

Public-Interest Incorporated foundation  
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Study report "The New Trends in Asian Urban Lifestyle"

## "The New Trends in Urban Lifestyle in Taiwan"

(serial in 3 parts)

### Part 1 The Features of Taiwan Society and the Changes in Traditional View of Family

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## **Introduction**

Located only 270km off the Okinawa Ishigaki Island and just 110km off the Yonaguni Island, Taiwan is a beautiful island country, as large as the Kyushu Island, full of greenery, and has the people with pro-Japanese sentiment. Taiwan and Japan have such a lot of exchanges as the number of tourists from Japan to Taiwan was no less than 1.29 million and from Taiwan to Japan was 1.14 million each in 2011. At the same time, Taiwan has a long relationship with Japan both economically and culturally.

For the benefit of future growth, Taiwan strengthens its coexistent relationship with China and promotes economic policies such as free trade with leading countries, as well as actively propels development of the Taipei metropolitan area for improvement of life environment and stronger business function. Furthermore, in order to compensate depopulation of the society, the country promotes various social policies such as acceptance of many overseas brides or workers from ASEAN. In this way Taiwan is trying to transform itself into a new and rich country economically, socially, and culturally.

This report "The New Trends in Urban Lifestyle in Taiwan" features the trend of dynamically changing lifestyle and culture of the wealthy and middle classes in Taipei; they have started to influence China and the great Chinese market as well as the whole Asian market.

The Part 1 uses macro data to grasp the hyper-low fertility, aging, income gap, trend for nuclear family, and changes in working style and lifestyle in Taipei. The Part 2 will study influence of urbanization, housing trend, changes in leisure activities and distribution businesses, and the final part will consider brand consciousness, trend of diet, information revolution, lifestyle consumption, and future trend of the wealthy and middle classes in Taipei, based on gathered information from interested persons, literatures and other various data.

## **1. Today of Taiwan**

The population of Taiwan is about 23 millions and the GDP is 468.9 billion US dollars, which is about 1/5 of that of Japan. Owing to the small scale of the domestic market, the businesses of the country have actively moved into Europe, the US, Japan, and the mainland China and cultivated the Asian market from early days to sustain their growth. The industrial strength lies in the manufacturing of high value-added semiconductors, electronic components and eco-friendly, energy-saving appliances as well as the services including IT industries. Many of the companies take an approach of OEM or EMS strategy for their clients' brand, but they intend to develop their own brands in the future.

Although the Taiwan economy has enjoyed relatively successful growth, the slowdown of the Western and the Chinese markets today has a significant effect on the Taiwan economy. Under such circumstances, the government is trying to increase the export and to promote the expansion of domestic demands by various economic measures including the free trade agreement between Taiwan and China (ECFA), FTA negotiations with other countries, reduction of corporate tax and inheritance duty, and recycling investment to Taiwan.

As regards to the geographical features, Taiwan is located on the "Golden Crossroads" of Asia. The capital Taipei is a core of one-day economic bloc where various Asian major cities such as Shanghai, Tokyo, Seoul, Hong Kong and Singapore are connected with Taipei by air within 1-4hours. Also Taiwan has become more important as a relay point of maritime transport. Aiming to become a hub city of world's communications in the IT society in future, Taiwan is promoting IT industry and realizing a city of wireless LAN as a part of national strategy.

Probably because of their relaxed and peaceful nature influenced by the subtropical climate, the Taiwan people are open-minded to different cultures. In the recent history, Taiwan was influenced by Japanese culture for 50 years from 1895 through the Japan's imperialization policy and cultural assimilation, and after 1945 the nation accepted the mainland culture by the Republic of China. At the same time, Taiwan has positively accepted good things of the Western culture after the war. Today more than a million workers of Taiwanese elite class take their post in the mainland China, while about 440 thousands of nursing care helpers, rural brides and workers from Southeast Asia are accepted in Taiwan along with their life culture in order to solve the labor shortage.

Thus, Taiwan is adaptable to different cultures and has absorptive ability and creativity to make the other cultures a unique Taiwanese one. In the Taiwan society, an interaction of Japanese, Chinese, Western and Southeastern cultures may be creating a culture and society unique to Taiwan.

Currently Taiwan is facing a number of challenges such as hyper low fertility, aging, nuclear families, support for working parents, widening gap, low wage, overwork, immigrants, and urbanization. Taiwan is a global nation of independent spirit and abounds in small business owners. The people have spirits to make a challenge. Even if the income gaps are widening, they regard themselves as middle class, value their family ties and friendship, and enjoy their life. The core of such activity is the wealthy and middle classes of the current Taiwan. They are creating new lifestyles filled with excitement for their happiness of the future.



\*The Japan Fair held at SOGO department store attracts a lot of pro-Japanese Taipei citizens.



\*A super skyscraper "Taipei 101", 509.2 meters in height and 101 floors above ground, in Taipei City Xinyi District

## 2. Economic trend and widening gap in Taiwan

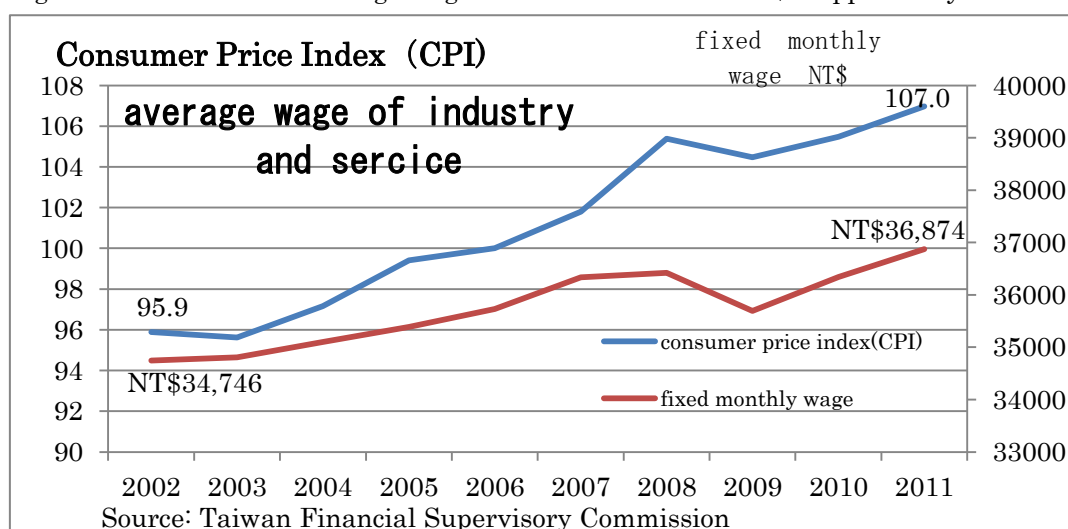
### 2-1. Both companies and human resources go to China

