[Template:Redirect](/wiki/Template:Redirect" \o "Template:Redirect) [Template:Use British English](/wiki/Template:Use_British_English) [Template:Use mdy dates](/wiki/Template:Use_mdy_dates) [Template:Coord](/wiki/Template:Coord) [Template:Infobox country](/wiki/Template:Infobox_country) [Template:Contains Japanese text](/wiki/Template:Contains_Japanese_text) **Japan** ([Template:Lang-ja](/wiki/Template:Lang-ja) *Nippon* [Template:IPA-ja](/wiki/Template:IPA-ja) or *Nihon* [Template:IPA-ja](/wiki/Template:IPA-ja); formally [Template:Nihongo2](/wiki/Template:Nihongo2) [*Template:Audio*](/wiki/Template:Audio) or *Nihon-koku*, "State of Japan") is an [island country](/wiki/Island_country) in [East Asia](/wiki/East_Asia). Located in the [Pacific Ocean](/wiki/Pacific_Ocean), it lies to the east of the [Sea of Japan](/wiki/Sea_of_Japan), the [East China Sea](/wiki/East_China_Sea), [China](/wiki/China), [Korea](/wiki/Korea) and [Russia](/wiki/Russia), stretching from the [Sea of Okhotsk](/wiki/Sea_of_Okhotsk) in the north to the East China Sea and [Taiwan](/wiki/Taiwan) in the south. The [kanji](/wiki/Kanji) that make up [Japan's name](/wiki/Names_of_Japan) mean "sun origin", and it is often called the "Land of the Rising Sun".

Japan is a [stratovolcanic](/wiki/Stratovolcano) [archipelago](/wiki/Archipelago) of [6,852 islands](/wiki/List_of_islands_of_Japan). The four largest are [Honshu](/wiki/Honshu), [Hokkaido](/wiki/Hokkaido), [Kyushu](/wiki/Kyushu) and [Shikoku](/wiki/Shikoku), which make up about ninety-seven percent of Japan's land area. The country is divided into 47 [prefectures](/wiki/Prefectures_of_Japan) in eight [regions](/wiki/List_of_regions_of_Japan). The population of 126 million is the [world's tenth largest](/wiki/List_of_countries_by_population). [Japanese people](/wiki/Japanese_people) make up 98.5% of Japan's total population. Approximately 9.1 million people live in the core city of [Tokyo](/wiki/Tokyo),[[1]](#cite_note-1) the [capital city of Japan](/wiki/Capital_of_Japan), which is the [sixth largest city proper](/wiki/List_of_cities_proper_by_population) in the [OECD](/wiki/Organisation_for_Economic_Co-operation_and_Development) and the fourth leading [global city](/wiki/Global_city) in the world.[[2]](#cite_note-2) The [Greater Tokyo Area](/wiki/Greater_Tokyo_Area), which includes Tokyo and several surrounding [prefectures](/wiki/Prefectures_of_Japan), is the [world's largest metropolitan area](/wiki/World's_largest_cities) with over 35 million residents and the [world's largest urban agglomeration economy](/wiki/List_of_cities_by_GDP).

Archaeological research indicates that Japan was inhabited as early as the [Upper Paleolithic](/wiki/Upper_Paleolithic) period. The first written mention of Japan is in [Chinese history](/wiki/History_of_China) texts from the 1st century CE. Influence from other regions, mainly [Imperial China](/wiki/Imperial_China), followed by periods of isolationism, later from Western Europe, has characterized [Japan's history](/wiki/History_of_Japan). From the 12th century until 1868, Japan was ruled by successive feudal military [shoguns](/wiki/Shogun) who ruled in the name of the [Emperor](/wiki/Emperor_of_Japan). 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](/wiki/Bakumatsu) to open to the West. Nearly two decades of internal conflict and insurrection followed before the [Meiji Emperor](/wiki/Emperor_Meiji) was restored as head of state in 1868 and the [Empire of Japan](/wiki/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](/wiki/First_Sino-Japanese_War), the [Russo-Japanese War](/wiki/Russo-Japanese_War) and [World War I](/wiki/World_War_I) allowed Japan to expand its empire during a period of increasing militarism. The [Second Sino-Japanese War](/wiki/Second_Sino-Japanese_War) of 1937 expanded into part of [World War II](/wiki/World_War_II) in 1941, which came to an [end in 1945](/wiki/End_of_World_War_II_in_Asia) following the [atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki](/wiki/Atomic_bombings_of_Hiroshima_and_Nagasaki). Since adopting its revised [constitution](/wiki/Constitution_of_Japan) in 1947, Japan has maintained a unitary [constitutional monarchy](/wiki/Constitutional_monarchy) with an [Emperor](/wiki/Emperor_of_Japan) and an elected legislature called the [National Diet](/wiki/National_Diet).

Japan is a member of the [UN](/wiki/United_Nations), the [G7](/wiki/Group_of_Seven_(G7)), the [G8](/wiki/Group_of_Eight_(G8)), and the [G20](/wiki/G-20_major_economies) and is considered a [great power](/wiki/Great_power).[[3]](#cite_note-3)[[4]](#cite_note-4)[[5]](#cite_note-5) The country has the world's third-largest [economy by nominal GDP](/wiki/List_of_countries_by_GDP_(nominal)) and the world's fourth-largest [economy by purchasing power parity](/wiki/List_of_countries_by_GDP_(PPP)). It is also the world's [fourth-largest exporter](/wiki/List_of_countries_by_exports) and [fourth-largest importer](/wiki/List_of_countries_by_imports). Although Japan has officially [renounced its right to declare war](/wiki/Article_9_of_the_Japanese_Constitution), it maintains a [modern military](/wiki/Japan_Self-Defense_Forces) with the world's [eighth largest military budget](/wiki/List_of_countries_by_military_expenditures),[[6]](#cite_note-6) used for [self-defense](/wiki/Self-defense) and [peacekeeping](/wiki/Peacekeeping) roles. Japan is a [developed country](/wiki/Developed_country) with a high standard of living and [Human Development Index](/wiki/Human_Development_Index) whose population enjoys the [highest life expectancy](/wiki/List_of_countries_by_life_expectancy), the third lowest [infant mortality](/wiki/Infant_mortality) in the world,[[7]](#cite_note-7)[[8]](#cite_note-8)[[9]](#cite_note-9) and ranked first in the number of Nobel laureates of any country in Asia.[[10]](#cite_note-10) Japan is ranked first in the Country Brand Index,[[11]](#cite_note-11) ranked sixth in the Global Competitiveness Report 2015–2016[[12]](#cite_note-12)[[13]](#cite_note-13) and is the highest-ranked Asian country in the [Global Peace Index](/wiki/Global_Peace_Index).[[14]](#cite_note-14) Japan was the first country in Asia to host both the [Summer](/wiki/1964_Summer_Olympics) and [Winter](/wiki/1972_Winter_Olympics) [Olympic Games](/wiki/Olympic_Games).

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## Etymology[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=1)]

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The English word *Japan* possibly derives from the early [Mandarin Chinese](/wiki/Mandarin_Chinese) or [Wu Chinese](/wiki/Wu_Chinese) pronunciation of the Japanese name, [Template:Nihongo2](/wiki/Template:Nihongo2), which in Japanese is pronounced *Nippon* [Template:Audio](/wiki/Template:Audio) or *Nihon* [Template:Audio](/wiki/Template:Audio). [Japanese people](/wiki/Japanese_people) refer to themselves as [Template:Nihongo](/wiki/Template:Nihongo) and to their language as [Template:Nihongo](/wiki/Template:Nihongo).

From the [Meiji Restoration](/wiki/Meiji_Restoration) until the end of [World War II](/wiki/World_War_II), the full title of Japan was [Template:Nihongo](/wiki/Template:Nihongo), meaning "the [Empire of Great Japan](/wiki/Empire_of_Japan)". Today the name [Template:Nihongo](/wiki/Template:Nihongo) 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 [Template:Nihongo](/wiki/Template:Nihongo), meaning "country", "nation" or "state".

The character [Template:Nihongo](/wiki/Template:Nihongo) means "sun" or "day"; [Template:Nihongo](/wiki/Template:Nihongo) 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 [Template:Nihongo](/wiki/Template:Nihongo) or [Template:Nihongo](/wiki/Template:Nihongo).[[15]](#cite_note-15) The English word for Japan came to the West via [early trade routes](/wiki/Nanban_trade). The [Old Mandarin](/wiki/Old_Mandarin) or possibly early Wu Chinese (吳語) pronunciation of Japan was recorded by [Marco Polo](/wiki/Marco_Polo) as *Cipangu*. In modern [Shanghainese](/wiki/Shanghainese), a Wu dialect, the pronunciation of characters [Template:Nihongo2](/wiki/Template:Nihongo2) Japan is *Zeppen* [Template:IPA-wuu](/wiki/Template:IPA-wuu). The old [Malay](/wiki/Malay_language) word for Japan, *Jepang*, was borrowed from a southern coastal Chinese dialect, probably [Fukienese](/wiki/Hokkien) or [Ningpo](/wiki/Ningbo_dialect),[[16]](#cite_note-16) and this Malay word was encountered by [Portuguese](/wiki/Portuguese_Empire) traders in [Malacca](/wiki/Portuguese_Malacca) in the 16th century. [Portuguese](/wiki/Portugal) traders were the first to bring the word to [Europe](/wiki/Europe).[[17]](#cite_note-17) An early record of the word in English is in a 1565 letter, spelled *Giapan*.[[18]](#cite_note-18)

## History[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=2)]

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### Prehistory and ancient history[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=3)]

[thumb|The](/wiki/File:Horyu-ji11s3200.jpg) [Golden Hall](/wiki/Main_Hall_(Japanese_Buddhism)) and [five-storey pagoda](/wiki/Tō) of [Hōryū-ji](/wiki/Hōryū-ji), among the oldest wooden buildings in the world, [National Treasures](/wiki/National_Treasures_of_Japan), and a [UNESCO World Heritage Site](/wiki/List_of_World_Heritage_Sites_in_Japan)

