

Japan's Baby Crisis

Why does the birth rate keep falling?

Haruka Sakamoto

Associate Professor, Tokyo Women's Medical University

Japan's declining birthrate is caused by • • • •

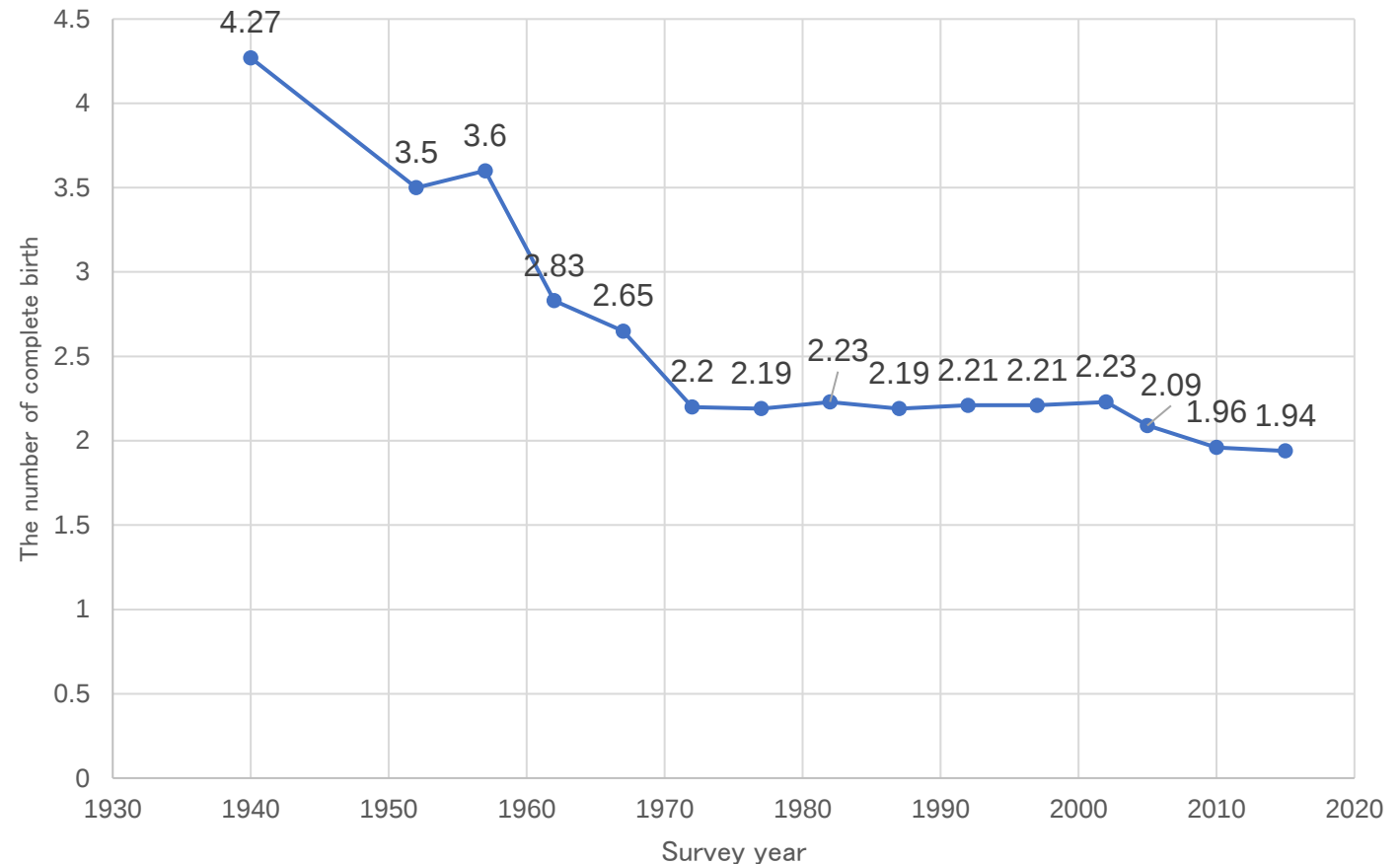
- Changing Values of the Younger Generation
- Younger generations have come to see love and marriage as a bother and a hassle.
- Diversification of entertainment, including the Internet/SNS
- Women have become more educated is a factor in the declining birthrate
- The poorer they are, the more children they have.

