

How Has Women's Social Stratification Changed? Focusing on Education, Occupation, Income, and Wealth

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1. Introduction

- In postwar Japan, as in many other countries, women's positions within the social stratification system have undergone substantial transformation.
 - ✓ Educational attainment has increased.
 - ✓ Employment conditions have improved.
 - ✓ Then women's capacity for earning income has expanded accordingly.
- However, it has been pointed out that gender differences persist across these indicators (Matsuoka 2019; Nagase 2024).
 - Against this background, institutional reforms aimed at achieving gender equality have been promoted in Japan, such as the enactment of the Equal Employment Opportunity Law and ongoing discussions on the abolition of the Category III insured system.

1. Introduction

- However, the existing discussions appear to lack the following perspectives.
 - ✓ How can equality between men and women at the individual level be measured?
 - What is the most appropriate way to define women's social stratification?
 - ✓ What is required of social security policies to achieve gender equality?
 - Is it sufficient merely to promote equality at the individual level?
 - ✓ How does the advancement of gender equality affect family formation?
 - What has family formation meant for women in the past?
- This study explores these questions through an exploratory analysis of changes in women's social stratification.

2. Literature Review

□ How Has Women's Social Stratification Changed in Previous Studies?

- ✓ **Education:** Women's access to higher education has expanded substantially, although a persistent gender gap remains (Ishida 2007; Matsuoka 2019).
- ✓ **Employment Status:** The proportion of women in regular employment has increased; however, labor market segmentation continues to characterize gender differences in employment (Yu 2009; Nagase and Brinton 2017).
- ✓ **Income:** Women's wages have risen over time, yet a considerable gender wage gap persists (Nagase 2024).
- ✓ **Wealth:** In Japan, marriage does not necessarily confer an advantage in terms of asset accumulation (Niimi 2021).

2. Literature Review

□ Previous studies suggest that it is particularly important to focus on income, because...

- ✓ Japan has long been characterized by the male breadwinner model,
- ✓ and social security policies have historically discouraged women's full labor force participation and earnings.

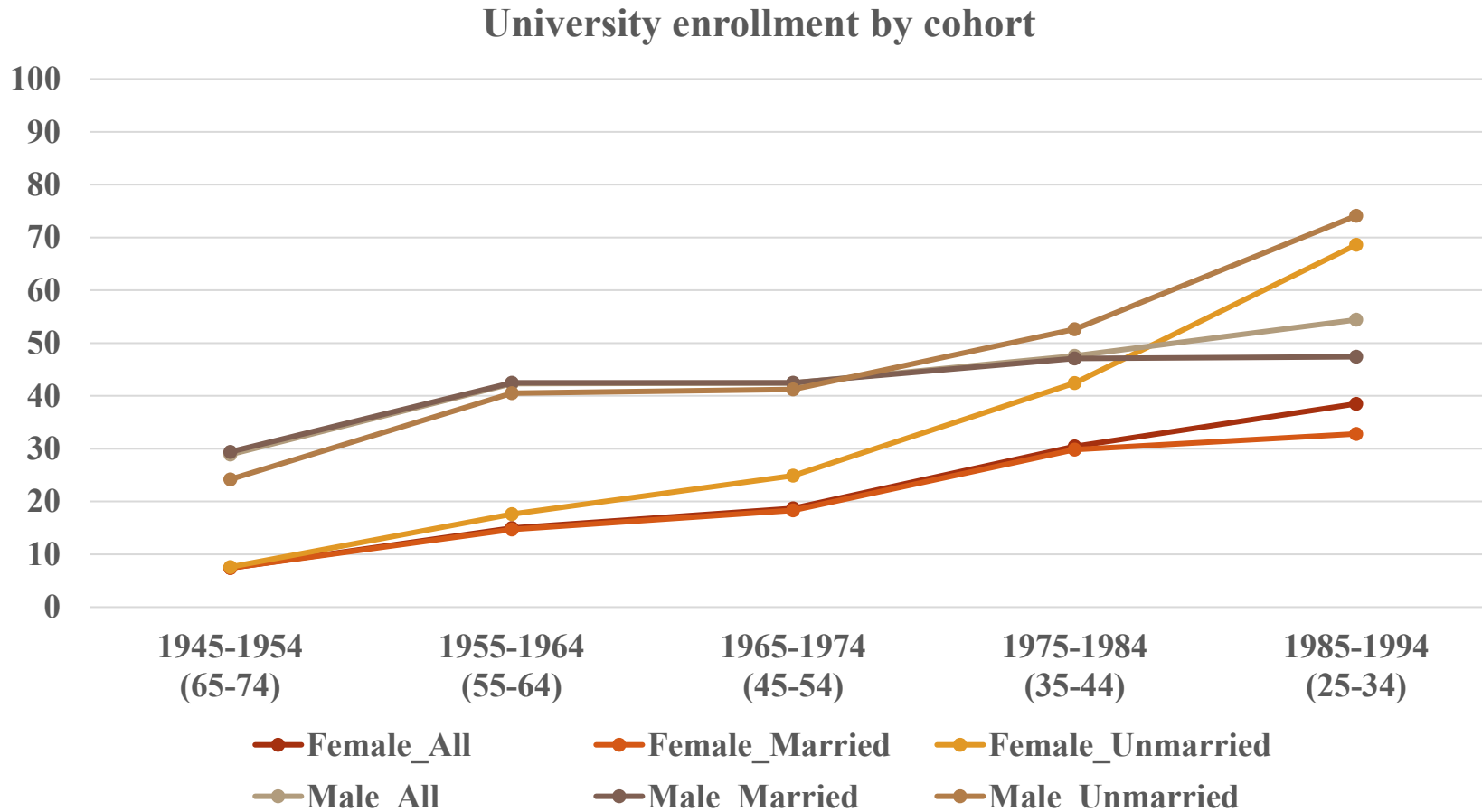
→ This study aims to clarify two main points in order to address the questions raised above:

