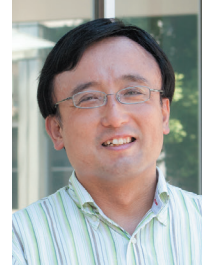


Number of Deaths in Japan Declined in 2020



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Number of Deaths Continuing to Exceed Number of Live Births

The figures for births and deaths among Japanese people in Japan for 2020 have been released. According to “Vital Statistics in Japan”, released in June 2021, the number of live births in 2020 was 840,832, down by 24,407 from the previous year. The number of deaths was 1,372,648, down by 8,445 from the previous year.

As shown in *Chart 1*, the number of deaths of Japanese people has continued to exceed the number of live births since 2007, and the difference between the two has been expanding year after year. The natural decrease, which is the difference between the number of live births and the number of deaths, is 531,816, up by 15,962 from the previous year.

Of these numbers, the figure for live births is currently struggling to turn to an increase. This is because the female population (the sum of those aged between 15 and 49 years) is continuing to decrease due to the earlier trend of a declining birth rate. In 2020, it was 23,899,561 women, down by 366,184 from the previous year. The total fertility rate for 2020 was 1.34, slightly higher than the

historical low of 1.26 in 2005, but not enough to stop the decline in the number of live births on the back of a decline in the child-bearing female population.

On the other hand, the number of deaths had been on an increasing trend on the back of an ageing society. But this turned to a decline in 2020, in spite of the coronavirus pandemic. In recent years, the decline in the number of deaths was limited to 2009 (down by 542 from the previous year) and 2000 (down by 20,378 from the previous year).

This article will investigate the background to how the number of deaths turned to a decline based on the “Vital Statistics in Japan”.

Number of Deaths of Elderly down

Looking at the number of deaths by age group, those over 65 years of age accounted for 1,246,827 people, more than 90% of the total. This trend is unchanged from the previous year, and of the decline in the number of deaths, those over 65 years of age accounted for 7,012.

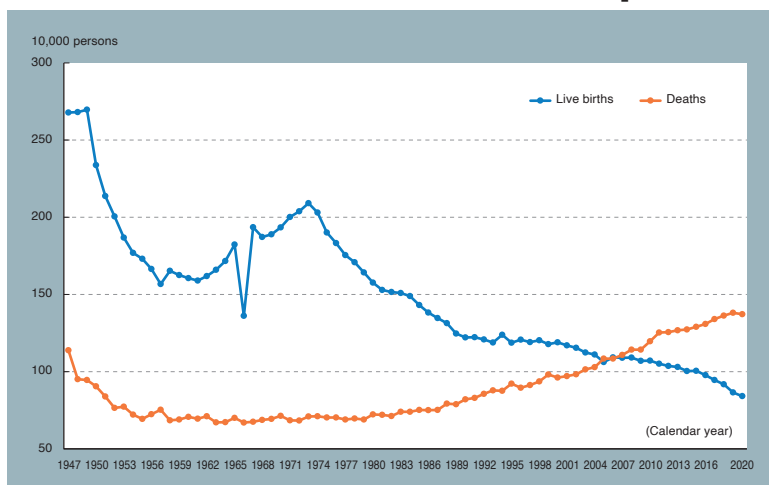
The likelihood of elderly people dying from illnesses is high.

Looking at the number of deaths by age group per 100,000 people (hereafter, death rate) in 2020, for example, it was 36.5 people for those aged 20 to 24 years, 890.8 for those aged 65 to 69 years, 4,006.3 for those aged 80 to 84 years, 13,342 for those aged 90 to 94 years, and 39,420 for those aged 100 years and above, indicating that the death rate becomes higher as age increases. But looking at the trends for each age group, the death rate has dropped for all groups in 2020 compared to 2005, except for the age group of those over 100 years of age. Especially for those in the elderly age groups, the decline is sharp (*Chart 2*).

