

Childhood Family Instability in Japan: Construction of Family History Data for Children by Retrospective Social Survey and Its Application

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The aims of this article are twofold: (1) to construct family history data for the children of survey respondents using a retrospective social survey that gathered information on marital history, pregnancy, and childbirth history, and (2) to estimate the cumulative rates of parental separation, divorce, and remarriage, thereby evaluating the degree of family instability from the perspective of children. We obtained the following results: First, evaluating the representativeness of child cases from the cumulative datasets of "The Japanese National Fertility Survey" (the 14th–16th rounds), conducted in 2010, 2015, and 2021 respectively, indicated no significant selection bias in sample characteristics for children born within approximately 15 years prior to each survey year (1995–2021) compared to vital statistics. Second, estimates using this cohort data revealed that for children born after 2005, the rates of parental separation or divorce, based on the marital histories of first-marriage mothers, decreased compared to earlier birth cohorts. In conclusion, it was highlighted that constructing family history data from retrospective social surveys serves as an effective analytical tool for estimating changes and the quantitative scale of family life experiences children undergo.

Keywords: children, family history data, family instability, retrospective social survey