The Aging Population and Aged Society

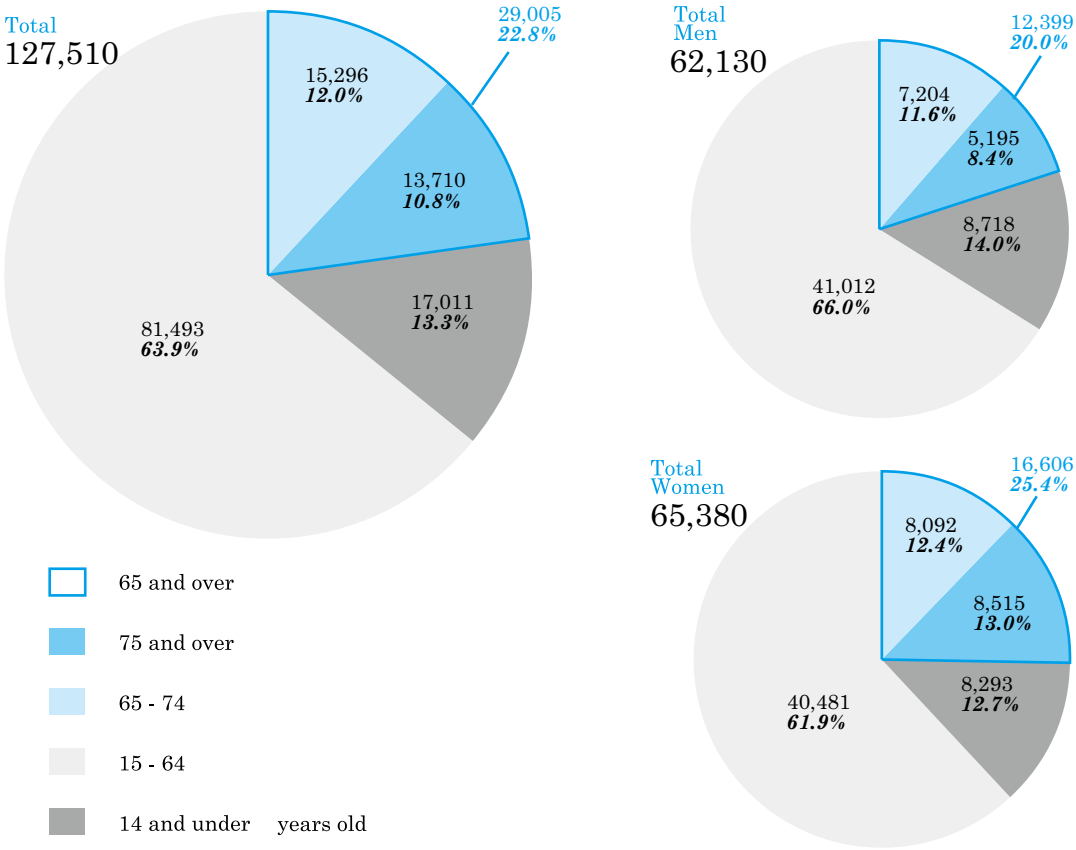
1.

Population Aging and Life Expectancy

The total Japanese population as of 2009 is 127.51 million (62.13 million men and 65.38 million women); about 29.01 million are aged 65 and over and 13.71 million are 75 and over. Older Japanese (aged 65 and over) represent 22.8% of the population, and people aged 75 and over represent 10.8%. In other words, more than one in every 5 persons is 65 and over, and one in every 10 is 75 and over. Women are overrepresented due to their longer average life expectancy; for example, there are 16 women for every 10 men in the group aged 75 and over. (1-1)

