

## **Study on Various Adult Career Guidance Needs and Desirable Guidance Services Summary**

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### **Overview**

In this report, we surveyed what career guidance needs middle-aged people in specific conditions have at present, covering regular employees, non-regular employees, jobless people, job seekers and full-time housewives in their 30s and 40s. Based on the survey, this report analyzed the relationships between these people's needs and their present employment statuses, past careers, consciousness, and so on, compiled realities of and desirable responses to career guidance needs among middle-aged people in their 30s and 40s, and provided policy implications.

## 1. Objectives of This Study

The background for this study includes (1) quantitative shortages in studies on career guidance for middle-aged people in Japan, and a need for (2) a comparison of these Japanese studies with adult career guidance studies mainly in Europe, and for (3) an analysis on new career guidance needs accompanying environmental changes for middle-aged people in Japan.

Particularly, we attempted to study the possibility that new career guidance needs emerged due to environmental changes surrounding jobs and families for workers in their 30s and 40s over the past decades. We thought that it would be significant to analyze anew the possibility that middle-aged people's career guidance needs could have changed quietly, without attracting much social attention behind employment problems for young people including those in their 20s.

Specifically, we aimed to survey mainly what career guidance needs middle-aged people in specific conditions have, covering regular employees, non-regular employees, jobless people, job seekers and full-time housewives in their 30s and 40s. Based on the survey, we aimed to analyze the relationships between these people's needs and their present employment statuses, past careers, consciousness, and so on, and to compile realities of career guidance needs and policy implications for labor administration.

## 2. Research Method

### (1) Survey method and questions

The survey took place in March 2011. Through a survey company, we mailed questionnaires to monitors of the company and asked them to send back responses. The survey covered about 4,000 adults in their 30s and 40s. We then planned to collect responses from 1,000 respondents each for four cells, i.e., men in their 30s and 40s and women in their 30s and 40s. For each of the four cells, sampling was based on the following shares:

- 1,000 men in their 30s (90% for regular employees, 10% for non-regular employees, jobless people, job seekers and others)
- 1,000 men in their 40s (90% for regular employees, 10% for non-regular employees, jobless people, job seekers and others)
- 1,000 women in their 30s (40% for regular employees, 20% for non-regular employees, 30% for full-time housewives, 10% for jobless people, job seekers and others)
- 1,000 women in their 40s (40% for regular employees, 20% for non-regular employees, 30% for full-time housewives, 10% for jobless people, job seekers and others)

Sampling was adjusted to limit deviations from the above-specified percentage shares to several percentage points. Considerations were given to avoiding any extreme biases regarding

school careers and jobs.

Questionnaire items were roughly divided into five sections: “basic attributes,” “post-graduation jobs and careers,” “present job,” “present consciousness,” and “assistance/support regarding jobs and careers.” Major questions included in each section are as follows (for details, see the questionnaire at the end of the report):

- Basic attributes

Gender, age, with or without spouse, etc.

- Post-graduation jobs and careers

School careers, academic results, successful or unsuccessful job-finding activities, etc.

Regular/non-regular employment periods, jobless periods, full-time housewife periods, job changes experienced, etc.

- Present job

Annual income, present position/rank, job/duty category, workforce size, etc.

- Present consciousness

Occupational life crisis (free description), degree of loyalty, life goals, degree of self-esteem feelings, degree of depression, etc.

- Assistance/support regarding jobs and careers (career guidance needs)

When do you seek career support? How much support do you need?

What problems do you feel with your job or career? How do you feel about such problems?

What assistance or support do you need regarding jobs or careers?

How much money and time can you spend on career guidance?

What are desirable career support services (environment, media, staff, etc.)?

Needs and media for job offers, job and career information

## (2) Characteristics of respondents

A breakdown of respondents by age and gender showed that the percentages of women respondents were larger in the 30-34 and 40-44 age groups than in other groups, indicating some imbalances. Overall, however, men and women account for roughly 50% of total respondents.

