

1 Population and Labor Force

Population Growth Rate and Decline from the Late 1970s

Between November 1945 (immediately after the end of World War II) and October 2012 (national census), Japan's population increased by a factor of about 1.77, from a reported 72.15 million to 127.52 million. Naturally, this continued increase has not been at a uniform pace over this 67 years. There has been a switchover in population change from the pre-war days of high birth rates and high death rates to the post-war situation of fewer births and fewer deaths.

During this transition period, we experienced a condition of high birth rates and low death rates. During the first baby boom (1947-49), the population grew at an average annual rate of over 5%, but growth rapidly slowed down to about 1% per year in the subsequent 10 years. The second baby boom occurred in the early 1970s, stimulating another rise in the rate of population growth until it once again reverted to 1% growth per year, and then began a steady decline. The growth rate recorded a post-war low of 0.2% in the 5 years until 2010. In fact, in the twelve months from 2011 to 2012, the population actually fell by 0.2%.

Nuclear Families as the Main Reason for Decline in the Population Growth Rate

There are a variety of factors behind the decline in population growth. However, one of the biggest reasons is the population shift from farming villages to urban centers causing an increase in families of employed laborers forming nuclear families, and as a result the birth rate have declined. This transition was

also marked by the tendency to postpone marriage and child-bearing until a higher age. Along with receiving a higher level of education, women are continuing to find an expansion of employment opportunities; the resulting rise in the female employment rate is closely related to this trend.

Total Population Peaked in 2008, and Thereafter Decline

It is believed that Japan has entered a period of population decline. According to the latest statistics from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication, the population peaked in 2008 reaching 128.08 million. It has decreased for the first time in history. (The total population in 2010 was in excess of 128 million people, as stated above, but this is thought to be because the statistical processing technique changed in March 2011, rather than indicating that the trend itself has changed.) Although population change is due to natural and societal increase and decrease, the natural increase and decrease that is considered to be the basis for population change has been gradually decreasing. Population distributions by age, too, will further increase with the tendency toward lower birth rates and a larger elderly population (see Figure II-1). The working population is already diminishing in both real and proportional terms. As a result, there is concern over problems such as a slow-down in economic growth, and an increasing burden of support for the younger and older segments of society. As the labor force ages, a decrease in the number of young workers and overall manpower is observable.

Post-war Period Characterized by Regional Migrations in Search of Employment Opportunities

Looking at the population shifts between three major urban areas and other areas of Japan over the postwar years shows one striking pattern—the shift from non-urban areas (farming villages) to major cities during the period of high economic growth in the 1950s and 1960s. With the exception of the eldest sons of families engaged in agriculture, people moved from farming areas (where employment opportunities were limited) to cities, where they could easily find work in the rapidly developing secondary and tertiary industries. This shift brought about the serious problems of depopulation in the countryside and overcrowding in urban centers. A subsequent shift saw a migration within urban boundaries from congested city centers to the suburbs. Geographic shifts in population finally began to subside with the 1973 oil crisis and the subsequent tapering off of economic growth.

Concentration of Population in the Greater Tokyo Area

The heavy concentration of population in the Greater Tokyo area, as opposed to other urban centers, poses many difficulties. Also noteworthy (though not so much in terms of absolute population) are the so-called “U-turn” and “J-turn” —the tendency for people to move from their birthplaces in the countryside to a large urban center, and later back to their home-towns or a major regional city near their hometowns.

The concentration has been increasing yearly, and as of 2010 (national census), approximately 28% of Japan’s population centers in the four prefectures of