All assumptions not based on data and old-fashioned values

The biggest factor is the increase in the number of **unmarried** people

- Lifetime unmarried rate (% unmarried at age 50)
Male 2.60% Female 4.45% (1980)
Male 23.37% Female 14.06% (2015)

The number of complete births to couples has remained mostly unchanged to a gradual decline in recent years



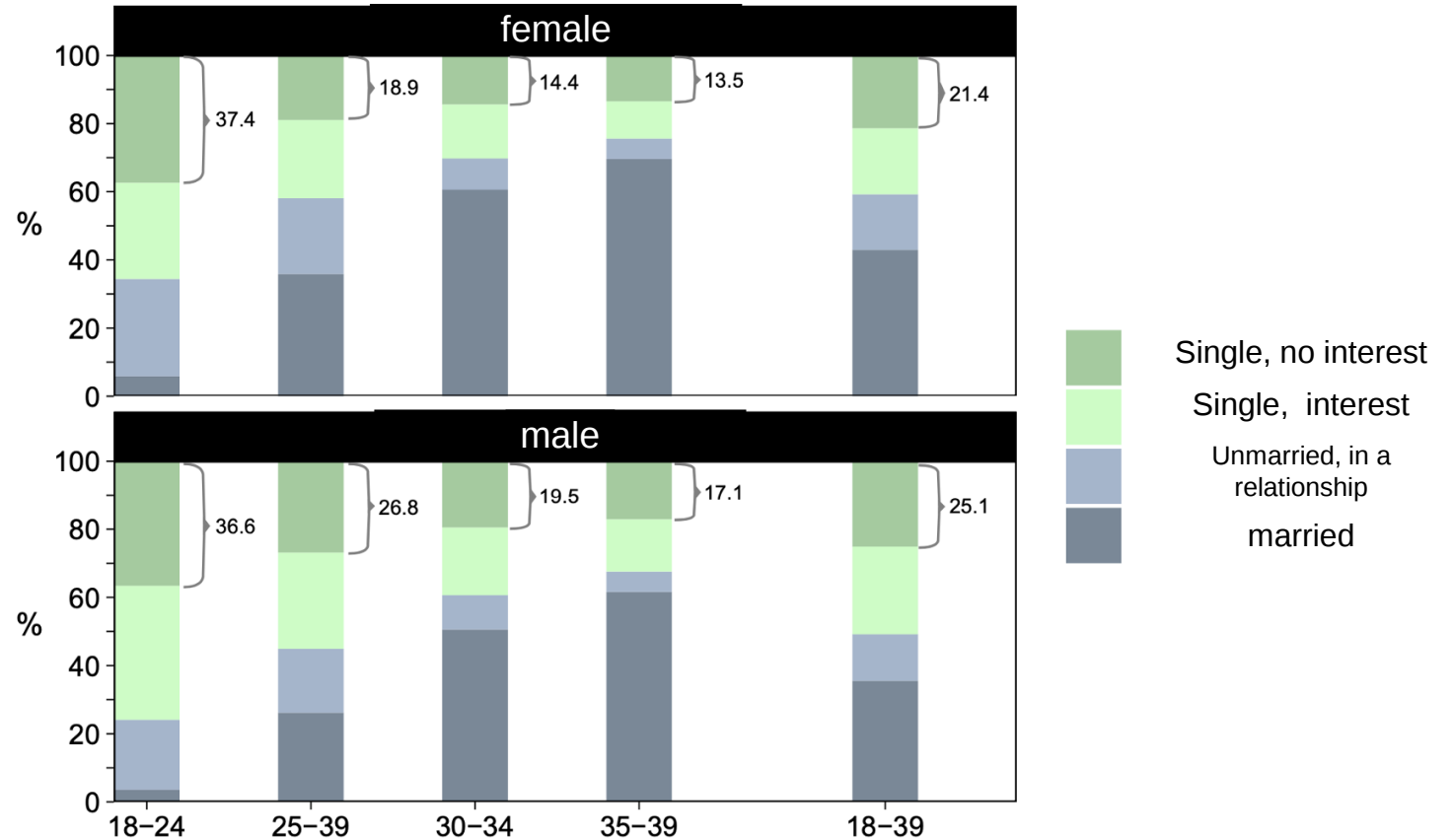
Increasing percentage of "herbivores"

