

Gender Gap widens despite the progress made in support measures for women's advancement.

-Insight Tech and SHeStands conducted a survey on
“People’s daily anxieties and concerns and its relevance to gender gap” continuing from 2021-



Insight Tech Co., LTD. (Headquarters: Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo, President: Tomohiro Ito) and SHeStands, Inc. (Headquarters: Minato-ku, Tokyo, CEO: Keiko Sato) collaborated again to conduct a survey on “People’s daily anxieties and concerns and its relevance to gender gap” targeting men and women across Japan who are of parental age (ages 20-49).

Challenges remain, regardless of the progress made in, infrastructure development and policymaking. In 2021, support measures for women's advancement, such as revision in childcare leave law, has shown some progress. However, the prolonged COVID-19 pandemic, has made both men and women focus more on their gender roles, widening the gender gap. People’s daily concerns and anxieties attributing from gender gap has increased compared to the previous year. Despite this increase, and even with the rise of online meetings since the COVID-19 pandemic making it more accessible to mental health services such as, counseling and community action, only less than 10% utilized them. “Gender equality” was nominated as the “2021 buzzword” in Japan, yet with more men concerned about “work” and more women concerned about “housework” and “childcare”, the gender gap widens, setting back gender equality.

<Abstract>

- “Gender equality” was nominated as a “2021 buzzword”, however, the specific improvements in legislation or abolishment of gender inequalities regarding the promotion of women’s advancement in society were less than impressive and men’s interest in the matter remain low.

- Women’s daily concerns and anxieties are more effected by the deep rooted gender gap. More than 1/3 of women have concerns about "housework burdens (36%)" and "childcare (42%)", which are more than 20 points higher than men. On the contrary men are concerned about “work satisfaction (46%)” and “evaluations and promotions at work (40%)” and these increased about 5 points compared to the previous year. A widening gap between men and women regarding their focus and concerns, can be seen. Around

90% of women have felt envious of the opposite sex. Resentment towards the tendency to evaluate housework and childcare by reducing points for women but by adding points for men exists.

- **Because of the uncertainties about the future due to the prolonged COVID-19 pandemic, “childbirth” (32%) or “childcare” (28%) has increased by 5 points from the previous year as reasons for giving up their careers. From the open-ended responses, we found that working women with husbands and children had no choice but to prioritize supporting their “spouse and children” over their careers”. On the other hand, the intention on restarting or challenging themselves for a new career path increased by 9 points from 59% last year to 68% this year. The increase in remote work from home and the revision of the childcare leave law gave some people more opportunities to challenge themselves with a new career path. However, less than 30% of the men and less than 10% of the women, felt the progression in “creation of a society where women can play an active role”, remaining in a low percentage as was the previous year.**

- **About 10% of people showed their needs for mental health services such as, counseling and community action, but only less than half of them are utilizing such services.**

- **The most memorable “event or topics related to gender in Japan in 2021” was the “sexist remarks by ex-Tokyo Olympic chief, Yoshiro Mori (39%)”.**

■ Purpose of joint survey

In the “Global Gender Gap Report 2021” ^{*1} released by the World Economic Forum on March 31st, 2021, Japan ranks 120th, the lowest among developed countries. “Gender equality” was nominated as a “2021 buzzword” in Japan, and many people saw and heard gender-related events occurring such as the revision of legislation in support of working women (childcare and elder care leave law revision etc.). According to international evaluation standards however, it has become clear that the situation has not improved much.

In the initial stage of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, attention was paid on the increase in the number of female suicides in Japan. ^{*2} One of the reasons for this was the large number of non-regular workers such as part-time workers, who were forced into poverty due to being unexpectedly let go or asked to take leave of absence from their jobs. In 2021, the number of suicides decreased for the first time in two years, but “struggles to maintain a living” increased as the reason for suicides where women doubled the men’s percentage, with 26% for women, and 10% for men. ^{*3} It can be estimated that this is influenced by deep rooted gender gaps within the Japanese work environment.

Under these circumstances, Insight Tech continuing from the previous year, conducted a survey on daily anxieties and concerns with SHeStands, a social business which aims to provide long term support for women’s financial and mental independence. The purpose of the survey is to clarify the relation between societal gender gaps and to obtain hints for its elimination, by listening to the “voices” of both men and women (age 20-49), who have concerns and complaints within the home and the workplace, and who are registered at the “Fuman Kaitori Center (Complaints purchasing center)” operated by Insight Tech.

^{*1}World Economic Forum “Global Gender Gap Report 2021” (http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2021.pdf)

^{*2} Number of suicides in Japan in 2020: Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department “Monthly number of suicides in 2020 (preliminary figures at the end of December)”

