

Need for a Gender-Sensitive Approach to Addressing the Gender/Class Gap in Digital Infrastructure Accessibility

Outcome of the survey on the public's perception on mid-to-long-term social changes

Seona Kim (Associate Research Fellow, Center for Gender Equality Strategy, KWDI),
Yun Mi Jung (Researcher, Center for Gender Equality Strategy, KWDI)

- With digital transformation, many changes are expected to take place in different realms of the society. In addition, there is an increasing demand that the role of gender equality policy should be redefined to fit such changes, due to the concerns about gender digital divide.
- In this regard, we conducted a survey on 5,000 Korean men and women aged 18~69 to figure out the Korean public's perception of social changes brought by digital transformation, identify the gender gap in terms of digital accessibility and utilization, and thereby to provide the basic data for establishing mid-to-long-term strategies of gender equality policy.
- According to the survey result, there was a gender gap in the perception on social changes brought by digital transformation. Although the gender gap in digital accessibility/utilization at work was not significant, the gender gap in terms of digital infrastructure such as possession of a personal computer clearly existed. The survey confirmed that the gender gap in digital infrastructure was wider among the group of people whose subjective class was low.
- In the era of digital transformation, gender equality policy makers need to consider that the gender gap in wage/income could lead to a wider gender gap in digital infrastructure accessibility.

< Survey Overview >

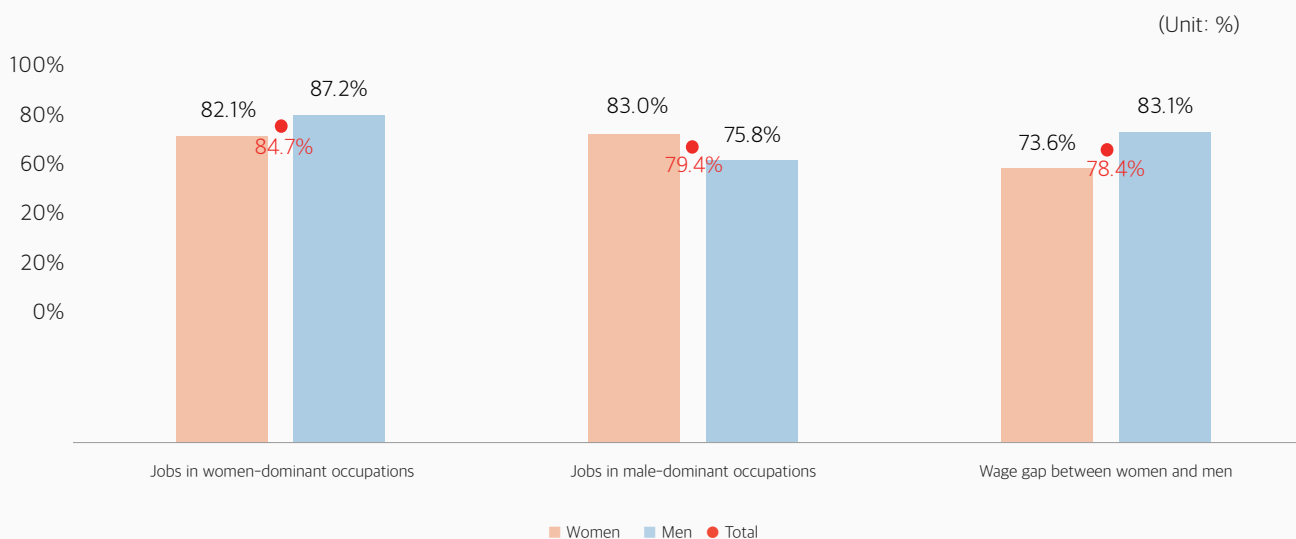
Classification	Content
Subject	5,000 men and women aged 18-69 across the country
Method	Web-based, online panel survey
Sample	Random sampling after population-based allocation by region/gender/age group
Period	January 5 ~ January 20, 2022
Content	Perception on mid-to-long-term social changes, achievements and future tasks of gender equality policies, and strategies for gender equality policy improvement

