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**Research Report on the Child-care Leave System:
Findings of a "Study of Women's Work and Family Life"**

(Summary)

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Introduction: Study Objective and Background

The objective of this study is to explore the effect that the child-care leave system has on "compatibility of work and family life" and sustainable working of women. Childbirth and childcare are major factors that prevent women from continuing to work, and, in fact, have forced many to quit their jobs. In recent years there have also been a growing number of women who have given up working due to the needs of family care. Although several surveys have been conducted over the past decade since the introduction of the child-care leave system, the findings have often been inconsistent and do not necessarily present reliable data on the continuation of work. This is partly because most of those studies are a re-analysis of existing macro-data, or research data that included subjects irrelevant to the child-care leave system.

Prior to this study, we carried out an interview survey of personnel managers from 11 companies in the Tokyo metropolitan area. These companies had employees who had used the child and family care leave system over the past three years. We also interviewed 20 users (18 took child-care leave, one was male, and two took family care leave). These individuals were introduced by management. The survey results were embodied in JIL's report entitled "Research Report on the Child and Family Care Leave System: A Case Study" (Reference Series 2001, No. 108).

As a result of the case study, it was found that there were very few users of the family care leave system and that even though the number of child-care leave takers has increased in recent years, the system has not necessarily been convenient for its users. Accordingly, this study focuses on the child-care leave system, and we examine the effects of the system on female users' working patterns and choice regarding having or not having children, as well as problems with the system and other areas needing improvement.

The child-care leave system was originally established in 1972, under the workingwomen's welfare law, as a welfare scheme for female workers. In 1992, the child-care leave law was enacted for both male and female workers. Later in 1995, in light of the aging population and changes in social conditions, the law was partly revised into the Child and Family Care Leave law. More recently there has been growing concern about the child-care leave system as a measure for checking the declining birthrate and forming a society that encourages the equal participation of men and women. Can the child-care leave system meet these challenges? Each chapter shows the analysis of the survey results.

1. Purpose and Method of the Survey

1.1. Purpose of the Survey

The purpose of this survey is to identify the effects of the child-care leave system on women's working patterns and choice in terms of having or not having children. The survey is intended to give answers to the following three questions:

- (1) Will the spread of the child-care leave system increase the likelihood of women continuing to work?
- (2) Will the spread of the child-care leave system induce more women to have children?
- (3) Can the spread of the child-care leave system contribute to the formation of a gender-equal society?

Of course, the child-care leave system is one of the requirements that enable harmony between work and family life and will not resolve all problems. Thus this study not only pays attention to working and childcare conditions, the use and evaluation of the child-care leave system, and companies' and communities' help in terms of the compatibility of work and family life, but also subjective factors that encourage or discourage an individual from continuing to work, including the sense of values and anxiety about rearing children. Moreover, we tried to understand what women want in order to maintain a favorable balance between work and family life by providing a blank space on the questionnaire form in order that respondents could comment freely. For detailed survey items, see the questionnaire sheet in the back of this report.

1.2. Survey Method

The survey targeted women who had given birth to their first child from April 2, 1992, to April 1, 2001. In order to determine whether there is a difference between different areas, three areas were selected: Suginami Ward, an uptown area of Tokyo, where the birthrate is declining; Edogawa Ward, a downtown part of Tokyo, where the birthrate decline is not so serious, and Takaoka and Toyama, cities with a high married women employment rate.

Sampling was on a two-stage random basis using the resident register. Twenty samples were taken in each of the 36 districts per area. That is, the number of samples was 720 per area, or 2,160 in total. Researchers visited the individual's home, handed out the questionnaire and collected it later. The survey was conducted in May and June 2001.

The number of questionnaires collected was 418 in Suginami Ward, 441 in Edogawa Ward, and 605 in Toyama and Takaoka. The valid collection rate was 58.1%, 61.3% and 84.0%, respectively.

2. Subjects for the Survey

2.1. Features of Targeted Areas

The population of Sugunami Ward, Edogawa Ward, and Toyama and Takaoka is 522,000, 620,000, and 498,000, respectively. In 2000, the number of children aged between 0 and 8, who were born from April 2, 1992, to April 1, 2001, was: 28,731 in Sugunami, 57,187 in Edogawa, and 40,500 in Toyama and Takaoka. The number of relevant women aged between 25 and 39 was: 71,000 in Sugunami, 80,000 in Edogawa, and 50,000 in Toyama and Takaoka.

According to the 2000 national census, half the households in Sugunami were single-person, and 32.4% of the households in Edogawa consisted of a husband, wife and children unit (the highest percentage among the three areas). In Toyama and Takaoka, three-generation households, including four-generation families and households with other relatives living together, accounted for 14.1%, far above the national average of 8.5%.

According to the 1995 national census, the employment rate of women aged 25-39 was 64.8% in Sugunami, 55.5% in Edogawa, and 65.4% in Toyama and Takaoka. The ratio of double-income households with children under the age of six was 28.3% in Tokyo and 51.7% in Toyama Prefecture. The latter figure was very high. A little more than 90% of those women who were working were employees in both Tokyo and Toyama.

