

# About 9 out of 10 South Koreans Support the Enactment of a Special Law Tackling

## The 21st National Assembly Needs to Speed Up its Legislative Work to Improve Gender Equality

Authors: Dong Sun Lee, Associate Research Fellow; Jung Soo Kim, Senior Researcher  
(Center for Strategic Projects for Gender Equality, Korean Women's Development Institute)

### Summary

- ◆ The Korean Women's Development Institute(KWDI) announced the survey results of the legislative issues on gender equality that the South Korean public hopes the 21st National Assembly would address.
- To mark the launch of the 21st National Assembly, KWDI conducted a survey of 'the legislative issues on gender equality that the South Korean public hopes the 21st National Assembly would address' in order to explore public opinion on the pending issues regarding gender equality and to propose high-priority legislative tasks for the 21st National Assembly.
- The survey confirmed that South Korean society shares a widespread national consensus on the need to eradicate gender-based violence and reduce gender discrimination.
  - A majority of the survey respondents believed that the legal grounds for measures against gender-based violence should be strengthened.
  - Most of the respondents supported the 'punishment of online grooming' (98.8%), followed by the 'enactment of a special law on the punishment of digital sexual crimes and the prevention of their recurrence' (94.5%), and the 'enactment of a law on the prevention of stalking' (94.4%). Also, at least 7~8 out of 10 respondents supported the introduction of a law that treats non-consensual sex as rape and the abolition of the suspension of indictment policy on the condition of obligatory counsel for the perpetrators of family violence.

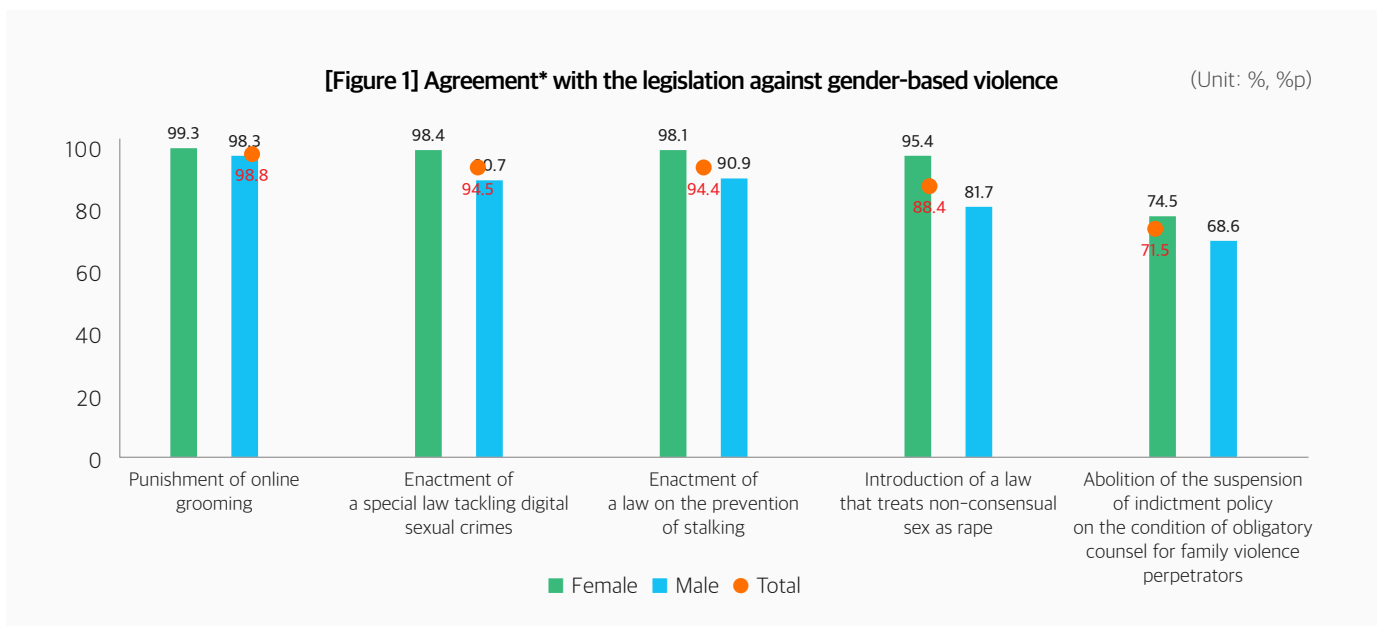
- About 7~8 out of 10 respondents supported the comprehensive ban on discrimination, the complete abolition of the anti-abortion law, and the strengthening of the legal/institutional foundation to narrow the gender gap in the labor market. However, differences in perceptions still existed between men and women in several areas.
- The 21st National Assembly needs to actively enact major gender equality legislation, including the punishment of online grooming, a special law tackling digital sexual crimes, a law on the prevention of stalking, etc., and vigorously implement institutional improvements to reduce gender discrimination in the labor market, etc.