Perception on Digital Transformation

- A large majority of the public predicted that digitalization will not have a significantly negative impact on the labor market, but there was a gap between men and women in such perception

- About 8 out of 10 respondents said that the number of jobs in women-dominant occupations(84.7%) and the number of jobs in male-dominant occupations(79.4%) will remain the same or increase due to digitalization. They(78.4%) also responded that the wage gap between women and men will stay the same or decrease due to digitalization.
- The survey result by gender shows that more men than women were positive about the prospect of jobs in the women-dominant occupations, and more women than men were positive about the outlook for jobs in the male-dominant occupations. Meanwhile, more men than women were optimistic about the outlook for wage gap between women and men, and such a gender gap in their perception was statistically significant.

<Figure 1> Outlook for Social Changes brought by digitalization (n=5,000)*



(Unit: point)

Classification	Women	Men	t value
Jobs in women-dominant occupations	3.25	3.37	4.546***
Jobs in male-dominant occupations	3.13	2.97	-7.205***
Wage gap between women and men	3.07	2.84	-10.188***

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

* The graph bars for the jobs in women-dominant occupations and the jobs in male-dominant occupations show the sum of the responses 'stay the same', 'slightly increase', and 'significantly increase.' The graph bars for the wage gap between women and men show the sum of the responses 'stay the same', 'slightly decrease', and 'significantly decrease.' Figures in the above table were measured based on a five-point scale (1 point: significantly decrease ~ 5 points: significantly increase).

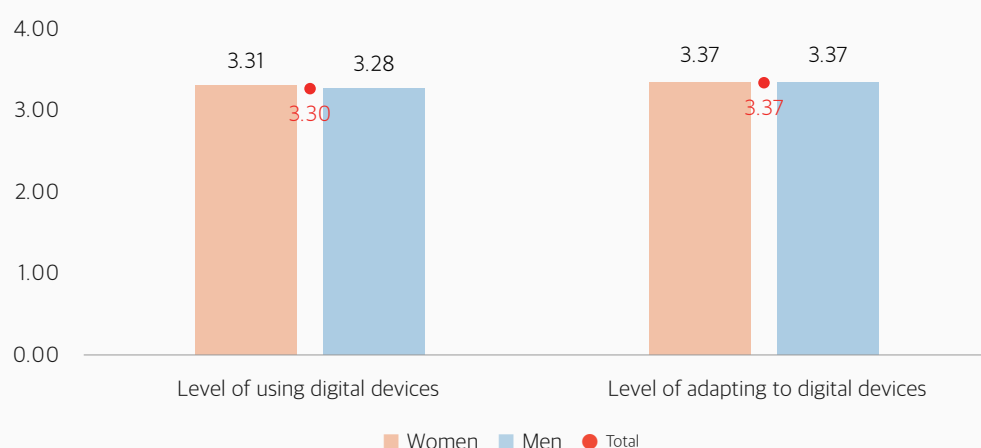
Digital Accessibility & Digital Utilization

● The gender gap in the level of using and adapting to digital devices was not significant.

- Both men and women showed a similar level of using (an average of 3.30 points) and adapting (an average of 3.37 points) to the digital devices(desktops, laptops, tablet PC) at work. Their average score in using and adapting to the digital devices was 2.5 or higher.
- In the survey, more women(3.31) than men(3.28) used digital devices but the difference between women and men was not statistically significant. In terms of the adaptation to digital devices, men and women showed the same score(3.37).
- The gender gap based on employment status and socioeconomic status was not statistically significant when it came to using digital devices. In the group of full-time workers, however, women's level of using digital devices(3.47) was statistically higher than that of men(3.39).