The number of nursery school toddlers in 2001 was 4,664 in Sugunami, 8,786 in Edogawa, and 10,388 in Toyama and Takaoka. The number of nursery school infants under 12 months of age was 397 in Sugunami, 95 in Edogawa, and 637 in Toyama and Takaoka. The figure for Edogawa was small because "childcare moms" (a woman who takes care of a baby at home on weekdays) were, in principle, supposed to take care of infants aged 0. In Toyama and Takaoka, nursery school care starts at a younger age than in other areas.

The number of infants on nursery school waiting-lists was, in December 2001, 116 in Sugunami, 456 in Edogawa, and zero in Toyama Prefecture. The nursery school fee for the household that pays only a fixed amount of residential tax differs vastly between the areas: ¥1,600 in Sugunami and Edogawa, ¥8,100 in Toyama, and ¥13,300 in Takaoka.

The ratio of those attending kindergartens to nursery school infants is more than 6 to 4 in Tokyo, compared to a ratio of 4 to 6 in Toyama Prefecture. In 1998, all after-school care programs facilities were publicly provided and their number exceeded

the number of elementary schools in Suginami. In Edogawa, slightly more than 80% of the elementary schools available were publicly supported programs. This figure is rather low in Tokyo. After-school care programs in Toyama and Takaoka were provided by local boards, and their ratio to elementary schools was more than 60% in Toyama and more than 40% in Takaoka. These programs generally covered schoolchildren in the lower grades, but all areas apart from Edogawa, provided them even for schoolchildren in fourth grade or higher. After-school care facilities were available even during the long vacation and on Saturdays in Suginami and Edogawa, while they were closed during the winter and spring vacations and on Saturdays in Toyama. They were open 200 days per year in Toyama, two-thirds those in Suginami.

2.2. Basic Attributes of Subject Women

The average age of the respondents was 34.1 in Suginami, 32.8 in Edogawa, and 32.0 in Toyama and Takaoka. As to the educational background, 70-80% across all areas were high school graduate, junior college or technical college graduates, while university graduates accounted for approximately 30% in Suginami. Nonworking women accounted for 60% of the sample from Suginami and Edogawa, while workingwomen accounted for 60% in Toyama and Takaoka. Many were employed in clerical work. The percentage of professional workers was higher in Suginami than in the other areas.

Seventy to eighty percent of the husbands of the respondents were regular employees. In Suginami, however, the percentage of those who were self-employed was higher. Sales, security and services (hereinafter referred to as "services") accounted for 20-30% in all the areas. In Suginami and Edogawa, clerical work accounted for less than 20%, twice as many as in Toyama and Takaoka, where skilled or manufacturing workers (hereinafter referred to as "skilled workers") accounted for less than 40%, three times as many as in Suginami and nearly twice as those in Edogawa. In Suginami, nearly 20% were managers, around twice as many as in the other areas. The average annual income of the husbands was highest in Suginami, where 16% earned ¥10 million or more, this was followed by Edogawa, and then Toyama and Takaoka. The husbands with the annual income less than ¥5 million accounted for 70% of the sample in Toyama and Takaoka, and more than 40-50% in Suginami and Edogawa.

The percentage of households with parents living together was 20% in Suginami, more than 10% in Edogawa, and 50% in Toyama and Takaoka. The home ownership rate was about 50% in Suginami and Edogawa, and a little less than 80% in Toyama and Takaoka. Of the householders, those with housing loans accounted for less than 70% in Suginami, 80% in Edogawa, and about 50% in Toyama and Takaoka.

3. Women's Work Patterns

3.1. Current Work Conditions

The percentage of women with any kind of job was about 40% in Suginami and Edogawa, and about 60% in Toyama and Takaoka. Clerical work accounted for 30% across the areas. Forty to fifty percent of the workers were employed by small companies with 29 or fewer employees, while only 10-20% were employed by large companies with 1,000 employees or more. Sixty to seventy percent worked 20-24 days per month. There were many regular employees at relatively large companies, government and other offices, and schools, who worked longer hours and years, so earned more. In contrast, there were many part-timers, temporary employees and dispatched workers (hereinafter referred to as "part-timers and the like") at small companies, who worked shorter hours and years, with correspondingly lower earnings. Quite a few part-timers, however, worked long hours as regular employees. Many graduates from junior high school, high school, junior college or technical college were engaged in clerical work or services, while most graduates from university or graduate school were professional workers. As the age of the youngest child increased, the percentage of women working as part-timers and the like increased. This was a common feature of those women who were working, however, there was a significant difference between the areas.

In Suginami, where there were many university or graduate school graduates, a little more than 60% of the respondents had no jobs, while nearly 30% were professional workers and earned ¥3 million or more per year. Both figures were higher than for those from the other areas. Nearly 50% of the regular employees commuted over 40 minutes each way. In short, married women in Suginami were polarized between being full-time homemakers with a well-paid worker as a husband and full-time workers who themselves earned a handsome income.

In Edogawa, the percentage of nonworking women was the highest (more than 60%). The percentage of part-timers and the like was higher than that of Suginami. Nearly 70% of regular employees commuted less than 40 minutes. Many women worked 5-7 hours a day, continued to work for the company for less than a year, and earned an annual income of less than ¥1 million. They were typical short-hour workers. Junior college or lower-level school graduates tended to be employed in the clerical field. As for university or graduate school graduates, they tended to get clerical work or professional jobs, and the percentage of skilled workers was higher. The percentage of those who worked for companies with 300 employees or more was also higher. Married women in Edogawa can be said to be broadly classified into full-time homemakers or low-wage, short-hour workers.

