

The Aging Population and Aged Society

1. Disparity among Regions

Demographic changes have not been evenly distributed across Japan. For many decades young Japanese have moved from the countryside into big cities in pursuit of better jobs. As a result of these long-term trends, the urban population (in big cities and their surrounding suburbs) is much younger than the rural population of Japan. In 2007, when 21.5% of the Japanese population was 65 and over, suburban Saitama Prefecture just north of Tokyo had the fewest older people, just 18.3%. The oldest prefectures—all with over 26% of their residents 65 and over—were Kochi in Shikoku, Akita and Yamagata in the north-east, and Shimane and Yamaguchi in western Japan on the Japan Sea coast. (See map P56)

Living Arrangements

2.

Living Arrangements

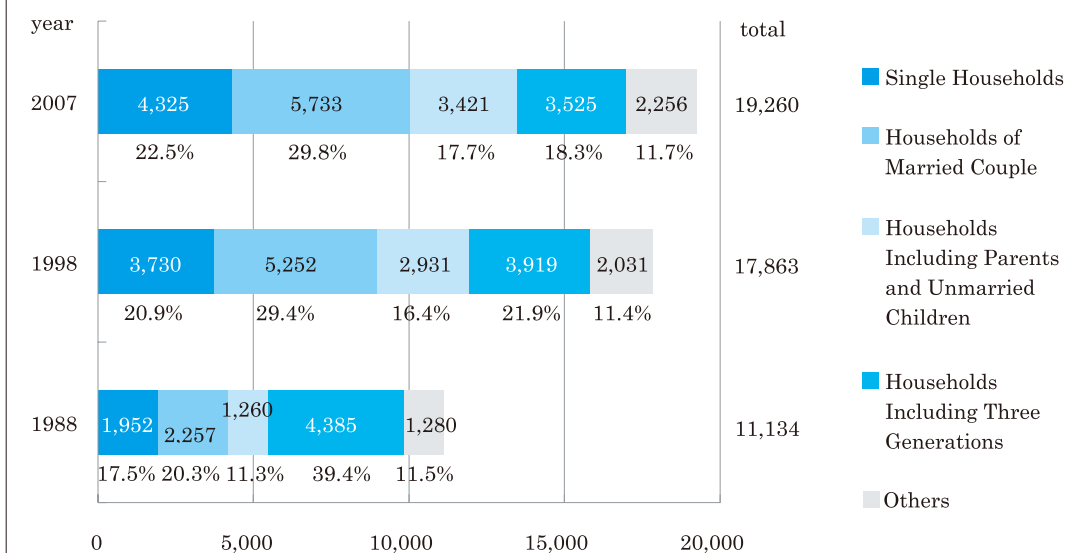
Changes in Older Person Households

As of 2007, there are approximately 48.02 million households in Japan, of which 19.26 million (about 40%) include one or more older persons. Looking at these households more closely reveals 4.33 million single-person households (22.5%), 5.73 million households of a married couple only (29.8%), 3.42 million households with older persons and unmarried children (17.7%) and 3.53 million three-generation households (18.3%). (2-1)

The total number of households with an elderly member has risen sharply, while the absolute number of three-generation households has been declining gradually.

