



Comments on "A Regional Analysis on Female Labor Market Participation in Japan" by Akiko SAKANISHI

Jouke van Dijk University of Groningen, Department of Economic Geography, PO Box 800, 9700 AV Groningen
 joukevandijk@rug.nl
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Introduction

This study investigates the determinants of regional differences in female labor force participation rates in Japan. There are little differences in the labor force participation rates of unmarried women among regions. In contrast, regional disparities are noticeable for married female. With respect to female labor force participation rates by age group, the age-specific pattern indicates a big fall in participation around childbearing ages of thirties. However, age-specific patterns are considerably different by regions.
 → Very nice paper, but some questions



Some questions: measuring participation

First section page 2: "In spite of the recent tendencies in other developed countries, the labor participation rate of Japanese women remains almost unchanged for four decades."

Causes:

1. Sluggish economy, Japanese women quit working after childbearing
2. Aging society: for age group 30-34 participation rate increased from 46% in 1971 → 69% in 2012, and 15-64 year increase from 53% till 63% in 2010. However, the participation rate 15+ year decreased from 48,6% in 1971 → 48,2% in 2012.
 Reason: rate population age 65+ increased from 7% in 1971 till 24% in 2012



Is there really a problem

So, the participation rate 15+ year decreased from 48,6% in 1971 → 48,2% in 2012.

Explanation: rate population age 65+ increased from 7% in 1971 till 24% in 2012

But, the participation rate 15-64 year increased from 53% till 63% in 2010

→ Does this justify the conclusion that participation rate are almost unchanged?

→ Which definition is used in the international comparisons?



Spatial differences

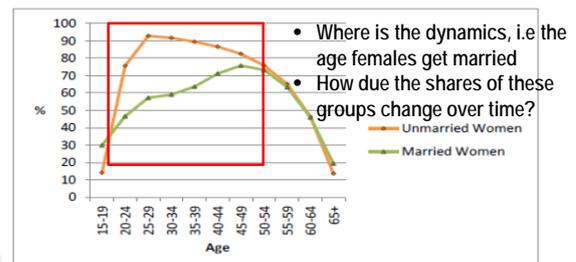
Generally, spatial distribution of jobs is less dense in suburban areas compared with the central business districts. It accounts for low female employment participation in the suburban areas partially (Simpson 1982). *Because of commuting time?*

In contrast, we observe higher female labor force participation in regions where the rates of married women living with their parents are high. As assistances by parents allow women to devote shorter time to household duties, married women living with their parents are likely to have sufficient work time and to be in labor force. Hence, the higher rates of living with parents, the higher female labor force participation in a region.



JVD1

Figure 3: Labor force participation rate by marital status and by age groups in Japan (%)



Source: The 2010 Population Census of Japan


Table 5: Results of panel estimation (Fixed effects model)

	Coefficient	t-value
Constant	80.6583 ***	8.565
Unemployment rate	-1.4807 ***	-3.919
Self-employed workers and their family	-0.3834 **	-2.070
Homeownership	0.1163	1.135
Population ageing rate	0.4177 ***	3.123
Primary sector worker	0.4113 **	2.269
Higher education	0.1239	1.469
Real regional income per capita	0.0016 *	1.909
Proportion of Nuclear family	-0.5971 ***	-6.784
Adj. R ²		0.9796

Note: * significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%.



Conclusions and policy implications

Policy advice:

- More childcare: is this the bottle-neck
- Adoption of permanent part-time staff system: is this the bottle-neck
- Policies needed targeted to increase the female participation rate in the low participation region to increase the national female participation in order to solve the aging problem: does this work? How? Do the females move to other regions? Do the jobs come to these regions?



Thanks for your attention