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### **The Changing Transition to Adulthood in Okinawa, Japan**

Panel: Social Capital and Well-being in Okinawa and Japan from the Perspectives of the Life Course (Session 2)

This paper explores the historical changes in the transition to adulthood among successive birth cohorts in Okinawa over the last thirty years, using a retrospective life course survey. Our data show that both later age of school completion and later age of marriage resulted in a delayed transition among the younger cohorts in Okinawa, which is in common with other areas including Japan mainland.

The transition in Okinawa, however, has been formed in its unique context. Because of a narrow job market and scarce opportunities for tertiary education in the remote islands, many young people move to mainland Japan around high school graduation, only to return home before getting married. Their migration experience tends to result in further prolongation of the transition.

This uniqueness of the transition in Okinawa is not necessarily problematic, especially those who studied or worked as fulltime employees in the mainland. They enjoy successful subsequent job career after returning to Okinawa. In contrast, another type raises some problems. It is of temporary employees. Most of them typically work in factories or construction sites. From the standpoint of well-being of adolescents and young adults, the latter case is a major concern because they are often excluded from stable job career when they get back in Okinawa.