

Low Fertility Phenomena and Housing Conditions

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The relation between the low fertility phenomena and current housing conditions is analyzed. The analysis focused on the relation between housing conditions and timing of marriage, birth of the first child and that of second or latter children in Tokyo Metropolitan area using data from population census, housing survey and national fertility survey.

The results indicate the following tendency: The influence of housing costs or housing conditions to the low fertility phenomena does not particularly exceed the demographic and socio-economic factors. Nonetheless, as is shown from consciousness surveys, housing cost causes psychological stresses, which in turn may indirectly influence the decision of giving birth. Households seem to plan well concerning having children, and accordingly their prospect for the future is quite important for their decision of having children. These results suggest that: (1) the stability of habitation is important, for the number of children tends to be higher in owned houses or low-rent houses; (2) the current housing condition is potentially important, although it is hard to discern the income effect and housing quality effect, for these two factors correlates; (3) brighter prospect for the future is important, for the number of children tends to be higher in houses habitable for longer periods; and (4) the environment suitable for raising children is important, for the number of children tends to be higher for households living with parents or those who can concentrate on raising children in profession status.

Based on those results, the following policies appear to be important as counter-measure for low fertility phenomena: (1) policy for stabilizing the habitability, i.e., to encourage more (both owned and rental) houses in the market that can be habitable for longer period; (2) counter-measure for recession to remove the fear of economy in the future, which avoids much involuntary unemployment for long time; (3) policy to encourage supply of houses of larger size in the market, that accommodate larger family; and (4) development of housing areas that are equipped with facilities assisting taking care of children, such as longer time day care centers.