

Hakuhodo Institute of Life and Living

The Family: Thirty Years of Change—Spousal Power Relationships

Wives get stronger, husbands weaker

Overall say in the family: “Husband” 72.4% in 1988→38.7% in 2018, “Wife” 10.1% in 1988→30.3% in 2018

Hakuhodo Institute of Life and Living has conducted its Family Survey of couples in households where the husband is a salaried employee every ten years since 1988 (1988, 1998, 2008, 2018). Aside from time-series analysis of 30 years of data, the survey enables a look at gaps between responses by spouses by asking husbands and wives the same questions.

In the last 30 years, the environment facing families and married couples in Japan has changed significantly as a result of various phenomena, including the declining birthrate and aging population, women marrying and giving birth later in life, and dual-income households.

How has this changed perceptions about families and spouses and who does the housework and child care? Entitled Spousal Power Relationships, this report is the first in a series focusing on key survey findings and shines a spotlight on changes to the power balance in the home and perceptions of the ideal couple image.

The survey is part of Hakuhodo Institute of Life and Living’s The Family: Thirty Years of Change study. These and other research findings will be presented at events and in reports as Summer Seminar 2018 The Family: Thirty Years of Change.

Survey design: Survey area: 40 km radius of Tokyo
 Targets: Households with spouses living together and the wife aged 20–59 630 households (630 husbands, 630 wives, total 1,260 samples)
 Survey method: Home visit and self-administered questionnaire
 Survey period: Feb. 7–Mar. 12, 2018 See p6 for 1988, 1998, 2008 survey designs

Key points of The Family: Thirty Years of Change

Overall say in the family

Husbands lowest, wives highest ever scores; closest scores ever

- In who has the overall say in the family, **“Husband” recorded its lowest ever score (72.4% in 1988→38.7% in 2018).**
- **“Wife” recorded its highest ever score (10.1% in 1988→30.3% in 2018),** bringing the two scores the closest they’ve ever been in 30 years.
- By age group, “Wife” topped “Husband” for the first time in couples where the wife is in her 30s or under.

Say in family matters

Say in work, number of kids, living with parents shifts sharply to wives

- Scores for **“Wife”** having the final say in family matters such as whether the wife works, whether they live with their parents, and children’s names are the **highest they’ve been in 30 years.**
- Scores for the same items for **“Husband” have been declining for 30 years and reached their lowest point ever.**

Ideal couple image and reality

“Married to best friend” tops in ideal and reality. “Husband rules the roost” becoming endangered?

- In ideal couple image, **“Married to best friend” scored highest among husbands and wives (64.9% for husbands, 79.5% for wives).**
- In reality, too, **“Married to best friend” scored highest (53.8% for husbands, 57.3% for wives).**
- “Husband rules the roost” recorded **its lowest score in 30 years in ideal and reality (Ideal for husband: 50.2% in 1988→17.8% in 2018).**

Spousal dependence (2018 survey only)

“Couldn’t live without my spouse” higher for husbands than wives

- When we asked husbands and wives whether they felt they “Couldn’t live without my spouse,” the “Yes” score for husbands (67.1%) topped that for wives (59.5%).
- By age group, “Yes” scores were high for both husbands and wives aged in their 30s or under.

