

The Depth of a Social Safety Net

How to Evaluate the Works of Welfare Commissioners in Japan

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Introduction

Looking at “the other side” of a Social Safety Net in Today’s Context

>> How are the government’s programs integrated with other programs

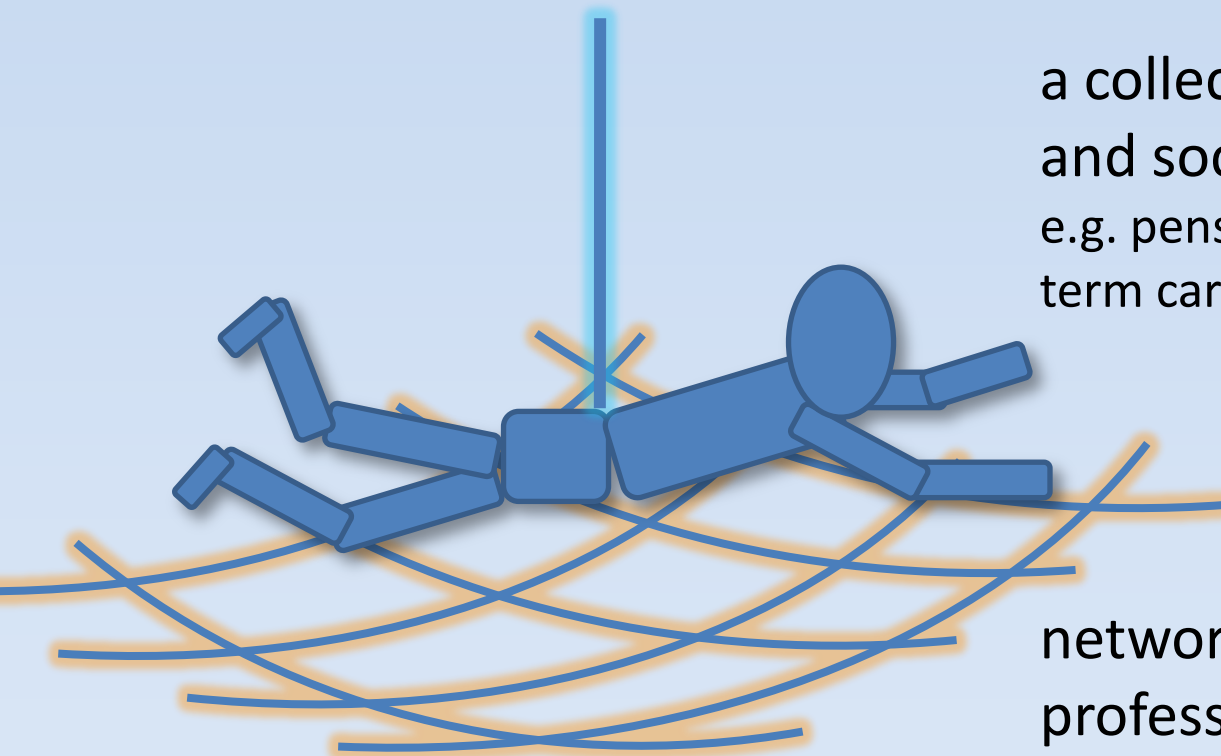
Key Element: Role of Welfare Commissioners (Minseijin)

>> updating the study by Goodman R.(1998) “The ‘Japanese-style welfare state’ and the delivery of personal social services”

Opening the “Black Box”

>> what is the role of welfare commissioners in a context of welfare-mix
Is it a sustainable welfare model? If not, what would be a challenge?

The other side of a Social Safety Net



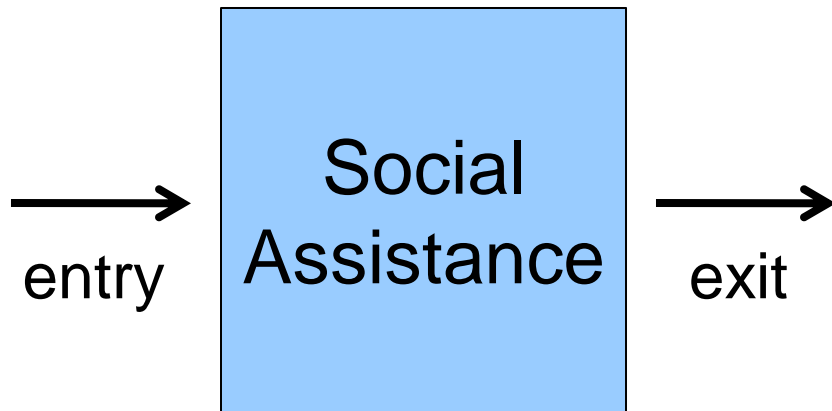
a collection of social insurances
and social security
e.g. pension, social assistance, long-
term care insurance

network of service providers,
professionals, volunteers, and
other actors

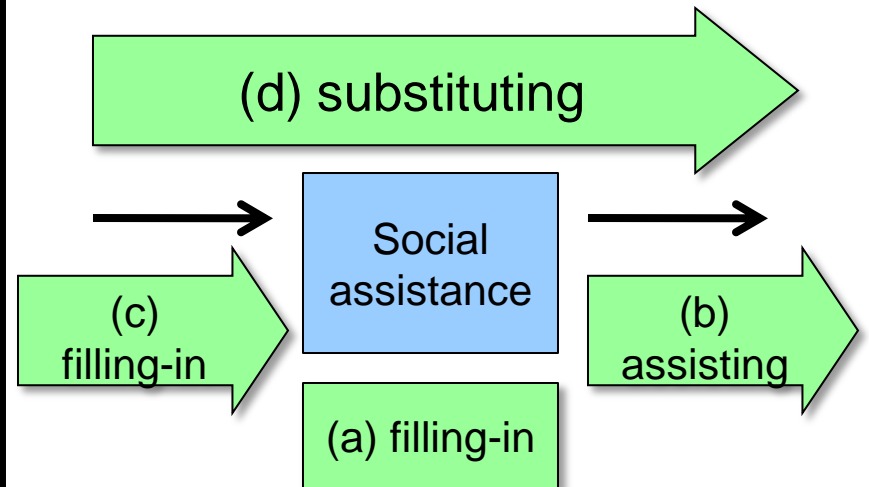
Between a public program and a private program

case study: bet/ social assistance program and social action program

ordinal safety net
with social assistance



safety net with collaboration
between social assistance and
Social Action Program



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Key Element: Role of Welfare Commissioners (Minseijiin)

>> updating the study by Roger Goodman (1998) “The ‘Japanese-style welfare state’ and the delivery of personal social services”

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Who are Welfare Commissioners?

Historically...

- Noble individual being recognized in a community
- Strong affiliation with the government (agent for social control)
- Gate keeper for social assistance program

> But Today

- Less noble (e.g. more housewives fill in the position)
- Less affiliation with the government
(Encouraged to work with community programs/initiatives)
- Less privilege (no longer an official gate keeper)

Welfare Commissioners Today

232,103 Welfare Commissioners (4,819 vacancies)
Appointed by Minister of Health Labor & Welfare
Three-year term

