

## Delayed Childbearing and the Changing Age Composition of Women who Desire Children

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The main cause of lowest-low fertility in Japan is not an increase in the prevalence of women who do not intend to have any children but rather the postponement of childbearing. We identified women who desired at least one (additional) child using responses to a question about fertility intentions in the National Fertility Surveys, and described changes in the size and composition of this group as a consequence of delayed childbearing. The number of reproductive age women desiring a child increased 17% between 1982 and 2005 - from 9.78 million to 11.47 million. Over the same period, this population aged, with the proportion at least 35 years old increasing dramatically from 5% to 15%.

Because female fecundity declines with age, this aging of the population of women desiring additional children will presumably result in an increase in infertility. Focusing on women who report visiting a clinic to seek help in having a child, we use data from the National Fertility Surveys to estimate the number of women in Japan who are receiving examinations or medical care related to fertility. These estimates show that 179 thousand women (95% confidence interval, 139 - 220) were receiving examinations or medical care at the survey time in 2005. Among this population, 120 thousand women are childless, while another 50 thousand with one child are facing so-called secondary infertility.