

Residency Status of Foreign Nationals in Japan



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Japan's Population Decline

The fundamental data that captures the trends in population domestically in Japan is the "Population Census" which is produced and released by the Statics Bureau of Japan every five years. Based on the Population Census and also using other population-related statistics is the "Population Estimates" published by the Statistics Bureau of Japan which estimates monthly trends in Japan's population.

In contrast, what the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications released on Aug. 6 was "Population, Demographics, and Households Based on the Basic Resident Register" as of Jan. 1, 2025. It consolidates demographics from Jan. 1, 2024, to Dec. 31, 2024, based on information from Certificates of Residence.

When these statistics were released on Aug. 6, newspapers and magazines focused on the decline in Japan's resident population, which exceeded 900,000 people in 2024. On the other hand, since foreign residents increased by over 350,000 people, accounting for

40% of this loss, overall population decline remained at only 550,000 people.

However, this fact had already been revealed in the population estimates released in June 2025. The strength of "Population, Demographics, and Households Based on the Basic Resident Register" is that it allows confirmation of the resident status of Japanese and foreign nationals on a municipality basis also. This article will focus on this point and look at the residency status of foreign nationals in Japan on a municipality basis.

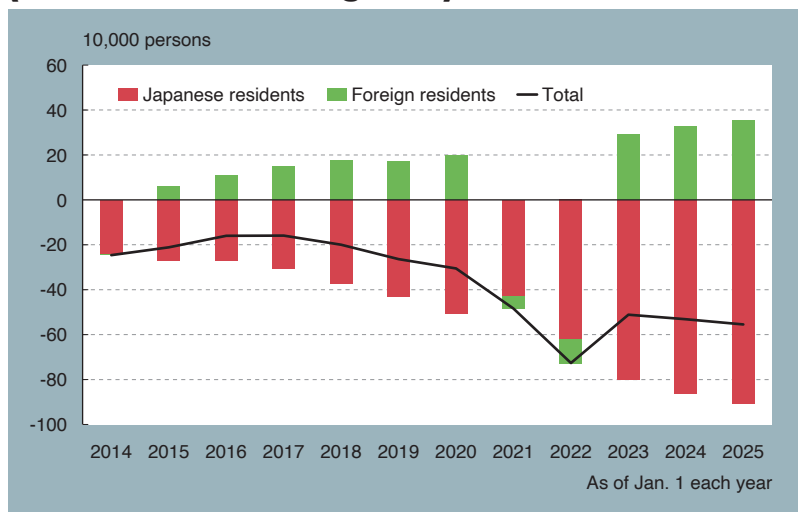
Percentage of Foreign Residents Across Japan at 3%

According to the "Population, Demographics, and Households Based on the Basic Resident Register", the population of Japan as of Jan. 1, 2025, was 124,330,690, of whom Japanese residents were 120,653,227 and foreign residents 3,677,463. Although the percentage of foreign residents is only 3%, it has continued to increase year on year ([Chart](#)) from Jan. 1, 2015, apart from in 2021 and 2022 during the coronavirus pandemic. While Japanese residents have declined by 5,510,000 people over the last 10 years, foreign residents have increased by 1,615,000 people, leading to some mitigation of nationwide population decline. On a prefectural basis, while Japanese residents declined in all prefectures except for Tokyo, foreign residents increased in all prefectures. The total population increased only for Tokyo and Chiba Prefecture, and only Chiba Prefecture was able to cover the decline in Japanese population with an increase in the population of foreign nationals.

As of Jan. 1, 2025, approximately 20% of all foreign residents – 721,223 people – live in Tokyo, while in the Tokyo Metropolitan area (Tokyo, Saitama Prefecture, Chiba Prefecture and Kanagawa Prefecture) approximately 40% of all foreign residents, some 1,490,781 people, live there. As stated, foreign residents have increased by just over 350,000 people in the past year, and just over 40% of that increase was in the Tokyo Metropolitan Area. Recently, the number of Japanese residents living in

CHART

Year-on-year change in population (Basic Resident Register)



Source: Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, "Population, Demographics, and Households Based on the Basic Resident Register"