Tasks and Roles

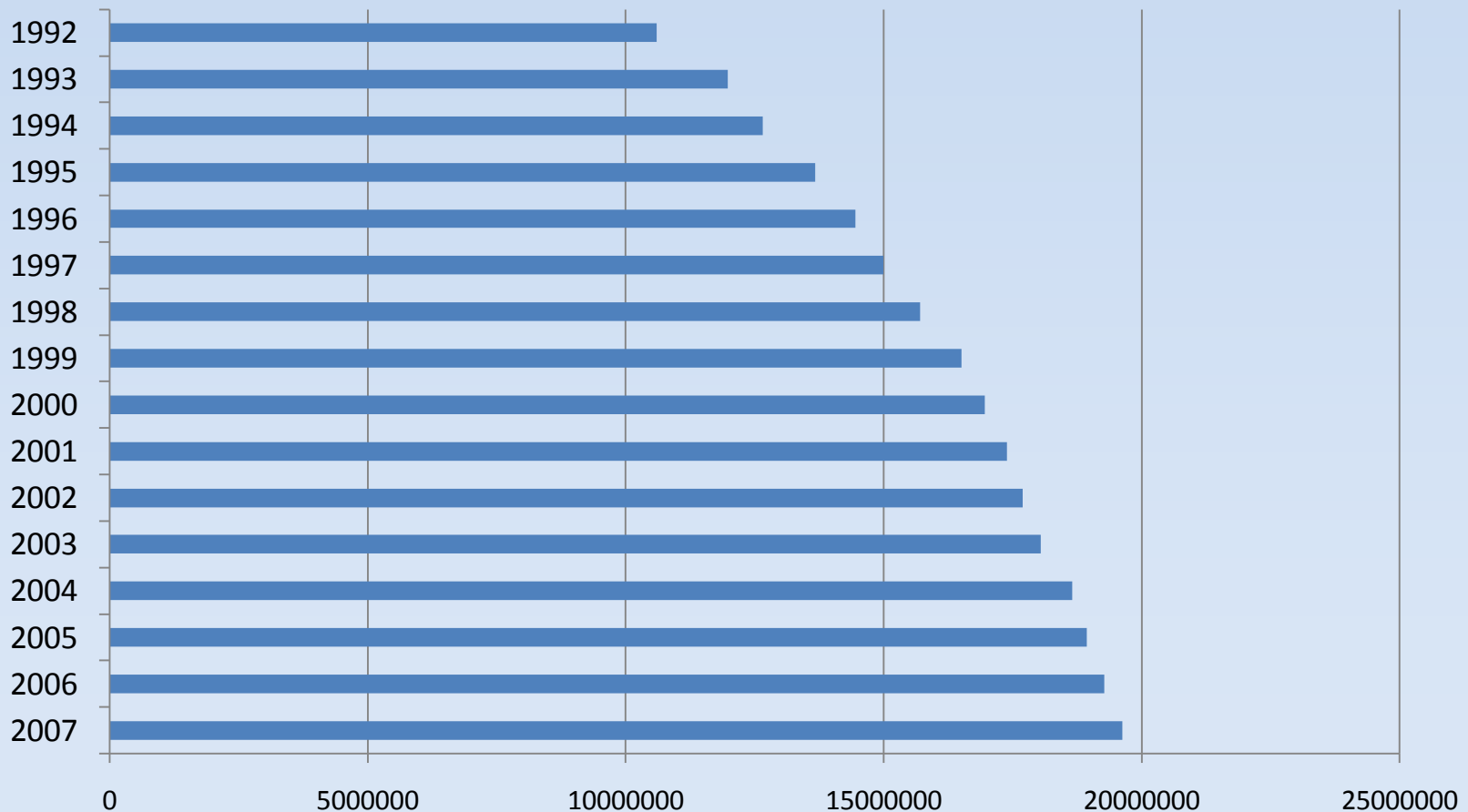
- appointed to the area of 70-440 households
- social research, friendly visits, disseminating information,
- collaborate with government agencies and other social service providers



Regulated by Welfare Commissioner Act

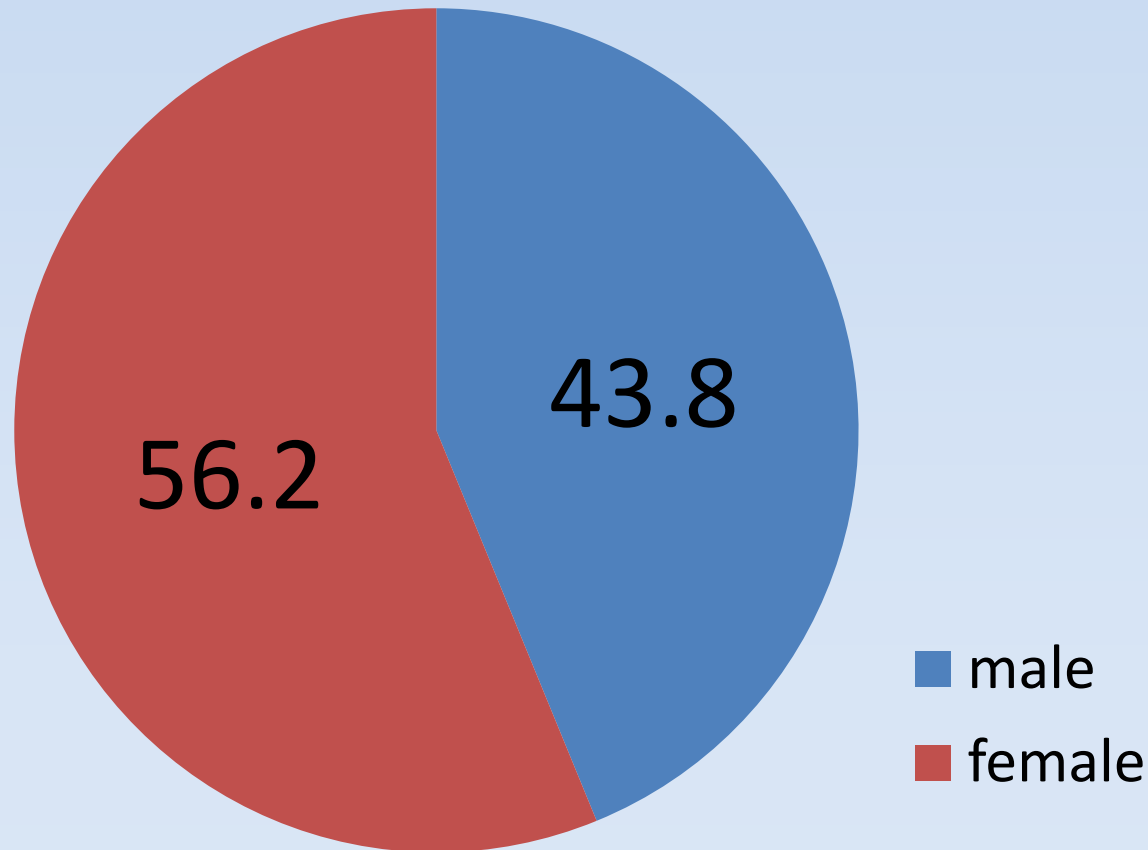
Some Basic Figures

19,625,092 visits made in a year (85.8 visits per WC)



Some Basic Figures

More female than male



Some Basic Figures

Average days of operation: 101.5 days/year

101.5 x 2.5 hours x 232,103 WCs x 750 yen
= 44,172,102,187.5 yen (280 million pounds)/year
>> 190,312 yen (1,217 pounds)/WC

WHAT DO THEY GET INSTEAD?

compensation : 58,200 yen (370 pounds)/year

Receive “the order” from the national government if they serve over 15 years

Research Questions

- Does the level of involvement from welfare commissioners depend on social needs (i.e. absence of a safety net)?
- How do they collaborate with other community-based programs? Are there any divisions of labor between welfare commissioners and workers?