1. To reexamine the transformation of women's social stratification in postwar Japan from a multidimensional perspective while comparing with men.
2. To discuss changes in gender differences and future directions based on the analytical results.

3. Analytical Results

- **Data: National Survey of Family Income, Consumption and Wealth 2019 (and 2009 National Survey of Family Income and Expenditure).**
 - ✓ **Conducted by: Statistics Bureau of Japan, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications. <https://www.stat.go.jp/data/zenkokukakei/2019/index.html>**
 - ✓ **Nationwide survey capturing household income, consumption, savings, and asset holdings.**
 - ✓ **One of Japan's most comprehensive datasets on household economic structure.**
 - **National coverage: Representative sample of Japanese households.**
 - **Data structure: Household-level data with tabulations by deciles/quintiles.**
 - **Indicators: Annual income, wealth composition, and demographic stratification.**
 - **Purpose: To assess the distribution and determinants of household economic well-being.**

3. Analytical Results



3. Analytical Results

Employment status by cohort (Female_All)



Employment status by cohort (Male_All)



Employment status by cohort (Female_Married)



Employment status by cohort (Male_Married)



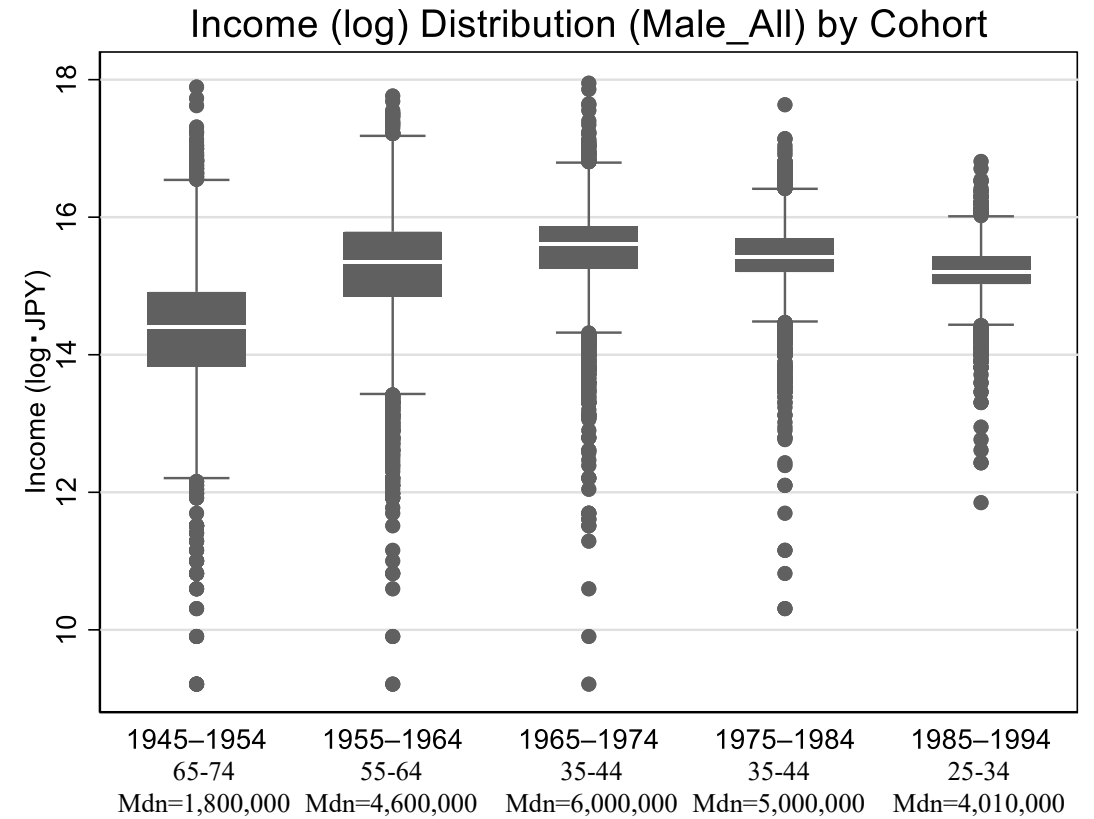
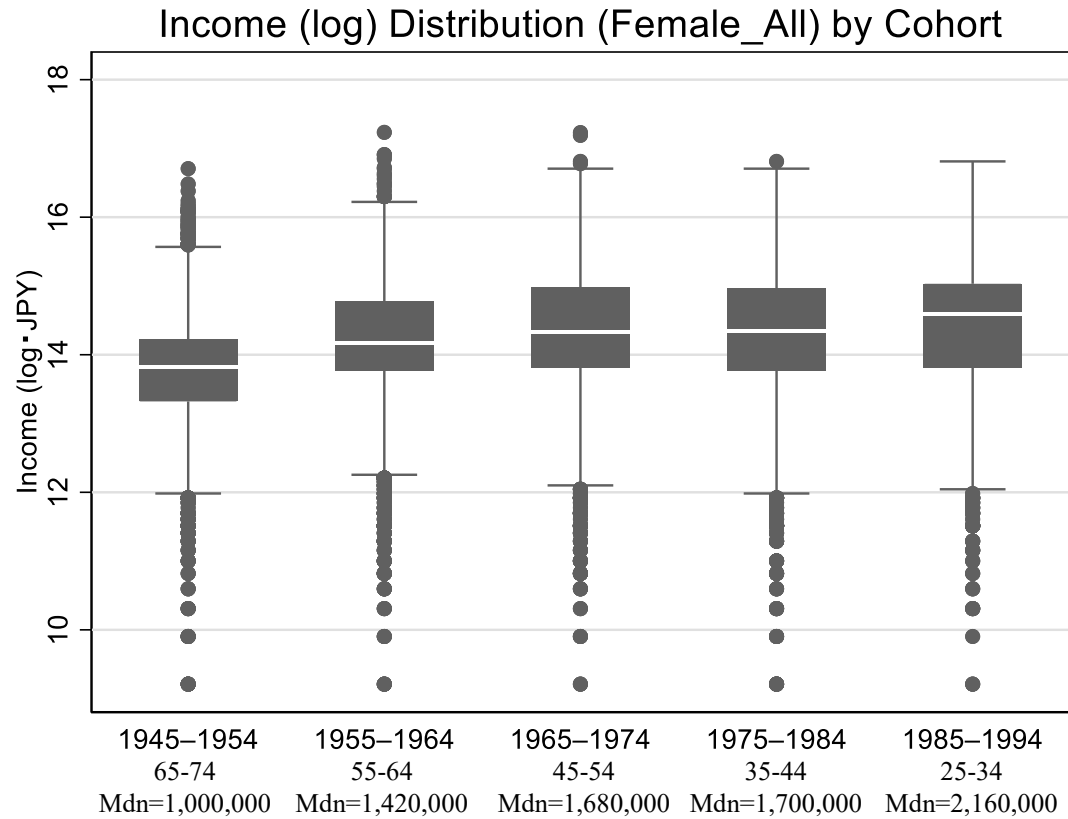
Employment status by cohort (Female_Unmarried)

