

Trends in Household Formation and Dissolution in Japan

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The Fifth, Sixth and Seventh National Surveys on Household Changes, conducted in 2004, 2009, and 2014, respectively, were used to calculate transition rates between household positions of individuals for examining trends in household formation and dissolution in Japan. Analysis results reveal that while the number of one-person households increased exceptionally between the 2005 and 2010 censuses, transition matrices generated from the three surveys did not indicate sudden acceleration in the propensity to live alone around 2005. It was also shown that the gender gap in household formation behavior among single persons has widened in recent years. While the intensity of home-leaving and marriage has declined monotonously for single women, the propensity to live alone has increased for single men since 2009. The coresidence of married children with parents decreased based on the seventh survey. The percentage of matrilocal coresidence declined more rapidly than patrilocal coresidence in the seventh survey, breaking the tendency toward a more egalitarian choice of locality until the sixth survey. The increasing propensity to live alone among the elderly was apparent not only in the distribution at survey date but also in the latent pattern suggested by the transition matrix. Among the elderly, around 50% of marriage dissolution, mostly by the death of spouse, resulted in the transition to living alone. The percentage of those living in an institutional household five years before the survey date was highest among young men, suggesting that the probability of an elderly person leaving a nursing home is lower than that of a younger person leaving dormitory or social institution. The most important purpose of the National Survey on Household Changes is to obtain the parameters necessary for the Household Projections for Japan. An example was shown as to how the results of the sixth survey were used in the previous household projection.