### 3. Research Results

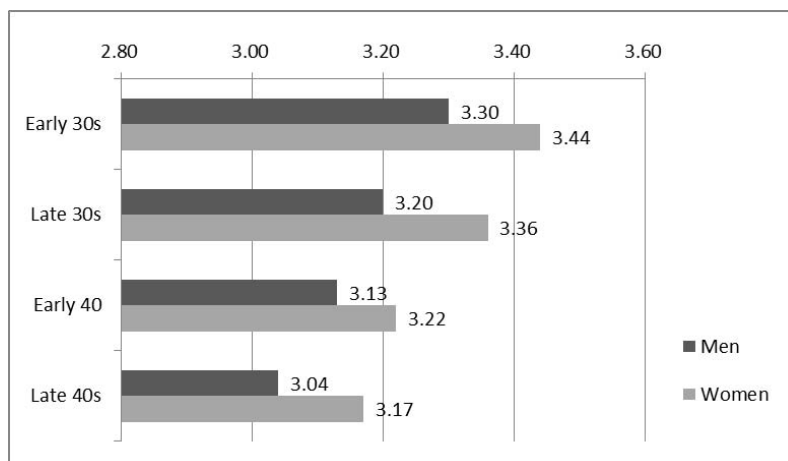
Following are the results in each chapter:

#### (1) Career guidance needs by gender and age

An analysis of gender- and age-wise career guidance needs among people in their 30s and 40s indicated that those in their early 30s, the youngest group among the survey respondents, had higher needs. A large portion of respondents in their early 30s had career guidance needs over their

“entire future courses.” They seemed to have higher career guidance needs “when they want to shift to jobs featuring better working conditions” and “when they want to switch to jobs that are worth doing.” Their career guidance needs are similar to those of young people in their 20s, indicating that it may be more appropriate to interpret career guidance needs among people in their early 30s as an extension of those among youths. Many women respondents in their late 30s said that assistance and support regarding jobs and careers would be necessary “when they have children or child-rearing problems.” Of all the respondents, many men and women in their late 40s said that assistance and support would be necessary “when they have no choice but to change jobs due to corporate bankruptcy or restructuring.” We reconfirmed that responses based on past experiences of people in their 30s and 40s reflect needs unique to the middle age class, including their respective past accumulations.

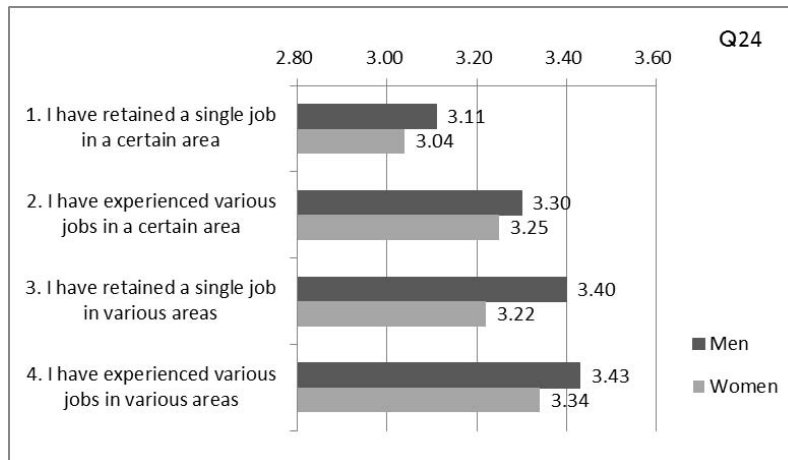
Figure 1 Comparison of gender- and age-wise average values of responses to the question of “how much assistance and support you need to solve your future job and career problems”



(2) Post-graduation careers and career guidance needs

The analysis indicated that career guidance needs were higher among people whose careers were broken up for some reasons, including those who changed jobs, those who perceived they “experienced various jobs in various areas,” and those who “failed to be recruited despite their search for their first jobs.” Conversely, career guidance needs were lower among people who did not change jobs, perceived that they had “long retained their respective jobs in certain areas,” or successfully found their respective first-choice jobs when seeking their first jobs. These results indicated that people who perceive that their careers have been broken up, including those who have failed to find jobs and those who have changed jobs, feel career guidance needs strongly.

Figure 2 Gender-wise Comparison of Average Degrees to Which People Feel Some Problems at Present Based on Past Work Experiences



(3) Present occupational life and career guidance needs

Generally, career guidance needs were higher among job-seeking full-time housewives and jobless (unemployed) people as well as non-regular job holders. More specifically, people who were more conscious of career problems included those who were eager to change jobs, those who were less satisfied with their present occupational life, those who were unemployed and had no spouse and those who were employed and took specific actions to improve their careers.

