



Marital Dissolution, Remarriage, and Fertility in Japan

About the Webinar

Many studies have demonstrated that later and less marriage, in combination with negligibly low levels of non-marital childbearing, is the primary reason for Japan's very low total fertility rate. One surprising omission from the large body of research on the relationship between marriage and fertility is explicit attention to the role of marital dissolution and remarriage. This is a critical limitation in light of the relatively high prevalence of both divorce and remarriage. In Japan, one-fourth to one-third of marriages end in divorce and one-fifth of all marriages involve at least one spouse who was formerly married. In this paper, we use data from the 2010 and 2015 rounds of the National Fertility Survey to quantify the contributions of marital dissolution and remarriage to period fertility rates. In the absence of non-marital fertility, we expect marital dissolution to contribute to lower fertility and remarriage to contribute to higher fertility. The relationship between remarriage and childbearing is a major research focus in Europe and the U.S., but to our knowledge, we are the first to examine this question with large nationally representative data in Japan. Preliminary analyses show that the total fertility rate in 2010-15 would have been roughly 5% higher than observed if first-married couples experienced no divorce and 5% lower if women who did exit first marriages via divorce were not exposed to the risk of fertility in the context of remarriage. In subsequent revisions, we will extend analyses to examine the contributions of divorce and remarriage to change over time in the total fertility rate. We will also supplement our simple synthetic cohort analyses with simulations of individual behavior under alternative assumptions about divorce rates, remarriage rates, and stepfamily fertility rates.

About the Speaker



Jim Raymo is Professor of Sociology and the Henry Wendt III Professor of East Asian Studies at Princeton University. Raymo is a social demographer whose research focuses on documenting and understanding the causes and potential consequences of demographic changes associated with population aging in Japan. His published research includes analyses of marriage timing, divorce, recession and fertility, marriage and women's health, single mothers' well-being, living alone, family change and social inequality, employment and health at older ages, and regional differences in health at older ages. He is currently engaged in three projects. In the third project, he is working with colleagues in Japan to document the well-being of single mothers and their children and to understand the ways in which intergenerational coresidence and exchanges of support may (or may not) offset some of the disadvantages faced by unmarried mothers. His research has been published in leading U.S. journals such as *American Sociological Review*, *American Journal of Sociology*, *Demography*, *Journal of Gerontology: Social Sciences*, and *Journal of Marriage and Family* as well as in Japanese journals. Raymo serves on the board of directors of the Population Association of America and is an associate editor of *Journals of Gerontology: Social Sciences* and *Demography*. He earned his Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Michigan in 2000.



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