A [Paleolithic](/wiki/Japanese_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 [Jōmon period](/wiki/Jōmon_period)) by a [Mesolithic](/wiki/Mesolithic) to [Neolithic](/wiki/Neolithic) semi-sedentary [hunter-gatherer](/wiki/Hunter-gatherer) culture, who include ancestors of both the contemporary [Ainu people](/wiki/Ainu_people) and [Yamato people](/wiki/Yamato_people),[[19]](#cite_note-19)[[20]](#cite_note-20) characterized by [pit dwelling](/wiki/Pit-house) and rudimentary agriculture.[[21]](#cite_note-21) Decorated clay vessels from this period are some of the oldest surviving examples of pottery in the world. Around 300 BC, the [Yayoi people](/wiki/Yayoi_period#Origin_of_the_Yayoi_people) began to enter the Japanese islands, intermingling with the Jōmon.[[22]](#cite_note-22) The [Yayoi period](/wiki/Yayoi_period), starting around 500 BC, saw the introduction of practices like wet-[rice](/wiki/Rice) farming,[[23]](#cite_note-23) a new style of [pottery](/wiki/Pottery),[[24]](#cite_note-24) and [metallurgy](/wiki/Metallurgy), introduced from China and Korea.[[25]](#cite_note-25) Japan first appears in written history in the Chinese [*Book of Han*](/wiki/Book_of_Han).[[26]](#cite_note-26) According to the [*Records of the Three Kingdoms*](/wiki/Records_of_the_Three_Kingdoms), the most powerful kingdom on the archipelago during the 3rd century was called [Yamataikoku](/wiki/Yamatai). Buddhism was first introduced to Japan from [Baekje](/wiki/Baekje), [Korea](/wiki/Korea) and was promoted by [Prince Shōtoku](/wiki/Prince_Shōtoku), but the subsequent development of [Japanese Buddhism](/wiki/Buddhism_in_Japan) was primarily influenced by China.[[27]](#cite_note-27) Despite early resistance, Buddhism was promoted by the ruling class and gained widespread acceptance beginning in the [Asuka period](/wiki/Asuka_period) (592–710).[[28]](#cite_note-28) The [Nara period](/wiki/Nara_period) (710–784) of the 8th century marked an emergence of the centralized Japanese state centered on the Imperial Court in [Heijō-kyō](/wiki/Heijō_Palace) (modern [Nara](/wiki/Nara,_Nara)). The [Nara period](/wiki/Nara_period) is characterized by the appearance of a nascent [literature](/wiki/Japanese_literature) as well as the development of Buddhist-inspired art and [architecture](/wiki/Historic_Monuments_of_Ancient_Nara).[[29]](#cite_note-29) The [smallpox](/wiki/Smallpox) epidemic of 735–737 is believed to have killed as much as one-third of Japan's population.[[30]](#cite_note-30) In 784, [Emperor Kanmu](/wiki/Emperor_Kanmu) moved the capital from Nara to [Nagaoka-kyō](/wiki/Nagaoka-kyō) before relocating it to [Heian-kyō](/wiki/Heian-kyō) (modern [Kyoto](/wiki/Kyoto)) in 794.

This marked the beginning of the [Heian period](/wiki/Heian_period) (794–1185), during which a distinctly indigenous Japanese culture emerged, noted for its [art](/wiki/Japanese_art), [poetry](/wiki/Japanese_poetry) and prose. [Murasaki Shikibu's](/wiki/Murasaki_Shikibu) [*The Tale of Genji*](/wiki/The_Tale_of_Genji) and the lyrics of Japan's national anthem [*Kimigayo*](/wiki/Kimigayo) were written during this time.[[31]](#cite_note-31) [Buddhism](/wiki/Buddhism) began to spread during the [Heian era](/wiki/Heian_era) chiefly through two major sects, [Tendai](/wiki/Tendai) by [Saichō](/wiki/Saichō), and [Shingon](/wiki/Shingon) by [Kūkai](/wiki/Kūkai). [Pure Land Buddhism](/wiki/Pure_Land_Buddhism) ([Jōdo-shū](/wiki/Jōdo-shū), [Jōdo Shinshū](/wiki/Jōdo_Shinshū)) became greatly popular in the latter half of the 11th century.

### Feudal era[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=4)]

[thumb|Samurai warriors facing Mongols during the](/wiki/File:Mōko_Shūrai_Ekotoba_2.jpg) [Mongol invasions of Japan](/wiki/Mongol_invasions_of_Japan); [Suenaga](/wiki/Takezaki_Suenaga), 1293

Japan's feudal era was characterized by the emergence and dominance of a ruling class of warriors, the [samurai](/wiki/Samurai). In 1185, following the defeat of the [Taira clan](/wiki/Taira_clan) in the [Genpei War](/wiki/Genpei_War), sung in the epic [Tale of Heike](/wiki/The_Tale_of_the_Heike), samurai [Minamoto no Yoritomo](/wiki/Minamoto_no_Yoritomo) was appointed [shogun](/wiki/Shogun) by [Emperor Go-Toba](/wiki/Emperor_Go-Toba), and he established a base of power in [Kamakura](/wiki/Kamakura,_Kanagawa). After his death, the [Hōjō clan](/wiki/Hōjō_clan) came to power as regents for the shoguns. The [Zen](/wiki/Zen) school of Buddhism was introduced from China in the [Kamakura period](/wiki/Kamakura_period) (1185–1333) and became popular among the samurai class.[[32]](#cite_note-32) The [Kamakura shogunate](/wiki/Kamakura_shogunate) repelled [Mongol invasions](/wiki/Mongol_invasions_of_Japan) in 1274 and 1281, but was eventually [overthrown by Emperor Go-Daigo](/wiki/Kenmu_Restoration). [Emperor Go-Daigo](/wiki/Emperor_Go-Daigo) was himself defeated by [Ashikaga Takauji](/wiki/Ashikaga_Takauji) in 1336.

Ashikaga Takauji established the shogunate in Muromachi, [Kyoto](/wiki/Kyoto,_Kyoto). This was the start of the [Muromachi period](/wiki/Muromachi_period) (1336–1573). The [Ashikaga shogunate](/wiki/Ashikaga_shogunate) achieved glory in the age of [Ashikaga Yoshimitsu](/wiki/Ashikaga_Yoshimitsu), and the culture based on Zen Buddhism (art of [*Miyabi*](/wiki/Miyabi)) prospered. This evolved to [Higashiyama Culture](/wiki/Higashiyama_period), and prospered until the 16th century. On the other hand, the succeeding Ashikaga shogunate failed to control the feudal warlords ([*daimyo*](/wiki/Daimyo)), and a civil war (the [Ōnin War](/wiki/Ōnin_War)) began in 1467, opening the century-long [Sengoku period](/wiki/Sengoku_period) ("Warring States").[[33]](#cite_note-33) During the 16th century, traders and [Jesuit](/wiki/Society_of_Jesus) [missionaries](/wiki/Missionary) from [Portugal](/wiki/Portugal) reached Japan for the first time, initiating direct [commercial](/wiki/Nanban_trade) and [cultural](/wiki/Nanban_art) exchange between Japan and the West. This allowed [Oda Nobunaga](/wiki/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](/wiki/Azuchi–Momoyama_period) (1573–1603). After he was assassinated in 1582, his successor [Toyotomi Hideyoshi](/wiki/Toyotomi_Hideyoshi) unified the nation in 1590 and launched [two unsuccessful invasions of Korea in 1592 and 1597](/wiki/Japanese_invasions_of_Korea_(1592–98)).

[Tokugawa Ieyasu](/wiki/Tokugawa_Ieyasu) served as regent for Hideyoshi's [son](/wiki/Toyotomi_Hideyori) and used his position to gain political and military support. When open war broke out, he defeated rival clans in the [Battle of Sekigahara](/wiki/Battle_of_Sekigahara) in 1600. Tokugawa Ieyasu was appointed shogun by [Emperor Go-Yōzei](/wiki/Emperor_Go-Yōzei) in 1603, and he established the [Tokugawa shogunate](/wiki/Tokugawa_shogunate) in [Edo](/wiki/Edo) (modern [Tokyo](/wiki/Tokyo)).[[34]](#cite_note-34) The Tokugawa shogunate enacted measures including [*buke shohatto*](/wiki/Buke_shohatto), as a code of conduct to control the autonomous daimyo;[[35]](#cite_note-35) and in 1639, the isolationist [*sakoku*](/wiki/Sakoku) ("closed country") policy that spanned the two and a half centuries of tenuous political unity known as the [Edo period](/wiki/Edo_period) (1603–1868).[[36]](#cite_note-36) The study of Western sciences, known as [*rangaku*](/wiki/Rangaku), continued through contact with the Dutch enclave at [Dejima](/wiki/Dejima) in [Nagasaki](/wiki/Nagasaki). The Edo period also gave rise to [*kokugaku*](/wiki/Kokugaku) ("national studies"), the study of Japan by the Japanese.[[37]](#cite_note-37)

### Modern era[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=5)]

[thumb|A scene at the](/wiki/File:Chikamatsu_Kiken_buto_no_ryakuke.jpg) [Rokumeikan](/wiki/Rokumeikan) depicting Japanese people dancing wearing European clothing, a visible part of the westernizing efforts under Emperor Meiji; [Chikanobu](/wiki/Toyohara_Chikanobu), 1888