Survey outline	
Category	Content
Sample population	Adult males and females aged 18~69 (international age) nationwide
Sample size	1,500 people: 760 (50.7%) males, 740 (49.3%) females
Survey region	17 cities and provinces
Sampling method	Proportional allocation according to the demographic composition by city/province, gender, and age group
Sampling error	±2.5%p at a 95% confidence level
Survey method	Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI)
Weighting method	Weighted by region, gender, and age: Based on the population registered as residents according to the announcement by the Ministry of the Interior and Safety in April 2020
Survey period	May 14 ~ May 20, 2020 (7 days)
Response rate	10.50%
Surveyed by	Hankook Research Co., Ltd.

1) The legislative issues on gender equality focus on the bills tackling the major areas of gender equality that have been proposed for enactment or revision so far but have not been processed yet, such as the eradication of violence against women and the enhancement of women's representation, etc., and the pending issues that have not been translated into bill proposals despite the calls for legislation by women's communities.

## The public in general firmly supports the need for strong measures against gender-based violence

- The majority of the public (at least 90% of all survey respondents) were found to believe that the legal grounds for measures against gender-based violence should be strengthened.
  - In the wake of the recent Telegram 'Nth Room' case, which prompted an increase in social alertness on the aggravated legal punishment for the perpetrators and the protection of the victims, a widespread national consensus was observed with regard to the need for strict measures against gender-based violence [Please see Figure 1].



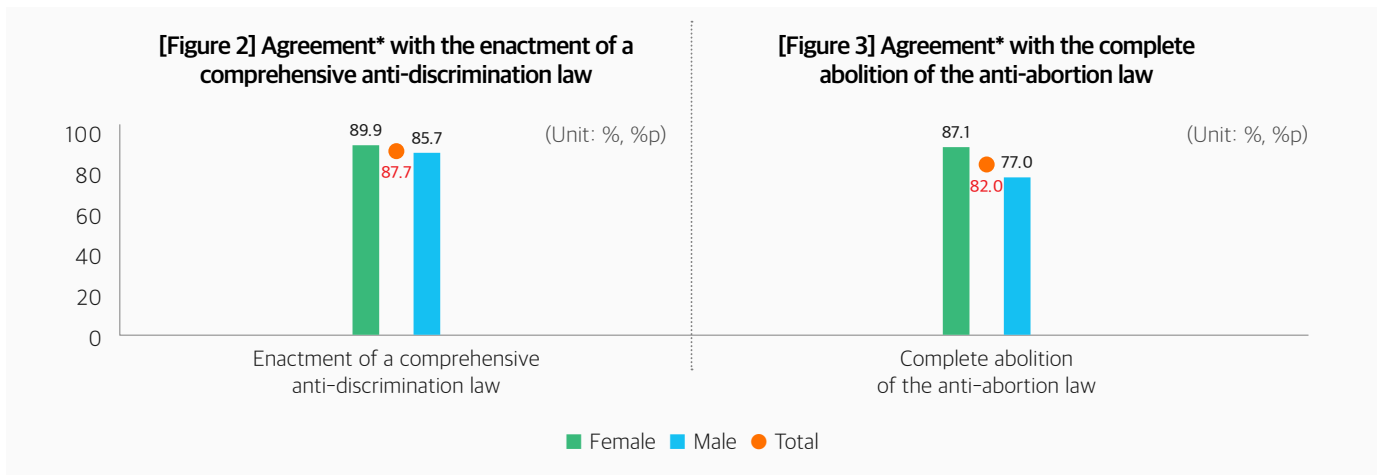
Note: The level of agreement represents the combined responses to 'extremely agree' and 'mostly agree'.

- Among the respondents, 98.8% (99.3% females, 98.3% males) agreed that 'There should be punishment for an act of enticing children or youth in order to demand sexual images of them or to sexually exploit them after building relationships with them online (Punishment of online grooming)'. Among the respondents, 94.5% (98.4% females, 90.7% males) agreed that 'A special law should be enacted to severely punish and prevent the recurrence of digital sexual crimes such as the Nth Room case (Enactment of a special law tackling digital sexual crimes)'.
- With regard to stalking, which is punished only lightly as it is seen as a minor crime under the current law, 94.4% (98.1% females, 90.9% males) agreed that 'A separate law should be enacted to prevent stalking and increase the severity of the punishment for stalking (Enactment of a law on the prevention of stalking)'.
- Also, about 7~8 out of 10 respondents supported the introduction of a law that treats non-consensual sex as rape and the abolition of the suspension of indictment policy on the condition of obligatory counsel for the perpetrators of family violence.

