

## 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 2014 (national census), Japan's population increased by a factor of about 1.76, from a reported 72.15 million to 127.08 million. Naturally, this continued increase has not been at a uniform pace over this 69 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. In fact, in the twelve months from 2013 to 2014, the population actually fell by 1.7%.

### 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

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. 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.

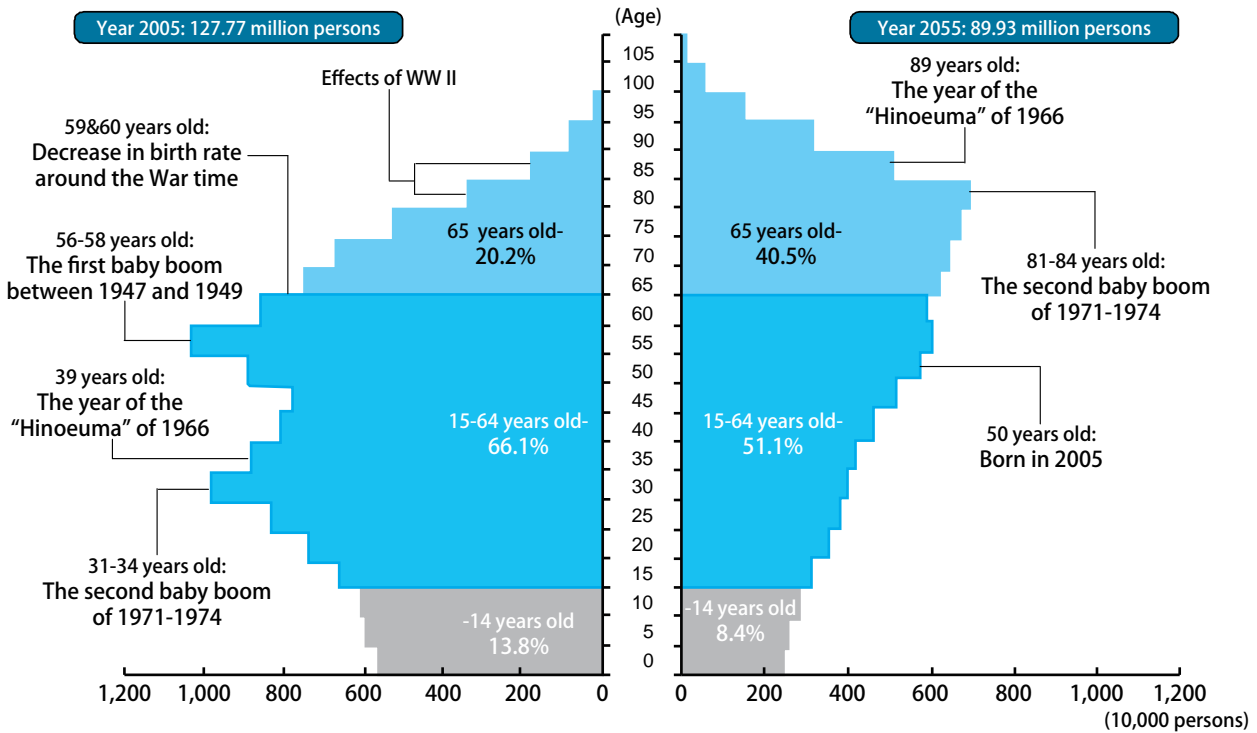
### **Foreign National Population Reverses Decline and Begins Increasing**

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. Thereafter, it began increasing again, and in 2014 stood at 2.122 million, close to its highest-ever level. This corresponds to 1.67% 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).