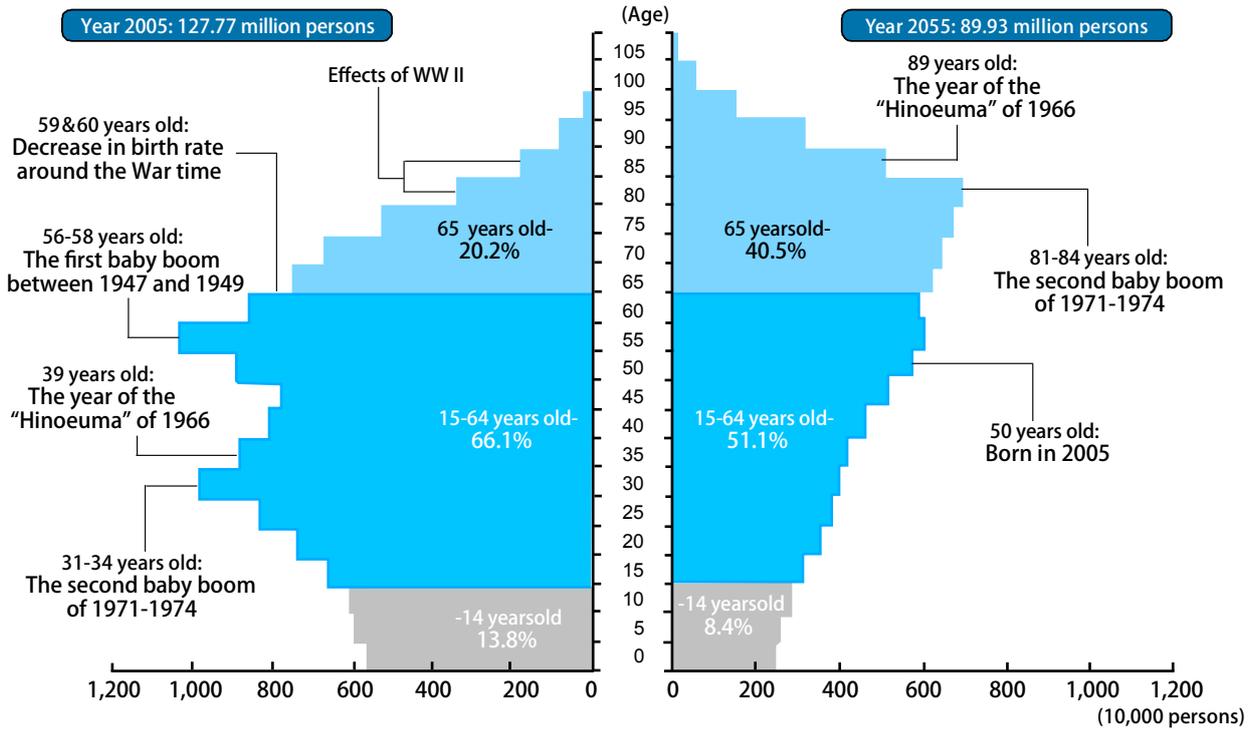
Saitama, Chiba, and Kanagawa, and Tokyo.

Ongoing Decline in the Population of Foreign Nationals

With the advance of globalization, the population of foreign nationals had been consistently increasing, peaking at 2.14 million in 2008. Due to the prolonged recession and other factors, however, the number has continued to decline since then, falling to 2.03 million in 2012. This corresponds to 1.60% of Japan’s total population. (NB: Caution is required when comparing with past data, as the basis for statistical measurement changed when the relevant legislation was amended in 2012.)

