

# 7 Improving Working Environment

While values regarding lifestyle and work styles diversify, the NPA is working to promote flexible work styles that respect the circumstances of individual employees and ensure the health of employees. The NPA is also working to reduce overtime and realize a harassment-free workplace.

## Working Hours System

### Outline of Working Hours System

With the aim of securing appropriate working conditions for the employees, the NPA develops various types of systems.

- Employees' basic working hours are 38 hours and 45 minutes per week and 7 hours and 45 minutes per day.
- In principle, all employees are allowed to flexibly set their working hours taking advantage of a flextime system, etc.
- Employees engaged in services that should be offered 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, such as prison officers and coast guard officers, work under the shift work system.

### Promoting work styles in line with the times

From the perspective of creating an environment in which employees can work with a sense of fulfillment and vitality and improving the attractiveness of the public service workplace, the NPA promotes work styles in line with the times.

#### ■ Review of flextime system (April 2025)

In addition to making it possible for them to designate one day per week other than Saturday and Sunday to which working hours are not allocated, employees can now change the finish time, etc., even after they start the day's work. Also, some term-limited employees can now take advantage of a flextime system.

As a basic use of the system,  
**you change the start and finish time,**  
and...



**You add an extra day off, and...**



#### ■ Establishment of Telework Guidelines (March 2024)

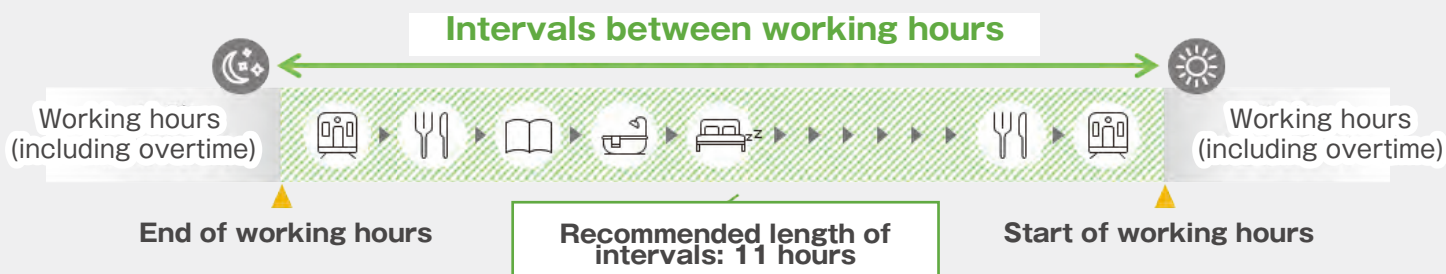
In order to ensure its appropriate and fair operation, the NPA, in cooperation with the Cabinet Bureau of Personnel Affairs, established the Telework Guidelines.

The NPA will make the guidelines known to expand telework in public service workplace.

## ■ Ensuring intervals between working hours (April 2024)

In addition to introducing mandatory effort provisions for heads of ministries and agencies, the NPA conducted surveys and research to understand the actual situation in each ministry and agency and to promote initiatives that contribute to resolving issues. Based on the result of the surveys and research, we will further promote our efforts to ensure intervals between working hours.

It aims to **secure sufficient time for sleep, which is essential to health, and other activities** by ensuring a certain amount of off-duty time from the **end of working hours to the start of the next working hours**.



## Reduction of Overtime Work

Long overtime work not only affect the health of individual employees and their work efficiency but also make the public service less attractive for younger generations to choose as a workplace. Therefore, the NPA is making efforts from many dimensions to reduce overtime work as one of its most important issues.

### Establishment of Upper Limit of Maximum Overtime Work

- ▶ The upper limit of maximum overtime work has been stipulated in the NPA rule as follows.

General rule	Sections/Units handling duties whose volume or deadline are beyond the control of the head of department	
45 hours or less per month	Less than 100 hours per month	Monthly average for the duration of 2 to 6 months should be 80 hours or less.
360 hours or less per year	720 hours or less per year	Overtime work for more than 45 hours per month should be 6 months or less per year.

Overtime work is permitted to be ordered beyond the above limits only when dealing with important and especially urgent duties such as responding to large-scale disasters, drafting the laws related to important policies, important negotiations with foreign countries or international organizations, and so forth. When the upper limit is exceeded, each ministry and agency are required to conduct verification afterwards.

- ▶ Toward the goal of reducing overtime work, the NPA's employees visit each ministry directly to provide guidance and advice. The NPA also monitors the status of overtime reduction and asks for understanding and cooperation from the Diet and other relevant parties.

## Promotion of Employees' Health

In order to realize the wellbeing of employees, it is extremely important to improve their own health. The NPA is working to improve health management systems and tackle mental health issues based on the status of health management systems in each ministry and efforts in the private sector to promote employee health.

### <Main Measures>

- ◆ The NPA works together with each ministry and agency and improves their health management system.
- ◆ "Counseling Office for Mental Health Care", in which employees can consult their emotional concerns, are held in 10 locations nationwide. Online counseling is available at all locations.
- ◆ Counseling service on female-specific health issues is newly established in FY2025.
- ◆ The NPA has developed support methods for smooth return to work and prevention of recurrence of long-term sick leave due to mental health problems, and provided them to ministries and agencies.
- ◆ Handbook on support for balancing cancer treatment and work is provided to ministries and agencies.



## Systems to Support the Balance Between Pregnancy, Childbirth, Childcare, Nursing Care and Work

The NPA works hard to improve various types of support systems, including childcare leave and nursing leave, so that employees can continue to work without any anxiety while taking care of their children and other family members.