In Toyama and Takaoka, the percentage of regular employees was high regardless

of their educational backgrounds. Over 80% of the respondents worked 20 days or more per month, and 12.8% worked nine hours or more per day on average. But the annual income was far lower than that of Suginami and Edogawa. Many workers earned an annual income of only ¥1-3 million. This was also the case for nearly 50% of regular employees. Almost 50% of regular employees commuted less than 20 minutes. Married women in Toyama and Takaoka worked longer hours and days, but their income was not so high. Many seemed to be forced to work in order to maintain their standard of living because their husband's income was low.

3.2. Attitude toward Raising Children and Working

Those who regard "reemployment after break" as an ideal working pattern for women accounted for around 70% in any of the areas. In Suginami, 20% thought "continuing to work" was best, and 10% thought "devoting themselves to housework" was best. Both figures are higher than those of the other areas. In Suginami and Edogawa, half of the regular employees approved of the statement, "continuing to work." In Toyama and Takaoka, however, 30% of regular employees approved of such a working pattern. In this regard, there was no significant difference between regular employees and part-timers.

Sixty percent of the respondents in any of the areas agreed to the so-called "3-year-old child myth," the view that children should be brought up by the mother until they become three years old. Among workingwomen, the percentage of those who do not agree to that view was high. Nearly 80% of regular employees in Suginami disagreed with the statement.

Over 60% of the respondents in each of the areas did not agree about collective care of children under the age of three, whether the mother worked or not. In Suginami and Edogawa, over 50% of regular employees agreed to do so, while in Toyama and Takaoka, over 40% agreed. This figure was not so different from that of part-timers.

3.3. Business Career

Over 80% of the respondents in each of the areas said they were first employed as regular workers. Among the types of jobs, the clerical job comprised the largest share. In Suginami and Edogawa, those who worked for companies with 1,000 employees or more accounted for over 30%. Those whose first job was professional work tended to continue in that line of work, while workers who began their careers in a clerical role tended to change jobs.

In Suginami and Edogawa, over 90% had left or changed their jobs. In Toyama and Takaoka, the rate was more than 80%. Around 50% of regular employees had left their job or changed employment. As to part-timers and self-employed workers, the rate was more than 90%. The main reasons for quitting a job or changing jobs were marriage,

pregnancy and childbirth. Workers in larger companies tended to refer to marriage as the major reason, while employees in smaller firms tended to refer to pregnancy and childbirth. Half or more of working women had thought of quitting a job for the benefit of their children. Among them the number of part-timers was larger than that of regular employees in Suginami and Edogawa, but vice versa in Toyama and Takaoka. In Suginami and Edogawa, the percentage of those who had thought of quitting a job was higher for workers who did not live with their parents. In Toyama and Takaoka, however, whether the workers lived with parents or not made no difference.

Those who continued working after giving birth to the first child accounted for less than 30% in Suginami, more than 20% in Edogawa, and more than 40% in Toyama and Takaoka. The percentage of those who also continued working after giving birth to their second child was higher in any of the areas than that for the first child: 70% in Suginami, 60% in Edogawa, and less than 80% in Toyama and Takaoka. In terms of regular employees, that figure exceeded 80% across all the areas. Ten to twenty percent left their job when they knew that they were pregnant with their first child. In Suginami and Edogawa, nearly 50% quit their job before childbirth. In Toyama and Takaoka, about a third did so. That is, many gave up working at about the birth of their first child. About 60% of those who quit their jobs before childbirth did so of their own free will, while about 20% wanted to continue to work if possible. With regard to reasons for resignation, regardless of the area, 50% said, "I wanted to bring up my child by myself," and 30% said, "I have no confidence that I can make work and family compatible." It should be noted that nearly 20% said, "The child-care leave system is not available."

What working patterns have women who were regular employees before childbirth, followed? Such patterns can be categorized into three types: formal continuation, reemployment after break, and devoting oneself to childcare. The formal continuation type accounted for less than 30% in Suginami, 20% in Edogawa, and less than 40% in Toyama and Takaoka. The reemployment after break type accounted for about a third in Suginami, less than 40% in Edogawa, and less than 40% in Toyama and Takaoka. The devoting oneself to childcare type accounted for less than 40% in Suginami, 40% in Edogawa, and less than 30% in Toyama and Takaoka.

Women with higher educational backgrounds, currently engaged in professional or clerical jobs, with one child, and those who used the child-care leave system when bearing their first child, tended to choose the formal continuation type. In Suginami, however, 30% of the devoting oneself to childcare type of women were university or graduate school graduates. This figure is far higher than the approximately 10% in the other areas.

Among women of the formal continuation type, the percentage of those who think continuing to work is ideal and who do not agree to the 3-year-old child myth, is higher.

Women of the formal continuation type in Toyama and Takaoka whose husband's annual income was less than ¥5 million accounted for more than 70%, higher than 25% in Suginami and less than 30% in Edogawa. More than 50% did not agree with the 3-year-old child myth. This figure was far lower than the less than 90% in Suginami and less than 80% in Edogawa. Therefore, it can be said that many women in Toyama and Takaoka have continued to work because they were forced to do so, even though they did not want to.