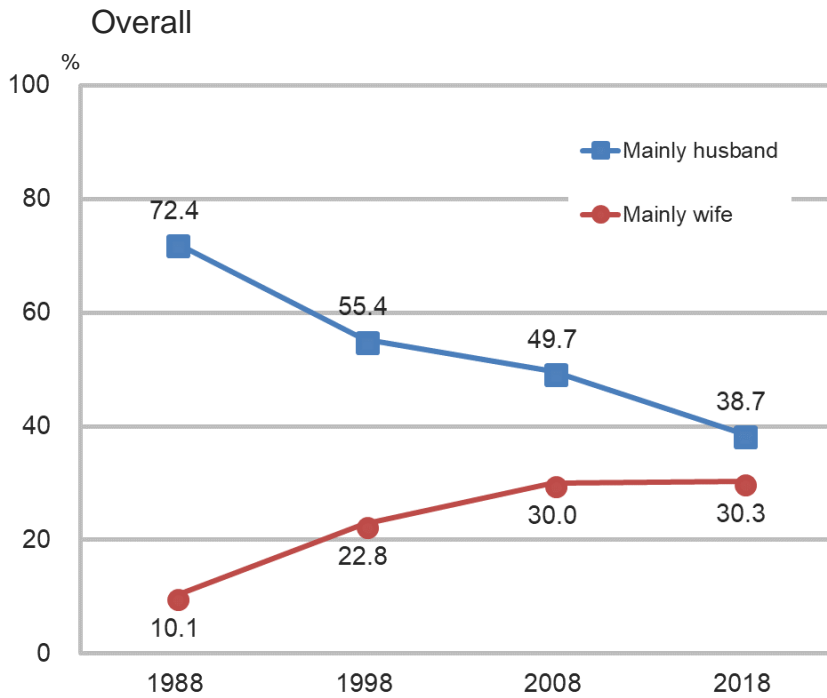
- In who has the overall say in the family, “Husband” recorded its lowest ever score (72.4% in 1988→38.7% in 2018).
- “Wife” recorded its highest ever score (10.1% in 1988→30.3% in 2018), bringing the two scores the closest they’ve ever been in 30 years
- By age group, “Wife” topped “Husband” for the first time in couples where the wife is in her 30s or under.

Overall say in the family

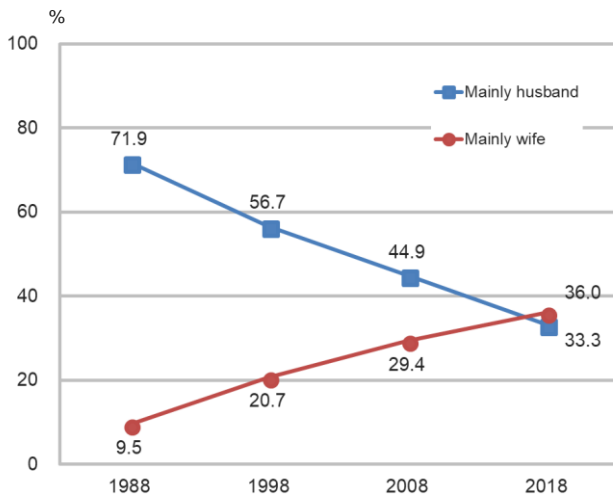


Overall, who would you say has the most say in your family?
 (Select one from: Mainly husband, Mainly wife, Husband and wife equally, Mainly child/ren, Mainly husband’s parents, Mainly wife’s parents, Other)

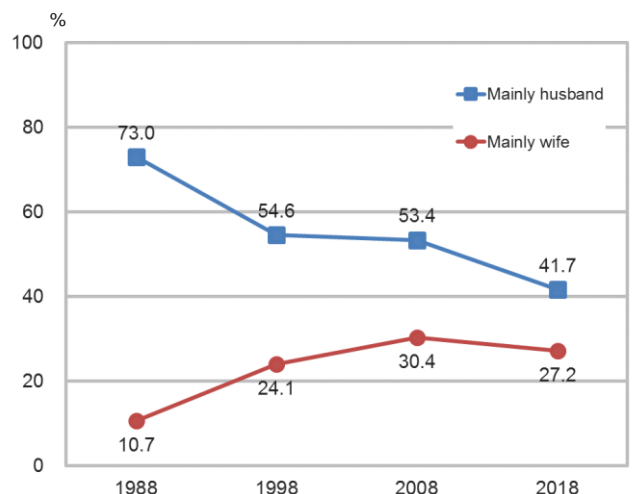
Base: Wives’ responses (630 samples) *Graph shows data for Mainly husband and Mainly wife



