

Regional Marital Fertility in Japan: Analysis of 15 Sample Surveys from 2000 to 2010

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In Japan, the total fertility rate (TFR) varies by region. While the TFR in Japan has been below replacement level since the latter half of the 1970s, the TFR in large urban areas has been lower than in small urban or rural areas. This TFR gap is related to the differences in nuptiality. In large urban areas, the proportion of those married has been lower and age at first marriage has been higher. Although TFR could be related to not only nuptiality but also marital fertility, the relationship between the TFR gap and difference in marital fertility has not been extensively studied.

In this study, we evaluate marital fertility differences of the nine regions into which Japan is divided; these are Hokkaido, Tohoku, Kita-Kanto, Minami-Kanto, Hokuriku-Koshinetsu, Tokai, Kinki, Chushikoku, and Kyusyu-Okinawa. We used microdata from 15 sets of national sample surveys from 2000 to 2010.

First, we examine the regional distribution of the average number of children who were born to married women aged 45–64 when the survey was conducted. The median of the average number of children varied from 1.97 in the Minami-Kanto region to 2.27 in the Kyushu-Okinawa region. By using Games-Howell post hoc tests, the statistically significant differences in the average number of children are observed between Minami-Kanto and other regions apart from Hokkaido and Kinki, and between Kyusyu-Okinawa and other regions apart from Tohoku, Hokuriku-Koshinetsu, and Chushikoku.

Second, we investigate the regional distribution of the parity progression ratio of married women aged 45–64 when the survey was conducted. While in Minami-Kanto the progression ratios from parity one to parity two, and from parity two to parity three, are lower than in other regions, in Kyusyu-Okinawa, these ratios are higher than in other regions.

According to the above results, we discuss how these differences could be related to regional TFR gaps, and note that in all regions nuptiality could be the main cause for a TFR being below the replacement level of TFR.