On March 31, 1854, [Commodore Matthew Perry](/wiki/Matthew_C._Perry) and the "[Black Ships](/wiki/Black_Ships)" of the [United States Navy](/wiki/United_States_Navy) forced the opening of Japan to the outside world with the [Convention of Kanagawa](/wiki/Convention_of_Kanagawa). Subsequent similar treaties with Western countries in the [Bakumatsu](/wiki/Bakumatsu) period brought economic and political crises. The resignation of the shogun led to the [Boshin War](/wiki/Boshin_War) and the establishment of a [centralized state](/wiki/Abolition_of_the_han_system) nominally unified under the Emperor (the [Meiji Restoration](/wiki/Meiji_Restoration)).[[38]](#cite_note-38) Adopting Western political, judicial and military institutions, the [Cabinet](/wiki/Cabinet_of_Japan) organized the [Privy Council](/wiki/Privy_Council_(Japan)), introduced the [Meiji Constitution](/wiki/Meiji_Constitution), and assembled the [Imperial Diet](/wiki/National_Diet). The Meiji Restoration transformed the [Empire of Japan](/wiki/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](/wiki/First_Sino-Japanese_War) (1894–1895) and the [Russo-Japanese War](/wiki/Russo-Japanese_War) (1904–1905), Japan gained control of Taiwan, Korea, and the southern half of [Sakhalin](/wiki/Sakhalin).[[39]](#cite_note-39) Japan's population grew from 35 million in 1873 to 70 million in 1935.[[40]](#cite_note-40) The early 20th century saw a brief period of "[Taishō democracy](/wiki/Taishō_period)" overshadowed by increasing [expansionism](/wiki/Expansionism) and [militarization](/wiki/Japanese_militarism). [World War I](/wiki/World_War_I) enabled Japan, on the side of the victorious [Allies](/wiki/Allies_of_World_War_I), to [widen its influence and territorial holdings](/wiki/Japan_during_World_War_I). It continued its expansionist policy by occupying [Manchuria](/wiki/Manchuria) in 1931; as a result of [international condemnation of this occupation](/wiki/Lytton_Report), Japan resigned from the [League of Nations](/wiki/League_of_Nations) two years later. In 1936, Japan signed the [Anti-Comintern Pact](/wiki/Anti-Comintern_Pact) with [Nazi Germany](/wiki/Nazi_Germany), and the 1940 [Tripartite Pact](/wiki/Tripartite_Pact) made it one of the Axis Powers.[[41]](#cite_note-41) In 1941, Japan negotiated the [Soviet–Japanese Neutrality Pact](/wiki/Soviet–Japanese_Neutrality_Pact),[[42]](#cite_note-42) which lasted until 1945 with the [Soviet invasion of Manchuria](/wiki/Soviet_invasion_of_Manchuria).[[43]](#cite_note-43) [thumb|upright|A mushroom cloud emerging from the](/wiki/File:Nagasakibomb.jpg) [atomic bombing of Nagasaki](/wiki/Atomic_bombings_of_Hiroshima_and_Nagasaki), Aug 9, 1945; this would be the second and last use of nuclear weapons in combat as of today The Empire of Japan invaded other parts of China in 1937, precipitating the [Second Sino-Japanese War](/wiki/Second_Sino-Japanese_War) (1937–1945). The Imperial Japanese Army swiftly captured the capital [Nanjing](/wiki/Nanjing) and conducted the [Nanking Massacre](/wiki/Nanking_Massacre).[[44]](#cite_note-44) In 1940, the Empire then [invaded French Indochina](/wiki/Japanese_invasion_of_French_Indochina), after which the United States placed an oil embargo on Japan.[[45]](#cite_note-45) On December 7–8, 1941, Japanese forces carried out surprise [attacks on Pearl Harbor](/wiki/Attack_on_Pearl_Harbor), attacks on British forces in [Malaya](/wiki/Battle_of_Malaya), [Singapore](/wiki/Bombing_of_Singapore_(1941)), and [Hong Kong](/wiki/Battle_of_Hong_Kong) and [declared war](/wiki/Japanese_declaration_of_war_on_the_United_States_and_the_British_Empire), bringing the US and the UK into [World War II in the Pacific](/wiki/Pacific_War).[[46]](#cite_note-46)[[47]](#cite_note-47) After the [Soviet invasion of Manchuria](/wiki/Soviet_invasion_of_Manchuria) and the [atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki](/wiki/Atomic_bombings_of_Hiroshima_and_Nagasaki) in 1945, Japan agreed to an [unconditional surrender](/wiki/Surrender_of_Japan) on August 15.[[48]](#cite_note-48) The war cost Japan and the rest of the [Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere](/wiki/Greater_East_Asia_Co-Prosperity_Sphere) millions of lives and left much of the nation's industry and infrastructure destroyed. The [Allies](/wiki/Allies_of_World_War_II) (led by the US) repatriated millions of [ethnic Japanese](/wiki/Japanese_diaspora) from colonies and military camps throughout Asia, largely eliminating the Japanese empire and restoring the independence of its conquered territories.[[49]](#cite_note-49) The Allies also convened the [International Military Tribunal for the Far East](/wiki/International_Military_Tribunal_for_the_Far_East) on May 3, 1946 to prosecute some Japanese leaders for [war crimes](/wiki/Japanese_war_crimes). However, the [bacteriological research units](/wiki/Unit_731) and members of the imperial family involved in the war were exonerated from criminal prosecutions by the [Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers](/wiki/Supreme_Commander_for_the_Allied_Powers) despite calls for trials for both groups.[[50]](#cite_note-50) In 1947, Japan adopted a new [constitution](/wiki/Constitution_of_Japan) emphasizing liberal democratic practices. The [Allied occupation](/wiki/Occupation_of_Japan) ended with the [Treaty of San Francisco](/wiki/Treaty_of_San_Francisco) in 1952[[51]](#cite_note-51) and Japan was granted membership in the United Nations in 1956. Japan later achieved [rapid growth](/wiki/Japanese_post-war_economic_miracle) 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](/wiki/Japanese_asset_price_bubble). In the beginning of the 21st century, positive growth has signaled a gradual economic recovery.[[52]](#cite_note-52) On March 11, 2011, Japan suffered the [strongest earthquake in its recorded history](/wiki/2011_Tōhoku_earthquake_and_tsunami); this triggered the [Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster](/wiki/Fukushima_Daiichi_nuclear_disaster), one of the worst disasters in the history of [nuclear power](/wiki/Nuclear_power).[[53]](#cite_note-53)

## Government and politics[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=6)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|](/wiki/File:Emperor_Akihito_and_Empress_Michiko_cropped_Barack_Obama_Emperor_Akihito_and_Empress_Michiko_20140424_2.jpg)[Emperor Akihito](/wiki/Akihito) and [Empress Michiko](/wiki/Empress_Michiko)

Japan is a [constitutional monarchy](/wiki/Constitutional_monarchy) whereby the power of the [Emperor](/wiki/Emperor_of_Japan) is very limited. As a ceremonial figurehead, he is defined by the [constitution](/wiki/Constitution_of_Japan) as "the symbol of the State and of the unity of the people." Power is held chiefly by the [Prime Minister](/wiki/Prime_Minister_of_Japan) and other elected members of the Diet, while sovereignty is vested in the Japanese people.[[54]](#cite_note-54) [Akihito](/wiki/Akihito) is the current Emperor of Japan; [Naruhito, Crown Prince of Japan](/wiki/Naruhito,_Crown_Prince_of_Japan), stands as next in line to the [Chrysanthemum Throne](/wiki/Chrysanthemum_Throne).

Japan's legislative organ is the [National Diet](/wiki/National_Diet), seated in [Chiyoda](/wiki/Chiyoda,_Tokyo), [Tokyo](/wiki/Tokyo). The Diet is a [bicameral](/wiki/Bicameralism) body, consisting of a [House of Representatives](/wiki/House_of_Representatives_(Japan)) with 480 seats, elected by popular vote every four years or when dissolved, and a [House of Councillors](/wiki/House_of_Councillors_(Japan)) of 242 seats, whose popularly elected members serve six-year terms. There is [universal suffrage](/wiki/Universal_suffrage) for adults over 18 years of age,[[55]](#cite_note-55) with a [secret ballot](/wiki/Secret_ballot) for all elected offices.[[54]](#cite_note-54) The Diet is dominated by the social liberal [Democratic Party of Japan](/wiki/Democratic_Party_(Japan)) and the conservative [Liberal Democratic Party](/wiki/Liberal_Democratic_Party_(Japan)) (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](/wiki/Head_of_government) and is [appointed](/wiki/Imperial_Investiture) 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](/wiki/Minister_of_State). Following the LDP's landslide victory in the [2012 general election](/wiki/Japanese_general_election,_2012), [Shinzō Abe](/wiki/Shinzō_Abe) replaced [Yoshihiko Noda](/wiki/Yoshihiko_Noda) as the Prime Minister on December 26, 2012[[56]](#cite_note-56) 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.[[54]](#cite_note-54) Historically influenced by [Chinese law](/wiki/Chinese_law), the [Japanese legal system](/wiki/Law_of_Japan) developed independently during the [Edo period](/wiki/Edo_period) through texts such as [*Kujikata Osadamegaki*](/wiki/Kujikata_Osadamegaki).[[57]](#cite_note-57) However, since the late 19th century the [judicial system](/wiki/Judicial_system_of_Japan) has been largely based on the [civil law](/wiki/Civil_law_(legal_system)) of Europe, notably Germany. For example, in 1896, the Japanese government established a civil code based on a draft of the German [Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch](/wiki/Bürgerliches_Gesetzbuch); with the code remaining in effect with post–World War II modifications.[[58]](#cite_note-58) Statutory law originates in Japan's legislature and has the [rubber stamp](/wiki/Rubber_stamp_(politics)) of the Emperor. The Constitution requires that the Emperor promulgate legislation passed by the Diet, without specifically giving him the power to oppose legislation.[[54]](#cite_note-54) Japan's court system is divided into four basic tiers: the [Supreme Court](/wiki/Supreme_Court_of_Japan) and three levels of lower courts.[[59]](#cite_note-59) The main body of Japanese statutory law is called the [Six Codes](/wiki/Six_Codes).[[60]](#cite_note-60)

