

= Japan =

Japan (Japanese : ?? Nippon [nip ? pō ? ?] or Nihon [nihō ? ?] ; formally ??? Nippon @-@ koku or Nihon @-@ koku , " State of Japan ") is an island country in East Asia . Located in the Pacific Ocean , it lies to the east of the Sea of Japan , the East China Sea , China , Korea and Russia , stretching from the Sea of Okhotsk in the north to the East China Sea and Taiwan in the south . The kanji that make up Japan 's name mean " sun origin " , and it is often called the " Land of the Rising Sun " .

Japan is a stratovolcanic archipelago of 6 @,@ 852 islands . The four largest are Honshu , Hokkaido , Kyushu and Shikoku , which make up about ninety @-@ seven percent of Japan 's land area . The country is divided into 47 prefectures in eight regions . The population of 126 million is the world 's tenth largest . Japanese people make up 98 @.@ 5 % of Japan 's total population . Approximately 9 @.@ 1 million people live in the core city of Tokyo , the capital city of Japan , which is the sixth largest city proper in the OECD and the fourth leading global city in the world . The Greater Tokyo Area , which includes Tokyo and several surrounding prefectures , is the world 's largest metropolitan area with over 35 million residents and the world 's largest urban agglomeration economy .

Archaeological research indicates that Japan was inhabited as early as the Upper Paleolithic period . The first written mention of Japan is in Chinese history texts from the 1st century CE . Influence from other regions , mainly Imperial China , followed by periods of isolation , particularly from Western Europe , has characterized Japan 's history . From the 12th century until 1868 , Japan was ruled by successive feudal military shoguns who ruled in the name of the Emperor . Japan entered into a long period of isolation in the early 17th century , which was ended in 1853 when a United States fleet pressured Japan to open to the West . Nearly two decades of internal conflict and insurrection followed before the Meiji Emperor was restored as head of state in 1868 and the Empire of Japan was proclaimed , with the Emperor as a divine symbol of the nation . In the late 19th and early 20th centuries , victories in the First Sino @-@ Japanese War , the Russo @-@ Japanese War and World War I allowed Japan to expand its empire during a period of increasing militarism . The Second Sino @-@ Japanese War of 1937 expanded into part of World War II in 1941 , which came to an end in 1945 following the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki . Since adopting its revised constitution in 1947 , Japan has maintained a unitary constitutional monarchy with an Emperor and an elected legislature called the National Diet .

Japan is a member of the UN , the G7 , the G8 , and the G20 and is considered a great power . The country has the world 's third @-@ largest economy by nominal GDP and the world 's fourth @-@ largest economy by purchasing power parity . It is also the world 's fourth @-@ largest exporter and fourth @-@ largest importer . Although Japan has officially renounced its right to declare war , it maintains a modern military with the world 's eighth largest military budget , used for self @-@ defense and peacekeeping roles . Japan is a developed country with a high standard of living and Human Development Index whose population enjoys the highest life expectancy , the third lowest infant mortality in the world , and ranked first in the number of Nobel laureates of any country in Asia . Japan is ranked first in the Country Brand Index , ranked sixth in the Global Competitiveness Report 2015 ? 2016 and is the highest @-@ ranked Asian country in the Global Peace Index . Japan was the first country in Asia to host both the Summer and Winter Olympic Games .

= = Etymology = =

The English word Japan possibly derives from the early Mandarin Chinese or Wu Chinese pronunciation of the Japanese name , ?? , which in Japanese is pronounced Nippon listen or Nihon listen . Japanese people refer to themselves as Nihonjin (???) and to their language as Nihongo (???) .

From the Meiji Restoration until the end of World War II , the full title of Japan was Dai Nippon Teikoku (?????) , meaning " the Empire of Great Japan " . Today the name Nippon @-@ koku / Nihon @-@ koku (???) is used as a formal modern @-@ day equivalent simply meaning " the

State of Japan " ; countries like Japan whose long form does not contain a descriptive designation are generally given a name appended by the character koku (?) , meaning " country " , " nation " or " state " .

The character nichi (?) means " sun " or " day " ; hon (?) means " base " or " origin " . The compound means " origin of the sun " or " sunrise " (from a Chinese point of view , the sun rises from Japan) ; it is a source for the popular Western description of Japan as the " Land of the Rising Sun " . Before Nihon came into official use , Japan was known as Wa (?) or Wakoku (??) .

The English word for Japan came to the West via early trade routes . The Old Mandarin or possibly early Wu Chinese pronunciation of Japan was recorded by Marco Polo as Cipangu . In modern Shanghainese , a Wu dialect , the pronunciation of characters ?? Japan is Zeppen [z??p?n] . The old Malay word for Japan , Jepang , was borrowed from a southern coastal Chinese dialect , probably Fukienese or Ningpo , and this Malay word was encountered by Portuguese traders in Malacca in the 16th century . Portuguese traders were the first to bring the word to Europe . An early record of the word in English is in a 1565 letter , spelled Giapan .

= = History = =

= = = Prehistory and ancient history = = =

A Paleolithic culture around 30 @, @ 000 BC constitutes the first known habitation of the Japanese archipelago . This was followed from around 14 @, @ 000 BC (the start of the J?mon period) by a Mesolithic to Neolithic semi @-@ sedentary hunter @-@ gatherer culture , who include ancestors of both the contemporary Ainu people and Yamato people , characterized by pit dwelling and rudimentary agriculture . Decorated clay vessels from this period are some of the oldest surviving examples of pottery in the world . Around 300 BC , the Yayoi people began to enter the Japanese islands , intermingling with the J?mon . The Yayoi period , starting around 500 BC , saw the introduction of practices like wet @-@ rice farming , a new style of pottery , and metallurgy , introduced from China and Korea .