3.4. Attitude to Future Work

Seventy to eighty percent of workingwomen hoped to continue in their current work. Regular employees and well-paid workers were particularly keen to do so. Seventy to eighty percent of women who were not working hoped, if possible, to work in the future, but many of them did not want to be regular employees. Sixty to seventy percent hoped to have shorter hours of work, for example, as part-timers.

Many women were working or hoped to work in the future, but there were a small number of women who continued to work as full-timers. Even now some women quit their jobs at childbirth, devoted themselves to childcare, and became reemployed as part-timers when the child-rearing burden lessened. A working pattern like this was still accepted by many women.

4. Current Conditions and Problems of Raising Children

4.1. Current Conditions of Raising Children

4.1.1. Current Status of Children

The average number of children per household was 1.48 in Suginami, 1.63 in Edogawa, and 1.61 in Toyama and Takaoka. In Suginami, the ratio of one-child households is less than 60%, higher than that of the other areas. Mothers' employment status affected the number of children. In other words, the number was larger if mothers were self-employed or not working, and smaller if the mothers were employed. In Edogawa, and Toyama and Takaoka, these tendencies were not seen. Living with parents helped increase the number of children in Toyama and Takaoka. But this was not the case for Suginami and Edogawa.

Women who wished to have two children in their life accounted for 50% in all the areas. The percentage of women who wanted only one child in their life was slightly higher in Suginami and lowest in Edogawa. Regardless of the areas, the number of children women wished to have in their life was a little greater for nonworking women and less for part-timers. Whether parents lived together or not did not affect that number. Working conditions, such as working days and hours and commuting time, were not

related to the number of children women had nor the number of children women wished to have. The major factors that influenced the number of children are: age at marriage, age when first child was born, and the length of time between marriage and the first child being born. As the marriage age and the age of the first childbirth were younger, and the period between marriage and first childbirth was shorter, both the number of children women had and the number of children women wished to have in their life tended to be larger.

4.1.2. Current Conditions of Child-care

In Edogawa, many women use child-care moms and unauthorized day-care centers. None of those women with children aged two or less, used unauthorized day-care centers in Toyama and Takaoka, while around 10%, mainly part-timers, used them in Tokyo. This indicated that there was a difference in the child-care policy among local governments and that regular employees find it hard to use authorized nursery schools. In Toyama and Takaoka, where there were many regular employees, infants less than 12 months of age were cared for at home, but infants aged over two were more often cared for at day-care centers.

When responding to the question “Who is usually in charge of taking care of children until they are around two years old,” about 90% in Suginami and Edogawa responded "I", while 80% did so in Toyama and Takaoka. Ten percent responded "my husband or parents" in Suginami and Edogawa, while 30% did so in Toyama and Takaoka. Of those who continued to work after their first child was born, including those who took child-care leave, many in Suginami and Edogawa used authorized or unauthorized day-care centers, while 60% in Toyama and Takaoka had their parents take care of the children. In Suginami and Edogawa, 15% used unauthorized day-care centers. In Edogawa, nearly 20% used child-care moms.

In Toyama and Takaoka, 50% of infants aged 5-6 went to kindergarten, while 80% went to kindergarten in Tokyo. The use rate of after-school care facilities was low in Toyama and Takaoka. A difference in childcare between the areas was made by the local government's child care policy and the community's practices, as well as the percentage of households with parents living together and the availability of support from parents living apart.

4.1.3. Trouble with Raising Children

According to comments on the problems respondents had in raising children, a difference between the first child and the second child was more noticeable than a regional difference. In particular, many wrote about the first child: They mentioned "no assistance in daily lives or in an emergency", "mental fatigue and stress", "children's mental status and characters", and "a shortage of childcare counseling, friends and

information". As for the second child, they mainly pointed out "balancing among children" and "physical fatigue and burden". In order to enable women to continue to work, it seems vital to resolve various problems with bringing up the first child.

4.1.4. Husbands' Participation in Childcare and Housekeeping

Husbands' participation in childcare depended on whether their wife had a job or not. Regional differences were not so significant. Husbands' participation increased in any of the areas when the wife had a job immediately after she gave birth to the first child. This is consistent with the result of a study conducted previously: Husbands' participation in childcare was promoted when childcare was needed.

Husbands' participation in housekeeping did not differ greatly between the areas. Instead, it depended heavily on the wife's and the husband's employment status, and whether their parents lived together. Regardless of the areas, when both wife and husband were regular employees, his participation tended to increase. In Toyama and Takaoka, husbands' participation was more active when the parents did not live together.

There was no evidence that the age of the youngest child, the number of children, the income and the educational background had an obvious relation to husbands' participation in housekeeping and childcare. Husbands' participation in housework is weaker than their participation in childcare.

4.1.5. Those People Women Called on for Help

Across all the areas, the women asked their husbands first for assistance in an emergency and in daily lives, and then asked their parents. In Toyama and Takaoka many depended on parents, and in Suginami and Edogawa, many depended on other relatives, friends and acquaintances.