## Foreign relations and military[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=7)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|upright|](/wiki/File:SM3_from_JDS_Kongo.jpg)[JDS *Kongō* (DDG-173)](/wiki/JDS_Kongō_(DDG-173)), a [guided missile destroyer](/wiki/Guided_missile_destroyer), launching a [Standard Missile 3](/wiki/RIM-161_Standard_Missile_3) [anti-ballistic missile](/wiki/Anti-ballistic_missile) in 2007. Japan is a member of the [G8](/wiki/Group_of_Eight_(G8)), [APEC](/wiki/Asia-Pacific_Economic_Cooperation), and "[ASEAN Plus Three](/wiki/ASEAN_Free_Trade_Area#ASEAN_Plus_Three)", and is a participant in the [East Asia Summit](/wiki/East_Asia_Summit). Japan signed a security pact with [Australia](/wiki/Australia) in March 2007[[61]](#cite_note-61) and with [India](/wiki/India) in October 2008.[[62]](#cite_note-62) It is the world's fifth largest donor of [official development assistance](/wiki/Official_development_assistance), donating US$9.2 billion in 2014.[[63]](#cite_note-63) Japan has close economic and military relations with the United States; the [US-Japan security alliance](/wiki/Treaty_of_Mutual_Cooperation_and_Security_between_the_United_States_and_Japan) acts as the cornerstone of the nation's foreign policy.[[64]](#cite_note-64) A member state of the United Nations since 1956, Japan has served as a non-permanent [Security Council](/wiki/United_Nations_Security_Council) member for a [total of 20 years](/wiki/List_of_members_of_the_United_Nations_Security_Council#List_by_number_of_years_as_Security_Council_member), most recently for 2009 and 2010. It is one of the [G4 nations](/wiki/G4_nations) seeking permanent membership in the Security Council.[[65]](#cite_note-65) Japan is engaged in several territorial disputes with its neighbors: with [Russia](/wiki/Russia) over the [South Kuril Islands](/wiki/Kuril_Islands_dispute), with [South Korea](/wiki/South_Korea) over the [Liancourt Rocks](/wiki/Liancourt_Rocks), with [China](/wiki/China) and [Taiwan](/wiki/Taiwan) over the [Senkaku Islands](/wiki/Senkaku_Islands), and with China over the [EEZ](/wiki/Exclusive_economic_zone) around [Okinotorishima](/wiki/Okinotorishima).[[66]](#cite_note-66) Japan also faces an ongoing dispute with [North Korea](/wiki/North_Korea) over the latter's [abduction of Japanese citizens](/wiki/North_Korean_abductions_of_Japanese_citizens) and its [nuclear weapons and missile program](/wiki/North_Korea_and_weapons_of_mass_destruction) (see also [Six-party talks](/wiki/Six-party_talks)).[[67]](#cite_note-67) Japan maintains one of the largest military budgets of any country in the world.[[68]](#cite_note-68) Japan contributed non-combatant troops to the [Iraq War](/wiki/Iraq_War) but subsequently withdrew its forces.[[69]](#cite_note-69) The Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) is a regular participant in [RIMPAC](/wiki/Exercise_RIMPAC) maritime exercises.[[70]](#cite_note-70) Japan's military (the [Japan Self-Defense Forces](/wiki/Japan_Self-Defense_Forces)) is restricted by [Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution](/wiki/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.[[71]](#cite_note-71) It is governed by the [Ministry of Defense](/wiki/Ministry_of_Defense_(Japan)), and primarily consists of the [Japan Ground Self-Defense Force](/wiki/Japan_Ground_Self-Defense_Force) (JGSDF), the [Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force](/wiki/Japan_Maritime_Self-Defense_Force) (JMSDF) and the [Japan Air Self-Defense Force](/wiki/Japan_Air_Self-Defense_Force) (JASDF). The forces have been recently used in peacekeeping operations; the [deployment of troops to Iraq](/wiki/Japanese_Iraq_Reconstruction_and_Support_Group) marked the first overseas use of Japan's military since World War II.[[69]](#cite_note-69) [Japan Business Federation](/wiki/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](/wiki/Joint_Strike_Fighter_program).[[72]](#cite_note-72) In May 2014 Prime Minister [Shinzō Abe](/wiki/Shinzō_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.[[73]](#cite_note-73)

## Administrative divisions[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=8)]

[Template:Further](/wiki/Template:Further) 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.[[74]](#cite_note-74) The nation is currently undergoing administrative [reorganization by merging](/wiki/Merger_and_dissolution_of_municipalities_of_Japan) 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.[[75]](#cite_note-75) [Template:Japan Regions and Prefectures Labelled Map](/wiki/Template:Japan_Regions_and_Prefectures_Labelled_Map)

## Geography[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=9)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main)

[thumb|Topographic map of the](/wiki/File:Japan_topo_en.jpg) [Japanese archipelago](/wiki/Japanese_archipelago) Japan has a total of 6,852 islands extending along the [Pacific coast](/wiki/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](/wiki/Hokkaido), [Honshu](/wiki/Honshu), [Shikoku](/wiki/Shikoku) and [Kyushu](/wiki/Kyushu). The [Ryukyu Islands](/wiki/Ryukyu_Islands), which include [Okinawa](/wiki/Okinawa_Island), are a chain to the south of [Kyushu](/wiki/Kyushu). Together they are often known as the [Japanese archipelago](/wiki/Japanese_archipelago).[[76]](#cite_note-76) About 73 percent of Japan is forested, mountainous, and unsuitable for [agricultural](/wiki/Agriculture,_forestry,_and_fishing_in_Japan), [industrial](/wiki/Manufacturing_in_Japan), or [residential](/wiki/Housing_in_Japan) use.[[77]](#cite_note-77)[[78]](#cite_note-78) 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](/wiki/List_of_countries_by_population_density) in the world.[[79]](#cite_note-79) The islands of Japan are located in a [volcanic](/wiki/Volcano) zone on the [Pacific Ring of Fire](/wiki/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](/wiki/Pleistocene) as a result of the [subduction](/wiki/Subduction) of the [Philippine Sea Plate](/wiki/Philippine_Sea_Plate) beneath the continental [Amurian Plate](/wiki/Amurian_Plate) and [Okinawa Plate](/wiki/Okinawa_Plate) to the south, and subduction of the [Pacific Plate](/wiki/Pacific_Plate) under the [Okhotsk Plate](/wiki/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](/wiki/Sea_of_Japan) around 15 million years ago.[[80]](#cite_note-80) Japan has 108 active volcanoes. During the twentieth century several new volcanoes emerged, including [Shōwa-shinzan](/wiki/Shōwa-shinzan) on Hokkaido and [Myōjin-shō](/wiki/Myōjin-shō) off the [Bayonnaise Rocks](/wiki/Bayonnaise_Rocks) in the Pacific. Destructive earthquakes, often resulting in [tsunami](/wiki/Tsunami), occur several times each century.[[81]](#cite_note-81) The [1923 Tokyo earthquake](/wiki/1923_Great_Kantō_earthquake) killed over 140,000 people.[[82]](#cite_note-82) More recent major quakes are the 1995 [Great Hanshin earthquake](/wiki/Great_Hanshin_earthquake) and the [2011 Tōhoku earthquake](/wiki/2011_Tōhoku_earthquake_and_tsunami), a 9.0-magnitude[[83]](#cite_note-83) quake which hit Japan on March 11, 2011, and triggered a large tsunami.[[53]](#cite_note-53)Japan is substantially prone to earthquakes, tsunami and volcanoes due to its location along the Pacific Ring of Fire[[84]](#cite_note-84) and has the [highest](/wiki/List_of_countries_by_natural_disaster_risk) [natural disaster](/wiki/Natural_disaster) risk in the [developed world](/wiki/Developed_country).[[85]](#cite_note-85)

### Climate[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=10)]

[thumb|Japan map of Köppen climate classification.](/wiki/File:Japan_map_of_Köppen_climate_classification.svg) [Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main)

[Template:Multiple image](/wiki/Template:Multiple_image) The climate of Japan is predominantly [temperate](/wiki/Temperate), but varies greatly from north to south. Japan's geographical features divide it into six principal climatic zones: [Hokkaido](/wiki/Hokkaido), [Sea of Japan](/wiki/Sea_of_Japan), [Central Highland](/wiki/Central_Highland_(Japan)), [Seto Inland Sea](/wiki/Seto_Inland_Sea), [Pacific Ocean](/wiki/Pacific_Ocean), and [Ryukyu Islands](/wiki/Ryukyu_Islands). The northernmost zone, [Hokkaido](/wiki/Hokkaido), has a [humid continental climate](/wiki/Humid_continental_climate) with long, cold winters and very warm to cool summers. [Precipitation](/wiki/Precipitation_(meteorology)) is not heavy, but the islands usually develop deep snowbanks in the winter.<ref name=autogenerated2>[Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)</ref>

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](/wiki/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 [Chūgoku](/wiki/Chūgoku_region) and [Shikoku](/wiki/Shikoku) regions shelter the [Seto Inland Sea](/wiki/Seto_Inland_Sea) from seasonal winds, bringing mild weather year-round.[[86]](#cite_note-86) The Pacific coast features a [humid subtropical](/wiki/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](/wiki/Subtropics), with warm winters and hot summers. Precipitation is very heavy, especially during the rainy season.[[86]](#cite_note-86) The average winter temperature in Japan is [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) and the average summer temperature is [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert).[[87]](#cite_note-87) The highest temperature ever measured in Japan [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) was recorded on August 16, 2007.[[88]](#cite_note-88) The main [rainy season](/wiki/East_Asian_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](/wiki/Typhoon) often bring heavy rain.[[89]](#cite_note-89)