Japan first appears in written history in the Chinese Book of Han . According to the Records of the Three Kingdoms , the most powerful kingdom on the archipelago during the 3rd century was called Yamataikoku . Buddhism was first introduced to Japan from Baekje , Korea and was promoted by Prince Sh?toku , but the subsequent development of Japanese Buddhism was primarily influenced by China . Despite early resistance , Buddhism was promoted by the ruling class and gained widespread acceptance beginning in the Asuka period (592 ? 710) .

The Nara period (710 ? 784) of the 8th century marked an emergence of the centralized Japanese state centered on the Imperial Court in Heij? @-@ ky? (modern Nara) . The Nara period is characterized by the appearance of a nascent literature as well as the development of Buddhist @-@ inspired art and architecture . The smallpox epidemic of 735 ? 737 is believed to have killed as much as one @-@ third of Japan 's population . In 784 , Emperor Kanmu moved the capital from Nara to Nagaoka @-@ ky? before relocating it to Heian @-@ ky? (modern Kyoto) in 794 .

This marked the beginning of the Heian period (794 ? 1185) , during which a distinctly indigenous Japanese culture emerged , noted for its art , poetry and prose . Murasaki Shikibu 's The Tale of Genji and the lyrics of Japan 's national anthem Kimigayo were written during this time .

Buddhism began to spread during the Heian era chiefly through two major sects , Tendai by Saich? , and Shingon by K?kai . Pure Land Buddhism (J?do @-@ sh? , J?do Shinsh?) became greatly popular in the latter half of the 11th century .

= = = Feudal era = = =

Japan 's feudal era was characterized by the emergence and dominance of a ruling class of warriors , the samurai . In 1185 , following the defeat of the Taira clan in the Genpei War , sung in the epic Tale of Heike , samurai Minamoto no Yoritomo was appointed shogun by Emperor Go @-@

Toba , and he established a base of power in Kamakura . After his death , the Hōjō clan came to power as regents for the shoguns . The Zen school of Buddhism was introduced from China in the Kamakura period (1185 ? 1333) and became popular among the samurai class . The Kamakura shogunate repelled Mongol invasions in 1274 and 1281 , but was eventually overthrown by Emperor Go - Daigo . Emperor Go - Daigo was himself defeated by Ashikaga Takauji in 1336 .

Ashikaga Takauji established the shogunate in Muromachi , Kyoto . This was the start of the Muromachi period (1336 ? 1573) . The Ashikaga shogunate achieved glory in the age of Ashikaga Yoshimitsu , and the culture based on Zen Buddhism (art of Miyabi) prospered . This evolved to Higashiyama Culture , and prospered until the 16th century . On the other hand , the succeeding Ashikaga shogunate failed to control the feudal warlords (daimyo) , and a civil war (the Ōnin War) began in 1467 , opening the century - long Sengoku period (" Warring States ") .

During the 16th century , traders and Jesuit missionaries from Portugal reached Japan for the first time , initiating direct commercial and cultural exchange between Japan and the West . This allowed Oda Nobunaga to obtain European technology and firearms , which he used to conquer many other daimyo . His consolidation of power began what was known as the Azuchi - Momoyama period (1573 ? 1603) . After he was assassinated in 1582 , his successor Toyotomi Hideyoshi unified the nation in 1590 and launched two unsuccessful invasions of Korea in 1592 and 1597 .

Tokugawa Iyasu served as regent for Hideyoshi 's son and used his position to gain political and military support . When open war broke out , he defeated rival clans in the Battle of Sekigahara in 1600 . Tokugawa Iyasu was appointed shogun by Emperor Go - Yōzei in 1603 , and he established the Tokugawa shogunate in Edo (modern Tokyo) . The Tokugawa shogunate enacted measures including buke shohatto , as a code of conduct to control the autonomous daimyo ; and in 1639 , the isolationist sakoku (" closed country ") policy that spanned the two and a half centuries of tenuous political unity known as the Edo period (1603 ? 1868) . The study of Western sciences , known as rangaku , continued through contact with the Dutch enclave at Dejima in Nagasaki . The Edo period also gave rise to kokugaku (" national studies ") , the study of Japan by the Japanese .

== = Modern era == =

On March 31 , 1854 , Commodore Matthew Perry and the " Black Ships " of the United States Navy forced the opening of Japan to the outside world with the Convention of Kanagawa . Subsequent similar treaties with Western countries in the Bakumatsu period brought economic and political crises . The resignation of the shogun led to the Boshin War and the establishment of a centralized state nominally unified under the Emperor (the Meiji Restoration) .

Adopting Western political , judicial and military institutions , the Cabinet organized the Privy Council , introduced the Meiji Constitution , and assembled the Imperial Diet . The Meiji Restoration transformed the Empire of Japan into an industrialized world power that pursued military conflict to expand its sphere of influence . After victories in the First Sino - Japanese War (1894 ? 1895) and the Russo - Japanese War (1904 ? 1905) , Japan gained control of Taiwan , Korea , and the southern half of Sakhalin . Japan 's population grew from 35 million in 1873 to 70 million in 1935 .