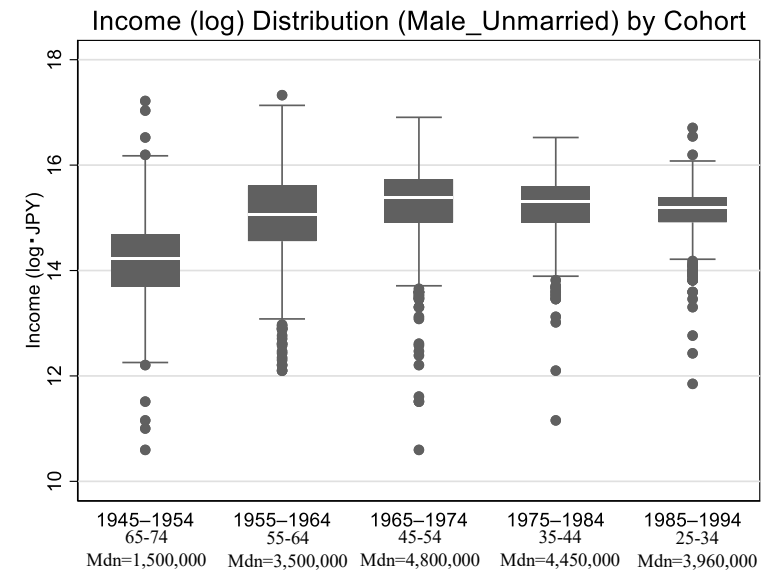
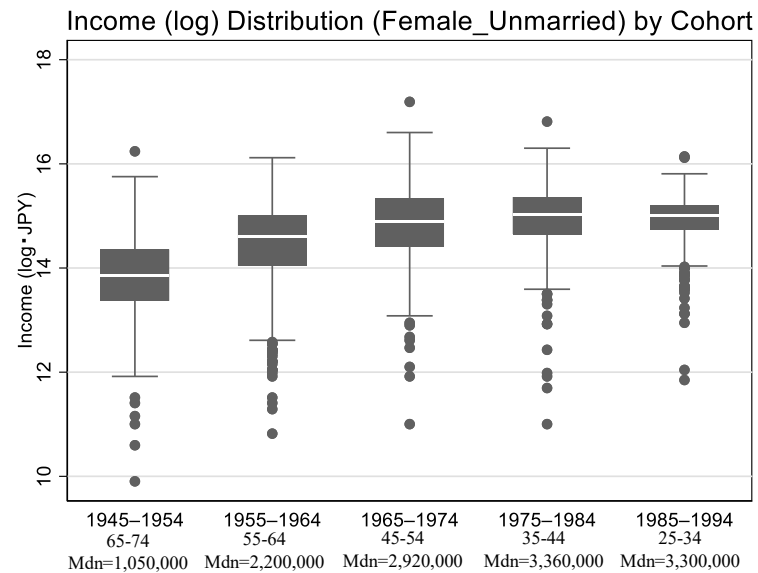
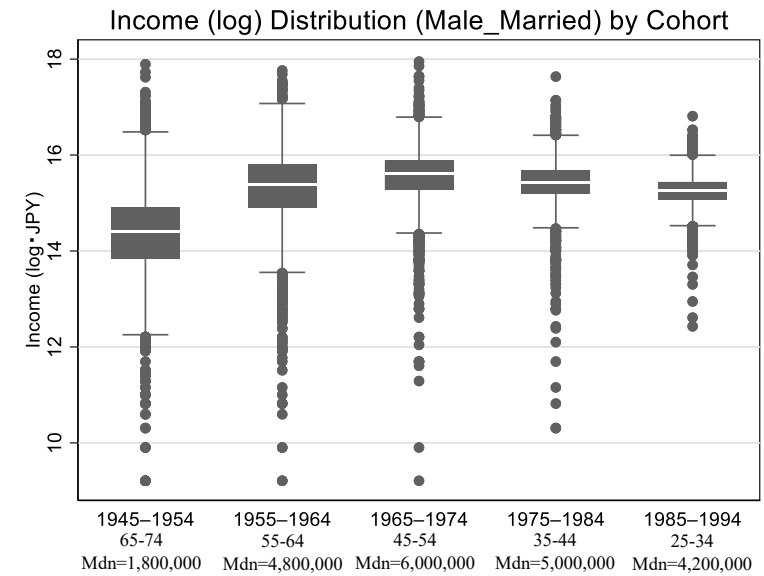
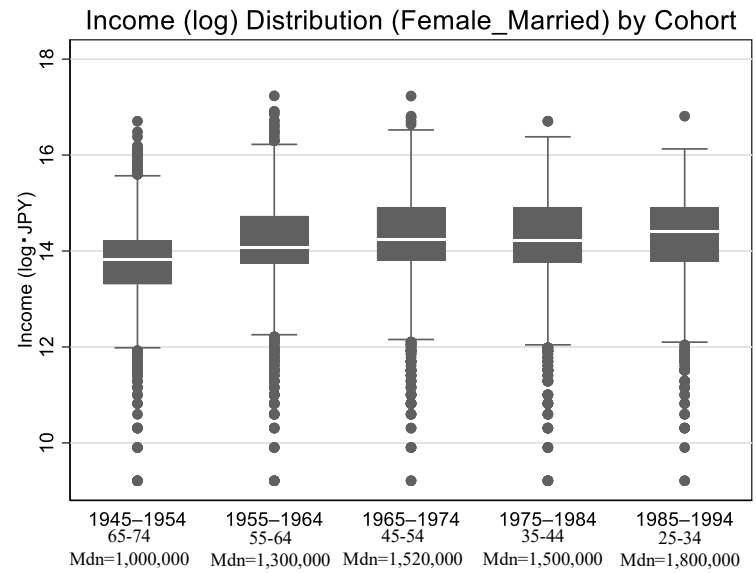


