

Covid-19 and Gender Gap in Employment in Japan: With a Further Focus on Child-rearing Female Workers



コロナ禍の日本の労働市場における男女格差 ～子育て中の女性労働者に焦点をあてて～



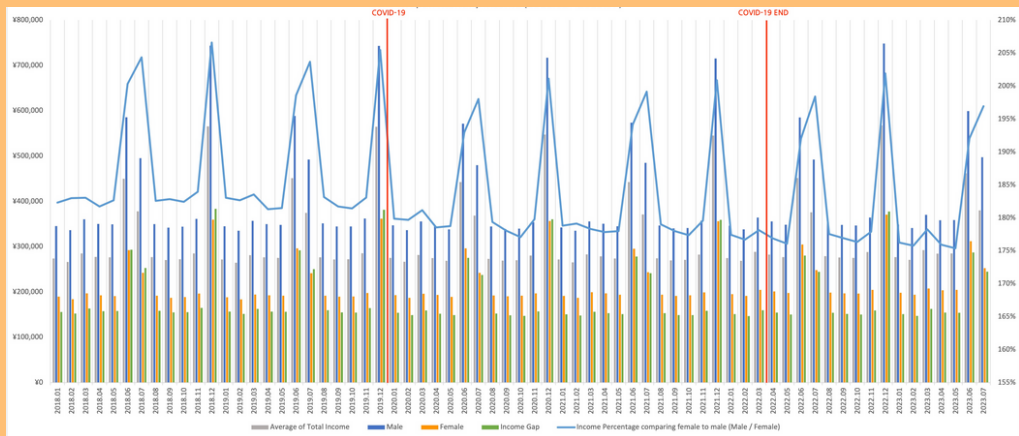
Yaneゼミ Homo Economicus and Friends 経済人と友達

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has cast a spotlight on the existing gender disparities in the Japanese labor market, underscoring the urgency of addressing these inequalities. This study investigates the impact of the pandemic on the gender gap in employment in Japan, delving into the intricate factors such as income, wage, and unemployment rate. This study further explores unique challenges faced by child-rearing female workers in Japan, as a specific case study, to understand the profound and multifaceted impact of the pandemic on the gender gap in employment.

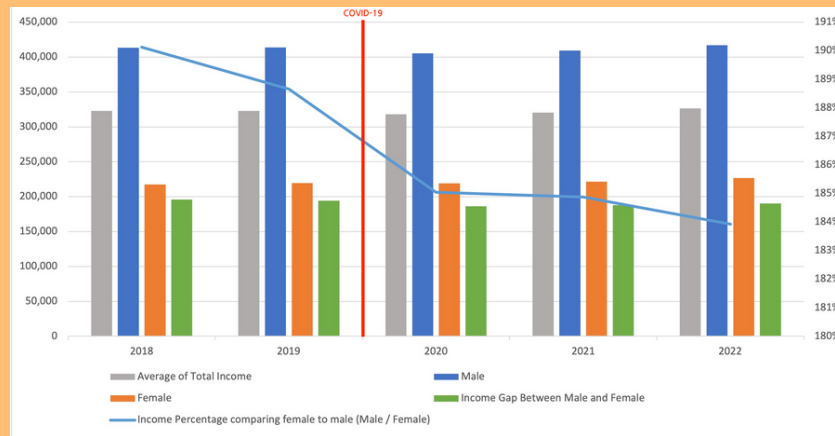
2. Gender Income Gap

Monthly Income (2018.01 - 2023.07)



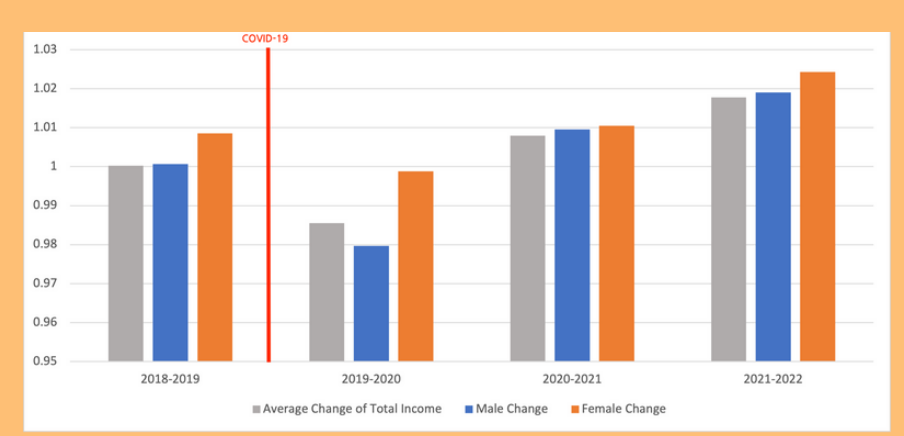
Source: Statistics Bureau of Japan, Monthly Labor Statistics Survey National Survey Results Chart

