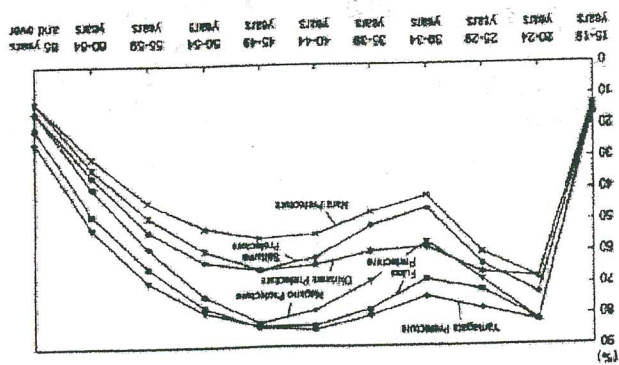


The graph below shows labour force participation rates by age and prefecture:

Figure 2: Women's labour force participation rates by age



Population Census (1995), Management and Coordination Agency

As the graph illustrates, there are peaks in the employment rates of women at the ages of 20 and 40 in the various prefectures, but the employment rates fall away between the peaks. It presents a situation where women leave the workplace because of marriage, childbirth, or child rearing. The fact is that women cannot continue to work throughout their life in Japan. Consequently, women have to work for a shorter period than men and retire before reaching management levels. It causes lack of experience or knowledge about the business.