Those who took no action to improve their careers assessed themselves as persons who did not know what to think or those who would consider taking some actions with help from others. These types were most common among job-seeking full-time housewives and unemployed people. Their difficulties in figuring out their needs served as a barrier to their specific actions to improve careers. These people were willing to undergo aptitude tests, reflecting their great interest in their aptitudes for jobs. This indicated that an approach from this aspect could be effective.

Basically, the survey also indicated that there were deep-rooted needs for free or low-cost career guidance services. Particularly, many of those requesting such services for free were found among unemployed job seekers. At the same time, unemployed job seekers wanted longer career guidance time than any other group. Regular employees, who were willing to spend more on career guidance than any other group, requested a guidance cost of 2,000 to 3,000 yen at most and a guidance time of 40 to 50 minutes for each of personal counseling, tests and information collection. Their requests deviated from costs for career counseling and consulting services now being provided by private-sector companies.

Mainly among regular employees, personal characteristics such as autonomous thinking, which means that they can plan and consider career guidance services on their own, have great influences on the selection of services. Our analysis indicated that basic interests in career problems

are necessary for people’s use of career guidance services.

Figure 3 Degrees to Which People Now Feel Problems with Present Careers

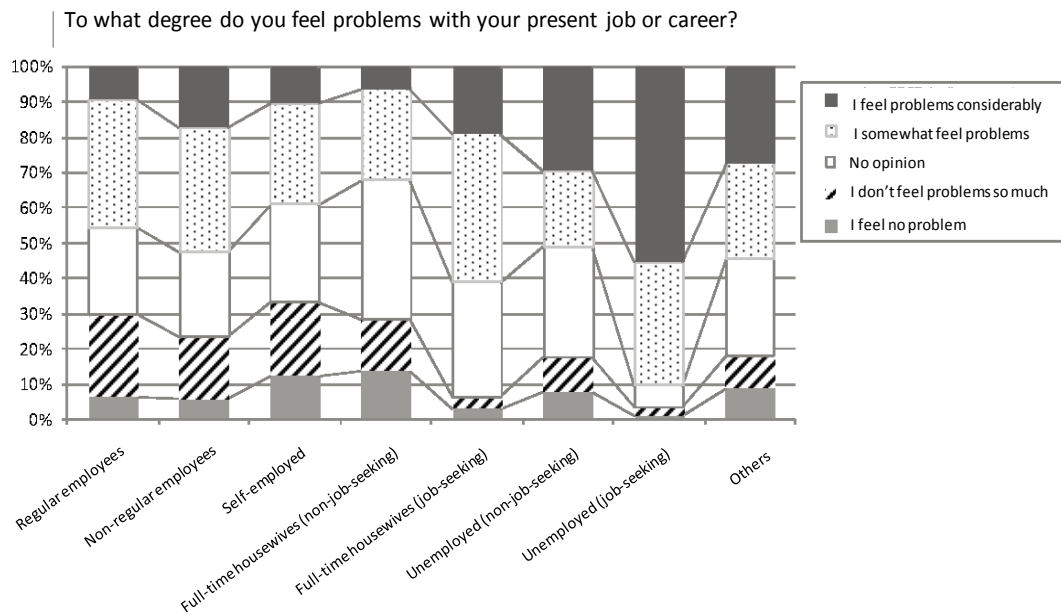


Table 1 Is assistance or support necessary to solve job or career problems?

	Regular employees	Non-regular employees	Self-employed	Full-time housewives (non-job-seeking)	Full-time housewives (job-seeking)	Unemployed (non-job-seeking)	Unemployed (job-seeking)	Others	Total
Very necessary	6.4	9.7	5.3	8.0	14.6	25.5	44.6	20.0	8.6
Somewhat necessary	32.4	37.9	24.9	35.7	48.5	25.5	36.1	23.6	33.6
No opinion	35.7	35.2	40.7	36.9	33.3	33.3	18.1	40.0	35.7
Very necessary	19.6	13.7	22.0	11.2	3.0	3.9	1.2	10.9	16.4
Not necessary	5.9	3.6	7.1	8.4	0.5	11.8	0.0	5.5	5.7

Note: Shaded columns indicate categories that have deviations significant at the 5% level from the standard for regular employees.