The early 20th century saw a brief period of " Taishō democracy " overshadowed by increasing expansionism and militarization . World War I enabled Japan , on the side of the victorious Allies , to widen its influence and territorial holdings . It continued its expansionist policy by occupying Manchuria in 1931 ; as a result of international condemnation of this occupation , Japan resigned from the League of Nations two years later . In 1936 , Japan signed the Anti - Comintern Pact with Nazi Germany , and the 1940 Tripartite Pact made it one of the Axis Powers . In 1941 , Japan negotiated the Soviet - Japanese Neutrality Pact , which lasted until 1945 with the Soviet invasion of Manchuria .

The Empire of Japan invaded other parts of China in 1937 , precipitating the Second Sino - Japanese War (1937 ? 1945) . The Imperial Japanese Army swiftly captured the capital Nanjing and conducted the Nanking Massacre . In 1940 , the Empire then invaded French Indochina , after which the United States placed an oil embargo on Japan . On December 7 ? 8 , 1941 , Japanese

forces carried out surprise attacks on Pearl Harbor , attacks on British forces in Malaya , Singapore , and Hong Kong and declared war , bringing the US and the UK into World War II in the Pacific . After the Soviet invasion of Manchuria and the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 , Japan agreed to an unconditional surrender on August 15 . The war cost Japan and the rest of the Greater East Asia Co -@ Prosperity Sphere millions of lives and left much of the nation 's industry and infrastructure destroyed . The Allies (led by the US) repatriated millions of ethnic Japanese from colonies and military camps throughout Asia , largely eliminating the Japanese empire and restoring the independence of its conquered territories . The Allies also convened the International Military Tribunal for the Far East on May 3 , 1946 to prosecute some Japanese leaders for war crimes . However , the bacteriological research units and members of the imperial family involved in the war were exonerated from criminal prosecutions by the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers despite calls for trials for both groups .

In 1947 , Japan adopted a new constitution emphasizing liberal democratic practices . The Allied occupation ended with the Treaty of San Francisco in 1952 and Japan was granted membership in the United Nations in 1956 . Japan later achieved rapid growth to become the second @-@ largest economy in the world , until surpassed by China in 2010 . This ended in the mid @-@ 1990s when Japan suffered a major recession . In the beginning of the 21st century , positive growth has signaled a gradual economic recovery . On March 11 , 2011 , Japan suffered the strongest earthquake in its recorded history ; this triggered the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster , one of the worst disasters in the history of nuclear power .

= = Government and politics = =

Japan is a constitutional monarchy whereby the power of the Emperor is very limited . As a ceremonial figurehead , he is defined by the constitution as " the symbol of the State and of the unity of the people . " Power is held chiefly by the Prime Minister and other elected members of the Diet , while sovereignty is vested in the Japanese people . Akihito is the current Emperor of Japan ; Naruhito , Crown Prince of Japan , stands as next in line to the Chrysanthemum Throne .

Japan 's legislative organ is the National Diet , seated in Chiyoda , Tokyo . The Diet is a bicameral body , consisting of a House of Representatives with 480 seats , elected by popular vote every four years or when dissolved , and a House of Councillors of 242 seats , whose popularly elected members serve six @-@ year terms . There is universal suffrage for adults over 18 years of age , with a secret ballot for all elected offices . The Diet is dominated by the social liberal Democratic Party of Japan and the conservative Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) . The LDP has enjoyed near continuous electoral success since 1955 , except for a brief 11 @-@ month period between 1993 and 1994 , and from 2009 to 2012 . It holds 294 seats in the lower house and 83 seats in the upper house .

The Prime Minister of Japan is the head of government and is appointed by the Emperor after being designated by the Diet from among its members . The Prime Minister is the head of the Cabinet , and he appoints and dismisses the Ministers of State . Following the LDP 's landslide victory in the 2012 general election , Shinz? Abe replaced Yoshihiko Noda as the Prime Minister on December 26 , 2012 and became the country 's sixth prime minister to be sworn in during a span of six years . Although the Prime Minister is formally appointed by the Emperor , the Constitution of Japan explicitly requires the Emperor to appoint whoever is designated by the Diet .

Historically influenced by Chinese law , the Japanese legal system developed independently during the Edo period through texts such as Kujikata Osadamegaki . However , since the late 19th century the judicial system has been largely based on the civil law of Europe , notably Germany . For example , in 1896 , the Japanese government established a civil code based on a draft of the German Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch ; with the code remaining in effect with post ? World War II modifications . Statutory law originates in Japan 's legislature and has the rubber stamp of the Emperor . The Constitution requires that the Emperor promulgate legislation passed by the Diet , without specifically giving him the power to oppose legislation . Japan 's court system is divided into four basic tiers : the Supreme Court and three levels of lower courts . The main body of Japanese

statutory law is called the Six Codes .

= = Foreign relations and military = =

Japan is a member of the G8 , APEC , and " ASEAN Plus Three " , and is a participant in the East Asia Summit . Japan signed a security pact with Australia in March 2007 and with India in October 2008 . It is the world 's fifth largest donor of official development assistance , donating US \$ 9 @. @ 2 billion in 2014 .

Japan has close economic and military relations with the United States ; the US @-@ Japan security alliance acts as the cornerstone of the nation 's foreign policy . A member state of the United Nations since 1956 , Japan has served as a non @-@ permanent Security Council member for a total of 20 years , most recently for 2009 and 2010 . It is one of the G4 nations seeking permanent membership in the Security Council .