In August 2024, the NPA submitted its opinions to amend the **Childcare Leave Act for National Public Employees** so that employees can take childcare hours, during which they are not required to be on duty for childcare reasons, more flexibly depending on their preferences or circumstances.

➡ Establish a new pattern for employees to take childcare hours equivalent to 10 days per year (October 2025)



### Leaves

#### Childcare leave

- Until a child becomes **3 years old** (up to two times, in principle)  
(In addition, postpartum childcare leave for fathers can be taken up to two times)

#### Nursing leave

- 6 months or less** per family member (can be taken in up to three instalments)  
(Re-acquisition is possible for each condition requiring care needs.)

#### Childcare short-time

- Until a child **enters elementary school** (Half-day work, etc.)

#### Childcare hours

- Until a child **enters elementary school** (Up to 2 hours a day)

#### Nursing hours

- 3 years or less** per family member (Up to 2 hours a day)  
(Re-acquisition is possible for each condition requiring care needs)

#### Childcare Time

- Until a child becomes **1 year old** (Twice a day for up to 30 minutes each)

#### Birth Support Leave

- 5 days** per year for hospital visits, etc. for infertility treatment  
(5 additional days if undergoing IVF or ICSI)

#### Prenatal and Postnatal Leave

- Before delivery: **6 weeks before** the estimated delivery date
- Postpartum: **8 weeks** after the day of birth

#### Spouse Childbirth Leave

- 2 days** during the period from the date of wife's hospitalization for childbirth until **2 weeks** after the day of birth

#### Leave for participating in childcare

- 5 days** during the period from the day 6 weeks before the estimated delivery date until the child becomes 1 year old

#### Leave for nursing children

- 5 days** per year (until a child finishes the third grade of elementary school)  
(10 days if the employee has 2 or more children before finishing the third grade of elementary school)

#### Short-term nursing leave

- 5 days** a year (10 days if the employee concerned has 2 or more family members in care-requiring condition)

※   : Unpaid   : Paid

### Changes in Working Hours

#### Flextime system

- Employees **can designate** one day per week other than Saturday and Sunday **to which working hours are not allocated**

#### Early or late work starting time

- Employees can choose a working pattern they want from various options.

### Avoidance of Overtime Work/Late-night Work

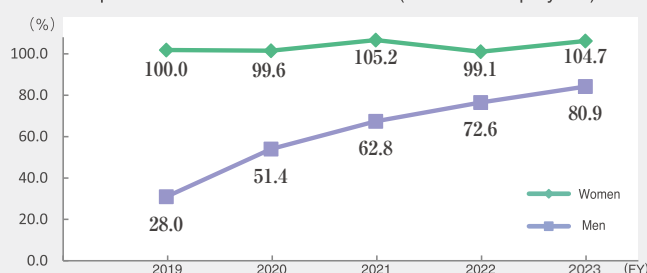
#### Restriction on late-night work

#### Restriction on overtime work

- Up to 24 hours a month and up to 150 hours a year

#### Exemption from overtime work

Acquisition Rate of Childcare Leave (Full-time Employees)



Source: "Survey concerning the Use of Work-life Balance Support-related Systems" (FY2019 to FY2023)

Note: The "Acquisition Rate" in FY2023 is the percentage of the number of employees who newly started childcare leave in FY2023 (a) to the number of employees whose child was born in FY2023 (limited to employees eligible for childcare leave)(b)(a/b). "a" includes employees whose child was born before FY2023 and newly started childcare leave in FY2023. Therefore, the acquisition rate may exceed 100%.

## Realization of Zero-Harassment

To create a working environment where everyone is respected and can fulfill their potential, the NPA has put in place rules to prevent sexual harassment, harassment concerning pregnancy, childbirth, childcare and nursing care, and power harassment. It is also working to create a workplace where harassment does not occur and, if it does occur, can be dealt with and resolved quickly and appropriately.

### Preventive Measures against Harassment

The NPA Rules stipulate that the employees shall not commit harassment

- ▶ It makes it mandatory for each ministry and agency to prevent harassment and to provide their employees with relief.
- ▶ Conduct anti-harassment training programs targeted for executive and managerial employees.
- ▶ Conduct a seminar for harassment counselors of each ministry and agency.
- ▶ Produce a training video that visualizes and explains possible cases related to power harassment.



### Harassment Prevention Week

- ▶ Dec. 4 to Dec. 10 every year is designated as "Harassment Prevention Week". During the week, each ministry and agency is called on to take measures on harassment, and the NPA also holds a seminar related to the topic.
- ▶ The NPA produces training materials for self-study with the goal to raise all employees' awareness about basic matters related to harassment.
- ▶ The NPA creates a poster to prevent harassment from customers, as words and actions from users of public services for which national public employees are in charge can also constitute harassment.



## Promotion of Safety Management Measures

The NPA promotes safety management at the workplace, for instance through distributing an overview of accidents that occurred in the past in order to prevent the recurrence of similar accidents; and providing guidance to thoroughly implement preventive measures against serious accidents, especially fatal accidents.

### Compensation for accidents caused by work or during commuting (Accident Compensation)

In order to support the lives of employees and their bereaved families who have suffered from accidents on duty or while commuting, standards and procedures have been established to certify accidents as duty-related or commuting-related and to provide the necessary expenses for medical treatment and others. In addition, the NPA supports the smooth implementation of certification and payment at each ministry and agency.

### Review of certification guidelines on accidents in line of duty related to mental disorders

In the case of workplace-related problems such as the case where harassing conduct causes an employee's mental disorder, such injuries can be certifiable as duty-related. In February 2024, the certification guidelines were amended to clarify that the certifiable workplace-related problems include so-called harassments from customers and remarks and actions related to sexual orientation and sexual identification.