Couples where the wife is in her 30s or younger



Couples where the wife is in her 40s or older

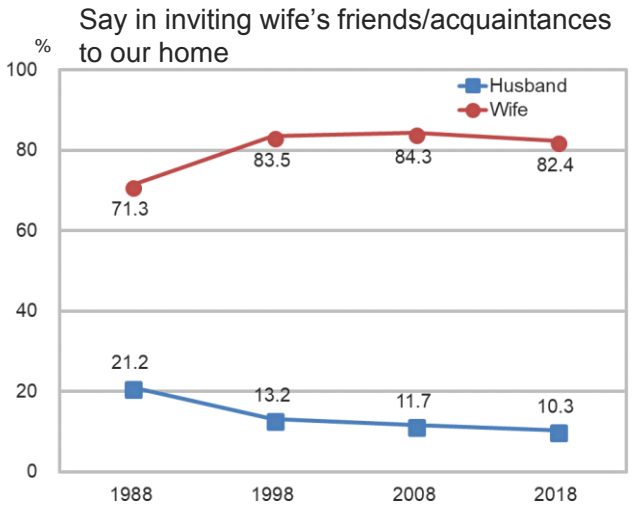
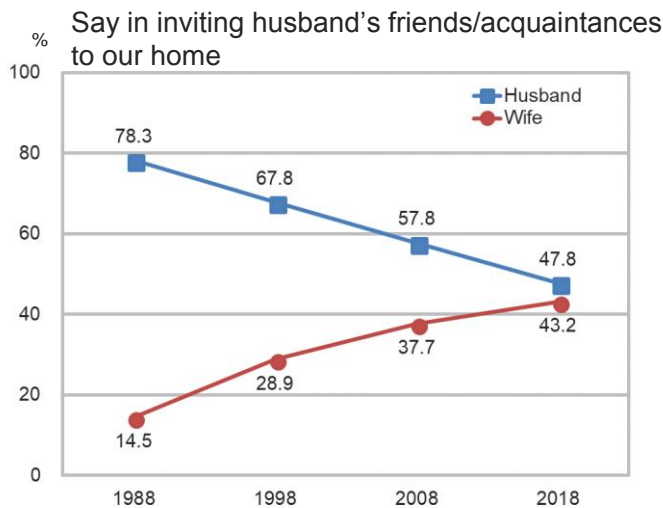
