

## Balancing Work and Child Rearing and Accessibility to Child-Care Centers

Mizuki Kawabata<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>CSIS, The University of Tokyo

The lack of affordable and quality child-care centers is a serious policy concern in Japan. Selecting Tokyo's 23 wards as the study area, I first conducted a survey on balancing work and child rearing and the accessibility to child-care centers. The survey was carried out from November 20 to November 25, 2009, using internet; the survey gathered answers from 311 people among 650 people included in the Nikkei Research access panel. The survey result indicated that among people who wanted to use child-care centers, only 44.9% could actually use desired child-care centers. The situation was severer for children aged 0 to 2 years than it was for children aged 3 to 5 years. The proportion of children who could enter desired child-care centers was 62.7% for children aged 3 to 5 years but 31.5% for those aged 0 to 2 years. Of those who had children awaiting enrollment in child-care centers, 28.2% unwillingly quit their jobs, and 70.9% stated that when their children could not be enrolled in the desired child-care centers, balancing work and child rearing became difficult and unstable. Among child-care centers, "Ninka-Hoikujo" (authorized child-care centers that meet national standards) was the predominantly popular desired child-care center. Almost all those who wanted to use child-care centers greatly weighted the factor of accessibility of the child-care centers from their home. In fact, 76.6%, 90.1%, and 98.2% of the one-way commuting time between homes and child-care centers for those who used child-care centers were within 10, 15, and 20 minutes, respectively.

Next, I examined the accessibility to child-care centers using a Geographic Information System (GIS) and detailed spatial data, which can indicate both quantitative and spatial mismatches between the supply and demand of child-care centers. The result showed that many areas had accessibility values below one, indicating a supply shortage of child-care centers. The findings suggest that the low accessibility to child-care centers is a factor contributing not only to the large number of children awaiting enrollment in child-care centers but also to the impeding balancing work and child rearing. The accessibility to child-care centers is proposed as a useful indicator in developing child-care centers.

Keywords: balancing work and child rearing, child-care centers, accessibility, Geographic Information System (GIS), Tokyo's 23 wards