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AUTHOR Muramatsu, Minoru  
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ABSTRACT

This occasional paper on Japan is one of a series setting forth the nature, scope, and accomplishments of population activities in specified countries. Here, an overview is given of population characteristics and growth patterns, the relationship of population growth to socioeconomic development, and the history of population concerns and policies. Private and governmental efforts to encourage family planning are described. It is shown that population growth has been a subject of concern since the beginning of the century, with this early interest focused primarily on the relationship of population size to food supply. Declines in both birth and death rates began in the 1920's. Though fertility practices have been under voluntary control, they have been influenced by certain notable governmental actions. With the birth rate continually decreasing, there is concern in some sectors that there will be a shortage in the labor force if present fertility patterns continue. The present rate of natural increase in Japan is 1% per year, and is expected to decline further. (JLB)

# Country Profiles

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## JAPAN

*THIS profile was prepared by Minoru Muramatsu, M.D., Chief of the Section of Public Health Demography of the Institute of Public Health in Tokyo. The material was compiled by Dr. Muramatsu in his personal capacity. The views presented here do not necessarily represent the official views of the Government of Japan.*

### Location and Description

Japan is an insular land off the east coast of Asia. It constitutes a part of the insular arcs of the Western Pacific which have been formed by intensive orogenic processes. Japan is composed of four main islands, with many smaller adjacent islands. The total land area of Japan is approximately 143,000 square miles, somewhat less than the area of the State of California in the United States. The density of the population is quite high, 719 persons per square mile—a density surpassed by only four countries in the world (Holland, Taiwan, Belgium, and the Republic of Korea), if countries with more than 5 million inhabitants are enumerated. The high degree of population density is more apparent if considered in terms of arable land, since in Japan only 19 percent of the total area can be used for cultivation.

There are many high, rugged mountains, which are for the most part uninhabitable. They contain a number of volcanoes, and volcanic activity and earthquakes occur not infrequently, even today.

Japan belongs to the Temperate Zone. Because of the influence of the East Asian monsoon belt, the heat of summer and the cold of winter in the country are relatively severe. Typhoons occur yearly, mostly in August and September.

Although little of the total land area is arable, rice, fruit, and vege-

tables are cultivated, and, until recently, farming was the major occupation in Japan. Japan's fishing industry is among the largest in the world. The most remarkable aspect of the country's economy, however, is the rapid spread of industrialization in this century that has brought Japan from the status of a developing to that of a developed country.

### Population

#### Size

*Total population.* According to an estimate by the Bureau of Statistics of the Prime Minister's Office, the population of Japan as of 1 October 1969 was 102,648,000. Around 1912, the total population was approximately 50 million and the mark of 100 million was reached some time during 1967. The time required for this doubling of the population was about 55 years, and the annual rate of population growth during this period was, on the average, 1.3 percent.

*Total number and average size of households.* The total number of households was 24.1 million in 1965. The average size of households was 4.08 persons, rural households being 16 percent larger than those in urban areas. Those households consisting of only the husband and wife and their children numbered 10.5 million (44 percent).

*Total number of married women of reproductive age.* According to the census data published by the Bureau

of Statistics, the total number of married women 15-49 years of age was 16,672,030 in 1965.

*Age at marriage.* In 1965 the average age at first marriage was 27.2 and 24.5, respectively, for husbands and wives, which indicates a slight advancement as compared with 1947 figures of 26.1 and 22.9.

### GROWTH PATTERNS

Table 1 shows the crude birth and death rates since 1920. It is generally maintained that 1920 was the year in which the "demographic transition" was initiated in Japan. It is noted that both birth and death rates started to decline at about the same time without the often-seen lag of the birth rate. The declines were not too precipitous, but continued steadily until 1940. The rates during the war years naturally reflected serious disturbances. In 1947, the crude birth rate went back up to the level of the 1920s but, in the course of the next ten years, declined by 50 percent. For the past decade or so, it has generally fluctuated around 17 to 18 per thousand population. The death rate in 1947, on the other hand, was not high in spite of the unfavorable social conditions then prevailing. Since 1951, it has remained below 10, and has recently been about 7 per 1,000 population. The rate of natural increase is presently slightly higher than 10 per 1,000 population or 1 percent per year.

It is notable that the birth rate in 1966 was abnormal in the sense that it fell far below the trend observed up to that point. The explanation for this is that 1966 was the year of "fire and horse" according to the Japanese zodiac signs, and a long-standing Japanese superstition says that a

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TABLE 1. *Vital Rates, Japan: 1920-1968*

Year	Per 1,000 population			Net reproduction rate
	Birth rate	Death rate	Rate of natural increase	
1920-24	35.0	23.0	12.0	
1925-29	34.0	19.8	14.3	
1930-34	31.8	18.1	13.6	
1935-39	29.3	17.4	11.9	
1940-43	30.7	16.3	14.4	
1944	29.2	17.4	11.8	
1945	23.2	29.2	-6.0	
1946	25.3	17.6	7.7	
1947	34.3	14.6	19.7	1.67
1948	33.5	11.9	21.6	1.75
1949	33.0	11.6	21.4	1.74
1950	28.1	10.9	17.2	1.53
1951	25.3	9.9	15.4	1.38
1952	23.4	8.9	14.4	1.28
1953	21.5	8.9	12.6	1.17
1954	20.0	8.2	11.9	1.09
1955	19.4	7.8	11.6	1.05
1956	18.4	8.0	10.4	0.99
1957	17.2	8.3	8.9	0.91
1958	18.0	7.4	10.5	0.96
1959	17.5	7.4	10.1	0.92
1960	17.2	7.6	9.6	0.92
1961	16.9	7.4	9.5	0.90
1962	17.0	7.5	9.5	0.91
1963	17.3	7.0	10.3	0.93
1964	17.7	6.9	10.7	0.95
1965	18.6	7.1	11.4	1.00
1966	13.7	6.8	7.0	0.74
1967	19.3	6.7	12.6	1.05
1968	18.4	6.8	11.6	0.99

