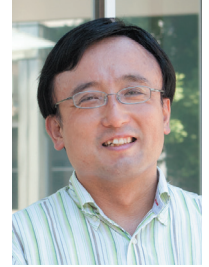


Births in Japan Continuing on Downward Trend



Author Nobuo Iizuka

By Nobuo Iizuka

Births of Japanese Likely in Lower 700,000 Range for 2023

The decline in the number of births of Japanese is not stopping. An article in the online version of the *Nikkei* newspaper on Nov. 24, 2023 reported a private estimate that sees the number of births of Japanese people in 2023 to be at the lower 700,000 level, setting an historical low for the eighth consecutive year. There are three types of statistics that constitute “Vital Statistics” which enables confirmation of the number of births, and they are the Prompt Vital Statistics Report, the Monthly Vital Statistics Report, and the Annual Vital Statistics Report. The *Nikkei* predicted the Annual Vital Statistics Report for 2023 from the actual values in the Prompt Vital Statistics Report and the Monthly Vital Statistics Report. My article looks at the differences in these three statistics, the recent trends and the outlook for the number of births of Japanese.

Three Statistics for Confirming Number of Births

The timing of the release of the three sets of statistics differs, with the Prompt Vital Statistics Report coming out about two months after

the month of survey, the Monthly Vital Statistics Report coming out around five months after the month of survey, and the Annual Vital Statistics Report appearing in September of the year following the year of survey. For the actual values for 2023, there is a need to wait until the end of February 2024, even for the Prompt Vital Statistics Report, but an accurate figure for the closely watched number of births of Japanese will not be available at that time. This is because the Prompt Vital Statistics Report counts the number of pages of the questionnaires created by the municipalities, and includes Japanese and foreigners living in Japan and Japanese living abroad (both including events that occurred earlier than the previous year).

It is the Monthly Vital Statistics Report which allows confirmation of the number of births of Japanese, and there is a need to wait until around June 2024 for the 2023 figure, which is finalized in September 2024. The number of births as released in each of the Prompt Vital Statistics Report, the Monthly Vital Statistics Report, and the Annual Vital Statistics Report for recent years are as shown in the [Table](#). The number of births as revealed in the Monthly Vital Statistics Report is around 0.96 to 0.97 times the number of births in the Prompt Vital Statistics Report.

At the time this article was written, the number of births has been released up until November 2023 in the Prompt Vital Statistics Report, and the cumulative total number of births for January to November was 696,886. It is a decline of 5.3% compared to the cumulative total for January to November 2022, and if it is assumed that the number of births in the Monthly Vital Statistics Report also declined at the same rate, the number of births of Japanese for 2023 is forecasted to be 730,000. Indeed, this is in the lower 700,000 range.

Births Nearing the 2017 Low Estimation

Population projections such as the future number of births are conducted by the National Institute of Population and Social Security

TABLE

Trends in vital statistics of Japan

Calendar Year	Number of Births (10,000)		
	Prompt Vital Statistics Report	Monthly Vital Statistics Report	Annual Vital Statistics Report
2016	101.09	97.70	97.72
2017	97.82	94.61	94.61
2018	95.08	91.84	91.84
2019	89.86	86.52	86.52
2020	87.27	84.08	84.08
2021	84.29	81.16	81.16
2022	79.97	77.07	77.08

Source: “Vital Statistics”, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare

Research, and the most recent version of the projections was released in April 2023. Multiple population projections with various assumptions of fertility rates and mortality rates have been released, but what is notable is the assumption where both the fertility rate and mortality rate are medium. The *Chart* compares the actual values with the projection results based on the previous (2017) medium and low fertility rate assumptions and the current projection based on the medium fertility rate assumption. Since the actual values are the number of births of Japanese, the projection uses the “Population Projection for Japanese”.

From 2016 to 2018 the actual values trended along the projections based on the medium fertility rate, which was released in 2017, but the decline grew larger after 2019, and it can be confirmed that it gradually became close to the projection results for the low fertility rate. The actual value for 2022 was 770,000 babies but the projection result for low fertility was 733,000. In 2023, the projection result for the low fertility rate (2017) was 717,000, the projection result for the medium fertility rate (2023) was 739,000, and the actual values are likely to be almost the same.