Japan is engaged in several territorial disputes with its neighbors : with Russia over the South Kuril Islands , with South Korea over the Liancourt Rocks , with China and Taiwan over the Senkaku Islands , and with China over the EEZ around Okinotorishima . Japan also faces an ongoing dispute with North Korea over the latter 's abduction of Japanese citizens and its nuclear weapons and missile program (see also Six @-@ party talks) .

Japan maintains one of the largest military budgets of any country in the world . Japan contributed non @-@ combatant troops to the Iraq War but subsequently withdrew its forces . The Japan Maritime Self @-@ Defense Force (JMSDF) is a regular participant in RIMPAC maritime exercises .

Japan 's military (the Japan Self @-@ Defense Forces) is restricted by Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution , which renounces Japan 's right to declare war or use military force in international disputes . Accordingly , Japan 's Self @-@ Defence force is a usual military that has never fired shots outside Japan . It is governed by the Ministry of Defense , and primarily consists of the Japan Ground Self @-@ Defense Force (JGSDF) , the Japan Maritime Self @-@ Defense Force (JMSDF) and the Japan Air Self @-@ Defense Force (JASDF) . The forces have been recently used in peacekeeping operations ; the deployment of troops to Iraq marked the first overseas use of Japan 's military since World War II . Japan Business Federation has called on the government to lift the ban on arms exports so that Japan can join multinational projects such as the Joint Strike Fighter .

In May 2014 Prime Minister Shinz? Abe said Japan wanted to shed the passiveness it has maintained since the end of World War II and take more responsibility for regional security . He said Japan wanted to play a key role and offered neighboring countries Japan 's support .

= = Administrative divisions = =

Japan consists of forty @-@ seven prefectures , each overseen by an elected governor , legislature and administrative bureaucracy . Each prefecture is further divided into cities , towns and villages . The nation is currently undergoing administrative reorganization by merging many of the cities , towns and villages with each other . This process will reduce the number of sub @-@ prefecture administrative regions and is expected to cut administrative costs .

= = Geography = =

Japan has a total of 6 @, @ 852 islands extending along the Pacific coast of East Asia . The country , including all of the islands it controls , lies between latitudes 24 ° and 46 ° N , and longitudes 122 ° and 146 ° E. The main islands , from north to south , are Hokkaido , Honshu , Shikoku and Kyushu . The Ryukyu Islands , which include Okinawa , are a chain to the south of Kyushu . Together they are often known as the Japanese archipelago .

About 73 percent of Japan is forested , mountainous , and unsuitable for agricultural , industrial , or residential use . As a result , the habitable zones , mainly located in coastal areas , have extremely

high population densities . Japan is one of the most densely populated countries in the world .

The islands of Japan are located in a volcanic zone on the Pacific Ring of Fire . They are primarily the result of large oceanic movements occurring over hundreds of millions of years from the mid Silurian to the Pleistocene as a result of the subduction of the Philippine Sea Plate beneath the continental Amurian Plate and Okinawa Plate to the south , and subduction of the Pacific Plate under the Okhotsk Plate to the north . Japan was originally attached to the eastern coast of the Eurasian continent . The subducting plates pulled Japan eastward , opening the Sea of Japan around 15 million years ago .

Japan has 108 active volcanoes . During the twentieth century several new volcanoes emerged , including Sh?wa @-@ shinzan on Hokkaido and My?jin @-@ sh? off the Bayonnaise Rocks in the Pacific . Destructive earthquakes , often resulting in tsunami , occur several times each century . The 1923 Tokyo earthquake killed over 140 @,@ 000 people . More recent major quakes are the 1995 Great Hanshin earthquake and the 2011 T?hoku earthquake , a 9 @.@ 0 @-@ magnitude quake which hit Japan on March 11 , 2011 , and triggered a large tsunami . Japan is substantially prone to earthquakes , tsunami and volcanoes due to its location along the Pacific Ring of Fire and has the highest natural disaster risk in the developed world .

= = = Climate = = =

The climate of Japan is predominantly temperate , but varies greatly from north to south . Japan 's geographical features divide it into six principal climatic zones : Hokkaido , Sea of Japan , Central Highland , Seto Inland Sea , Pacific Ocean , and Ryukyu Islands . The northernmost zone , Hokkaido , has a humid continental climate with long , cold winters and very warm to cool summers . Precipitation is not heavy , but the islands usually develop deep snowbanks in the winter .

In the Sea of Japan zone on Honshu 's west coast , northwest winter winds bring heavy snowfall . In the summer , the region is cooler than the Pacific area , though it sometimes experiences extremely hot temperatures because of the foehn wind . The Central Highland has a typical inland humid continental climate , with large temperature differences between summer and winter , and between day and night ; precipitation is light , though winters are usually snowy . The mountains of the Ch?goku and Shikoku regions shelter the Seto Inland Sea from seasonal winds , bringing mild weather year @-@ round .

The Pacific coast features a humid subtropical climate that experiences milder winters with occasional snowfall and hot , humid summers because of the southeast seasonal wind . The Ryukyu Islands have a subtropical climate , with warm winters and hot summers . Precipitation is very heavy , especially during the rainy season .