Further, looking at the trend from 2019 to 2020, the death rate dropped for each age group for those over 55 years of age, except for those aged between 75 and 79 years. Under the coronavirus pandemic, a high number of deaths among the elderly have been reported, but overall the death rate has been declining. A decline in the death rate among the elderly who have a high population

CHART 1

Trends of live births & deaths in Japan



Source: “Vital Statics in Japan”, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare

ratio is thought to have contributed to the decline in the overall death rate and the number of deaths.

On the other hand, in each age group between 10 to 54 years of age, the death rate saw a slight increase. For those under 10 years of age, it declined.

Main Cause of Death Is Malignant Neoplasm, but Suicide for Younger Generation

Let us look at the number of deaths in 2020 by the cause of death. Number one was malignant neoplasm, at 378,356 people. The death rate was 307.0. Since 1981, it has continuously been the number one cause of death, and the death rate is also on an upward trend (Chart 3). Number two is heart diseases (excluding hypertensive heart diseases), at 205,518 people, and the death rate was 166.7. Since 1997, it has continued to be the number two cause of death. Third is senility, at 132,435 people, and the death rate was 107.5. In recent years, the death rate from senility has been rising. Fourth is cerebrovascular diseases, at 102,956 people, and the death rate was 83.5. The death rate has been declining having hit its peak in the 1960s.

Then at number five is pneumonia, at 78,445 people, and the death rate was 63.6. This has gone down from a death rate of 77.2 in 2019. Deaths from Covid-19 were 3,466 people and the death rate was 2.8. As such, even under the coronavirus pandemic, significant changes to the trends in causes of death were not identified.

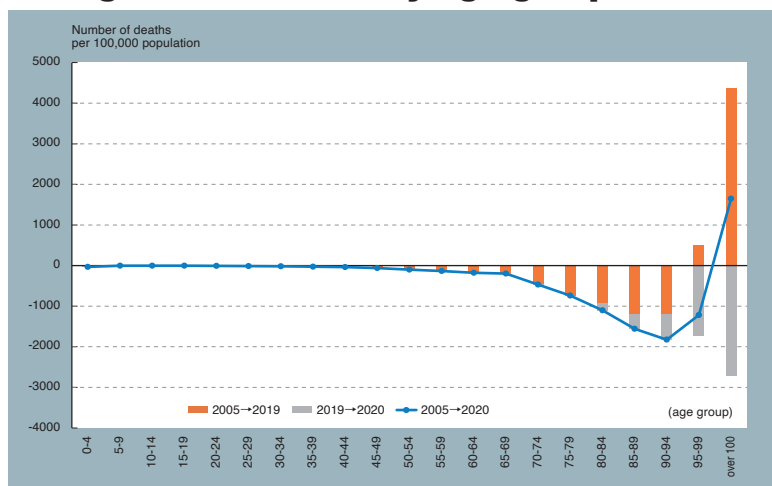
On the other hand, focusing on the causes of death by age group, suicide is number one for those aged between 10 and 39 years – number two behind malignant neoplasm for those aged between 40 to 49 years; and it is also the number three cause for those aged between 50 to 54 years. Looking at all age groups, the number of deaths by suicide in 2020 was 20,222, up from 19,425 in 2019. The death rate was 16.4, a rise from 15.7 in 2019. The most recent peak in the suicide death rate was 24.4 in 2009, one year after the Lehman Shock. The death rate has since been declining, but it has once again turned to a rise in 2020.

Various causes lie behind suicides, but one such cause is thought to be an increase in the number of people who are pushed into economic hardships and people who fall into isolation.