As China has developed from "the Workshop of the World" to "the Market of the World", especially over this decade, not only large companies but small businesses have moved into China one after another for lower labor costs. Additionally, for the purposes of factory management, cultivation of Chinese market, and expansion into Western market via China, a great number of managers and middle elite workers of both Taiwanese and foreign companies go and live in China. Astoundingly, 5 million people come and go between Taiwan and China annually and more than 1 million Taiwanese people currently stay long at various cities in China. Regardless of single or married, most of them live alone in China to tackle their severe works with the Chinese counterparts. They have about three official vacations to come home a year; Chinese New Year, Labor Day on May 1 and a long vacation starting from October 1 including the National Day on October 10. They are making strenuous efforts to maintain good relationships with their families at Taiwan.

On the other hand, the companies remaining at Taiwan are still suffering severe competitions in which they are forced to reduce costs. Under such economic circumstances, companies can't afford to raise their employees' salary. Furthermore, since the companies which have relocated their factories and other facilities to China for new opportunities reinvest the earned profit in the Mainland, it would not benefit the domestic Taiwan. Therefore, as the Figure 1 shows, the fixed wages have increased only about 5% on average in the last decade in spite of the recent increase in consumer price. Unfavorable winds continue against the improvement of domestic income.

Figure 1 : Transition of average wage

1NT \$ = approx 2.9yen

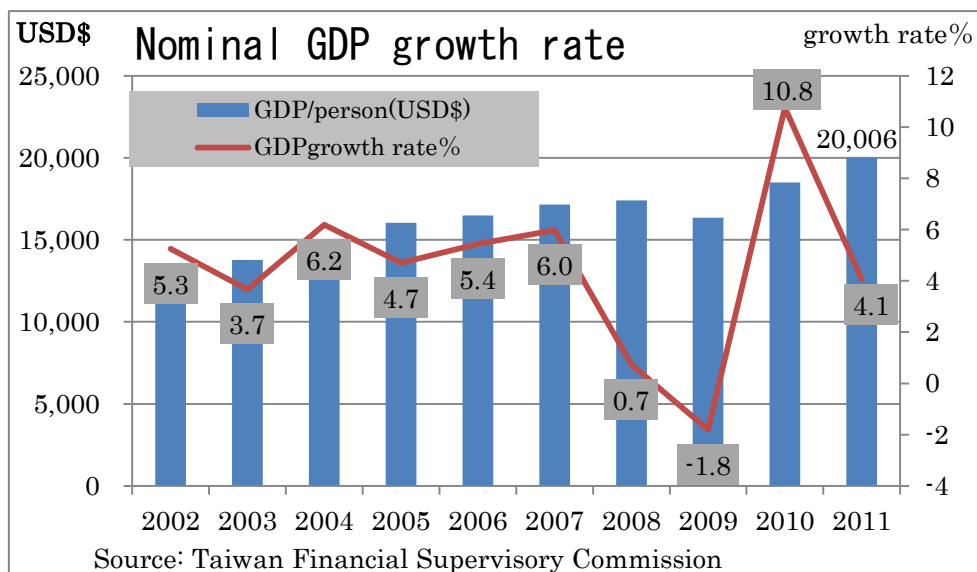


## 2-2. Flagging rate of economic growth

Although the Taiwan economy has maintained relatively high growth rate under harsh circumstances, the GDP growth rate varied greatly after the Lehman shock in 2008 as shown in Figure 2 in accordance with the business trend of the US and Europe, the major export destinations. The rate plummeted to -1.8% in 2009, but it soared to 10.8% the next year. This was largely caused by the FTA named "Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA)" concluded between Taiwan and China in 2010. The agreement is expected to improve Taiwan's export competitiveness to the Chinese market, promote FTA with other countries, and increase global companies' investment in Taiwan.

However, owing to the stalled economy of China caused by the Western depression, the Taiwan economy suffered continued slump for 10 months from October 2011. As a result, the GDP growth rate of 2012 is expected to be as low as about 1.1%. The Taiwan government and enterprises strongly expect increased investment from Japan to Taiwan and recovery of the Chinese consumption market hereafter.

Figure 2 : Transition of economic growth rate



## 2-3. Economic policy widens income gap

Various economic policies are further promoted by the Taiwan government to boost the economy, but on the other side of the coin, they are widening the income gap in the Taiwan society. The policies include facilitation of joint works of business, government and academics and land offers for IT industry development, tax reduction of corporate tax (from 20% to 17%) and inheritance tax (from maximum 50% to flat-rate 10%), which

