

# JAPAN AT A GLANCE

## BASIC DATA

Japan is the world's fourth largest island nation. With a surface area of 378,000 square kilometres, it is a bit larger than Germany. Japan lies east of the Asian mainland on roughly the same longitude as North and South Korea. Its other neighbours are China, Taiwan and Russia. Japan consists of four main islands: Hokkaido, Honshu, Shikoku and Kyushu. Honshu occupies 61 percent of the country's total land area, Hokkaido 22 percent, Kyushu eleven percent and Shikoku five percent. Besides these, there are over 6,800 smaller islands.

**Surface area:** 377,915 km<sup>2</sup>

**Climate:** sub-arctic (Hokkaido) to subtropical (Okinawa)

**Population 2017:** 126.7 million\*

**Population density 2017:** 335.3 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>\*

**Population growth 2017:** -0.2 percent\*

**Fertility rate 2015:** 1.5 births per woman

**Birth rate 2017:** 7.7 births per 1,000 inhabitants\*

**Age distribution 2017:**

0–14 years	15–24 years	25–54 years	55–64 years	over 65 years
12.8 percent	9.6 percent	37.5 percent	12.2 percent	27.9 percent*

**University graduates 2014:** 980,726 (graduations in total)

**Agricultural produce:**

- fish
- wheat
- barley
- legumes
- tea
- sugar cane
- potatoes
- taro
- yams
- flowers
- beef
- pork
- poultry
- dairy products
- fruits
- rice
- vegetables

## ECONOMY

### Gross Domestic Product (GDP, nominal) in billion yen:

2016	2017	2018
537	544*	552*

### GDP per head (nominal) in million yen:

2016	2017	2018
4.2	4.3*	4.4*

### GDP distribution 2015:

- mining / manufacturing: 20.5 percent
- retail / hospitality / hotels: 14.3 percent
- transport / logistics / communication: 10.5 percent
- construction: 5.9 percent
- agriculture / forestry / fishing: 1.2 percent
- others: 47.5 percent

### GDP spending 2015:

- consumer spending: 56.6 percent
- investment in capital and facilities: 23.4 percent
- public spending: 19.9 percent
- inventory changes: 0.5 percent
- overseas contribution: -0.3 percent

### Economic growth as a percentage change in GDP (real):

2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
0.3	1.1	1.0	1.5*	0.7*

### Inflation rate (percent):

2016	2017	2018
-0.1	0.4*	0.5*

### Unemployment (percent):

2016	2017	2018
3.1	2.9*	2.9*

## EXTERNAL TRADE

External trade (Billion US-Dollar, rounded down):

	2014	Percent	2015	Percent	2016	Percent
Imports	812.2	-2.5	625.6	-23.0	606.9	-3.0
Exports	690.2	-3.5	624.9	-9.5	644.9	3.2
Balance	-122.0		-0.7		38.0	

Ratio of external trade (exports and imports / GDP in percent):

2014	2015	2016
31.0	28.5	25.4

Ratio of exports (exports / GDP in percent):

2014	2015	2068
14.2	14.3*	13.1*

Imported goods by SITC (total imports) 2016:

- electronics: 13.0 percent
- food: 8.5 percent
- crude oil: 8.4 percent
- machinery: 6.6 percent
- raw material: 6.1 percent
- others: 57.4 percent

Exported goods by SITC (total exports) 2016:

- vehicles and parts: 21.8 percent
- machinery: 18.4 percent
- electronics: 9.3 percent
- electrical equipment: 7.3 percent
- measuring and instrumentation: 3.9 percent
- others: 39.3 percent

Main source of imports 2016:

- China (25.8 percent)
- USA (11.4 percent)
- South Korea (4.1 percent)
- Taiwan (3.8 percent)
- Germany (3.6 percent)

Main destination of exports 2016:

- USA (20.2 percent)
- China (17.6 percent)
- South Korea (7.2 percent)
- Taiwan (6.1 percent)
- Hong Kong (5.2 percent)

## POLITICAL SYSTEM

- parliamentary democracy
- emperor (*tenno*) stands as the symbol of the nation, but has no actual power to govern
- division of powers between the national diet (*kokkai*), the cabinet (*naikaku*) and the judiciary (head: Supreme Court – *saiko-saibansho*)
- **cabinet:**
  - Japan's executive branch
  - head: Prime Minister, who determines Japan's domestic and international policy direction
  - Prime Minister is not directly elected by the electorate, but by the diet
- **diet:**
  - legislative branch
  - authority to make new laws
  - Upper House: 242 members
  - Lower House: 465 members
  - majority of diet members from the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)
- more than a dozen other parties in Japan, but none has sufficient representation in the diet to influence the political landscape on the scale of the LDP

## SOCIETY

- urban society
- barely five percent of the population are engaged in agriculture
- various phenomena shape Japan's society:
  - ageing of society (*koreika*)
  - one of the world's lowest fertility rates
  - population will drop from 127 million to less than 100 million
- proportion of foreigners:
  - approximately two percent of the population – very low compared to other industrialised countries
  - has risen noticeably over the last 30 to 40 years
  - among non-Asian nationals, Americans are the most numerous: approximately 10,000 residents
  - number of German residents in the low thousands

## NATURAL DESASTERS

- **earthquakes:**
  - four tectonic plates meet below Japan
  - when the plates collide: earthquakes and tsunami
  - one fifth of the world's earthquakes occur in Japan
- **volcanoes:**
  - Japan lies on the rim of the Pacific "Ring of Fire" (chain of volcanoes)
  - majority of the world's volcanic eruptions occur in this region
  - about half of the active volcanoes are constantly monitored
  - residents and visitors are warned and sometimes even evacuated when volcanic activity increases
  - warnings and advice are issued by the Meteorological Office – <http://www.jma.go.jp/en/volcano/>
- Japan's residents be constantly well prepared
  - schools and communities hold frequent disaster drills
  - businesses are constantly developing new and innovative products

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\* estimation/forecast