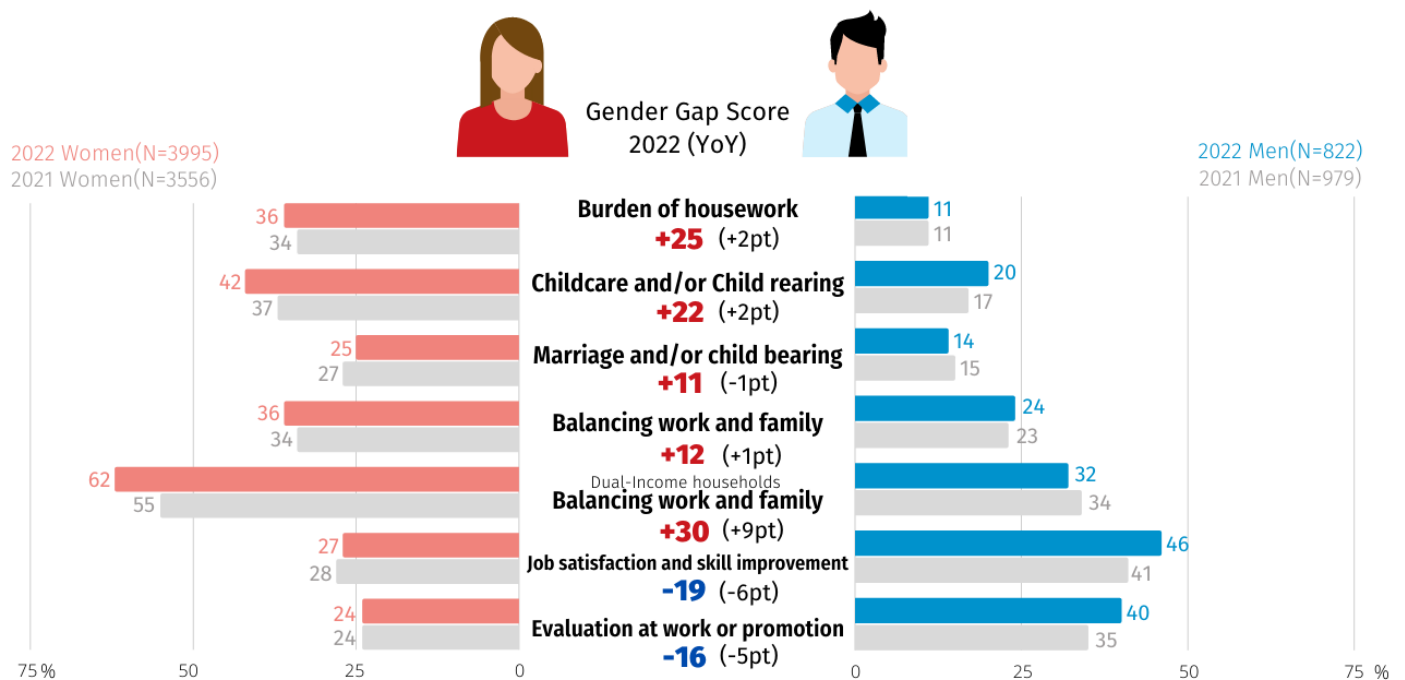
^{*3} Suicide, decrease for the first time in 2 years = Corona effect? Increase in struggles to maintain a living-Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare (Jiji Press, 2020, January 21, 4th report)

■ Survey results

1) Concerns from women mainly surround the “home” or “work” or “how to maintain work and family”. Men are focused more on “work” rather than “home”. Both men and women focus more on their gender roles, widening the gender gap

Looking at daily anxieties and concerns, women tend to have anxieties and worries in criteria such as “burdens of housework” and “childcare” which surround the home. Since the previous survey, the number of women who are concerned about the two criteria has increased, while the number of men who are concerned about “careers” and “future career plans” has increased, widening the gender gap. In double-income households, the lack of men’s awareness, care, and involvement in “housework” and “childcare” can be examined. Uncertainties about the future due to the COVID-19 pandemic has created a situation in which working women are forced to focus more on “supporting their spouse and children for the near future (childcare and schooling).

<Fig. 1> Daily anxieties and concerns



2) About 90% of women have felt envious of the opposite sex. (Same as previous year).

Resentment towards the tendency to evaluate housework and childcare by reducing points for women but adding points for men.

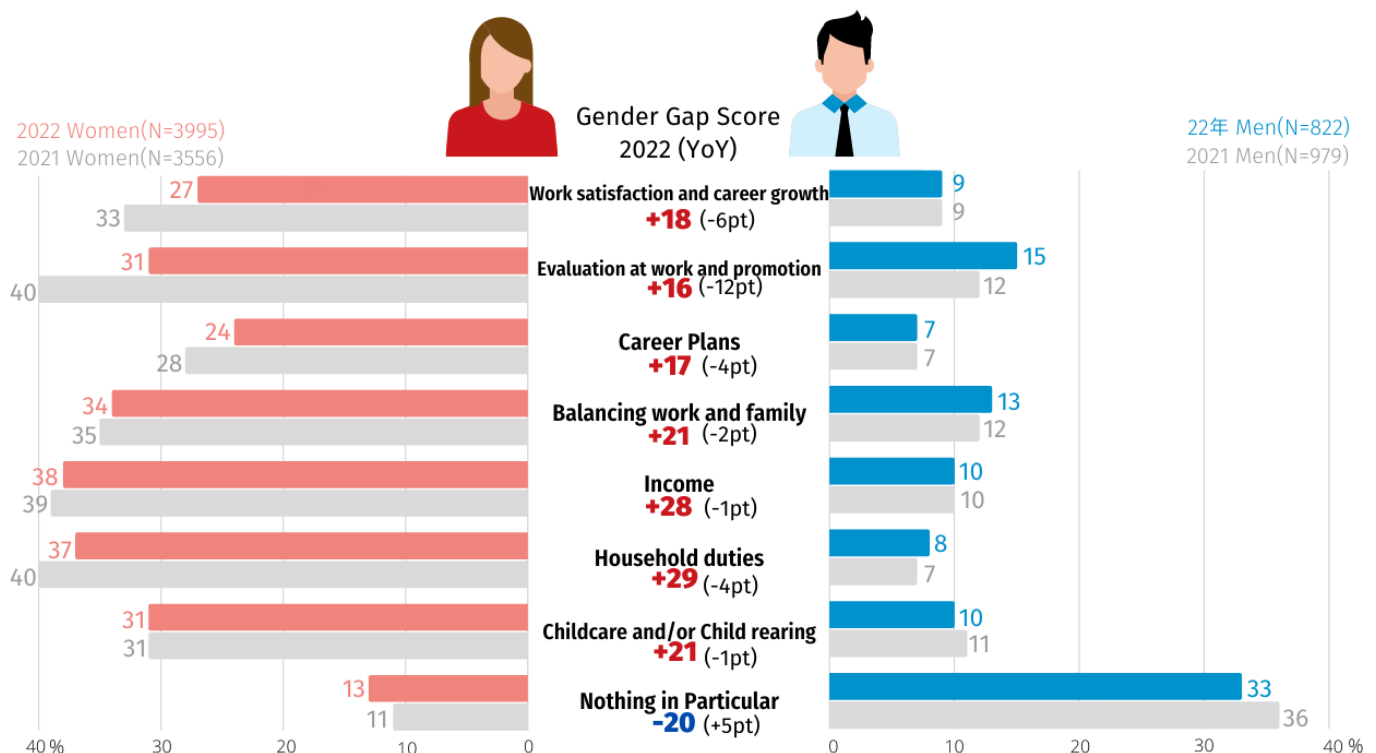
Approximately 90% of women have said that they have felt envious of the opposite sex (men), and more than 80% have anxieties and concerns caused by the gender gap, slightly increasing from the previous year. From the previous survey, criteria such as “*Evaluation at work and promotions*” or “*relationships at work*” decreased for women, but criteria such as “*balancing work and the family*” and “*burdens of housework*” continued to be high at over 30%. Even with the word “*gender equality*” being nominated as a “2021 buzzword”, no huge improvements were made on the consciousness and attitude towards gender equality.