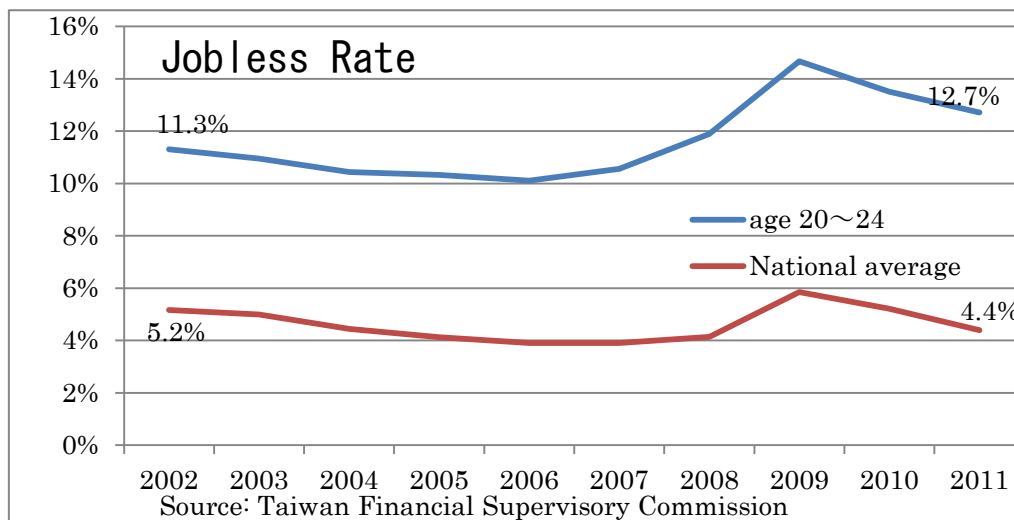
have been favorable treatments for firms and capitalists. In addition, the soaring estate values caused by urban development have enabled not a few people to make a fortune by real estate investment. Consequently, while a limited wealthy class including business managers and investors has become richer, the salaries of general employees are almost unchanged as explained above and the income and asset gap between the wealthy and the others is further widening.

The statistics of Taiwan Financial Supervisory Commission show that the Gini coefficient has risen from 0.312 in 1992 to 0.342 in 2011. This change indicates the greater inequality in income distribution. The issue of income difference is a more serious problem for the new graduates. According to the statistics of Taiwan Council of Labor Affairs, the average fixed wage of college graduates in 2011 is NT\$26,577 per month (Taiwan dollar 1NT\$=2.9yen). The fact is, they can hardly afford their living costs such as housing, transportation, heating and lighting, food, etc. in Taipei with such a low standard of payment.

Moreover, company bankruptcies and personnel downsizing caused by Lehman shock depression in 2008 still have a grave impact on the harsher situation of job hunting. The new graduates particularly have been suffering high unemployment rate for these three years, with the rate 12% or higher (see Figure 3).

Such income gap and job scarcity have significant effect on the life planning of undergraduates. The statistics of the Taiwan Ministry of Education indicate that nearly 30% of the excellent students of National Taiwan University, the top university in Taiwan, stay on at the school and prepare for studying abroad, exam for graduate school or job hunting, because of the severe job shortage at home.

Figure 3: Transition of jobless rate

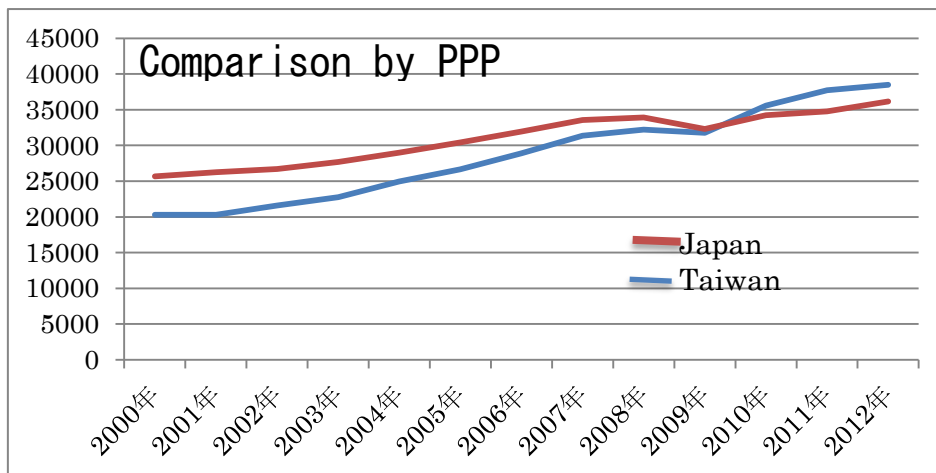


## 2-4 Comparison of Taiwan and Japan by the Purchasing Power Parity

The nominal GDP per person of Taiwan reached US\$20,006 in 2011. The GDP in terms of purchasing power parity per person is US\$37,716, exceeding the Japan's US\$34,748 in 2010. Taiwan seems to be either equally or more comfortable country to live in than Japan. Most of the Taiwanese have middle-class feeling probably because their life is easy even though their incomes do not increase.

Taiwan doesn't have a distinct definition of the wealthy or the middle class, but social wealthiness is generally judged based not on personal annual income but on disposable income (the balance of income after non-consumption expenditures such as tax, pension, insurance, and interest are deducted); NT\$1million and more (1NT\$=2.99yen) is generally accepted as the social indicator. For reference's sake, those with disposable income of NT\$1million and more accounts for 7.4% of 13.3million workers in fiscal 2011.

\*GDPs of Taiwan and Japan in terms of purchasing power parity per person (US\$) ~2012



Source: IMF - World Economic Outlook Databases (Oct 2012)

