



The Movement of People – relocation, migration, tourism

In today's lecture we think about the movement of people. There is quite a lot of information in the *Statistical Handbook*. This gives you all of the data on domestic modes of transport, and also the levels of international travel. Of course, the corona pandemic affected all of these statistics massively from early 2020. The figures started to recover in 2022 as corona restrictions on movement were effectively abandoned. Now the question is whether we should return to pre-Covid-19 levels of movement given the climate crisis. This is a major point for debate for the decade of the 2020s and beyond.

1

Characteristics of Domestic Travel

- Japan is the land of the train and the bicycle.
- “My car” as private recreational space vs “My car” as essential for everyday life.
- Airports ... too many of them?
- Peak seasons, peak times: price gouging on planes but not on trains.
- A good result of the pandemic ... encouraging people to travel at different times?

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Let's look at some of the social characteristics of domestic travel.

In many ways, Japan is the land of the train and the bicycle. Next time you pass an estate agent, look at the signs in the window advertizing apartments for rent. In the large urban areas like Tokyo, it will always say how many minutes walk the property is from the nearest train station. For commuters, this is the key information. A property close to a station that will get you quickly from your flat in the suburbs into the city centre has long been the ideal for Japan's corporate employees. Within major urban areas, commuting by car is relatively uncommon compared to other countries. Parking spaces are limited and the roads are crowded. For short distances, a bicycle is preferable. Cycling to the station and then taking the train to work or school is the classic Japanese transportation experience.

All of this gives cars quite a different social role in Japan to many other countries. Of course there are many places in the regions of Japan where commuting by car is common. And, in sparsely populated areas, cars are often the only means of getting around. I lived in Hokkaido for 14 years and that was very much a car society, apart from right in the centre of

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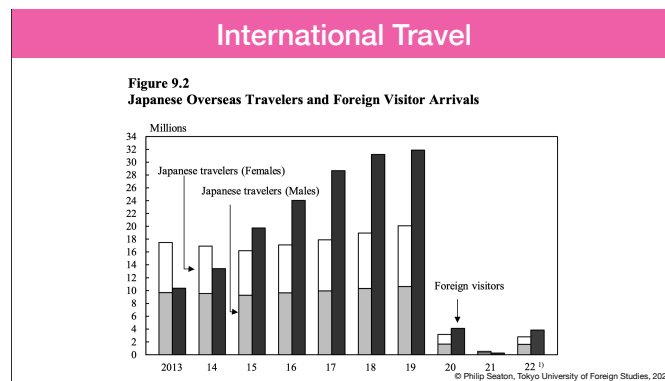
Sapporo. In Tokyo, a car is just an expensive luxury. In the midst of Japan's crowded cities, cars tend to be more of a personal recreational space than a mode of transport. They are often used on weekends for a *doraibu* (recreational drive). Even a *doraibu* might actually mean being stuck in a traffic jam somewhere for much of the time! But at least it is your personal space, and these days your car navigator doubles up as a television and sound system.

Japan has an extensive air transport network. In fact, one might say it is too extensive. Of course Japan needs its major domestic and international gateways in Tokyo, Osaka and other major cities. But, Japan has almost a hundred airports, or an average of around two per prefecture. Many of these are small airports on isolated islands in places like Okinawa. But most prefectures have a major airport for commercial passenger jets. Many were struggling to survive until Low Cost Carriers became popular in the 2010s. They faced disaster again during the collapse of air travel during the pandemic. And the backlash against frequent flying as the climate crisis unfolds is their next challenge. However, more than any other form of transportation infrastructure except perhaps a Shinkansen station, airports are a status symbol as well as a transportation hub. Local politicians love big construction projects like airports. But, all too often airport construction has been driven by local politics rather than local need.

The final thing to say about domestic travel is that Japanese people have, in my opinion, an unhealthy habit of traveling en masse at the same time. The peak seasons for traveling en masse are new year, golden week and o-bon, when television news reports 30-40 kilometer traffic jams on the motorways. I watch this news and just ask myself why people subject themselves to such a travel nightmare. Often the trains are no better because they are crammed full of commuters or holidaymakers. But, the trains do have an interesting feature. There is no price gouging on Japan's railroads. The price of a ticket from A to B is, for the most part, the same at any time. This is different to many other countries, and indeed to air travel in Japan, where the cost can rise sharply during holiday seasons. Japanese people cannot take long holidays, and when they do have a few days of holiday in a row, very often the travel companies significantly raise their prices. The poor consumer has little option but to pay Golden Week prices because they cannot take their holidays off at any other time.

If there is one good side to the covid pandemic regarding domestic transportation, let it be this. People were encouraged to avoid crowded places. Social distance became a buzzword. Perhaps in the post-pandemic era, people can remember these benefits of traveling at different times and create a new, less crowded transportation system in Japan.

