

Developmental trends in stem-family households in rural Japan: A panel survey in Katsunuma over 50 years

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to understand the changes and the continuity of stem-family households in rural Japan by conducting a follow-up study on a panel survey of about 100 family households from 1966 to 1997 in Katsunuma. Katsunuma, a town famous for its commercial grape production, is located in Yamanashi, a neighbouring prefecture of the capital city of Tokyo.

The panel was designed by Kiyomi Morioka in 1966 when the first survey was performed. The following main criteria for selecting about 100 households were: (1) they had to be a stem-family household having a head of the household, his wife, a father and mother, and (2) the head of the household needed to be born between 1921 and 1935.

After the first survey in 1966, these family households were repeatedly researched: in 1972, 1976 (limited survey), 1981, 1992, and 1997. There are series of panel data and life documents on each 107 stem-family household, and since 2016, we have conducted follow-up studies of these households in order to investigate their developmental trends over 50 years.

The main findings are as follows: 60 of the 107 family households were on the life stage feasible to form a stem-family household in 2018, but only 35 had done so. More than 40% of the family households feasible to form stem-family households were living separately between generations. Even so, this is quite a high proportion compared to the national statistic: 8.6% in 2015.

1. Introduction

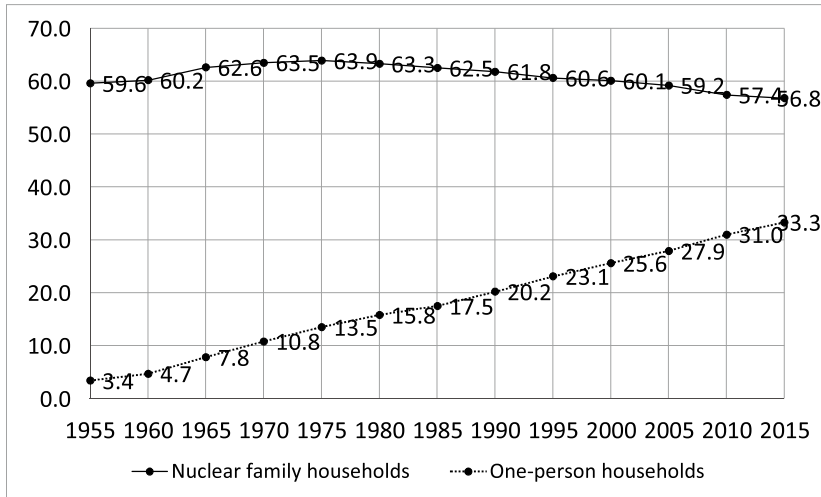
After World War II, the Japanese family ideology has generally been viewed to have changed from the stem-family system to the conjugal-family system [Morioka, *et al.* 1993]. Trends in the family composition are one of its primary indicators. During a period of rapid economic growth (1955–1973), the composition ratio of nuclear family households increased and reached its peak of 63.9% in 1975.

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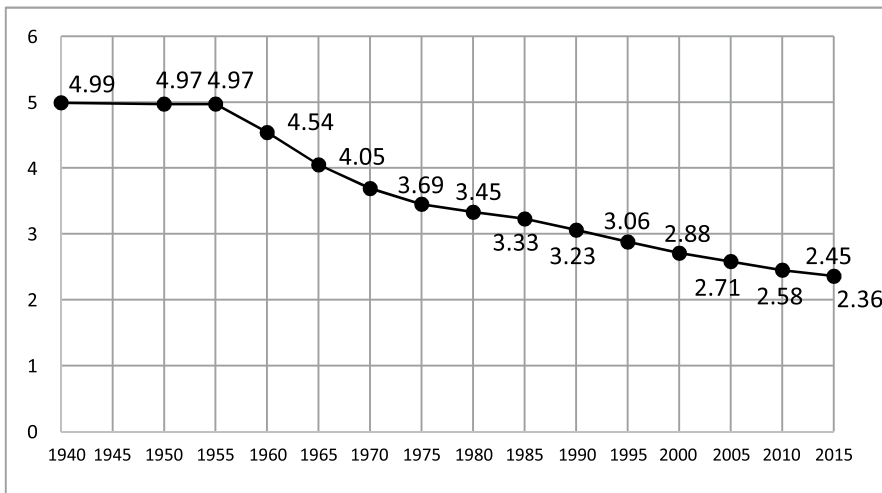
Keywords : stem-family households, panel survey, rural Japan

After that, it began to decrease slightly and the composition ratio of one-person households increased markedly. According to the most recent population census of Japan in 2015, nuclear family households account for 56.8% and one-person households for 33.3% of the total ordinary households¹ (Fig. 1), for 90.1% in total. As a result, the mean size of ordinary households has decreased: from 4.97 members in



Source: Population Census of Japan
 Note: The ratio to “ordinary households”.

