



**UNIVERSIDADE  
FERNANDO  
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# **The Reality of Immigration in Japan: Social, Economic and Political Impact**

[A Realidade da Imigração no Japão: Impacto Social, Económico e Político]

Projeto de Graduação

[1º ciclo de estudos em Ciência Política e Relações Internacionais]

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## **Resumo**

Este projeto foi iniciado com o propósito de analisar a imigração, com especial foco no Japão. A imigração tornou-se um tema cada vez mais polarizador no mundo atual, com este fenómeno a aumentar e a tornar-se parte da vida quotidiana.

Através da análise de várias estatísticas, como taxas de criminalidade, número de trabalhadores estrangeiros, número total de imigrantes e da observação do sentimento social, procuramos encontrar uma resposta para a questão simples, mas difícil de saber se a imigração está a ser feita corretamente para resolver os problemas atuais que o Japão enfrenta, sejam eles económicos ou sociais. Caso contrário, o que poderia ser feito para integrar melhor os cidadãos estrangeiros nesta cultura única, resolver os problemas enfrentados pelo país, determinar se a imigração é verdadeiramente necessária e acalmar a indignação negativa na sociedade.

Por último, o objetivo é dissipar a ideia de que a imigração é sempre um fenómeno positivo sem quaisquer efeitos secundários negativos, como é retratado no atual clima político.

Palavras-chave: Imigração; Japão; Estatísticas; Opinião pública; Cultura; Sociedade; Clima político

## **Abstract**

This project was started with the purpose of analyzing immigration, with a special focus on Japan. Immigration is becoming a more and more polarizing topic in today's world, with this phenomenon ever increasing and becoming a part of daily life.

By looking at various statistics like crime rates, number of foreign workers, number of total immigrants and observing social sentiment, we try to find an answer to the simple but hard question of if immigration is being done correctly to resolve the current problems, be they economic or social, faced by Japan. If not, what could be done better to integrate these foreign citizens into this unique culture, solve the issues faced by the country, determine if immigration is truly needed and quell the negative uproar in society.

Lastly, the aim is to dispel the idea that immigration is always a positive phenomenon without any negative side effects, as it is portrayed in the current political climate.

Keywords: Immigration; Japan; Statistics; Social sentiment; Culture; Society; Political climate

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## Introduction

Japan is an island nation located in East Asia, with a population of approximately 123 million, with 4 million being foreign residents, a low number compared to the Japanese citizens.

Despite their declining birth rate and the worsening of the economic situation every passing day due to salaries being at stalemate and the yen dropping in value, the sentiment towards foreigners and immigration has only become worse, even though immigration is a phenomenon that could help solve these issues. Why are they so opposed to it?

Academic literature suggests that this contradiction is rooted in the ethnonationalist ideology that has dominated Japan's post-war identity, framing it as a racially homogeneous nation resistant to immigration (Liu-Farrer, 2025). This ideological barrier, combined with the government's historical reliance on 'side-door' policies that officially denied admitting migrant workers while creating exceptions, has shaped both policymaking and public perception (Takaya, 2025). This project thus aims to research exactly what consequences this ethnonationalism and the reliance on these disguised policies could have.

This essay researches the various factors that contribute to the ever-growing negative sentiment towards foreigners, be they workers or tourists. It also intends to show the effect of these sentiments and the possible future it might lead to, if their views on this matter don't change.

The research for this project was conducted by analyzing several news articles, national statistics and interviews conducted to the Japanese populace. This paper also contains firsthand observations from a four-month long period of study at a Japanese University, namely NUFS (Nagoya University of Foreign Studies), and the continuous daily monitoring of Japanese social media, even after my return to Portugal.

The numerous factors that will be discussed in this paper will be an overview of the current political climate regarding the Sanseito political party, the new policies put in place by the recently elected Prime Minister Sanae Takahichi, the sentiment of the Japanese population concerning immigration and its necessity, the history of

immigration and foreigners in Japan and lastly the analysis of data provided by the Japanese government pertaining specifically to foreigners in the country.

## 1. Historical Context

Japan has a rich history spanning over many centuries and with it being an island nation, commerce and influence from nations overseas has of course been a part of it. But how has this connection played a part in the views that Japanese people have of foreigners today? We will look at several key moments in Japanese history and see how they could have affected the perception of foreigners. These events will be the Sakoku policy of the Edo period from 1603 to 1868, the Meiji Restoration from 1868 to 1889 and post-World War 2 from 1945 to 1952 (History Skills, 2014-2026.; Weatherhead East Asia Institute, 2026).

