



COMMENT

Letters

Japanese fertility must be a social, not a female issue

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From Ms Johanna Rickne.

Sir, The persistence of journalists (["A fiscal frailty"](#), Analysis, August 4) and Japanese politicians and bureaucrats to focus the fertility debate on enabling women to balance career and child-rearing hides the crucial aspect of gender equality and thereby hinders efficient reform.

Today, in the minds of the Japanese, the responsibility of caring for children and the elderly still rests squarely with the woman. Shifting that responsibility from women on to the couple and society will create the social ethics needed for solving the fertility crisis. Such a change would remove the social stigma faced by men who share family duties with their wives. It would also increase the political pressure and political will to expand welfare programmes by making fertility a social issue instead of a women's issue. On the labour market, it would remove the basis for discrimination associated with care activities and allow both men and women balanced lifestyles.

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