The average winter temperature in Japan is 5 @.@ 1 ° C (41 @.@ 2 ° F) and the average summer temperature is 25 @.@ 2 ° C (77 @.@ 4 ° F) . The highest temperature ever measured in Japan 40 @.@ 9 ° C (105 @.@ 6 ° F) was recorded on August 16 , 2007 . The main rainy season begins in early May in Okinawa , and the rain front gradually moves north until reaching Hokkaido in late July . In most of Honshu , the rainy season begins before the middle of June and lasts about six weeks . In late summer and early autumn , typhoons often bring heavy rain .

= = = Biodiversity = = =

Japan has nine forest ecoregions which reflect the climate and geography of the islands . They range from subtropical moist broadleaf forests in the Ry?ky? and Bonin Islands , to temperate broadleaf and mixed forests in the mild climate regions of the main islands , to temperate coniferous forests in the cold , winter portions of the northern islands . Japan has over 90 @,@ 000 species of wildlife , including the brown bear , the Japanese macaque , the Japanese raccoon dog , the Large Japanese Field Mouse , and the Japanese giant salamander . A large network of national parks has been established to protect important areas of flora and fauna as well as thirty @-@ seven Ramsar wetland sites . Four sites have been inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List for their outstanding natural value .

== Environment ==

In the period of rapid economic growth after World War II , environmental policies were downplayed by the government and industrial corporations ; as a result , environmental pollution was widespread in the 1950s and 1960s . Responding to rising concern about the problem , the government introduced several environmental protection laws in 1970 . The oil crisis in 1973 also encouraged the efficient use of energy because of Japan 's lack of natural resources . Current environmental issues include urban air pollution (NO_x , suspended particulate matter , and toxics) , waste management , water eutrophication , nature conservation , climate change , chemical management and international co -operation for conservation .

As of June 2015 , more than 40 coal -fired power plants are planned or under construction in Japan . The NGO Climate Action Network announced Japan as the winner of its " Fossil of the Day " award for " doing the most to block progress on climate action . "

Japan ranks 39th in the 2016 Environmental Performance Index , which measures a nation 's commitment to environmental sustainability . As a signatory of the Kyoto Protocol , and host of the 1997 conference that created it , Japan is under treaty obligation to reduce its carbon dioxide emissions and to take other steps to curb climate change .

== Economy ==

== Economic history ==

Modern Japan 's economic growth began in the Edo period . Some of the surviving elements of the Edo period are roads and water transportation routes , as well as financial instruments such as futures contracts , banking and insurance of the Osaka rice brokers . During the Meiji period from 1868 , Japan expanded economically with the embrace of the market economy . Many of today 's enterprises were founded at the time , and Japan emerged as the most developed nation in Asia . The period of overall real economic growth from the 1960s to the 1980s has been called the Japanese post -war economic miracle : it averaged 7 .5 percent in the 1960s and 1970s , and 3 .2 percent in the 1980s and early 1990s .

Growth slowed in the 1990s during the " Lost Decade " due to after -effects of the Japanese asset price bubble and government policies intended to wring speculative excesses from the stock and real estate markets . Efforts to revive economic growth were unsuccessful and further hampered by the global slowdown in 2000 . The economy recovered after 2005 ; GDP growth for that year was 2 .8 percent , surpassing the growth rates of the US and European Union during the same period .

As of 2012 , Japan is the third largest national economy in the world , after the United States and China , in terms of nominal GDP , and the fourth largest national economy in the world , after the United States , China and India , in terms of purchasing power parity . As of 2014 , Japan 's public debt was estimated at more than 200 percent of its annual gross domestic product , the largest of any nation in the world . In August 2011 , Moody 's rating has cut Japan 's long -term sovereign debt rating one notch from Aa3 to Aa2 inline with the size of the country 's deficit and borrowing level . The large budget deficits and government debt since the 2009 global recession and followed by the earthquake and tsunami in March 2011 caused the rating downgrade . The service sector accounts for three quarters of the gross domestic product .

== Exports ==

Japan has a large industrial capacity , and is home to some of the largest and most technologically advanced producers of motor vehicles , electronics , machine tools , steel and nonferrous metals , ships , chemical substances , textiles , and processed foods . Agricultural businesses in Japan

cultivate 13 percent of Japan 's land , and Japan accounts for nearly 15 percent of the global fish catch , second only to China . As of 2010 , Japan 's labor force consisted of some 65 @. @ 9 million workers . Japan has a low unemployment rate of around four percent . Some 20 million people , around 17 per cent of the population , were below the poverty line in 2007 . Housing in Japan is characterized by limited land supply in urban areas .

Japan 's exports amounted to US \$ 4 @, @ 210 per capita in 2005 . As of 2012 , Japan 's main export markets were China (18 @. @ 1 percent) , the United States (17 @. @ 8 percent) , South Korea (7 @. @ 7 percent) , Thailand (5 @. @ 5 percent) and Hong Kong (5 @. @ 1 percent) . Its main exports are transportation equipment , motor vehicles , iron and steel products , semiconductors and auto parts . Japan 's main import markets as of 2012 were China (21 @. @ 3 percent) , the US (8 @. @ 8 percent) , Australia (6 @. @ 4 percent) , Saudi Arabia (6 @. @ 2 percent) , United Arab Emirates (5 @. @ 0 percent) , South Korea (4 @. @ 6 percent) and Qatar (4 @. @ 0 percent) .

= = = Imports = = =

Japan 's main imports are machinery and equipment , fossil fuels , foodstuffs (in particular beef) , chemicals , textiles and raw materials for its industries . By market share measures , domestic markets are the least open of any OECD country . Junichir? Koizumi 's administration began some pro @- @ competition reforms , and foreign investment in Japan has soared .