In the COVID-19 pandemic, indignant comments towards the social idea that women should “*prioritize their husbands and children*” were conspicuous from the survey. The popular expression known as “*ikumen*” that appears frequently in the media and social media appeared many times on the survey’s open-ended responses. Women are feeling the unfairness of the social tendency of evaluating housework and childcare by reducing points for women, but by adding points for men.

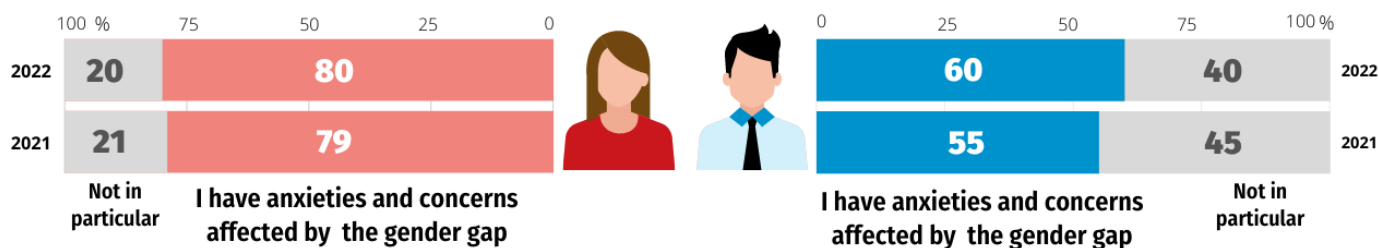
<Fig. 2-1> Whether you have ever felt envious of the opposite sex



<Fig. 2-2> Criteria for feeling “envious of the opposite sex”



<Fig. 2-3> Anxieties and concerns affected by “differences in treatment and positions based on gender”



<Fig. 2-4> Experiences of feeling envious of the opposite sex

Restarting my career got pushed because of COVID-19. I want to have a career soon when I think about the future, but because I'm a mother, I have to stay at home. If I was a father, I could have continued working regardless of childbirth, maternity leave and childcare after giving birth. Being a woman means being constantly disadvantaged and I feel that current Japan makes it harder for women to go back to work.

With COVID-19, I felt helpless, because at home schooling, restraints on being in the delivery room, and hospital visits, limited my very few opportunities to share the struggles of pregnancy and childbirth to my husband. Such events should be a shared experience between partners. If partners did experience it together, it will be more gender equal and if there were more men who experience and understand the struggles for women, women would go through less unpleasanties. (Especially at work).

When fathers take part in childcare in public even for a little while, they are instantly praised as “ikumen”. It is a trend on social media where mothers are never highly regarded for housework and childcare they do, but when men do the smallest things, they are praised. It must be nice being a man, just having to go to work.

If fathers don't do housework that's okay. But when mothers don't that's unacceptable. When fathers do the bare minimum for housework, they are an “ikumen” but for mothers it is obligatory. If there were anything mothers didn't do, they would be called lazy and abandoning childcare.

Men who take care of their own children are called “ikumen” and are praised for doing childcare. On the other hand, women aren't called “ikuwomen”.



