Author’s response to reviews

Title: Trends in heterosexual inexperience among young adults in Japan: analysis of national surveys, 1987-2015

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Version: 2 Date: 14 Feb 2019

Author’s response to reviews:

Dear Editors,

Thank you for considering this manuscript. Below we have responded to each point raised by the reviewers. Given the importance of these data to Japan and other Japanese researchers, we would like to add a Japanese translation of the manuscript as a Supplement. We hope that this will be a possibility.

Best wishes,

Peter Ueda

Reviewer reports:

Catherine Heather Mercer, PhD (Reviewer 1): Thank you for your invitation to re-review this paper, which I read with interest. The authors have done a good job revising their paper in line with my suggestions (and made it very easy for me to understand and find the changes that they had made for which I thank them).

We thank Dr. Mercer for the comments.
Four (minor) issues remain to be addressed in my opinion:

1. It is not common practice to report a change, either an increase or a decrease, unless there is statistical evidence to support this. As such, the authors should remove such statements (e.g. in the Abstract: "Among those aged 30-34 years, the prevalence increased between 1987 and 2015: from 6.2% to 11.9% for women (p for trends, ≥0.398) and from 8.8% to 12.7% for men (p for trends, ≥0.248).")

We have now revised the sentences accordingly throughout the manuscript.

Abstract

Among those aged 30-34 years, the prevalence was 6.2% in 1987 and 11.9% in 2015 for women (p-values ≥0.05) and 8.8% (1987) and 12.7% (2015) for men (p-values ≥0.05). Among those aged 35-39 years, prevalence increased from 4.0% in 1992 to 8.9% in 2015 among women (p-values <0.05). The corresponding numbers for men in the same age group were 5.5% and 9.5%, respectively (p-values ≥0.05).

Results (line 211):

In the oldest age groups, prevalence rose nominally during the study period: from 8.8% in 1987 to 12.7% in 2015 among those aged 30-34 years (p-values for trend ≥0.05), and from 5.5% in 1992 to 9.5% in 2015 among those aged 35-39 years (p-values for trend ≥0.05).

2. Abstract conclusion: it is not clear how the sentence "Heterosexual intercourse is the main method of human reproduction, and sexual health and satisfaction are important for wellbeing" relates to the results of this particular study. The authors should either better integrate it or remove it. (Personally I think it's redundant in line with the paper's main Conclusion statement).

We have now removed this sentence.

3. Reporting of p-values: it is conventional to report exact p-values as (e.g.) "p=0.012" else if a particular threshold is used to denote statistical significance then this can be used throughout (e.g.) p<0.01 or p<0.05. Also (throughout) note that where a p-value is cited corresponding to one trend then 'p-value' (singular not plural) should be used (cf. "p-values for trend ≤0.012").

To reduce the word count and maintain readability, we had presented the highest p-value of the two p-values for linear and quadratic trends, respectively, and reported this as ≤ highest p-value. We have now changed the presentation of p-values in the abstract to the pre-specified cut-offs.
for statistical significance using <0.05 for significant p-values and ≥0.05 for non-significant p-values.

We have revised the manuscript such that we use the plural wherever we mention p-values; we now consistently use the term “p-values for trend”.

4. Check the wording of the addition to the text: "In total, 3.26 million women and 3.80 million men, aged 18-39 years, were estimated to have no heterosexual experience in 2010. (Table 1)" - should this actually be "…were estimated in 2010 to have never had heterosexual experience"?

We have now revised the sentence accordingly:

In total, 3.26 million women and 3.80 million men, aged 18-39 years, were estimated in 2010 to have no heterosexual experience.

Yan Zhang (Reviewer 2): I have reviewed the revised manuscript. While the authors do adhere to most of the comments, and the manuscript itself is much improved. However, it suffers from one minor problem: Reference 14 met the References format?

We have now revised the reference.

Additional minor edits made to the manuscript:

1. We have added a Japanese translation of the paper as a Supplement.

2. Results, p.11, lines 22. We have added a sentence describing the proportion of those aged 25-39 years without heterosexual experience who wished to get married during their lifetime.

   “Among those without heterosexual experience aged 25-39 this proportion was 81.0% for women and 78.2% for men.”

3. Some additional minor edits (wording, grammar and typos) as shown in the document with changes tracked.