

# Trends in Total Marital Fertility Rates: An Explanation by Socioeconomic Developments, Gender Regime, and Reproductive Technology

Shohei YODA and Miho IWASAWA

The roles of three domains, namely socioeconomic developments, gender regime, and reproductive technology, are well emphasized in explaining fertility changes in the modern and post-modern eras. According to these perspectives, developed countries with very low fertility rates will experience fertility upturn as (1) economic resources play an advantageous role in reproduction within a slow-growth economy; (2) transformation of the gender system eases work-family conflict; and (3) assisted reproductive technologies partly make up for the "lost" births resulting from postponement of childbearing. In order to understand to what extent this model of fertility change in an advanced society is applicable in post-war Japan, we present the trends in marital fertility indices using survey data.

Using data from Japanese National Fertility Surveys conducted from 1977 to 2015, we demonstrate the trends in the period Total Marital Fertility Rates (*TMFR*) and describe the differential trends in the *TMFR* by subpopulations. We found that, similar to the Total Fertility Rate, the trend of the *TMFR* reversed around 2005 from the bottom level of 1.79 to 2.12 in 2014. This upturn of the *TMFR* is prominent among married couples who were previously characterized by lower marital fertility compared with their counterparts (e.g., wives or husbands with a college degree, couples with wives who have liberal gender-role attitudes). Additionally, couples who had undergone fertility treatment contributed significantly to the rise in marital fertility. These results are mostly consistent with the explanations for fertility changes in the developed world. We conclude that Japan seems to be in a transitional phase, changing from a "lowest-low fertility society" to a "low-fertility society."