Annual Income (2018-2022)



Source: Statistics Bureau of Japan, Monthly Labor Statistics Survey National Survey Results Chart

Income Percentage Change (2018-2022)

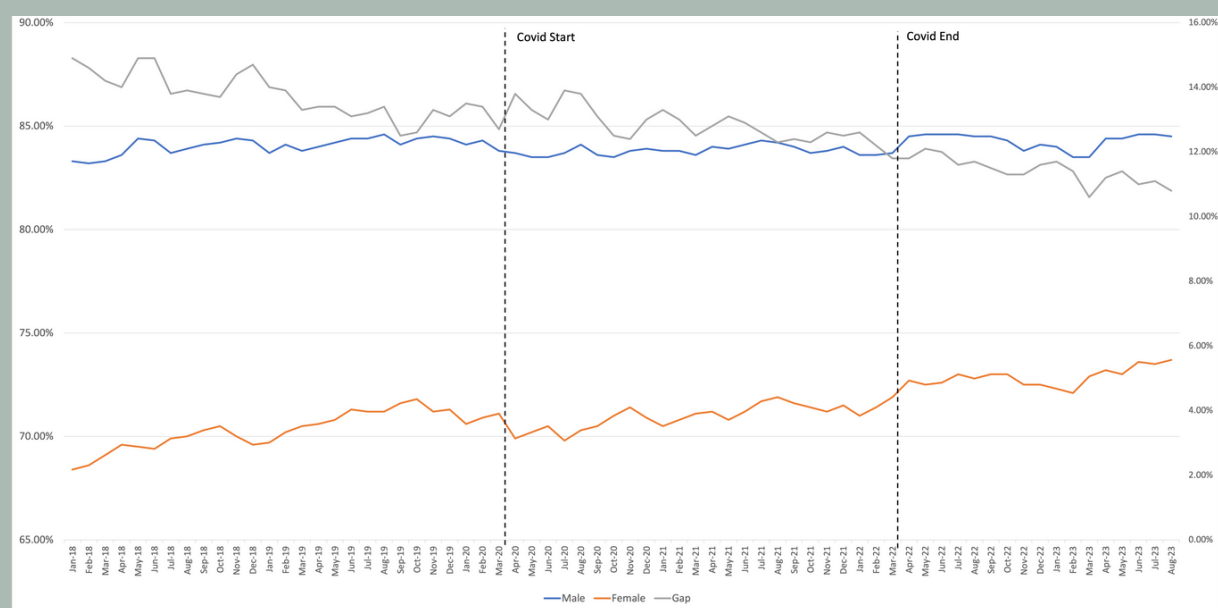


Source: Statistics Bureau of Japan, Monthly Labor Statistics Survey National Survey Results Chart

The data show a decrease in the income gap between male and female workers. From first graph, it is hard to see difference between months due to income gap, but more of changes between months during one year. In some of months, there were slight decrease in income gap as time changes, compared to same month in last year. Decrease in income gap can be seen distinguishably from the ratio of male income to female income, which decreased from 192% to 180%. However, COVID-19 seems to have slowed down the rate of this decrease in the income gap. The decline seems to pick up again after 2021, but at a slower rate than before. As can be seen from income percentage change graph, it is possible to see that yearly income of female increase more than male, which shows decrease in income gap. On average, female workers' income seems to have improved, however, the benefits may be concentrated on female workers without children.