<Figure 2> Level of using(n=3,732) and adapting(n=3,047)* to digital devices

(Unit: point)



Employment status	Level of using digital devices	Full-time workers		Temporary/daily workers		Non-wage workers		Currently not employed	
		Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
		3.47	3.39	2.75	2.74	3.11	3.04	-	-
		t=-2.612**		t=-0.181		t=-0.834		-	
	Level of adapting to digital devices	Full-time workers		Temporary/daily workers		Non-wage workers		Currently not employed	
		Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
3.41		3.38	3.26	3.31	3.24	3.28	-	-	
t=-1.209		t=0.755		t=-0.726		-			
Socioeconomic status	Level of using digital devices	Low		Mid-low		Middle		Mid-high	
		Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
		3.12	3.11	3.27	3.23	3.38	3.36	3.37	3.34
		t=-0.191		t=-0.868		t=-0.473		t=-0.434	
	Level of adapting to digital devices	Low		Mid-low		Middle		Mid-high	
		Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
		3.27	3.27	3.32	3.34	3.40	3.39	3.47	3.41
		t=0.061		t=0.617		t=-0.039		t=-1.399	

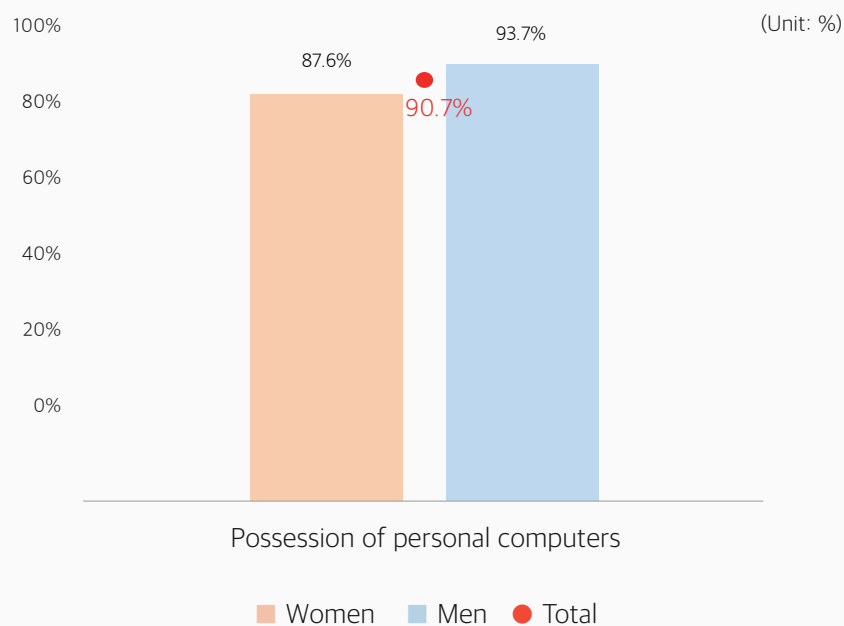
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

* Measurement is based on a four-point scale. (Level of adapting to digital devices: 1 point 'not adapted to digital devices at all ~ 4 points 'very well adapted to digital devices')

● A gender gap exists in terms of the possession of personal computers, and such a gender gap widens among the group of people whose subjective class is low.

- The survey shows that about 9 out of 10 respondents have their own personal computers. In terms of gender, the proportion of men(93.7%) who have personal computers is 6.1%p higher than that of women(87.6%).
- In terms of the gender gap based on the employment status and socioeconomic status, the proportion of men who have personal computers was higher than that of women in all groups. In terms of the possession of personal computers, there was a wider gender gap among those who are currently not employed(women: 80.9%, men: 90.4%) and among those whose subjective class is low such as those with low socioeconomic status(women: 83.2%, men: 93.8%).