Nonworking women and those who did not live with parents tended to ask neighbors or friends for help, the percentage of those who had never asked anyone for assistance was significantly high. On the one hand, they might have built a wider network than working women, though they could have been isolated without any reliable people around them.

Many women consulted with their husband, parents, friends and acquaintances about bringing up children. There was no difference between the areas. The percentage of those who had never consulted with anybody was lower than the percentage of those who had never asked anybody for help. A network for consulting was very widespread.

4.2. Anxiety about Raising Children

We assessed the degree of anxiety about raising children by using a 14-item measure. As a result, the degree of anxiety was the highest in Suginami, followed by

Edogawa, and then Toyama and Takaoka. Factors that affected anxiety about childcare were different between the areas. In Edogawa, and Toyama and Takaoka, anxiety tended to increase as the number of children grew. Of those who felt anxiety, the percentage of regular employees was the lowest in Edogawa and highest in Toyama and Takaoka.

A factor analysis of anxiety about childcare found that anxiety was made up of three factors: a burden, lack of pleasure, and no free time. There was a significant difference among the areas in the relationship between factor points and attribute variables. In Suginami and Edogawa, for example, being a regular employee helped her feel the pleasure of childcare and have free time. In Toyama and Takaoka, however, it had an adverse effect. Moreover, in Suginami and Edogawa, "active participation of husbands in childcare" helped lessen the wives' burden. In Toyama and Takaoka, however, it was likely to decrease the pleasure women gained from childcare as well as their free time.

These findings were affected by motives to work and the view of how to bring up children. In Toyama and Takaoka, although many women wanted to raise children by themselves and thought they should stay home until children was three years old, they actually did go out to work, bound by the local custom of women working. They were forced to work for economic reasons (that is, because the husband's income was low and child-care fees are high) or because they avoided a conflict due to the presence of two housekeepers within one family. Under such circumstances, it could be thought that working, especially working as a regular employee, increased anxiety about childcare. When considering measures for childcare and employment, attention should also be paid to regional differences. Continuing to work as a regular employee helped reduce anxiety about childcare in Suginami and Edogawa, but this was not necessarily true of Toyama and Takaoka.

5. Child and Family Care Leave System

5.1. Use of the Child-care Leave System

5.1.1. Awareness of the Child-care Leave System

In all areas, 80% of the sample knew of the system. Of these, the percentage of regular employees was high because the system generally covered regular workers. Of those who were not aware of the system, 30% were regular employees around the time of their first child's birth, and 10% were regular employees and were also so when they got pregnant and gave birth to their first child.

5.1.2. Intensive Users of the System

Those who were aware of the child-care leave system were asked whether they

knew of users (including themselves). Many responded "friends and acquaintances outside the workplace". Across all areas, many regular employees mentioned themselves, and friends and acquaintances at the workplace. As to those who continued to work even after they got pregnant and gave birth to their first child, a larger number of users mentioned friends and acquaintances at the workplace than women who returned to work without using the system. This indicated that actual users encourage new users.

5.1.3. Child-care Leave System Use

Across all areas the system was available for 50-60% of regular employees around the time of pregnancy and the first child's birth. That percentage grew with time. By the second child's birth, the system was available for 70-80% of regular employees in any of the areas.

Of those whose workplace had the child-care leave system in place when they became pregnant and bore their first child, system users accounted for less than 40% in Suginami, about 30% in Edogawa, and 50% in Toyama and Takaoka, even though the majority of the users were regular employees. In Suginami and Edogawa, the percentage of those who "considered but did not use the system" was relatively high. The system has spread over time, and there are a growing number of women who are willing to use or consider using the system.

Most of those who used it for their second child's birth were also regular employees, and a difference between the areas has narrowed. Seventy-eight women used the system for their second child's birth, 80% of these had also used the system when bearing their first child. In other words, women who had used the system once tend to use it repeatedly.

5.1.4. Child-care Leave System Users

The number of women who had used the child-care leave system was 42 (or 10%) in Suginami, 35 (or 8%) in Edogawa, 119 (or 20%) in Toyama and Takaoka. The respondents were asked to choose two advantages of the child-care leave system. In Suginami, about 60% answered that the system was "good for the health of children", and less than 50% "enjoyed the pleasure of raising a child". In Edogawa, 60% "enjoyed the pleasure of raising a child", and less than 50% "overcame the difficult period of rearing children". In Toyama and Takaoka, less than 50% answered that the system was "good for the health of children", and about 40% "overcame the difficult period of rearing children". Those who agreed with the 3-year-old child myth tended to mention the advantages for children, while those who disagreed about the myth tended to mention the advantages for themselves.

Concerning disadvantages of the system, 40-60% of the respondents in any of the

areas said that "they were afraid of whether they could adapt when returning to work". In Suginami, where there was a long waiting list for nursery schools, relatively many women were "afraid of whether they could find a day care center for their children". In Toyama and Takaoka, where both the husband and the wife were not well paid, many women said they were "economically disadvantaged" while using the system.

Across the areas, 60-80% did not talk about who would take leave, the husband or wife. In Suginami, however, the view that "the wife should take leave" was not so widely accepted.