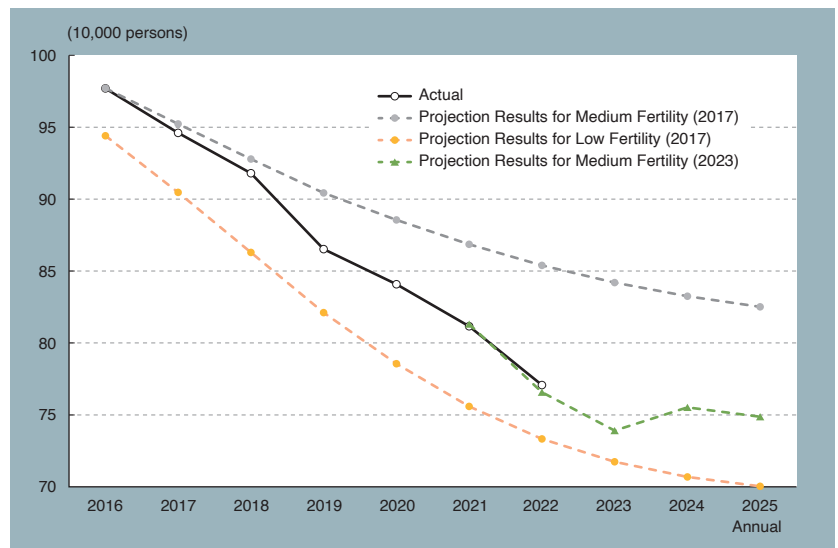
Further, according to the projection results for the medium fertility rate (2023), the number of births is projected to grow from 2024, but projection results for the low fertility rate (2017) see the number of births at below 700,000 in 2026.

Births of Foreign Nationals in Japan Still Low

The Annual Vital Statistics Report also separately lists the demographics of foreign nationals living in Japan and the demographics of Japanese living abroad. The number of births of foreign nationals in Japan for 2022 was 16,874. This was around 2% of the Japanese births in Japan and it is still very low. However, even 10 years ago in 2012, the number of births of foreign nationals in Japan was 13,484, and considering that the number of births of

CHART

Number of births in Japan – actual & projection results



Source: “Vital Statistics”, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, “Population Projection for Japan”, National Institute of Population and Social Security Research

Japanese living in Japan back then was 1.04 million, their presence may be slowly becoming more noticeable.

The number of births for Japanese living abroad in 2012 was 16,205, but this slightly decreased to 10,746 in 2022.

Note: This article was written with information obtained as of Jan. 23, 2024.

Article translated from the original Japanese by Mio Uchida



Nobuo Iizuka is a professor of the Department of Economics at Kanagawa University and research director at the Tokyo Foundation for Policy Research. He worked for the *Nihon Keizai Shimbun (Nikkei)* and the Japan Center for Economic Research for more than 20 years, and is one of the most highly-regarded commentators on Japanese business and the economy.