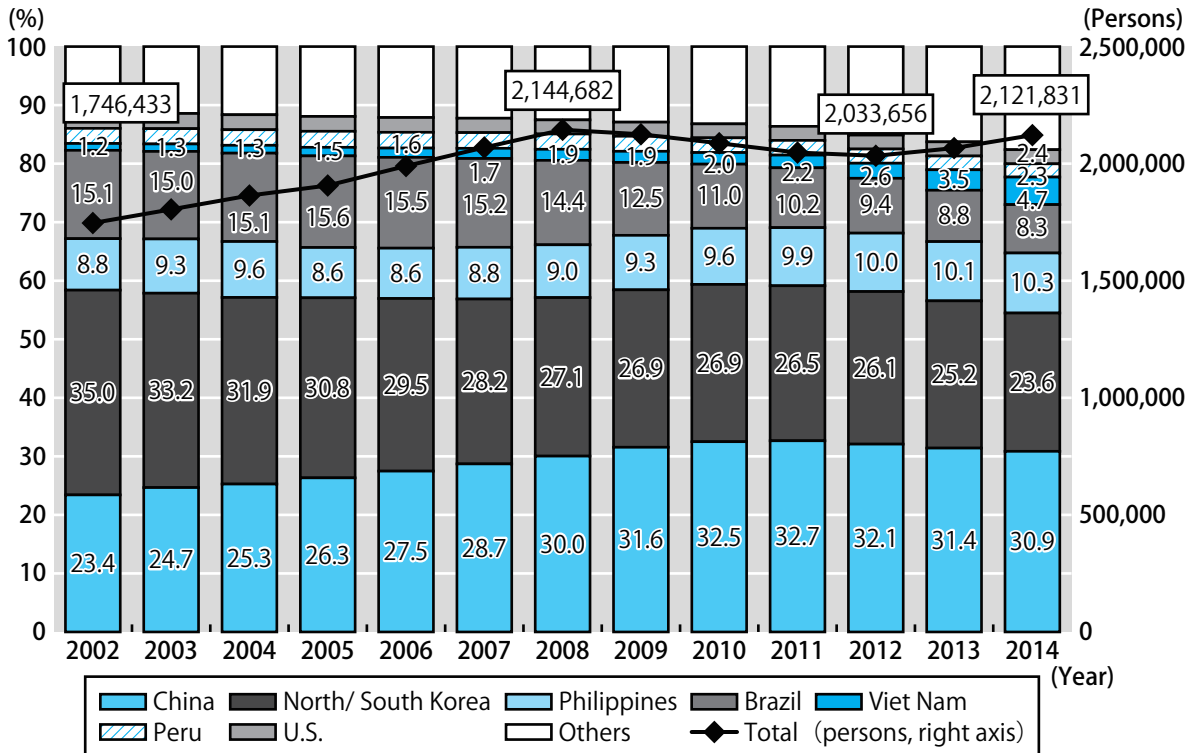
With regard to the breakdown of this, in the past, North and South Koreans accounted for the vast majority of Japan’s resident aliens. Their share has been decreasing, however, and as of the end of 2014, they accounted for 23.6% of the foreign population, a record low (see Figure II-2). On the other 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. Chinese nationals as a percentage of the total non-Japanese population peaked in 2011, and although this percentage has since been declining, it still stands at 30.9%. Also, although they still constitute a small percentage of the total, there has been an increasing influx of Vietnamese nationals in recent years.

**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 Mar. 31, 2014*

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

Japan's total population stands at 127.08 million. Of this total, 16,233,000 are aged 0-14, 77,850,000 are in the 15-64 bracket, and 32,780,000 are 65 or above (as of October 1st, 2014; Population Estimate by the Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications).

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 2014 this had swollen to an average of 65.87 million (males 37.63 million, females 28.24 million) (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, 2014 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 59.4% in 2014 (male: 70.4%, female: 49.2%) (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, 2014 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 2014, and points out the following characteristics as long-term trends of Japan's labor force ratio:

1. The male labor force has not changed significantly

overall, but the number aged 60 and over has grown.

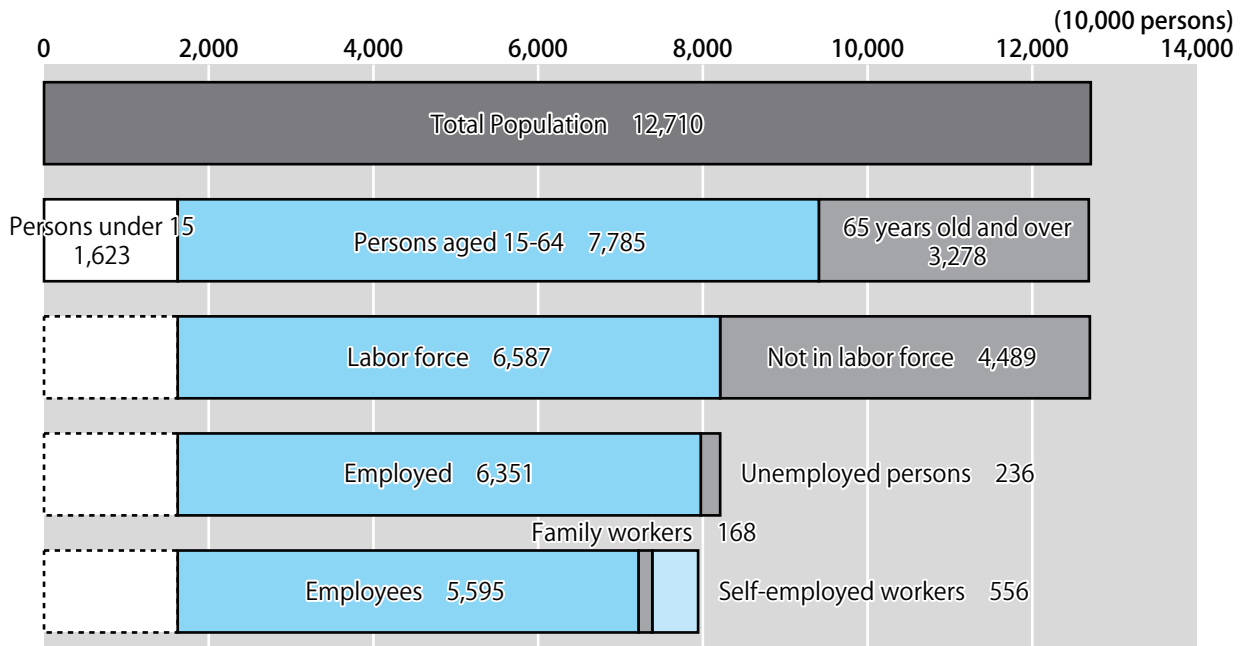
2. The female labor force ratio develops in the M-shaped curve: the labor force ratio of female workers declines for workers in their late 20s through their 30s, and increases again after that. However, the labor force participation rate for all age groups rose over the period surveyed, and the valley part of the M-shape moves upward and to the right over time.