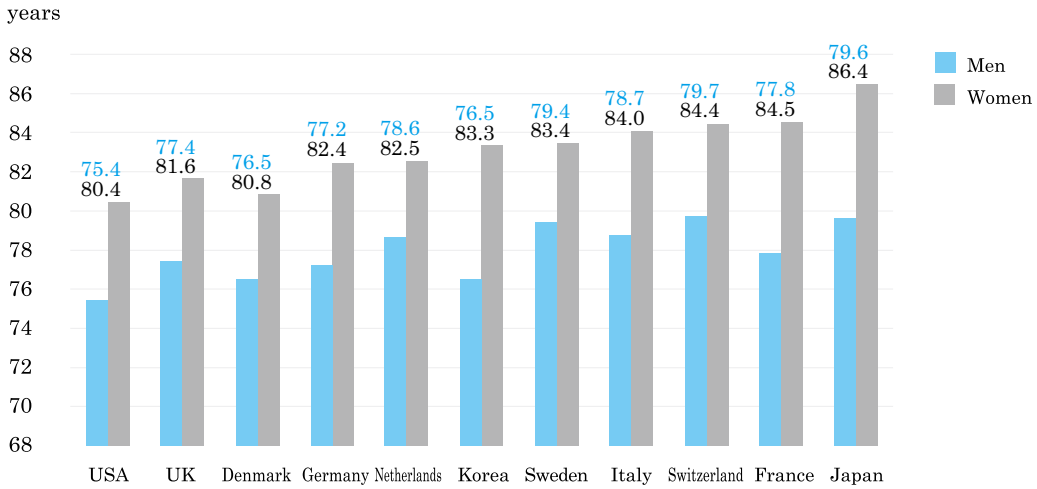
One reason for the growth of the elderly population is that people now live longer. Japan has one of the highest life expectancies in the world with average life expectancy at 79.6 years for men and 86.4 years for women. (1-2)

1-1 Population Aging in Japan (1,000 people, %)



Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, *Population Estimates,* 2009

1-2 Life Expectancy at Birth



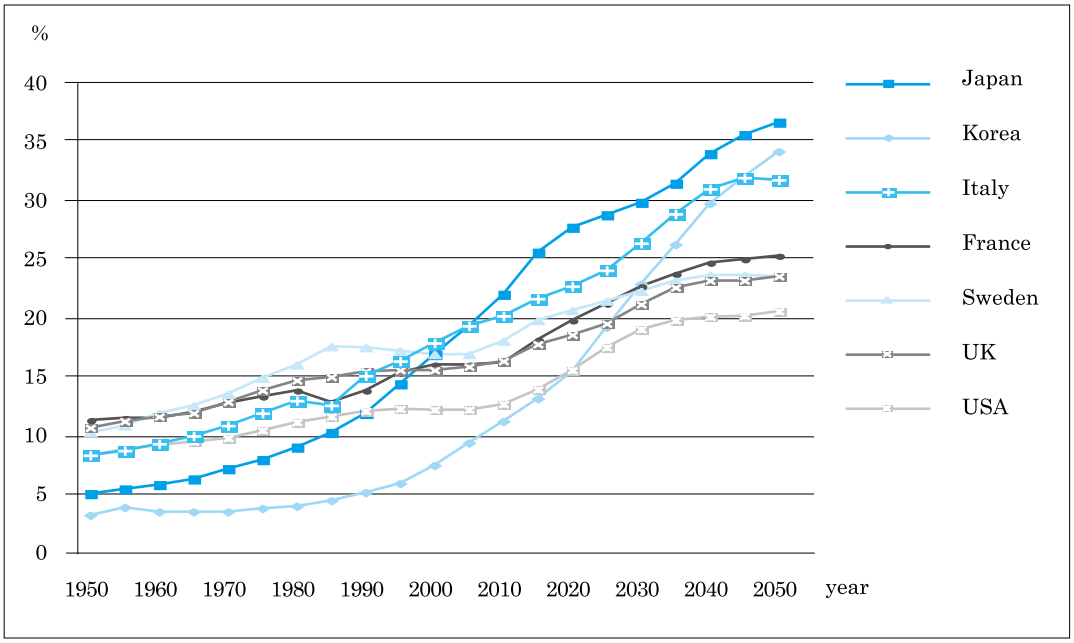
UN, *Demographic Yearbook,* 2008
Note : Some data are offered by governments.