Figure 1 Composition ratio of nuclear family households and one-person households in Japan (1955–2015).



Source: Population Census of Japan
 Note: Average number of “ordinary households”.

Figure 2 Average number of household members in Japan (1940–2015).

1950 to 2.36 in 2015 (Fig. 2).

Rural areas are no exception. Couples that held the stem-family ideology continued to live with the heir's family, but changes to the living conditions among two successive married couples has been observed [Otomo, 2010 b]. Today, we can see considerable changes in living arrangements between a couple and their heir(s), especially in rural families.

The aim of this study is to clarify the changes and continuity of stem-family households in rural Japan through a follow-up study on a panel survey of about 100 family households from 1966 and 1997 in Katsunuma, a town famous for its commercial grape production. Katsunuma is located in Yamanashi, a neighboring prefecture of the capital city of Tokyo.

2. Data Characteristics

The panel was designed by Kiyomi Morioka (1923–, Tokyo University of Education Prof. Emeritus) in 1966 when the first survey was performed. The main criteria for selecting about 100 households were: (1) they had to be a stem-family household consisting of a head of the household, his wife, and his father and mother, and (2) the head of the household needed to be born between 1921 and 1935 (aged between 31 and 45 years at the time of the survey).

After the first survey in 1966, these family households were repeatedly researched: in 1972, 1976 (limited survey), 1981, 1992, and 1997. There is a series of panel data and life documents on each of the 107 stem-family households, and from March 2016 to April 2018, we conducted follow-up studies of these family households in order to investigate their developmental trends over the last 50 years.

At the first panel, all these family households contained two married couples: one from each consecutive generation. After that, over the next 50 years, all parents passed away and several new couples of the next generation and a few of the generation after that were added to these family

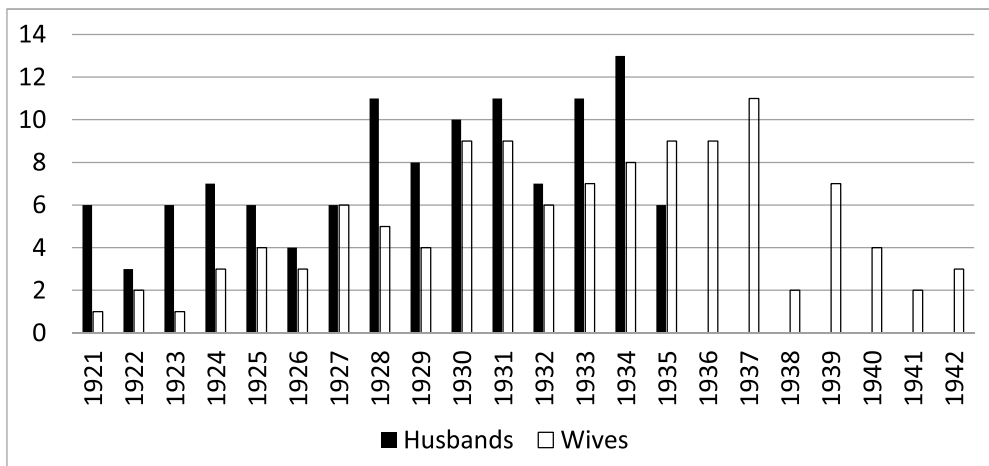
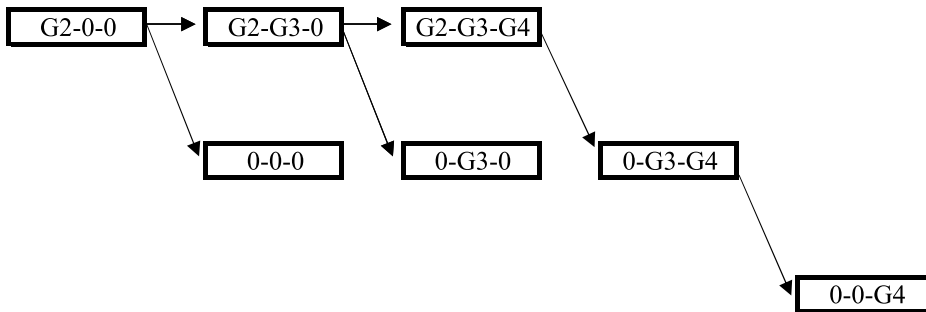


Figure 3 Birth year of second-generation couples (Panel in Katsunuma).

households. Here we name these four consecutive generations in a family line as the first generation (G1): the husband's parents; the second generation (G2): the couple; the third generation (G3): child(ren) of the couple; and the fourth generation (G4): grandchild(ren) of the couple (Fig. 4).