The number of women who used the system but did not return to work is a total of 22 (or about 10% of 196 users in all areas): seven (or less than 20% of 42 users) in Suginami, one (or 3% of 35 users) in Edogawa, and 14 (or about 10% of 119 users) in Toyama and Takaoka. Most of them did not return to work after using the system for their first child's birth.

With regard to reasons for not returning to work, 10 women said they wanted to bring up children by themselves, and nine said they were afraid of whether they could strike a balance between work and childcare after returning to work. Most of them did not or could not return to work after the first childbirth probably due to anxiety and confusion about the first child, a gap between expectation and reality, and a lapse in confidence regarding the compatibility between work and childcare.

In terms of quitting their jobs, 12 women did so of their own free will, six wanted to continue working if possible, and three expressed the view that they didn't mind. Users should be prepared for returning to work because companies change personnel and place alternative staff on the assumption that they will return to work after leave.

5.1.5. Returning to Work without Using the System

The number of women who returned to work without using the system was 38 (or 9.1%) in Suginami, 28 (or 6.3%) in Edogawa, and 105 (or 17.4%) in Toyama and Takaoka. Respondents were asked their reasons for such behavior (multiple answers were allowed). "There was no system", "I didn't know there was a system" and "I was not covered by the system" accounted for 60-70% in Suginami and Edogawa. In Toyama and Takaoka, however, "there was a person who takes care of children" accounted for about 40%, and "there was no atmosphere that allows for the use of the system" accounted for 30%.

The number of women who returned to work without using the system after the first or second childbirth, although they could have used the system, was six in Suginami, five in Edogawa, and 38 in Toyama and Takaoka. Toyama and Takaoka occupied a greater proportion. As far as these two cities were concerned, 23 said, "I didn't have to take leave because there was a person to take care of my children." This

showed that the ratio of households with parents living together was high in these cities. In contrast, only one referred to that reason in Suginami, and nobody in Edogawa. Seventeen respondents in Toyama and Takaoka said, "There was no atmosphere that allowed the use of the system", and 12 said, "I was afraid I would cause colleagues inconvenience if I took leave." This means that many women did not use the system even if they could, because their working environment did not allow them to use it.

Thirty-eight women returned to work without using the child-care leave system after their first child's birth, even though they knew they could use it. Twenty-four did so after the second childbirth. Thirteen of them also did so for the first childbirth. The percentage of those who said, "There was no precedent for using the system", was higher for the first childbirth. The percentage of those who said, "There was no atmosphere that allowed the use of the system", and "I would cause colleagues inconvenience if I took leave", was also relatively higher for the first childbirth. When giving birth to their first child, women seem to find it difficult to use the child-care leave system since there appears to be a lack of precedent and they feel that it is necessary to consider others' feelings.

5.1.6. Willingness to Use the Child-care Leave System

Asked "whether you want to use the child-care leave system if you are employed when bearing a child", 80% irrespective of area said, "I want to use it." This percentage is higher among those who have used it.

Regardless of the areas, 80-90% said, "It is good for men to take child-care leave." In Toyama and Takaoka, however, the percentage of those who thought that "very good" was relatively low. As far as their husbands were concerned, however, in Suginami 60% wanted husbands to take leave, in Edogawa 50%, and in Toyama and Takaoka 60% did not want husbands to take leave. In other words, women generally approved of men taking leave, but as a matter of fact, they did not necessarily approve of their husbands' taking leave.

5.1.7. What Companies and Worksites Should Do to Improve the Child-care Leave System

A relatively large number of women who have used the system said that companies should "consider the extension of leave and the time to return to work", "offer economic assistance even during the period of leave", "secure alternative staff during the period of leave", and "not consider the use of the system in promotion". Those who had never used the system tended to call on companies to allow part-timers to take leave and to promote a better understanding of the system at the workplace. These answers reflect both of the problems users faced and the barriers that prevent the use of the system, which indicate what should be taken into account when the system is

reformed.

5.1.8. Effect of the Child-care Leave System: Relationship between System Use and Continuation of Work

Of those women who were employed when they got pregnant and bore their first child, about 30% quit their job because the system did not exist, nearly 30% quit the job without using the system, and a little more than 20% used the system and continued to work. The majority of the women who continued to work after the first childbirth, whether they used the child-care leave system or not, still had a job. Regular employees in particular tended to use the system and continued to work. In other words, the child-care leave system does help regular employees continue in work, but does not necessarily contribute to the continuation of work in general. Those who continued to work after the first childbirth, whether they used the system or not, and were still employed tended to continue to work even after the second childbirth.

The percentage of women with two children or more has no connection to system use. Rather, this percentage is a little higher for those who continued to work without using the system, even though it was available. The number of children the respondents plan to have in their life was also unrelated to system use. Therefore, system use cannot be said to directly contribute to a rise in the birthrate.

The percentage of women who used the system and continued to work after the second childbirth was higher than that for the first childbirth. In particular, those who used the system and continued to work after the first childbirth tended to do so again with the second childbirth. That is, using the system for the first childbirth seems to contribute to using it a second time.

At present, the child-care leave system is still difficult to use, although it is regarded as a key to compatibility between work and family. Taking leave does not necessarily enable work and childcare to be compatible. There remains a large amount of problems to be solved, including consideration of the measures needed to help adapt to the workplace after returning to work, and the availability of childcare services.