Note: Calculations for the net reproduction rates are by the Institute of Population Problems. The rate for 1968 is provisional. For all vital rates for 1920 through 1943, calculations are by the Institute of Population Problems. For 1944, 1945, and 1946, figures are based on the United Nations Demographic Yearbooks. All other calculations are cited from the publications of the Division of Statistics and Investigation, Ministry of Health and Welfare.

female born in this particular year is doomed to an unhappy life and will destroy her husband if she marries. In the absence of any reliable scientific methods to avoid birth of a female, many couples apparently tried not to have any babies at all in that year, and hence there was a decrease of about 460,000 births from the 1965 record. In a sense, it seems amazing that such a superstition could exert its influence to this extent in Japan today but, at the same time, the behavior of the population amply demonstrates that fertility performance, excluding problems of infertility, has now been brought under complete voluntary control in Japan. In any event, the statistics related to births in 1966, and also in 1965 and 1967, to some extent, should be used with sufficient caution for this reason.

In 1956 the net reproduction rate dropped below the replacement level. In 1957 the total fertility rate fell

below the level required for the population to become stationary after several decades. Since then both rates have continued to stay at low levels, if the unusual years of 1965, 1966, and 1967 are ruled out. This phenomenon has recently given rise to concern among some quarters of society over the fertility trend in Japan.

A comparison of age-specific fertility rates per 1,000 married women between 1925 and 1965 gives an interesting picture (Table 2). Today, as compared with the period during which Japan was undergoing modernization, fertility is sharply controlled after a wife has reached age 30.

#### AGE STRUCTURE

Of an estimated total population of 100,243,000 for 1967, approximately 24.4 million belonged to the age group 14 years and under; 69.2 million, 15-64 years; and 6.7 million, 65 years

and over. The three age groups represented 24.36, 68.99, and 6.65 percent of the total population, respectively. In 1935 the proportion of those aged 65 years and over was less than 5 percent; since that time it has steadily increased. The most recent figure for the dependency ratio, i.e., the population in the age groups "under 15 years" and "65 and over" divided by the population 15-64 years, is 47.

#### RURAL/URBAN DISTRIBUTION

In the ten-year period 1955-1965, there was a large-scale migration in Japan from rural to urban areas. From 1955 to 1960, a great number of rural inhabitants moved into cities, especially those cities with a population of 500,000 or more. From 1960 to 1965, an even greater number of people migrated, but the migration pattern was gradually changed; the medium-sized and small cities with populations of 100,000 to 300,000 absorbed a relatively large proportion of migrants while the rate of population increase due to migration in the largest cities was considerably reduced, reflecting the fact that the saturation point had already been reached in the most congested areas. As a matter of fact, in such giant cities as Tokyo and Osaka out-migrants now outnumber in-migrants, especially in the cities' central areas. At the same time, rapid population growth is taking place in their peripheries.

The movement of people from small rural communities to urban areas is still going on today. As a result, Japan is faced with a problem of imbalance of population distribution: extremely high density in large cities as contrasted with extremely sparse

TABLE 2. *Age-Specific Fertility Rates per 1,000 Married Women, Japan: 1925 and 1965*

Age	1925	1965
15-19	325.44	253.48
20-24	340.28	357.22
25-29	296.58	254.73
30-34	253.06	98.14
35-39	196.09	22.03
40-44	88.25	3.58
45-49	12.58	0.22
15-49	1,512.28	989.40

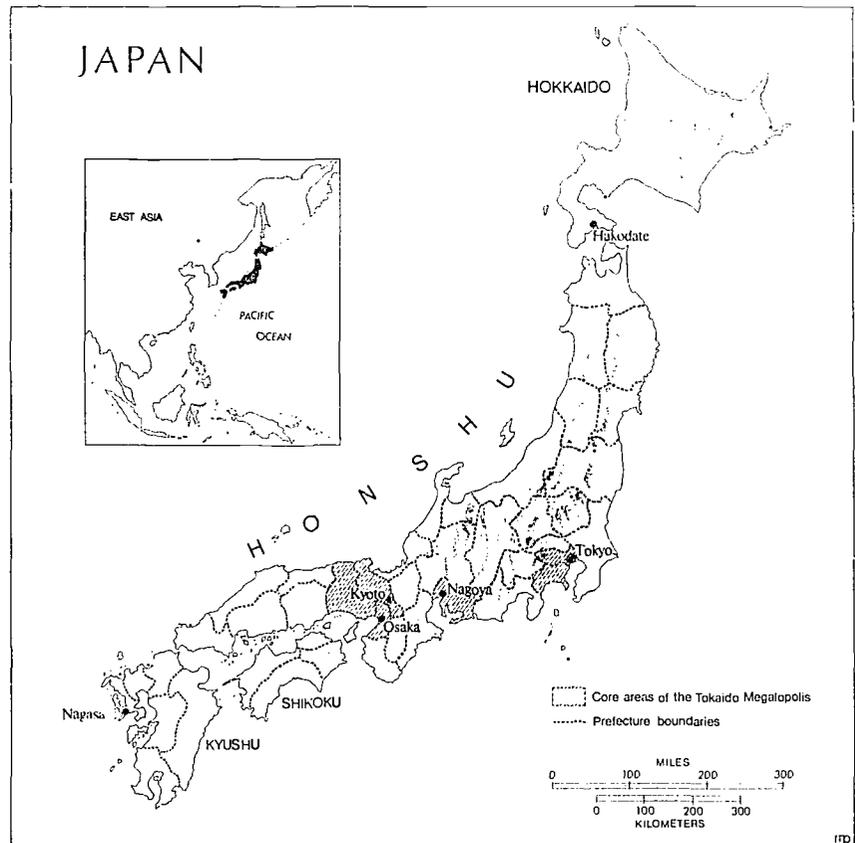
settlement in small farming villages. This has brought about serious problems on each side: for example, air pollution, waste disposal, and traffic congestion in the cities; and difficulty in the maintenance of farms in the villages. To counteract the imbalance of rural/urban distribution, the government is now considering the possibility of introducing a number of industries and factories into rural areas so that people living in rural communities can find favorable employment opportunities without migrating into urban centers.