### Biodiversity[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=11)]

[thumb|The](/wiki/File:Jigokudani_hotspring_in_Nagano_Japan_001.jpg) [Japanese macaques](/wiki/Japanese_macaque) at [Jigokudani hot spring](/wiki/Jigokudani_Monkey_Park) are notable for visiting the spa in the winter. [Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) Japan has nine forest [ecoregions](/wiki/Ecoregions_in_Japan) which reflect the climate and geography of the islands. They range from [subtropical moist broadleaf forests](/wiki/Tropical_and_subtropical_moist_broadleaf_forests) in the Ryūkyū and [Bonin Islands](/wiki/Bonin_Islands), to [temperate broadleaf and mixed forests](/wiki/Temperate_broadleaf_and_mixed_forests) in the mild climate regions of the main islands, to [temperate coniferous forests](/wiki/Temperate_coniferous_forest) in the cold, winter portions of the northern islands.[[90]](#cite_note-90) Japan has over 90,000 species of [wildlife](/wiki/Wildlife_of_Japan), including the [brown bear](/wiki/Brown_bear), the [Japanese macaque](/wiki/Japanese_macaque), the [Japanese raccoon dog](/wiki/Japanese_raccoon_dog), the [Large Japanese Field Mouse](/wiki/Large_Japanese_field_mouse), and the [Japanese giant salamander](/wiki/Japanese_giant_salamander).[[91]](#cite_note-91) A large network of [national parks](/wiki/List_of_national_parks_of_Japan) has been established to protect important areas of flora and fauna as well as thirty-seven [Ramsar wetland sites](/wiki/Ramsar_sites_in_Japan).[[92]](#cite_note-92)[[93]](#cite_note-93) [Four sites](/wiki/World_Heritage_Sites_in_Japan) have been inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List for their outstanding natural value.[[94]](#cite_note-94)

### Environment[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=12)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) In the period of rapid economic growth after [World War II](/wiki/World_War_II), environmental policies were downplayed by the government and industrial corporations; as a result, [environmental pollution](/wiki/Four_Big_Pollution_Diseases_of_Japan) was widespread in the 1950s and 1960s. Responding to rising concern about the problem, the government introduced several environmental protection laws in 1970.[[95]](#cite_note-95) The [oil crisis in 1973](/wiki/1973_oil_crisis) also encouraged the efficient use of energy because of Japan's lack of natural resources.[[96]](#cite_note-96) Current environmental issues include urban air pollution ([NOx](/wiki/NOx), suspended particulate matter, and toxics), [waste management](/wiki/Waste_management), water [eutrophication](/wiki/Eutrophication), [nature conservation](/wiki/Nature_conservation), climate change, chemical management and international co-operation for conservation.[[97]](#cite_note-97) 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."[[98]](#cite_note-98) Japan ranks 39th in the 2016 [Environmental Performance Index](/wiki/Environmental_Performance_Index), which measures a nation's commitment to environmental sustainability.[[99]](#cite_note-99) As a signatory of the [Kyoto Protocol](/wiki/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.[[100]](#cite_note-100)

## Economy[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=13)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|The](/wiki/File:Tokyo_stock_exchange.jpg) [Tokyo Stock Exchange](/wiki/Tokyo_Stock_Exchange), one of the largest stock exchanges in Asia[[101]](#cite_note-101)

### Economic history[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=14)]

Modern Japan's economic growth began in the [Edo period](/wiki/Edo_period). Some of the surviving elements of the Edo period are [roads](/wiki/Kaidō) and water transportation routes, as well as financial instruments such as [futures contracts](/wiki/Futures_contract), banking and insurance of the [Osaka rice brokers](/wiki/Osaka_rice_brokers).[[102]](#cite_note-102) During the Meiji period from 1868, Japan expanded economically with the embrace of the [market economy](/wiki/Market_economy).[[103]](#cite_note-103) Many of today's enterprises were founded at the time, and Japan emerged as the most developed nation in Asia.[[104]](#cite_note-104) The period of overall real economic growth from the 1960s to the 1980s has been called the [Japanese post-war economic miracle](/wiki/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.[[105]](#cite_note-105) Growth slowed in the 1990s during [the "Lost Decade"](/wiki/Lost_Decade_(Japan)) due to after-effects of the [Japanese asset price bubble](/wiki/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](/wiki/Dot-com_bubble).[[77]](#cite_note-77) The economy recovered after 2005; GDP growth for that year was 2.8 percent, surpassing the growth rates of the US and [European Union](/wiki/European_Union) during the same period.[[106]](#cite_note-106) [Template:As of](/wiki/Template:As_of), Japan is the third largest national economy in the world, after the United States and China, in terms of [nominal GDP](/wiki/Nominal_GDP),[[107]](#cite_note-107) and the fourth largest national economy in the world, after the United States, China and India, in terms of [purchasing power parity](/wiki/Purchasing_power_parity). [Template:As of](/wiki/Template:As_of), Japan's [public debt](/wiki/Government_debt) was estimated at more than 200 percent of its annual gross domestic product, the largest of any nation in the world.[[108]](#cite_note-108) In August 2011, [Moody's](/wiki/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.[[109]](#cite_note-109) The [service sector](/wiki/Service_sector) accounts for three quarters of the gross domestic product.[[110]](#cite_note-110)

### Exports[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=15)]

[thumb|A plug-in](/wiki/File:Prius_Plug-in_Hybrid-11-09-04-iaa-by-RalfR-108.jpg) [hybrid car](/wiki/Hybrid_vehicle) manufactured by [Toyota](/wiki/Toyota), one of the world's largest carmakers. Japan is the second-largest producer of automobiles in the world.[[111]](#cite_note-111) Japan has a large industrial capacity, and is home to some of the largest and most technologically advanced producers of motor vehicles, [electronics](/wiki/Electronics), [machine tools](/wiki/Machine_tool), steel and nonferrous metals, ships, [chemical substances](/wiki/Chemical_substance), textiles, and [processed foods](/wiki/Food_processing). [Agricultural businesses in Japan](/wiki/Agriculture,_forestry,_and_fishing_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.[[77]](#cite_note-77) [Template:As of](/wiki/Template:As_of), Japan's labor force consisted of some 65.9 million workers.[[112]](#cite_note-112) Japan has a [low unemployment rate](/wiki/List_of_countries_by_unemployment_rate) of around four percent. Some 20 million people, around 17 per cent of the population, were below the poverty line in 2007.[[113]](#cite_note-113) [Housing in Japan](/wiki/Housing_in_Japan) is characterized by limited land supply in urban areas.[[114]](#cite_note-114) Japan's exports amounted to US$4,210 per capita in 2005. [Template:As of](/wiki/Template:As_of), 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.[[115]](#cite_note-115) Japan's main import markets [Template:As of](/wiki/Template:As_of) were China (21.3 percent), the US (8.8 percent), Australia (6.4 percent), [Saudi Arabia](/wiki/Saudi_Arabia) (6.2 percent), [United Arab Emirates](/wiki/United_Arab_Emirates) (5.0 percent), South Korea (4.6 percent) and [Qatar](/wiki/Qatar) (4.0 percent).[[77]](#cite_note-77)

### Imports[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=16)]

Japan's main imports are machinery and equipment, [fossil fuels](/wiki/Fossil_fuel), 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](/wiki/Organisation_for_Economic_Co-operation_and_Development) country.[[116]](#cite_note-116) [Junichirō Koizumi's](/wiki/Junichirō_Koizumi) administration began some pro-competition reforms, and foreign investment in Japan has soared.[[117]](#cite_note-117) Japan ranks 27th of 189 countries in the 2014 [Ease of doing business index](/wiki/Ease_of_doing_business_index) and has [one of the smallest tax revenues](/wiki/List_of_countries_by_tax_revenue_as_percentage_of_GDP) of the developed world. The Japanese variant of capitalism has many distinct features: [keiretsu](/wiki/Keiretsu) enterprises are influential, and [lifetime employment](/wiki/Permanent_employment) and seniority-based career advancement are relatively common in the [Japanese work environment](/wiki/Japanese_work_environment).[[116]](#cite_note-116)[[118]](#cite_note-118) Japanese companies are known for management methods like "[The Toyota Way](/wiki/The_Toyota_Way)", and [shareholder activism](/wiki/Shareholder_activism) is rare.[[119]](#cite_note-119) Some of the largest enterprises in Japan include [Toyota](/wiki/Toyota), [Nintendo](/wiki/Nintendo), [NTT DoCoMo](/wiki/NTT_DoCoMo), [Canon](/wiki/Canon_Inc.), [Honda](/wiki/Honda), [Takeda Pharmaceutical](/wiki/Takeda_Pharmaceutical_Company), [Sony](/wiki/Sony), [Panasonic](/wiki/Panasonic_Corporation), [Toshiba](/wiki/Toshiba), [Sharp](/wiki/Sharp_Corporation), [Nippon Steel](/wiki/Nippon_Steel), [Nippon Oil](/wiki/Nippon_Oil), and [Seven & I Holdings Co.](/wiki/Seven_&_I_Holdings_Co.).[[120]](#cite_note-120) It has some of the world's largest banks, and the [Tokyo Stock Exchange](/wiki/Tokyo_Stock_Exchange) (known for its [Nikkei 225](/wiki/Nikkei_225) and [TOPIX](/wiki/TOPIX) indices) stands as the second largest in the world by [market capitalization](/wiki/Market_capitalization).[[121]](#cite_note-121) [Template:As of](/wiki/Template:As_of), Japan was home to 326 companies from the [Forbes Global 2000](/wiki/Forbes_Global_2000) or 16.3 percent.[[122]](#cite_note-122) In 2013, it was announced that Japan would be importing [shale](/wiki/Shale) [natural gas](/wiki/Natural_gas).[[123]](#cite_note-123)