5.2. Family Care Leave System Use

Asked whether "there were family members or relatives who needed more than two weeks of care, including attendance at the hospital, for the past five years or so", 4-6% said they "now have such a person", and nearly 20% said they "once had such a person but not now". Only one person used the family care leave system in Suginami and Toyama and Takaoka. In both cases, the user was a regular employee. The family care leave system has been required since April 1999, and this survey was conducted in 2001. The result implies that the system has not been well publicized. There are a small number of respondents who have been forced to take care of someone, or they are not in

charge of care even if they have a family member who needs care.

6. Assistance for a Compatible Work and Family Life

6.1. Assistance in the Community and the Company

6.1.1. Important Factors for a Compatible Work and Family Life

What is important for a compatible work and family life? Across all of the areas, 60-70% mentioned "family cooperation and encouragement", 30-40% "moderately cutting corners", 30% "a support system of the company and the workplace", and 20-30% "improvement of social services". As far as regular employees were concerned, in Toyama and Takaoka two-thirds of them put importance on "family cooperation and encouragement", in Edogawa 40% "a support system of the company and the workplace", and in Suginami 30% "reduction in working hours". As for part-timers, there was no significant difference between the areas. Quite a number of women mentioned "a support system of the company and the workplace" in Suginami, "moderately cutting corners" in Edogawa, and "family cooperation and encouragement" in Toyama and Takaoka.

6.1.2. Improving the Environment in order that Women can Call on Society and the Community to Support Working Women Rearing Children

In Suginami and Edogawa, the respondents called for increasing the number and capacity of nursery schools, lowering childcare fees and extending childcare hours, and temporary childcare. In Toyama and Takaoka, however, they demanded the lowering of nursery school fees, but rarely mentioned the number and capacity of nursery schools. In Toyama Prefecture, nursery school fees were far higher than in Tokyo, and there were no nursery school waiting lists (see 2.1).

6.1.3. Corporate Systems Necessary for Supporting Workers' Childcare

Across all of the areas, more than 50% called for "a nursing care leave system", 30-40% "a day-care center within the establishment", a little more than 30% "a child care leave system", nearly 30% "a reemployment system for those who resigned," and 20-30% "a flextime system".

6.1.4. Supportive Measures

Asked whether they agreed to a reduction in working hours or the extension of nursery school hours, around 80% preferred a reduction in working hours. Many women called for a reduction in working hours in Suginami, while an extension of childcare hours in Toyama and Takaoka was preferred. There was rarely a difference between occupations in Suginami. In Edogawa and Toyama and Takaoka, many of the

women engaged in services and skilled jobs call for extending nursery school hours. More than 40% of skilled workers in Toyama and Takaoka demanded longer care hours.

Asked which was more desirable, nursing care leave or care of the sick child, when the child is sick, 80-90% from all areas called for nursing care leave. Though there was rarely a difference between occupations, nearly a quarter of professional workers in Suginami demanded care of sick children. This ratio was slightly higher than that of the other areas. As a result of the revision in the child and family care leave system, business owners have been encouraged to introduce the family care leave system since April 2002.

6.2. What Prevents Women from Working

6.2.1. Factors that promote nonworking

When the youngest child is under 12 months age, the percentage of nonworking women was high across all of the areas. In Toyama and Takaoka, this ratio fell rather rapidly as the youngest child grew older. In Suginami and Edogawa, however, the ratio was high until the youngest child reached three to four years of age. When that child entered an elementary school, the gap between the areas narrows. In Toyama and Takaoka, regardless of the age of the youngest child, the percentage of regular employees was higher than that of Suginami and Edogawa.

In Toyama and Takaoka, women returned to work earlier after childbirth than those of Suginami and Edogawa. This is due to the percentage of households with parents living together was high, the nursery school had a relatively large capacity, and the percentage of regular employees was high. In Suginami and Edogawa, the belief that children should be raised by the mother until they are three years old has been a serious barrier to women working.

In Suginami and Edogawa, the annual income of women who have been working for the company since they were first employed, is very high: nearly ¥5 million in Suginami. In Toyama and Takaoka, the income of regular employees, whether they had quit a job or not, was around ¥3 million. In Toyama and Takaoka, as the husband's income increased, wives tended to have no jobs or to change their jobs. In Suginami and Edogawa, however, there was no significant statistical difference in the husband's income between households with a nonworking wife and households with a wife continuing with her first job. For households with a reemployed wife, the husband's income was significantly lower. That is, in Suginami and Edogawa, less than 10% of the women continued to work for the company they were first employed by, but if they are able to do so, the household income increased rapidly.

6.2.2. Child-care Leave System and Continuation of Work

According to a probit analysis designed to examine factors that enable continuation of work, the probability that employees of a company with a child-care leave system continuing to work is higher, when compared to employees of a company without such a system. Factors that raise this probability are as follows: (i) employees believe continuing to work is an ideal way of life, which increases the probability by 23%; (ii) the company has a child-care leave system (up 16%); (iii) employees are university graduates (up 14%); (iv) their parents live together (up 14%); (v) they live in Toyama or Takaoka (up 13-14% compared to Tokyo); (vi) they believe the mother should stay home until the children reach three years of age (down 13%), and (vii) the age of childbirth (up about 1% as the age rises by one year).

