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Recovery to Replacement Level Is Possible? Fertility Development of Japan Since 2005

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Abstract Text:

Around 2005, the upturn of TFR has been observed in many developed countries and the "End of 'Lowest-Low' Fertility?" was speculated. Within ten years, Japan's TFR recovered from 1.26 at bottom (2005) to 1.45(2015). This study focused on the fertility development of Japan since 2005, to clarify if this trend shows recovery to replacement level of fertility or not. A Lexis diagram indicates the shift of relatively high fertility from young to upper ages. It occurred since 1975 and at the same time the fertility distribution trends to be leveled and its peak is lowered. The TFR under 29 is decreasing and TFR over 30 is increasing. This trend continues unchanged until today. The upturn happened, when the TFR over 30 caught up and over the TFR under 29 around 2005.This timing shift was related by increasing mean age at first marriage since 1974. The extending average years at school after age 15 causes a timing shift with delayed start for match making process with a partner. The four-years delay has changed the distribution of age specific first marriage rates, from an early pattern with high peak, left skew and narrow range, to late pattern with low peak, right skew and wide range. As a result, the cumulative first marriage rate grows too slowly and cannot reach high level at the end of reproductive period. It increases the unmarried rate at 50 years old and shift the mean age of first birth to later age. This increases again the childlessness rate. The same effect was confirmed in the second and higher births order. The probability of multiparity is diminishing. The model estimation indicated 1.78 as the maximum level of TFR in 2016, which is less than the replacement level of fertility 2.08.

Group: RC41 Sociology of Population

Session Selection: Family Demography and Inequality

Title: Recovery to Replacement Level Is Possible? Fertility Development of Japan Since 2005

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Keywords: a shrinking society, childlessness, late marriage and childbearing and lowest-low fertility

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