Employment status by cohort (Male_Unmarried)



3. Analytical Results





3. Analytical Results

□ Summary of Descriptive Analysis

✓ **Education:** higher educational attainment has become more common among recent cohorts of women.

→ Gender and marital gaps persist.

✓ **Employment:** the share of regular employees has increased among younger cohorts, reflecting women's expanding participation in the labor market.

→ Differences by gender and marital status are evident in employment status, with the gender gap being especially pronounced among the married population.

3. Analytical Results

□ Summary of Descriptive Analysis

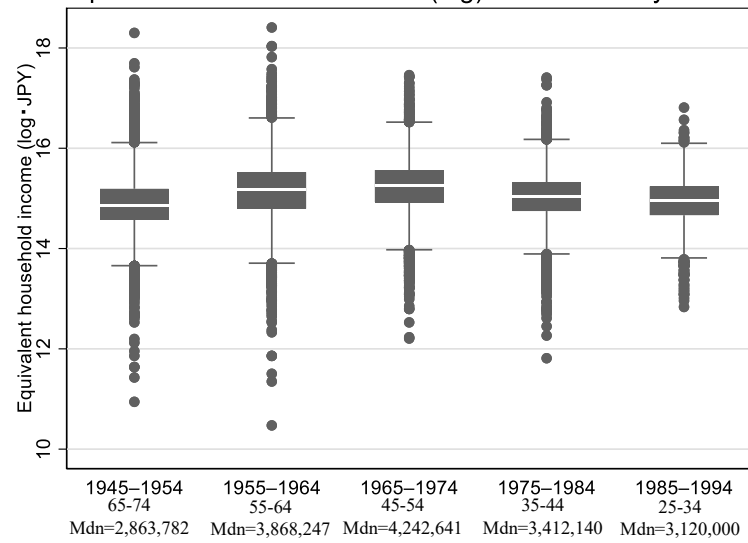
✓ **Income: Differences exist by gender and marital status.**

→ **Differences among married individuals are particularly pronounced, whereas among the unmarried, the gender gap in income is smaller in more recent cohorts.**