Singles (never married and not in a relationship) aged 18-39

- Male 40.3% Female 27.4% (1992)
- Male 50.8% Female 40.7% (2015)

Interest in dating with the opposite sex

- Half of singles aged 18-39 not interested
25.1% of all males, 21.4% of all females



Who are unmarried and single?

Lower income and lesser education related to dating relationships with the opposite sex

Male:

- Percentage with a regular job

Married > in a relationship > singles interested in a relationship > singles not interested in a relationship

- Similar trends in annual income

Married > > > > singles not interested in dating

annual income	married person	having a girlfriend	Single (interested)	Single (not interested)
0	6.8	33.0	40.7	48.2
100-299	16.6	26.0	24.8	28.2
300-499	44.5	32.7	27.4	19.7
500-799	27.2	7.7	6.7	3.8
≥ 800	5.0	0.7	0.4	0.1
	100%	100%	100%	100%

Disparity also seen in experience with heterosexual intercourse

Percentage of respondents who have never had heterosexual sex, 2015 (1987 or 1992 in parentheses)

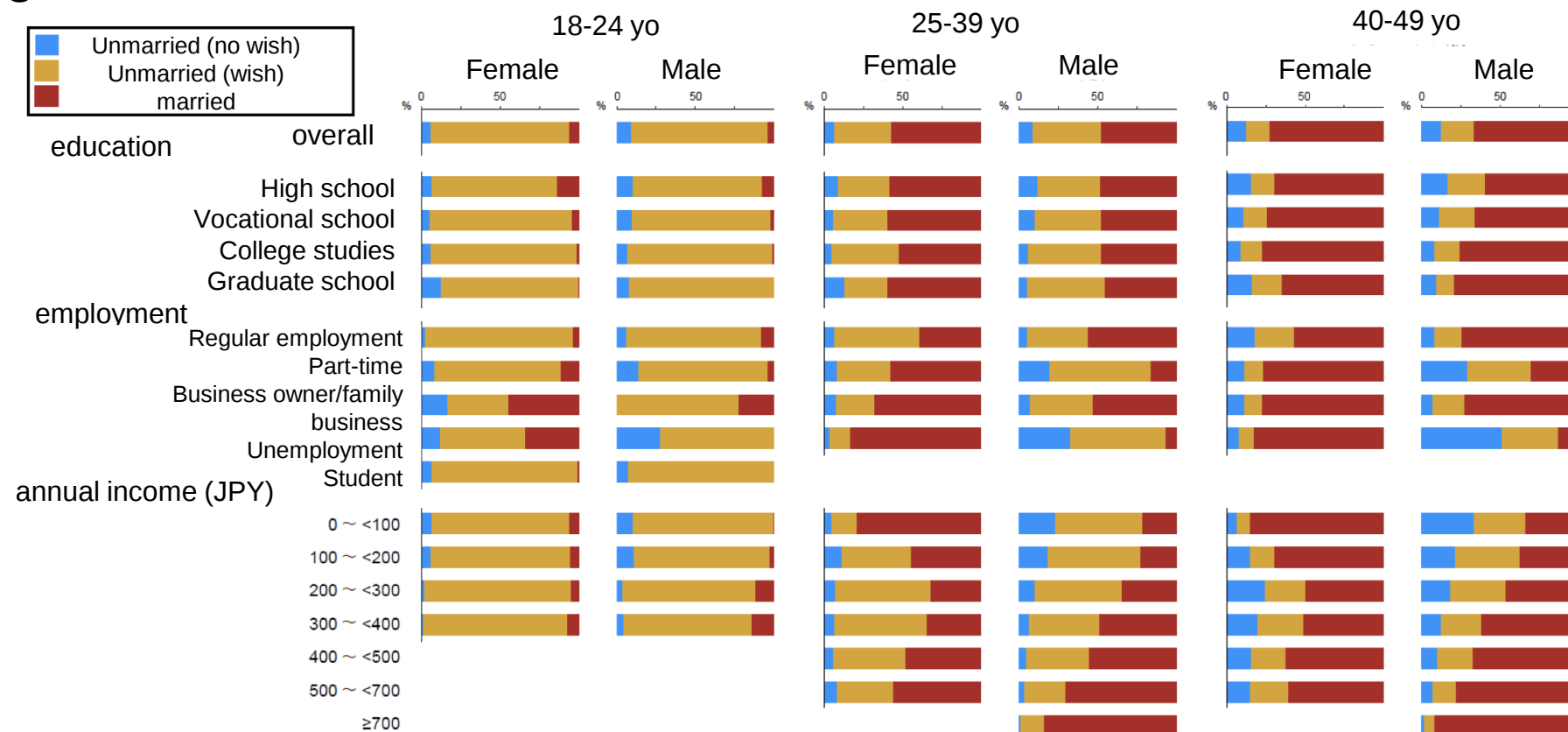
	male	female
18-39 years old	25.8% (20.0%)	24.6% (21.7%)
18-19 years old	75.1 (74.9)	77.5 (80.7)
20-29 years old	46.6 (41.9)	44.4 (55.5)
30-34 years old	12.7 (6.8)	11.9 (6.2)
35-39 years old	9.5 (5.5)	8.9 (4.0)