### Science and technology[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=17)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|The](/wiki/File:Kibo_PM_and_ELM-PS.jpg) [Japanese Experiment Module](/wiki/Japanese_Experiment_Module) (Kibo) at the [International Space Station](/wiki/International_Space_Station) Japan is a leading nation in [scientific research](/wiki/Scientific_research), particularly [technology](/wiki/Technology), [machinery](/wiki/Machinery) and [biomedical research](/wiki/Biomedical_research). Nearly 700,000 researchers share a US$130 billion [research and development](/wiki/Research_and_development) budget, the third largest in the world.[[124]](#cite_note-124) Japan is a world leader in [fundamental scientific research](/wiki/Fundamental_research), having produced twenty-one [Nobel laureates](/wiki/Nobel_Prize) in either physics, chemistry or medicine,[[125]](#cite_note-125) and three [Fields medalists](/wiki/Fields_Medal).[[126]](#cite_note-126) Some of Japan's more prominent technological contributions are in the fields of electronics, automobiles, machinery, [earthquake engineering](/wiki/Earthquake_engineering), [industrial robotics](/wiki/Industrial_robot), [optics](/wiki/Optics), chemicals, [semiconductors](/wiki/Semiconductor) and metals. Japan leads the world in [robotics](/wiki/Robotics) production and use, possessing more than 20% (300,000 of 1.3 million) of the world's industrial robots [Template:As of](/wiki/Template:As_of)[[127]](#cite_note-127)—though its share was historically even higher, representing one-half of all industrial robots worldwide in 2000.[[128]](#cite_note-128) The [Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency](/wiki/Japan_Aerospace_Exploration_Agency) (JAXA) is Japan's [space agency](/wiki/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](/wiki/International_Space_Station): the [Japanese Experiment Module](/wiki/Japanese_Experiment_Module) (Kibo) was added to the station during [Space Shuttle](/wiki/Space_Shuttle) assembly flights in 2008.[[129]](#cite_note-129) Japan's plans in [space exploration](/wiki/Space_exploration) include: launching a [space probe](/wiki/Space_probe) to [Venus](/wiki/Venus), [*Akatsuki*](/wiki/Akatsuki_(spacecraft));[[130]](#cite_note-130)[[131]](#cite_note-131) developing the [*Mercury Magnetospheric Orbiter*](/wiki/Mercury_Magnetospheric_Orbiter) to be launched in 2016;<ref name=FACTS>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref> and building a [moon base](/wiki/Colonization_of_the_Moon) by 2030.[[132]](#cite_note-132) On September 14, 2007, it launched lunar explorer "[*SELENE*](/wiki/SELENE)" (**Sel**enological and **En**gineering **E**xplorer) on an [H-IIA](/wiki/H-IIA) (Model H2A2022) carrier rocket from [Tanegashima Space Center](/wiki/Tanegashima_Space_Center). *SELENE* is also known as *Kaguya*, after the lunar princess of [*The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter*](/wiki/The_Tale_of_the_Bamboo_Cutter).[[133]](#cite_note-133) *Kaguya* is the largest lunar mission since the [Apollo program](/wiki/Apollo_program). Its purpose is to gather data on the [moon's origin and evolution](/wiki/Moon#Formation). It entered a lunar orbit on October 4,[[134]](#cite_note-134)[[135]](#cite_note-135) flying at an altitude of about [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert).[[136]](#cite_note-136) The probe's mission was ended when it was deliberately crashed by JAXA into the Moon on June 11, 2009.[[137]](#cite_note-137)

### Energy[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=18)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main)

[Template:As of](/wiki/Template:As_of), 46.1% of energy in Japan was produced from petroleum, 21.3% from coal, 21.4% from natural gas, 4.0% from [nuclear power](/wiki/Nuclear_power_in_Japan), and 3.3% from [hydropower](/wiki/Hydropower). Nuclear power produced 9.2 percent of Japan's electricity, as of 2011, down from 24.9 percent the previous year.[[138]](#cite_note-138) 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](/wiki/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.[[139]](#cite_note-139) [Template:As of](/wiki/Template:As_of), two reactors at Sendai are likely to restart in early 2015.[[140]](#cite_note-140) Japan lacks significant domestic reserves and so has a heavy dependence on [imported energy](/wiki/List_of_countries_by_oil_imports).[[141]](#cite_note-141) Japan has therefore aimed to diversify its sources and maintain high levels of energy efficiency.[[142]](#cite_note-142)

### Transport[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=19)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|A high-speed](/wiki/File:JR_west_N700series_N1_maibara.jpg) [N700 Series](/wiki/N700_Series_Shinkansen) [Shinkansen](/wiki/Shinkansen) "Bullet train" Japan's road spending has been extensive.[[143]](#cite_note-143) Its 1.2 million kilometers of paved road are the main means of transportation.[[144]](#cite_note-144) A single network of high-speed, divided, limited-access [toll roads](/wiki/Toll_road) 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.[[145]](#cite_note-145) Since privatisation in 1987, [dozens of Japanese railway companies](/wiki/List_of_railway_companies_in_Japan) compete in regional and local passenger transportation markets; major companies include seven [JR](/wiki/Japan_Railways_Group) enterprises, [Kintetsu Corporation](/wiki/Kintetsu), [Seibu Railway](/wiki/Seibu_Railway) and [Keio Corporation](/wiki/Keio_Corporation). Some 250 high-speed [Shinkansen](/wiki/Shinkansen) trains connect major cities and Japanese trains are known for their safety and punctuality.[[146]](#cite_note-146)[[147]](#cite_note-147) Proposals for a new [Maglev](/wiki/JR–Maglev) route between Tokyo and Osaka are at an advanced stage.[[148]](#cite_note-148) There are 175 airports in Japan;[[77]](#cite_note-77) the largest domestic airport, [Haneda Airport](/wiki/Haneda_Airport), is [Asia's second-busiest airport](/wiki/World's_busiest_airports_by_passenger_traffic).[[149]](#cite_note-149) The largest international gateways are [Narita International Airport](/wiki/Narita_International_Airport), [Kansai International Airport](/wiki/Kansai_International_Airport) and [Chūbu Centrair International Airport](/wiki/Chūbu_Centrair_International_Airport).[[150]](#cite_note-150) [Nagoya Port](/wiki/Nagoya_Port) is the country's largest and busiest port, accounting for 10 percent of Japan's trade value.[[151]](#cite_note-151)

## Demographics[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=20)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|](/wiki/File:Bjs48_02_Ainu.jpg)[Ainu](/wiki/Ainu_people), an ethnic minority people from Japan [thumb|A Japanese wedding at the](/wiki/File:Meiji-jingu_wedding_procession_-_P1000847.jpg) [Meiji Shrine](/wiki/Meiji_Shrine) Japan's population is estimated at around 127 million,[[77]](#cite_note-77) with 80% of the population living on [Honshū](/wiki/Honshū). Japanese society is [linguistically](/wiki/Linguistics) and culturally homogeneous,<ref name=MulticulturalJapan>[Template:Cite news](/wiki/Template:Cite_news)</ref> composed of 98.5% ethnic Japanese,[[77]](#cite_note-77) with small populations of foreign workers.<ref name=MulticulturalJapan/> [Zainichi Koreans](/wiki/Koreans_in_Japan),[[152]](#cite_note-152) [Zainichi Chinese](/wiki/Chinese_people_in_Japan), [Filipinos](/wiki/Filipinos_in_Japan), [Brazilians](/wiki/Brazilian_people) mostly [of Japanese descent](/wiki/Japanese_Brazilian),[[153]](#cite_note-153) and [Peruvians](/wiki/Peruvian_people) mostly [of Japanese descent](/wiki/Japanese_Peruvian) are among the small minority groups in Japan.[[154]](#cite_note-154) In 2003, there were about 134,700 non-Latin American Western and 345,500 [Latin American](/wiki/Latin_Americans) expatriates, 274,700 of whom were [Brazilians](/wiki/Brazilians_in_Japan) (said to be primarily Japanese descendants, or [*nikkeijin*](/wiki/Nikkeijin), along with their spouses),[[153]](#cite_note-153) the largest community of Westerners.[[155]](#cite_note-155) The most dominant native ethnic group is the [Yamato people](/wiki/Yamato_people); primary minority groups include the indigenous [Ainu](/wiki/Ainu_people)[[156]](#cite_note-156) and [Ryukyuan peoples](/wiki/Ryukyuan_people), as well as social minority groups like the [*burakumin*](/wiki/Burakumin).[[157]](#cite_note-157) There are persons of mixed ancestry incorporated among the Yamato, such as those from [Ogasawara Archipelago](/wiki/Bonin_Islands).[[158]](#cite_note-158) In 2014, foreign-born non-naturalized workers made up only 1.5% of the total population.[[159]](#cite_note-159) 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](/wiki/Multiethnic_society).[[160]](#cite_note-160) Most Japanese continue to see Japan as a [monocultural society](/wiki/Monoculturalism). Former Japanese Prime Minister and current Finance Minister [Tarō Asō](/wiki/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](/wiki/Ainu_people).[[161]](#cite_note-161) Japan has the second longest overall [life expectancy](/wiki/Life_expectancy) at birth of any country in the world: 83.5 years for persons born in the period 2010–2015.[[8]](#cite_note-8)[[9]](#cite_note-9) The [Japanese population is rapidly aging](/wiki/Aging_of_Japan) as a result of a [post–World War II baby boom](/wiki/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.[[162]](#cite_note-162) 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.[[163]](#cite_note-163) A growing number of younger Japanese are not marrying or remain childless.[[164]](#cite_note-164) 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.[[165]](#cite_note-165) This decline was made worse by the [March 11 earthquake and tsunami](/wiki/2011_Tōhoku_earthquake_and_tsunami), which killed nearly 16,000 people with approximately another 2,600 still listed as missing as of 2014.[[166]](#cite_note-166) Japan's population is expected to drop to 95 million by 2050;[[162]](#cite_note-162)[[167]](#cite_note-167) demographers and government planners are currently in a heated debate over how to cope with this problem.[[164]](#cite_note-164) [Immigration](/wiki/Immigration) and birth incentives are sometimes suggested as a solution to provide younger workers to support the nation's aging population.[[168]](#cite_note-168)[[169]](#cite_note-169) Japan accepts a steady flow of 15,000 *new Japanese citizens* by *naturalization* (帰化) per year.[[170]](#cite_note-170) According to the [UNHCR](/wiki/United_Nations_High_Commissioner_for_Refugees), in 2012 Japan accepted just 18 refugees for resettlement,[[171]](#cite_note-171) while the US took in 76,000.[[172]](#cite_note-172) Japan [suffers from a high suicide rate](/wiki/Suicide_in_Japan).[[173]](#cite_note-173)<ref name=Times>[Template:Cite news](/wiki/Template:Cite_news)</ref> In 2009, the number of suicides exceeded 30,000 for the twelfth straight year.[[174]](#cite_note-174) Suicide is the leading cause of death for people under 30.[[175]](#cite_note-175) [Template:Largest cities of Japan](/wiki/Template:Largest_cities_of_Japan)

### Religion[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=21)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main)