In a Case of Osaka prefecture

8.8 million people

(Osaka City is the third largest city in
Japan with 2.6 million people)

Aging population 18.5%
(22.0% in Japan)

Unemployment rate: 4.9%
(4.2% in Japan)

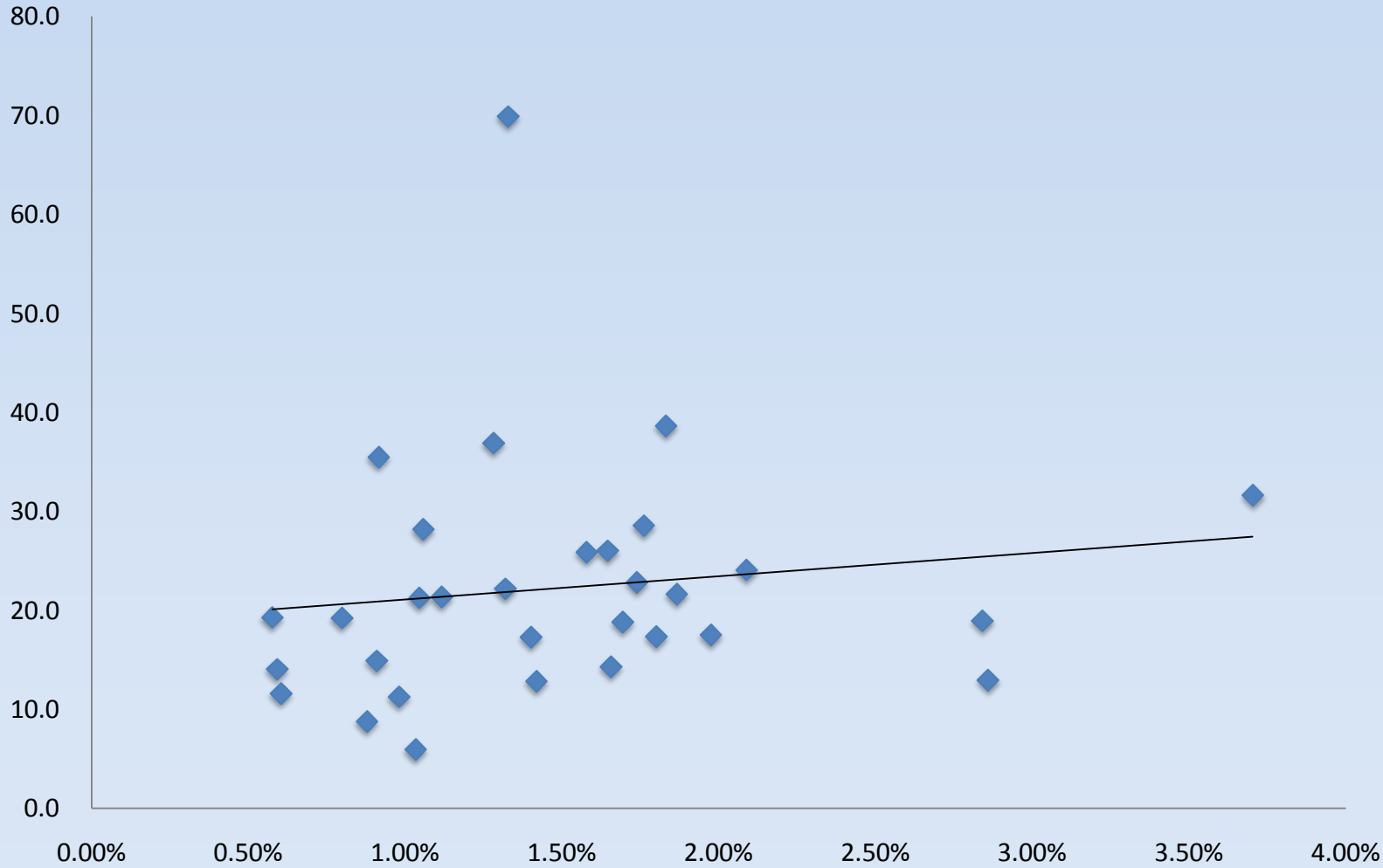
Welfare recipient rate: 1.63%
(1.11% in Japan)



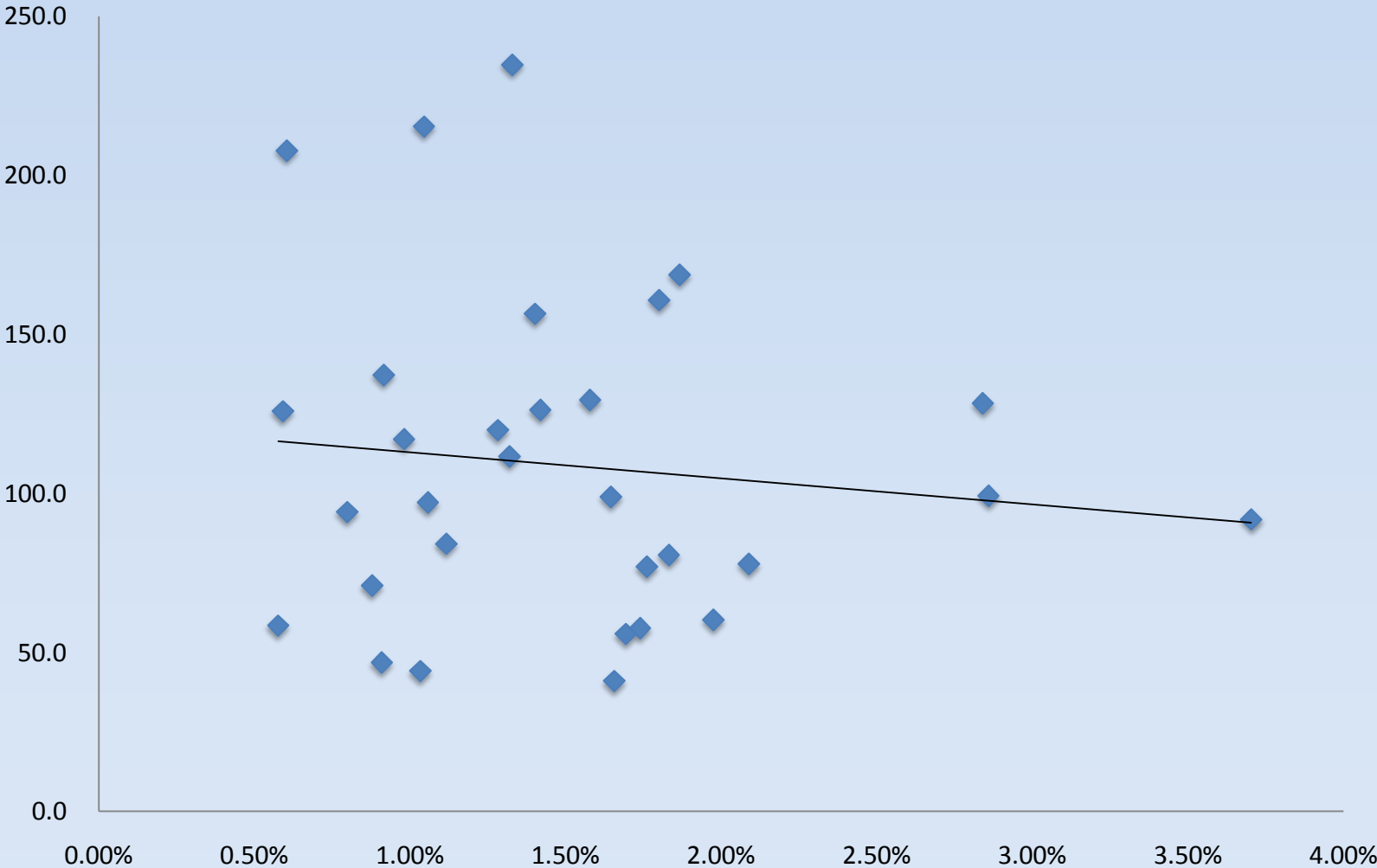
Correlation between works of WCs and some social indicators

<i>Pearson's R</i>	Welfare Recipient	Aging Population	Unemployment
# of cases	.139 (.456)	-.154 (.408)	-.084 (.654)
# of visits	-.266 (.147)	-.053 (.777)	-.313 (.086)
# of days In operation	-.119 (.523)	-.090 (.630)	-.251 (.173)