Cyrus et al (2018)

- For men, part-time employment, and unemployment were significantly related to never having had heterosexual intercourse. Percentage of never had heterosexual intercourse decreased with increasing annual income.

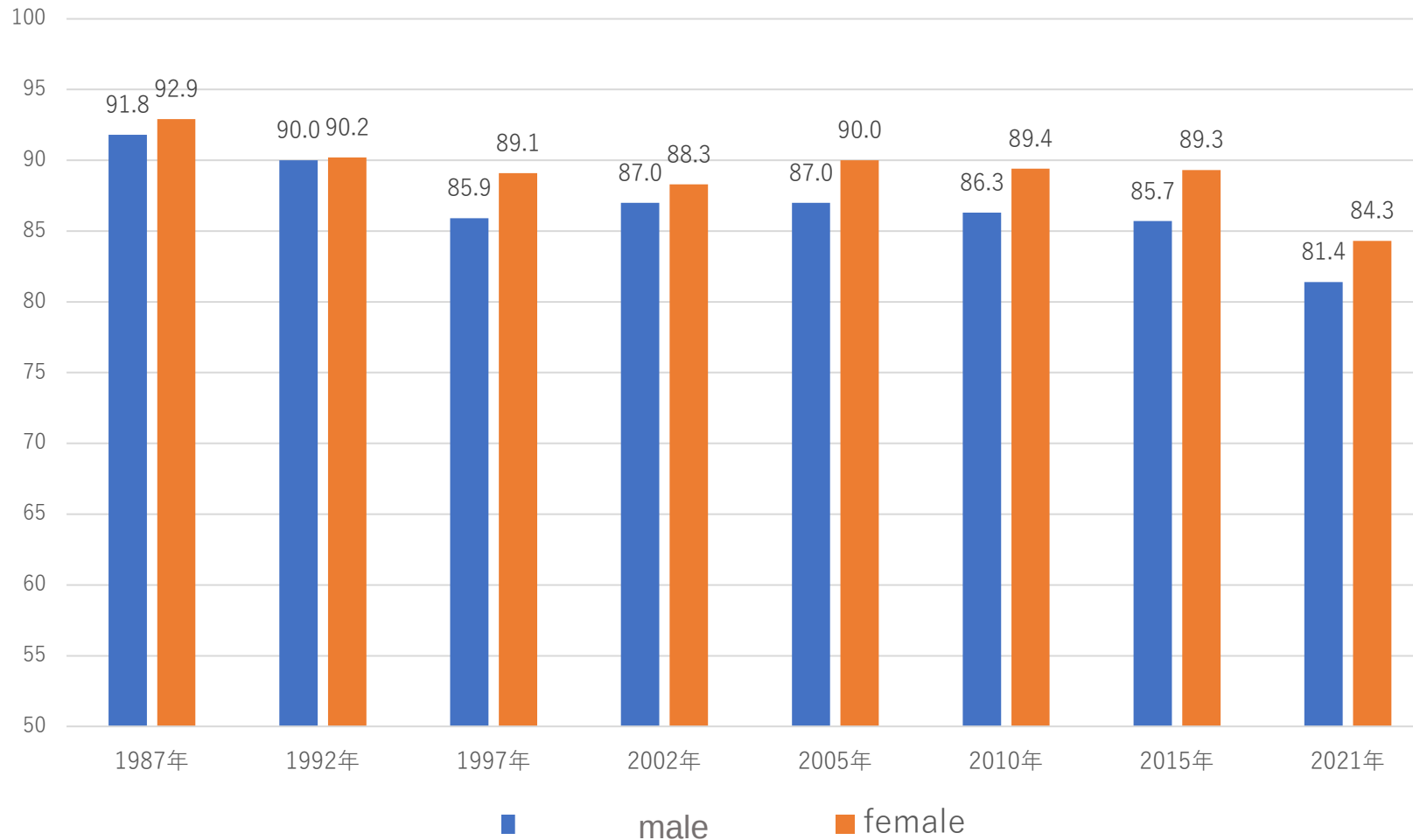
Marriage market in Japan

- For women (18-49 years), the relationship between income and marriage is U-shaped, with the **lowest income group and the highest income group marries**.
- The higher a man's income, the more married he is.



unchanging desire for marriage

Percentage of never-married persons (18-34 yrs.) who answered "intend to get married someday"