Japan is in a state where the coronavirus pandemic has not been contained. In addition to containing the number of deaths from Covid-19 by preventing further spread of the virus, what is also

CHART 2

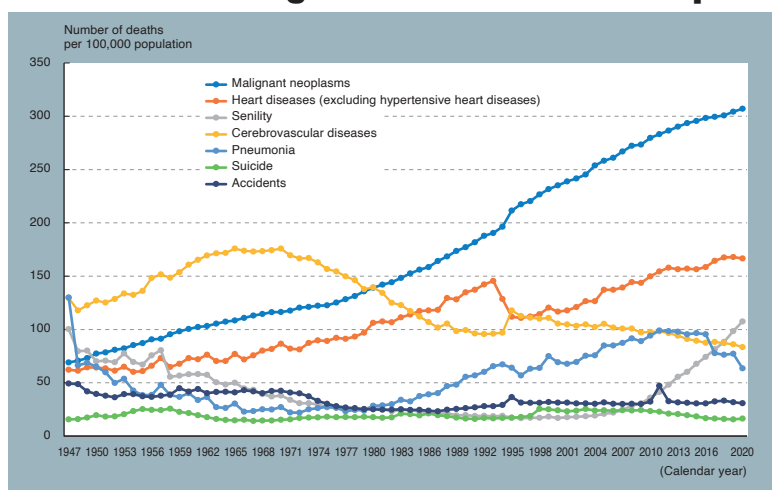
Change in death rate by age group



Source: "Vital Statics in Japan", Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare

CHART 3

Trends in leading causes of death in Japan



Source: "Vital Statics in Japan", Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare

required is to stop the increase in the number of people who are driven to commit suicide.

NOTE: This article was written based on available information as of July 28, 2021.



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Calendar year, Quarter and Month	Real GDP		Nominal GDP		IIP rate of increase over previous year/term (month) (%)	CPI (All terms, less fresh food) rate of increase over previous year/the same term (month) of the previous year (%)
	Amount (trillion yen)	Rate of increase over previous year/term (%)	Amount (trillion yen)	Rate of increase over previous year/term (%)		
2013	528.2	2.0	508.7	1.6	-0.2	0.4
2014	529.8	0.3	518.8	2.0	2.0	2.6
2015	538.1	1.6	538.0	3.7	-1.2	0.5
2016	542.1	0.8	544.4	1.2	0.0	-0.3
2017	551.2	1.7	553.1	1.6	3.1	0.5
2018	554.3	0.6	556.2	0.6	1.1	0.9
2019	554.4	0.0	559.9	0.7	-3.0	0.6
2020	528.7	-4.6	538.7	-3.8	-10.4	-0.2
2020/3rd Qtr.	527.0	5.3	538.6	5.4	9.0	-0.3
4th Qtr.	542.0	2.8	551.2	2.3	5.7	-0.9
2021/1st Qtr.	536.9	-0.9	545.6	-1.0	2.9	-0.5
2nd Qtr.	538.7	0.3	546.0	0.1	1.1	-0.6
2020/Nov.	—	—	—	—	0.7	-0.9
Dec.	—	—	—	—	-0.2	-1.0
2021/Jan.	—	—	—	—	3.1	-0.7
Feb.	—	—	—	—	-1.3	-0.5
March	—	—	—	—	1.7	-0.3
April	—	—	—	—	2.9	-0.9
May	—	—	—	—	-6.5	-0.6
June	—	—	—	—	6.5	-0.5
Sources	"SNA (National Accounts of Japan)", Cabinet Office				"Indices of Industrial Production", Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry	"Consumer Price Index", Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications

