

# About 1 in 4 Japanese adults in their 20s and 30s is a virgin, study says



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**Hong Kong (CNN)** Japanese adults have their first heterosexual sexual experiences later than their counterparts in the United States and the UK, according to [a new study](#).

Public health experts at the University of Tokyo found that sexual inexperience was on the rise in the country, with the percentage of women aged 18 to 39 who'd never had sex rising to 24.6% in 2015 from 21.7% in 1992.

The change was greater for men of the same age, with 25.8% virgins in 2015, up from 20% in 1992.

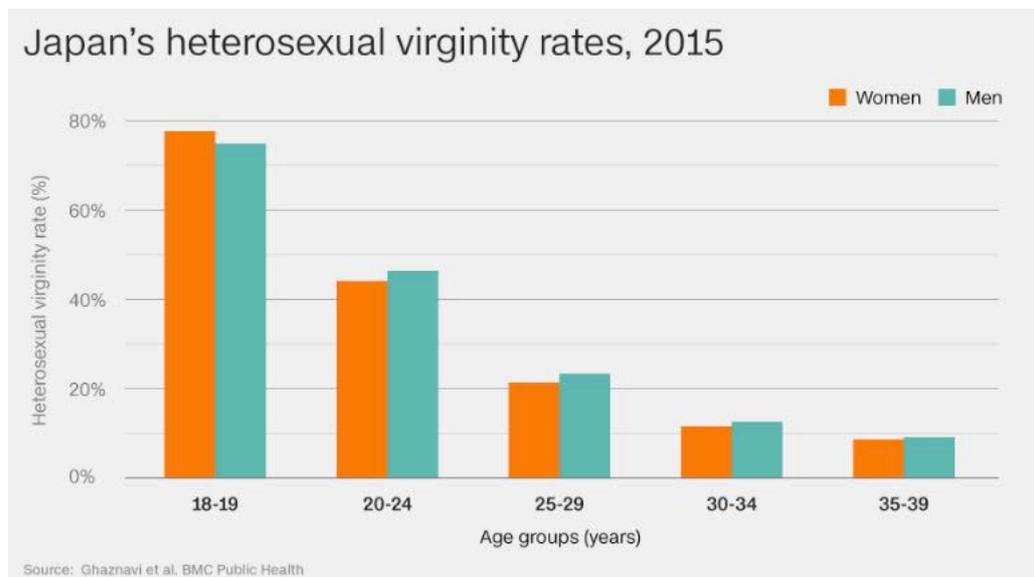
"Sexual inexperience has become a national concern in Japan, but previous reports did not examine the trend across different age groups and socioeconomic backgrounds," said Peter Ueda, a public health researcher at the University of Tokyo and an author of the study, published Monday.

By comparison, surveys from the UK, the United States and Australia suggest that rates of heterosexual inexperience are between 1% to 5% of adults in or around their 30s, said the paper, which was published in the journal *BMC Public Health*.

The authors said that while it had been suggested that an increasing number of Japanese adults were sexually inexperienced, their study was the first to address this issue using nationally representative data.

The paper defined heterosexual sexual experience as vaginal intercourse between men and women. It did not include responses from those identifying as LGBTQ or asexual, and it assumed that all married couples had had sex.

The researchers based their nationwide estimate on data from seven national fertility surveys conducted over three decades. Each drew on the responses of between 11,553 and 17,859 adults 18 to 39 years old.



## 'Money talks'

The report found that a higher percentage of men on lower incomes remained sexually inexperienced compared to women.

"Although the discussion around cause and effect becomes very complex when considering who becomes sexually experienced and who remains a virgin, we show that heterosexual inexperience is at least partly a socioeconomic issue for men. Simply put, money talks," said Cyrus Ghaznavi, the lead author of the study.

The issue of birth rate is important in Japan because its population is aging rapidly.

Japan is considered a "super-aged" nation, meaning more than 20% of its population is over 65 years old. Just [946,060 babies were born in 2017](#), a record low since official records began in 1899.

The decline means a shrinking cohort of workers is left supporting an increasingly elderly population in need of health care and pensions, explained Kukhee Choo, a media studies professor at Sophia University in Tokyo, who wasn't involved in the research. Choo added that putting a spotlight on the rise of sexlessness is part of a domestic agenda to rectify the population decline.

In recent years, local governments have boosted their efforts [to pair off heterosexual singles](#) in a bid to reverse the country's declining fertility rate.

"There seems to be a national push to get people to really think about this issue and feel a sense of urgency," Choo said.

Furthermore, despite Japan's multibillion-dollar porn industry, Choo said discussions around porn and sex remain taboo. "Sex is seen as dirty and corrupting in Japan," Choo said.

"My students can't use the word 'penis' or 'vagina,' and if a woman expresses any knowledge or interest in sex, you're seen as a fallen women. Men don't talk about it, either."