In 1965, 57,154,229 persons, or 58 percent of the total population, lived in cities with a population of 50,000 or more. In 1967, the total population of the seven principal cities (population of one million or more) in Japan amounted to nearly 20 million, about 20 percent of the country's total inhabitants.

The flow of people has, in the main, been directed toward the more industrialized, more prosperous areas along the Pacific coast. Development of the "Tokaido Megalopolis" will receive increasing attention in the overall national development scheme in the years to come.

**ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS COMPOSITION**  
Ethnically Japan is quite homogeneous. The people are of Mongoloid origin with a mixture of various racial backgrounds. They are believed to have come to Japan originally from mainland Asia and southern islands. Although in the northernmost part of the country there lives an ethnic group different from the Japanese people known as the Ainu, their number is almost negligible, and Japan is considered a one-race nation.

In 1968, according to a survey on religious affiliation published by the Bureau of Culture and based on reports from various religious organizations, Shintoism represented 45 percent of the reports; Buddhism, 51 percent; Christianity (both Roman Catholic and Protestant), 0.5 percent; and the remaining 3 percent included miscellaneous groups. When the numbers of followers of different faiths thus reported were added up, the total was 1.5 times the total population of Japan, suggesting that many individuals were counted in more than one religion.



It is said that about 30 percent of the population of Japan has no religious interest at all. Indifference to religion is more pronounced among intellectuals, youths, and laborers. However, among all classes, religion is more often a matter of tradition of the family or the community to which the individual belongs, than a matter of deep, internal concern.

Shintoism, though it has a fairly large number of followers, tends in general to be formalistic. From the standpoint of actual influence on people's thoughts and behavior, Buddhism holds a more important position and has a large number of well-trained, well-respected teachers. Christianity has its genuine devotees among the highly educated and among young men and women. For this reason, although Christians are a very small religious group in terms of number, they play an influential role in society. Roman Catholics are reported to be 2.4 times as numerous as Protestants.

To understand the fertility control behavior among the Japanese people,

particularly the question of induced abortion, these traditional attitudes toward religion must be considered.

#### LITERACY

As far as ordinary reading and writing skills are concerned, the degree of literacy in Japan is nearly 100 percent. In 1947 a new system of education was introduced. It is known as the 6-3-3-4 system, with the numbers representing years of schooling at the elementary, secondary, high school, and university levels. The first nine years are the period of compulsory education. The school attendance rate for this period is over 99 percent.

#### ECONOMIC STATUS

Of the population 15 years of age and over, 64 percent were economically active in 1968, representing 81.7 percent of the males and 47.5 percent of the females.

In 1950, those who were engaged in primary industry represented 48.3 percent of the economically active population, but this proportion decreased to 22.2 percent in 1968. It is

TABLE 3. *Estimation of the Future Population of Japan*

Year	Number (in thousands)				Percent			
	Age				Age			
	0-14	15-64	65 and over	All ages	0-14	15-64	65 and over	All ages
1965	25,166	66,928	6,181	98,275	25.61	68.10	6.29	100
1975	26,347	74,863	8,715	109,925	23.97	68.10	7.93	100
1985	28,211	81,085	11,502	120,798	23.35	67.13	9.52	100
1995	26,952	86,012	15,380	128,344	21.00	67.02	11.98	100
2005	28,647	86,865	19,448	134,960	21.23	64.36	14.41	100
2015	29,279	85,857	23,477	138,614	21.12	61.94	16.94	100
2025	29,128	88,496	22,994	140,619	20.71	62.94	16.35	100

Note: Estimates are from the Institute of Population Problems, Medium Assumption.

estimated that the percentage will further decrease to a level of 11.7 in 1975. The proportion of those engaged in secondary industry rose from 22.0 percent in 1950 to 33.5 percent in 1968. This was due for the most part to the increase in the number of workers in the manufacturing industries. The number of workers in the mining industry, on the other hand, showed a decrease during this period. Because of the increase in service industry workers, the proportion in the tertiary industry also showed a rise from 29.6 percent in 1950 to 44.3 percent in 1968.

As is evident above, the composition of the economically active population by industry has undergone a rapid change during the past 20 years. The number of farmers has decreased while more workers have been absorbed in manufacturing, commercial activities, and various types of service activities.

Between 1965 and 1969 the average wages went up 36 percent, taking inflationary factors into consideration. An outstanding feature of the wage structure in recent years is the gradual closing of the wage gap for young workers between small and medium-sized enterprises and large enterprises. The shortage of young laborers and the resultant difficulty for owners of small enterprises wanting to recruit new workers have greatly facilitated this process.