Calendar year, Quarter and Month	Foreign Trade Statistics									
	Exports amount (trillion yen)	Exports rate of increase over previous year/ the same term (month) of the previous year (%)	Imports amount (trillion yen)	Imports rate of increase over previous year/ the same term (month) of the previous year (%)	Exports amount to US (trillion yen)	Exports to US rate of increase over previous year/ the same term (month) of the previous year (%)	Imports amount from US (trillion yen)	Imports from US rate of increase over previous year/ the same term (month) of the previous year (%)	Exports amount to EU (trillion yen)	Exports to EU rate of increase over previous year/ the same term (month) of the previous year (%)
2013	69.8	9.5	81.2	14.9	12.9	15.6	6.8	12.0	5.9	8.8
2014	73.1	4.8	85.9	5.7	13.6	5.6	7.5	10.7	6.4	8.2
2015	75.6	3.4	78.4	-8.7	15.2	11.5	8.1	6.9	6.7	4.4
2016	70.0	-7.4	66.0	-15.8	14.1	-7.1	7.3	-9.2	6.5	-2.8
2017	78.3	11.8	75.4	14.1	15.1	6.9	8.1	10.5	7.1	9.5
2018	81.5	4.1	82.7	9.7	15.5	2.4	9.0	11.4	7.7	7.8
2019	76.9	-5.6	78.6	-5.0	15.3	-1.4	8.6	-4.2	7.4	-3.0
2020	68.4	-11.1	67.8	-13.7	12.6	-17.3	7.4	-13.9	6.3	-15.1
2020/3rd Qtr.	16.7	-13.0	15.8	-19.9	3.2	-13.7	1.7	-19.5	1.5	-20.2
4th Qtr.	19.4	-0.7	17.4	-11.8	3.7	-0.2	1.8	-17.1	1.8	-2.3
2021/1st Qtr.	19.2	6.0	18.7	1.9	3.3	-4.9	2.0	-3.4	1.8	2.9
2nd Qtr.	20.7	45.0	20.2	23.8	3.7	70.0	2.2	19.8	1.9	52.0
2020/Nov.	6.1	-4.2	5.8	-11.0	1.2	-2.5	0.6	-13.8	0.6	-2.6
Dec.	6.7	2.0	6.0	-11.5	1.2	-0.7	0.6	-21.8	0.6	-1.6
2021/Jan.	5.8	6.4	6.1	-9.5	1.0	-4.8	0.6	-14.1	0.5	-1.6
Feb.	6.0	-4.5	5.8	11.9	1.1	-14.0	0.6	-3.6	0.6	-3.3
March	7.4	16.1	6.7	5.8	1.2	4.8	0.8	6.6	0.7	12.8
April	7.2	38.0	6.9	12.9	1.3	45.1	0.7	5.8	0.7	39.5
May	6.3	49.6	6.5	28.0	1.1	87.9	0.7	28.8	0.6	69.6
June	7.2	48.6	6.8	32.7	1.3	85.7	0.8	27.4	0.7	51.1
Sources	"Trade Statistics of Japan", Ministry of Finance									

Calendar year, Quarter and Month	Cash salary amount rate of increase over previous year/the same term (month) of the previous year (%)	Active job openings-to-applicants ratio (time(s))	Unemployment rate (%)	M2 rate of increase over previous year/ the same term (month) of the previous year (%)	Balance of payments		Yen/\$ rate (averaged during the term)
					Trade balance (trillion yen)	Current balance (trillion yen)	
2013	-0.2	0.93	4.0	3.6	-8.8	4.5	97.6
2014	0.5	1.09	3.6	3.4	-10.5	3.9	105.8
2015	0.1	1.20	3.4	3.6	-0.9	16.5	121.0
2016	0.6	1.36	3.1	3.4	5.5	21.4	108.8
2017	0.4	1.50	2.8	4.0	4.9	22.8	112.2
2018	1.4	1.61	2.4	2.9	1.1	19.5	110.4
2019	-0.4	1.60	2.4	2.4	0.2	19.3	109.0
2020	-1.2	1.18	2.8	6.5	3.0	17.5	106.8
2020/3rd Qtr.	-1.2	1.06	3.0	8.5	1.5	5.3	106.1
4th Qtr.	-2.1	1.04	3.1	9.1	2.5	5.3	104.5
2021/1st Qtr.	-0.3	1.10	2.8	9.5	1.4	6.3	105.9
2nd Qtr.	0.8	1.10	2.9	7.6	0.9	4.2	109.4
2020/Nov.	-1.8	1.05	3.0	9.1	0.6	1.9	104.4
Dec.	-3.0	1.05	3.0	9.1	1.0	1.3	103.8
2021/Jan.	-1.3	1.10	2.9	9.4	-0.1	0.7	103.7
Feb.	-0.4	1.09	2.9	9.6	0.5	2.9	105.4
March	0.6	1.10	2.6	9.4	1.0	2.6	108.7
April	1.4	1.09	2.8	9.2	0.3	1.3	109.1
May	1.9	1.09	3.0	7.9	0.0	2.0	109.1
June	-0.1	1.13	2.9	5.9	0.6	0.9	110.1
Sources	"Monthly Labour Survey", Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare	"Employment Referrals for General Workers", Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare	"Labour Force Survey", Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications	"Money Stock", Bank of Japan	"Balance of Payments", Ministry of Finance		Bank of Japan

