

# Understanding the Female Life-course Changes: Gap between Desired and Anticipated Life Courses among Unmarried Women

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Despite the established evidence of changes in women's life-course patterns in post-war Japan, their interpretation remains open to question. Have these changes occurred in accordance with or against individual preferences? This paper aims to advance our understanding of women's life course changes by focusing on the gaps between the life-course patterns preferred and anticipated by unmarried women aged 18-19. Using data from the National Fertility Surveys (n=3,999), we found that those in favor of lifelong singlehood, DINKs (Double Income, No Kids), or continued work after marriage and childbirth reported a better prospect of realizing their preferences. In contrast, those inclined towards temporary and permanent exit from the labor market upon marriage and childbirth reported a lower likelihood of following through on their desires. Furthermore, these consistencies and inconsistencies between desired and anticipated life-course patterns among unmarried women have been relatively stable over the last three decades.

Keywords: life course, preference, family change