**FUTURE TRENDS**

The Institute of Population Problems revealed its official population estimates up to the year 2025 in August 1969 (Table 3). In these estimates, certain assumptions were made as to the fertility and mortality trends up

to 1985 by age and sex. Figures from 1990 onward are projections into the future with the fertility and mortality levels of 1985 held unchanged.

According to the Institute's estimates, the total population of Japan will reach 120,798,000 in 1985. The birth rate is expected to decrease further and to be about 15 per 1,000 population in 1985. The death rate, on the other hand, will show a slight increase to reach 7.7 per 1,000 population in that year. As a result, the rate of natural increase will decline from the recent figure of 1.2 percent a year to 0.7 percent in 1985.

The size of the population under 15 years of age is estimated to increase somewhat, but its proportion will decrease to 23.4 percent in 1985. The productive age group (15-64 years of age) will continue to grow in size but its proportion will be slightly reduced to 67 percent. The annual increment of this age group was 960,000 during the period 1965-1970, but it will be only 620,000 during the period 1970-1985. This means that the question of shortage of young laborers will become serious. The segment of the population 65 years and over will increase and will pass the mark of 10 million around 1980. In 1985, the total number of the aged will be 11.5 million, comprising 9.5 percent of the total population.

**Population Growth and Socioeconomic Development**

**RELATIONSHIP TO NATIONAL INCOME**  
For the past decade or so, Japan's economic growth has been of unprecedented magnitude. With the exception of one year (1965), from 1963 through 1969, the yearly economic growth rate (as measured by the per-

centage increase of real gross national product over the previous year) has been above 10 percent. For 1970, it is estimated that the economic growth rate will be somewhat less than the previous figures, but will still maintain a level higher than 10 percent: 11.1 percent according to the Japanese government, or 11.25 percent according to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The total amount of nominal GNP for 1970 will be approximately 200 billion dollars, making Japan rank third after the United States and the Soviet Union.

According to reports by the Economic Planning Board, the total national income in the fiscal year 1968 was 117 billion dollars. The annual growth rate for the five-year period up to 1968 fluctuated between 11 and 18 percent. If the national income is calculated on a per capita basis, however, it passed the mark of \$1,000 for the first time in 1968 when it was \$1,155.

The remarkable growth of national income in recent years was due mainly to the increase in production in secondary and tertiary industries. The primary industry also showed an increase, but its growth rate was rather insignificant if compared with the other two industries. Table 4 indicates the change over time in the relative contribution each of the three industries makes toward the net national product.

TABLE 4. *Composition of Net National Product by Industry, in Percents, Japan: 1955 and 1968*

Year	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
1955	22.7	28.9	48.1
1968	9.9	38.8	51.7

**RELATIONSHIP TO SIZE OF LABOR FORCE**

Table 5 represents estimates of the future size of the labor force published by the Institute of Population Problems in December 1966. It deals with the labor force 15 years of age and over. Using the estimated populations by age group worked out by the same Institute, three different levels of labor force participation rate were considered: A, assuming that the



same labor force participation rate of 1965 would prevail throughout the entire period under consideration; C, assuming that the labor force participation rate would fall precipitously; and B, the median between A and C.

The five-year increment will diminish notably after 1970. Under Assumption C, the total size of the labor force will decrease after 1975. In these changing circumstances, adjustments in the employment and industrial structures will be necessary.

#### RELATIONSHIP TO AGRICULTURE

In 1950 the population living in farmers' households was 37.8 million. In 1960 it decreased to 34.5 million (36 percent of the total population). In 1968, it further declined to 27.2 million (27 percent of the total population). During the period 1950-1968, the number of farmers' households dropped from 6.20 million to 5.35 million. The number of households engaged in agriculture alone decreased tremendously, from 50 percent in 1950 to 20 percent in 1968. This means that the majority of farmers in Japan today have some members within the family who are gainfully occupied outside agriculture.

The average arable land available per farmer's household is extremely limited in Japan: 1.06 hectares.

Because large numbers of young workers have migrated to urban areas, while the old workers have remained on the farms, the average age of the agricultural labor force has increased. At the same time, mechanization is in progress, and the use of such equipment as tractors, motorized tillers, and automatic sprayers has increased.

In recent years, the share of agricultural product in the gross national product has diminished: from 9.1 percent in 1960 to 6.1 percent in 1968. However, the total volume of agricultural product has increased during the period 1965-1968 by 17 percent. In a breakdown, the production of rice, fruits, chicken, eggs, and milk has been especially high, while wheat and pulse production have fallen considerably.

For three consecutive years since 1967, the yearly yield of rice was more than average. At the same time, consumption of rice is now down as the dietary habits of the Japanese people

TABLE 5. *Estimation of Future Labor Force, 15 Years of Age and Over, Japan: 1955-1985*

Year	Number (in thousands)	Index (1965 = 100)	Increment (in thousands)
Assumption A			
1955	40,027	82.9	
1960	44,009	91.1	3,982
1965	48,294	100.0	4,285
1970	54,026	111.9	5,732
1975	56,901	117.8	2,875
1980	59,284	122.8	2,383
1985	61,598	127.5	2,314
Assumption B			
1955	40,027	82.9	
1960	44,009	91.1	3,982
1965	48,294	100.0	4,285
1970	53,148	110.1	4,854
1975	54,998	113.9	1,850
1980	56,116	116.2	1,118
1985	57,081	118.2	965
Assumption C			
1955	40,027	82.9	
1960	44,009	91.1	3,982
1965	48,294	100.0	4,285
1970	52,268	108.2	3,974
1975	53,007	109.8	739
1980	52,937	109.6	-70
1985	52,559	108.8	-378

Note: Figures for 1965 and before are observed census results. See text for description of Assumptions A, B, and C.

are undergoing a rapid change. The surplus of rice crops has become a serious problem. It is estimated that by early 1971 the total amount of rice in stock will reach 8 million tons, sufficient to ration the total population for 16 months. Disposal of old rice and the curtailment of rice production are among the more imminent problems that the government has to solve.

