

# Women's Education and Fertility Strategy in Japan: Spacing or Stopping?

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The purpose of this article is to examine the influence of women's educational attainment on the probability and tempo of having a first and a second child in Japan. Like other developed countries, Japan has experienced a great increase in the enrolment rate of women at universities over the past few decades. A rise in the level of education should theoretically increase woman's earning power in the labour market, leading to an avoidance of or a postponement in childbearing. The extent to which changes in fertility behaviour are affected by women's educational levels has not, however, been sufficiently examined. More specifically, it still remains an open question whether a rise in woman's educational attainment results in a fall in the probability of having children or a delay in the timing of childbearing. In this study, we employed the Mover-Stayer Mixture Model and examined the influence of women's educational attainment on the probability and tempo of having a first and a second child in Japan.

In this analysis we used micro-data obtained from the International Comparative Survey on Marriage and the Family in 2004. The data was collected for men and women aged between 18 and 69. Out of this whole sample, we selected married women between ages 20 and 55, and carried out an analysis of them.

The results of this study show, first, that the levels of women's education significantly affected the tempo of first childbirth, but did not have any bearing on the probability of having a first child. More specifically, compared with less-educated women, those educated to a higher level extended the length of the interval between marriage and a first childbirth, but no difference was observed between these two groups of women in terms of the probability of remaining childless. Hence, a rise in the level of women's education did not result in their abandonment of childbearing, but in their postponement of the timing of bearing a first child. Second, this study found that women's educational attainment had no substantial impact on patterns of second childbearing. In concrete terms, no significant difference existed between women with different levels of education with regard to the period between their first and second childbirth and the probability of bearing a second child. Thus, a rise in women's educational attainment led neither to giving up nor to postponing second childbearing. Third, the results of the present study show that age at first marriage had a salient influence on first and second childbearing behaviour. Specifically, a rise in age at marriage significantly increased the probability of remaining childless. Similarly, compared with women who married earlier in life, those who married later were more likely to forego a second birth. Age at marriage, however, had no bearing on first and second birth intervals. These findings suggest that getting married and having children are tightly interlocked in Japan. Fourth, the results of this study reveal that respondents' birthplace type exerts little influence on patterns of first and second childbearing. Thus, the probability and tempo of having a first and a second child hardly differed among women born in a rural area and those born in an urban area.

All in all, this study suggests that the influence of women's educational attainment on the probability and tempo of having a first and a second child was limited in Japan, and that changes in fertility patterns could not perfectly be attributed to a rise in women's educational attainment.