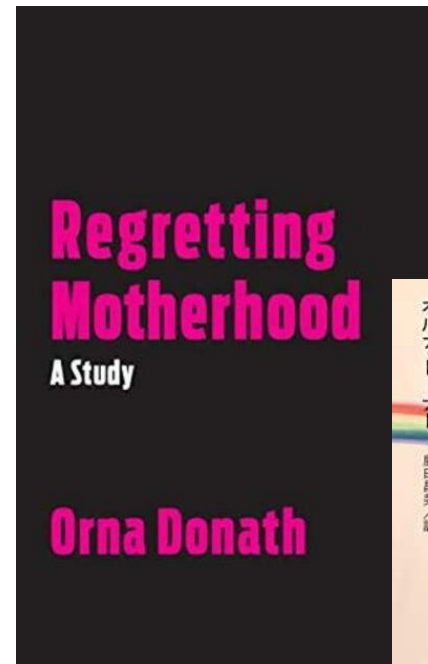


# Japanese Responses to *Regretting Motherhood*

***“The taboo of all taboos that would overturn society by its roots”***

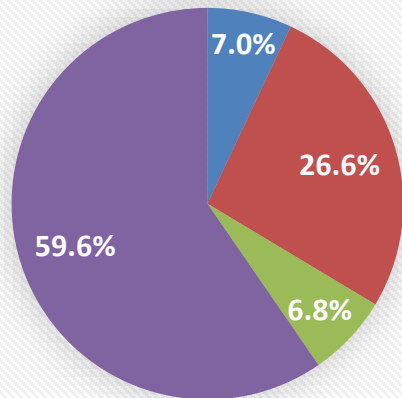
“The first thing I felt after reading the book was relief. **Oh, there are so many others who feel similarly to me.** And they have summoned all their courage to try to voice that sense of discomfort. The fear I had been feeling [...] suddenly subsided and my outlook had changed”

“Mothers with the courage to speak out” by YUZUKI Asako (Japanese novelist)  
<https://www.shinchosha.co.jp/book/507271/>



# Maternal Regret in Japan

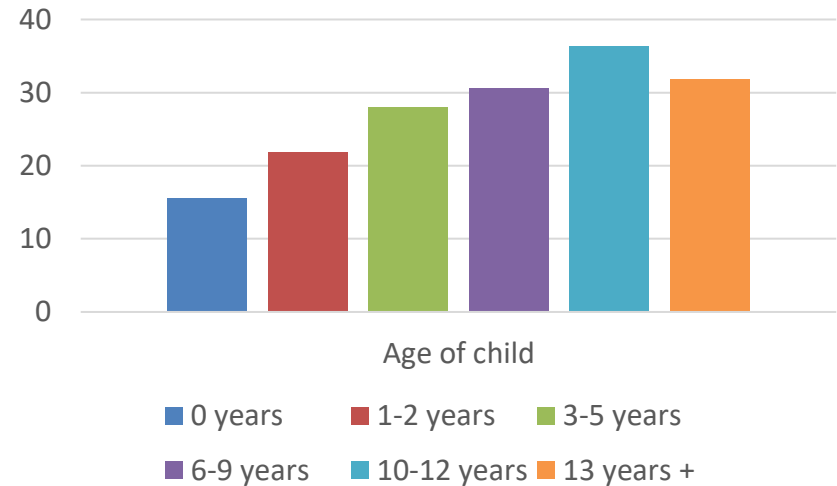
Have you ever thought  
'I should not have given birth'?



Countless times Numerous times  
Just once Never

40% have regretted giving birth at least once,  
1/4 of mothers numerous times

Percentage of mothers who  
answered 'numerous times', by  
age of child



1/3 of mothers with child over 10 regretted  
numerous times

*Imadoki mama no 'honno' chōsa*, Hakuodo and Mama Sutajiamu 2019

## Moving towards a more inclusive approach

- Acknowledge maternal regret as a valid feeling that can be discussed openly and honestly
- Clearly distinguish feelings towards child and feelings towards motherhood: maternal regret  $\neq$  rejection of child
- Move away from solely child-centric approach: mother as a separate person with feelings/needs/desires
- Acknowledge maternal regret not exclusive to over-burdened mothers
- Acknowledge diversity (*tayōsei*) of feelings as well as lifestyles: not all childless/free women want to become mothers, no matter how much support available
- (More) academic (ethnographic) research needed on this topic in Japan!