

# Average age of new mothers tops 30 for first time

Jiji

2011 saw Japanese women enter motherhood at an average age of 30.1, topping 30 for the first time, the Health, Labor and Welfare Ministry said.

Marriages meanwhile fell for the third straight year to 661,899, marking a postwar record low.

The number of babies born last year was 1,050,698, also a postwar low and down some 10,000 from the previous year.

The ministry noted a combination of factors, such as a tendency to marry late, financial constraints and problems associated with childcare leave, created an environment in which women are finding it hard to start a family.

The so-called total fertility rate in 2011 was 1.39, unchanged from the previous year.

The rate, which represents the average number of children a woman is expected to have in her lifetime, fell to a record low of 1.26 in 2005 before recovering to 1.37 between 2006 and 2008. It remained flat in 2009.

The total fertility rate was highest in Okinawa at 1.86 and lowest in Tokyo at 1.06.

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