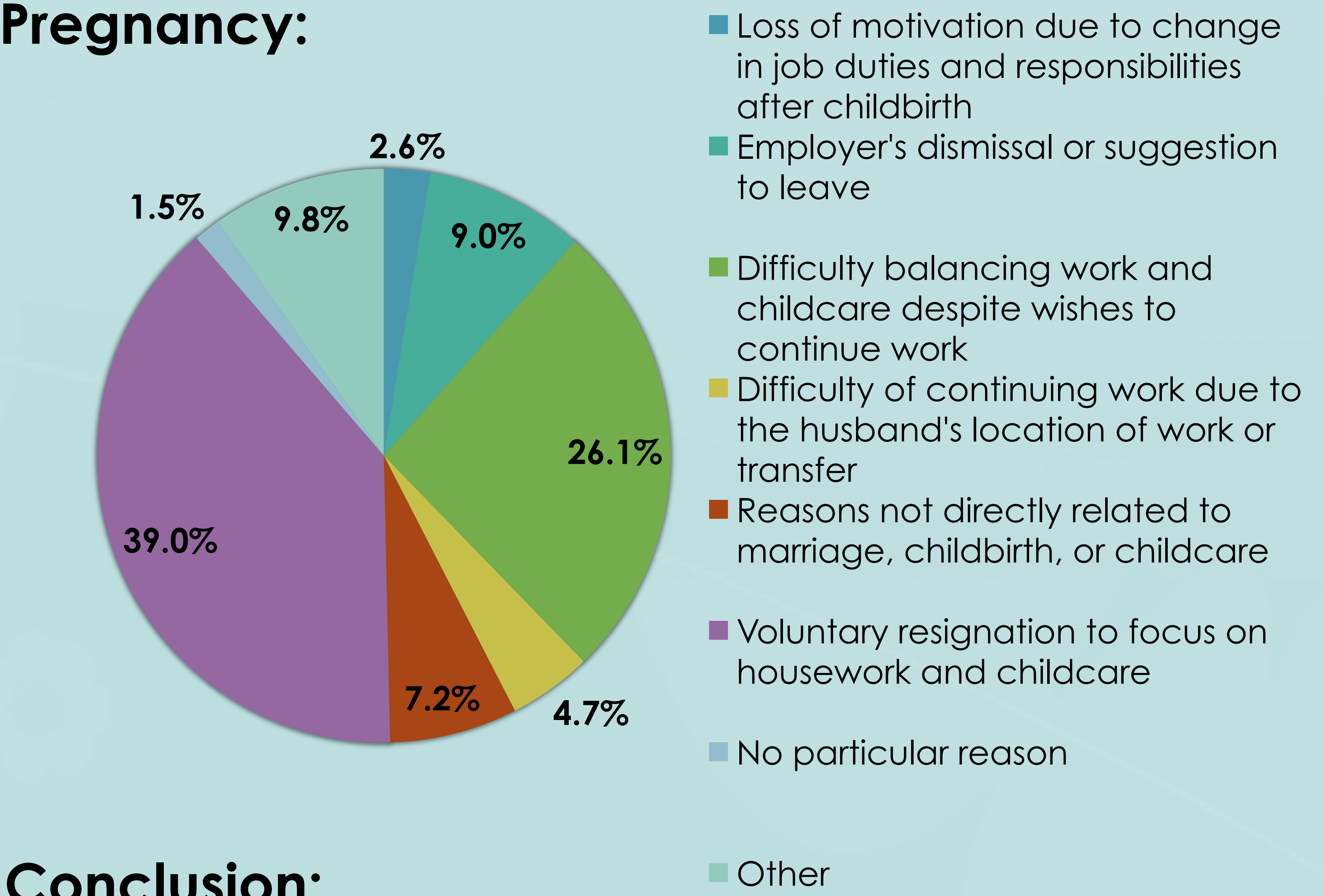
**Hypothesis:**

I anticipate that various social constraints, gender roles, and the government would be the specific primary factors that prevent or discourage female entrepreneurs from achieving success. I believe that family support, access to technology, and potential government assistance will be the main elements that are necessary for a Japanese female entrepreneur to achieve success.

**Japanese Legislation Regarding Women:**



**Reasons for Having Left a Job Before/After Pregnancy:**



**Conclusion:**

Through the use of the Internet, a more visible and proactive Womenomics program, as well as a fundamental cultural and traditional shift that enforces work-life balance and female empowerment, female Japanese entrepreneurs can find success in Japan.