As shown in Table 1, seven out of the 107 family households have died out due to leaving no successor in the town between 1997 and 2018. The second-generation husband (1922–1935) and/or wife (1926–1942) are/is alive in 70 households (65.4%). Twenty-four households (22.4%) have been succeeded by a third-generation husband and/or wife, and the remaining six are one-person households (5.6%) composed of a single son or a divorced sister of the second-generation husband.

For the follow-up studies of these family households, we conducted structured interviews in



- Notes: G2-0-0: Second generation only
 G2-G3-0: Second generation and third generation
 G2-G3-G4: Second generation, third generation, and fourth generation
 0-G3-0: Third generation only
 0-G3-G4: Third generation and fourth generation
 0-0-G4: Fourth generation only
 0-0-0: Only unmarried members or extinct households

Figure 4 Generation of stem families (Panel in Katsunuma in 2018).

Table 1 Stem-family households after 50 years (Panel in Katsunuma in 2018).

	Actual number	Percentage	
Husband and/or wife are/is alive	70	65.4%	
	Husband and wife are alive	32	29.9%
	Husband is alive	7	6.5%
	Wife is alive	31	29.0%
Husband and wife are dead	37	34.6%	
	Succeeded	24	22.4%
	A single son living alone	5	4.7%
	A divorced sister living alone	1	0.9%
	Extinct	7	6.5%
Total	107	100.0%	

February and March 2018 with the second-generation or third-generation husbands and/or wives. However, we had difficulty identifying the members of some of the households whose second-generation husband and wife were dead. One example is the case where an unmarried second son inherited the premises while the eldest son inherited the farmland and was living with his family at another address. This case was classified as “a single son living alone” in Table 1 because the second son had been a member of his father’s household even though the eldest son was recognized as the family successor in the community and responded to the interview.

3. Analytical Framework

3-1. Difference between the concept of household and family

As mentioned above, household and family are different concepts that cannot be used interchangeably. The United Nations defines the difference between the household and the family as follows²:

A household may consist of only one person but a family must contain at least two members and the members of a multi-person household need not be related to each other, while the members of a family must be related. Moreover, a family cannot comprise more than one household (emphasis added); a household, however, can contain more than one family, or one or more families together with one or more non-related persons, or it can consist entirely of non-related persons.

Household is a statistical term, and its definition and classification differ according to countries and censuses. The population census of Japan³ defines that a household may consist of only one person, and moreover, a household can contain more than one family, or one or more families together with one or more non-related persons, or it can consist entirely of non-related persons, the same as the UN, *Demographic Yearbook system, Population Censuses' Datasets*.

However, in terms of family study in Japan, a family can include more than just the household members. For example, students living separately from parents are considered to be family members of the parents. Moreover, several social surveys have shown that there is a tendency among parents to consider the eldest son and his family to be their family members even if they live separately (Kasugai, 2001). This attitude comes from conventional Japanese stem-family ideology.

3-2. Family type of household

According to the definition of the population census of Japan, households are classified into “private households” and “institutional households”. Private households are classified into three broad categories: “relatives households”, “households including non-relatives”, and “one-person households”. The relatives households are family households and further divided into twenty minor groups⁴ (Table 3). The majority of “other relatives households” in the relatives households are stem-families consisting of a family nuclei and direct ancestors or descendants.

“Head of household” depends on the judgment of each household regardless of the notification to the Basic Resident Register; therefore, it is not easy to identify family type of household objectively. Furthermore, living quarters for private households are diverse. The glossary of the population census of Japan states that structurally separated parts of a structure suitable for the separate home life of a family count as dwelling houses for private households.

Nowadays, rural families typically favour a lifestyle in which each married generation lives in a different building but on the same premises or next to each other [Otomo, 2010 b]. In this case, it depends also on the judgment of each household whether it forms a conjugal-family household or one generation of a stem-family household, even though it may be considered a stem-family household in the community. The boundaries of family members and family composition are highly subjective matters.

In this study, the 107 family households are objectively classified by current residential unit into the family type of household. However, we should take into consideration stem-family life cycle. In 1966, the 107 family households were on the same stage of this cycle, but after 50 years, they have become quite diverse. We cannot determine whether families are following the stem-family life cycle or whether they have stopped being in that cycle on the basis of their temporal residential unit.