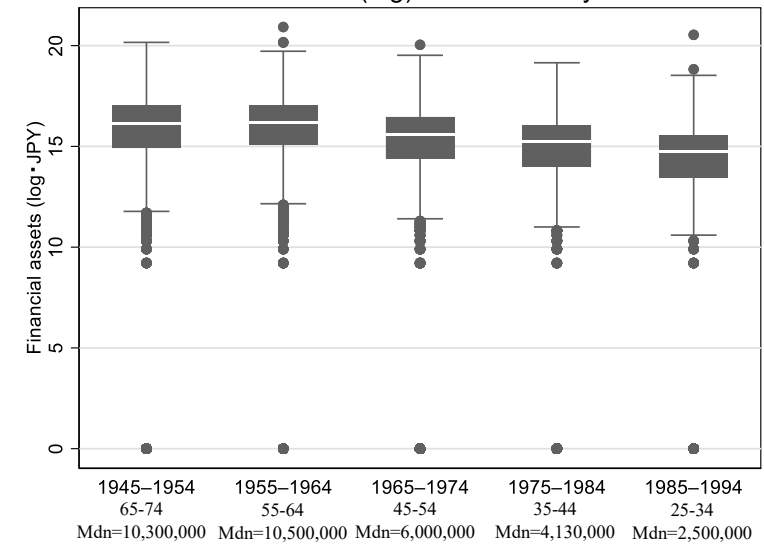
□ **From these findings arises a central question: Why do women choose to marry despite experiencing a decline in social status?**

→ **Focusing on households rather than individuals may provide an answer to this question.**

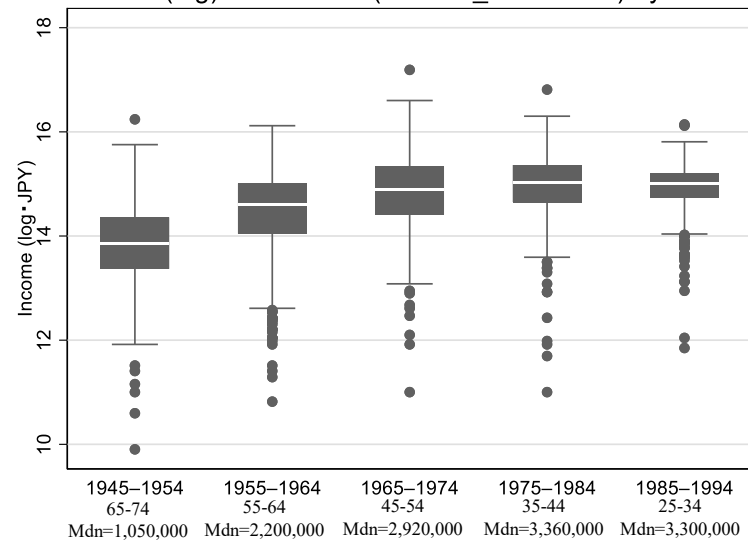
Equivalent household income (log) Distribution by Cohort



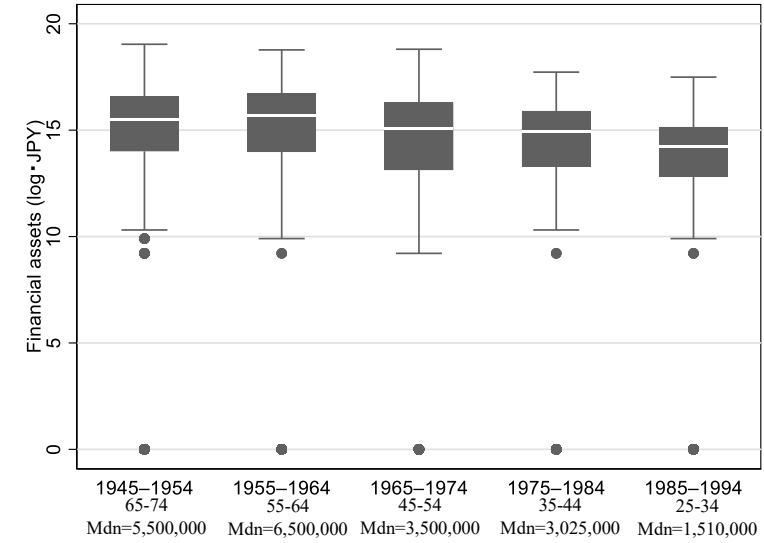
Financial assets (log) Distribution by Cohort