#### RELATIONSHIP TO SOCIAL WELFARE EXPENDITURES

*Public education.* In recent years the proportion of those trying to obtain higher education has increased. After completing the nine-year compulsory education, 80 percent move up to the high school. Girls show a slightly higher percentage of continuation than boys. Of graduates from high schools, 23 percent proceed to college or university education.

In the fiscal year 1968, the Ministry of Education received a total of 700 billion yen (US 1.94 billion dollars) as its official appropriation, representing 12 percent of the total national budget.

When the children born during the post-war baby boom reached elementary school age, the number of pupils per class was enormously inflated. Many schools had to stagger classes in order to accommodate more students. For the past ten years, however, the number of children entering elementary schools has been much smaller because of the decrease in births.

*Public health.* In 1950 the budget for the Ministry of Health and Welfare represented 10.45 percent of the total national budget. In 1965 it rose to 13.08 percent and in 1969, to 13.4 percent.

In 1969, the Ministry of Health and Welfare's budget was spent in four main areas, as follows: 52 percent, social insurance; 20 percent, public relief programs; 13 percent, public health and medical care; and 10 percent, social welfare programs.

The number of doctors per 100,000 population was 111 in 1967, the same ratio as in Sweden. The number of beds per 100,000 population was 990, about the same as in England and Wales.

The average expectation of life at birth in 1968 was 69 and 74 years respectively for males and females, a gain of about ten years over the past two decades.

### History of Population Concerns

Perhaps the first significant episode in the modern era of Japan that made the whole nation concerned with the population problem was the "rice riot" in 1918. Protesting against high prices of rice, the traditional staple food for the Japanese, a large number of underprivileged people rioted in many parts of the country, destroying rice shops and public establishments. The government policy was criticized, and the population problem was gradually brought to the attention of many individuals. As a result, during the 1920s, a number of social scientists entered into a serious dispute over the population growth in Japan, some in favor of Malthusian and others in favor of Marxian doctrine. In 1927, the government established an official commission charged with the task of investigating population and food situations. Three years later, the commission was abolished, but it had set a precedent for discussion of population matters in official circles.

At that time the main focus of attention was on the relationship between food and population. Since then factors such as natural resources, employment, and other economic aspects have been gradually included in the discussion of population. However, it appears that the general tendency in Japan even today to talk about the population problem mainly in terms of its connection with the food supply has its origin in this kind of historical development.

During the late 1930s and the 1940s, the general political atmosphere prohibited any discussions of population limitation. The government policy was designed to increase the size of the population of Japan to enhance the military position of the country. Practically all birth control programs were suspended.

For a few years after the end of World War II, overpopulation was a serious issue among the Japanese people. A number of population commissions were organized, newspapers and public magazines conducted extensive

campaigns on the subject, and the need for birth limitation was voiced vigorously among the general public. On a few occasions, strong objections to birth control were expressed by communist and Roman Catholic leaders. However, regardless of official policy decisions or the pros and cons of birth control, people proceeded to practice birth control on their own, primarily through induced abortion.

### Population Policies

In the author's opinion, this condition of widespread practice of voluntary birth control in Japan differs basically from the condition in many other Asian countries, where national family planning programs have been initiated by the governments.

However, if we broaden our observations and include those steps that have had certain bearing upon fertility trends in the country, at least two government policies emerge as notable influences: first, the establishment of the Eugenic Protection Law; and second, the establishment of a national program for the promotion of family planning practice.

### THE EUGENIC PROTECTION LAW

The Eugenic Protection Law of 1948 made three provisions relating to fertility and family planning: (1) it provided for activities of family planning field workers; (2) it permitted the performance of abortions for health reasons and a year later was amended to include reasons of economic necessity; (3) it permitted sterilization for health reasons. The law did not constitute an antinatalist policy. It was presented as being for eugenic and medical rather than for demographic purposes.

The main aim of the law was liberalization of induced abortion. Criminal abortions were on the increase, and it was considered essential to provide a channel for legalized, sanitary, safe, induced abortion from the standpoint of maternal health. Furthermore, liberalized abortion was expected to accelerate the desired process of fertility decline. One might argue that the establishment of such a law was in fact a population policy. Even if we admit this argument, however, the law did not enforce or encourage induced abortion for popula-

tion control; it simply permitted abortion. The law provided a means: indoctrination in population control as a prerequisite to such an action was not required.

A recent publication by the Japanese Medical Association<sup>1</sup> emphasizes the point that the Eugenic Protection Law was advanced by a group of medical doctors, including the then president of the Association, and not by the government. The publication reviews the law's role in mitigating suffering in the difficult economic and social conditions following the war: "If it were not for the law, a tremendous burden would have fallen upon mothers and children, under such chaotic conditions where poverty and malnutrition were so prevalent . . ."

The number of reported induced abortions rose sharply after 1948. In the peak year, 1955, it reached 1.17 million. Thereafter, it has gradually declined (the figure was 744,451 in 1969).