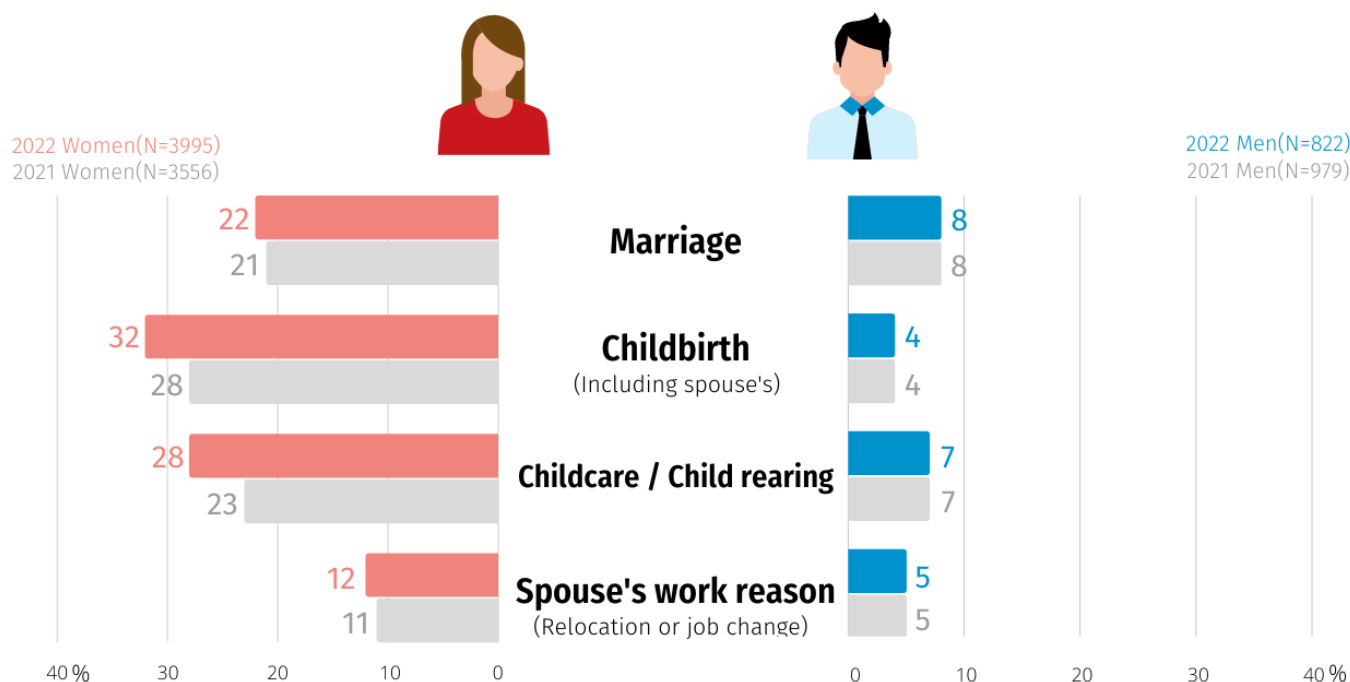
3) 20-30% of women have experienced abandoning career development due to “childbirth” or “childcare and childrearing”. (Same as previous year).

Marriage, childbirth, and childcare often affect career development (social success) among women, and the tendency to prioritize their spouse’s work over their own remain more prominent in comparison to men. (Slightly worse than last survey). The idea that “*If I do not conduct housework and childcare, my family will collapse*” was examined, and it could be understood that there is little faith in expecting support or care from local governments, corporations, and people around them.

<Fig. 3-1> Experiences of abandoning career development



<Fig, 3-2> Main reasons for abandoning career development

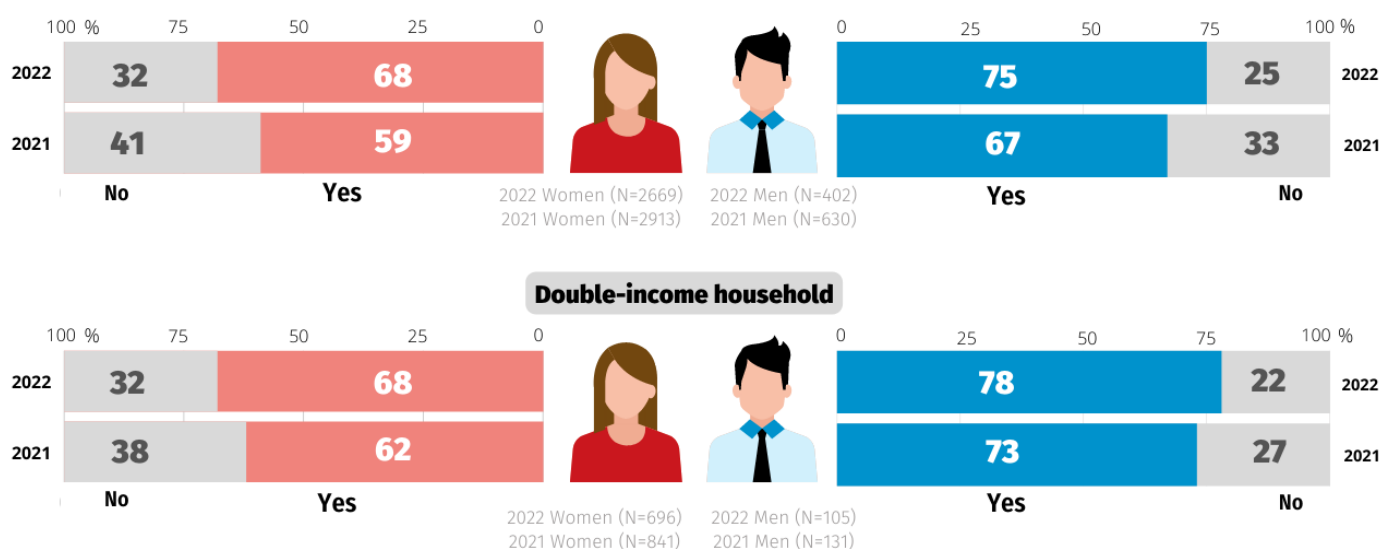


4) Intentions of restarting their career has increased. Possible reason could be the increase in companies introducing “full time remote work.”

Among women who gave up their career development due to childbirth or childcare, about 70% are considering returning to work or to find a new career which has been significantly increasing since last year. Looking at the open-ended responses, the increase of companies introducing remote work due to the COVID-19 pandemic, has opened possibilities for women to search for a career and work style that can be balanced with housework and childcare.

