

# Marriage Intentions Among Never Married Japanese Individuals

## Background

- Average ages at first marriage in Japan have been steadily increasing, and they are among the oldest in the world (Raymo & Iwasawa, 2008)
- In 2008, average ages at first marriage were
  - 30 years for men
  - 29 years for women
 (Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, 2009)
- Proportion of those who have never married has also been increasing (Raymo & Iwasawa, 2008)
- About 26% of men and 14% of women ages 35-39 were never married in 2000 (Raymo & Iwasawa, 2008)
- Overwhelming majorities of Japanese young single men and women expect to marry someday (e.g., Kaneko et al., 2008; Raymo & Iwasawa, 2008)
- What factors are associated with marriage intentions among never married Japanese men and women?

## Positive Factors Associated with Marriage Intentions

- Marriage has a symbolic importance as a marker of adulthood (Lebra, 1984; Yamada & Shirakawa, 2008)
- Marriage and childbearing are strongly connected in Japan, with nonmarital births accounting for roughly 2% of all births (e.g., Lebra, 1984; Tsuya & Mason, 1995; Tsuya & Bumpass, 2004)

## Negative Factors Associated with Marriage Intentions

- Women's educational attainment has greatly improved (e.g., Raymo & Iwasawa, 2005)
- Traditional gender relationships remain strong (e.g., Tsuya & Bumpass, 2004)
- The specialization framework is supported in Japan; women's economic resources are negatively associated with the transition to marriage (e.g., Ono, 2003, Raymo & Iwasawa, 2005)

## Hypotheses

- H1: Positive attitudes toward the importance of marriage in life are positively associated with marriage intentions
- H2: The desire to have a child is positively related to marriage intentions
- H3: Gender and economic resources interact:
  - Women's economic resources are negatively associated with marriage intentions
  - Men's economic resources are positively related to marriage intentions

## Data and Methods

- The Japan 2000 National Survey on Family and Economic Conditions (Tsuya, Bumpass, & Rindfuss, 2008, N = 4,482)
- Never married men and women ages 20-39 (n = 1,793)
- Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression models were estimated
- Interactions between gender and economic resources were tested

Figure 1  
Marriage Intentions  
"Do you want to get married someday?"

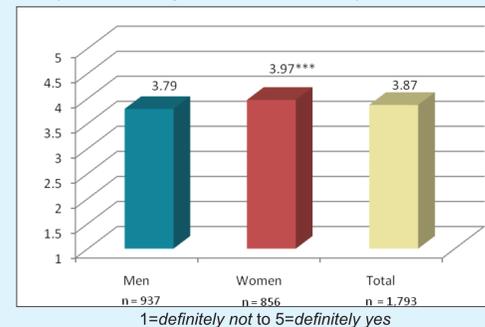


Figure 2  
Importance of Marriage and Desire to Have a Child

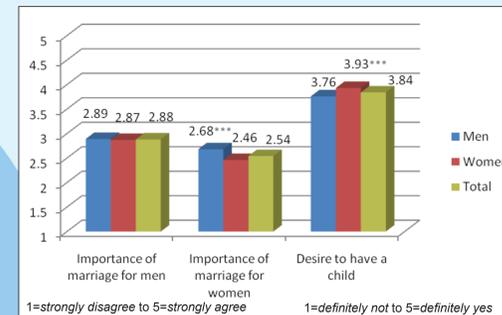


Figure 3  
Educational Attainment and Employment Status

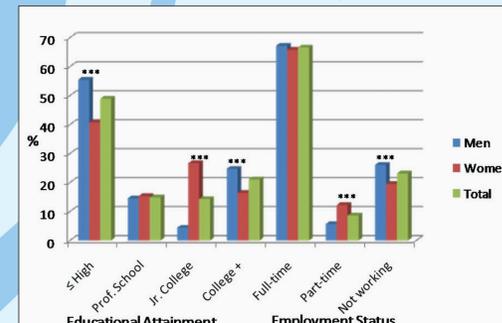


Table 1  
OLS Regression Models Predicting Marriage Intentions

Independent Variables	b	SE
Gender (women=1)	0.129 ***	0.04
Age (in years)	-0.013 **	0.004
Importance of marriage for men	0.072 ***	0.02
Importance of marriage for women	0.104 ***	0.02
Desires to have a child	0.460 ***	0.02
Dating status (1=yes)	0.270 ***	0.04
Educational attainment		
Junior high school	0.117	0.08
Professional training	-0.005	0.05
Junior college	0.037	0.05
College or more	0.107 *	0.04
Other	-0.005	0.21
Employment status		
Full-time	-0.097	0.66
Not working	-0.136 *	0.07
Other	-0.363 **	0.14
Income		
< 1 million Japanese yen	-0.078	0.05
1-1.99 million Japanese yen	-0.132 **	0.05
4-5.99 million Japanese yen or more	0.008	0.06
Co-residence with parents (1 = yes)	0.019	0.04
Urban residence in childhood (1 = yes)	-0.033	0.04
Current geographic size		
Large metropolitan cities	-0.031	0.04
Small cities/towns	-0.049	0.05
Rural areas	-0.023	0.05
Gender role attitudes	0.009	0.02
Success in work (1=yes)	0.097 †	0.05
Spending time with family (1=yes)	0.186 ***	0.04
Intercept	1.882 ***	0.17
Adjusted R-square	0.4399	

Source: The Japan 2000 National Survey on Family and Economic Conditions  
† p < .10, \*p < .05, \*\*p < .01, \*\*\*p < .001.

## Findings

- A strong belief in the importance of marriage was positively related to marriage intentions
- The desire to have a child was positively and strongly associated with marriage intentions
- Women were more likely than men to intend to marry
- There was no significant interaction between gender and economic resources
- Age was negatively associated with marriage intentions
- Factors associated with marriage intentions did not differ greatly for singles in 20s and 30s (results not shown)
- Among women, those with college degrees were *more* likely to intend to marry, compared to those who have completed high school (result not shown)

## Limitations

- Never married individuals in their 40s were not included because of small sample sizes
- Cross-sectional data did not allow tests of the causal order between some key factors (e.g., desire to have children, belief in importance of marriage, and marriage intentions)

## Conclusion

- Japanese singles still report relatively strong marriage intentions
- Women have *stronger* marriage intentions than men, regardless of the persistence of gendered domestic responsibilities for Japanese married women
- A strong desire for parenthood is a very powerful factor in predicting marriage intentions among Japanese singles