(4) Present job consciousness and career guidance needs

Based on daily life goals, we divided survey respondents into three types—“community/leisure-oriented,” “work/leisure-oriented,” and “work/community-oriented.” “Work/leisure-oriented” respondents felt career problems most strongly among the three types. They were hoping to change jobs due to problems regarding job details, workplace troubles or human relations, while indicating no specific career guidance needs. This type covered many regular employees working at large companies, but we may have to reconsider their needs. “Work/community-oriented” respondents covered many high-income employees working at large companies with spouses and children and who had less consciousness of career problems or less

needs for support. The result can be interpreted as indicating they might have little room to think about their careers in their daily occupational and family life. These core regular employees' career guidance needs may become a challenge again.

The survey indicated that a large portion of respondents who had feelings of lower self-esteem or a tendency toward depression felt problems with their careers or occupational life and should be recognized as a group with high career guidance needs. Particularly, those with feelings of lower self-esteem felt problems “regarding the entire future course” and “their aptitudes for jobs” and had high needs for their aptitude tests and counseling. A large portion of them wanted to use support from experts of public organizations.

Meanwhile, most respondents with a present tendency toward depression had had various problems, including human relations troubles, corporate bankruptcy and restructuring, workplace troubles and spouses' deaths or divorces. These problems seem to have contributed to their tendency toward depression. Particularly, a large portion of them described their past occupational crises, including a case where mental pressures at the workplace brought about physical and mental ataxia. Some special responses seemed necessary for them. At the same time, respondents with a tendency toward depression were oriented toward changing jobs, indicating that appropriate career guidance could help them solve problems to some extent. We may have to consider the relationship between mental health problems and career guidance.

Figure 4 Views about Jobs and Careers by Degree of Self-esteem Feelings

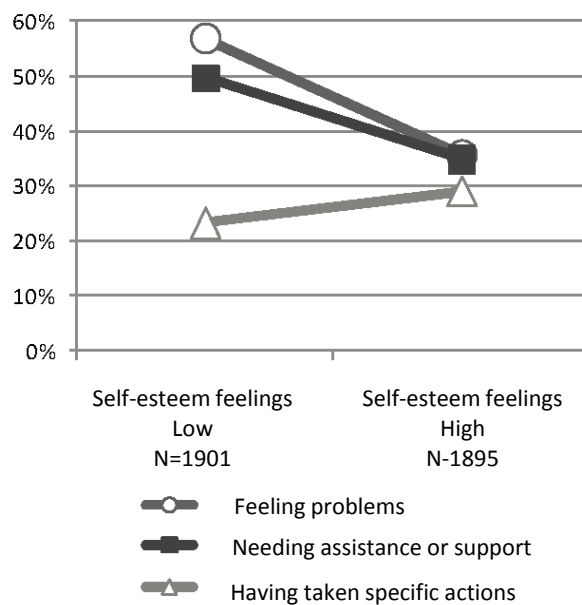


Table 2 Past Cases Where Those with a Tendency toward Depression Needed Career Guidance

	Having no depression N=1598	Having light depression N=1542	Having a tendency toward depression N=604	sig.
[Job change-related cases]				
When wanting to shift to a job with better working conditions	34.5%	39.4%	40.8%	**
When wanting to switch to a job that is worth doing	27.5%	28.0%	26.9%	
When wanting to change a job due to human relations and other problems	15.7%	22.3%	36.5%	**
When having no choice but to change a job due to corporate bankruptcy or restructuring	16.0%	18.0%	24.5%	**
[Workplace-related cases]				
When there is workplace trouble	13.0%	20.0%	30.9%	**
When being transferred to a new workplace position or division	12.5%	13.9%	16.4%	
When job details change	13.8%	16.5%	18.0%	
When wanting to determine the future course at the workplace	14.7%	15.0%	15.6%	
[Family-related cases]				
When wanting to get married and have a family (when having a family)	13.1%	14.9%	17.2%	
When a child is born and childcare problems emerge	22.0%	21.9%	18.9%	
When a child grows up with no more childcare required	9.6%	10.1%	8.4%	
When being separated from a spouse due to a divorce or death	6.2%	8.5%	10.4%	**
[Other cases]				
When wanting to find my first job on my own after graduation	22.2%	23.4%	24.0%	
When wanting to assume a steady job after reaching a certain age	10.1%	16.2%	23.6%	**
When wanting to shift to a regular job from a non-regular one	10.2%	14.3%	23.9%	**
When some of my friends or acquaintances ask me for advice upon their finding jobs	3.6%	2.9%	2.7%	
Other cases	5.2%	3.0%	4.0%	**