Increase in Life Expectancy

Several factors have contributed to higher life expectancies. Direct factors include improved nutrition and living conditions, as well as public health. Also, advances in medical and pharmacological technology led to dramatic changes in the nature of prevalent diseases. More generally, after World War II, Japanese people experienced an era of peace and prosperity along with their economic growth, which was probably conducive to long life.

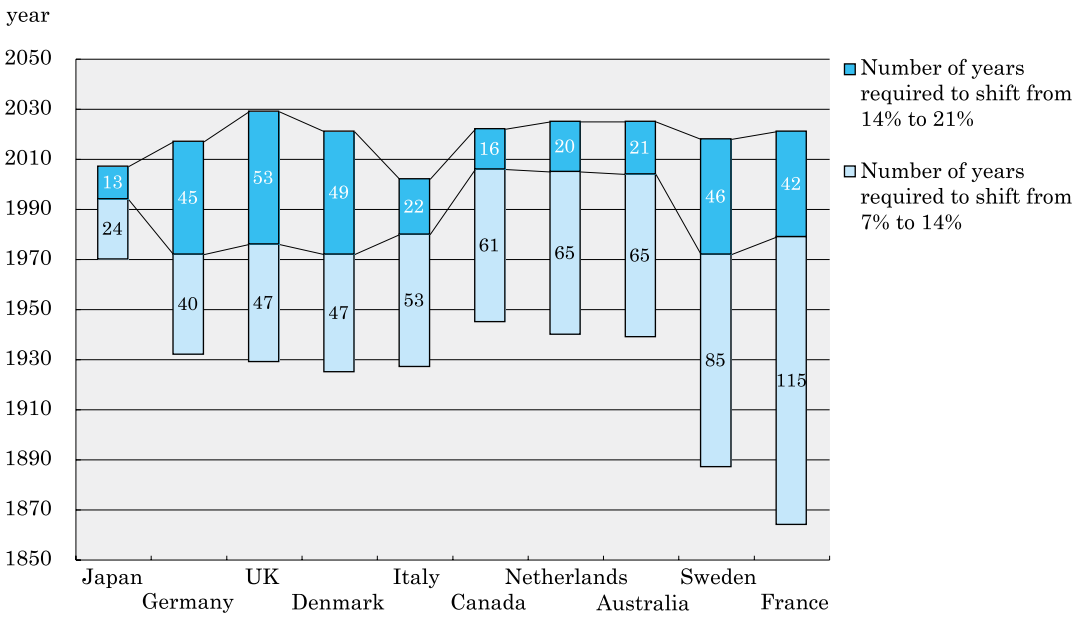
Japan became an "aging society" in 1970. An aging society is defined by WHO as one with 7% or more of people aged 65 and over. Still, compared to other advanced nations Japan remained relatively young until the 1980s. In 1994, Japan became an aged society, meaning 14% 65 and over. The proportion of older persons had doubled in just 24 years in Japan, a process that took about 115 years in France and 40 years in Germany. In 2005, Japan became the country with the highest proportion of people aged 65 and over at 20% by surpassing Italy. (1-3 , 1-4)

1-3 Trends of Population Aging (Population 65 and over, Medium variant) (%)



UN, *World Population Prospects*: The 2008 Revision

1-4 Speed of Population Aging : International Comparison (year)



1950 and before except Japan : UN, *UN Aging of Population and Its Economic and Social Implications (Population Studies, No.26, 1956)* and *UN Demographic Yearbook*.
After 1950 except Japan: UN, *UN World Population Prospects* : The 2004 Revision
Japan : Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, *National Population Census Survey* (2005) and National Institute of Population and Social Security Research, *Population Estimates* (2007)