<Figure 3> Proportion of those who possess personal computers (n=5,000)

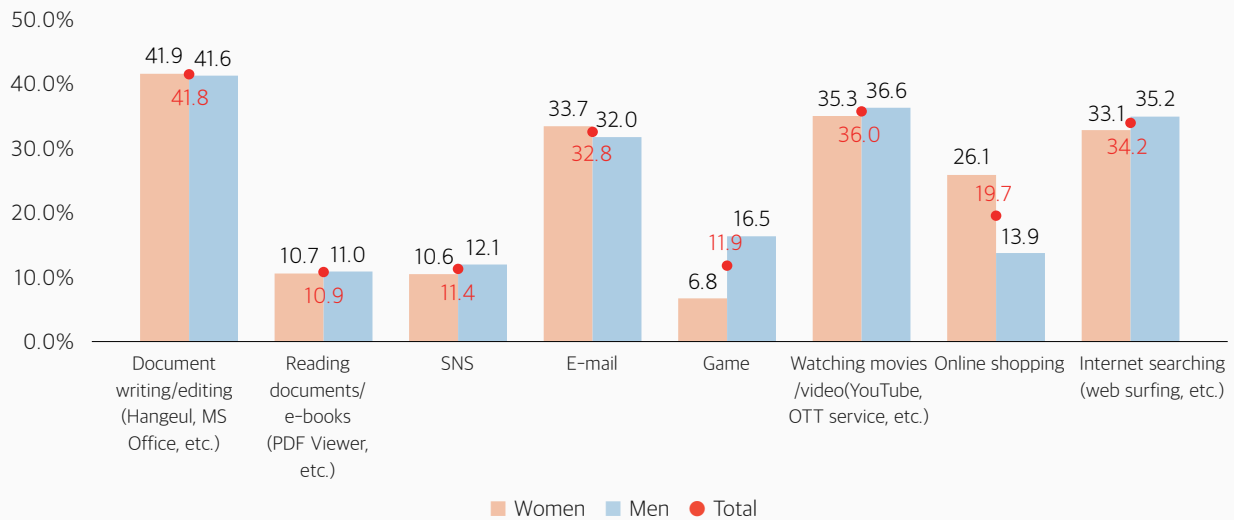


Employment status	Full-time workers		Temporary/daily workers		Non-wage workers		Currently not working	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
	91.7%	94.8%	88.5%	93.0%	89.8%	93.5%	80.9%	90.4%
Socioeconomic status	Low		Mid-low		Middle		Mid-high	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
	83.2%	93.8%	86.6%	93.7%	89.0%	94.0%	90.4%	93.0%

- When asked about the purpose of using personal computers, the largest proportion of respondents chose 'document writing/editing(41.8%)', which was followed by 'watching movies/video(36.0%)', 'searching on the Internet(34.2%)', 'using e-mail(32.8%)', 'online shopping(19.7%)', 'game(11.9%)', 'using SNS(11.4%)', 'reading books/e-books(10.9%)'.
- In terms of gender, both women and men chose 'document writing/editing' the most for the reason of using personal computers. Meanwhile, women chose 'game' the least but men chose 'reading books/e-books' the least for the reason of using personal computers.

<Figure 4> Purpose of using personal computers (n=4,536)*

(Unit: %)



* The sum of 'first choice' and 'second choice' responses

● More women than men had experience of seeking jobs through online platforms, and there was a large gap in their job-seeking experience depending on whether they own a personal computer or not.

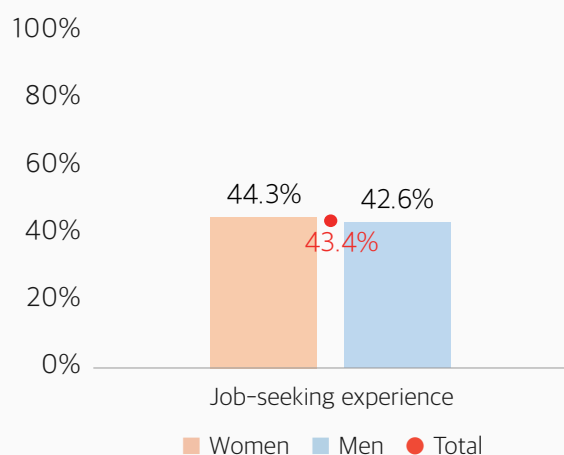
- Only 25.4% of the survey participants were 'currently not employed', but 4 out of 10 such participants answered that they have sought jobs through online platforms(Internet website, mobile app, etc.) for 3 months previous to the survey period.