Therefore, the family type of household classified by residential unit is compared with the family type of household classified by family, which is recognized as a family in the community regardless of living arrangement. In the case that the conventional stem-family ideology is still effective, these family members will compose a stem-family household. The gap between actual residential unit and ideal family members of the 107 family households is an indicator for grasping the developmental trends in stem-family households in rural Japan.

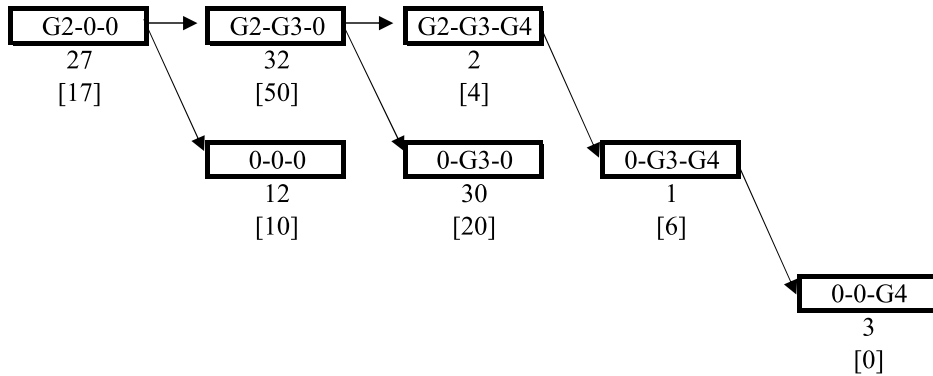
4. Findings

4-1. Current generation of the 107 stem-family households in 1966

Figure 5 shows the current generation of the 107 stem-family households in 1966. As of 2018, there are three combinations of the multi-generation families or residential unit: G2-G3-0, G2-G3-G4, and 0-G3-G4. There are 60 multi-generation families; however, there are only 35 multi-generation residential units. Eleven of the 35 multi-generation residential units, namely one-third, include a married daughter and her parent(s), while the second generation of the 107 stem-family households were only counted by paternal descendent lines in 1966.

4-2. Size of residential unit and family

Table 2 lists the current number of people per residential unit and per family of the 107 stem-family households in 1966 along with the mean size of each. The mean size of the residential unit, 3.12 persons, is slightly larger than that of national average, 2.36 (2015), but about one person fewer than that of family, 3.93 persons.



Notes: The number of residential units and the number of families are in parentheses.
See Figure 4.

Figure 5 Generation of stem families (Panel in Katsunuma in 2018).

Table 2 Size of household (Panel in Katsunuma in 2018).

Number of people per household	Classified by residential unit		Classified by family	
	Actual number	%	Actual number	%
0	8	7.5%	7	6.5%
1	16	15.0%	11	10.3%
2	26	24.3%	15	14.0%
3	16	15.0%	15	14.0%
4	22	20.6%	18	16.8%
5	12	11.2%	20	18.7%
6	4	3.7%	13	12.1%
7	3	2.8%	7	6.5%
8	0	0.0%	1	0.9%
Total	107	100.0%	107	100.0%
Average	3.12	persons	3.93	persons

4-3. Family types of household classified by residential unit and family

Table 3 shows two sets of statistics for family types of household: one is a classification by residential unit and the other is a classification by family. National data from the population census of Japan is also shown.

As for the classification by residential unit, “family nuclei” account for 44.4%, the largest category, “one-person households” for 16.2%, and “other relatives households” for 33.3% of the relatives households. This means that one-third of the 107 stem-family households in 1966 re-established stem-family households by the third and/or fourth generation(s) in 2018.

As for the classification by family, “family nuclei” account for 28.0%, “one-person households” for

Table 3 Family type of household (Panel in Katsunuma in 2018).

Family type of household	Classified by residential unit		Classified by family		National* in 2015
	Actual number	%	Actual number	%	
I. Private households					
A. Relatives households					
I. Family nuclei					
(1) A married couple only	99	92.5%	100	93.5%	100.0%
(2) A married couple with their child(ren)	82	76.6%	88	82.2%	88.0%
(3) Father with his child(ren)	49	45.8%	28	26.2%	28.0%
(4) Mother with her child(ren)	20	18.7%	11	10.3%	11.0%
(5) A couple with their parents	22	20.6%	12	11.2%	12.0%
(6) A couple with their parent	1	0.9%	0	0.0%	0.0%
(7) A couple with their child(ren) and parents	6	5.6%	5	4.7%	5.0%
(8) A couple with their child(ren) and parent	33	30.8%	60	56.1%	60.0%
(9) A couple with relative(s) other than child(ren) and parent(s)	2	1.9%	5	4.7%	5.0%
(10) A couple with their parent(s) and relative(s) other than parent(s)	4	3.7%	3	2.8%	3.0%
(11) A couple with their child(ren), parent(s) and other relative(s)	6	5.6%	20	18.7%	20.0%
(12) A couple with their child(ren), parent(s) and other relative(s)	15	14.0%	20	18.7%	20.0%
(13) Brothers or sisters only	1	0.9%	1	0.9%	1.0%
(14) Other relatives households not elsewhere classified	1	0.9%	2	1.9%	2.0%
B. Households including non-relatives	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0.0%
C. One-person households	1	0.9%	8	7.5%	8.0%
2. Institutional households	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0.0%
3. Drop-out (Extinct households)	3	2.8%	1	0.9%	1.0%
Total	1	0.9%	1	0.9%	1.0%
	16	15.0%	11	10.3%	11.0%
	1	0.9%	-	-	-
	7	6.5%	7	6.5%	-
	107	100.0%	107	100.0%	-

