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Sixteenth Japanese National Fertility Survey: Summary of Results

The National Institute of Population and Social Security Research has compiled the results of the Sixteenth Japanese National Fertility Survey (JNFS) conducted in June 2021 (Reiwa 3). The JNFS is conducted periodically to examine marriage and childbearing patterns in Japan to understand population trends and provide basic data for developing policies. It consists of a survey of unmarried men and women and a survey of married women. The survey was originally scheduled to be conducted in June 2020 (Reiwa 2), but it was postponed for one year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

[Sample] Unmarried men and women aged 18 to 55 and married women under the age of 55 living in 1,000 districts (census tracts) selected randomly from all survey districts established for the 2021 Comprehensive Survey of Living Conditions of the People on Health and Welfare.

[Period of Survey] June 2021 (Information as of June 30)

[Number of Responses] **Survey of Unmarried Men and Women:** 14,011 questionnaires distributed, 7,826 valid responses (55.9% response rate); **Survey of Married Women:** 9,401 questionnaires distributed, 6,834 valid responses (72.7% response rate)

[Key Findings] (“P.” indicates the page number in the “Summary of Results” in Japanese.)

● Views on Marriage and Childbearing among Never-married Persons

- The percentage of never-married persons aged 18-34 who report that they “intend to get married someday” decreased regardless of gender, age, or “lifestyle” reflected in personal tastes and preferences (men: 81.4%, compared to 85.7% in the previous survey; women: 84.3%, compared to 89.3% in the previous survey). → P.18, P.19, P.38
- The percentage of never-married persons who are in a romantic relationship remained unchanged at 21.1% for men and decreased slightly to 27.8% for women compared to the previous survey. At the same time, 1 in 3 never-married persons has no desire to be in a romantic relationship. Six out of 10 men and women have ever been in a romantic relationship with a person of the opposite sex (60.0% of men and 64.8% of women). → Pp.25-27
- For the first time since the survey was conducted, the most common response for the ideal “women’s life course” was “balancing work and child-rearing” for both men and women. → P.31, P.32

- In terms of desired traits in a potential marriage partner, men increasingly indicate that a woman's financial ability is either important or a consideration (48.2% vs. 41.9% in the previous survey), while the percentage of women who consider a man's housework and childrearing attitudes and ability to be important has increased significantly (70.2% vs. 57.7% in the previous survey). → P.33
- The average number of children desired decreased for all age groups (1.82 vs. 1.91 in the previous survey for men; 1.79 vs. 2.02 in the previous survey for women). → P.34, P.35
- Support for the views that “one should have children after marriage” and “femininity and masculinity are necessary” declined significantly. → P.93

● Marriage, Childbearing, and Child-rearing among First Married Couples

- The percent of first married couples who met at their workplace or through friends decreased, while couples who met through Internet services such as SNS and matching apps now account for 13.6% of recent marriages. → P.42
- The number of children ever born to couples with wives aged 45-49 decreased (1.81 children compared to 1.86 children in the previous survey), reflecting the effect of later marriage. → P.45
- The average number of children a couple expects to have remained unchanged (2.01 children in both this and the previous survey). → P.54
- The percentage of women who chose “child-rearing and education is too costly” as the reason for not having their ideal number of children decreased. Still, it remains the most commonly chosen reason. → P.58, P.59
- The percent of couples who have undergone testing/treatment for infertility increased from 18.2% to 22.7%. 6.7% of couples married for less than 5 years were undergoing testing/treatment for infertility at the time of the survey. → P.64
- The percentage of wives who continued to work before and after the birth of their first child rose from about 50% to almost 70% over the past five years, reaching 69.5% for wives who gave birth between 2015 and 2019. 79.2% of those remaining employed used childcare leave. → P.68