### 1.1. Sakoku Policy

The main history related to immigration and foreign influence in Japan starts decades before one of the most popular periods in Japanese history, the Tokugawa Shogunate, since influence of European traders and missionaries had already been felt before it, in feudal Japan.

One of the first contacts Japan had with foreigners was with Portuguese traders in 1543 when they brought firearms, ship designs, and exotic goods. This led to Japanese blacksmiths starting production on their own firearms named arquebuses.

Another important contact with foreigners happened in 1549 when Jesuit missionaries named Francis Xavier, Cosme de Torres and Juan Fernández landed in Kagoshima and introduced Christianity to Japan, gaining

a lot of traction in the southernmost island known as Kyushu, amassing close to 300,000 followers. This later led to a nationwide ban on Christianity by the Shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu (Ruler during feudal Japan), who feared that this new religion could cause a split in the loyalty to the Shogunate (the governing body during feudal Japan) and give more

*Figure 1 - Tokugawa Ieyasu*



*Note: Adapted from Saga Shakadō; © Aflo. (2020). A portrait of Tokugawa Ieyasu [Portrait]. Nippon.com. <https://www.nippon.com/en/japan-topics/b06907/> Copyright*

Figure 2 - Tokugawa Iemitsu



Note: Adapted from Historiographical Institute, The University of Tokyo. (2022). A portrait of Tokugawa Iemitsu [Portrait]. Nippon.com. <https://www.nippon.com/en/japan-topics/c10801/> Copyright

power to European Colonialists (History Skills, 2014-2026).

Later during the Shogunate of Tokugawa Iemitsu, at least 5 edicts were introduced from 1633 to 1639, with the aim of restricting foreign contact (Lumen Learning, 2025). This was ensured by banning Japanese from traveling abroad, making it illegal for those who already left to return, thus limiting foreign trade to specific ports which were under close supervision. This was the basic framework for the Sakoku policy or the

locked/closed country which is a term that still exists in Japanese immigration discussions (Han, 2024). Also under this new system, only the Dutch who didn't engage in missionary work, could trade through the artificial island of Dejima in Nagasaki. Japanese ships were also limited to a carrying capacity of 500 koku (the coin at the time) to prevent ocean-going voyages, though enforcement varied.

One of the motivating factors that led to the creation of this policy and showed that the previous Shoguns' fear of foreign influence was rooted in some truth was the Shimabara Rebellion that broke out in Kyushu in 1637 and ended in 1638, during which thousands of Christian peasants and dispossessed samurais rose against the heavy taxation and religious persecution. These rebels resisted the Shogunate forces for several months in Hara Castle, forcing the Shogunate to ask for support from Dutch artillery commanded by Nicolaes Coukebacker to break the siege, thus demonstrating support for the Shogunate. After the end of this rebellion roughly 37 thousand were executed by authorities (History Skills, 2014-2026).

Figure 3 - Map of Dutch Trade Post near Dejima



Note: Adapted from Munez, E. (2025). Map of Dejima [Map]. Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/sakoku> Copyright

Under the pretense of limiting the growth of Christianity in Japan, the Shogun introduced new policies, to ensure that Japan would not be colonized by the Europeans, like what was happening to other nations in Asia with Macao by the Portuguese and the Philippines by the Spaniards. These policies also allowed the government to better control the trade system by monitoring transactions, the collection of taxes and ensuring that nothing like the previously mentioned rebellion would happen again by preventing the Daimyo (rulers of Japanese regions) from interacting with foreigners independently. Additionally, by managing their imports and exports so tightly, the Shogunate made sure that Japan could continue to be self-sufficient and not rely on outside supplies for vital goods, thus remaining economically independent (Liu-Farrer, 2025). Lastly, since the Dutch were the only Europeans able to trade with the Japanese their medicine and their philosophical way of thinking had an important influence in the future history of those two fields.

## 1.2 Meiji Restoration

Figure 4 - Commodore Matthew Perry



Note: Adapted from Mathew, B. B. (2011). Commodore Matthew Calbraith Perry, USN [Picture]. Wikipedia.  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matthew\\_C.\\_Perry](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matthew_C._Perry) Copyright

Now let's talk about the reason why Japan opened its doors to foreigners again. It dates back to the mid nineteenth century when foreign presence increased throughout East Asia.

In 1853, at Edo Bay an American Commodore by the name of Matthew Perry arrived with four steam powered warships, demanding that a treaty would be signed allowing U.S. vessels to access Japanese ports for supplies. Later in 1854 Perry would once again return to Edo Bay, but this time would bring nine warships with him. With the Shogunate being aware of the military superiority of the American forces, he agreed to sign the treaty on March 31st of the same year, this treaty is

known as the Treaty of Kanagawa. This treaty stated that the ports of Shimoda and Hakodate would be opened to American ships, a U.S. consulate would be formed and shipwrecked sailors were to receive care (History Skills, 2014-2026).