<Fig. 4-1> Intentions of restarting after abandoning careers

[Config. Those who have abandoned / may abandon their career development]



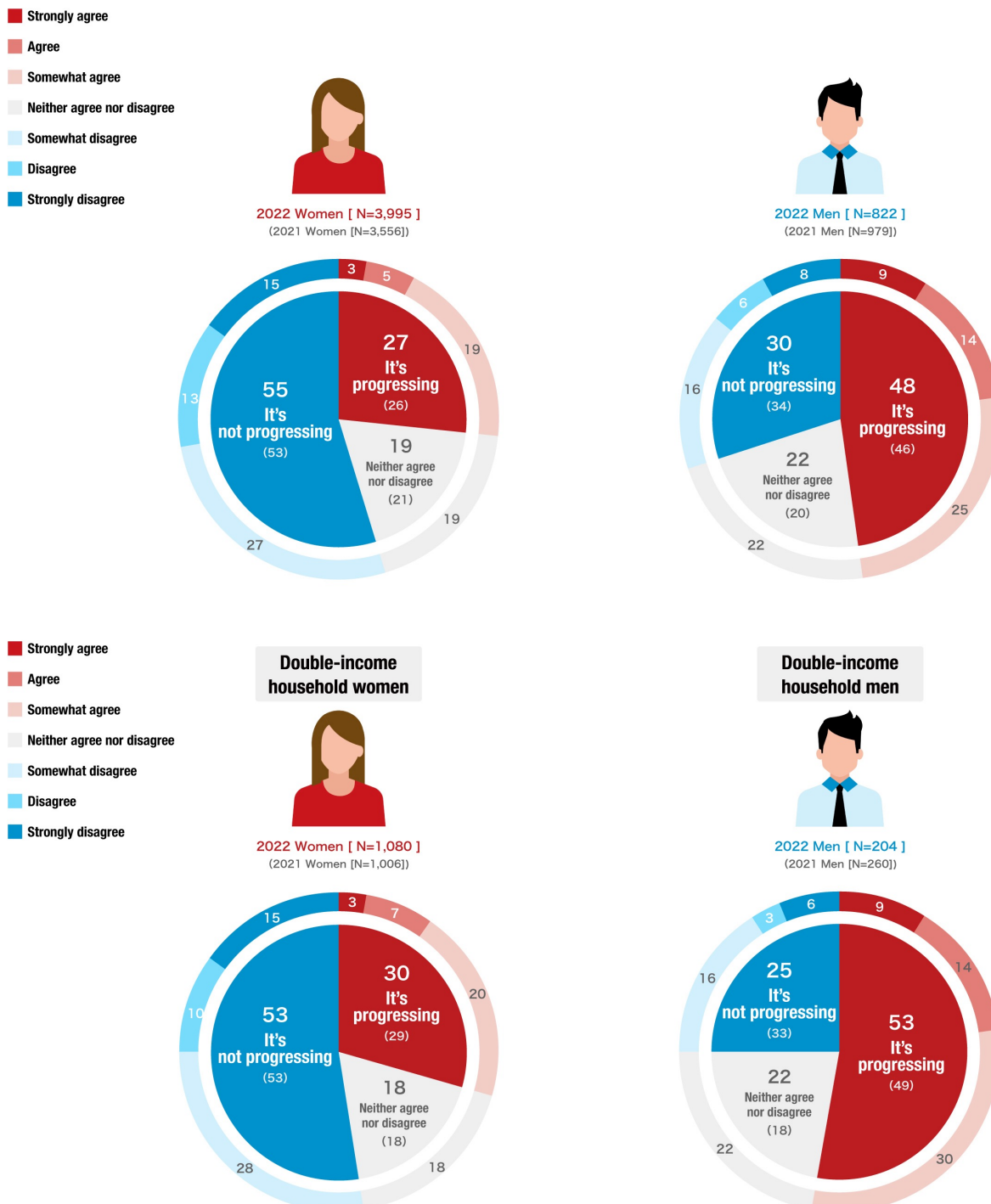
<Fig. 4-2> Open-ended responses: possibilities in “remote work



5) Only less than 30% of women feel the progress of “a creation of a society where women can play an active role”. (Same as last year).

Only less than 10% of women answered that they feel progress (“Strongly agree” and “Agree”) on a “creation of a society where women can play an active role”, while it was less than 30% for men. Again, the gender gap can be examined. Similar results were examined when limiting the answers to double income households, confirming that social gender gaps have not yet been resolved in 2021.

**<Fig. 5> Feeling towards the progress on
“a creation of a society where women can play an active role” in current Japan.**



6) “Remote work environment” is mentioned as necessary for the “creation of a society where women can play an active role”.

The majority called out the need for more tangible changes such as, increasing the number of daycare centers and nursery schools and intangible changes such as, mandatory/compulsory shorter work hours and paternity leave / childcare leave for men. On the other hand, there were many people who mentioned that remote work at home being normalized due to the COVID-19 pandemic has reduced the amount of burden that comes with housework and childcare.

There was also a strong need for remote work, as a solution for people who are unable to leave their children at daycare centers (limited capacity or financial issues).

<Fig. 6-1> What is necessary for the “creation of a society where women can play an active role”

I feel like with population decrease and less people working, they are just saying “women’s advancement” so there would be more workers. Women shoulder housework, childcare and elder care so being told to go out to work on top of that is exhausting. In order to make it easier for women to work, I want there to be **measures so that services such as housekeeping services that can outsource housework can be more accepted.**

There is no support for women who do not want to get married or who do not (cannot) have children, and they are usually burdened with more work to make up the empty spots. Women do not exist to get married or have children. There shouldn’t be a work environment where I cannot take time when I am in period pain, because because I have to support people who are pregnant. **I want an actual environment where ANY women can make advancements. Enough with government just talking the talk.**

Women cannot have a day off even on days when we don’t have work, because of the heavy burden of childcare. I wish there were **facilities where we can drop off our children so that we can have a day to refresh or a system where we can leave our children at the nursery school, even on days off of work.**

As long as we cannot change men's mindset, anything is meaningless. So I think **gender education should be done from a younger age. Teach them that we need to be independent regardless of gender. As for society in general, they should anticipate a society where many different types of people can work. The government should start listening to an array of people in different positions such as women, disabled people, foreigners etc.**