Japan ranks 27th of 189 countries in the 2014 Ease of doing business index and has one of the smallest tax revenues of the developed world . The Japanese variant of capitalism has many distinct features : keiretsu enterprises are influential , and lifetime employment and seniority @- @ based career advancement are relatively common in the Japanese work environment . Japanese companies are known for management methods like " The Toyota Way " , and shareholder activism is rare .

Some of the largest enterprises in Japan include Toyota , Nintendo , NTT DoCoMo , Canon , Honda , Takeda Pharmaceutical , Sony , Panasonic , Toshiba , Sharp , Nippon Steel , Nippon Oil , and Seven & I Holdings Co .. It has some of the world 's largest banks , and the Tokyo Stock Exchange (known for its Nikkei 225 and TOPIX indices) stands as the second largest in the world by market capitalization . As of 2006 , Japan was home to 326 companies from the Forbes Global 2000 or 16 @. @ 3 percent . In 2013 , it was announced that Japan would be importing shale natural gas .

= = = Science and technology = = =

Japan is a leading nation in scientific research , particularly technology , machinery and biomedical research . Nearly 700 @, @ 000 researchers share a US \$ 130 billion research and development budget , the third largest in the world . Japan is a world leader in fundamental scientific research , having produced twenty @- @ one Nobel laureates in either physics , chemistry or medicine , and three Fields medalists . Some of Japan 's more prominent technological contributions are in the fields of electronics , automobiles , machinery , earthquake engineering , industrial robotics , optics , chemicals , semiconductors and metals . Japan leads the world in robotics production and use , possessing more than 20 % (300 @, @ 000 of 1 @. @ 3 million) of the world 's industrial robots as of 2013 ? though its share was historically even higher , representing one @- @ half of all industrial robots worldwide in 2000 .

The Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) is Japan 's space agency ; it conducts space , planetary , and aviation research , and leads development of rockets and satellites . It is a participant in the International Space Station : the Japanese Experiment Module (Kibo) was added to the station during Space Shuttle assembly flights in 2008 . Japan 's plans in space exploration include : launching a space probe to Venus , Akatsuki ; developing the Mercury Magnetospheric Orbiter to be launched in 2016 ; and building a moon base by 2030 .

On September 14 , 2007 , it launched lunar explorer " SELENE " (Selenological and Engineering Explorer) on an H @- @ IIA (Model H2A2022) carrier rocket from Tanegashima Space Center .

SELENE is also known as Kaguya , after the lunar princess of The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter . Kaguya is the largest lunar mission since the Apollo program . Its purpose is to gather data on the moon 's origin and evolution . It entered a lunar orbit on October 4 , flying at an altitude of about 100 km (62 mi) . The probe 's mission was ended when it was deliberately crashed by JAXA into the Moon on June 11 , 2009 .

== Energy ==

As of 2011 , 46 % of energy in Japan was produced from petroleum , 21 % from coal , 21 % from natural gas , 4 % from nuclear power , and 3 % from hydropower . Nuclear power produced 9 percent of Japan 's electricity , as of 2011 , down from 24 percent the previous year . However , by May 2012 all of the country 's nuclear power plants had been taken offline because of ongoing public opposition following the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster in March 2011 , though government officials continued to try to sway public opinion in favor of returning at least some of Japan 's 50 nuclear reactors to service . As of November 2014 , two reactors at Sendai are likely to restart in early 2015 . Japan lacks significant domestic reserves and so has a heavy dependence on imported energy . Japan has therefore aimed to diversify its sources and maintain high levels of energy efficiency .

== Transport ==

Japan 's road spending has been extensive . Its 1.2 million kilometers of paved road are the main means of transportation . A single network of high speed , divided , limited access toll roads connects major cities and is operated by toll collecting enterprises . New and used cars are inexpensive ; car ownership fees and fuel levies are used to promote energy efficiency . However , at just 50 percent of all distance traveled , car usage is the lowest of all G8 countries .

Since privatisation in 1987 , dozens of Japanese railway companies compete in regional and local passenger transportation markets ; major companies include seven JR enterprises , Kintetsu Corporation , Seibu Railway and Keio Corporation . Some 250 high speed Shinkansen trains connect major cities and Japanese trains are known for their safety and punctuality . Proposals for a new Maglev route between Tokyo and Osaka are at an advanced stage .

There are 175 airports in Japan ; the largest domestic airport , Haneda Airport , is Asia 's second busiest airport . The largest international gateways are Narita International Airport , Kansai International Airport and Chubu Centrair International Airport . Nagoya Port is the country 's largest and busiest port , accounting for 10 percent of Japan 's trade value .

== Demographics ==

Japan 's population is estimated at around 127 million , with 80 % of the population living on Honshu . Japanese society is one of the most ethnically , linguistically and culturally homogeneous societies in the world , composed of 98.5 % ethnic Japanese , with small populations of foreign workers . Zainichi Koreans , Chinese , Filipinos , Brazilians mostly of Japanese descent , Peruvians mostly of Japanese descent and Americans are among the small minority groups in Japan . In 2003 , there were about 134,700 non Latin American Western (not including more than 33,000 American military personnel and their dependents stationed throughout the country) and 345,500 Latin American expatriates , 274,700 of whom were Brazilians (said to be primarily Japanese descendants , or nikkeijin , along with their spouses) , the largest community of Westerners .