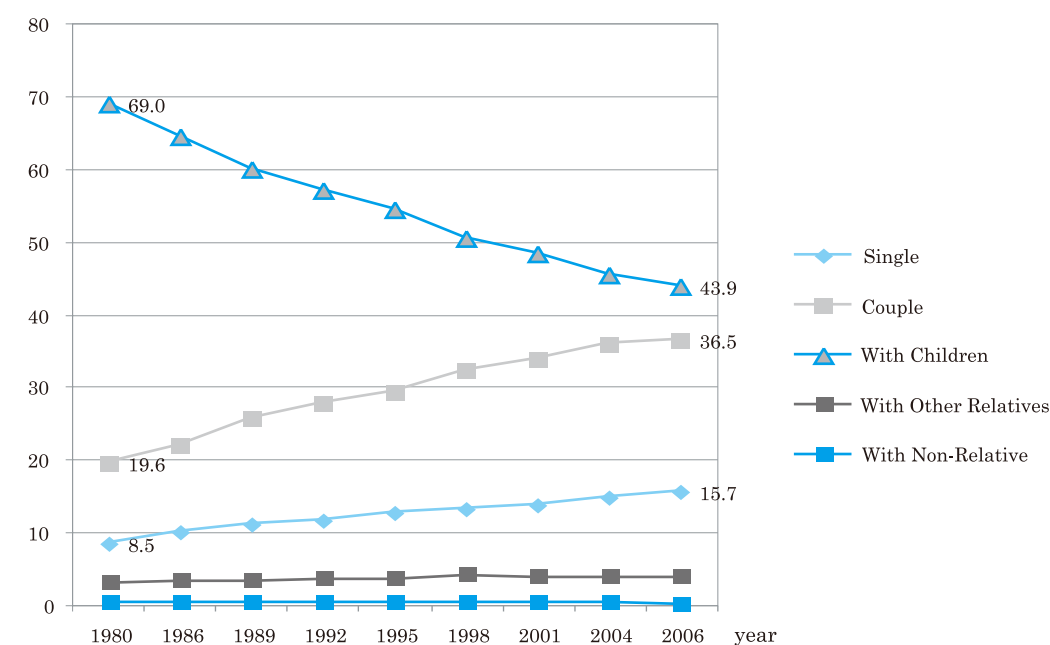
Focusing on individuals rather than households, the most significant change is that the proportion of older persons living with a child decreased from about 70% in 1980 to 44% in 2006, in a remarkably steady decline. The number living with a child is still very high compared to Western countries. Also noteworthy is that the proportion of older people living only with a spouse rose sharply from 20% to 37%, and that those living alone rose from 9% to 16%. (2-2)

2-1 Number and Proportion of Households with Member Aged 65 and Over (1,000 households, %)



Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, *Comprehensive Survey of Living Condition of the People on Health and Welfare*, 2007

2-2 Living Arrangements of Individuals Aged 65 and Over (%)



Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, *Comprehensive Survey of Living Condition of the People on Health and Welfare*, 2006

Living Arrangements

Gender Differences

Men and women differ greatly in their living arrangements as aging progresses. Among women, the proportion of living only with her husband drops sharply from the late 60s age group to older than 80, and the proportion living with a married child goes up proportionally. The main reason of course is that on average men die younger. The living arrangements of men are quite stable over the age groups. (2-3)