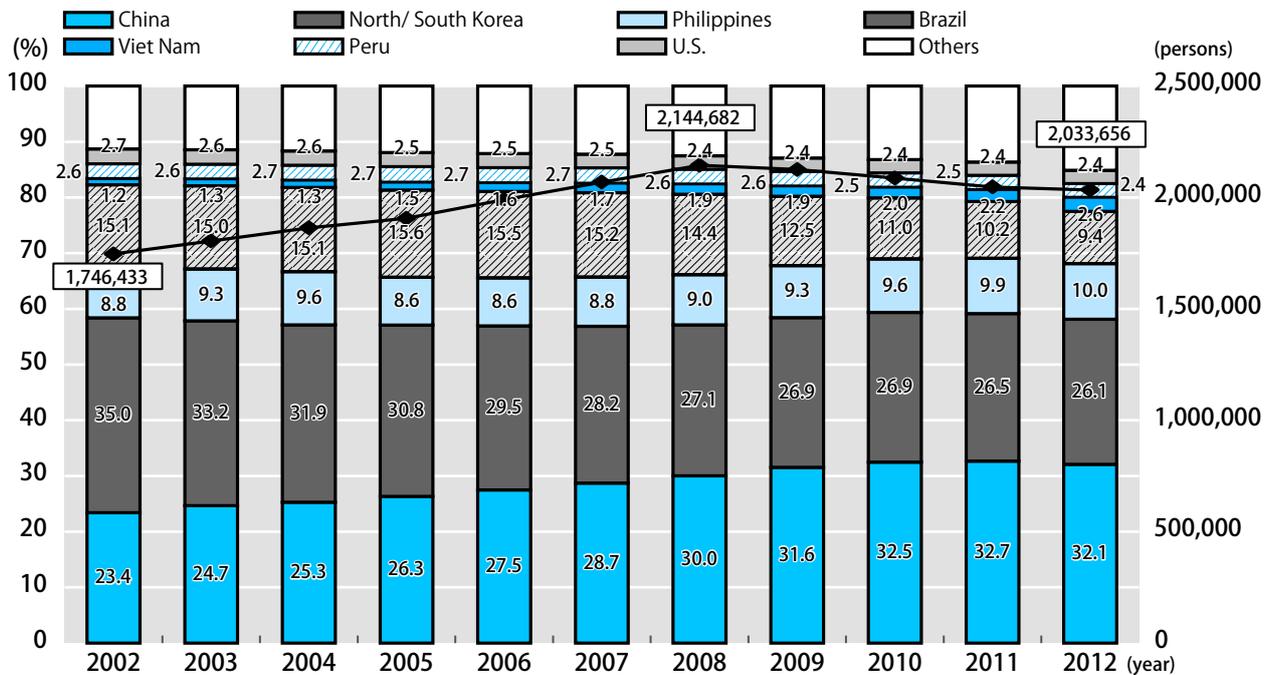
With regard to the breakdown of this, in the past, North and South Koreans accounted for the vast majority of Japan’s resident aliens. Their share has been decreasing, however, and as of the end of 2012, they accounted for 26.1% of the foreign population, a record low (see Figure II-2). On the other hand, there has been an influx of people from other Asian countries such as China and the Philippines, and the number of Central and South Americans of Japanese descent who have immigrated to Japan with their families to work is also on the rise after approval of their permanent-resident visas. This trend began to gather speed during the bubble economy of the late 1980s. The Chinese population in Japan, in particular, has been increasing greatly to No.1 since 2000, overtaking North and South Korea by the end of 2007. Although the ratio fell slightly between 2011 and 2012, Chinese nationals still account for 32.1% of the foreign population. There have also been notable increases in nationals from Thailand, Indonesia, Nepal and other countries, although their proportion of the whole is not very large.

Figure II-1 Japan's Population in 50 Years



Source: The figures in 2005 are based on *Report of Population Census*, Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications. 2055 are on *Population Projections for Japan Medium-variant fertility (with Medium-variant mortality)*, National Institute of Population and Social Security Research. Note: "Hinoeuma" is one of the sign in the Oriental Zodiac. It is superstitiously believed that females born to this sign will create evil and many people avoided to give birth on this year.

Figure II-2 Changes in Registered Alien Population by Nationality



Source: Compiled from Ministry of Justice, *Numbers of Foreign Nationals Resident in Japan as of Dec. 31, 2012*

Changes in Labor Force and Labor Force Ratio – Declines in Both –

Japan's total population stands at 127.44 million. Of this total, 16,525,000 are aged 0-14, 79,901,000 are in the 15-64 bracket, and 31,019,000 are 65 or above (as of January 1st, 2013; Final Population Estimate by the Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, 2013).

The labor force includes those people aged 15 and older who actually hold jobs and therefore qualify as “workers”, as well as “completely unemployed persons” who want and seek jobs, but are not currently engaged in any work.

Japan's working population in 1960 was 45.11 million, but by 2012 this had swollen to an average of 65.55 million (males 37.89 million, females 27.66 million) (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, 2012 Annual Report on the Labour Force Survey).

