

# Sixth Family Research Network (FRN) Forum:

## *“Singlehood in Singapore: Issues and Challenges”*

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# Understanding Singlehood: The Japan Case Study

Dr. Mika TOYOTA

Department of Sociology

National University of Singapore

# Outline

## **Key question:**

Is delayed and non-marriage due to non-traditionalistic individualism or due to traditionalistic attitude toward marriage and family?

## **Structure of the talk:**

- Trends in late and non-marriage in Japan
- Reasons for the increasing singlehood
- Social and policy Implications

# Never married Japanese women

(30-44 years old) (%)

(source: National Institute of Population and social Security Research)

AGE	1970	1980	1990	1995	2000	2005
30-34	7.2	9.1	13.9	19.7	26.6	32.0
35-39	5.8	5.5	7.5	10.1	13.9	18.7
40-44	5.3	4.4	5.8	6.8	8.6	12.2

# Never married Japanese Men

(40-54 years old) (%)

(National Institute of Population and social Security Research)

AGE	1970	1980	1990	1995	2000	2005
40-44	2.8	4.7	11.8	16.5	18.7	22.7
45-49	1.9	3.1	6.8	11.3	14.8	17.6
50-54	1.5	2.1	4.4	6.7	10.3	14.4

# Proportion of those who are never married at the age of 50

(日本の世帯数の将来推計より)

	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030
Male	12.57	15.96	19.1	22.7	26.0	28.5	29.5
Female	5.82	7.25	10.0	13.6	17.4	20.8	22.6

# Changing attitudes toward marriage? (1)

- “Japanese women are more skeptical than Japanese men about the benefits of marriage”

(Tsuya, Mason and Bumpass 2004:46)

- “Is marriage necessary?” (2011)

(Internet Survey: n=264 among working women in their 20s -40s)

15.9 %: Yes, it is absolutely necessary

35.6 %: Yes, it may be necessary

43.9 %: No, it may not be so crucial

2.7 %: No, it is not necessary

1.9 %: I do not know

# Changing attitudes toward marriage? (2)

- Financial stability
  - Japanese men without life-time employment are hesitant to get married
  - The phenomenon of “parasite single”
- “marriage package”:
  - Marriage is not simply a matter between two individuals, but it encompasses complex issues of child bearing, child rearing, and care for the elderly, especially parents-in-law



## Changing attitudes toward marriage? (3)

- Acceptance of pre-marital sex:
  - Sex is longer solely associated with reproduction purpose
  - However, pregnancy is likely to lead to marriage. The proportion of births by unmarried women is as low as 1-2 % in the past 40 years.
  - Marriage is regarded as essential for childbearing in Japan
- “shot-gun wedding”:
  - 25.3 % of birth in Japan were from “*shotgun marriages*” (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare 2009)
  - 63.6 % of birth among 20-24 years old are “shotguns”

# Implications of singlehood

- Increasing number of international marriages

- Japanese male married to foreign brides (79%)
- Japanese female married to foreign grooms (21%)

The numbers of Japanese married overseas:

- Japanese female married to foreign grooms (67.8%)
- Japanese male married to foreign brides (13.7%)

- Smaller size of household: 2.46 persons per household (2010 Census)

- Increasing number of single elderly, which poses new challenges in elderly care

- International retirement migration to Southeast Asian countries