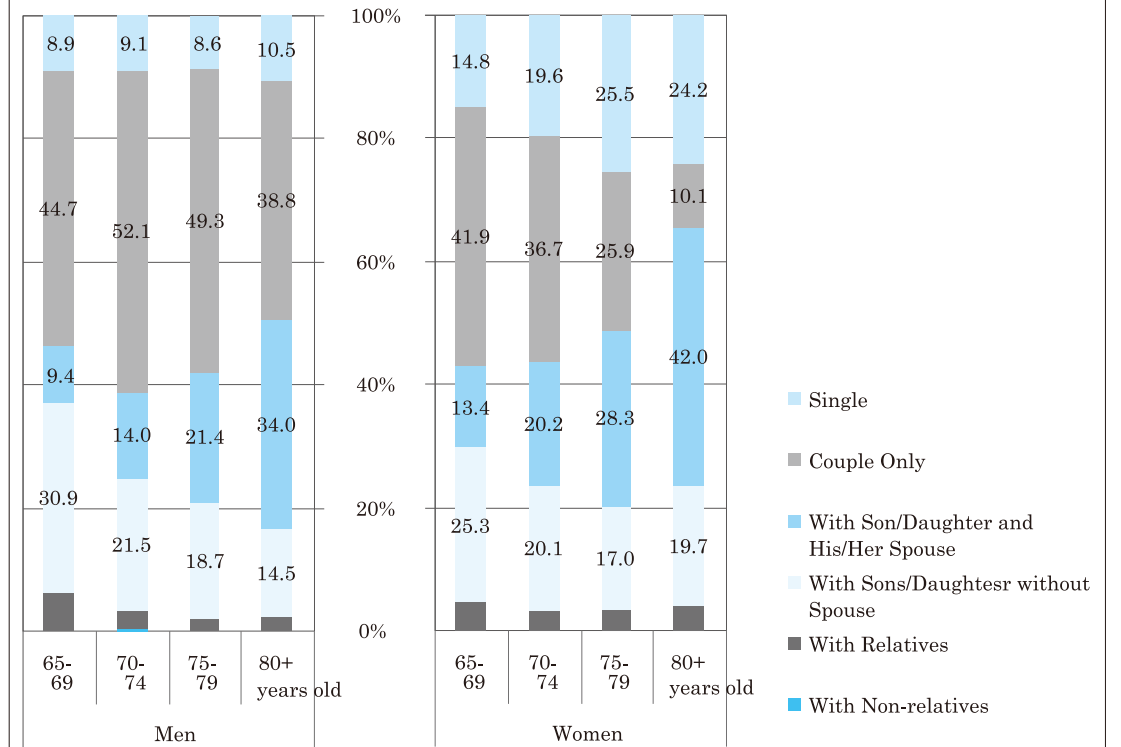
Housing

About 93% of people aged 65 and over (25.51 million) live at home, of whom 84% are owners and 16% are renters, a much higher home ownership rate than the total households (61% are owners and 39% are renters). *1 About 60% of them have been living in a same house at least for 31 years. *2

Although it is normal for people to live their own homes as they age, this becomes increasingly difficult as they come to need care. Yet even when they need assistance, many older people want to continue to live independently in their own homes as long as they can with informal and/or formal care services. About 10% of them (2.57 million) receive community-based care services such as home help and day care. *3

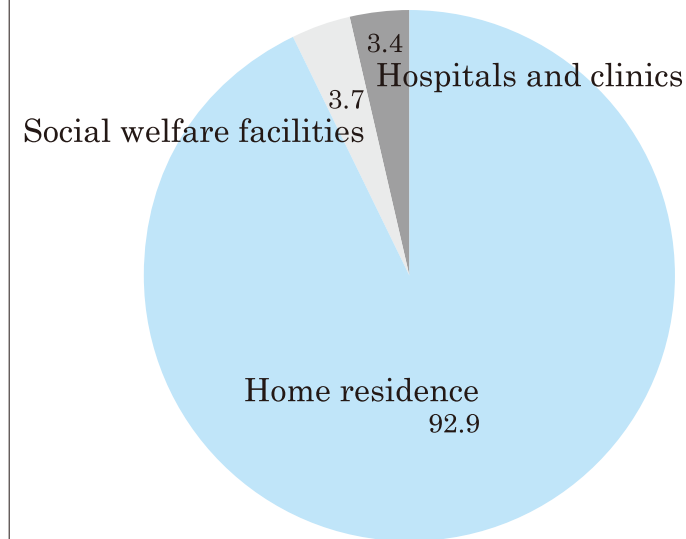
The remaining 7% (1.96 million) of the aged 65 and over are in hospitals or social welfare facilities. As the final residence for so many elderly people, residential facilities work to improve the living environment for the residents and enhance the quality of their care. (2-4)

2-3 Living Arrangements of 65 and Over by Sex and Age Group (%)



Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, Comprehensive Survey of Living Condition of the People on Health and Welfare, 2007

2-4 Residing Premises of the People Aged 65 and Over (%)



Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, Population estimates, 2007, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, Survey of social welfare institutions, 2006, Survey of institutions and establishments for long-term care