

Japan's population is shrinking at record speed

Many industrialized countries have low birth rates - the problem is particularly acute in Japan.

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<https://www.tagesanzeiger.ch/japans-bevoelkerung-schrumpft-im-rekordtempo-787650956005>

Japan's population continues to shrink at record speed. The number of Japanese people fell last year by 801,000 compared to the previous year to just 122.4 million. This is the sharpest decline since comparable data began to be collected, the Interior Ministry in Tokyo announced on Wednesday.

For the first time, all 47 prefectures in the country recorded a decline in the number of Japanese nationals. Including foreign residents, Japan's population was 125.4 million. That is around 511,000 fewer than a year earlier.

This means that the population of the world's third-largest economy has been shrinking for 14 years now.

Bevölkerungsentwicklung ausgewählter Länder bis 2100

UNO-Prognosen, Mittleres Szenario



Quelle: UNO Weltbevölkerungsprognose 2022

With low birth rates and almost no immigration, Japan is aging faster than any other industrial nation. Entire regions are dying out, millions of houses are empty and derelict, schools are being closed. Prime Minister Fumio Kishida has called for "unprecedented" measures to boost the birth rate in order to stop the population decline by 2030. However, doubts remain as to whether such initiatives, most of which are extensions of existing measures, will be effective.

Relax immigration rules

The country has the second oldest population in the world after Monaco. In January, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida warned that his country was faced with the question "whether we can continue to function as a society".

The decline was the largest since data collection began in 1968. Japan recorded fewer than 800,000 births last year.

The country has comparatively strict immigration rules, but the government is gradually relaxing them to make up for the lack of workers.

Move from the city to the country

To stop the population decline in rural areas, the Japanese government has been paying 1 million yen per child since the beginning of the year when families leave Tokyo. That's the equivalent of 7,000 francs/euro and corresponds to about two months' wages in Tokyo. The measure is also intended to relieve the overcrowded metropolis.

Tokyo is one of the most expensive cities in the world, the apartments are small, there are only a few childcare options, but people are still drawn to the city. Although more people moved away from the capital during the corona pandemic, the financial incentives are apparently needed to lure families to the countryside. There would be more than enough space there – but the prospects are bleak. In many villages there are hardly any children left, schools are being closed and there are places where the youngest person is over 50 years old.

Since 2019, the government has been paying a premium to people who want to move who have lived and worked in Tokyo for at least five years. The home office options that have existed since Corona also make moving easier. In fact, Shizuoka Prefecture, which is located southwest of Tokyo on the Pacific Ocean and is only an hour away by Shinkansen, is popular with emigrants from Tokyo.

For families, moving away from the city is increasingly an option, because the focus is increasingly on the value of the family, whereas this used to be primarily about work. But younger people are also increasingly moving to the country. On the one hand they are attracted by nature and cleaner air, but on the other hand there are also offers. For example, they receive money if they renovate an abandoned house.

Selected Comments

ofehrmedia

In principle, the state, society and economy should be organized in such a way that they are geared towards the needs of the existing population and not the other way round.

However, one prefers to postulate some axioms here, such as that an older population on average, or the decline in the number of inhabitants, is bad - without justifying this, but mostly with reference to 'the economy', and then derives from these axioms why you have to have a different population than you have, especially a younger one, even though everyone would like to live to be 150 and older.

It would be desirable if mankind were a little older on average, then maybe they would finally mature a little and shed those childish naïve traits that regularly lead to wars and catastrophes.

rudolfo muller

An interesting topic. Unfortunately, the article is very poor.

What is the retirement age, how are the pensions financed?

What are the working hours, how many weeks of vacation are there?

Joe Amberg

Can we finally stop presenting population shrinkage as a problem?

The biggest problem on this planet is massive overpopulation.

Total pollution, CO2 emissions, global warming - all directly proportional to population size.

So, it would be great if economists would finally say goodbye to their absurd model of perpetual growth.

It would be great if our pension systems would finally get off their pyramid scheme (four pay for one, etc.) and calculate and collect the necessary contributions based on a stable to shrinking population that are needed for a pension.

It's like with renewable energies: of course, everything is possible, you just have to start with it.