\*\* indicates a statistically significant difference at the 1% level.  
The column for the largest value on each line is shaded.

#### (5) Job information and career guidance needs

The survey indicated that there were strong needs for job information provided through the Internet. However, women seeking local jobs, including part-time jobs, gave priority to inserted advertisements in newspapers and flyers, indicating that information media differ depending on personal needs. While there were strong needs for job information provided through public employment security offices, needs for such information services, including face-to-face communications, depended on whether job seekers are oriented toward and have no feelings of resistance toward human communications. The problem is how those who are not good at human communications should be provided opportunities to receive career guidance services and be taken over by public employment security offices and other organizations that provide face-to-face career



guidance services. We may have to search career guidance mechanisms where information and counseling are provided integrally.

Table 3 Media for Obtaining Job Offer Information (by age group/gender)

	Total				People wanting job offer information			
	Men in their 30s (n=1003)	Women in their 30s (n=1061)	Men in their 40s (n=991)	Women in their 40s (n=1051)	Men in their 30s (n=285)	Women in their 30s (n=362)	Men in their 40s (n=347)	Women in their 40s (n=342)
Internet sites	64.5	69.0	<u>57.4</u>	<u>60.3</u>	83.2	82.9	83.8	78.7
Public employment security offices (Hello Work)	<u>25.6</u>	50.8	<u>33.5</u>	44.5	<u>52.6</u>	67.7	56.7	63.7
Newspaper ads, inserted ads, flyers, etc.	<u>18.5</u>	41.1	<u>16.1</u>	39.8	<u>25.6</u>	55.5	<u>24.7</u>	<u>57.0</u>
Books, magazines, information magazines, etc.	27.2	36.7	<u>23.6</u>	28.3	37.9	46.1	35.6	42.1
Private-sector job placement organizations	26.3	28.9	26.1	24.5	37.9	41.2	40.5	34.2
No need for job offer information at present	23.6	<u>16.2</u>	<u>29.0</u>	23.2	3.2	1.1	1.6	1.2

As a result of residual analyses, significantly high values at the 5% level are shaded and significantly low values are underlined.

#### (6) Various career guidance needs and how to provide guidance

The survey indicated that jobless people and non-regular employees had job and career problems and strong needs for career guidance. Particularly, these people might have carried over such problems as poor school records, failed attempts to find jobs upon graduation, frequent job changes and other school-to-work transition and youth career problems, as adult career problems for the 30s and 40s.

The survey also found that guidance users recognized “information” and “tests” among major career guidance components as being relatively and characteristically similar to “counseling” and “seminars.” There were needs for (1) short-time simple career guidance services given at home with no definite schedule and (2) career guidance services linked to vocational training and lifetime learning needs.

Average costs users could spend on career guidance services were about 2,000 yen on “counseling,” about 1,300 yen on “tests” and about 1,400 yen on “seminars,” indicating there are limits on costs users can spend on career guidance services. The survey also indicated a paradoxical fact that job seekers, jobless people and non-regular employees, who have greater career guidance needs, have less capacity to pay for career guidance services.