- Among the respondents, 88.4% (95.4% females, 81.7% males) agreed that 'The current law should be revised to punish sexual assault as a rape if the perpetrator ignored the rejection of a victim or committed the assault without consent, regardless of whether there was violence/intimidation (Introduction of a law that treats non-consensual sex as rape)', while 71.5% (74.5% females, 68.6% males) agreed that 'The government should abolish the system that suspends the prosecutor's indictment of domestic violence perpetrators on the condition of counseling (Abolition of the suspension of indictment policy on the condition of obligatory counsel for family violence perpetrators)'.

**There was a considerable level of national consensus on the introduction of a comprehensive anti-discrimination law, the complete abolition of the anti-abortion law, and the strengthening of the legal and institutional foundation to narrow the gender gap in the labor market.**

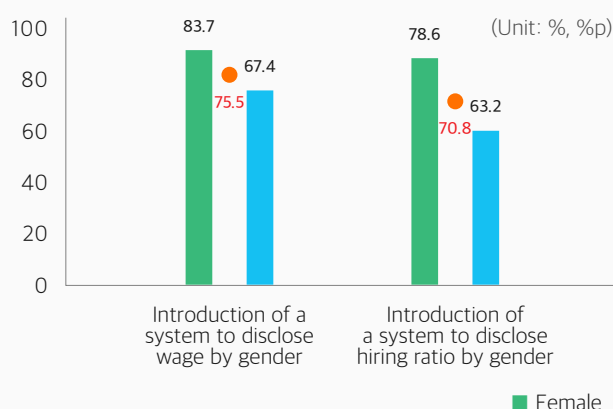
- Among the respondents, 87.7% were in favor of strengthening the legislative foundation for a comprehensive ban on discrimination [Please see Figure 2].
  - The majority of both female and male respondents (89.8% females, 85.7% males) reported that they 'agree' with the statement 'A law should be enacted to ban various types of discrimination based on gender, disability, race, sexual orientation, etc. and to provide remedies for damages'.
- About 8 out of 10 South Korean people were found to be in favor of the complete abolition of the anti-abortion law [Please see Figure 3].
  - Among the respondents, 82.0% (87.1% females, 77.0% males) agreed that 'The legal provision that punishes abortion should be abolished altogether, and women's right to self-determination on abortion should be respected'. The level of agreement was somewhat higher among females than males.



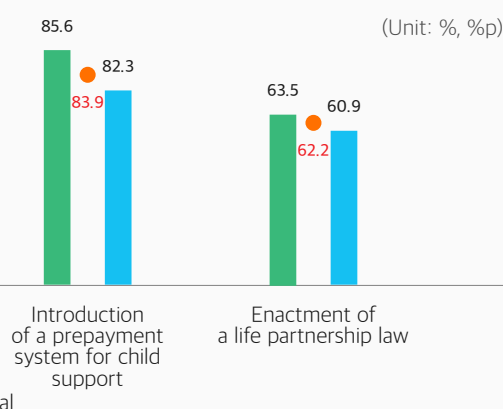
Note: The level of agreement represents the combined responses to 'extremely agree' and 'mostly agree'.

- At least 7 out of 10 respondents supported the introduction of a system to disclose wage by gender and a system to disclose hiring ratio by gender, which indicated that a majority of people are in favor of resolving the gender gap in the labor market [Please see Figure 4].
  - Among the respondents, 75.5% agreed that 'In order to eliminate wage discrimination by gender, public institutions and companies should introduce a system that requires them to disclose the status of wage gaps between men and women'. However, the gender difference in the agreement rates (83.7% females, 67.4% males) suggested that men and women perceive this issue somewhat differently.
  - Among the respondents, 70.8% agreed that 'In order to resolve gender discrimination in hiring, public institutions and companies should introduce a system that requires them to disclose the male-to-female ratio among the applicants and successful applicants in the hiring process'.
- There was a considerable support for the introduction of a prepayment system for child support and the enactment of a life partnership law, which illustrated that there was a high demand for the promotion of family diversity among the public [Please see Figure 5].
  - About 8 out of 10 respondents (85.6% females, 82.3% males) agreed that 'The government should introduce a system in which the state pays child support expenses first and collects them later from the parents who do not rear children, in case these parents fail to pay child support after divorce'.
  - About 6 out of 10 respondents (63.5% females, 60.9% males) agreed that 'If people share livelihoods or residences together, they should be recognized as family members even if they are not married or related by blood, and thereby should be guaranteed equal rights of inheritance/welfare, etc.'