[thumb|The](/wiki/File:Itsukushima_torii_distance.jpg) [torii](/wiki/Torii) of [Itsukushima Shrine](/wiki/Itsukushima_Shrine) near [Hiroshima](/wiki/Hiroshima), one of the [Three Views of Japan](/wiki/Three_Views_of_Japan) and a UNESCO World Heritage Site

Japan has full religious freedom based on Article 20 of [its Constitution](/wiki/Constitution_of_Japan). Upper estimates suggest that 84–96 percent of the Japanese population subscribe to [Buddhism](/wiki/Buddhism_in_Japan) or [Shinto](/wiki/Shinto), including a large number of followers of a [syncretism](/wiki/Syncretism) of [both religions](/wiki/Shinbutsu_shūgō).[[77]](#cite_note-77)[[176]](#cite_note-176) However, these estimates are based on people [affiliated](/wiki/Danka_system) 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.<ref name=Kisala>[Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)</ref> According to [Edwin Reischauer](/wiki/Edwin_O._Reischauer) and [Marius Jansen](/wiki/Marius_Jansen), some 70–80% of the Japanese do not consider themselves believers in any religion.<ref name=ReischauerJansen215>[Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)</ref>

Nevertheless, the level of participation remains high, especially during [festivals](/wiki/Japanese_festivals) and occasions such as the [first shrine visit](/wiki/Hatsumōde) of the [New Year](/wiki/Japanese_New_Year). [Taoism](/wiki/Taoism) and [Confucianism](/wiki/Confucianism) from China have also influenced Japanese beliefs and customs.[[177]](#cite_note-177) Japanese streets are decorated on [Tanabata](/wiki/Tanabata), [Obon](/wiki/Obon) and [Christmas](/wiki/Christmas). Fewer than one percent of Japanese are [Christian](/wiki/Christianity_in_Japan).[[178]](#cite_note-178) Other minority religions include [Islam](/wiki/Islam_in_Japan), [Hinduism](/wiki/Hinduism_in_Japan), [Sikhism](/wiki/Sikhism), and [Judaism](/wiki/Judaism), and since the mid-19th century numerous [new religious movements](/wiki/Japanese_new_religions) have emerged in Japan.[[179]](#cite_note-179)

### Languages[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=22)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main)

More than 99 percent of the population speaks Japanese as their first language.[[77]](#cite_note-77) Japanese is an [agglutinative language](/wiki/Agglutinative_language) distinguished by a system of [honorifics](/wiki/Honorific_speech_in_Japanese) reflecting the hierarchical nature of Japanese society, with verb forms and particular vocabulary indicating the relative status of speaker and listener. [Japanese writing](/wiki/Japanese_writing_system) uses [kanji](/wiki/Kanji) ([Chinese characters](/wiki/Chinese_character)) and two sets of [kana](/wiki/Kana) ([syllabaries](/wiki/Syllabary) based on [cursive script](/wiki/Cursive_script_(East_Asia)) and [radical](/wiki/Radical_(Chinese_characters)) of kanji), as well as the [Latin alphabet](/wiki/Latin_alphabet) and [Arabic numerals](/wiki/Arabic_numerals).[[180]](#cite_note-180) Besides Japanese, the [Ryukyuan languages](/wiki/Ryukyuan_languages) ([Amami](/wiki/Amami_language), [Kunigami](/wiki/Kunigami_language), [Okinawan](/wiki/Okinawan_language), [Miyako](/wiki/Miyako_language), [Yaeyama](/wiki/Yaeyama_language), [Yonaguni](/wiki/Yonaguni_language)), also part of the [Japonic language family](/wiki/Japonic_languages), are spoken in the [Ryukyu Islands](/wiki/Ryukyu_Islands) chain. Few children learn these languages,[[181]](#cite_note-181) but in recent years the local governments have sought to increase awareness of the traditional languages. The [Okinawan Japanese](/wiki/Okinawan_Japanese) dialect is also spoken in the region. The [Ainu language](/wiki/Ainu_language), which has no proven relationship to Japanese or any other language, is [moribund](/wiki/Moribund_language), with only a few elderly native speakers remaining in Hokkaido.[[182]](#cite_note-182) Public and private schools generally require students to take Japanese language classes as well as [English](/wiki/English_language_education_in_Japan) language courses.[[183]](#cite_note-183)<ref name=ItaGiappone>Ambasciata d'Italia a Tokio: [Lo studio della lingua e della cultura italiana in Giappone.](http://www.ambtokyo.esteri.it/Ambasciata_Tokyo/Menu/I_rapporti_bilaterali/Cooperazione_culturale/linguaitaliana_Giappone/)</ref>

### Education[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=23)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|Announcement of the results of the](/wiki/File:Tokyo_University_Entrance_Exam_Results_6.JPG) [entrance examinations](/wiki/Higher_education_in_Japan#University_entrance) to the [University of Tokyo](/wiki/University_of_Tokyo) Primary schools, secondary schools and universities were [introduced](/wiki/Education_in_the_Empire_of_Japan) in 1872 as a result of the Meiji Restoration.[[184]](#cite_note-184) Since 1947, compulsory education in Japan comprises [elementary](/wiki/Elementary_schools_in_Japan) and [middle school](/wiki/Secondary_education_in_Japan#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](/wiki/Secondary_education_in_Japan), and, according to the [MEXT](/wiki/Ministry_of_Education,_Culture,_Sports,_Science_and_Technology_(Japan)), [Template:As of](/wiki/Template:As_of) about 75.9 percent of high school graduates attended a university, junior college, trade school, or other [higher education](/wiki/Higher_education_in_Japan) institution.[[185]](#cite_note-185) The two top-ranking universities in Japan are the [University of Tokyo](/wiki/University_of_Tokyo) and [Kyoto University](/wiki/Kyoto_University).[[186]](#cite_note-186)[[187]](#cite_note-187) The [Programme for International Student Assessment](/wiki/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.[[188]](#cite_note-188)

### Health[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=24)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) 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.[[189]](#cite_note-189) Patients are free to select the physicians or facilities of their choice.[[190]](#cite_note-190)

## Culture[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=25)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also) [thumb|](/wiki/File:Kinkaku-ji_01.jpg)[Kinkaku-ji](/wiki/Kinkaku-ji) or 'The Temple of the Golden Pavilion' in [Kyoto](/wiki/Historic_Monuments_of_Ancient_Kyoto_(Kyoto,_Uji_and_Otsu_Cities)), [Special Historic Site, Special Place of Scenic Beauty](/wiki/List_of_Special_Places_of_Scenic_Beauty,_Special_Historic_Sites_and_Special_Natural_Monuments), and UNESCO World Heritage Site; its torching by a monk in 1950 is the subject of a [novel](/wiki/The_Temple_of_the_Golden_Pavilion) by [Mishima](/wiki/Yukio_Mishima).

[thumb|Hirado ware porcelain censer in the form of tiger and figurine with fan, brown and blue glazes](/wiki/File:HIRADO_PORCELAIN_CENSER_AND_COVER.JPG) Japanese culture has evolved greatly from its origins. Contemporary culture combines influences from Asia, Europe and North America. Traditional Japanese arts include [crafts](/wiki/Japanese_handicrafts) such as [ceramics](/wiki/Japanese_pottery_and_porcelain), [textiles](/wiki/Kimono), [lacquerware](/wiki/Japanese_lacquerware), [swords](/wiki/Japanese_sword) and [dolls](/wiki/Japanese_traditional_dolls); performances of [bunraku](/wiki/Bunraku), [kabuki](/wiki/Kabuki), [noh](/wiki/Noh), [dance](/wiki/Japanese_traditional_dance), and [rakugo](/wiki/Rakugo); and other practices, the [tea ceremony](/wiki/Japanese_tea_ceremony), [ikebana](/wiki/Ikebana), [martial arts](/wiki/Japanese_martial_arts), [calligraphy](/wiki/Japanese_calligraphy), [origami](/wiki/Origami), [onsen](/wiki/Onsen), [Geisha](/wiki/Geisha) and [games](/wiki/List_of_Japanese_games). Japan has a developed system for the protection and promotion of both tangible and intangible [Cultural Properties](/wiki/Cultural_Properties_of_Japan) and [National Treasures](/wiki/National_Treasures_of_Japan).[[191]](#cite_note-191) [Nineteen sites](/wiki/World_Heritage_Sites_in_Japan) have been inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List, fifteen of which are of cultural significance.[[94]](#cite_note-94)

### Art[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=26)]

[thumb|19th-century](/wiki/File:The_Great_Wave_off_Kanagawa.jpg) [ukiyo-e](/wiki/Ukiyo-e) [woodblock print](/wiki/Woodblock_printing_in_Japan)[*The Great Wave off Kanagawa*](/wiki/The_Great_Wave_off_Kanagawa), one of the best-recognized works of Japanese art in the world [Template:Further](/wiki/Template:Further) The [Shrines of Ise](/wiki/Ise_Grand_Shrine) have been celebrated as the prototype of Japanese architecture.[[192]](#cite_note-192) Largely of wood, [traditional housing](/wiki/Minka) and many [temple buildings](/wiki/Japanese_Buddhist_architecture) see the use of [tatami](/wiki/Tatami) mats and [sliding doors](/wiki/Shōji) that break down the distinction between rooms and indoor and outdoor space.[[193]](#cite_note-193) [Japanese sculpture](/wiki/Japanese_sculpture), largely of wood, and [Japanese painting](/wiki/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](/wiki/Japanese_aesthetics) and adaptation of imported ideas.<ref name=autogenerated3>[Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)</ref>

The interaction between Japanese and European art has been significant: for example [ukiyo-e](/wiki/Ukiyo-e) prints, which began to be exported in the 19th century in the movement known as [Japonism](/wiki/Japonism), had a significant influence on the development of modern art in the West, most notably on [post-Impressionism](/wiki/Post-Impressionism).[[194]](#cite_note-194) Famous ukiyo-e artists include [Hokusai](/wiki/Hokusai) and [Hiroshige](/wiki/Hiroshige). Hokusai coined the term [manga](/wiki/Manga). Japanese comics now known as manga developed in the 20th century and have become popular worldwide.[[195]](#cite_note-195) Japanese animation is called [anime](/wiki/Anime). Japanese-made [video game consoles](/wiki/Video_game_console) have been popular since the 1980s.[[196]](#cite_note-196)