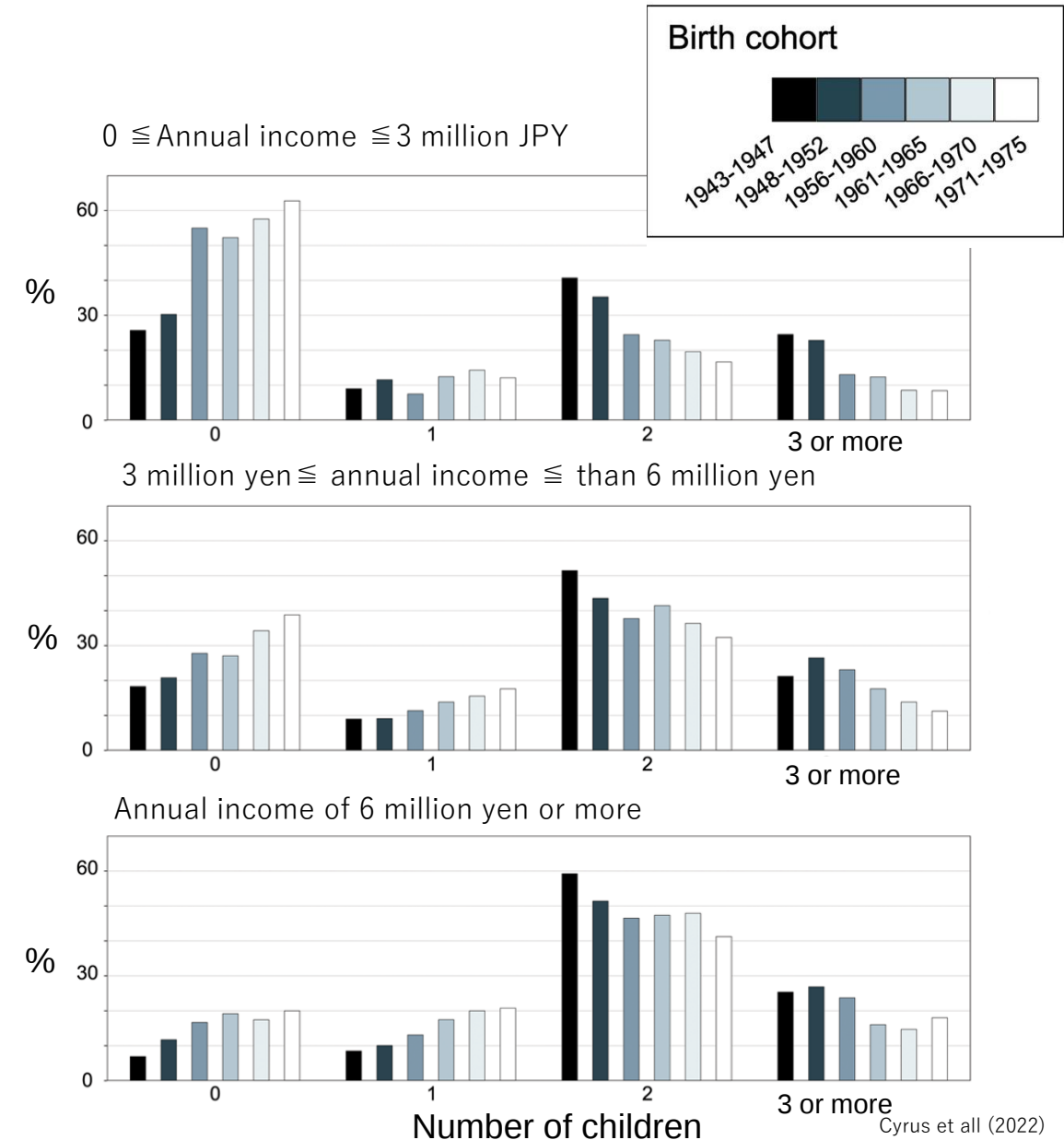
"Disparity" in the number of children

% of those who do not have children

- Male 14.3%, Female 11.6% (1943-1947)
- Male 39.9%, Female 27.6% (1971-1975)
- For men, the higher the income, the