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Income of young Japanese women tops that of men

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TOKYO (Reuters Life!) - Not only can young Japanese women look forward to a longer life than their male peers, now they also make more money.

Income for single women under 30 hit an average of 218,156 yen (\$2,680) a month in 2009, edging above the 215,515 yen (\$2,640) of their male counterparts for the first time ever, according to an Internal Affairs ministry survey.

The change, which saw women's incomes surge 11.4 percent from the previous survey five years ago compared to a 7 percent fall for men, was driven by the plunge of the global economy and the fact that men's incomes simply had more room to fall.

"Basically, men's salaries were much higher in general, and they took a much bigger hit when the economy worsened," said Hideo Kumano, chief economist at the Dai-ichi Life Research Institute.

"In addition, many more men work in manufacturing than women, and after the Lehman failure things for this sector really chilled."

Japan's economy has always been export-dependent and centered around manufacturers, who suffered especially badly from the late 2008 failure of Lehman Bros and the global stock market plunge that followed. In early 2009, Japanese stocks fell to a 26-year closing low.

By contrast, women are much more involved in jobs in medicine and nursing care, which have surged as Japan's population ages.

In addition, Kumano said, younger women may finally be starting to reap the rewards of the trails blazed by older predecessors in white-collar jobs such as finance.

"Women are now more able to take career-track jobs like this thanks to those in their 40s and older, who now are taking up managerial positions," he added.

But Kumano cautioned the figures may be a one-off fluctuation and it is still too early to see if the change is lasting.

According to the 2009 United Nations Development Programme's Gender Empowerment Measure, Japan ranked 57th out of 109 countries in political and economic participation for women.

Women accounted for only 4.1 percent of department managers in private corporations in 2008, according to a study by Japan's Gender Equality Bureau of the Cabinet Office.

(\$1 = 81.46 Yen)

(Writing by [Elaine Lies](#); editing by [Sugita Katyal](#))



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