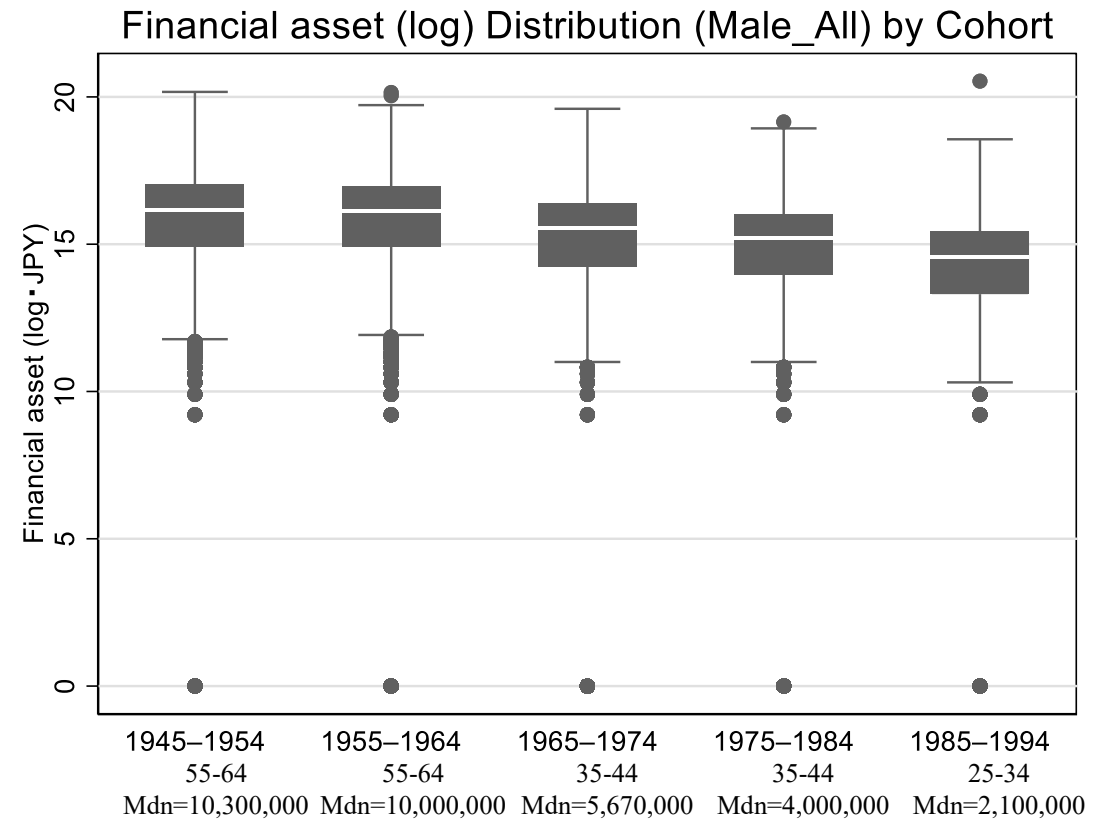
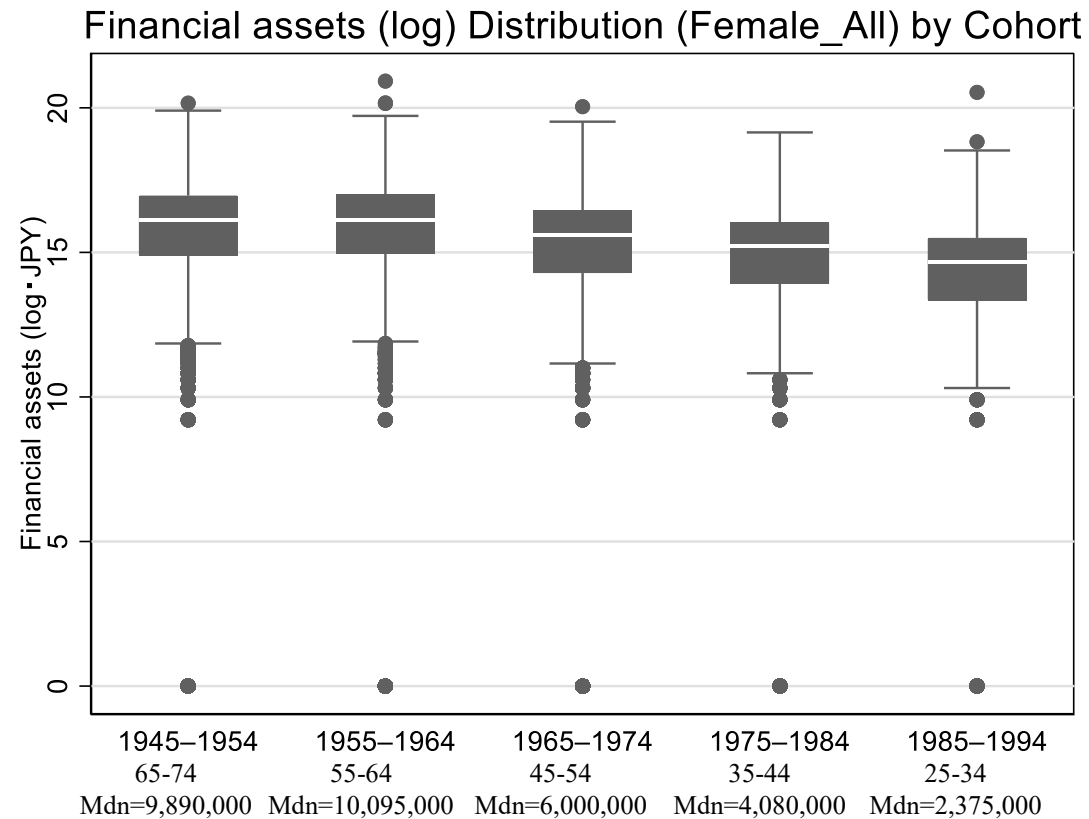
Income (log) Distribution (Female_Unmarried) by Cohort