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 (%)		
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	554.8	0.6	556.6	0.6	0.6	0.9
2019	552.5	-0.4	557.9	0.2	-2.6	0.6
2020	529.6	-4.1	539.8	-3.2	-10.4	-0.2
2021	543.2	2.6	552.6	2.4	5.4	-0.2
2022	548.4	1.0	559.7	1.3	-0.1	2.3
2023	558.7	1.9	591.5	5.7	-1.1	3.1
2023/1st Qtr.	557.2	1.1	580.4	2.3	-1.8	3.5
2nd Qtr.	562.6	1.0	595.0	2.5	1.4	3.2
3rd Qtr.	557.9	-0.8	594.6	-0.1	-1.2	3.0
4th Qtr.	557.3	-0.1	596.4	0.3	1.3	2.5
2023/May	—	—	—	—	-2.2	3.2
June	—	—	—	—	2.4	3.3
July	—	—	—	—	-1.8	3.1
Aug.	—	—	—	—	-0.7	3.1
Sep.	—	—	—	—	0.5	2.8
Oct.	—	—	—	—	1.3	2.9
Nov.	—	—	—	—	-0.9	2.5
Dec.	—	—	—	—	1.4	2.3
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 (%)
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	68.0	-13.5	12.6	-17.3	7.5	-13.7	6.3	-15.1
2021	83.1	21.5	84.9	24.8	14.8	17.6	8.9	19.6	7.7	21.4
2022	98.2	18.2	118.5	39.6	18.3	23.1	11.8	31.9	9.4	22.0
2023	100.9	2.8	110.2	-7.0	20.3	11.0	11.5	-1.9	10.4	10.9
2023/1st Qtr.	23.0	4.8	28.2	10.8	4.4	11.4	2.9	12.0	2.3	10.5
2nd Qtr.	24.3	1.6	26.1	-8.8	4.8	10.6	2.7	-0.5	2.6	14.3
3rd Qtr.	25.9	1.1	26.9	-16.1	5.3	10.7	2.9	-11.1	2.7	12.7
4th Qtr.	27.6	3.7	29.0	-10.5	5.8	11.3	3.0	-5.2	2.8	6.4
2023/May	7.3	0.6	8.7	-10.2	1.4	9.4	0.9	2.1	0.8	16.6
June	8.7	1.5	8.7	-13.1	1.7	11.7	0.9	-4.2	0.9	15.0
July	8.7	-0.3	8.8	-14.1	1.8	13.5	0.9	-11.5	0.9	12.4
Aug.	8.0	-0.8	8.9	-17.6	1.6	5.1	1.0	-9.5	0.8	12.7
Sep.	9.2	4.3	9.1	-16.5	1.9	13.0	0.9	-12.4	0.9	12.9
Oct.	9.1	1.6	9.8	-12.4	1.9	8.5	1.0	-4.4	0.9	8.9
Nov.	8.8	-0.2	9.6	-11.8	1.8	5.3	1.0	-3.4	0.9	-0.0
Dec.	9.6	9.7	9.6	-6.9	2.1	20.2	1.0	-7.7	1.0	10.3
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)	
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	2.8	16.0	106.8
2021	0.3	1.13	2.8	6.4	1.8	21.5	109.8
2022	2.0	1.28	2.6	3.3	-15.7	10.7	131.4
2023	1.2	1.31	2.6	2.5	-6.6	20.6	140.5
2023/1st Qtr.	0.9	1.34	2.6	2.6	-4.2	2.4	132.3
2nd Qtr.	2.0	1.31	2.6	2.6	-1.1	5.2	137.4
3rd Qtr.	0.9	1.29	2.6	2.4	-0.3	7.8	144.5
4th Qtr.	1.0	1.28	2.5	2.3	-1.1	5.3	147.9
2023/May	2.9	1.31	2.6	2.6	-1.2	1.9	137.4
June	2.3	1.30	2.5	2.6	0.3	1.4	141.3
July	1.1	1.29	2.7	2.5	0.1	2.8	141.2
Aug.	0.8	1.29	2.7	2.5	-0.8	2.2	144.7
Sep.	0.6	1.29	2.6	2.4	0.4	2.8	147.7
Oct.	1.5	1.30	2.5	2.4	-0.5	2.6	149.6
Nov.	0.7	1.28	2.5	2.3	-0.7	1.9	149.9
Dec.	1.0	1.27	2.4	2.3	0.1	0.7	144.1
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 (%)
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	7.8	-12.1	24.1	-9.4	17.2	-9.4	15.1	2.7	17.5	-5.1
2021	9.5	21.8	30.2	25.0	20.7	20.6	18.0	19.2	20.4	16.4
2022	11.4	21.1	36.4	20.6	28.6	37.8	19.0	5.7	24.8	21.9
2023	11.3	-1.3	34.7	-4.6	27.6	-3.4	17.8	-6.5	24.4	-1.7
2023/1st Qtr.	2.6	-2.0	8.4	2.9	7.1	14.1	3.8	-11.3	6.0	8.8
2nd Qtr.	2.9	-2.0	8.4	-8.4	6.5	-5.3	4.3	-6.0	5.8	-1.6
3rd Qtr.	2.9	6.9	8.7	-8.1	6.8	-11.7	4.6	-10.2	6.0	-10.3
4th Qtr.	3.0	-7.1	9.2	-3.8	7.2	-7.5	5.0	1.0	6.6	-2.0
2023/May	0.9	-3.0	2.6	-10.4	2.1	-7.5	1.3	-3.4	1.9	-5.9
June	0.9	0.4	3.0	-7.0	2.3	-2.8	1.5	-10.9	2.0	-10.2
July	1.0	20.8	2.9	-13.2	2.3	-9.6	1.5	-13.4	1.9	-14.1
Aug.	0.9	9.6	2.7	-7.6	2.3	-13.5	1.4	-11.0	1.9	-12.0
Sep.	1.0	-6.2	3.1	-3.3	2.3	-11.9	1.6	-6.2	2.2	-4.9
Oct.	1.0	-5.6	3.0	-6.1	2.4	-11.1	1.7	-4.0	2.3	-2.8
Nov.	1.0	-6.6	3.0	-5.0	2.4	-9.7	1.6	-2.2	2.3	-3.2
Dec.	0.9	-9.2	3.1	-0.4	2.4	-1.1	1.8	9.5	2.0	0.4
Sources	"Trade Statistics of Japan", Ministry of Finance									