

## Introduction

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In July 2011, National Institute of Population and Social Security Research (IPSS) had conducted the Seventh National Survey on Migration, one of the five surveys the IPSS carries out on regular basis. Due to the Great East Japan Earthquake hit in the midst of the preparation of this survey in March 2011, Iwate, Miyagi and Fukushima prefectures were excluded from the survey and the survey in Hokkaido was postponed to September 2011. Nonetheless, the total of 11,353 households with 29,320 household members, or 73.5% of eligible 15,449 households, answered the questionnaire. The basic results were already published on the web ([www.ipss.go.jp](http://www.ipss.go.jp)) and e-Stat, the portal site of official statistics of Japan.

The First National Survey on Migration was conducted in 1976, followed by the Second in 1986, after which the survey became quinquennial in 1991, 1996, 2001, 2006 and 2011. Although there were significant changes in the survey design throughout the seven surveys stretching over 35 years, all household members were covered since the Third Survey in 1991, and the question items were stabilized approximately since the Fourth (1996).

In Japan, official statistics regarding internal migration can be found in the Census and the Report on Internal Migration, both published by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications. These are the statistics which cover the whole population of Japan, allowing regional and municipal level analysis. The National Survey on Migration of IPSS, an official national sample survey, clarifies the detailed migration characteristics such as the place of residence at the time of important life events such as the birth, junior high school graduation, first employment or first marriage, and the time-points such as one year ago, five years ago and before the last move, as well as the life-time residence history, the reason of migration, possibility of future moving and so forth.

Mobility is normally high in earlier stage of life, due to the enrollment for the higher education, employment or marriage which would happen during one's 20's. In Japan in 2011, with highest rate of population ageing in the world, naturally, the slowdown of migration was observed on the overall basis. However, detailed analyses revealed particular changes of migration trend such as higher mobility of young women due to the higher educational achievement, wider range of migration experience of young people or high mobility among the elderly who are unhealthy or do not own a house. In the Special Issue of this volume (Vol.69 No.4) and the next (Vol.70 No.1), further in-depth analyses will be performed.

In the 1970's when the National Survey on Migration started, the main focus of internal migration was mainly on the rapid urbanization and concentration of the population in metropolitan areas of Japan. Now in the 2010's, even with the population decline, some urban areas are gaining population and the number of household is increasing, and the migration studies still play an important role. How we can fulfill our lives by moving or staying, where lies the best balance for the decision of migration, such are the questions which remain to be investigated along with the mechanism of mobility.