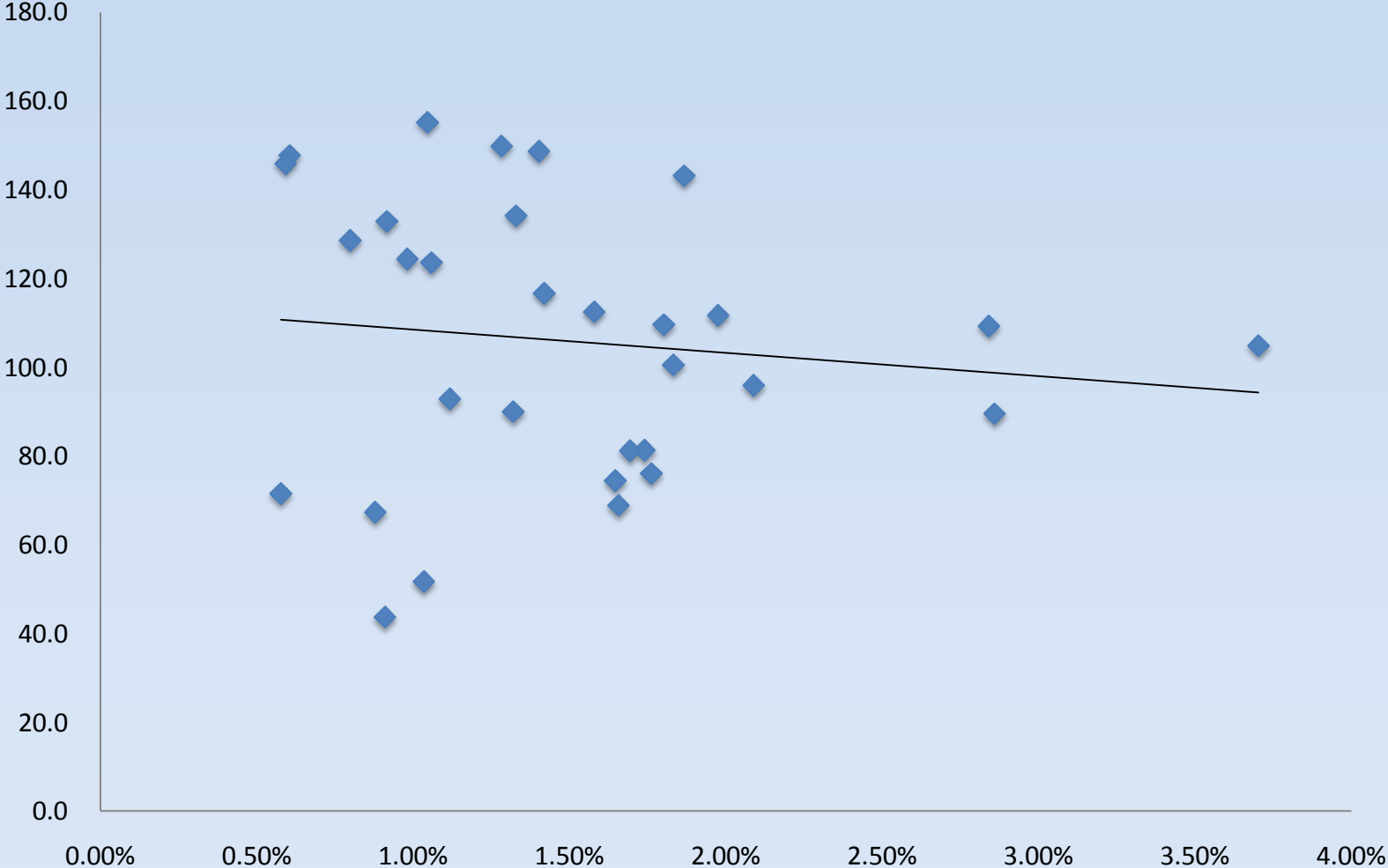
Welfare Recipients and WC Cases



Welfare Recipients and WC Visits



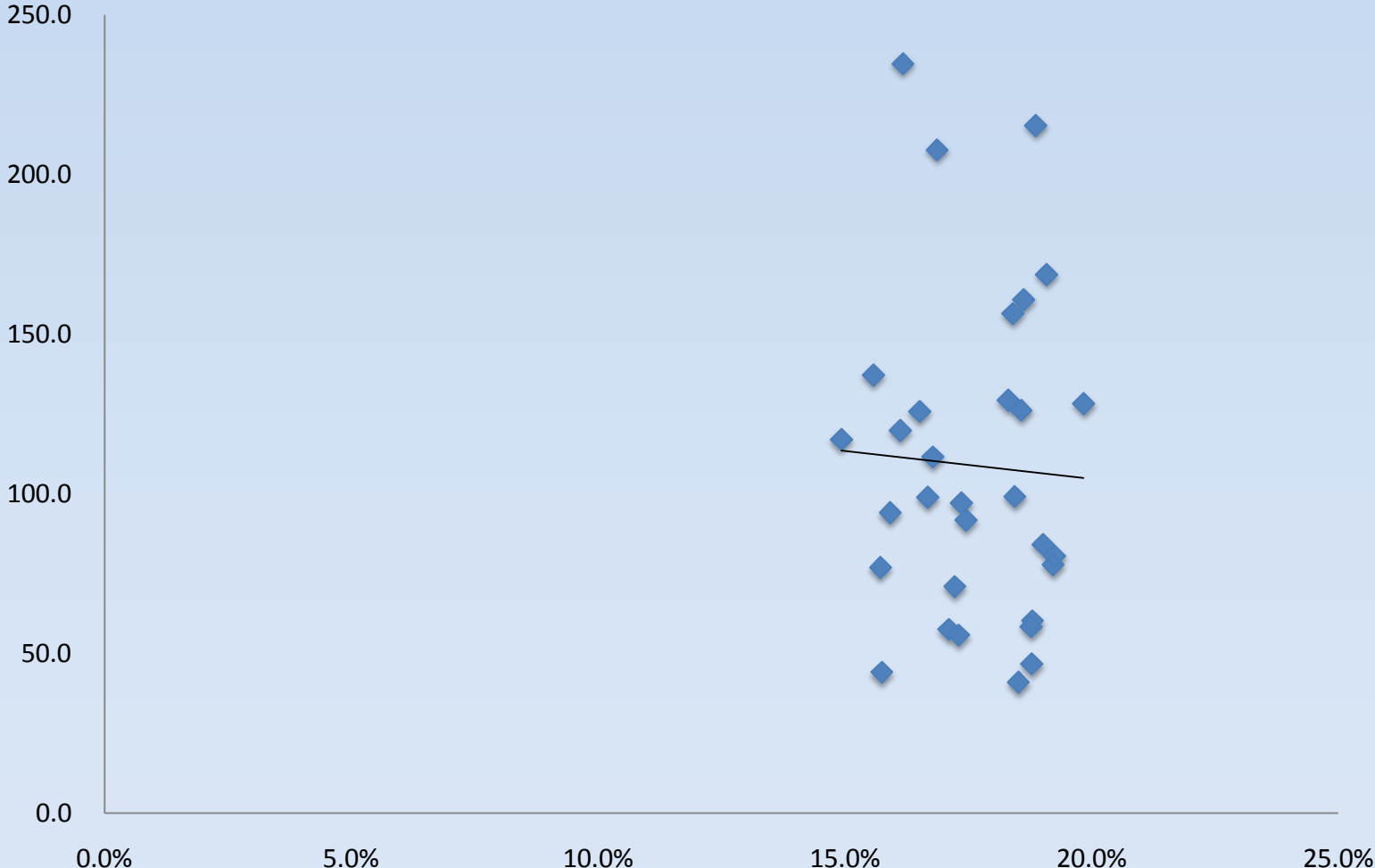
Welfare Recipients and WC Days of Operation