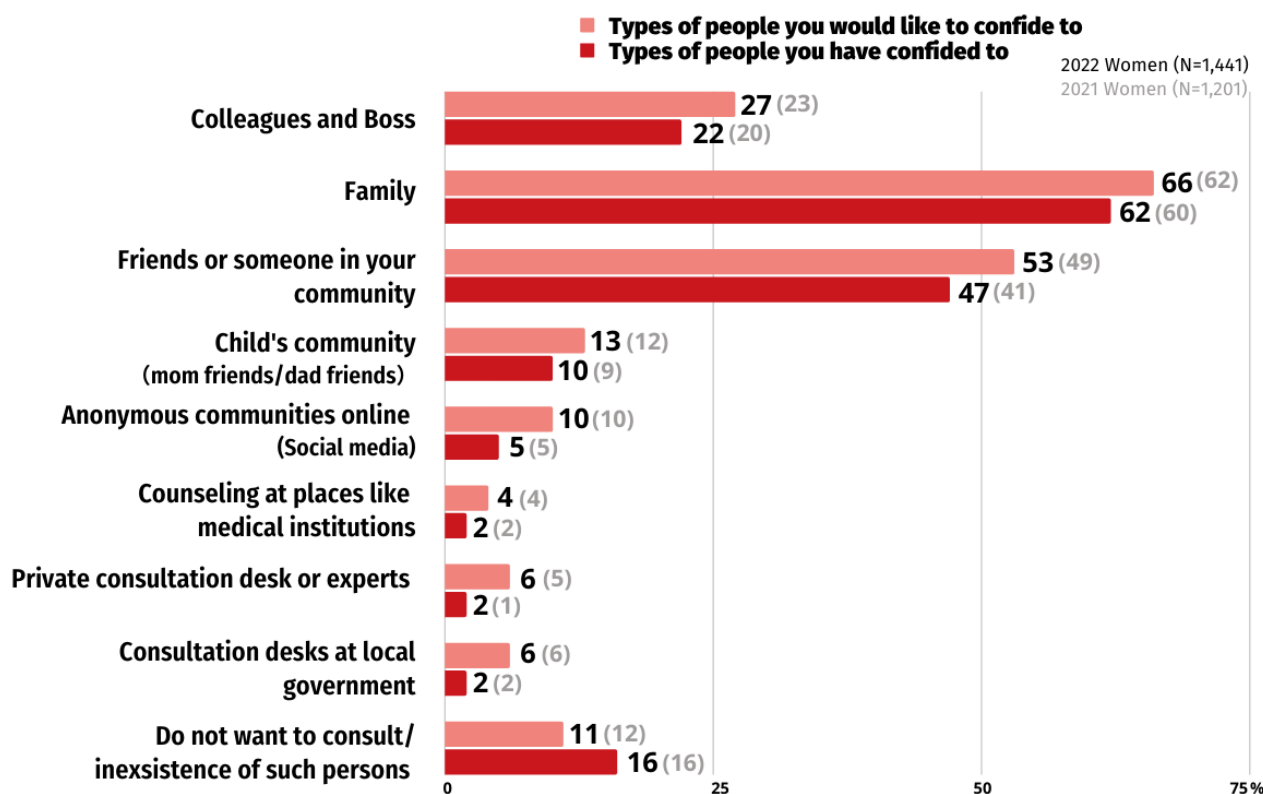
7) Needs for services to consult on “work” and “balancing work and home” exists, but access to those services is limited (same as previous year)

Most people said that the kind of people they can confide in about anxieties and concerns regarding work are the ones that are close to them such as family and friends. Compared to the previous survey, there was an increase in people who consult with their colleagues and superiors about their anxieties and concerns about “work satisfaction and career growth” or “balancing work and the family”.

As in the previous survey, only a percentage of people have actually utilized services such as counseling, seeking advice from experts, and joining anonymous groups online, but about 10% would like to in the future and therefore, potential need for such services can be detected. There were voices calling out for not only physical back up support, like housekeeping services and childcare support in urgent cases, but also for needs of someone such as an adviser or a supporter to comfortably talk to about issues like “social isolation of mothers” and “concerns on housework and childcare”.