Financial assets (log) Distribution (Female_Unmarried) by Cohort



3. Analytical Results



3. Analytical Results

□ When focusing on households rather than individuals, ...

- ✓ Among older cohorts, equivalent household income tends to exceed the individual income of unmarried women.
- ✓ In terms of wealth accumulation as well, households (i.e., married women) in older cohorts have been able to accumulate higher levels of assets than unmarried women.

→ In the context of Japan's institutional setting, marriage may have functioned as a mechanism that prevented a decline in women's social status in later life.

- ✓ The Category III insured system
- ✓ Glass ceiling, etc.

4. Conclusion

□ The answers to the questions of this study are as follows:

- ✓ How can equality between men and women at the individual level be measured?
 - How we conceptualize the household can be an important consideration.
 - While social status appears to decline at the individual level, this is not necessarily the case when viewed at the household level.
- ✓ What is required of social security policies to achieve gender equality?
 - Is it appropriate to weaken the household's function as a source of security (the abolition of the Category III insured system, etc)?
 - If marriage behavior does not change, this may lead to unintended consequences, such as an increase in non-regular employment among married women.

4. Conclusion

□ The answers to the questions of this study are as follows:

✓ How does the advancement of gender equality affect family formation?

- The equilibrium in which marriage prevents a decline in women's social status at the household level may be changing.
- Improvement in individual earning capacity + Decline in the household's social security function → Marriage becomes socioeconomically gender-neutral.
 - Non-socioeconomic values → remain relatively stable
 - Socioeconomic values only → marriage tends to be suppressed

4. Conclusion

□ Implications of this study

✓ A redefinition of how women's social stratification is measured is necessary.

→ Particularly regarding whether it should be understood at the individual or household level (Shirahase 2004).

✓ Social security policies should be discussed with this perspective in mind.

→ Reducing the household's function as a social safety net may lead to unintended consequences.

✓ Moreover, it is essential to consider how gender equality at the individual level affects family formation.

→ Marriage and childbirth should be viewed not as given institutions but as outcomes of individual choice.

4. Conclusion

□ Limitations

- ✓ Because this dataset is cross-sectional, it does not allow us to distinguish age from cohort effects.
→ To address this limitation, a two-point comparison will be conducted using data from 2009.
- ✓ The current results are therefore descriptive in nature.
→ More detailed analyses will be conducted through multivariate methods.

□ Future Tasks

- ✓ This study will examine, through detailed analysis, whether the current implications are valid.
- ✓ From the perspective of individual-level equality, it will focus particularly on the determinants of income and their changes over time.

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Acknowledgements

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