The ratio of the labor force to the general population aged 15 and older is called the “labor force ratio” (or the “labor force population ratio”). In 1960, Japan's labor force ratio was 69.2%, but it declined to 59.1% in 2012 (male: 70.8%, female: 48.2%). (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, 2012 Annual Report on the Labour Force Survey)

Features of Japan Visible in the Labor Force Ratio

Figure II-4 shows the labor force ratio classified by gender and age from 1980 to 2012, and points out the following characteristics as long-term trends of Japan's labor force ratio:

(1) For males, no significant change is seen overall, but there are decreases in the 25-29 and over 65 age groups.

(2) The female labor force ratio develops in the M-shaped curve: the labor force ratio of female workers declines for workers in their late 20s through their 30s, and increases again after that. During this period, however, the bottom of the M-shaped curve shifts upwards and to the right, showing a smaller decrease in the labor force ratio.

Factors behind the Labor Force Ratio

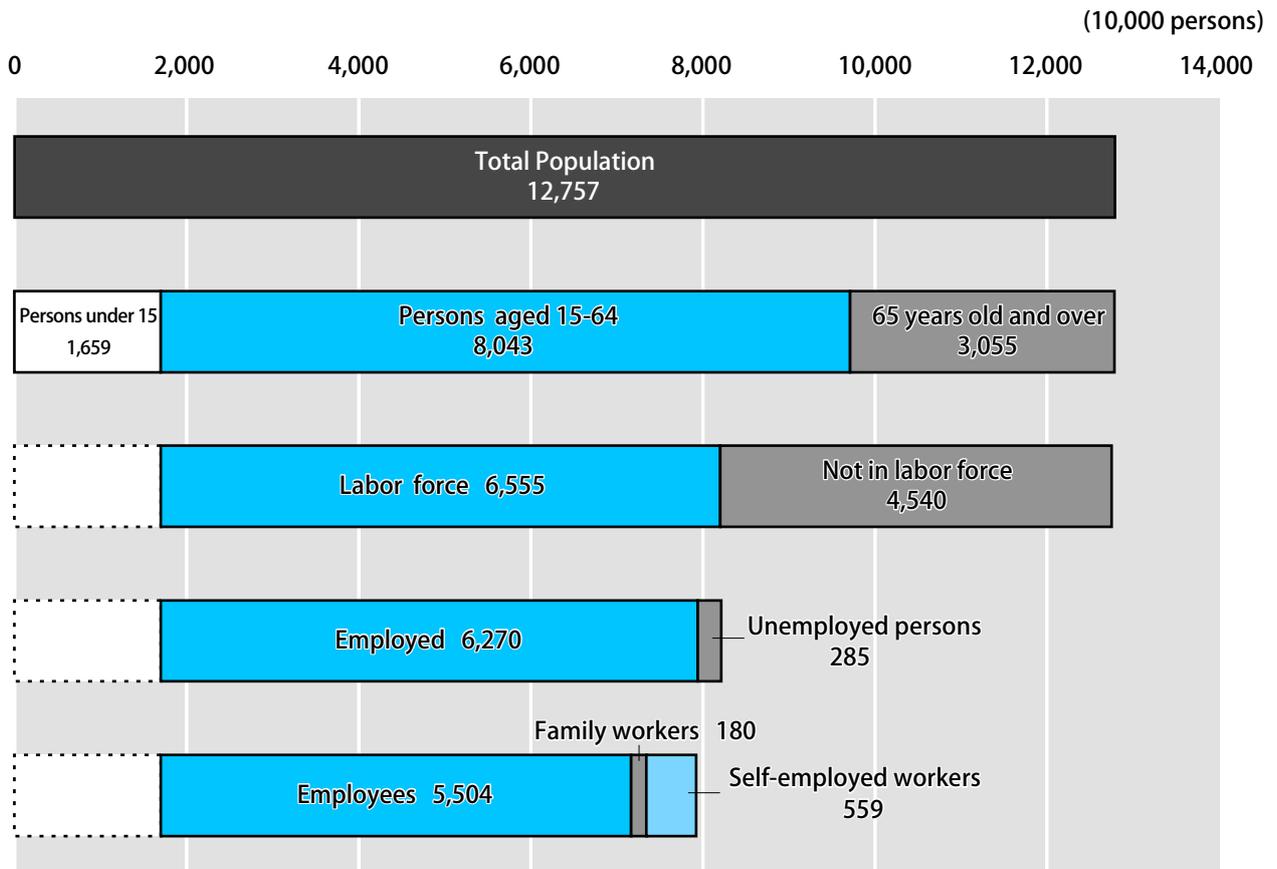
The following factors are thought to have caused these changes in the labor force ratios.