Twenty years have passed since the Eugenic Protection Law was enacted, and in this time general living conditions in Japan have changed greatly. In 1969, the Japanese Government and the Japanese Association for Maternal Welfare (an organization composed of designated physicians) each conducted a survey on induced abortion. Although many women expressed disapproval of abortion, a large percentage expected to resort to abortion if and when they needed it. Thus, the Eugenic Protection Law and the whole question of induced abortion in Japan are now under serious debate in the Diet and among intellectuals.

Some religious groups have organized powerful movements with a view to amending, or repealing altogether, the Eugenic Protection Law. A group of political leaders have joined this effort. Fear of diminishing population; the shortage of young laborers; decay in sexual morality; and physical and mental harm resulting from induced abortion; Japan's international reputation as an abortion paradise—these are some of the reasons advanced by those who seriously seek to change the law.

<sup>1</sup>"On the Eugenic Protection Measures," a publication of the Japanese Medical Association, August 1970 (mimeo., in Japanese).

The medical profession, by and large, is opposed to this movement to change the Eugenic Protection Law. The above-mentioned publication of the Japanese Medical Association attempts to refute some of the arguments for abortion reform. The publication argues as follows: The attempt to increase Japanese fertility levels only through restrictions on induced abortion is illogical; rather, pronatalist social policies must be strengthened if fertility is to be restored. Liberalization of abortion laws was not the cause of a decay in sexual morality; the subject should be viewed from a wider angle. There is no scientific evidence to suggest that the present-day abortion operation performed by authorized physicians results in a high degree of damage to mothers' health. Measures designed to place more rigid qualifications on the physicians performing abortion and to complicate procedures for the performance of abortion are anachronistic in view of the tendencies in other advanced countries where efforts are being made to simplify the conditions and procedures. Furthermore, criminal abortions would increase should the law be amended into a highly restrictive form. The publication calls attention to evidence of a growing recognition by women in Japan that the freedom of pregnancy and childbirth is a fundamental right of each individual. Under these circumstances, the publication recommends that modification of the law take the form of the addition of certain indications for abortion, such as consideration of the effect of childrearing upon maternal health, or the so-called fetal reasons involving high risks of congenital malformation due to various causes.

At present, the outcome of the debate is unknown. However, even if changes in the law are indicated, it will take some time before the issue reaches a final settlement.

#### PROMOTION OF FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAM

The present debate is not the first precipitated by the Eugenic Protection Law. For a few years subsequent to the establishment of the law, the number of induced abortions rose rapidly. In 1951, the Cabinet members, alarmed by the sharp increase,

issued an official statement to the effect that contraception was to be recommended as a far more reasonable method of family limitation than induced abortion and that official programs to promote family planning were to be strengthened. As a result, in 1952, the Ministry of Health and Welfare compiled a scheme for a national family planning program, covering the whole range from public education to individual technical guidance. Health centers, midwives, local communities, and voluntary organizations participated, and gradually contraceptive practice has gained ground against induced abortion.

With the increase in contraceptive use among the people, Japan's birth rate declined further. For the past decade, it has generally maintained the level of 17-18 per 1,000 population. A norm of slightly over two children per couple has been established.

#### RECENT CHANGES IN ATTITUDES TOWARD FAMILY PLANNING

Since 1960, the concept of family planning has undergone a notable change. The positive approach, i.e., to have a few children rather than to avoid having children, has been more and more emphasized. A reaction to the low fertility trend and apprehension of "diminishing" population are developing. Business magnates and industrial leaders have voiced concern over the shortage of young workers. In the government administration, the family planning program has admittedly lost its relative significance under these changing circumstances.

In April 1969, the Mainichi Newspapers conducted their Tenth Survey on Family Planning. According to the published results, the opinion that population limitation is favorable for the nation, prevalent in 1950, is less widespread than formerly. Those who believe that population limitation is detrimental to the nation represent 35 percent of all respondents.

In August 1969, the Population Problems Council attached to the Ministry of Health and Welfare issued its interim report,<sup>2</sup> focusing at-

<sup>2</sup> For an English translation of this report, see "Japan: Interim Report of the Population Problems Inquiry Council," *Studies in Family Planning*, 56:1-4, August 1970.

tention on the question of fertility. The report contained these points, among others: (1) the fertility performance and reproduction rates of the Japanese people are now among the lowest in the world; (2) the records for the past ten years suggest that the population of Japan will begin to decrease after a generation or so if the present level of reproduction continues; (3) in order to bring about a "stationary population" in the future, it is necessary for Japan to restore its fertility slightly; and (4) efforts to raise fertility levels should be directed toward the strengthening of social development programs so that the people encounter fewer economic, social, and other deterrents to pregnancy, childbirth and child-rearing.

Although more than a year has passed since the report was submitted by the Council, no specific official measures have been taken by the government to ensure the restoration of fertility. No overtly pronatalist policies have been advanced. At the time that the report was submitted, the government's position toward it was to take note of the contents and to study the problem. A basic understanding was that a final report on all aspects of population phenomena would be submitted in due time, and the government would then consider necessary measures and programs.

At the same time, the government is currently considering establishing an official program whereby a "child allowance" amounting to 3,000 yen (US\$83) per month would be provided to couples for their third child and every child thereafter. Recently the Ministry of Health and Welfare announced that it will try to implement this scheme by next year, but there are a number of problems (such as the question of the source of payment) to be solved before it becomes a reality.

The child allowance has been under discussion for nearly ten years. From the standpoint of the government, it is entirely a welfare measure, having nothing to do with the recommendations contained in the interim report. However, some critics, noting that the discussion has become particularly intensive during the past year, assert that this is evidence of the

pronatalist attitude of the present government.