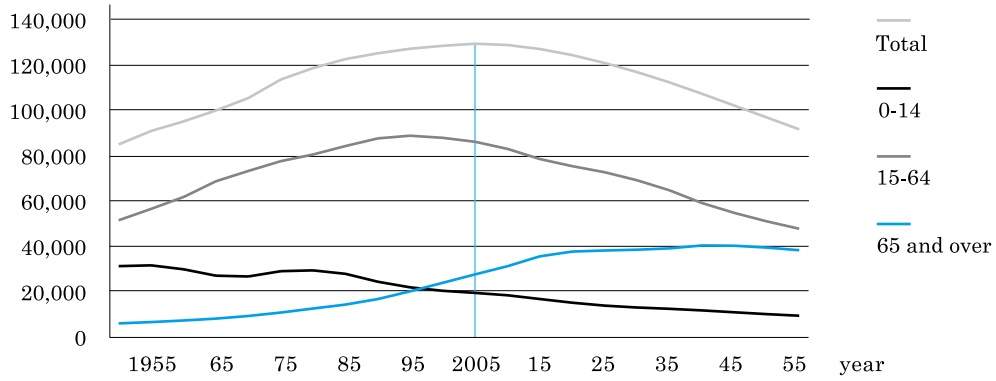
Decrease of Population and the Growth in Rate of Population Aging

In the future, the population is projected to drop to 125 million in 2015, when 34 million people, (27% of the population, or 1/4 people) will be aged 65 and over. By 2035, the total Japanese population is expected to decline to 111 million, of which 37 million (34%, 1/3 people) will be 65 and over. By 2055, with a total population of about 90 million, 36 million (41%) will be 65 and over. That year is expected to be the peak of population aging in Japan.

An interesting point is that the rapid growth in the 65 and over population is almost over. From 1980 to 2005 the number of elderly people more than doubled, but the rate of increase will moderate sharply from about 2010. However, the old-age share of the population will continue to go up because the total population is shrinking. (1-5)

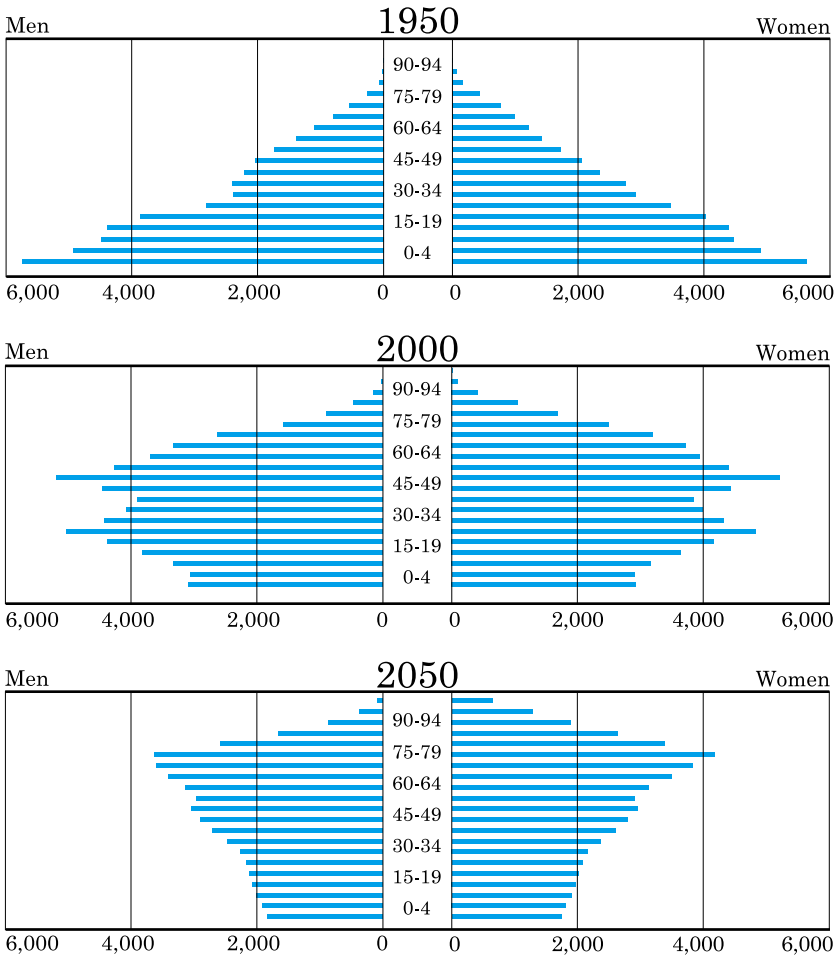
The radical transformation of the Japanese population structure over one century is dramatically shown in the "population pyramids" for 1950, 2000 and 2050 (younger cohorts estimated). Japan went from being quite a young nation, to a middle-aged nation, to a remarkably old nation. (1-6)