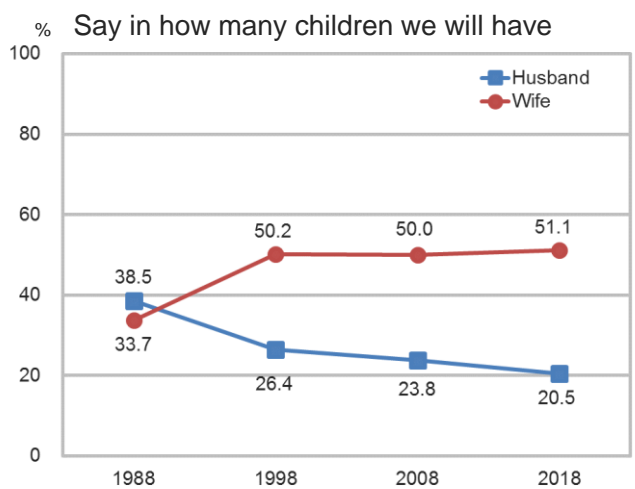
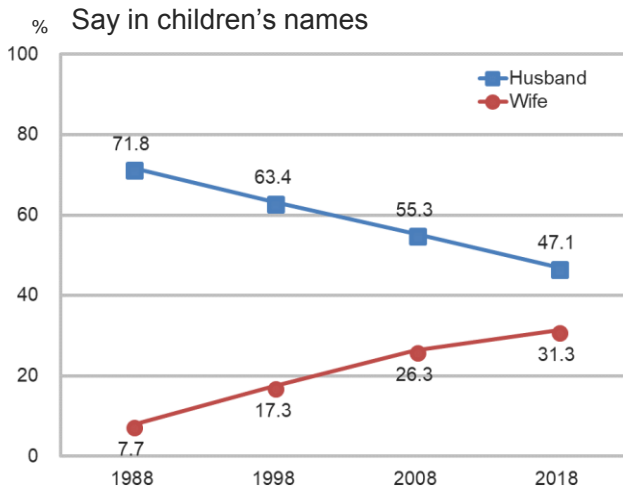
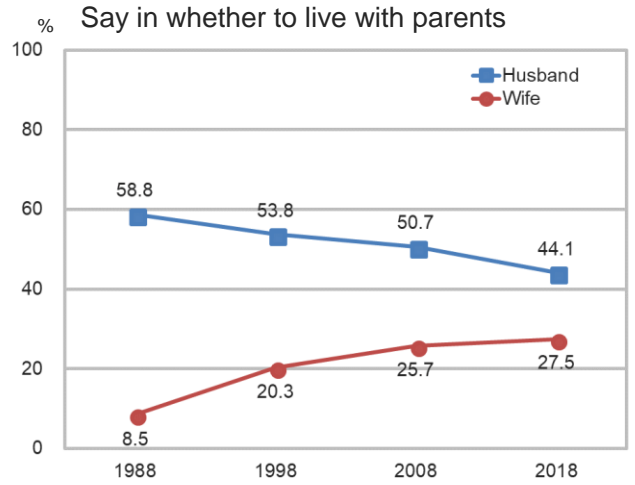
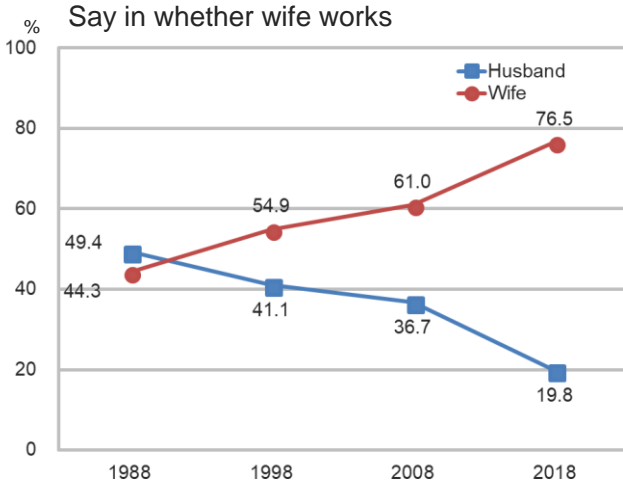