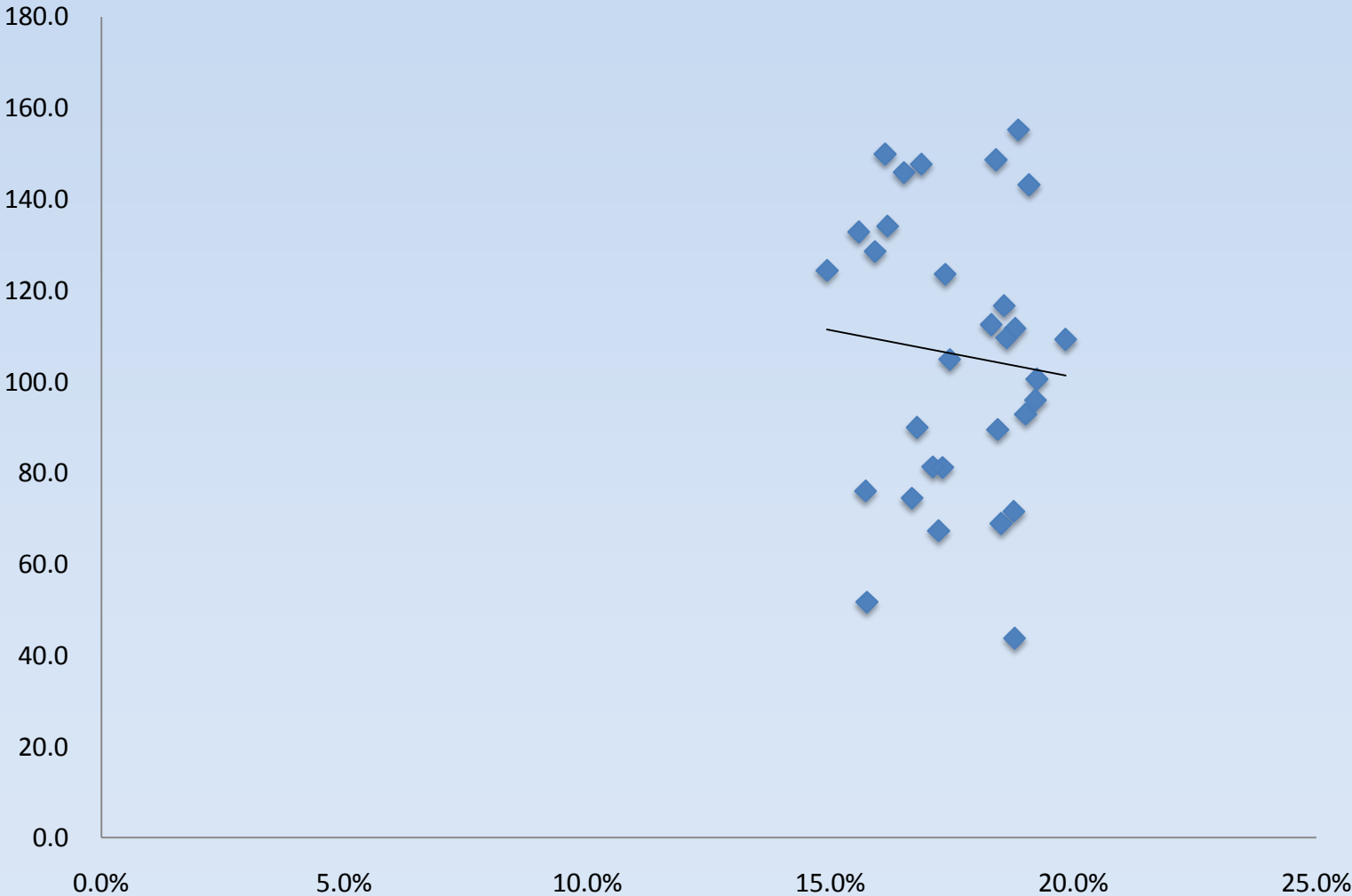
Aging Population and WC Cases



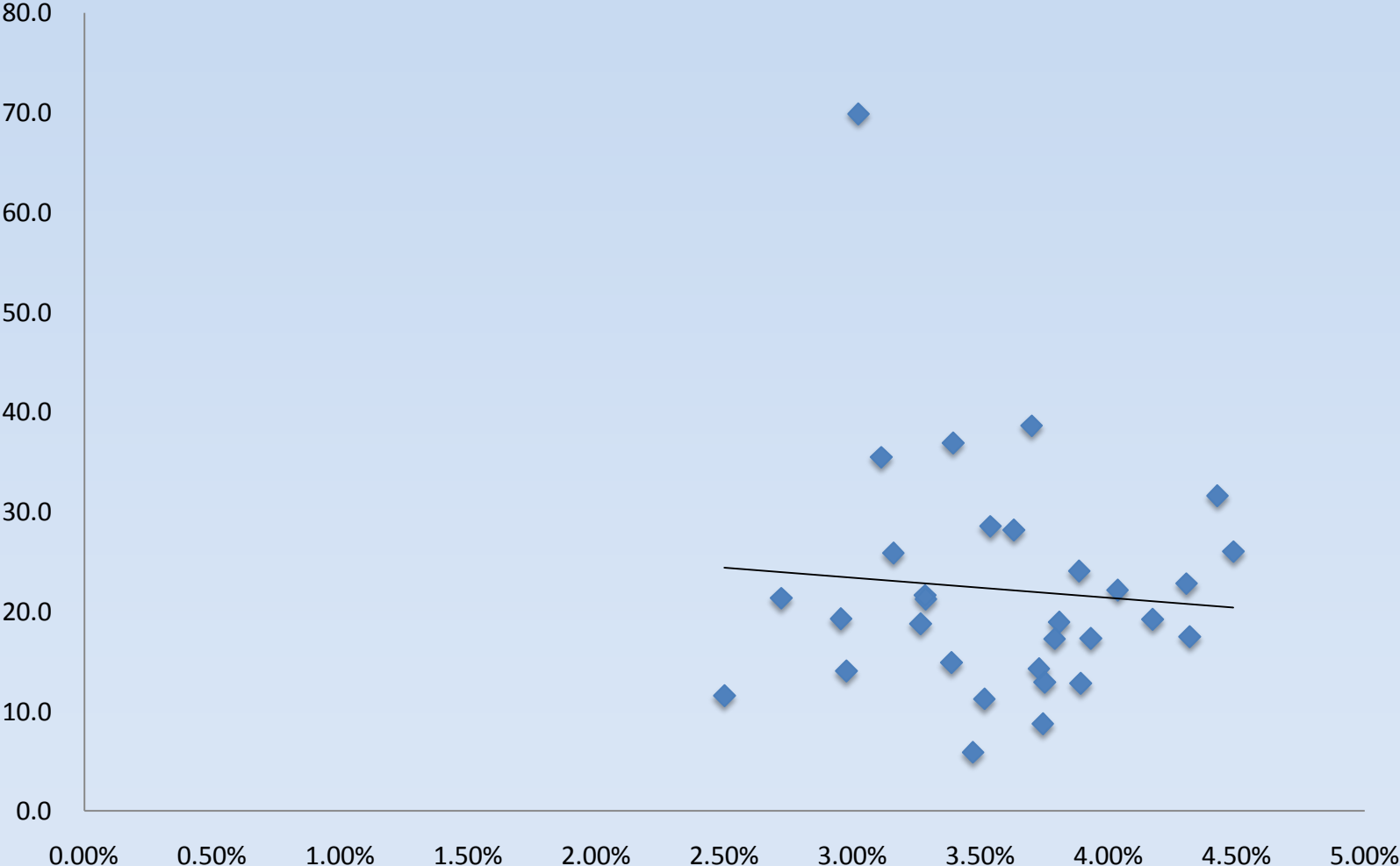
Aging Population and WC Visits



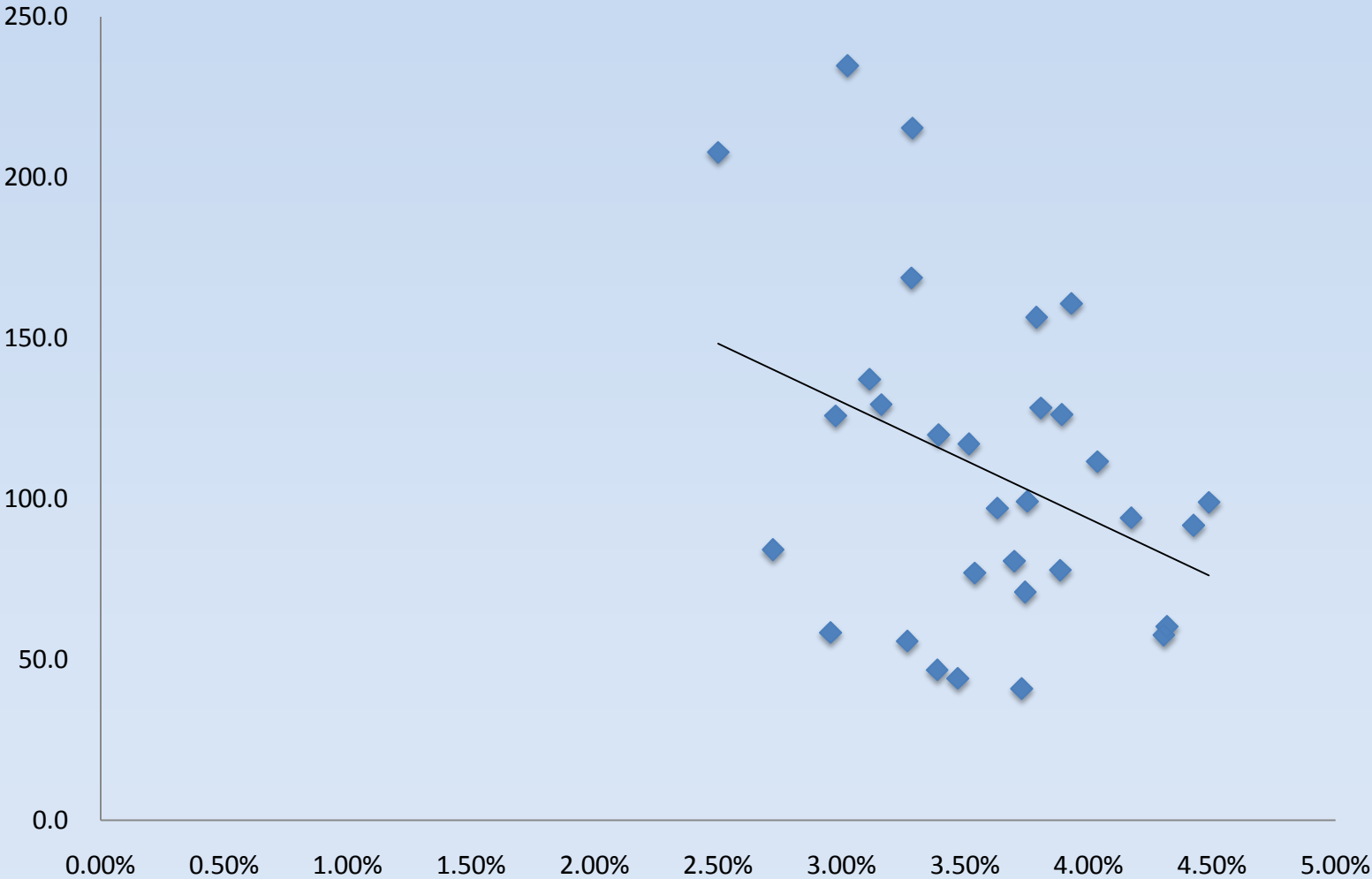
Aging Population and WC Days of Operation



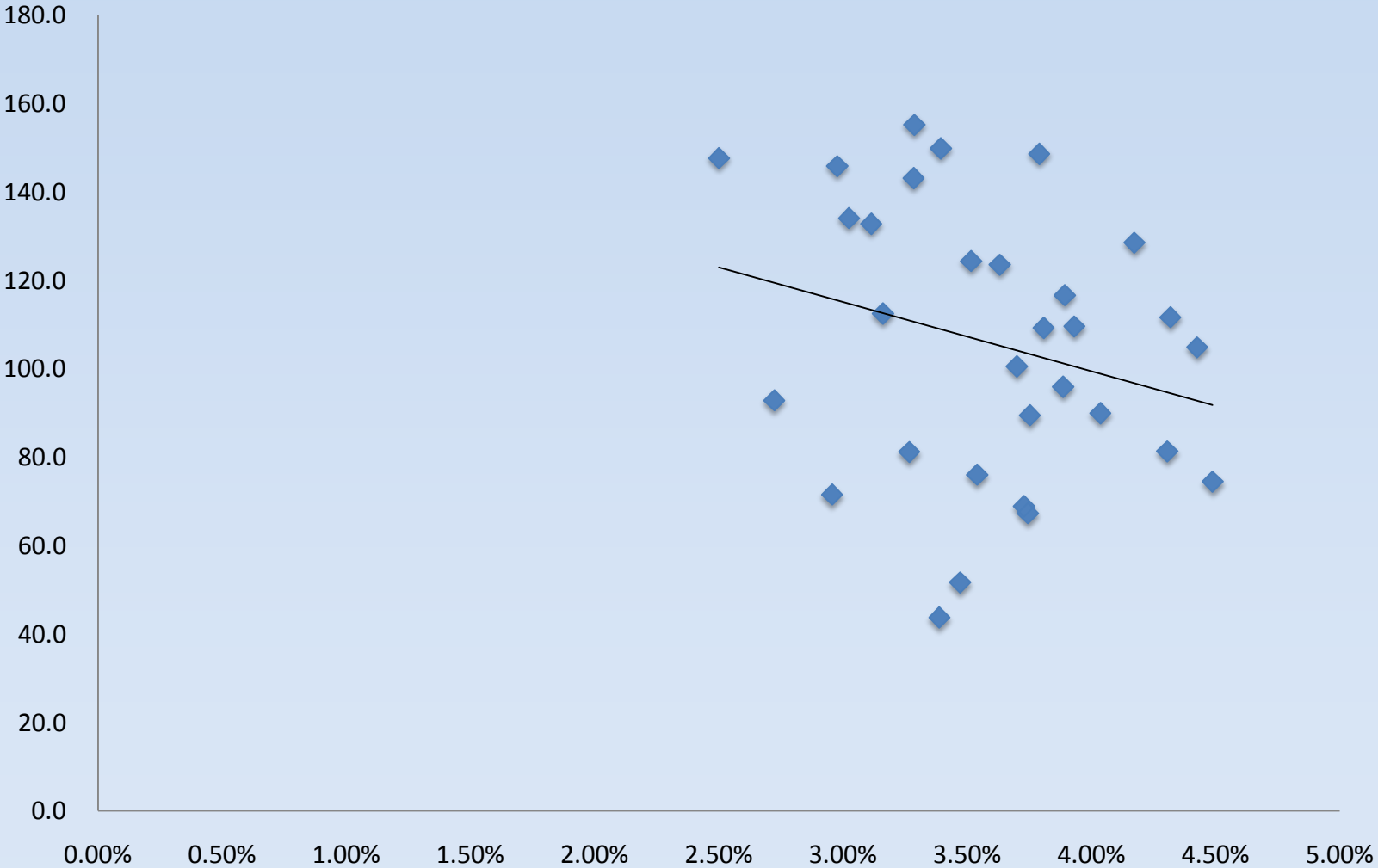
Unemployment Rate and WC Cases



Unemployment Rate and WC Visits



Unemployment Rate and WC Days of Operation



Interviews

Subjects: Welfare Commissioners and Social Workers (6 cities in Osaka)

Method: Focus Group Interview with semi-structured interview sheets

Conducted between June 2007 and July 2008

Each interview took 60 minutes to 120 minutes

Total Sample: 16 (7 welfare commissioners & 9 social workers)

What kind of Integration?

1) Local volunteer associations

780 areas in Osaka prefecture. Took 20 years and completed in 2005.

2) Community-wide Comprehensive Support Centers

Part of the long-term care insurance. Local government contacts out.

3 professionals in 1 center. 1 center in every 20k-30k people. Since 2006.

3) Social Action Program

Privately-run financial assistance program to people at risk. Since 2004.