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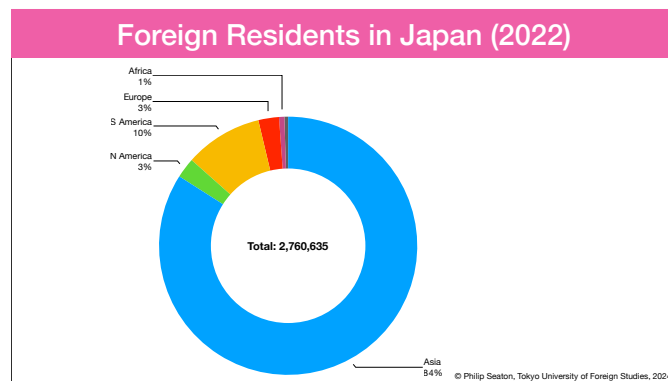
Let's now think about international travel in three main ways. International tourism, foreign residents in Japan, and Japanese living overseas.

Look at the data for international travel into and out of Japan. The key feature is the huge increase in the number of foreign visitors to Japan in the 2010s. This was in response to the heavy promotion of inbound tourism by the government. The vast majority of inbound tourists were from Asian countries. Note how outbound travel by Japanese people remained relatively constant. These trends reflected a fundamental change in Japanese government thinking about the movement of people. Up until the 1990s, net outbound tourism was considered as a means of correcting Japan's balance of payments surplus with Western countries. In other words, Japanese tourists spent money abroad as a counterbalance to the large number of Japanese exports bought in America and Europe. In the 2000s, the thinking changed fundamentally. Inbound tourists, particularly from Asia, became a way of ensuring growth and revitalization in regions that have experienced depopulation and economic stagnation for over two decades. However, as you can see in 2020, Covid-19 wiped out all these calculations. The tourism recovery began slowly in 2022. The final data for 2023 isn't yet available, but it looks like inbound tourism will shoot

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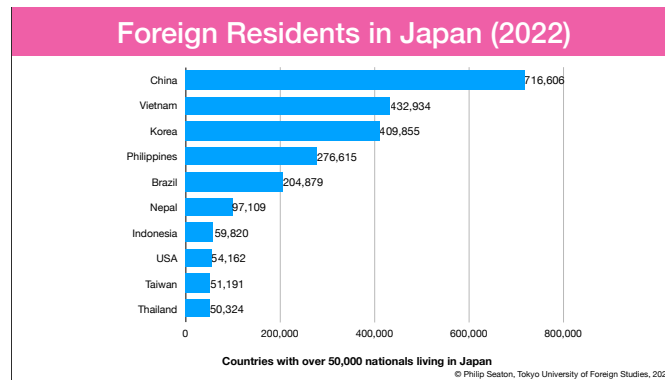
up to around 25 million again. In other words, it is almost back to pre-pandemic levels. As I said in the previous lecture, this is hardly welcome news from an environmental perspective, but the tourism industry is surely happy.

3



In addition to short term visitors to Japan, there are long-term visitors too. In 2022 there were 2.76 million foreign residents in Japan. The vast majority were from Asia. Up until the 1990s, there was a strong image of the *gaijin* as a white westerner. But that stereotype is well out of date now.

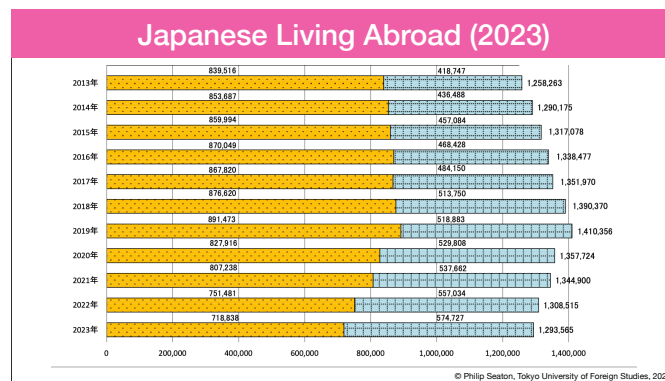
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Here are the statistics broken down by nationality. China, Vietnam, South Korea and the Philippines are the big four in Asia. But, notice how Brazilians are in fifth place. This is because there were various schemes from the 1980s onwards to encourage the return migration to Japan of the descendants of Japanese Brazilians, who emigrated to South America from early in the 20th century. There is lots more information about Japanese Brazilians in the on-demand materials on the webpage.