## Factors behind the Labor Force Ratio

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

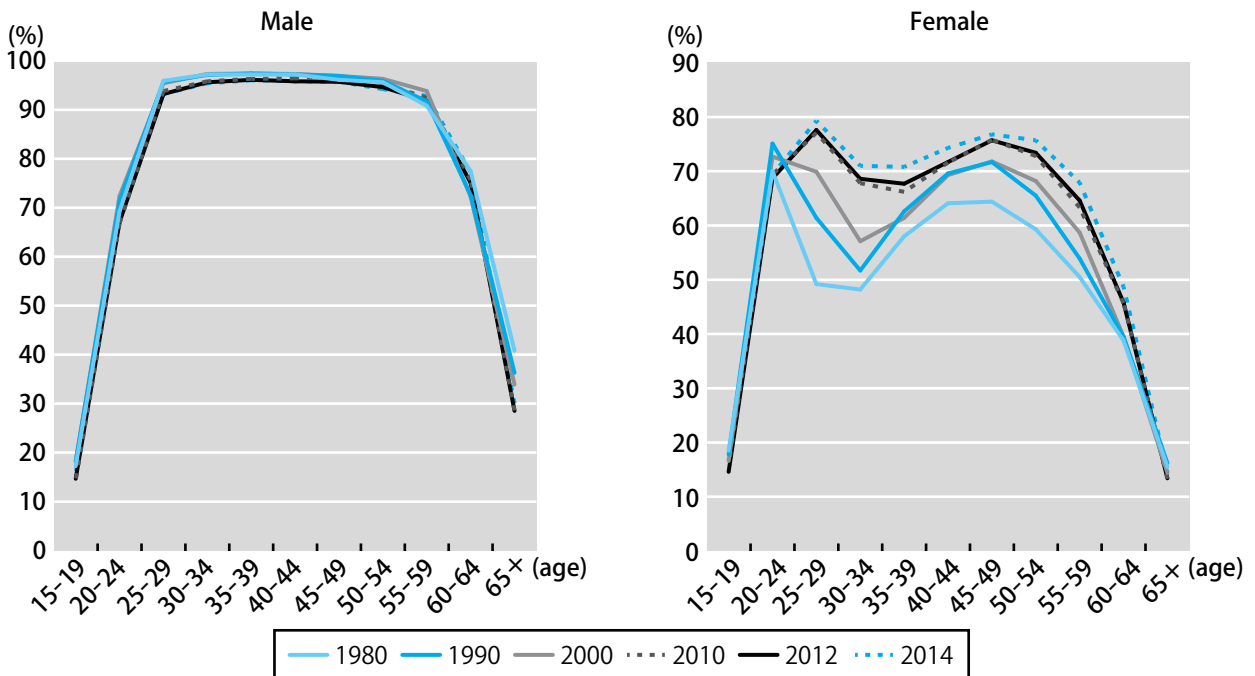
1. There is a rising number of older workers in the labor force, and companies are utilizing these workers more.
2. For women, the labor force ratio used to decrease from the late 20s through the 30s, because many would quit their jobs and leave the labor force to get married and have children during 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.
3. Among women, labor force participation is increasing, and they account for a larger proportion of regular employees in all age groups. The number of female short-term employees is also rising, particularly part-time workers and those doing side jobs in the 40-44, 45-49, and 50-54 age groups. (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2014 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*