1-5 Trends with Population in Japan (1,000 people)



Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, *Population Statistics of Japan,* 2008

1-6 Population Pyramids of Japan 1950, 2000, 2050 (1,000 people)



UN, *World Population Prospects* : The 2008 Revision

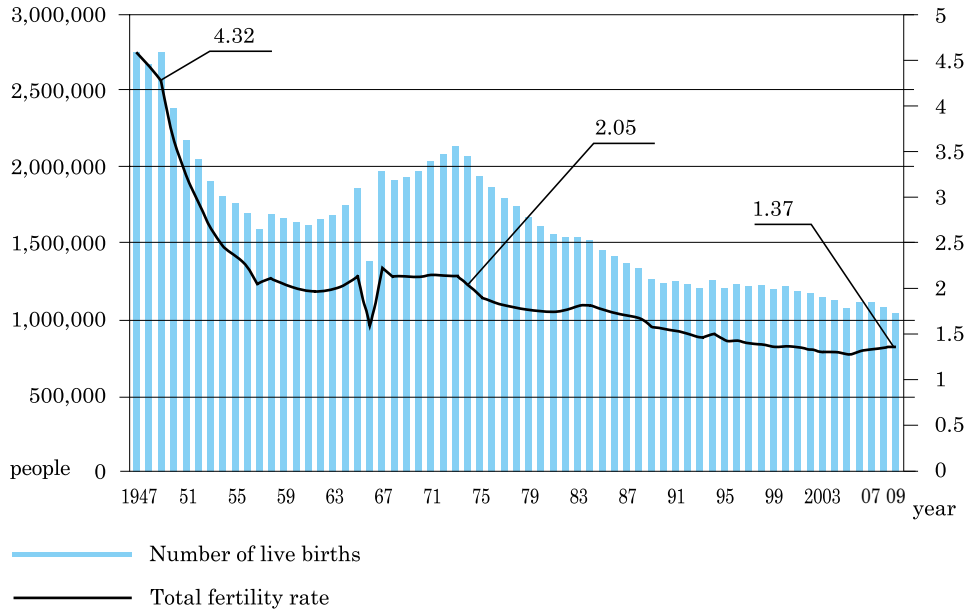
Declining Number of Births

The primary reason for the rapidity of aging in Japan is the declining number of births. The total fertility rate (TFR) had been over 4.30 in the late 1940s, when the baby-boom generation was born, but in 1974 it declined to 2.05, which is the replacement fertility rate, and continued to fall to 1.37 in 2009. (1-7) The primary reasons for this trend are fewer and later marriages, and fewer births among married couples.

In comparison with other countries, Japan's TFR is lower than in the US, France and the Scandinavian countries, and similar to that in Germany and Italy. TFRs in Singapore, Korea and Taiwan are currently lower than in Japan. (1-8)