This would become the catalyst for similar treaties to be signed with other nations, which as the previous Shoguns feared, led to the weakening of their power over foreign contact, prompting political unrest and later the fall of the Shogunate in 1868 with the Meiji Restoration.

With this revolution, Japan opened its border to foreign trade and commerce once again. This was followed by the abolishment of the restrictions on residency of both types permanent and temporary, and the restrictions on freedom of movement inside the Country.

During the Meiji Restoration, the idea of an ideal Japanese Nation was one focusing on a strong State just like in Europe. To achieve it, they believed ethnical homogeneity was a necessity, even if artificial (Shishito & Roncato, 2015).

In this period the building blocks were set for Japan's transformation into an ethnonationalist state, along with the barriers to its transformation into an immigration society (Liu-Ferrer, 2025). Even in the Japan of today the Japanese versus foreigners mentally still present (Takaya, 2025).

Political reform also happened where a modern social system was implemented, meaning a centralized state with an Industrial focused economy. With the Russia-Japan war that lasted from 1904 to 1905, a colonial system was established since during this time Korea was occupied by the Japanese (Shishito & Roncato, 2015).

### 1.3 Post WW2

*Figure 5 - Douglas MacArthur and Emperor Hirohito*



*Note: Adapted from Gaetano, F. (2024). MacArthur and the Emperor of Japan, Hirohito, at their first meeting, September 1945 [Picture]. Wikipedia.*  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Douglas\\_MacArthur#/media/File:Emperor\\_Hirohito\\_and\\_General\\_MacArthur.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Douglas_MacArthur#/media/File:Emperor_Hirohito_and_General_MacArthur.jpg) Copyright

The next major influence foreigners had in Japan happened after the end of the Second World War, namely from 1945 to 1952 when Japan was occupied by the United States. During this time, an American General by the name of Douglas MacArthur was chosen to be the Supreme Commander of the Occupation Forces. This led to the restructuring of Japan as a country, with political, economic and civic changes being put in place. With these new policies still influencing the policy framework and the social attitudes of today (Shishito & Roncato, 2015).

First let us start with the political changes since they were the most noticeable ones, as the new constitution created was completely different from the old one, which was known as the Meiji Constitution of 1889.

The biggest change established was the shift in who held political power, which went from the emperor to the people, thus forming the basis for a democracy. Despite this the Emperor continued to exist as a symbol of Japanese unity and culture but was stripped of his power completely.

*Figure 6 - National Diet*



*Note: Adapted from The National diet of Japan. (2026). The House passes the supplementary budget for FY2026 [Picture]. House of Councillors The National Diet of Japan.*  
<https://www.sangiin.go.jp/eng/featurednews/2026/260605en.htm> Copyright

The new supreme political institution created in Japan was a parliament, known as the National Diet, made up of freely elected representatives of the people. Other important implementations in this new constitution were that women were given equal rights including the right to vote, local governments were strengthened to encourage grassroots level political participation, new civil liberties like the right of free speech were

established and the police's power was weakened and carefully regulated. Lastly but still very relevant nowadays was the abolishment of the Japanese military forces, the prohibition of maintaining an army or going to war.

Along with these political changes, economic ones were also implemented. A relevant one was the land reform, where the land was taken away from the Landlords and redistributed to the farmers making the families more economically independent, allowing them to participate in the newly established democracy. They also attempted to change the industrial sector by changing the laws to allow free trade unions, and by 1949, half of the industrial workers belonged to one. They also tried to implement measures to break up giant corporations known as Zaibatsu, but it was ultimately abandoned as it would have made the economic recovery for the country very difficult.

Lastly, the civic changes implemented by the Americans followed a main theme where they wanted Japanese people to better understand democracy, since after the war many Japanese were left disillusioned by their military leaders and were thus open to these new American ideas.

One of the first actions they took was to use their control over newspapers and magazines to explain and popularize democracy. Another implementation was the reform of the education system, which included the abolishment of Moral Training in favor of introducing Democratic ideas, and transfer of control over education and censorship from the central government to a local administration. The family laws were also changed, whereas previously the power was solely reserved for the head of the family, it was now redistributed to make every member more equal, thereby promoting a more democratic structure.