- Scores for “Wife” having the final say in family matters such as whether the wife works, whether they live with their parents, and children’s names are the highest they’ve been in 30 years.
- Scores for the same items for “Husband” have been declining for 30 years and reached their lowest point ever.
- Scores for many kinds of family matters, including Inviting husband’s/wife’s friends/acquaintances to the home, have been shifting towards wives in the last 30 years.

Say in family matters



In your family, which of you has the final say in matters that come up in the family? Choose one person who has the final say in the following matters. (Select one from: Husband, Wife, Neither) Base: Wives’ responses (630 samples) *Graph shows data for Husband, Wife



Ideal couple image and reality

“Married to best friend” tops in ideal and reality. “Husband rules the roost” becoming endangered?

- In ideal couple image, “Married to best friend” scored highest among both husbands and wives (64.9% for husbands, 79.5% for wives).
- In reality, too, “Married to best friend” scored highest (53.8% for husbands, 57.3% for wives).
- “Husband rules the roost” recorded its lowest score in 30 years in ideal and reality (Ideal for husband: 50.2% in 1988 → 17.8% in 2018).
- Husbands’ ideal has drawn closer to “Married to best friend,” wives’ consistent ideal, for 30 years, and in reality “Married to best friend” couples appear to be increasing.

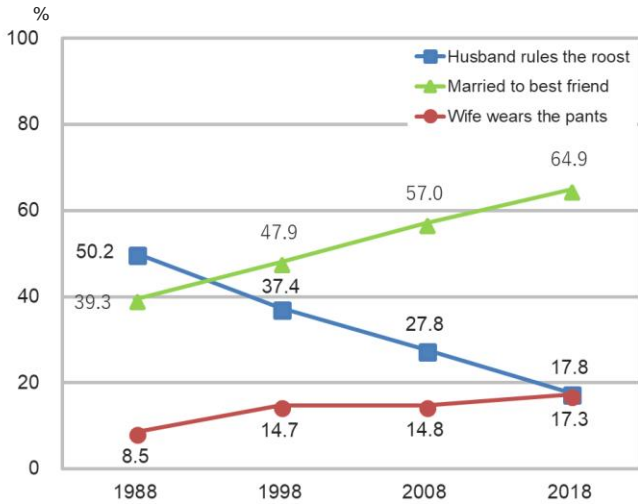
■ Ideal couple image



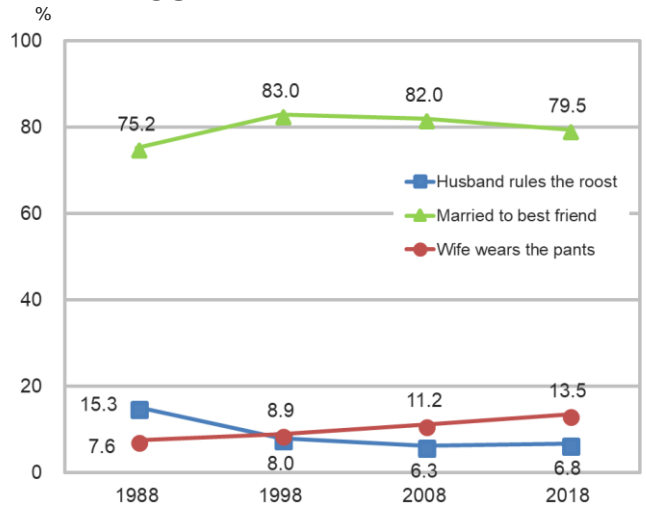
Which type of couple image is closest to your ideal?

(Select one from: Husband rules the roost, Married to best friend, Wife wears the pants in the family) Husbands’ responses (630 samples), Wives’ responses (630 samples)

Husbands



Wives



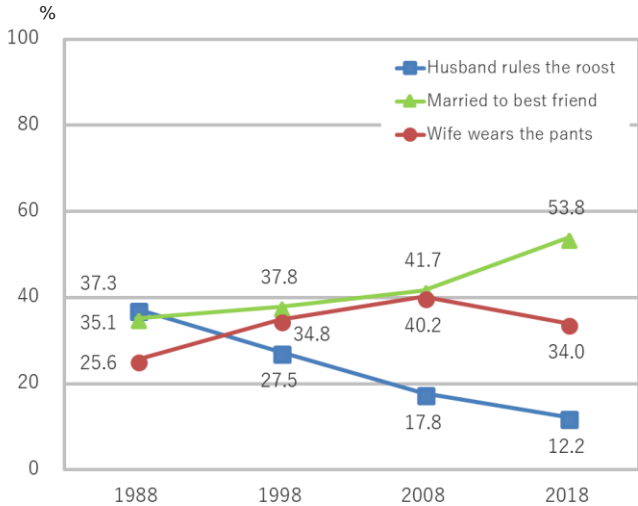
■ Actual couple image



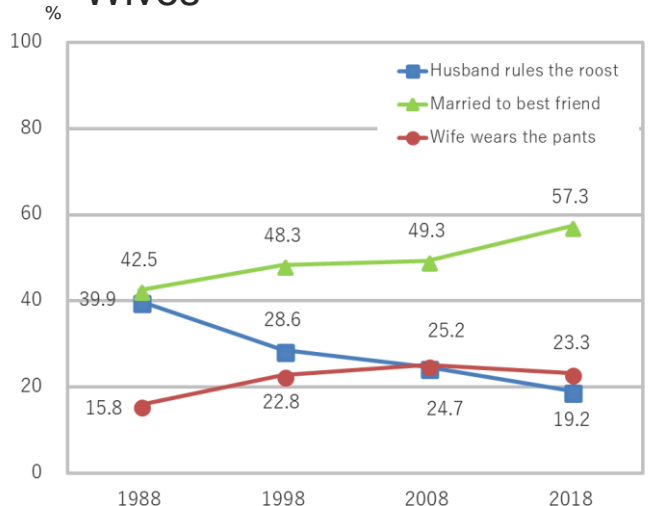
Which type of couple image is closest to your reality?

(Select one from: Husband rules the roost, Married to best friend, Wife wears the pants in the family) Husbands’ responses (630 samples), Wives’ responses (630 samples)