TABLE

Top 20 municipalities by foreign resident population, 2025

Municipality	Foreign residents			Total population		Share of foreign residents (%)
	Population	Net change	% Change	Population	Net change	
Osaka	189,281	19,889	11.7	2,778,917	21,275	6.8
Yokohama	126,744	10,790	9.3	3,753,398	429	3.4
Nagoya	100,502	7,744	8.3	2,303,004	5,259	4.4
Kyoto	61,328	5,894	10.6	1,373,887	-5,642	4.5
Kobe	59,139	4,711	8.7	1,493,543	-6,882	4.0
Kawasaki	55,850	5,056	10.0	1,535,141	6,005	3.6
Fukuoka	51,728	7,077	15.8	1,608,140	14,221	3.2
Kawaguchi	48,161	5,033	11.7	607,447	1,132	7.9
Shinjuku	48,097	4,200	9.6	352,717	3,491	13.6
Edogawa	47,932	5,014	11.7	693,570	3,609	6.9
Adachi	43,996	4,665	11.9	698,276	5,053	6.3
Koto	39,561	2,555	6.9	541,685	2,577	7.3
Chiba	39,375	4,856	14.1	983,896	4,997	4.0
Itabashi	37,481	5,130	15.9	578,914	5,987	6.5
Toshima	36,360	3,628	11.1	294,644	2,994	12.3
Saitama	34,704	3,116	9.9	1,350,500	5,488	2.6
Ota	32,041	3,644	12.8	740,519	6,885	4.3
Kita	31,471	4,109	15.0	362,089	4,388	8.7
Hamamatsu	30,173	1,392	4.8	783,924	-5,061	3.8
Katsushika	29,664	2,826	10.5	469,916	2,916	6.3

Source: Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, "Population, Demographics, and Households Based on the Basic Resident Register"

the Tokyo metropolitan area has decreased by over 70,000, so it can be said that the presence of foreign residents in the Tokyo metropolitan area is growing.

Osaka Top for Number of Foreign Residents & Their Increase

Looking by municipalities, the number of foreign residents is largest in Osaka as of Jan. 1, 2025 (*Table*). Foreign residents totaled 189,281, increasing by 19,889 from the previous year. They account for 6.8% of Osaka city's total population, higher than Japan's average. Moreover, the top 10 municipalities with the highest increases in foreign residents in the past year are all included in the top 20 municipalities with the greatest number of foreign residents. Osaka is also at the top in the number of increases in foreign residents.

The top 20 municipalities with foreign residents include many government-designated cities, confirming that foreign residents also tend to reside in municipalities with large populations. Foreign residents residing in the top 20 municipalities totaled 1,143,588, accounting for over 30%. The ratio of the top 20 municipalities to Japan's overall population is just under 20%, and thus the concentration of foreign residents can be confirmed even when viewed by municipalities.

Further, of the top 20 municipalities, nine are part of the 23 wards of Tokyo. There are 605,506 foreign residents residing in the 23 wards of

Tokyo and the number has increased by 62,642 in one year. The increase for one year for Tokyo is 73,807, and thus 85% of the increase is in the 23 wards of Tokyo.

Highest Percentage of Foreign Residents in Shimukappu Village in Hokkaido

Looking at the top 20 municipalities with the highest number of foreign residents, there are wards with high percentages such as Shinjuku Ward (13.6%) and Toshima Ward (12.3%). But there are regions where the population is low and the number of foreign residents is rising. The highest percentage of foreign residents is in Shimukappu village in Hokkaido. The total population there is 1,590 people, but foreign residents number 582 people at 36.6%. The second highest percentage is also in Hokkaido's Akaigawa village, where the total population is 1,492 people and foreign residents number 527 people at 35.3%. Shimukappu is home to Tomamu, a ski resort which is popular among foreign tourists, and the number of foreign nationals working in tourist facilities is increasing. Similarly, Akaigawa is adjacent to Niseko, another ski resort popular with foreign

tourists. Niseko also ranks high in foreign resident ratios (19.0%).

In contrast, of the total population of 41,653 people in Oizumi town in Gunma Prefecture, foreign residents number 8,871, making up 21.3% of the population, but this is not a tourist site. There are numerous automotive parts manufacturers and related factories located there, and with the amendment to the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act in 1990 which granted permanent resident visas to second- and third-generation Japanese descendants, the number of Brazilians working in these factories has increased. At present, it is considered an advanced region for foreign immigration, and is even known as Little Brazil.

As the trend of decline in the Japanese population continues, the number of areas where foreign residents have a growing presence is likely to increase. Policies for coexistence are required.

NOTE: This article was based on available information as of Aug. 25, 2025.