3. Gender Gap in Employment

Employment Rate (2018.01 - 2023.08)

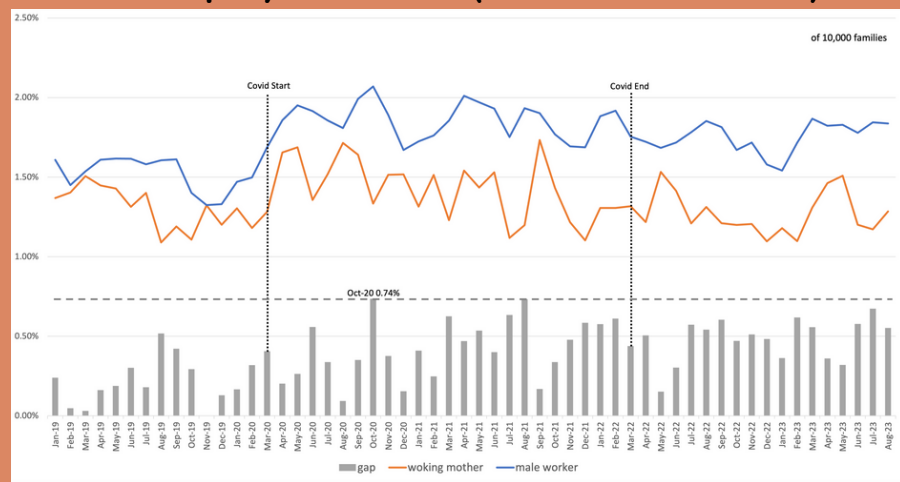


Source: Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications "Labour Force Survey"

Data on employment rate of both genders and their gap shows the following findings. At the start of the COVID-19 period, we can see an increase in the gender gap even though there is no noticeable change in the male employment rate. However, there are more prominent fluctuations in the female Employment rate. It indicates that female employment rate is the key to the changes in the gender gap in employment. After the COVID-19 period, female employment rate increased, and thus the gender gap has been decreasing.

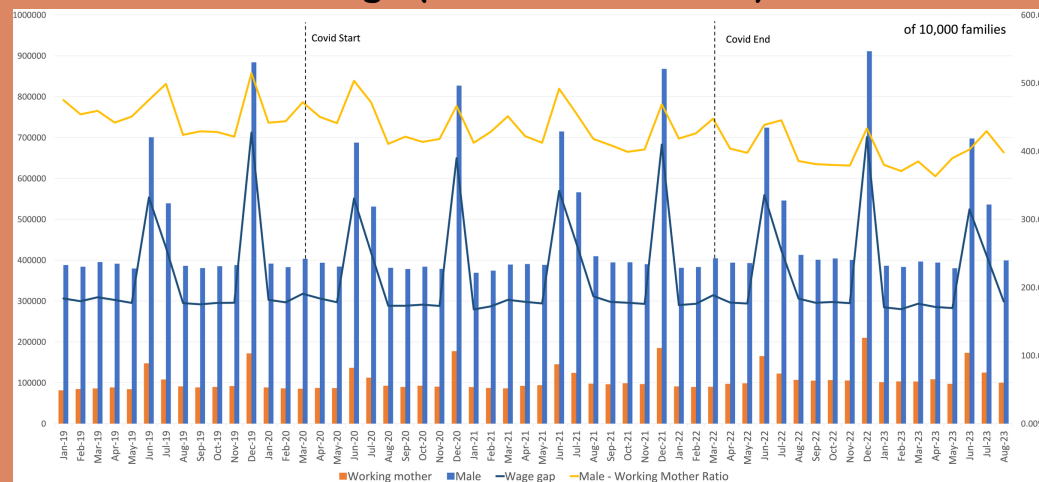
4. Child-rearing Female Workers (Working Mothers)

Unemployment Rate (2019.01 - 2023.08)



Source: Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications "Labour Force Survey"

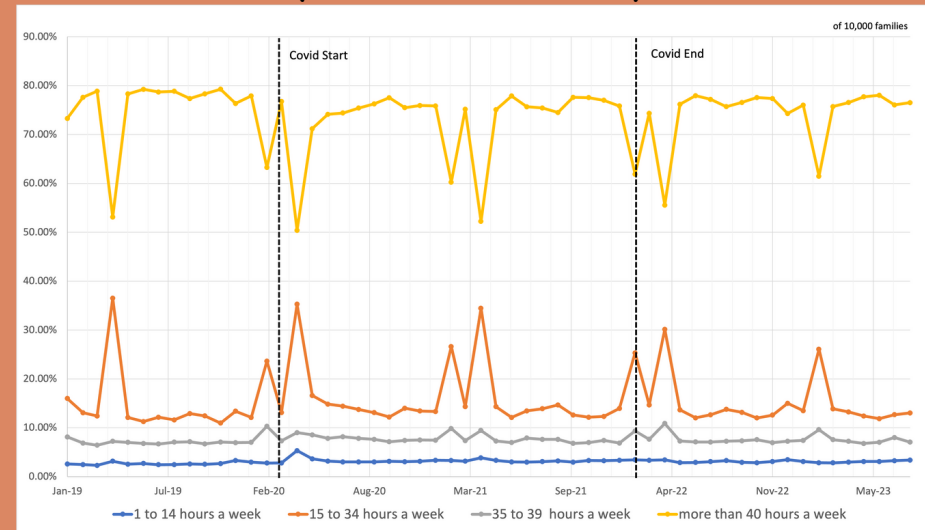
Wage (2019.01 - 2023.08)