*Resource: Population census of Japan

11.0%, and “other relatives households” for 60.0% of the relatives households. This means that, in 2018, the majority of the 107 family households is on the life stage feasible to form a stem-family household. However, only one-third of the 107 family households actually realize stem-family households; namely, about half of the family households feasible to form stem-family households are living separately between generations, although it is quite a high proportion compared to the national statistic: 8.6% in 2015.

4-4. Cross-tabulation comparing residential unit with family

Table 4 is a cross-tabulation comparing family types of household classified by residential unit with family types of household classified by family of the 107 family households. In terms of family types of household classified by family, couples of type 7: a couple with their child(ren) and parents, and type 5: a couple with their parents, tend to live separately from parents. In contrast, couples of type 8: a couple with their child(ren) and parent, and type 6: a couple with their parent, tend to live together with their widowed parents. However, there are also couples in these categories who live separately from their widowed parents. These widowed parents live alone, forming an aged-one-person household, or live in a nursing home. In 2000, the national elder-care insurance system was introduced, which changed family care dramatically, including in rural families.

5. Conclusion

From 2016 to 2018, we conducted a follow-up study on a panel survey of 107 family households from 1966 and 1997 in Katsunuma and analysed the changes and continuity of the stem-family households over 50 years.

In 1966, the 107 family households were on the same life stage of the stem-family life cycle—a stem-family household comprising a head of the household, his wife, and his father and mother—but these households have diversified in the ensuing 50 years. In order to discuss the family changes, the stem-family life cycle must be taken into consideration. It cannot be determined whether families are following the stem-family life cycle or whether they have stopped being in that cycle on the basis of their temporary residential unit. In Japan, especially in rural areas, a family can include more than just the household members. Therefore, we compared the family type of household classified by residential unit with the family type of household classified by family, which is recognized as a family in the community regardless of living arrangement.

The results of this analysis are as follows.

After 50 years, 60 of the 107 family households were multi-generation families; however, there were only 35 multi-generation residential units. Moreover, 11 of the 35 multi-generation residential units included a married daughter and her parent(s). This means that the traditional male-dominant succession has changed, and now daughters also have the chance to succeed the family.

Sixty of the 107 family households were on the life stage feasible to form a stem-family household in 2018, but only 35 had done so. More than 40% of the family households feasible to form stem-family

households were living separately between generations. Even so, this is quite a high proportion compared to the national statistic: 8.6% in 2015.

Couples with parents tended to live separately from their parents. In contrast, couples with a widowed parent tended to live together with that parent. However, some of the widowed parents lived alone, forming an aged-one-person household, or lived in a nursing home.

This study focused mainly on the analysis of the continuity of the stem-family ideology, but issues regarding unmarried successors, grape farming, and the transitions of the family life cycle remain. This is a brief report of the panel survey over 50 years.

Acknowledgments

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Notes

- 1 According to the definition of the population census of Japan, households are sub-divided into “private households” and “institutional households”. In 1980 and before, however, households were sub-divided into “ordinary households” and “quasi-households”. An ordinary household referred to the private households excluding single persons who lived in company dormitories for unmarried employees. Figures 1 and 2 deal with ordinary households in order to illustrate changes in the household structure of Japan over a long period of time.
- 2 Demographic and Social Statistics, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Statistics Division
<https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic-social/sconcerns/family/index.cshtml#docs> (Accessed 14 January 2019)
- 3 Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications
<http://www.stat.go.jp/english/data/kokusei/2010/pdf/ex.pdf> (Accessed 14 January 2019)
- 4 Parent(s) of “other relatives households” is/are divided into husband’s parent(s) or wife’s parents(s), and therefore, five groups—(5) (6) (7) (8) (11) (12)—are further divided into ten minor groups all together.

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