(1) For women, the labor force ratio used to decrease from the late 20s through the 30s, because many would quit their jobs and leave the labor force to get married and have children during that time. In the period under review, however, more women were staying in employment at these ages. Other contributory factors are a tendency to delay marriage and childbirth, and a rise in the proportion of unmarried women.

(2) Comparing the female labor force ratio by age group between married and unmarried women from 1990 to 2012, the gap between the two has widened in the child-rearing ages of 20-44. That is, while the ratio has remained relatively unchanged for unmarried women compared to ten years ago, it has risen for married women in all age groups except 40-44. The scale of this increase is particularly large in the 25-29 and 30-34 age groups.

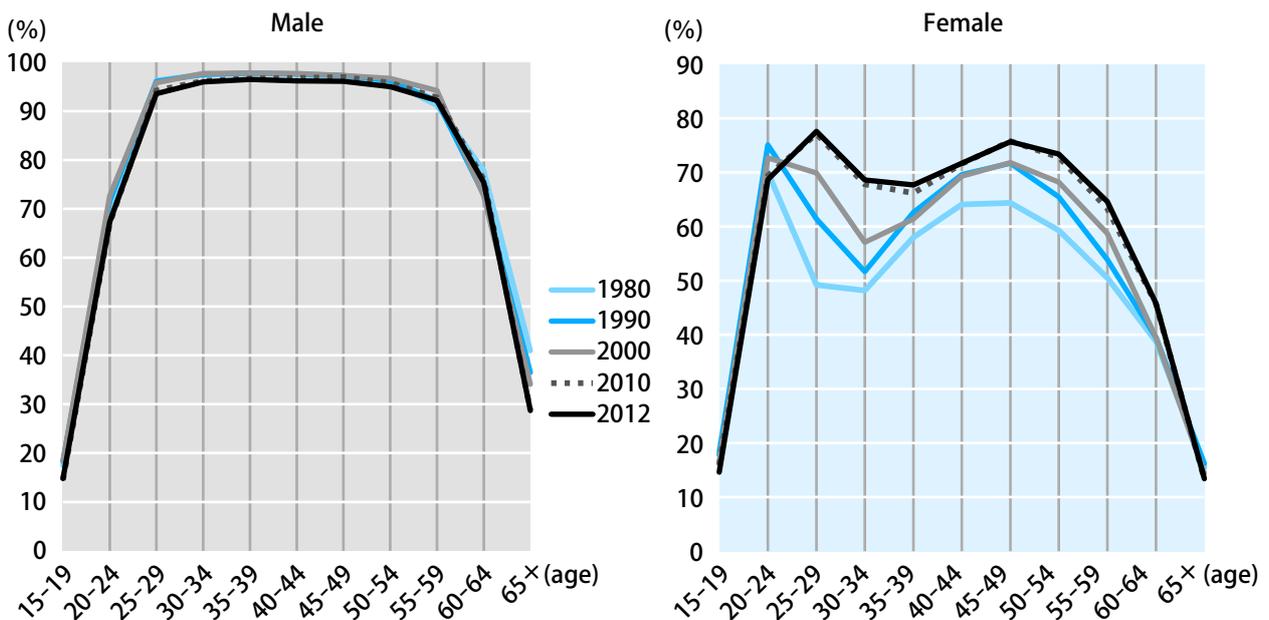
Thus, although women's participation in employment has progressed, the increase in employed females is due to an increase in the number of non-regular workers, among other factors (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2012 Analysis of Labor Economy).

Figure II-3 Composition of Labor Force



Source: Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, Population Census, *Labour Force Survey*

Figure II-4 Changes in the Labor Force Participation by Sex and Age



Source: Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, *Labour Force Survey*