How quickly is the population of Japan ageing?

The population of Japan will decrease by 5.0% over the next two decades, and is expected to be around 120 million by 2030. The proportion of the population aged 60 years and above exceeded that of the younger population aged 0–14 years in 1991 (see Figure 1).

The proportion of persons aged 60 years and above will increase from 30.5% of the population in 2010 to 37.1% in 2030. The population aged 0–14 years will constitute 12.5% of the total population by 2030 (see Table 1).

Table 1. Population percentages and percentage change by age group, 2010–2030

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2030</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0–14</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>-0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50+</td>
<td>43.3%</td>
<td>51.9%</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60+</td>
<td>30.5%</td>
<td>37.1%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80+</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total population (in 000’s)</td>
<td>126536</td>
<td>120218</td>
<td>-5.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*All percentages are rounded to the closest one decimal point.


What percentage of older people are participating in the workforce?

In Japan (2010), the percentage of labour force participation in the population aged 65 years and above was 13.4% for women and 27.2% for men, with 19.4% of people aged 65 years and above participating in the workforce.

Over a period of 20 years, the median age in Japan will increase by 6.7 years, from 44.7 years in 2010 to 51.4 years in 2030. This compares to an increase of 6.4 years in Asia and 4.8 years in Europe over the same period.

The 2010 population pyramid for Japan shows a large number of people in the middle age bracket. There are also more women aged 80 years and older than men (see Figure 2a). Compared to 2010, the 2030 pyramid shows an older population. There is a large increase in women and men aged 54–60 years and still more women than men in the 80–84 year age bracket (see Figure 2b).

How many years can older people expect to live in good health?

In 2010, healthy life expectancy (HALE) at birth was 75.5 years for women and 70.6 years for men. HALE at age 18.4 years for women and 16.1 years for men.
How do we assess the health of populations as they age?

In Japan, life expectancy at birth and at age 60 will increase for both women and men between 2010 and 2030 (see Table 2). Over the next 20 years, life expectancy at birth will increase by 2.3 years for women and men. The life expectancy gap between sexes will remain constant for 2010 and 2030 at 7.0 years. For people who survive to age 60 in 2010, women can expect to live another 29.0 years, and men another 23.2 years.

What health issues currently affect the population?

In 2004, noncommunicable (Group II) conditions constituted 89% of the overall disease burden. Group I conditions accounted for 7%, while Group III conditions accounted for 4% of the total disease burden (see Figure 3).

The number one burden of disease for men was malignant neoplasm. This condition was far more prevalent in men than women. Cardiovascular disease was the second largest burden of disease for men. For women, the number one burden of disease was neuropsychiatric conditions, closely followed by malignant neoplasms and cardiovascular disease (see Figure 4).

How will ageing in Japan affect the disease burden borne by older people?

The burden of disease in Japan is expected to change as a consequence of population ageing. The disease burden in the older age group (60 years and above) is expected to increase between 2005 and 2030 (see Figure 5).

The estimates and projections (DALYs) for persons aged 60 years and above in 2005, 2015 and 2030 show that Group II conditions will continue to increase and hold the leading position for the burden of disease in the Western Pacific Region (see Figure 5).

Policy and practice recommendations

✔ Constructive, proactive measures are needed to implement and monitor strategies and policies on ageing.
✔ Continued support for collaborative, multidisciplinary and cross-country research is indicated.
✔ Improved translation of health research results is crucial to inform the current New Gold Plan.
✔ Coordinated interventions are needed to address health and well-being gaps between prefectures and their ageing populations.