

Leaving Home in Japan: Its Trends, Gender Differences, and Determinants

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This paper examines home-leaving behavior in Japan using The Fourth National Survey on Household Changes. First, life table measures are calculated by sex and cohort using the information of 15,722 individuals aged 20-59 without missing values on the experience of leaving home and on the age at leaving if ever left. Comparison of life tables reveals that the delay in leaving the parental home has been taking place since the cohort born in early 1950s. However, the proportion left home by age 20 in females born in early 1970s is higher than their predecessors, suggesting the delay is coming to an end.

Male and female home-leaving behaviors of cohorts born around 1960 are compared with those in Europe and North America. It is revealed that, unlike in other developed countries, males leave the parental home earlier than female in Japan. This uniqueness is due to the fact that much more males leave home before marriage, especially at the age 18, than females.

The proportion co-residing with parents among those who ever left home are calculated to estimate the probability of returning home. Although it is difficult to estimate accurately due to the lack of necessary data, the returning probability seems to be about 40 percent for those who left by age 22. The probability is highest for those who left for higher education and is lowest for those who left for marriage.

A logistic regression analysis shows that parents' living in metropolitan area, house ownership, education, mother's not working on fulltime basis, and small family size prevent children from leaving home. It is inferred that daughters are more sensitive to mother's labor force status and that sons are more attracted by educational and occupational opportunities found only in metropolitan areas. According to a bivariate analysis in this paper and more sophisticated analyses in past studies using other survey data, it is unlikely that the delay in leaving home is the main reason of nuptiality and fertility decline in Japan. Therefore, it cannot be said that the delay in leaving home is the cause of very low fertility in Japan.