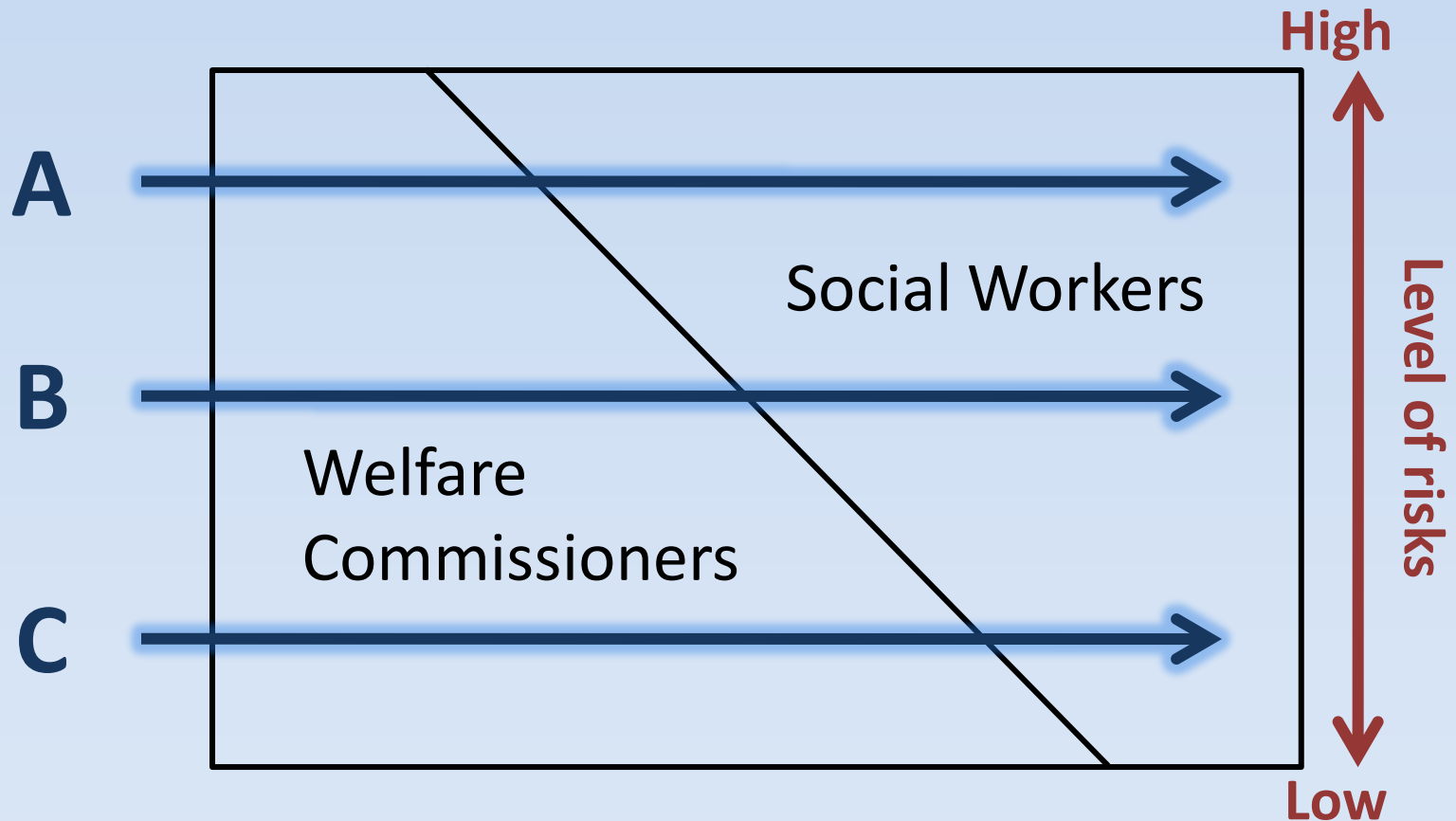
4) Community-based Social Work Program

Government-run program hiring a social worker in every 20k people.

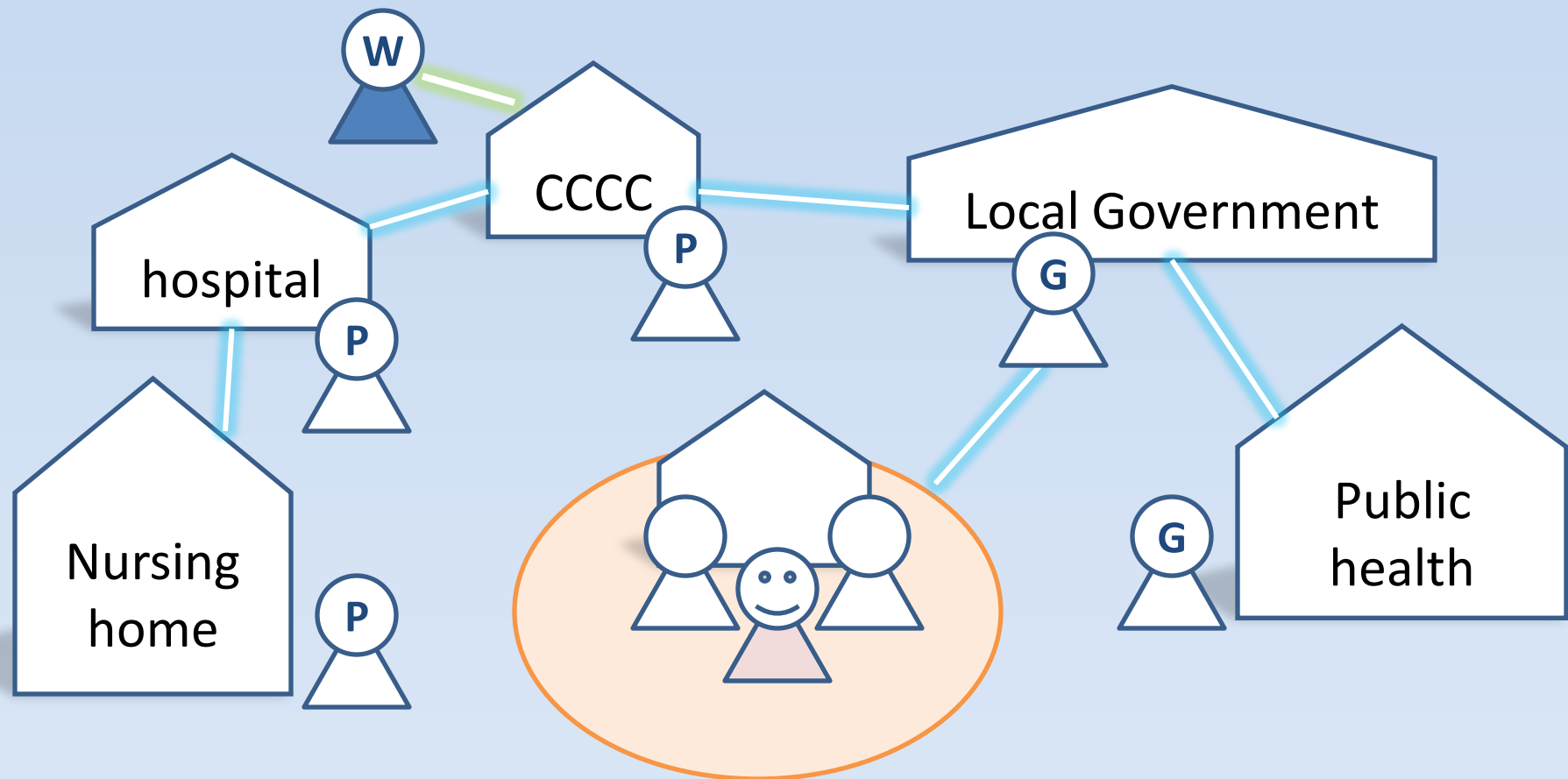
Others: local welfare offices, child welfare centers, council of social welfare, etc.

