

Prospects of Economic and Social Situation and Policy Evaluation: From "Survey of Experts on Prospects of Fertility Decline"

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The purpose of the "Survey of Experts on Prospects of Fertility Decline" is to obtain information that can guide us in population projections and making suggestions for better family policies. The sample of this survey is a group of experts - including demographers and family sociologists - who are familiar with the problems of low fertility and aging society. The questions asked in the survey can be divided broadly into the following four areas: images of low fertility and aging society; prospects of economic and social situations; projections of population indices; and evaluation of family policies regarding low fertility.

The results show that many experts expected continuing and stronger tendencies of people marrying later in their lives, not marrying, and having fewer children in Japan. Such projections are based on their view of the uncertainty of future economic situation, increase in the number of employed women, and diversification of family formation processes.

The experts tend to consider the following family policies necessary and effective: policies related to childcare, such as improvement of childcare facilities and services and a better childcare leave system; reemployment of women and realization of various forms of employment; and increase in men's participation in household chores.

In this paper, we present the frequency distributions of main items and the results of two analyses: (1) how the experts' prediction of total fertility rate (TFR) vary according to their projection of the future economic and social situation; and (2) how the extent to which the experts find family policies necessary varies according to their views on the changes in economic environment.

The results show that the experts' projection of TFR is related to their projection of the following aspects: real economic growth rate; fecundity of Japanese women; strength of the norm that children should take care of their elderly parent(s); and proportions of never-married among women aged 30-34, childless couples, and never-married persons living with their parent(s).

Factor analysis was used for examining the experts' evaluation of family policies. It was found that the experts' evaluation differs by their views of the future economic environment.