



Written by [Angeline Tan](#) on April 14, 2024

Japanese Population Down 13th Year in a Row

As of October 1, Japan's population [dropped](#) by 595,000, or 0.48 percent, from a year before to 124,352,000, indicating the [13th consecutive year of decrease](#) amid an increasingly aging population and a steep birth decline. Moreover, household size also continues to decline, according to [national data](#) on April 12.

Putting foreign residents aside, the figure stood at 121,193,000, down 837,000, or 0.69 percent, from a year earlier, indicating the most significant decrease since 1950, based on a demographic survey by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications. Such a decrease comes amid government efforts to address the country's falling birthrate and rapidly graying society.

Per [estimates](#) published by Japan's National Population Institute on April 12, single-person households are predicted to make up 44.3 percent of the 52.61 million households in Japan in 2050, with almost [half of them made up of people aged 65 or older](#).

In 2020, the number of single households comprised 38 percent of the total, per data by the [National Institute of Population and Social Security Research](#).

The average number of people living in a household is slated to fall from 2.21 in 2020 to 1.99 in 2033 and 1.92 in 2050, the institute contended.

Among elderly living alone in 2050, 59.7 percent of men and 30.2 percent of women are poised to be people who have never married, an increase from 33.7 percent and 11.9 percent, respectively, in 2020.

Moreover, the ministry's figures depicted people aged 75 or above rising by 713,000 to about 20.08 million, surpassing the 20 million mark for the first time.

Also, the number of people aged from zero to 14 declined by 329,000 to about 14.17 million, consisting of 11.4 percent of the total population, the lowest figures ever. Those aged between 15 and 64 fell by 256,000 to about 73.95 million, accounting for 59.5 percent of the total population.

At the same time, the foreign national population in Japan escalated by 243,000 to about 3.16 million. The ministry admitted that it included foreign workers and students who had been in Japan for more than three months in the overall population count.

Among Japan's 47 prefectures, only Tokyo saw an increase in population, the second straight year of increase for the Japanese capital.

Japan's population started to decrease after [reaching its zenith of 128 million](#) in 2008, registering 125 million in 2022. According to the [East Asia Forum](#), commonly cited factors for Japan's declining population include sky-high costs of living and the economic costs of having and raising children,



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especially for lower-income households. [Changing lifestyles](#), such as the increase in the number of women in the workforce instead of getting married and staying home to raise children, also contributed to the decline in births and children.

A [Pew Research Center survey](#) conducted between June 2 and September 17, 2023, and published April 3 revealed that fewer than 30 percent of people in Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and Vietnam say women have a societal obligation to have children.

“Women should decide for themselves whether to bear children,” the survey results published on April 3 read.

Furthermore, the same survey stated that among all places polled, “older adults are more likely than younger adults to say women have a societal obligation to bear children.”

Japan ranked top in the survey with 79 percent of respondents declaring that women were free to choose their childbirth preferences.

This percentage was followed by Hong Kong (78 percent), Taiwan (70 percent), South Korea (68 percent), and Vietnam (67 percent).

Interestingly, the same poll revealed the role of religion and prayer in influencing respondents’ views towards having children.

To combat the country’s declining birth rates, the Japanese government has taken steps over the years to encourage couples to have children, such as maintaining that having children [“is fun”](#) instead of “a duty.”

Last month, Japan’s Cabinet [greenlit a plan](#) to widen the coverage of monthly child allowances to high school-age children as Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida hopes to tackle the steep fall in birth rates. According to this plan, the current income limit for households qualifying for monthly child benefits would be removed, thus permitting more families to receive these allowances.

Last year, Tokyo announced that it would [spend about 3.5 trillion yen](#) (about \$25 billion/€23.5 billion) yearly to reverse its declining birth rates. “In Japan, South Korea and Taiwan, adults who pray daily are somewhat more likely than those who pray less often to say women are obligated to have children,” the survey showed.

Parents will be entitled to a monthly allowance of around 15,000 yen — about \$107 dollars — for each child from newborn to two years old. Besides, there will then be 10,000 yen for children from the age of three and older, with increased coverage to include children in senior high school.

Also, Japan’s government also hopes to set up nursery school or day-care centers for children, even if their parents are unemployed.

Strikingly, Japan has more than 86,500 centenarians, with women accounting for most of them. Relative to its population, the country has one of the highest numbers of centenarians in the world.

In addition to increasing incentives for Japanese couples to have children, the Japanese government has resorted to luring more foreigners, both qualified professionals and even [refugees](#), to combat the country’s declining native population and to address acute labor shortages in certain industries.

In 2023, Japan set a new precedent by granting refugee status to [303 individuals](#), according to statements from government ministries. The total number of refugees accepted increased by 101 compared to the previous year, which was a 50-percent increase in only one year.



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[Afghans made up the majority of refugees with 237 individuals](#), many of whom were linked to the Japan International Cooperation Agency and who obtained refuge following the Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan.

The second-largest number of refugees with 27 were from Myanmar, where fighting between the military and democratic factions have been underway since the military coup in 2021. Six people from Ethiopia, which defaulted on its national debt in December 2023, also obtained refugee status.



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