Unit: US dollar

## 3. Trend of social changes surrounding the life environment

### 3-1. Aging Taiwan with decreasing population

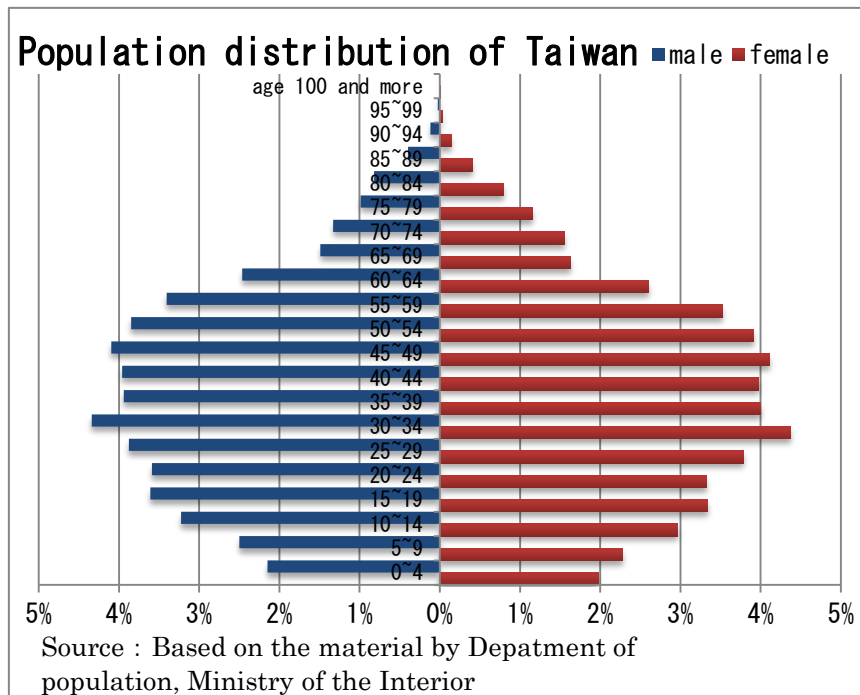
The population of Taiwan was 23.22million as of the end of 2011. Today in 2012, as the elderly people aged over 65 accounts for 10.9% of the whole population, the Taiwan society is heading straight for aging. According to WHO (World Health Organization), the percentage of the elderly over 65 reached 7% in 1993 and is expected to exceed 14% in 2017, making the Taiwan society an "Aged Society".

The whole population is said to reach its peak in 2022, and the producing population in 2015. In order to support sustainable growth of domestic consumption market in



such environment of declining birthrate and low expectations of population growth, not only measures against low fertility, but economic policies to utilize China's and other Asian countries' growth and social measures to accept immigrants are required.

Figure 7: Population composition



### 3-2. Later marriage, international marriage, and decreasing birthrate in the Taiwan society

In Taiwan, the social issues such as recession, widening income gap, rising jobless rate and prices inflation are so severe that the daily lifestyles of today's 20s and 30s are significantly influenced by their sense of crisis for the future.

For one thing, the percentage of unmarried people in their early 30s has steeply risen in this decade. During the only 10 years, the percentage of unmarried people from 30 to 34 has risen by nearly 20% (see Figure 4). It is especially noteworthy that the percentage of unmarried men exceeds 50%.

In an attempt to improve such situation as much as possible, the number of dating websites and private marriage bureaus has rapidly increased. At the same time, local governments have started to make serious efforts and frequently hold events for support of dating and marriage. In rural areas, such cross-border activities are flourishing as international marriage meetings for those who would like to get married. An overwhelming majority of the marriage partners are from China (64.7%), while 18.5% of those are from Vietnam. The number of international marriages accounted for 30% of all the marriages across the country in 2003 followed by slight fall, but about

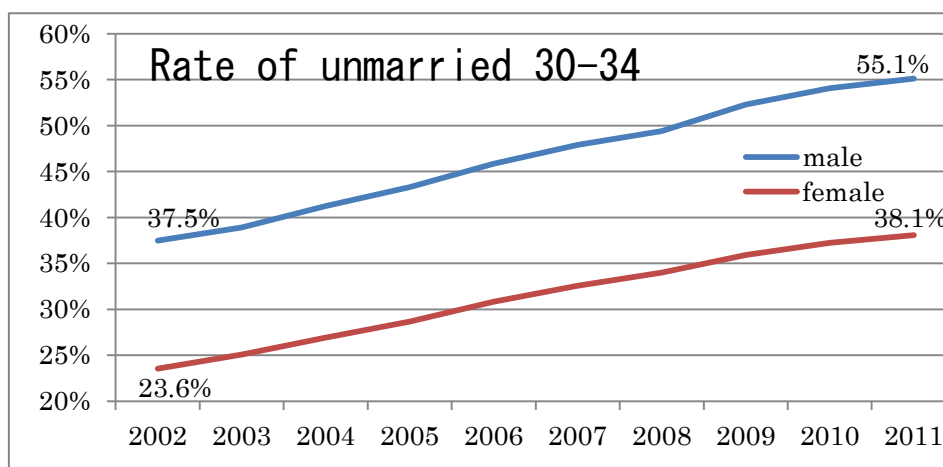
25,000 couples are married internationally every year, which accounts for more than 10% of all.

As regards to the number of births, it has been declining for the decade and the number of children is decreasing. To our surprise, the birthrate in 2010 was 0.89, the lowest record ever, and Taiwan has become a country of lowest birthrate in the world. The 2010 was a year of Tiger according to the Oriental Zodiac, and a Taiwan legend says a girl born in this year will be stronger than boys. The low birthrate may partly owe to this legend, but the rate is simply abnormal. The reasons for declining birthrates are economic issues, long working hours, later marriage and unmarried people caused by such troubles as working parents and child care; social measures for these challenges are required.

Although the international marriages may contribute to improvement of decreasing birthrate, they are causing some troubles. The number of divorces in 2011 was 57,077, while that of internationally married couples was 14,212 (accounts for 24.9% of all). Especially in case of the couples in rural areas, the purposes of marriage are often labor force and having children, and the marriages do not always go well. When the brides from mainland go back home, various legal proceedings are necessary; even when they return home temporarily, the husbands are required to shoulder the burdens of such souvenirs as home appliances or house renovation for the brides' family home.

On the other hand, the international marriages have created a distinctive, new lifestyles strongly influenced by the Southeast Asia and the mainland China. At elementary schools, the percentage of children with non-Taiwanese parent has increased. For mutual understanding of the children's cultures, education at home and their own identities, further exchanges need to be facilitated.