### Music[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=27)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) Japanese music is eclectic and diverse. Many [instruments](/wiki/Traditional_Japanese_musical_instruments), such as the [koto](/wiki/Koto_(instrument)), were introduced in the 9th and 10th centuries. The accompanied [recitative](/wiki/Recitative) of the [Noh](/wiki/Noh) drama dates from the 14th century and the popular [folk music](/wiki/Music_of_Japan#Folk_music), with the guitar-like [shamisen](/wiki/Shamisen), from the sixteenth.[[197]](#cite_note-197) Western classical music, introduced in the late 19th century, now forms an integral part of Japanese culture. The imperial court ensemble [Gagaku](/wiki/Gagaku) has influenced the work of some [modern](/wiki/20th-century_classical_music) Western composers.[[198]](#cite_note-198) Notable classical composers from Japan include [Toru Takemitsu](/wiki/Toru_Takemitsu) and [Rentarō Taki](/wiki/Rentarō_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](/wiki/J-pop), or Japanese popular music.[[199]](#cite_note-199) [Karaoke](/wiki/Karaoke) is the most widely practiced cultural activity in Japan. A 1993 survey by the [Cultural Affairs Agency](/wiki/Agency_for_Cultural_Affairs) found that more Japanese had sung karaoke that year than had participated in traditional pursuits such as flower arranging (ikebana) or tea ceremonies.[[200]](#cite_note-200)

### Literature[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=28)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|12th-century](/wiki/File:Genji_emaki_01003_001.jpg) [illustrated handscroll](/wiki/Genji_Monogatari_Emaki) of [*The Tale of Genji*](/wiki/The_Tale_of_Genji), a [National Treasure](/wiki/National_Treasures_of_Japan) The earliest works of Japanese literature include the [*Kojiki*](/wiki/Kojiki) and [*Nihon Shoki*](/wiki/Nihon_Shoki) chronicles and the [*Man'yōshū*](/wiki/Man'yōshū) [poetry anthology](/wiki/List_of_Japanese_poetry_anthologies), all from the 8th century and written in Chinese characters.[[201]](#cite_note-201)[[202]](#cite_note-202) In the early Heian period, the system of [phonograms](/wiki/Phonogram_(linguistics)) known as *kana* ([Hiragana](/wiki/Hiragana) and [Katakana](/wiki/Katakana)) was developed. [*The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter*](/wiki/The_Tale_of_the_Bamboo_Cutter) is considered the oldest Japanese narrative.[[203]](#cite_note-203) An account of Heian court life is given in [*The Pillow Book*](/wiki/The_Pillow_Book) by [Sei Shōnagon](/wiki/Sei_Shōnagon), while [*The Tale of Genji*](/wiki/The_Tale_of_Genji) by [Murasaki Shikibu](/wiki/Murasaki_Shikibu) is often described as the world's first novel.[[204]](#cite_note-204)[[205]](#cite_note-205) During the Edo period, the [chōnin](/wiki/Chōnin) ("townspeople") overtook the samurai aristocracy as producers and consumers of literature. The popularity of the works of [Saikaku](/wiki/Saikaku), for example, reveals this change in readership and authorship, while [Bashō](/wiki/Matsuo_Bashō) revivified the poetic tradition of the [Kokinshū](/wiki/Kokinshū) with his [haikai](/wiki/Haikai) ([haiku](/wiki/Haiku)) and wrote the poetic travelogue [*Oku no Hosomichi*](/wiki/Oku_no_Hosomichi).[[206]](#cite_note-206) The Meiji era saw the decline of traditional literary forms as Japanese literature integrated Western influences. [Natsume Sōseki](/wiki/Natsume_Sōseki) and [Mori Ōgai](/wiki/Mori_Ōgai) were the first "modern" novelists of Japan, followed by [Ryūnosuke Akutagawa](/wiki/Ryūnosuke_Akutagawa), [Jun'ichirō Tanizaki](/wiki/Jun'ichirō_Tanizaki), [Yukio Mishima](/wiki/Yukio_Mishima) and, more recently, [Haruki Murakami](/wiki/Haruki_Murakami). Japan has two [Nobel Prize-winning](/wiki/Nobel_Prize_in_Literature) authors—[Yasunari Kawabata](/wiki/Yasunari_Kawabata) (1968) and [Kenzaburō Ōe](/wiki/Kenzaburō_Ōe) (1994).[[203]](#cite_note-203)

### Cuisine[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=29)]

[thumb|right|Breakfast at a](/wiki/File:Breakfast_at_Tamahan_Ryokan,_Kyoto.jpg) [*ryokan*](/wiki/Ryokan_(Japanese_inn)) or inn [Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) Japanese cuisine is based on combining [staple foods](/wiki/Staple_food), typically [Japanese rice](/wiki/Japanese_rice) or [noodles](/wiki/Japanese_noodles), with a soup and [*okazu*](/wiki/Okazu) — dishes made from [fish](/wiki/Fish_(food)), vegetable, [tofu](/wiki/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](/wiki/Seasonal_food),[[207]](#cite_note-207) quality of ingredients and presentation. Japanese cuisine offers a vast array of [regional specialties](/wiki/Japanese_regional_cuisine) that use traditional recipes and local ingredients. The [Michelin Guide](/wiki/Michelin_Guide) has awarded restaurants in Japan more Michelin stars than the rest of the world combined.<ref name=michelin20101124>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref>

### Sports[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=30)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|](/wiki/File:Sumo_ceremony.jpg)[Sumo](/wiki/Sumo) wrestlers form around the referee during the ring-entering ceremony Traditionally, [sumo](/wiki/Sumo) is considered Japan's national sport.[[208]](#cite_note-208) [Japanese martial arts](/wiki/Japanese_martial_arts) such as [judo](/wiki/Judo), [karate](/wiki/Karate) and [kendo](/wiki/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.[[209]](#cite_note-209) Japan hosted the Summer Olympics in [Tokyo in 1964](/wiki/1964_Summer_Olympics). Japan has hosted the Winter Olympics twice: [Sapporo in 1972](/wiki/1972_Winter_Olympics) and [Nagano in 1998](/wiki/1998_Winter_Olympics).[[210]](#cite_note-210) Tokyo will host the [2020 Summer Olympics](/wiki/2020_Summer_Olympics), making Tokyo the first Asian city to host the Olympics twice.[[211]](#cite_note-211) Japan is the most successful Asian [Rugby Union](/wiki/Rugby_Union) country, winning the [Asian Five Nations](/wiki/Asian_Five_Nations) a record 6 times and winning the newly formed [IRB Pacific Nations Cup](/wiki/IRB_Pacific_Nations_Cup) in 2011. Japan will host the 2019 IRB [Rugby World Cup](/wiki/Rugby_World_Cup).[[212]](#cite_note-212) [Baseball](/wiki/Baseball_in_Japan) is currently the most popular spectator sport in the country. Japan's top professional league, now known as [Nippon Professional Baseball](/wiki/Nippon_Professional_Baseball), was established in 1936.[[213]](#cite_note-213) Since the establishment of the [Japan Professional Football League](/wiki/J._League) in 1992, association football has also gained a wide following.[[214]](#cite_note-214) Japan was a venue of the [Intercontinental Cup](/wiki/Intercontinental_Cup_(football)) from 1981 to 2004 and co-hosted the [2002 FIFA World Cup](/wiki/2002_FIFA_World_Cup) with South Korea.[[215]](#cite_note-215) Japan has one of the most successful football teams in Asia, winning the [Asian Cup](/wiki/AFC_Asian_Cup) four times.[[216]](#cite_note-216) Also, Japan recently won the [FIFA Women's World Cup](/wiki/2011_FIFA_Women's_World_Cup) in 2011.[[217]](#cite_note-217) Golf is also popular in Japan,[[218]](#cite_note-218) as are forms of auto racing like the [Super GT](/wiki/Super_GT) series and [Formula Nippon](/wiki/Formula_Nippon).[[219]](#cite_note-219) The country has produced one [NBA](/wiki/National_Basketball_Association) player, [Yuta Tabuse](/wiki/Yuta_Tabuse).<ref name=consulteny>[Template:Cite news](/wiki/Template:Cite_news)</ref> [Template:Clear](/wiki/Template:Clear)

## See also[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=31)]

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* [Index of Japan-related articles](/wiki/Index_of_Japan-related_articles)
* [Outline of Japan](/wiki/Outline_of_Japan)

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## References[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=32)]

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## External links[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=34)]

[Template:Sister project links](/wiki/Template:Sister_project_links)

Government

* [Kantei.go.jp](http://web.archive.org/web/20090319120122/http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/index-e.html), official site of the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet
* [Kunaicho.go.jp](http://www.kunaicho.go.jp/eindex.html), official site of the Imperial House
* [National Diet Library](http://www.ndl.go.jp/en/index.html)
* [Public Relations Office](http://www.gov-online.go.jp/eng/index.html)

Tourism

* [Japan National Tourist Organization](http://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/)
* [Template:Wikivoyage-inline](/wiki/Template:Wikivoyage-inline)

General information

* [Template:CIA World Factbook link](/wiki/Template:CIA_World_Factbook_link)
* [Japan](http://ucblibraries.colorado.edu/govpubs/for/japan.htm) from *UCB Libraries GovPubs*
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* [Japan](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-14918801) profile from [BBC News](/wiki/BBC_News)
* [Energy Profile for Japan](http://www.eia.gov/countries/country-data.cfm?fips=JA) from the US [Energy Information Administration](/wiki/Energy_Information_Administration)
* [Japan](http://www.oecd.org/japan/) from the [OECD](/wiki/Organisation_for_Economic_Co-operation_and_Development)
* [Key Development Forecasts for Japan](http://www.ifs.du.edu/ifs/frm_CountryProfile.aspx?Country=JP) from [International Futures](/wiki/International_Futures)

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