

Recent Trends and Educational Differentials in Marital Dissolution in Japan

James M. RAYMO, Miho IWASAWA, and Larry BUMPASS

Abstract

Although the crude divorce rate has increased markedly, we know very little about recent trends in divorce in Japan. In this paper, we use Japanese vital statistics and census data to describe trends in the experience of marital dissolution from a marriage cohort perspective, and to examine change over time in educational differentials in divorce. We show that cumulative probabilities of marital dissolution have increased rapidly across successive marriage cohorts over the past twenty years. Synthetic cohort estimates based on data from 2002 also suggest that roughly one-third of Japanese marriages are now likely to end in divorce. Although divorce has increased across the educational spectrum, our results suggest that divorce is increasingly concentrated among women with lower levels of education. Educational differentials were negligible in 1980, but by 2000, women who had not gone beyond high school were far more likely to be divorced than those with a two-year college degree or more.