Figure 4: Transition of the rate of unmarried people



Source: Taiwan Financial Supervisory Commission

Figure 5: State of international marriages

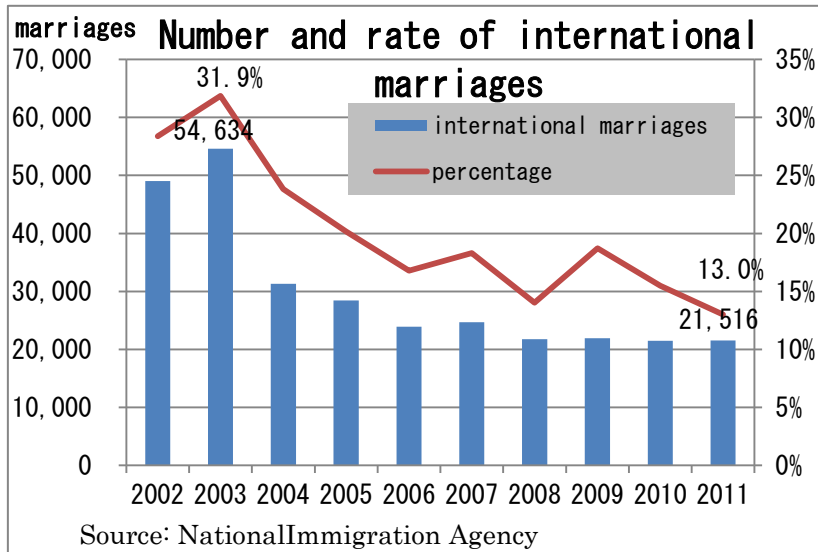
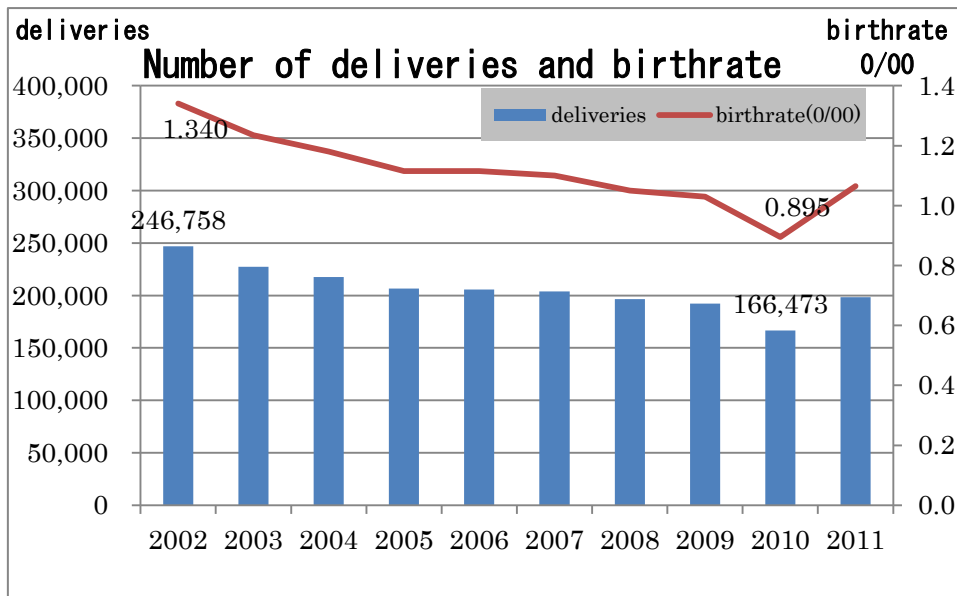


Figure 6: Transitions of birth rate and number of deliveries



### 3-3. Sense of crisis for the future makes the Taiwanese accept immigrants from the Southeast Asia

While as many as 1 million Taiwanese managers stay long in China, 20 thousands and more people come to live in Taiwan for international marriage annually, and about 440 thousands immigrants are living in the nation now as care giver for the seniors or

help for labor shortage in infrastructure development.

The statistics of Taiwan Council of Labor Affairs show that the number of care helpers who came from the Southeast Asia and work at private houses or nursing homes for the elderly is no less than about 200 thousands as of October 2012. Therefore, the remaining 240 thousands are mainly male guest workers laboring at factories or construction sites in Taiwan. Owing to the fewer children, Taiwan would be in serious problems both for life and economy if it were not for their workforce.

They have brought in their own home practices, culture, meal and religious rites with them. On weekends and national holidays, a lot of new citizens from the Southeast Asia group together to create various communities around stations, at churches near station, or in Taipei Station building. In such places, new businesses have started targeted at those citizens dealing with the goods and meals of their countries. Many Taiwanese people are interested in the exotic mood and enjoy strolling through such places.

#### **3-4. Wealthy and middle classes ask for care helpers**

In the aging Taiwan society, a great number of nurses, helpers for care and housework are required. Currently the number of households in Taiwan is about 7.41 millions. Assuming that one household hires one helper, 2.7% of whole households, that is, about 200 thousand households are hiring a helper from the Southeast Asia.

Since caring for the seniors is not an attractive job for the Taiwanese, a large number of women who have been trained as care helper for the elderly at home and nursing facilities come to work from Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam. As the Taiwan society is tackling the issues of aging and working parents simultaneously, nurses and care helpers are indispensable for the families. The largest number of helpers is from Indonesia, who in most cases live in their employers' house with meal expenses included.

The monthly cost of hiring a foreign helper is about NT\$23,000(1NT\$=2.9yen), which is affordable not only for the wealthy class but for the middle class. However, the applications about foreign helpers are strictly conditioned. The purpose of hiring a care helper at private home is supposed to be "care for the elderly parents" in principle. In reality, however, the employers often illegally have the helpers be engaged in household chores, caring for children and shopping. In some cases of serious offence, small firm owners forced them to help business. Additionally, not a small number of problems are happening such as illicit relationship of a husband and a helper, sexual and power harassments.

Also the foreign helpers at home may cause other various problems. Helpers are regarded as a gift from husband to wife, but sometimes a mother-in-law who has a traditional view of family protests against the idea because the wife would be free from her obligations such as devotion to her parents and household chores, as well as care for children. Sometimes, small children misidentify helpers as their own mothers.