**[Figure 4] Agreement\* with the introduction of the disclosure systems to narrow the gender gap in the labor market**



**[Figure 5] Agreement\* with the legislation to promote family diversity**



Note: The level of agreement represents the combined responses to 'extremely agree' and 'mostly agree'.

**It is necessary to actively promote the legislation on gender equality and simultaneously make efforts to expand the consensus among both men and women.**

- The results confirmed that although there is a widespread national consensus in our society on the need to eradicate gender-based violence and resolve gender discrimination, a gap still exists between women and men in terms of their perceptions about several issues.
  - The 21st National Assembly needs to actively promote major legislation on gender equality and vigorously implement institutional improvements in order to eliminate gender-based violence, resolve gender discrimination in the labor market, and so on.
- In the aftermath of the Telegram Nth Room case, the public came to accept the seriousness of technology-based sexual crimes, and the demand for aggressive measures tackling these crimes increased for both women and men. Therefore, vigorous legislative efforts need to be made to address the issues that are pending legislation, such as the punishment of online grooming, the enactment of anti-stalking law, etc.
- Considering that a reform in the sexist structure of the labor market is a prerequisite to building a gender equal society, and that institutional intervention is essential in achieving this, relevant institutions should be introduced in parallel with the efforts to spread the consensus among both men and women.

Level of agreement for the legislative issues on gender equality by gender (%)				
Area	Question items	Total	Female	Male
Measures against gender-based violence	<b>Punishment of online grooming</b> There should be punishment for an act of enticing children or youth in order to demand sexual images of them or to sexually exploit them after building relationships with them online.	98.8	99.3	98.3
	<b>Enactment of a special law tackling digital sexual crimes</b> A special law should be enacted to severely punish and prevent the recurrence of digital sexual crimes such as the Nth Room case.	94.5	98.4	90.7
	<b>Enactment of a law on the prevention of stalking</b> A separate law should be enacted to prevent stalking and increase the severity of the punishment for stalking.	94.4	98.1	90.9
	<b>Introduction of a law that treats non-consensual sex as rape</b> The current law should be revised to punish sexual assault as a rape if the perpetrator ignored the rejection of a victim or committed the assault without consent, regardless of whether there was violence/intimidation.	88.4	95.4	81.7
	<b>Abolition of the suspension of indictment policy on the condition of obligatory counsel for family violence perpetrators</b> The government should abolish the system that suspends the prosecutor's indictment of domestic violence perpetrators on the condition of counseling.	71.5	74.5	68.6
Ban on discrimination	<b>Enactment of a comprehensive anti-discrimination law</b> A law should be enacted to ban various types of discrimination based on gender, disability, race, sexual orientation, etc. and to provide remedies for damages.	87.7	89.8	85.7
Abolition of the ban on abortion	<b>Agreement with the complete abolition of the anti-abortion law</b> The legal provision that punishes abortion should be abolished altogether, and women's right to self-determination on abortion should be respected.	82	87.1	77
Alleviation of the gender gap in the labor market	<b>Introduction of a system to disclose wage by gender</b> In order to eliminate wage discrimination by gender, public institutions and companies should introduce a system that requires them to disclose the status of wage gaps between men and women.	75.5	83.7	67.4
	<b>Introduction of a system to disclose hiring ratio by gender</b> In order to resolve gender discrimination in hiring, public institutions and companies should introduce a system that requires them to disclose the male-to-female ratio among the applicants and successful applicants in the hiring process.	70.8	78.6	63.2
Promotion of family diversity	<b>Introduction of a prepayment system for child support</b> The government should introduce a system in which the state pays child support expenses first and collects them later from the parents who do not rear children, in case these parents fail to pay child support after divorce.	83.9	85.6	82.3
	<b>Enactment of a life partnership law</b> If people share livelihoods or residences together, they should be recognized as family members even if they are not married or related by blood, and thereby should be guaranteed equal rights of inheritance/welfare, etc.	62.2	63.5	60.9

Note: The level of agreement stated above (Total/Female/Male) represent the combined responses to 'extremely agree' and 'mostly agree'.