Table 4 Results of a Correspondence Analysis on Attributes of Respondents in This Survey and Degrees to Which They Feel Job/Career Problems

Annual household income: "10 million yen or more"	0.83	-0.14	Present position: "Unemployed or any other"	-2.69	0.56
Annual household income: "8 to less than 10 million yen"	0.52	-0.15	Household cost bearer: "Mainly parents bear the costs"	-1.31	0.14
Household cost bearer: "I and my spouse equally share the costs"	0.40	-0.44	Job change frequency: "7 times or more"	-1.21	0.80
Workforce at place of work: "1,000 persons or more"	0.37	-0.50	Upon graduation from school: "I failed to get any job despite my job-finding activities"	-1.20	0.38
I don't feel problems so much	0.33	-0.33	Annual household income: "0 to less than 4 million yen"	-1.07	0.07
Years of experience as regular employee: "21 years or more"	0.33	-0.29	Present position: "Full-time housewife/unemployed (job seeker)"	-1.06	0.86
Annual household income: "6 to less than 8 million yen"	0.29	-0.07	Experience as unemployed: "Yes"	-0.87	0.03
Experience as a non-regular employee: "No"	0.22	-0.05	I feel problems considerably	-0.82	0.09
Present position: "Regular employee"	0.18	-0.42	After graduation from school: "I didn't work for a while"	-0.79	0.37
Working style after graduation from school: "Regular employee"	0.14	-0.01	After graduation from school: "Non-regular employee"	-0.75	0.10
Average weekly working hours: "40 to 50 hours"	0.13	-0.43	School: "Dropped out"	-0.65	0.84
Years of experience as regular employee: "10 to 20 years"	0.12	-0.19	Experience as non-regular employee: "4 years or more"	-0.57	0.08
Average weekly working hours: "Less than 40 hours"	0.11	-0.33	Junior high school educational record: "Low"	-0.32	0.52
Average weekly working hours: "40 hours"	0.06	-0.16	Experience as regular employee: "Less than 10 years"	-0.25	0.32
Educational background: "Graduated from university"	0.01	-0.21	Upon graduation from school: "I did not conduct job-finding activities"	-0.19	0.25
Career consciousness: "Various jobs in a certain area"	0.00	-0.17	Job change frequency: "Twice"	-0.16	0.07
Present position: "Full-time housewife"	0.69	1.36	Career consciousness: "A single job in various areas"	-0.16	0.27
Upon graduation from school: "I assumed my first choice job through job-finding activities"	0.45	0.08	Present residence: "Urban"	-0.06	0.04
I don't feel any problems	0.42	0.42	Age: "Late 30s"	-0.05	0.07
Spouse: "Present"	0.39	0.11	Spouse: "No"	-0.79	-0.13
Household cost bearer: "Mainly the spouse bears the costs"	0.39	0.52	Job change experience: "4-6 times"	-0.61	-0.14
Job change experience: "No"	0.38	0.11	Present position: "Non-regular employee"	-0.50	-0.07
Present position: "Self-employed/family employee"	0.37	0.38	Job change experience: "3 times"	-0.44	-0.35
Children: "Present"	0.34	0.12	Children: "No"	-0.41	-0.09
Career consciousness: "One job in a certain area"	0.34	0.12	Career consciousness: "Various jobs in various areas"	-0.39	-0.02
Experience as housewife: "Yes"	0.20	0.61	Workforce at place of work: "100 persons or fewer"	-0.28	-0.34
Age: "Late 40s"	0.18	0.03	Upon graduation from school: "I assumed a job other than my first choice through job-finding activities"	-0.25	-0.13
Experience as unemployed: "No"	0.17	0.02	Age: "Early 30s"	-0.24	-0.10
No opinion	0.16	0.27	I feel problems somewhat	-0.12	-0.15
Job change experience: "Once"	0.15	0.03	Workforce at place of work: "1,000 persons or fewer"	-0.11	-0.40
Junior high school educational record: "Average"	0.08	0.23	Gender: "Male"	-0.09	-0.23
Residence: "Non-urban"	0.08	0.00	Experience as housewife: "No"	-0.09	-0.20
Gender: "Female"	0.07	0.26	Workforce at place of work: "300 persons or fewer"	-0.05	-0.43
Annual household income: "4 to less than 6 million yen"	0.06	0.03	Household cost bearer: "Mainly I bear the costs"	-0.04	-0.24
Experience as non-regular employee: "1 to 3 years"	0.06	0.16	Average weekly working hours: "50 hours or more"	-0.01	-0.19
Educational background: "Graduated from junior/career college"	0.03	0.31	Junior high school educational record: "High"	-0.01	-0.16
Workforce at place of work: "29 persons or fewer"	0.03	0.21			
Educational background: "Graduated from senior high school"	0.03	0.06			
Age: "Early 40s"	0.03	0.06			

\* Results of a correspondence analysis. Attributes are lined in the order of first-axis values from high to low. The first axis indicates degrees to which respondents feel job/career problems. The second axis indicates whether respondents are regular or non-regular employees.