It may be interesting to note that the employers who consider themselves to be wealthy treat their helpers as servant, while those who regard themselves as middle class treat their helpers as friends.

Table 1: Number of foreign workers for welfare services etc. in Taiwan (as of Oct. 2012)

	Nationality					
	Total	Indonesia	Philippines	Thailand	Vietnam	Mongolia
Helpers at nursing facilities	11053	1974	1108	51	7920	0
Care helpers at home	<b>188081</b>	<b>152323</b>	<b>21102</b>	<b>826</b>	<b>13829</b>	<b>1</b>
General helpers at home	2153	1459	633	12	49	0
Total	<b>201287</b>	155756	22843	889	21798	1

Source: Council of Labor Affairs

#### 4. Trend in lifestyle and working style in Taipei

The next topic is the trend in lifestyle and working style in Taipei. In Taiwan, about 70% of the population dwell in urban areas, among which the Taipei metropolitan area has 2.66million people in its core Taipei City and 4.06million in New Taipei City, a satellite town of Taipei, reaching the total of 6.72million people in 2011; about 30% of the whole population is concentrated in the Taipei area and the number is still growing.

The life infrastructure has been improved and enormous shopping malls have been opened in Taipei city; the city has become more comfortable to live in with better urban functions. In recent years, the improved public transports such as roads and MRT (Mass Rapid Transit: subway) stretching out to the suburbs have made the suburban life much more convenient with shorter commuting time.

Most of the Taipei city residents used to live near their workplace, but because of the soaring prices of real estates and housings in the city, more and more households are moving out to the suburban New Taipei City. In order to deal with such situation, New Taipei City has developed a number of housings and carried out New City Center development project; at the same time, modern commercial facilities have opened to

make the living environment in the suburbs more comfortable.

In such a major change of urban life environment, the Taipei citizens are creating new living needs and demands while they strictly maintain their traditional sense of values, and consequently form newer Taipei lifestyles.

In the following chapters, the changes in lifestyle and working style in Taipei are discussed: the former includes changing view of traditional family, a growing number of nuclear families, education-consciousness, varying roles of men and women, and grandmother's greater role in childcare; the latter includes two-earner couples, long working hours, and a larger number of temporary employees.



\* Shopping mall of luxury brands



\* High-rise housings in the suburbs

#### 4-1. Traditional sense of values and view of family

In Taiwan, traditional view of family and social sense of values are strictly maintained. Especially the bond of family and relatives are highly esteemed. As for the care of the elderly, for example, the Taiwanese usually take care of their seniors by family members rather than using public assistance. Also the elderly parents baby-sit their grandchildren for their working son's or daughter's couples, or routinely enjoy eating out by three-generation family.

In addition, the traditional festive practices are well preserved. On the day of harvest moon (August 15th of lunar calendar), families traditionally assemble to enjoy moon-viewing while eating "Geppei" (moon cake). These days, they generally enjoy barbecue or grill dishes at verandah or in open spaces on this occasion. Taipei is located in the Taipei Basin; the smoke of moon-viewing barbecue is so intense that the basin gets full of smoke and the administration calls for voluntary restraint. In the Chinese New Year, whole family members assemble to celebrate the New Year and wish their health and rush of business of the year.

Many of the wealthy people enjoy family trip in Taiwan or abroad. Resourceful

family members accept larger responsibility for the traveling cost in order to strengthen their family bond through traveling together.

On the other hand, the sense of moral values such as "Chuko" (loyalty and filial piety), "Jinai" (benevolence), "Shingi" (faith) and "Wahei" (peace and conformity) are strictly observed as social code. The traditional Confucian idea before the Cultural Revolution is preserved in Taiwan, and the moral framework "Reigi Renchi" (ethical behaviors and sense of honor) is still taught at the elementary schools, although Japan has abandoned this idea. The Taiwan people inherit good sense of values, cultures and practices in proper manners. For example, even when priority seats in MRT train are vacated, it is unconceivable that young people sit in the seats. Moreover, the Taiwanese are so attentive to strangers and tourists that sometimes they can be meddlesome. For preservation of such secure Taiwan society, the Taiwanese people treasure their traditional view of families and sense of social values.



\*Many pious Taipei citizens pay their respect at the Longshan Temple



\*At the prestigious Taipei Municipal Jianguo Senior High School, the moral framework of "Reigi Renchi" adorns the school building. The school was Taihoku Prefectural Taihoku First Junior High School in the era of Taisho 11th. "Reigi Renchi" was also Japan's moral in those days

#### 4-2. Taiwan society emphasizes educational background

Partly owing to the influence of the Chinese culture, Taiwan is traditionally an education-conscious society. Academic records are important information for decision on employment, in-house promotion, and even one's marriage partner. Such attitude is so deeply rooted that a larger number of students proceed to MBA or master's course of specialized field these days while many find a job after college.

As of 2011, 46% of the late 20s (25-29) have the educational records of college graduates and 11% have postgraduate degrees, according to the statistics of Taiwan Ministry of Interior. The Taiwan Ministry of Education's statistics indicate that the

number of graduate school students account for 17% of whole university students (in 2011). The students major in math and science are particularly likely to proceed to a graduate school rather than to get employed. For example, according to the survey by 104 job information website, in National Tsing Hua University, a top-class university with many divisions of general science and engineering in Taiwan, about 49% of the undergraduates go to the graduate school instead of finding a job.

Needless to say, high-school students study at school from morning till night and go to cram schools on holidays in order to pass entrance exams for elite universities. Such fiercely competitive examinations continue to the entrance exams for graduate schools. In order to go to national university graduate school, undergraduate students commonly attend the cram schools specialized in entrance exams for graduate school from 3rd year to 4th year.