more likely they are to have children, regardless of whether they were born in any decade from 1943-1975 (the same trend holds for education)

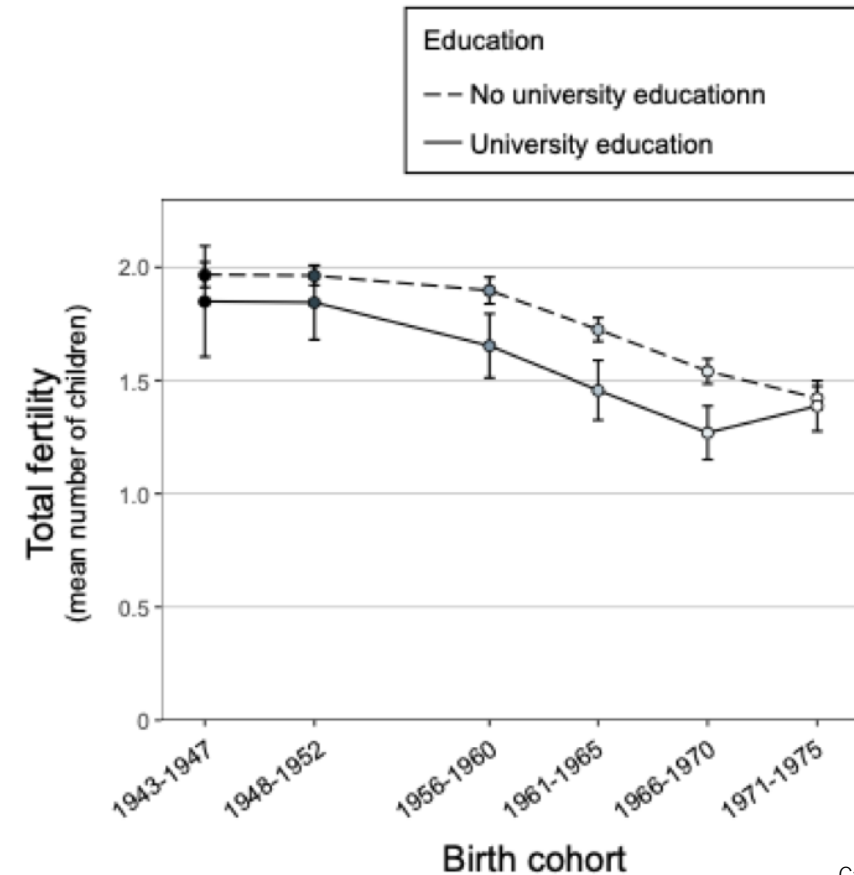
Percentage of men who do not have children