The most noticeable recent trend is the rapid rise in Vietnamese residents in Japan in recent years. Back in 2011 there were only 44,690 Vietnamese residents in Japan. In other words, over the past decade their numbers have increased almost ten-fold. Much of this is due to high Vietnamese participation in the technical intern scheme. More generally, Vietnam is considered to be one of Japan's closest friends in Asia, so educational, business, and other links are flourishing, too.

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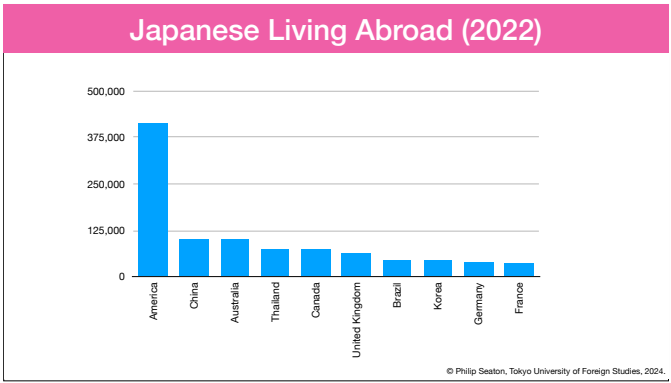


Let's now look at Japanese living abroad. Here is a graph from the Annual Report of Statistics on Japanese Nationals Overseas produced by the Japanese government. As you can see, numbers peaked at 1.41 million Japanese living abroad in 2019. Yellow is for long-term stays, for example long study abroad experiences. Blue is for permanent residents. Up until 2019 the number of both was steadily rising. Then Covid hit in 2020. Since 2022 there has been the Ukraine War and a very weak yen. Long-term stays abroad have fallen back, but the numbers of permanent overseas residents keep rising. Why do you think that the number of Japanese people who are permanent residents overseas increased by over 150,000 in the ten years from 2013 to 2023, with no reverse in the trend because of Covid 19? Individuals' reasons for living overseas will be diverse, primarily family, career, or lifestyle choice. But the number of Japanese who want to live outside Japanese society has grown steadily in the past decade or two. Ironically, while the Japanese population is shrinking in Japan, it is growing outside of Japan.

Whatever the reason, in addition to natural population decline caused by greater mortality than fertility, there is also a phenomenon of drip drip emigration, with 10,000 to 20,000 leaving the country permanently each year. Add this to the

6

increased numbers of foreigners in Japan and you can see clearly the statistical evidence for Japan becoming ever more multicultural as a society.



And this is where they are going. Note how they are concentrated in Western countries such as the US, neighboring Asian countries like China, and again Brazil, which has those important historical links with Japan.

Crime & Detention

- Crime - the quickest way to lose all freedom of movement in Japan.
- Japan's crime rate has been dropping since 2002, but some crimes are under-reported. See the White Paper on Crime for statistics.
- Crimes that grab media attention: random knife attacks, child abuse, abduction, deaths caused by elderly drivers, train gropers, telephone/computer fraud, crimes by foreigners ...
- Issues that stir international media debate: the death penalty and "hostage justice" (e.g. Carlos Ghosn case).
- Detention of refugees ... a hidden scandal.

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Finally, let's briefly mention crime, which is the quickest way for you to lose all freedom of movement in Japan because you end up in detention, or prison.

Japan has a reputation as a low crime society and reported crime is falling. However, it is suspected that many crimes, particularly those like rape, are underreported. Japan, therefore, is certainly not a crime free society. Look at the White Paper on Crime linked from the class webpage to see all the statistics.

Crimes that gain particular attention in Japan include random knife attacks, child abuse, abduction, deaths caused by elderly drivers, train gropers, telephone/computer fraud, and crimes by foreigners ...

There are two main issues in Japan that stir international media debate. The first is the death penalty. Japan continues to execute people for certain crimes. The death penalty is controversial wherever it exists, but in Japan's case there is significant concern about the safety of many convictions.

8

This is due to the second issue, what is known as "hostage justice", by which the police have extensive powers to detain people until they make a confession. Rather than deal with these complicated issues in this short lecture, I encourage you to read the materials linked from the class webpage. The issue of "hostage justice" was the subject of intense international media attention after the escape of Nissan's former CEO Carlos Ghosn in December 2019.

And there is one other form of detention that gets very little attention in the Japanese media: the detention of refugees. From 2022, the media has been cultivating an image of Japan as a welcoming place for Ukrainian refugees. But others are not nearly so fortunate in terms of their welcome in Japan, even if their home countries face serious unrest. Read the pages of the Global Detention Project website to see some of the important human rights issues that are mostly hidden from view in supposedly peaceful, low-crime Japanese society. People who flee war, violence or danger in their own countries sometimes come to Japan seeking a safe refuge. Despite Japan basically being a very safe society, many refugees find little hope and safety here.