Among the general public, the interim report has been a subject of controversy. The report was concerned with the goal of a "stationary population." It did not advocate a substantial increase in the population. However, the way in which the mass media treated this report was quite sensational. Many interpreted the report as a warning and urged strongly a return to a high-fertility nation. Some publications even implied that the population of Japan was already declining. Subsequent to this publicity, the future population of Japan and its relationship to industry, labor, and economic development have become topics for wide discussion. Some maintain that an increase in the birth rate is imperative, while others wonder why Japan should raise its fertility rates in the face of an inevitable increase of tens of millions in the population expected during the several decades to come. However, one recognition that is almost common to the two groups is that the future fertility trends in this country will be largely determined by the people, not by interventions from outside.

## Population Programs

### OBJECTIVES

The Government of Japan currently has a national program for the promotion of family planning. Its objectives are to enlighten the public on the subject of family planning, to promote the idea of responsible parenthood, and to replace the fairly large number of induced abortions occurring today with more rational means of family planning.

The national family planning program operates under the Maternal and Child Health Program administered by the Ministry of Health and Welfare. The program has no targets in terms of desired number of acceptors. Family planning information and services are made available in conjunction with maternal and child health services, especially during postpartum education, well-baby clinics, and home visits by field workers to mothers with new-born babies.

In addition to the general family planning program outlined above, a

special project provides economically underprivileged couples with counseling in contraception and with contraceptive devices and chemicals, free of charge or at reduced costs. The scope of this project has been diminished in recent years.

Recently emphasis has been placed upon the education of younger groups of men and women in family planning. This education is usually provided in classes for newly married couples or for premarital education, organized by local community authorities as well as by public health centers.

### ORGANIZATION

The Maternal and Child Health Section of the Ministry of Health and Welfare is responsible for the administration of the program. At the prefectural level, departments of health and social welfare assume the responsibility, and at the local level, family planning comes under the jurisdiction of health centers.

Two affiliates of the Ministry of Health and Welfare are in charge of training and research in population-related fields: the Institute of Public Health conducts research on medical aspects of family planning and population, and the Institute of Population Problems is concerned with socioeconomic aspects of population.

### OPERATIONS

The annual budget for family planning at the national level is approximately US \$186,000. Local communities appropriate certain amounts in addition to the sums received from the national treasury, thus making the total expenditures in family planning roughly US \$500,000 a year.

Information and education of the general public in matters related to population and family planning are provided through mass media: newspapers, magazines, and television and radio programs.

As regards field workers in family planning, a large number of midwives and a relatively small number of public health nurses have been recruited and trained. The training program for these categories of professionals is conducted by a voluntary family planning organization. Upon completion of an officially approved

training course, midwives and nurses become entitled to the designation of conception control practical instructor, which enables them to charge a set fee for their counseling and even to sell contraceptive devices and chemicals at a profit. Midwives participate in the above-mentioned special program for indigents. They receive remuneration for their service from the officially compiled budget. This item and expenditures for supplies of contraceptives are the two main items in the national budget for family planning at the present time.

In Japan the predominant contraceptive methods are the "traditional" methods. Various field surveys have shown the following distribution by method: condoms, 50-60 percent; safe period, including the use of basal body temperature, 30-40 percent; contraceptive jellies and tablets, 15-25 percent; and diaphragms, 5-10 percent. Often more than one method is employed; hence the total of these percentages exceeds 100. Condoms are the most popular method in every survey on contraceptive methods in Japan.

Neither oral contraceptives nor IUDs have been officially approved by the government for general use in Japan. Even today, despite some discussion of the advantages of these modern methods, it is unlikely that the government will approve them. Anxiety that serious harm may arise from long-term use of orals, and from the general easy availability of drugs in Japan, and insufficient knowledge of the mechanisms of action of IUDs are among the more important reasons for the government's negative position, although there is additional concern among some political and industrial quarters over the "too low fertility."

The government's injunction on the two methods does not mean that no one uses orals or IUDs. In fact, a small number of women are on the pill, and 9 out of 100 current contraceptors use the Ota ring, a Japanese intrauterine contraceptive device, according to a national survey conducted by the Prime Minister's Secretariat in November 1969.

### RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

The Institute of Population Problems and the Institute of Public Health

are the major government organizations involved in research on family planning and population. The Institute of Population Problems is concerned mainly with the research in the social and economic fields of family planning and population. Their recent studies have included differential fertility by education, income, and degree of urbanization; future population estimation; estimation of labor force; estimation of the size of households; characteristics of population migration in Japan; and the estimation of population distribution by major geographical region.

The Institute of Public Health has conducted research on such topics as: follow-up of the use of the Ota ring; X-ray observation of the intrauterine ring; complications arising from induced abortion; roles played by induced abortion and contraception in the reduction of births; and induced abortion situations in other countries. Some of these studies are undertaken as joint projects with the Family Planning Federation of Japan (described below).

The departments of obstetrics and gynecology in some medical schools are interested in experimental studies of new fertility regulation agents, such as oral progestins of various types, or prostaglandins.

#### Private Efforts

The Family Planning Federation of Japan is the national voluntary organization representing several constituent bodies. It functions in the field of publicity and education and the training of family planning professionals. It is a full member of the International Planned Parenthood Federation.

The Japan Family Planning Association, a member organization of the Family Planning Federation of Japan, is particularly active in the educational and publicity activities and has prepared a large volume of teaching materials in family planning, such as movies, slides, tapes, demonstration kits, pelvic models, textbooks, wall charts, and pamphlets.