- 25.7% → 62.8% (annual income 3 million)
- 6.9% → 20.0% (6 million annual income)



Is the higher education of women a cause of lower fertility?

- For those born between 1943-1970, college graduates are less likely to have children than the rest of the population
- For those born after 1971, there is no longer a difference between college graduates and others
- Nordic countries are experiencing a "reversal" - at age 40, more educated women have more children
- Due to economic reasons, change in value about family formation and having children among younger generations (more high-income women are getting married in Japan)



Fact on Sexual Activity

Sexual orientation (2022)

	heterosexual	bisexual	homosexual	asexual
male	87.4% (in %)	3.4% (3.4%)	2.0% (2.0%)	6.9% (in %)
female	82.9% (in %)	5.5% (5.5%)	0.9% (0.9%)	10.0% (1.0)

Japanese official statistics cannot capture relationships other than heterosexual ones.

Cyrus et al (2023)

The percentage of asexuals is about 1% in the U.S. and Europe.

- Sexual intercourse in the past year (including sex workers) Male 13.2% Female 13.0
- No sexual partners in the past year (including sex workers) Male 44.5% Female 45.3

➡ The reality of inactivity compared to Europe and the U.S. is evident.
Background of non-recovering birth rates?

Key message

- "A change in the values of the younger generation," "diversification of entertainment," or "women becoming more highly educated," should never be the reasons for the declining birthrate and the increase in the number of unmarried people that underlie the decline in the birthrate.
- Rather, they are victims of the "ice age generation (job shortage generation)" and the "stagnant society" that followed. The structural change of the society is necessary. It is also necessary to change the mindset, especially among politicians and policy makers, rather than placing the blame on the individual.
- Data-driven policy - Who are the married/non-married and who is the generation with/without children?

bibliography

1. Cyrus Ghaznavi, Peter Ueda, Ayako Okuhama, **Haruka Sakamoto**. Sexual Behaviors among Individuals Aged 20-49 in Japan: Initial Findings from a Quasi- Journal of Sex Research. 2023.
2. Ghaznavi C, **Sakamoto H**, Yamasaki L, Nomura S, Yoneoka D, Shibuya K, et al. (2022) Salaries, degrees, and babies: Trends in fertility by income and education among Japanese men and women born 1943-1975. *PLoS ONE*. 17(4): e0266835.
3. Ghaznavi C, **Sakamoto H**, Nomura S, Kubota A, Yoneoka D, Shibuya K, Ueda P. 2022. Fish in the sea: Number, characteristics, and partner preferences of *Plos one*, 17(2), e0262528.
4. Ghaznavi C, **Sakamoto H**, Nomura S, Kubota A, Yoneoka D, Shibuya K, Ueda P. The herbivore's dilemma: Trends in and factors associated with The herbivore's dilemma: Trends in and factors associated with heterosexual relationship status and interest in romantic relationships among young adults in Japan-Analysis of national surveys, 1987 -PLOS ONE. 2020; 15(11): e0241571.
5. Ghaznavi C, **Sakamoto H**, Yoneka D, Nomura S, Shibuya K, Ueda P. Trends in heterosexual inexperience among young adults in Japan: analysis of national surveys, 1987 - 2015. *bmc public health*. 2019;19:355.

Thank you for your attention.