

Recent Changes in Return Migration to Prefecture of Birthplace in the Non-metropolitan Regions

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This paper analyses patterns and trends in inter-prefectural return migration to the non-metropolitan regions in Japan. Analysis of pooled data drawn from the National Survey on Migration over the last 20 years finds a recent decline in the 5-year migration rate, defined as the proportion of return migrants to the prefecture of birthplace among those who lived outside the prefecture of birthplace 5 years ago, for both males and females aged 20-39. A significant decline is observed for never-married males, and those who have graduated from university, including post-graduate school, in the last 5 years, although they are the principal return migrants. Analysis of post-graduation return migration confirms that, for both males and females, those who have graduated from a university or college in the Tokyo metropolitan region have the lowest return migration rate, compared to those who have completed higher education in the other regions. It is also observed that, compared to those born in 1971-80, the post-graduation return migration rate from the metropolitan regions is significantly lower for males and females born in 1981-90. These findings provide new evidence for the recent decline in return migration to non-metropolitan regions, particularly among the younger cohorts born after around 1980. Further research is needed to examine the timings of return migration after post-graduation employment, and their impacts on levels and trends in the overall return migration for each cohort.