Concerning the destinations of overseas study, English speaking countries are popular. The most popular is the US, while the UK is also popular because students can get a master's degree in a year there. These days an increasing number of students go to China for study. Many of those who go to Japan have graduated from the Japanese departments of Universities. Since women accounts for the majority of students specialized in Japanese, most of the Taiwanese who study in Japan are female.

In Taiwan, high education is considered to be an investment for the future, and the necessary school expenses, cram school fee, and living costs are shouldered by parents. Under the current circumstances of widening income gap, those of middle lower class are facing economically difficult situations.

Figure 8: rate of graduate students

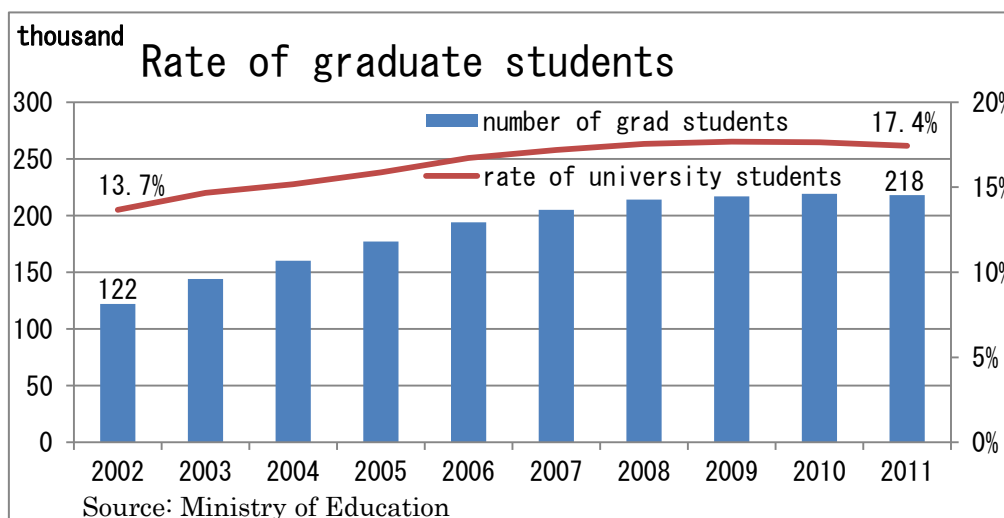




Table 2: Four most popular destinations of studying abroad

Destinations	Applications for overseas education in 2010
The US	15,890
Australia	3,633
The UK	3,610
Japan	3,253

Source: Taiwan Ministry of Education

#### 4-3. Marriage leads to nuclear family

Let's review the style of families here. As explained in the former chapters, owing to the sluggish rise of wages and soaring housing prices, the younger people today have difficulty purchasing a house. Therefore, unless they come from rural area to live in the city, the single people generally live with their parents even if they are working. Once they get married, however, to avoid the troublesome relationship between a wife and a mother in law, a growing number of couples set up another household. Such households consist of only a young couple (11%) or a young couple and unmarried children (36%). In other words, the Taiwanese generally live with their parents until they get married, but they start a separate household of nuclear family when they are married. But the separate housings are basically supposed to be "close enough to share meals regularly".

Table 3 Forms of families (as of Dec. 2010)

Nuclear families					Other families				
	total	Couple only	Parent unmarried children and unmarried children	Male parent unmarried children and Female parent unmarried children	Couple, unmarried children and parents	Parents and married children	Grandparents and grandchildren	Single	Others
Number of families	7,414,371	817,971	2,655,448	555,086	814,515	300,550	101,626	1,629,970	539,205
Rate %	100%	11%	36%	7%	11%	4%	1%	22%	7%

Source: Based on Taiwan Financial Supervisory Commission

#### **4-4. Separate roles of working couples**

In Taiwan many women continue their work after marriage. In urban households, working couples are commonly seen. When both of the husband and wife have jobs, which is an ordinary case in the city, they share the burden of housework and childcare. The Taiwanese women, who dream of the Western gentlemanship, demand various services from the men based on the Western manners. For example, they assume the male should carry baggage and hold children in his arms. Their ideal husbands mentally support their job or do various house chores. On husbands' part, few of them dare to leave all the responsibilities for housework and childcare on their wife. It is a normal way of life for the double working couples that the husbands wash dishes and do laundry.

#### **4-5. Working parents leave their children in grandparents' care**

When a child is born, the nuclear family usually leaves their child in grandparents' or full-time care giver's care to continue the parent's job. Even if they use a full-time care giver, the parents can ask their grandparents to pick up and take care of their child when they are forced to come home late. In some cases, partly to save on the costs, grandparents take in and look after the child until he or she is grown enough to go to a day-care center. If the grandparents live in the vicinity, the child can see their parents' face every night; but if the grandparents live in a faraway place, the child can meet his or her parents only on the weekends.

About 70% of all children are taken care of by their grandparents in some way until they are as grown as 3 years old. In other words, while they no longer live together as a big family, the grandparents who take care of their grandchildren contribute to preservation of their family's intergenerational bond. Owing to such situations, the parents wish to live as close as possible to grandparents', while in Taiwan the nuclear family households of parents and children have become prevailing. As a matter of fact, there are numerous cases that each of the parents and the son or daughter's family purchases separate housings in a same condominium. For the younger couple, they have various advantages such as putting their children in their parent's hand or enjoying meal together. Unlike in Japan, the nuclear families of married younger generation in Taiwan still maintain strong bond with their parent generation.

On the other hand, the education of children in the nuclear family of working parents has become a significant social issue. Since the parents are busy at work, their children at school age often buy meal with pocket money from his or her parents and have supper alone every day. In other cases, the parents have their children go to a

cram school after school and let them study there until the parents go to pick them up after work. When they are home, it would be time for bed for the children. In this way, some families have troubles in family life and communication owing to the each member's different times of life.



\* Grandparents baby sit their grandchildren



\* Families with children play at a park

#### **4-6. Women continue their work after marriage and childbirth**

In Taiwan, the people are scarcely conscious of fixed gender roles like in Japan. Additionally, the sole income of husband is not enough to maintain a household, so the women in Taiwan highly tend to continue their job after marriage. Female accounts for 44% of all the labor force population.