Division of Labor

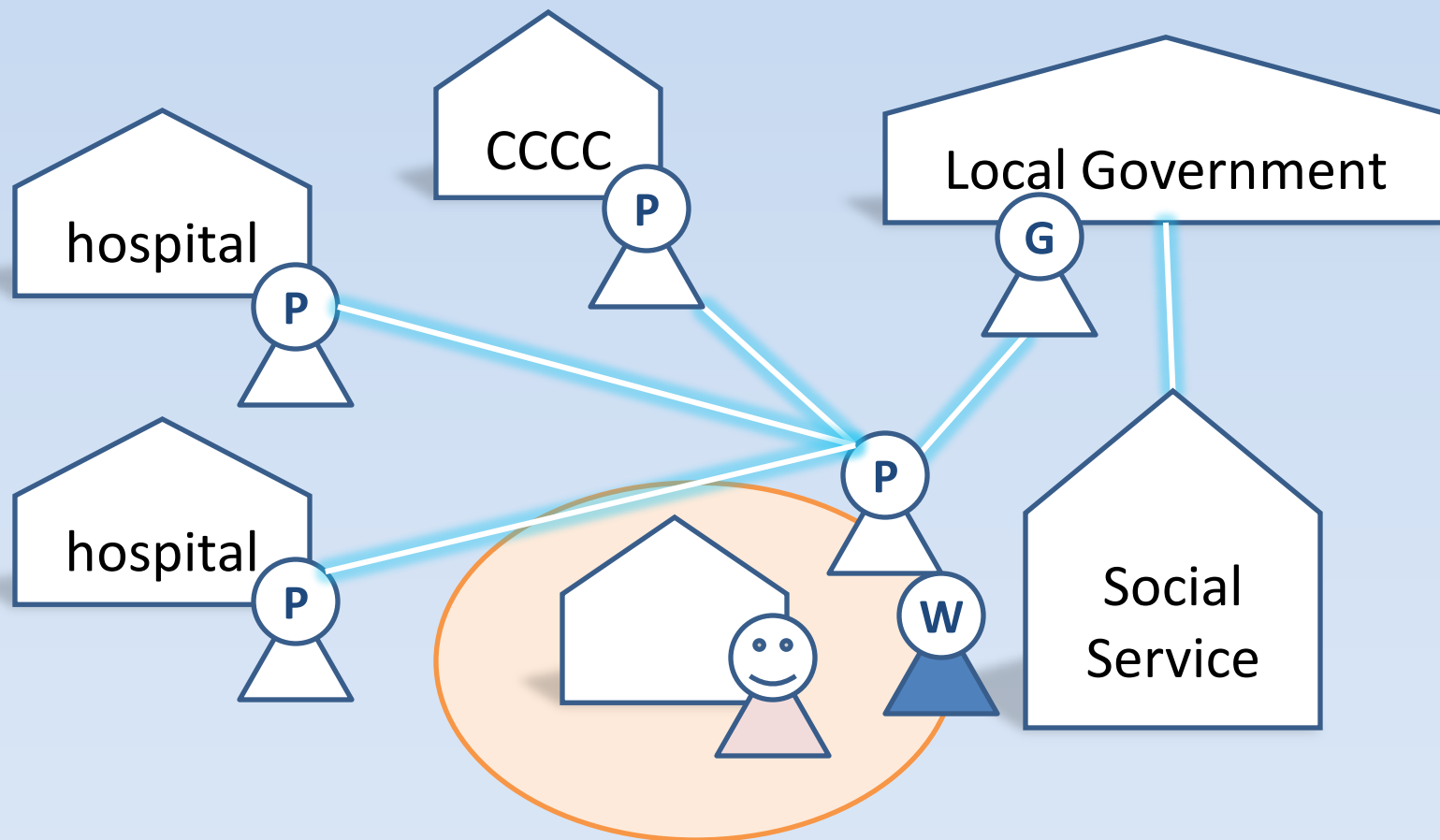
*modified a model by Fujii, H. (2008)



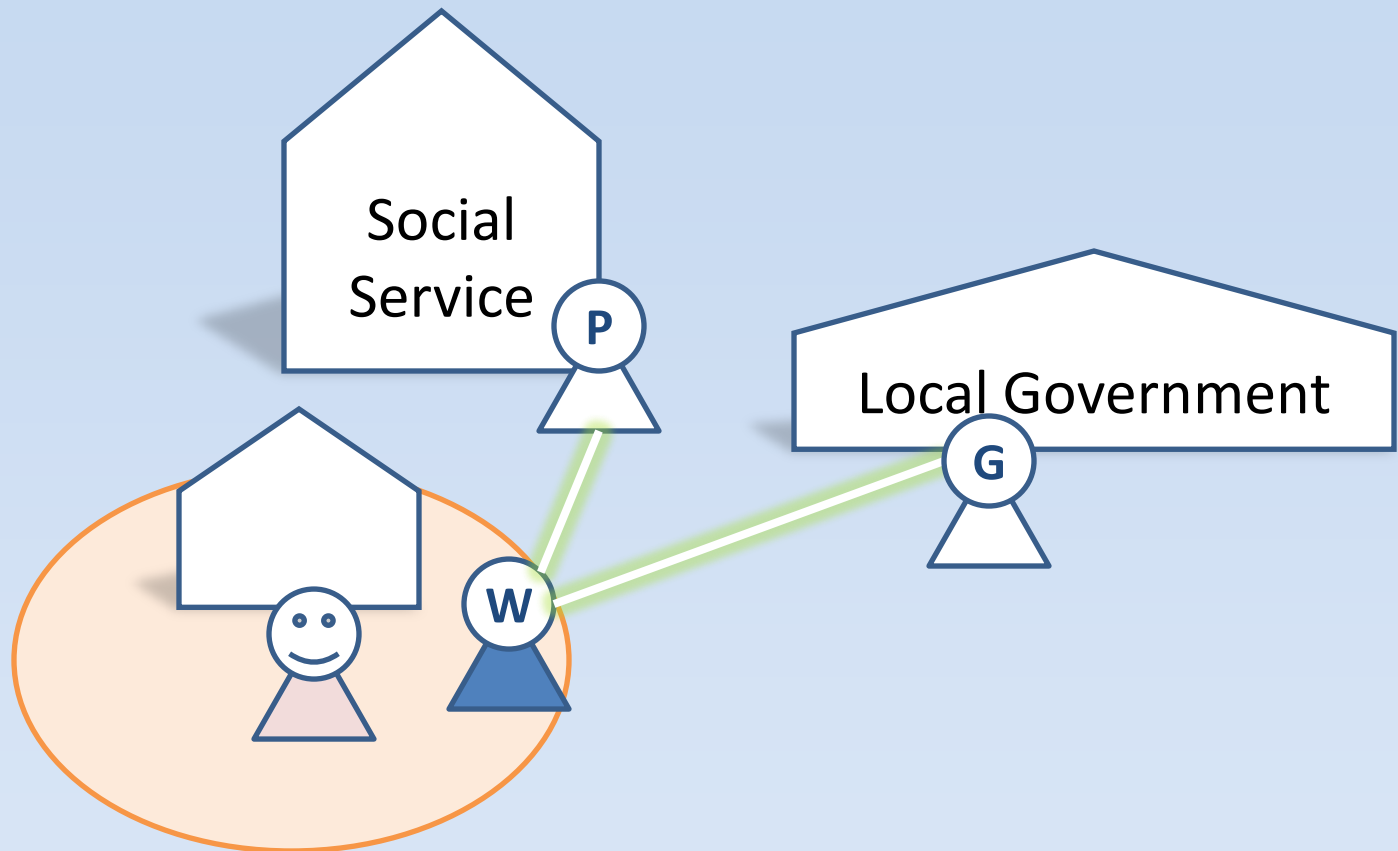
Model Case (A): need of professional support



Model Case (B): WC and professional care



Model Case (C): cyclical visit by WC



What can be concluded?

- Welfare Commissioners would not be involved in a case that would require professional skills and knowledge.
- However, their involvements set a ground work for professionals to tackle those at-risk cases.
- Historically, welfare commissioner system was characterized as “noblesse oblige”, but now it is characterized as a part of welfare service networks.
(indeed, some local government sets up a special regulation/pact to integrate WC’s work into their welfare programs.)

Further Policy Discussion

- Reform to implement welfare commissioners into community-based programs.
- Decentralize the system; make it local government's discretion.
- Ban the program (unrealistic)
- Paying for their work as needed

Challenges & Suggestions

- Needs to overcome “cheaper-deal” argument
- Difficult to evaluate their work in today’s outcome-oriented evaluation system

- Develop and implement empowerment evaluation or process-oriented evaluation into the program