In the past, a number of large industrial establishments formed programs for family planning promotion among their employees. Because of many advantages inherent in such an approach, such as the availability of

necessary funds, a ready audience, and teaching facilities for family planning workers, their programs were remarkably effective. In recent years, however, these programs have been on the decline in general, reflecting concern of industrialists over the shortage of labor and the repercussions of this concern on attitudes toward family planning.

The Mainichi Newspapers Agency, which publishes one of the most popular papers in Japan, has long maintained a keen interest in population studies and related fields. For the past two decades the agency has conducted surveys on birth control and family planning every other year, on the average. This series of surveys is unique in the sense that it provides a long-term study of the transition over time in family planning, induced abortion, and the attitudes toward population problems on the part of the Japanese people as a whole. In July 1970, an overall review of the past ten surveys was published by the agency under the title "Japan's Population Revolution" (in Japanese).

#### Educational and Scientific Efforts in Population

Demography is included in some courses in university departments related to economics or sociology. Lectures on population as an aspect of natural science are often included in medical schools. Family planning and its technical methodology are ordinarily introduced in connection with the teaching of obstetrics and gynecology and public health, but the inclusion of these topics is not universal.

A brief explanation about family planning is given to high school students.

In the curriculum for postgraduate training of public health personnel, the Institute of Public Health includes some lectures on population problems and family planning in the world as well as in Japan.

#### Foreign Assistance

Until a decade ago, Japan received assistance from foreign countries. However, Japan's status has changed rapidly, and now she is in a position to consider and strengthen financial and technical assistance to others.

Because of the waning interest in family planning in the domestic arena, Japan, until quite recently, did not show much interest in supporting programs in other countries; but an increasing number of government officials and civil leaders have begun to take a fresh look at population problems in developing nations with a view to lending support.

In April 1968, the Japanese Organization for International Cooperation in Family Planning was established. So far, it has been engaged mainly in shipping family planning equipment to Indonesia, Taiwan, and Korea. Also, three small-scale family planning seminars for Asian medical doctors have been conducted in Japan. Activities through this channel, as well as formal government activities, are expected to expand in both scope and volume.

#### Major Publications

Y. Moriyama *et al.*, "Harmful Effects of Induced Abortion," Family Planning Federation of Japan, 1966.

M. Muramatsu, (Editor-in-Chief), *Japan's Experience in Family Planning—Past and Present*, Family Planning Federation of Japan, March 1967.

———. "Japan: Miracle in East Asia," in *Family Planning Programs: An International Survey*, B. Berelson, ed. (New York: Basic Books, 1969).

———. "The Demographic Aspects of Induced Abortion in Japan," paper submitted at the general conference of the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population, London, September 1969.

I. B. Taeuber, *The Population of Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958).

#### Summary

Population growth has been a subject of widespread concern in Japan since early in this century. The population problem in relation to the food supply and the level of living motivated people to attempt on their own to limit family sizes, especially after World War II. Declines in both birth and death rates began in the 1920s. Fertility performance, aside from infertility problems, is now under complete voluntary control. The rate of natural increase is at present slightly higher than 10 per 1,000 population

or 1 percent per year and is expected to decline further.

Japan has no official government policy on population growth. Nonetheless, two government actions have had notable influence in facilitating family limitation practice among the population. The Eugenic Protection Law passed in 1948 permitted performance of abortions by private physicians for reasons of maternal health and, a year later, was amended to include reasons of economic necessity. The main goal of the law was to stem the increase in illegal abortions, though the possible influence on the fertility decline of liberalized abortion regulations was also taken into consideration. The establishment of a national program for family planning practice in 1952 had as its primary intention to replace widespread induced abortion with a more rational means of family planning. Its goals were to make information about contraception and contraceptives themselves readily available to those who sought them. As with the passing of the Eugenic Protection Law, the formation of the program did not constitute

a demographic policy; both were presented primarily as health policies that would allow the individual to choose family size without incurring health injury.

The national program operates in conjunction with the Japan Family Planning Association, a private organization especially active in education and publicity activities. The predominant contraceptive methods that are used in Japan, and are supported by the program; and the government, are the "traditional" methods. Neither oral contraceptives nor IUDs are officially approved.

In recent years, family planning programs have lost their relative significance in the government as a reaction to increasingly low fertility levels has set in. Large business organizations that formerly sponsored their own family planning programs are now inclined to favor an increase in the birth rate, because they anticipate a major decrease in the size of the labor force if the present fertility patterns continue. The publication of the 1969 interim report of the Population Problems Council, recommend-

ing a slight increase in the birth rate, has aroused controversy among those concerned. In the political arena there is a movement to repeal or modify the Eugenic Protection Law in order to increase the birth rate. The moderate view, and that supported by the Population Problems Council in its 1969 interim report, is that, in order to bring about a stationary population in the future, it will be necessary for Japan to restore its fertility slightly. For this purpose, repeal of the Eugenic Protection Law or a strong pronatalist policy on the part of the government would not be necessary. Since family size has long been a matter of personal choice of couples in Japan, the strengthening of social development programs is recommended so that the people encounter fewer economic, social and other deterrents to pregnancy, childbirth, and childrearing. Such measures would be consistent with the Eugenic Protection Law and the national program for family planning practice as policies that facilitate the freedom of choice of couples in Japan, and promote responsible parenthood.



## THE POPULATION COUNCIL

245 Park Avenue, New York, New York 10017

The Population Council is a foundation established in 1952 for scientific training and study in population matters. It endeavors to advance knowledge in the broad field of population by fostering research, training, and technical consultation and assistance in the social and biomedical sciences.

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