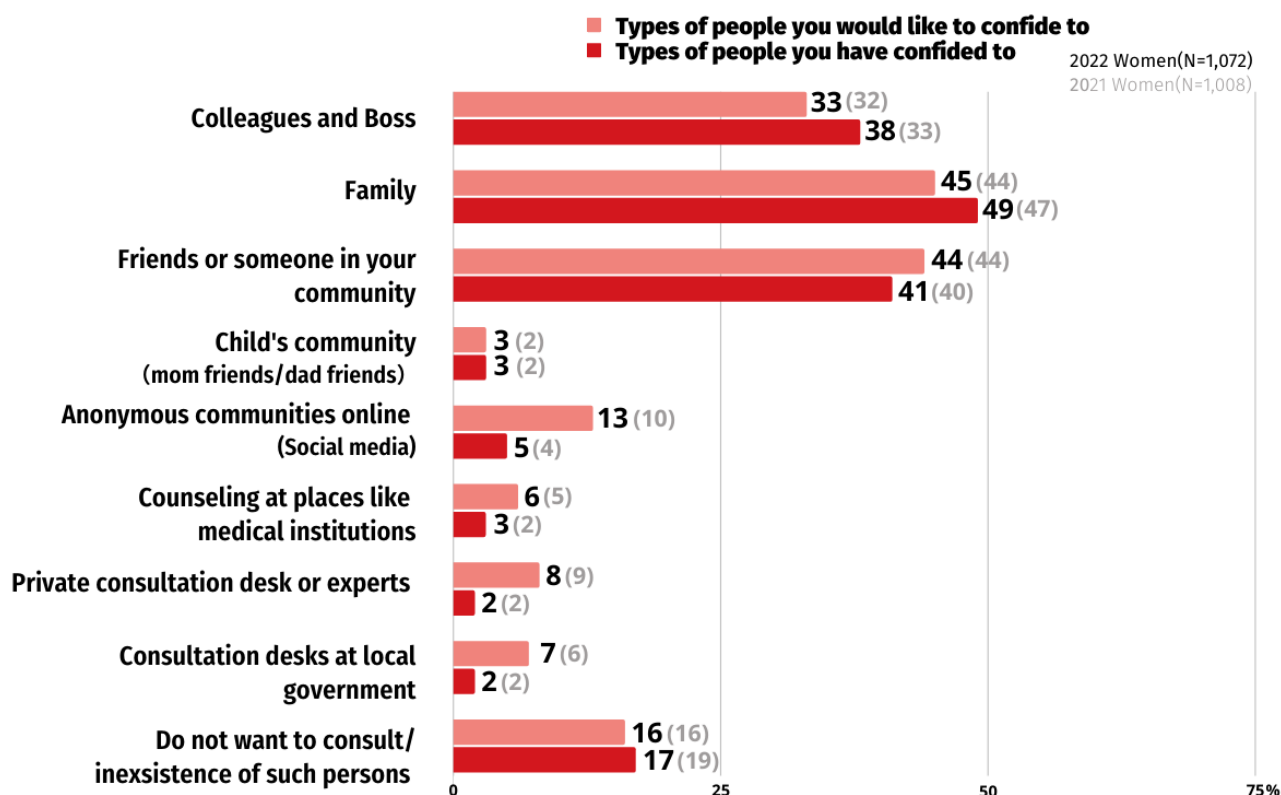
<Fig.7-1> Types of people you would like to confide in about anxieties and concerns regarding “balancing work and family” and types of people you have confided in.

[Config: Women feeling anxieties and concerns regarding “Balancing work and family” n=1,441]



<Fig. 7-2> Types of people you would like to confide in about anxieties and concerns regarding “work satisfaction and career growth” and types of people you have confided in

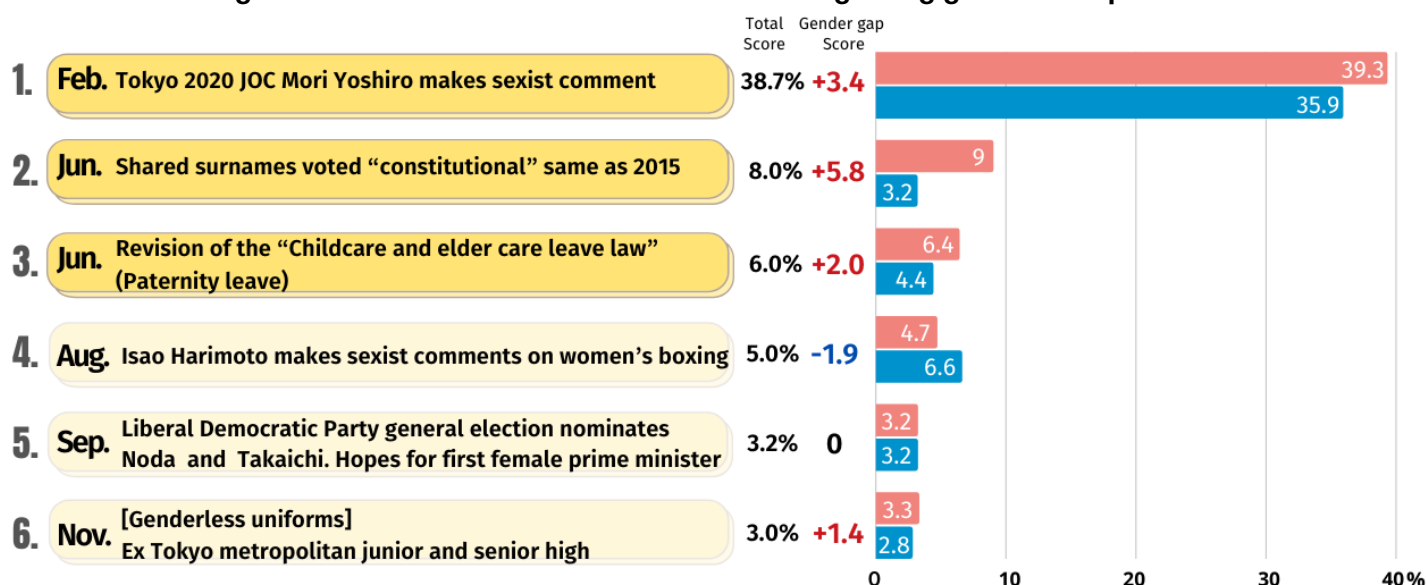
[Config: Women feeling anxieties and concerns regarding “work satisfaction and career growth” n=1,072]



8) In 2021, the impression that ex Tokyo Olympic chief, Mori Yoshiro, left regarding his sexist comments remained strong, yet measures and rulemaking on gender equality was insignificant and the interest of men continued to be low.

Although the sexist comments made by ex-Tokyo Olympic chief, Mori Yoshiro left strong impressions, legislation revisions and movements for the abolition of gender inequalities such as the revision of the “Childcare and elder care leave law”, the mandatory surname changes being ruled as “*constitutional*”, or the adoption of “*genderless uniforms*”, remained less impressionable and the interest of men were low. Such things prove why Japan performs so low in the gender gap index.

<Fig. 8-1> Memorable events and occurrence regarding gender in Japan in 2021



<Fig. 8-2> Reason why the events and occurrence regarding gender in Japan in 2021 was so memorable

[Different surnames for married couples denied]

I am still going through anguish having felt like I lost my own identity for changing my surname.