The most dominant native ethnic group is the Yamato people ; primary minority groups include the indigenous Ainu and Ryukyuan peoples , as well as social minority groups like the burakumin . There are persons of mixed ancestry incorporated among the Yamato , such as those from Ogasawara Archipelago . In 2014 , foreign born non naturalized workers made up only 1.5 % of the total population . Japan is widely regarded as ethnically homogeneous , and does

not compile ethnicity or race statistics for Japanese nationals ; however , at least one analysis describes Japan as a multiethnic society . Most Japanese continue to see Japan as a monocultural society . Former Japanese Prime Minister and current Finance Minister Tarō Asō described Japan as being a nation of " one race , one civilization , one language and one culture " , which drew criticism from representatives of ethnic minorities such as the Ainu . Unofficial analysis put the number of mixed race Japanese citizens to be around 0 . 5 % of the population .

Japan has the second longest overall life expectancy at birth of any country in the world : 83 . 5 years for persons born in the period 2010 ? 2015 . The Japanese population is rapidly aging as a result of a post ? World War II baby boom followed by a decrease in birth rates . In 2012 , about 24 . 1 percent of the population was over 65 , and the proportion is projected to rise to almost 40 percent by 2050 .

The changes in demographic structure have created a number of social issues , particularly a potential decline in workforce population and increase in the cost of social security benefits like the public pension plan . A growing number of younger Japanese are not marrying or remain childless . In 2011 , Japan 's population dropped for a fifth year , falling by 204 , 000 people to 126 . 24 million people . This was the greatest decline since at least 1947 , when comparable figures were first compiled . This decline was made worse by the March 11 earthquake and tsunami , which killed nearly 16 , 000 people with approximately another 2 , 600 still listed as missing as of 2014 .

Japan 's population is expected to drop to 95 million by 2050 ; demographers and government planners are currently in a heated debate over how to cope with this problem . Immigration and birth incentives are sometimes suggested as a solution to provide younger workers to support the nation 's aging population . Japan accepts a steady flow of 15 , 000 new Japanese citizens by naturalization (??) per year . According to the UNHCR , in 2012 Japan accepted just 18 refugees for resettlement , while the US took in 76 , 000 .

Japan suffers from a high suicide rate . In 2009 , the number of suicides exceeded 30 , 000 for the twelfth straight year . Suicide is the leading cause of death for people under 30 .

== Religion ==

Japan has full religious freedom based on Article 20 of its Constitution . Upper estimates suggest that 84 ? 96 percent of the Japanese population subscribe to Buddhism or Shinto , including a large number of followers of a syncretism of both religions . However , these estimates are based on people affiliated with a temple , rather than the number of true believers . Other studies have suggested that only 30 percent of the population identify themselves as belonging to a religion . According to Edwin Reischauer and Marius Jansen , some 70 ? 80 % of the Japanese do not consider themselves believers in any religion .

Nevertheless , the level of participation remains high , especially during festivals and occasions such as the first shrine visit of the New Year . Taoism and Confucianism from China have also influenced Japanese beliefs and customs . Japanese streets are decorated on Tanabata , Obon and Christmas . Fewer than one percent of Japanese are Christian . Other minority religions include Islam , Hinduism , Sikhism , and Judaism , and since the mid - 19th century numerous new religious movements have emerged in Japan .

== Languages ==

More than 99 percent of the population speaks Japanese as their first language . Japanese is an agglutinative language distinguished by a system of honorifics reflecting the hierarchical nature of Japanese society , with verb forms and particular vocabulary indicating the relative status of speaker and listener . Japanese writing uses kanji (Chinese characters) and two sets of kana (syllabaries based on cursive script and radical of kanji) , as well as the Latin alphabet and Arabic numerals .

Besides Japanese , the Ryukyuan languages (Amami , Kunigami , Okinawan , Miyako , Yaeyama , Yonaguni) , also part of the Japonic language family , are spoken in the Ryukyu Islands chain . Few

children learn these languages , but in recent years the local governments have sought to increase awareness of the traditional languages . The Okinawan Japanese dialect is also spoken in the region . The Ainu language , which has no proven relationship to Japanese or any other language , is moribund , with only a few elderly native speakers remaining in Hokkaido . Public and private schools generally require students to take Japanese language classes as well as English language courses .

=== Education ===

Primary schools , secondary schools and universities were introduced in 1872 as a result of the Meiji Restoration . Since 1947 , compulsory education in Japan comprises elementary and middle school , which together last for nine years (from age 6 to age 15) . Almost all children continue their education at a three @-@ year senior high school , and , according to the MEXT , as of 2005 about 75 @.@ 9 percent of high school graduates attended a university , junior college , trade school , or other higher education institution .

The two top @-@ ranking universities in Japan are the University of Tokyo and Kyoto University . The Programme for International Student Assessment coordinated by the OECD currently ranks the overall knowledge and skills of Japanese 15 @-@ year @-@ olds as sixth best in the world .

=== Health ===

In Japan , health care is provided by national and local governments . Payment for personal medical services is offered through a universal health insurance system that provides relative equality of access , with fees set by a government committee . People without insurance through employers can participate in a national health insurance program administered by local governments . Since 1973 , all elderly persons have been covered by government @-@ sponsored insurance . Patients are free to select the physicians or facilities of their choice .