- In terms of gender, women(44.3%) had more experience of seeking jobs through online platforms than men(42.6%). Particularly, the gender gap based on the employment status and socioeconomic status was the most significant(12.1%p) in the group of non-wage workers such as self-employed people, employers, and unpaid family workers, where 51.9% of women and 39.8% of men had the experience of seeking jobs through online platforms.

- Meanwhile, 45.7% of those who have personal computers had job-seeking experience through online platforms, but 21.8%(almost half of the above 45.7%) of those who don't have personal computers had job-seeking experience via online platforms.

<Figure 5> Experience of seeking jobs/employees through online platforms (n=5,000)

(Unit: %)



Employment status	Full-time workers		Temporary/daily workers		Non-wage workers		Currently not working	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
	47.4%	43.3%	54.4%	54.9%	51.9%	39.8%	34.7%	36.0%
Socioeconomic status	Low		Mid-low		Middle		Mid-high	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
	36.5%	38.2%	41.8%	41.2%	47.1%	44.6%	49.6%	44.3%
Possession of personal computers	Yes				No			
	45.7%				21.8%			

Conclusion

- In our survey, 8 out of 10 Korean people answered that jobs in the women-dominant occupations and men-dominant occupations will stay the same or increase due to digital transformation and that the wage gap between women and men will remain the same or decrease. In other words, the survey participants predicted that digitalization will not have a significantly negative impact on the labor market. However, women were concerned more about a potential decrease in the jobs of women-dominant occupations, and men were concerned more about a potential decrease in the jobs of male-dominant occupations. Meanwhile, more women than men were worried about a possible widening wage gap between women and men. According to the survey result, there are ambiguous expectations and anxiety among the Korean public about potential changes in jobs due to digital transformation.
- In general, more women than men were using digital devices at work, but the gap between women and men was not big. In terms of the level of adaptation to digital devices, no gender gap was found. In terms of the level of using digital devices, there was a statistically significant gender gap between women(3.47 points) and men(3.39 points) among full-time workers in the category of employment status. It confirms that in the group of full-time workers, more women than men are using digital devices at work. In terms of the possession of a personal computer, which is a basic element of digital accessibility, however, the proportion of men who have a personal computer was about 6.1%p higher than that of women. Such a gender gap was wider among the group of people who are currently not working(women: 80.9%, men: 93.8%, a gender gap of 9.5%p) in the category of employment status, and among the group of people who have low socioeconomic status(women: 83.2%, men: 93.8%, a gender gap of 10.6%p). This survey result shows that the digital divide widened by different level of resources among different classes could be concentrated to women. When implementing policies to improve digital accessibility of the vulnerable, therefore, it is necessary to take a gender-sensitive approach such as monitoring the impact of policies on different genders.

- In the survey, 43.4% of the respondents had the experience of seeking jobs via online platforms, and just like the survey result in the level of using digital devices, slightly more women(44.3%) than men(42.6%) had job-seeking experience through online platforms. Meanwhile, there was a large gap among the survey participants in their job-seeking experience via online platforms depending on whether they have a personal computer or not (those who have a personal computer: 45.7%, those who don't have a personal computer: 21.8%). With digital transformation, more people are expected to use online platforms to search for job information and employment opportunities. Therefore, the government should make efforts to reduce the digital accessibility divide based on gender, employment status, and socioeconomic status, in order to ensure universal access to job-seeking opportunities.
- In conclusion, this study confirms that women have sufficient capabilities to adapt to digital transformation, as shown in the survey result where more women than men have the experience of using digital devices and seeking jobs through online platforms. Nevertheless, women – in particular, women with low subjective class status – had lower access to digital infrastructure such as a personal computer, compared to men. Therefore, efforts are needed to ensure universal access to digital infrastructure.