[Revision of the Childcare and elder care leave law]

Regarding the promotion for more men to take childcare leave, I would like for men to have mandatory prenatal training in the first and second semester like women do. In spite of the increase in double-income households, women tend to shoulder housework and childcare and when men suddenly take time off to do housework and childcare, they do not know or have the skills to do them, so it ends up burdening the wife. **I think that there will be less trouble if both men and women have the chance to learn about housework and childcare before marriage and childbirth.**

[Revision of the Childcare and elder care leave law]

I gave birth this year, so I realized how difficult childbirth is. If the husband takes paternity leave, what he does during his paternity leave is important. Just like how each person has different personalities, each person has a different experience mentally after childbirth. Some might find it stressful that their husbands are at home. Also, the mindset behind what men is thinking during their paternity leave is different. **I think it'll be beneficial if there were training opportunities for both men and women to learn about the kind of relationship troubles that spouse's have after childbirth or to hear about experiences that wives and husbands go through. It'll also be an opportunity for spouse's to talk.**

[Revision of the Childcare and elder care leave law]

Even if men took paternity leave, they are not useful if they are **just there, not taking care of anything in the house.** If that's the case, I would much rather receive financial benefits from work. I wish they would actually look into what we need before they execute measures.

[Revision of the Childcare and elder care leave law]

Even if you made a system where men can take childcare leave easier, you still cannot take it at most companies. Even if it's a big corporation, it is just for show. Without a more compelling power that pushes for it, it doesn't matter if the law is revised. **Nothing changes with just obligatory efforts.** I wish they would take a bigger leap with the revisions.

■ Recommendations from the survey results for future development

Examining the “*Global Gender Gap Report 2021*” and the survey results from 2022 and 2021, there is clearly a deep-rooted gender gap within Japanese society, which hinders social success for women and their career formation.

In 2021, we saw progress in intangible aspects (systems and support measures) related to balancing work and the family for women, such as the revision of the “Childcare and elderly care leave law” and recommendations for more remote work. On the other hand, calls for the need for more tangible changes such as increasing the number of daycare centers and nursery schools (facilities / infrastructure) continue to remain.

This survey found that men were less interested in the concept of “*gender equality*” and its related events. The areas of concern for women and men showed signs of deep-rooted gender roles and there was a wider gap between consciousness of men and women in comparison to previous year. It became apparent that the concept of gender roles is deep-rooted even within women and that they also internalize the idea that mothers should be the one to conduct housework and childcare. It seems that there is still a divergence between women and men in being conscious about supporting each other’s lives with equality.

Moreover, the prolonged COVID-19 pandemic has impacted men and women by increasing their anxieties and concerns that are attributed to societal gender gap. Under this situation, the need for counseling services was examined. However, the access to such services remains low. In Japan, few people utilize counseling services or seek expert advice to consult on their anxieties and concerns. Despite the rise of online meetings and online services, making services more accessible, negative impressions and psychological barriers (including financial issues) can be reasons for the low number of utilizations.

Based on these findings, in addition to “*gender education*”, strengthening counseling services and fostering an environment where there is little hesitation to confide in someone (an environment where you can show your vulnerability and where you do not have to be ashamed to seek help), can be one step in abolishing the gender gap in Japan.

Insight Tech will become a hub for closing the gender gap by fostering a community where people can easily post and share their daily dissatisfaction and anxieties through 「不満買取センター」 “Fuman Kaitori Center (Complaints purchasing center)”. Issues found within the public’s voices will highlight social issues which we can use to demand formulation of policies to relieve them.

SHeStands strives to promote a virtuous cycle within society by supporting women to have a positive and prosperous life by aiding them with consultations and advice about their life plans and careers.

[Survey outline]

Survey name: The survey on “People’s daily anxieties and concerns and its relevance to gender gap”

Questionnaire on your daily life and work style

Survey target: Men and women between the ages of 20 and 49 registered in the 「不満買取センター」 “Fuman Kaitori Center”

Survey period: December 17th, 2021, to January 7th, 2022

Survey method: Questionnaire on the 「不満買取センター」 “Fuman Kaitori Center” website

Main questions:

-About yourself (Family structure, work style etc.)

-Your own anxieties and concerns (Whether or not you have anxieties or concerns, whether or not you have a person to consult with, etc.)

-Feeling envious of the opposite sex (experiences or events, degree of pain)

-Impact of life events on “career formation” (abandoning career, intentions on retrying etc.)

-Regarding the “promotion of women’s advancement” in Japan (feelings of progress, what are necessary for governments and corporations)

-Memorable events regarding gender in Japan in 2021

[Target: Details of attributes]

[Gender] Female (n = 3,995) 83% / Male (n = 822) 17%

[Age] 20s (n = 1,131) 23% / 30s (n = 2,161) 45% / 40s (n = 1,525) 32%

[Living situation] Married family with children (n = 2,455) 51% / Double-income family (n = 1,284) 27%

■Company Information



Insight Tech Co., LTD. (<http://insight-tech.co.jp>)

Date of establishment: June 19, 2012

Address : Shinjuku Island Tower, 6-5-1 Nishi Shinjuku, Shinjuku-ku TOKYO 163-1333

Description: Marketing Research and Reporting Commission of AI analysis of natural language processing & machine learning Corporate promotion and branding support/ “Fuman-Kaitori Center” operation



SHeStands, Inc. (<https://shestands.co.jp>)

Date of Establishment: May 26, 2020

Address : 13th Floor Area Shinagawa Building, 1-9-36 Konan, Minato-ku, TOKYO 108-0075

Description: Consulting and counseling/ Seminars, Workshop and Event planning and execution Matching business/ Writing and Online Media