#### 4. Policy Implications

In response to the abovementioned results, we would like to point out the following three policy implications:

(1) New career guidance needs involving environmental changes for middle-aged people in Japan

It had been assumed that there should be new career guidance needs involving environmental changes for middle-aged people in Japan. We have reconfirmed that job-seeking full-time housewives, unemployed or jobless people and non-regular employees have high career guidance needs. Given that these people are increasing in the middle-aged class, career guidance needs in the class in general are assumed to have been expanding. This implies that various career guidance services including traditional ones should be expanded further. Particularly, needs are very high for “information,” “tests” and “counseling” among career guidance services, indicating that desirable “information,” “tests” and “counseling” for the middle-aged class should be continuously considered. At present, “information,” “tests” and “counseling” are provided separately in most cases, but these services should be linked to each other. For example, we should explore the direction in which those accessing “information” may be invited to undergo “counseling” and “tests,” receiving more sufficient career guidance services. Separate mechanisms for individual services could be linked to each other to develop career guidance arrangements for the middle-aged class without costing too much. This is a challenge for future consideration.

(2) Combining personal assistance and career guidance for the middle-aged class

As mentioned above, our survey indicated that career guidance needs are high among peripheral people in the labor market. These people frequently have feelings of lower self-esteem and a tendency toward depression. Traditionally, these people have often been viewed as subject to mental health or clinical psychology intervention assistance rather than career guidance. However, our study implies that appropriate intervention assistance in career guidance could provide some solutions for these people in many cases. Those with feelings of low self-esteem or a high tendency toward depression could be provided with not only mental health intervention assistance but also career guidance services to make their future directions clearer and help them change or find their jobs to improve their self-esteem and the mental tendency positively. We should interpret such contacts between personal assistance and career guidance as having entered a new phase. The implication here is that we should give full consideration to such contacts in working out career formation assistance measures and explore new possibilities.

(3) Reconsidering career guidance for core white-collar employees at large enterprises

While attention is paid to job-seeking full-time housewives, unemployed or jobless people, non-regular employees, those with feelings of low self-esteem or a tendency toward depression, and

other people who feel greater difficulties regarding jobs and careers, career guidance for male white-collar university graduates working at large enterprises tends to be overlooked. However, great career environment changes might have also emerged for such core regular employees, as shown in the results of this study. Nevertheless, they have relatively fewer problems and tend to be left untouched, and proper consideration might not be given to them. For example, our survey revealed the possibility that they are considered to be in a relatively favorable environment and capable of developing their career by their independent efforts, and as a result, appropriate intervention assistance measures for them would fail to be explored. We should reconsider career guidance needs at large enterprises in regard to human resources management and development.

## **5. Future Challenges**

We would like to cite the following three points as indicating future challenges based on this study:

The first point is about our study's renewed finding that job-seeking full-time housewives, unemployed or jobless people and non-regular employees have high career guidance needs. We must more deeply analyze how these needs are pressing or urgent and how much career guidance needs exist in regard to specific employment patterns. We must also consider that there may be potential needs that people do not feel. We may have to build on findings in this study to explore more specific and realistic career guidance approaches.

The second point is related to this study's indication that people with feelings of lower self-esteem or a tendency toward depression have higher needs for career guidance. Combining personal mental health support and career guidance for these people remains as a challenge to tackle in the future. At the same time, it is important to analyze the background resulting in feelings of lower self-esteem or a tendency toward depression, and to focus on possible educational and preventive intervention assistance. Considering these problems in sequence are left as challenges for the future.

The third point is related to this study's indication that career guidance for white-collar university graduates working at large enterprises has been overlooked or left untouched with no appropriate measures taken because career guidance needs among people having difficulties in job-finding and career formation are relatively stronger and more serious. Given that changes in the job environment for the middle-aged class in Japan might have also caused great changes in the career environment for core regular employees, we should consider career guidance for these people in regard to human resources management and development. This is also a future challenge.