If women who considered using the child-care leave system offered by the company but who left the job without using it are called "those who hesitated but resigned", they would account for about 20% in Suginami and Edogawa, and about 10% in Toyama and Takaoka. This type of women more often sees continuing to work as an ideal working pattern rather than those who left their job without hesitation. However, women who cannot find a day-care center etc., who want to work for uneconomic reasons since their husband earns a high income, or who gave birth to a child recently tend to leave the job after some hesitation. In Toyama and Takaoka, no one left the job due to a shortage of nursery schools. This means that there are inadequate childcare services for workingwomen in Suginami and Edogawa.

Those who left the job because they wanted to raise their children by themselves accounted for over 50%. Moreover, the women who believe the mother should bring children up until they reach an age of three account for 60% across the areas. Not only the availability of the child-care leave system and childcare services, but also the women's sense of values may prevent women from continuing to work.

7. What Women Want

By analyzing the respondents' comments noted on the blank portion of the questionnaire, we were able to examine the concerns women have about work and family life and what they expect from the family and society.

(1) On themselves

Regardless of their marital status and work conditions, they all faced various problems, including where to seek their identity as a full-time housekeeper, regrets about leaving or getting work, anxiety about continuing to work, a heavy burden on the working mother, and difficulties following divorce.

(2) On the family

They were thoroughly discontented with their husbands: he is often not at home, does not take part in housework and childcare, does not understand the wife's work and so on. Most of their complaints were related to the difficulty of a compatible work and family life. As for parents, women referred to a difference in the sense of values, especially in terms of how to bring up children, between generations.

Workingwomen believe that working and raising children entails using a nursery school. To do so is advantageous as it eases the stress imposed on the mother and makes the children learn about society. On the other hand, full-time housekeepers argue that the mother should stay home and devote herself to childcare until children are three years old so as to ensure the emotional security and development of the children. The fact that quite a few women refer to the phrase "until age three" reflects how deeply the **3-year-old myth is rooted.**

(3) Assistance for a compatible work and family life

In terms of nursery schools, women mentioned temporary childcare services even full-time housekeepers can use when the mothers themselves are sick or bearing a child, lowering day-care fees, care appropriate for children (e.g. a spacious garden, shorter working hours rather than long childcare hours), a shortage of after-school care services, and the limited number of days when such services are offered.

With respect to the child-care leave system, the respondents referred to the need for measures to support a compatible work and family life after taking care leave and men taking leave. There are many other demands for, for example, supportive measures that truly benefit children, spread of teleworking, shorter working hours for both men and women, and the establishment of an easy-to-use counseling body. Some oppose these suggestions stating that there is too much emphasis on the need for compatible work and family life and insist on the importance of the family.

(4) Comments to companies

The respondents made the following complaints about the child-care leave system: hard to use, use may result in discrimination in promotion, etc. It is not easy to take sick leave and paid leave. They wanted the company to exempt them from overwork and holiday work while children are very young. They wanted colleagues at the workplace to increase their understanding of working mothers.

(5) Comments to society in general

Many complained about the male-dominated society where labor is divided by gender role, and mentioned the need for a regional campaign aimed at changing men's attitudes. Moreover, the respondents pointed out a lack of understanding among full-time housekeepers, working mothers and women raising children. They also

expressed their expectation for a society that was friendly toward the raising of children and ensured a variety of ways of life.

Conclusion

(1) Effects of the child-care leave system on continuing to work

The child-care leave system has no direct effect on women continuing to work. Whether they took childcare leave or not, women who continued to work after their first child's birth have been working. Generally, companies with the child-care leave system in place actively make use of women's abilities, have systems and practices that make it easy for women to work, and have an atmosphere that encourages women to continue working. Whether continuing to work is possible or not depends not only on the employment system and child care services, but also the view taken of occupation and childcare, and what motivates women to work. Those who were negative about continuing to work, who believed in the 3-year-old myth, and who worked for economic need tended to be negative about continuing to work.

(2) Effects of the child-care leave system on the declining birthrate

Taking child-care leave has no relation to the number of children women now have and the number of children women plan to have in their life. The women who continued to work by using the system tended to have fewer children. As the marriage age decreases and the period between marriage and childbirth shortens, households tended to have and to plan to have a larger number of children. However, it did not appear that the child-care leave system encourages marriage. Many of those who continued to work by using the child-care leave system were regular employees. If the use of the system is limited to regular employees, the spread of the system may lead to a further decline in the birthrate.

(3) Effects of the child-care leave system on the formation of a gender-equal society

The child-care leave system applies to both male and female workers, but in fact very few men take this leave. Most women generally agree to men taking leave, but they often showed disapproval of their husband taking leave. Many did not talk about who takes leave, the husband or the wife. It seemed very difficult to attain the goal of 10% established by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare in 2002 with regard to the rate of men taking childcare leave.

It has been proved, however, that the child-care leave system is very effective in terms of enabling regular employees to continue to work. In order to further spread the use of this system, additional measures will be necessary. For example, companies should incorporate the consideration for women, including childcare leave, into the

manager training program. The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare should announce the names of companies that are not family-friendly. Moreover, the child-care leave system should be applied to part-timers, too.