Source: Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications "Labour Force Survey"

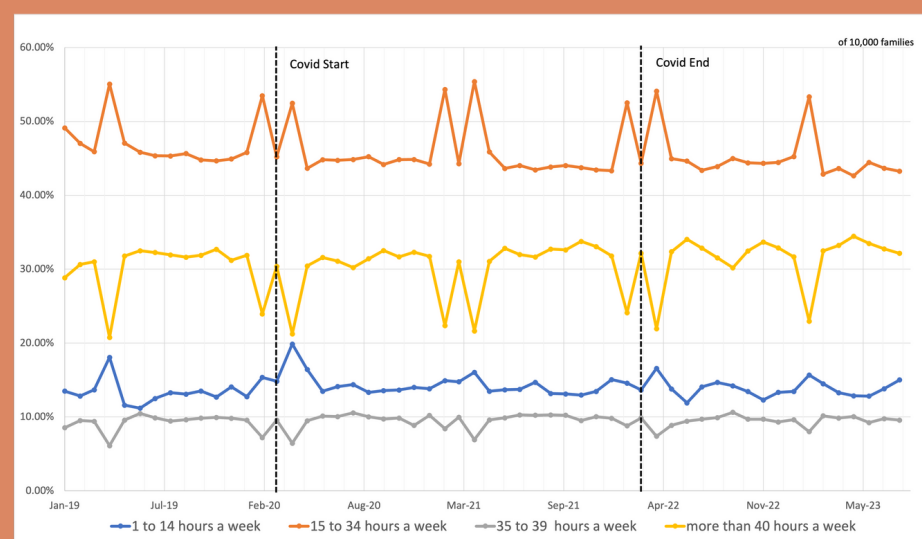
According to the 1st graph, the highest rate of unemployment in recent years occurred during the COVID-19 period for both groups. The unemployment rate for male workers remains higher than for working mothers. In August 2020, the unemployment gap hit a low, which signifies the increase in the unemployment rate for working mothers while the male unemployment rate dropped. We can see that the unemployment gap between men and working mothers increases compared to the time period before the pandemic, which indicates a higher unemployment rate for male workers and a lower unemployment rate for working mothers. This trend remains present in the most recent period. One important thing to note is, that if more working mothers had to leave the labor force, this could contribute to their low unemployment rate.

Share of Male Workers by Weekly Working Hours (2019.01 - 2023.08)



Source: Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications "Labour Force Survey"

Share of Working Mothers by Weekly Working Hours (2019.01 - 2023.08)



Source: Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications "Labour Force Survey"

The 2nd graph, calculated on a year-on-year basis, shows that there is a wide gap between male workers' and working mothers' wages, although the wage gap is slightly declining. One thing to note is that the differences in other attributes such as occupations and tasks may be accountable for the big gap.

The 4th graph shows that the largest proportion of working mothers work 15-34 hours per week. Following that is 40+, 1-14, and lastly 35-39 working hours per week. According to the third graph, the largest proportion of male workers work over 40 hours per week. Following that are 15-34, 35-39, and 1-14 work hours per week. We can trace the movement of both working mothers and male workers moving from working over 40 hours per week to 15-34 hours per week. COVID-19 seemingly has not affected working hours relatively more than before. There is a seemingly increasing trend of working mothers who work more than 40 hours per week after COVID-19, although in recent months it has been declining. There is also a recent slight increase in the share of working mothers who work 1-14 hours per week.

5. Conclusion

- ① During COVID-19, the decline in gender income gap became stagnant. Since then, however, the gender income gap has started to decrease again albeit at a slower rate.
- ② Gender gap in employment rate increased at the wake of COVID-19, however, as female employment rate increased, the gender gap in employment has been decreasing.
- ③ The wage gap between male workers and working mothers is slightly declining, but there is still a positive gap. There is a seemingly increasing trend of working mothers who work more than 40 hours per week after COVID-19.