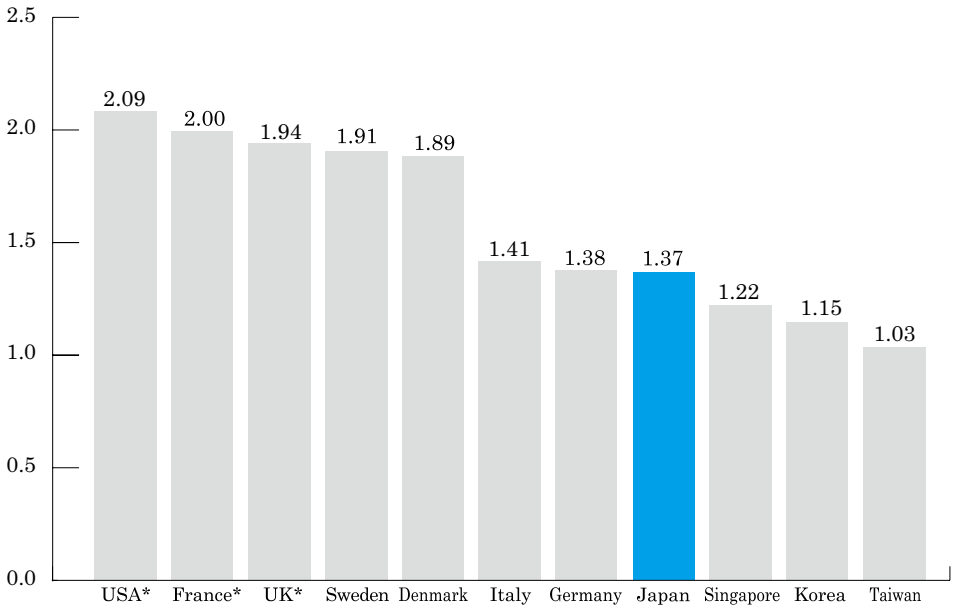
The government has initiated several programs to raise birth rates, but so far they have been ineffectual. In any case, even if the fertility rate were to rise, the number of women able to have babies will be declining rapidly once the "secondary baby boom" (aged 25-29 in 2000) passes out of its fertile years.

1-7 Declining Fertilities in Japan (1947-2009)



Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, *Vital Statistics*, 2009

1-8 Total Fertility Rates: International Comparison (2008 - 2009)