=== Culture ===

Japanese culture has evolved greatly from its origins . Contemporary culture combines influences from Asia , Europe and North America . Traditional Japanese arts include crafts such as ceramics , textiles , lacquerware , swords and dolls ; performances of bunraku , kabuki , noh , dance , and rakugo ; and other practices , the tea ceremony , ikebana , martial arts , calligraphy , origami , onsen , Geisha and games . Japan has a developed system for the protection and promotion of both tangible and intangible Cultural Properties and National Treasures . Nineteen sites have been inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List , fifteen of which are of cultural significance .

=== Art ===

The Shrines of Ise have been celebrated as the prototype of Japanese architecture . Largely of wood , traditional housing and many temple buildings see the use of tatami mats and sliding doors that break down the distinction between rooms and indoor and outdoor space . Japanese sculpture , largely of wood , and Japanese painting are among the oldest of the Japanese arts , with early figurative paintings dating back to at least 300 BC . The history of Japanese painting exhibits synthesis and competition between native Japanese aesthetics and adaptation of imported ideas .

The interaction between Japanese and European art has been significant : for example ukiyo @-@ e prints , which began to be exported in the 19th century in the movement known as Japonism , had a significant influence on the development of modern art in the West , most notably on post @-@ Impressionism . Famous ukiyo @-@ e artists include Hokusai and Hiroshige . Hokusai coined the term manga . Japanese comics now known as manga developed in the 20th century and have become popular worldwide . Japanese animation is called anime . Japanese @-@ made video game consoles have been popular since the 1980s .

== Music ==

Japanese music is eclectic and diverse . Many instruments , such as the koto , were introduced in the 9th and 10th centuries . The accompanied recitative of the Noh drama dates from the 14th century and the popular folk music , with the guitar @-@ like shamisen , from the sixteenth . Western classical music , introduced in the late 19th century , now forms an integral part of Japanese culture . The imperial court ensemble Gagaku has influenced the work of some modern Western composers .

Notable classical composers from Japan include Toru Takemitsu and Rentar? Taki . Popular music in post @-@ war Japan has been heavily influenced by American and European trends , which has led to the evolution of J @-@ pop , or Japanese popular music . Karaoke is the most widely practiced cultural activity in Japan . A 1993 survey by the Cultural Affairs Agency found that more Japanese had sung karaoke that year than had participated in traditional pursuits such as flower arranging (ikebana) or tea ceremonies .

== Literature ==

The earliest works of Japanese literature include the Kojiki and Nihon Shoki chronicles and the Man'y?sh? poetry anthology , all from the 8th century and written in Chinese characters . In the early Heian period , the system of phonograms known as kana (Hiragana and Katakana) was developed . The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter is considered the oldest Japanese narrative . An account of Heian court life is given in The Pillow Book by Sei Sh?nagon , while The Tale of Genji by Murasaki Shikibu is often described as the world 's first novel .

During the Edo period , the ch?nin (" townspeople ") overtook the samurai aristocracy as producers and consumers of literature . The popularity of the works of Saikaku , for example , reveals this change in readership and authorship , while Bash? revived the poetic tradition of the Kokinsh? with his haikai (haiku) and wrote the poetic travelogue Oku no Hosomichi . The Meiji era saw the decline of traditional literary forms as Japanese literature integrated Western influences . Natsume S?seki and Mori ?gai were the first " modern " novelists of Japan , followed by Ry?nosuke Akutagawa , Jun 'ichir? Tanizaki , Yukio Mishima and , more recently , Haruki Murakami . Japan has two Nobel Prize @-@ winning authors ? Yasunari Kawabata (1968) and Kenzabur? ?e (1994) .

== Cuisine ==

Japanese cuisine is based on combining staple foods , typically Japanese rice or noodles , with a soup and okazu ? dishes made from fish , vegetable , tofu and the like ? to add flavor to the staple food . In the early modern era ingredients such as red meats that had previously not been widely used in Japan were introduced . Japanese cuisine is known for its emphasis on seasonality of food , quality of ingredients and presentation . Japanese cuisine offers a vast array of regional specialties that use traditional recipes and local ingredients . The Michelin Guide has awarded restaurants in Japan more Michelin stars than the rest of the world combined .

== Sports ==

Traditionally , sumo is considered Japan 's national sport . Japanese martial arts such as judo , karate and kendo are also widely practiced and enjoyed by spectators in the country . After the Meiji Restoration , many Western sports were introduced in Japan and began to spread through the education system . Japan hosted the Summer Olympics in Tokyo in 1964 . Japan has hosted the Winter Olympics twice : Sapporo in 1972 and Nagano in 1998 . Tokyo will host the 2020 Summer Olympics , making Tokyo the first Asian city to host the Olympics twice . Japan is the most successful Asian Rugby Union country , winning the Asian Five Nations a record 6 times and winning the newly formed IRB Pacific Nations Cup in 2011 . Japan will host the 2019 IRB Rugby

World Cup .

Baseball is currently the most popular spectator sport in the country . Japan 's top professional league , now known as Nippon Professional Baseball , was established in 1936 . Since the establishment of the Japan Professional Football League in 1992 , association football has also gained a wide following . Japan was a venue of the Intercontinental Cup from 1981 to 2004 and co - @ hosted the 2002 FIFA World Cup with South Korea . Japan has one of the most successful football teams in Asia , winning the Asian Cup four times . Also , Japan recently won the FIFA Women 's World Cup in 2011 . Golf is also popular in Japan , as are forms of auto racing like the Super GT series and Formula Nippon . The country has produced one NBA player , Yuta Tabuse .