

# Below-Replacement Fertility and Family Policy in Japan in an International Comparative Perspective

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The authors aimed at deriving suggestive measures to cope with low fertility, from the comparative analyses of fertility and family policies among developed countries. Fertility in Japan has declined far below replacement level since the middle of the 1970s and its major cause has been the increasing difficulties of balancing occupational work and childcare, due to women's emancipation, which have been aggravated by the persistent traditional gender role relationships. Such Japanese fertility situation is much more similar to that in Southern European countries and German-speaking countries than that in Northern European countries, French-speaking countries and English-speaking countries.

As for family policies for these country groups, Northern European countries and French-speaking countries are more or less common in having implemented relatively strong measures for balancing work and childcare as well as for supporting childcare economically, while Southern European countries are weak in both measures and German-speaking countries are weak in measures for balancing work and childcare. Although family policies in English-speaking countries are as weak as those in Southern European countries, they have come to be "family-friendly societies" through the development of childcare market and flexible job market and changing gender role relationships. Japanese Government has strengthened since 1990, the year of "1.57", measures for balancing work and childcare but their extent and levels are still insufficient if compared with Northern European countries and French-speaking countries and measures for supporting childcare financially are among the weakest in developed countries. Therefore strengthening family policies in these two aspects would be conducive to the rise in fertility in Japan.