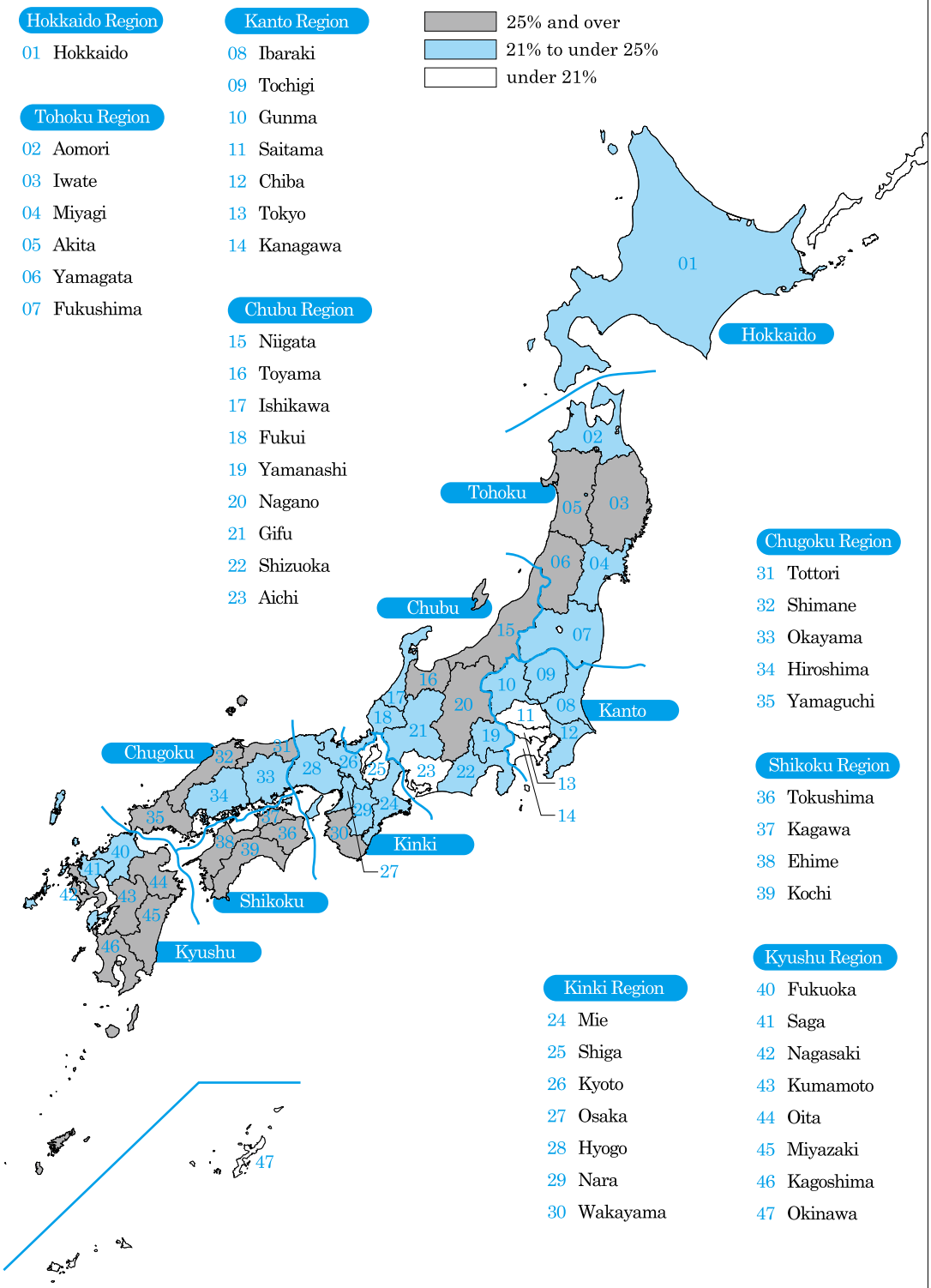


* = provisional value
Korea National Statistics Office
Statistics Singapore
NCHS, *National Vital Statistics Reports of USA*
National Institute of Population and Social Security Research, *Latest Demographic Statistics of Japan,* 2009
Directorate-General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics Taiwan, *Statistical Yearbook*
World Bank, *World Development Indicators*
Office for National Statistics (UK)

Population Aging by Prefecture

Demographic changes have not been evenly distributed across Japan. For many decades young Japanese have moved from the countryside into big cities in pursuit of better jobs. As a result of these long-term trends, the urban population (in big cities and their surrounding suburbs) is much younger than the rural population of Japan. In 2009, while 22.8% of the Japanese population was 65 and over, it was 19.8% in Aichi (1-9 No.23). It had the lowest proportion of older people except Okinawa (1-9 No.47) in the most south part of Japan (17.5%). The oldest prefectures – with over 28% of their residents 65 and over –were Shimane(29.1%) in Chugoku region in the western part on the Japan Sea coast and Akita (28.9%) in Tohoku region in the north-east part of Japan (1-9 No.32 and 05).

1-9 Proportion of Population Aged 65 and Over by Prefecture



Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, *Population Estimates*, 2009

Great Centenarians

〈Population Aged 100 and Over〉 (People)

1969	331	2030	273,000
1989	3,078	2055	634,000
2010	44,449		

Source: Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare and National Institute of Population and Social Security Research, *Latest Demographic Statistics*, 2010

Fumi Arai

Born in 1909 (Tokyo)

She has devoted herself to *Chado*—The Japanese Way of Tea over the past 80 years. She is still committed to on-site lesson as the oldest honorary instructor of The *Urasenke* Tradition of Tea. She teaches younger generation manners and carriage of tea-serving, knowledge of the Way of Tea, etc. in a resounding tone earnestly and strictly.

She manages daily housework such as cooking and laundry, and naturally fixes up *kimono* on her own. She has continued 200 times of abdominal exercises every morning for more than 30 years. It is also her daily routine to put on some lotion and lipstick before going to bed.

Tempura is her favorite food, and it is one of her enjoyment to have a drink with her dinner every evening.