Calendar year, Quarter and Month	Foreign Trade Statistics									
	Imports amount from EU (trillion yen)	Imports from EU rate of increase over previous year/ the same term (month) of the previous year (%)	Exports amount to Asia (excluding China) (trillion yen)	Exports to Asia (excluding China) rate of increase over previous year/ the same term (month) of the previous year (%)	Imports amount from Asia (excluding China) (trillion yen)	Imports from Asia (excluding China) rate of increase over previous year/ the same term (month) of the previous year (%)	Exports amount to China (trillion yen)	Exports to China rate of increase over previous year/ the same term (month) of the previous year (%)	Imports amount from China (trillion yen)	Imports from China rate of increase over previous year/ the same term (month) of the previous year (%)
2013	7.0	15.6	25.2	8.1	18.3	12.6	12.6	9.7	17.7	17.4
2014	7.5	6.9	26.1	3.5	19.4	6.2	13.4	6.0	19.2	8.6
2015	7.8	4.6	27.1	3.7	18.9	-2.6	13.2	-1.2	19.4	1.3
2016	7.4	-5.0	24.7	-8.7	16.2	-14.5	12.4	-6.5	17.0	-12.4
2017	8.0	7.0	28.0	13.3	18.6	14.8	14.9	20.5	18.5	8.5
2018	8.8	10.6	28.8	2.9	20.0	7.8	15.9	6.8	19.2	4.0
2019	8.8	0.3	26.6	-7.6	19.0	-5.3	14.7	-7.6	18.5	-3.9
2020	7.7	-12.6	24.1	-9.4	17.2	-9.5	15.1	2.7	17.5	-5.2
2020/3rd Qtr.	1.9	-16.6	5.7	-14.2	4.0	-15.0	3.9	9.1	4.2	-9.5
4th Qtr.	2.0	-11.0	6.7	-1.5	4.4	-7.5	4.4	8.1	4.8	1.8
2021/1st Qtr.	2.1	5.7	6.9	7.4	4.8	0.9	4.0	25.4	4.7	23.4
2nd Qtr.	2.4	27.8	7.4	37.9	4.9	24.0	4.6	28.4	5.0	7.1
2020/Nov.	0.6	-17.2	2.1	-9.0	1.5	-5.7	1.4	3.8	1.7	7.0
Dec.	0.7	-4.0	2.4	3.6	1.5	-6.7	1.6	10.2	1.6	1.8
2021/Jan.	0.7	-2.3	2.1	10.9	1.5	-8.2	1.2	37.5	1.7	-1.0
Feb.	0.6	0.4	2.2	-2.9	1.5	1.5	1.2	3.4	1.4	114.6
March	0.8	19.0	2.6	14.5	1.8	9.8	1.6	37.2	1.6	10.1
April	0.8	16.6	2.6	32.0	1.7	21.8	1.6	33.8	1.8	0.8
May	0.8	39.4	2.2	38.7	1.5	23.6	1.4	23.6	1.6	4.8
June	0.8	29.2	2.5	43.7	1.7	26.8	1.6	27.7	1.6	17.6
Sources	"Trade Statistics of Japan", Ministry of Finance									