Husbands



Wives

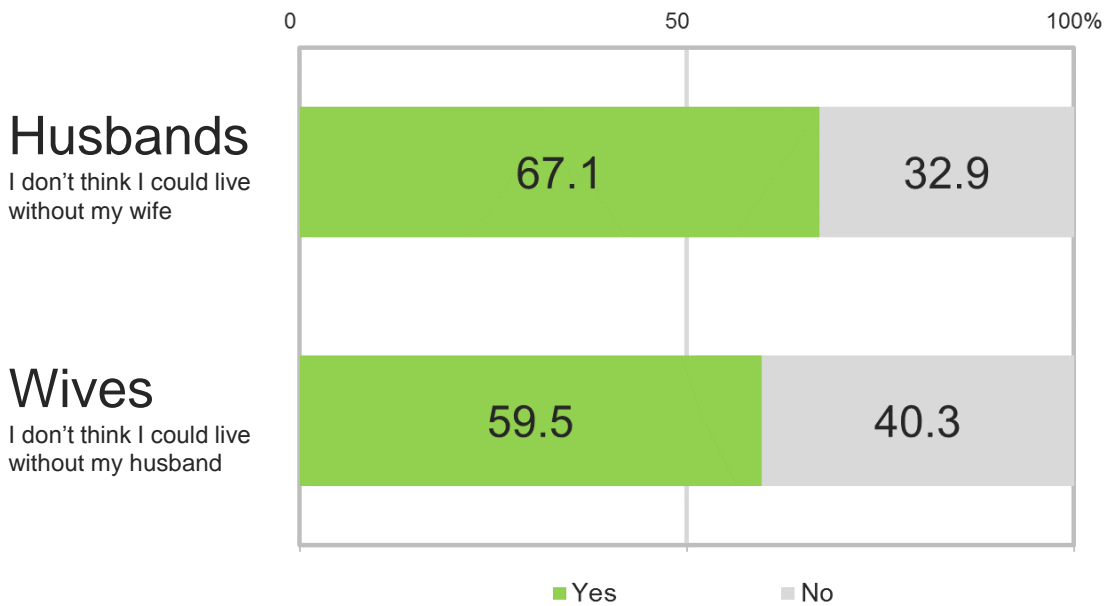


- When we asked husbands and wives whether they felt they “Couldn’t live without my spouse,” the “Yes” score for husbands (67.1%) topped that for wives (59.5%).
- By age group, the “Yes” scores were higher for both husbands and wives aged in their 30s and under.

■ Spousal dependence



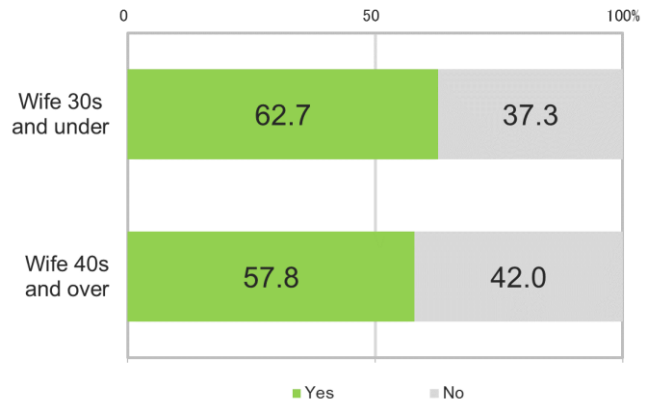
I don't think I could live without my husband/wife (Yes, No)
Husbands (630 samples), Wives (630 samples)



Husbands (by age group)



Wives (by age group)



Family Survey survey design

- Survey area: 40 km radius of Tokyo
- Targets: Households with spouses living together and the wife aged 20–59
Target conditions: Households to which both of the following apply
(1) Husband is salaried employee (2) Husband and wife live together (with or without children)
- 630 households (630 husbands, 630 wives, total 1,260 samples)

| | Wife 20–29 | Wife 30–39 | Wife 40–49 | Wife 50–59 | Total |
|------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-------|
| 2018 | 41 | 184 | 238 | 167 | 630 |
| 2008 | 57 | 208 | 173 | 162 | 600 |
| 1998 | 146 | 323 | 422 | 309 | 1,200 |
| 1988 | 149 | 446 | 366 | 223 | 1,185 |

* 1988 total includes one household where the wife's age is unknown

- Survey method: Home visit and self-administered questionnaire
Two questionnaires
 - Wives questionnaire: Consisting of Household Questionnaire about the family and home to be completed by wives only, and Individual Questionnaire to be filled in by both husband and wife
 - Husbands questionnaire: Individual questionnaire to be filled in by both husband and wife only
- Survey periods: February 7–March 12, 2018
June 12–July 7, 2008
January 8–February 2, 1998
August 3–22, 1988
- Planning & analysis: Hakuhodo Institute of Life and Living
- Survey implementation: Tokyo Survey Research Inc.