Article translated from the original Japanese by Mio Uchida

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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 (%)		
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	529.5	-4.2	539.6	-3.3	-10.4	-0.2
2021	543.8	2.7	553.1	2.5	5.4	-0.2
2022	549.0	1.0	560.6	1.4	-0.1	2.3
2023	555.8	1.2	590.7	5.4	-1.3	3.1
2024	556.4	0.1	608.4	3.0	-2.6	2.5
2024/3rd Qtr.	558.0	0.6	612.1	0.9	0.3	2.7
4th Qtr.	560.8	0.5	619.6	1.2	0.4	2.6
2025/1st Qtr.	561.3	0.1	625.1	0.9	-0.3	3.1
2nd Qtr.	564.3	0.5	635.1	1.6	0.4	3.5
2025/Jan.	—	—	—	—	-1.1	3.2
Feb.	—	—	—	—	2.3	3.0
March	—	—	—	—	0.2	3.2
April	—	—	—	—	-1.1	3.5
May	—	—	—	—	-0.1	3.7
June	—	—	—	—	2.1	3.3
July	—	—	—	—	-1.2	3.1
Aug.	—	—	—	—	-1.5	2.7
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 (%)
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	2.7	110.4	-6.8	20.3	11.0	11.6	-1.7	10.4	10.9
2024	107.1	6.2	112.6	2.0	21.3	5.1	12.7	9.6	10.0	-3.9
2024/3rd Qtr.	27.1	4.5	28.7	6.8	5.4	1.4	3.1	8.6	2.5	-7.7
4th Qtr.	28.5	3.2	28.9	-0.5	5.5	-5.3	3.0	0.1	2.5	-7.6
2025/1st Qtr.	26.9	7.4	28.5	5.9	5.3	7.1	3.1	-0.7	2.4	-7.6
2nd Qtr.	26.5	-0.0	27.1	-3.2	5.0	-8.1	3.1	-8.9	2.4	0.7
2025/Jan.	7.9	7.3	10.6	16.3	1.5	8.1	1.1	5.2	0.7	-15.0
Feb.	9.2	11.4	8.6	-0.7	1.9	10.5	1.0	-2.6	0.8	-7.7
March	9.9	4.0	9.3	1.9	1.9	3.1	1.0	-4.5	0.9	-1.1
April	9.2	2.0	9.3	-2.1	1.8	-1.8	1.0	-10.6	0.8	-5.2
May	8.1	-1.7	8.8	-7.6	1.5	-11.0	1.1	-13.4	0.8	4.9
June	9.2	-0.5	9.0	0.3	1.7	-11.4	1.0	-1.9	0.8	3.6
July	9.4	-2.6	9.5	-7.4	1.7	-10.1	1.1	-0.8	0.9	-3.4
Aug.	8.4	-0.1	8.7	-5.2	1.4	-13.7	1.1	11.6	0.8	5.6
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)	
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	-15.5	11.4	131.4
2023	1.2	1.31	2.6	2.5	-6.6	22.2	140.5
2024	2.8	1.25	2.5	1.7	-3.7	29.4	151.5
2024/3rd Qtr.	2.9	1.24	2.5	1.3	-1.2	8.9	149.2
4th Qtr.	3.7	1.25	2.5	1.2	0.0	7.1	152.4
2025/1st Qtr.	2.2	1.25	2.5	1.1	-1.7	7.6	152.5
2nd Qtr.	2.4	1.24	2.5	0.7	-0.1	6.9	144.5
2025/Jan.	1.8	1.26	2.5	1.3	-2.9	-0.3	156.4
Feb.	2.7	1.24	2.4	1.2	0.7	4.1	152.0
March	2.3	1.26	2.5	0.8	0.5	3.7	149.1
April	2.0	1.26	2.5	0.5	-0.0	2.2	144.3
May	1.4	1.24	2.5	0.6	-0.5	3.4	144.8
June	3.1	1.22	2.5	0.8	0.5	1.3	144.5
July	3.4	1.22	2.3	1.0	-0.2	2.7	146.9
Aug.	1.5	1.20	2.6	1.3	0.1	3.8	147.6
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 (%)
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	11.4	-0.2	34.7	-4.6	27.6	-3.4	17.8	-6.5	24.4	-1.7
2024	11.9	3.9	38.0	9.4	28.6	3.6	18.9	6.2	25.3	3.6
2024/3rd Qtr.	3.2	10.1	9.8	12.5	7.5	10.2	4.7	1.5	6.3	5.2
4th Qtr.	3.1	2.0	10.2	11.1	7.3	1.7	5.1	0.7	6.9	5.2
2025/1st Qtr.	3.1	16.4	9.9	13.2	7.5	9.4	4.4	0.7	6.5	10.9
2nd Qtr.	3.2	7.1	9.8	6.6	6.8	-2.7	4.6	-4.7	6.4	3.2
2025/Jan.	1.1	37.8	3.0	12.1	2.7	18.9	1.2	-6.1	2.6	18.4
Feb.	1.0	15.2	3.4	16.5	2.3	1.8	1.5	14.0	1.7	-3.4
March	1.0	1.1	3.6	11.1	2.5	7.5	1.7	-4.8	2.1	15.9
April	1.0	-0.6	3.4	9.3	2.3	-2.3	1.6	-0.6	2.3	6.7
May	1.1	7.5	3.0	5.5	2.1	-9.4	1.4	-8.8	2.1	-2.2
June	1.1	14.7	3.4	4.9	2.4	3.7	1.6	-4.7	2.1	5.3
July	1.1	6.6	3.5	1.4	2.4	-10.0	1.6	-3.5	2.2	-3.9
Aug.	0.9	-18.2	3.2	2.7	2.3	-3.0	1.5	-0.5	1.9	2.1
Sources	"Trade Statistics of Japan", Ministry of Finance									