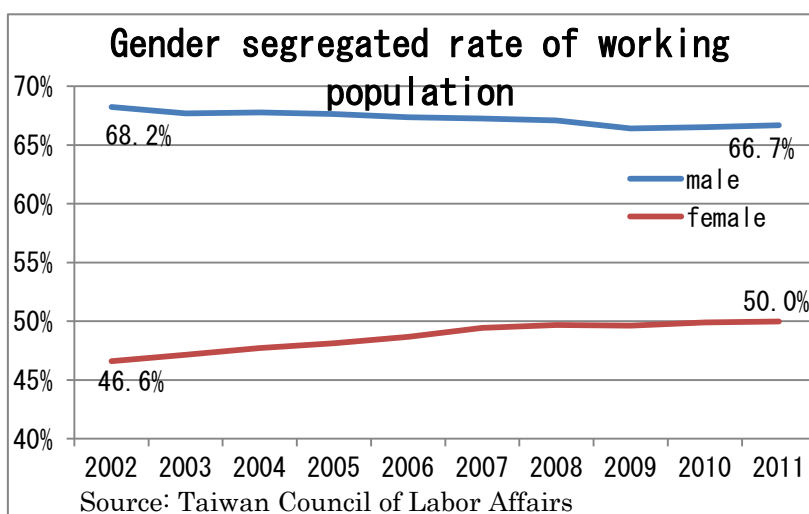
As the situation shows, the women continue their work after childbirth and can rise to high managerial positions. The women in Taiwan keep on working during pregnancy and even after delivering take only about 8 weeks of maternity leave. The census data in 2010 show that only 16% of the married women left job permanently or temporarily owing to delivery.

The percentage of working people by gender in 2011 was 66.7% for men and as high as 50.0% for women according to the statistics of Taiwan Council of Labor Affairs. Furthermore, the data of this decade shown in Figure 9 illustrates that the working percentage of women has been increasing while that of men is on the decline. Currently a female boss in company or a female professor in university can be commonly seen.

These days, female employees are highly appreciated that they have such advantages as more tolerant of stress and more conscious of details in business planning than male employees. As a result, major companies started to pay attention to the survey result of "The 10 most female-friendly companies" intending to hire brilliant female workers.

However, the more single brilliant women devote themselves to their job, the more unlikely they become to get married because of narrower selection of eligible men for them who would like to find a same- or higher-level partner. This is probably another major reason for the growing number of later married and unmarried people of the Taiwan society.

Figure 9 Transition of gender-segregated rate of working population



#### 4-7. Why do the Taiwanese work long hours?

In the traditional Taiwanese culture, it is preferable to work like a worker bee. In accordance with Labor Standard Law, all workers in Taiwan will be granted with at least a 7 days' leave with full pay in his or her first year of service. The paid leave will become longer as a worker continues service, but not a small number of employees have difficulty in taking all the paid leave. Many office workers not only leave the paid vacation unused, but work after hours on weekdays and weekends. Based on their culture, they believe it is a right thing to endure even a painful job in order to become a wealthy person. They dream of early retirement and easy life when they have enough savings. As such, the working hours in Taiwan are particularly long among Asian countries. In 2011, the monthly working hours on average was 174 hours for the service sector and 184 hours for industrial sector. These hours do not include unpaid overtime work.

The long working hours are mainly caused by two reasons. The first is the characteristics of works; for example, in financial or IT industries, the workers are often pressed by overtime and forced to work about 12 hours every day. The second is that various kinds of shops are open late into the night in Taipei. At many service

businesses such as department stores and beauty salons, the employees have only 6 days off a month while their working times are long in accordance with the shops' long business hours. For instance, the department stores in Taiwan are open from 11 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. on weekdays. On Fridays and Saturdays, the closing hours are prolonged to 10 p.m.

The overtime can't be controlled partly because of restructuring and job cut, as well as housings near workplaces. Since the number of employees is reduced, the workload of an employee is increasing. If an employee lives in the vicinity of workplace, a taxi fare to his or her house would be reasonable, so even if the employee works late into the night, he or she could go back home easily. Accordingly the times of last train can not serve to control the overtime work.



\* Motorcycles are convenient commuting tool for the Taipei citizens



\* In Taipei City, public transports are developed for the convenience of citizens

#### **4-8. Number of temporary or contracted employees is increasing**

In recent years, Taiwan has had a greater percentage of non-regular workers, temporary employees, and contracted employees. According to the survey of Taiwan Financial Supervisory Commission, the percentage of the temporary or non-regular employees in 2011 accounts for 7.7% of whole employees (641thousands/8329thousands). More than 70% of those engaged in temporary work seem to have difficulty changing their jobs. Not only in retailing, but in other industries such as finance, communication services and schools, many assistants are dispatched by personnel agencies and employed as short-term contracted employees. Also in such businesses as information management, temporary workers are often employed on a project basis.

While the employers hire short-term, temporary workforce, it has become popular for the young workers in Taiwan to change their jobs. The "Survey on Adolescent Workers Employment Status" held by Taiwan Council of Labor Affairs in 2008 indicates that among young people under 30 no fewer than 60% have experienced job transfer. The

major reasons include "no chance of career improvement", "low wage", "want to change work place" and other complaints. The wage or position of young workers will not necessarily improve by job changing, but if they worked at large companies the career would be taken into account. The young workers change their jobs easily probably because they are unhappy with working conditions and they can work without problem at a new workplace with new bosses.

### **Summary**

The report above describes the overall view of the ordinary, middle-class people's life in Taipei. Both of the parents are too busy on weekdays to communicate with their children or older parents. On the weekends, however, they have meals or go on a trip by three generations of parents, children and grandchildren, and enjoy their life. The Taiwanese males and females work long and hard in order to seek a richer future.

The next part will introduce an in-depth view of the lifestyle of the wealthy and middle classes in Taipei.