

An International Comparison of Fertility Decline and Policy Responses in Japan, China, and South Korea

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This study is an international comparison of the development and causes of declining fertility and policy responses in Japan, China, and South Korea. These three countries differ in the timing of when the total fertility rate reached a state of persistently below the population replacement level, the speed of change in fertility-related indicators, and the timing of when governments began to address policies against declining fertility. However, they all share the fact that the declining birthrate is due to "postponement of marriage and childbearing," and that the factors behind this decline include the weakening of the economic base of the younger generation, difficulties in balancing work and family under the persistent gender role division of labor, gender differences in the burden of housework and childcare, changing views on marriage and family, and fierce educational competition. While a number of policies have already been proposed and implemented in Japan and South Korea, efforts in China are still in their infancy. All three countries have adopted the direction of shifting to a society in which it is easier to "work and raise children together" as a solution to the declining birthrate, and this requires changes in the social structure in each country. It is important to share information and conduct research on this difficult policy issue in each country.

Keywords: low fertility, family policy, Japan, China, South Korea