After the Americans left the country in 1952, the reforms that did not find strong support in the Japanese system were discontinued, the implemented anti-monopoly laws were weakened, allowing new giant businesses to appear, and the power over the educational system was returned to the central government, but ultimately the new democratic curriculum stayed the same. During this time, the ruling conservative party tried to reimplement the previously abolished Moral Training in schools and the abolishment of the peace clause, but these changes were abandoned. The changes introduced by the Americans were received positively by the Japanese population and continue even up to today (Weatherhead East Asia Institute Columbia University, 2026).

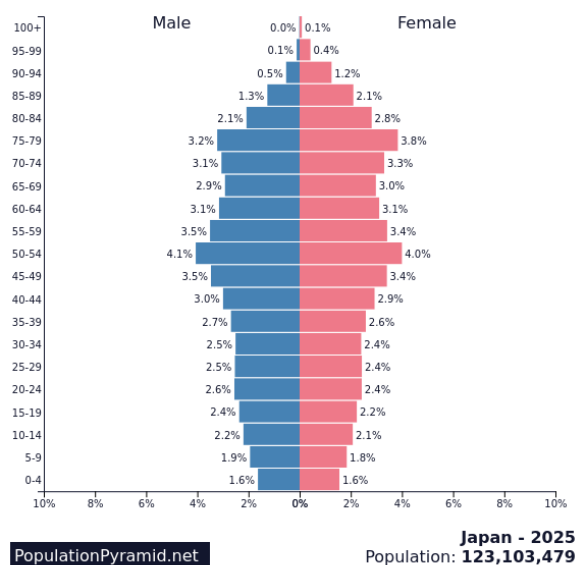
## 2. Immigration in Japan Today

Immigration has become a polarizing topic of discussion nowadays because of the new Sanseito political party established in 2020 that, in the most recent election that took place in July 2025, was able to acquire a total of 14 seats in the Japanese Parliament despite previously only having 1 seat. This change is attributed to the increasing sentiment of unease among Japanese citizens regarding overtourism and immigration, and the newly elected Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi, who plans to review immigration laws and to crack down severely on illegal immigration and visa overstays. What could have led the Japanese population to support these new policies and politicians? And how can Japanese balance its need for foreign labor while preserving its cultural identity and social harmony? The following points will tackle these questions by examining economic, social and political dimensions of immigration in the Japan of today.

### 2.1. How has Immigration affected Japan

Immigration has affected Japan in several ways over the years, but the most notable sector affected would be the labor one. Japan is considered an aging country, with most of the population being concentrated in the age groups from 40 to 79 years old in 2025. This has a profound effect on the labor market since more people are reaching ages where they are unable to work, whether it be because of retirement or because their bodies can no longer keep up with the physical requirements of certain jobs. Meaning that Japan has been forced to open its doors wider in response to demographic crises and skills shortages. Liu-Farrer (2025) highlights two parallel processes in this

Figure 7 - Population Pyramid



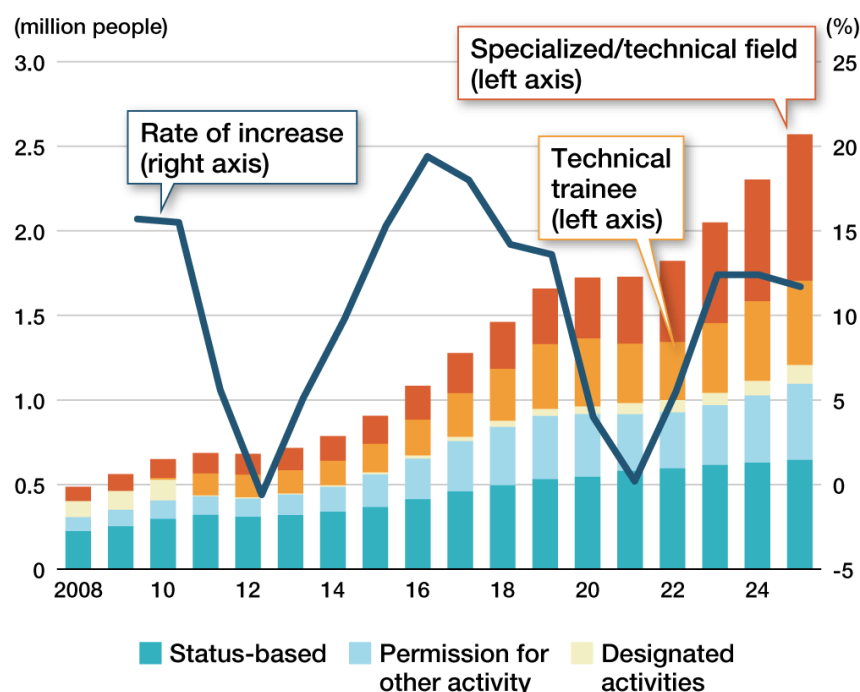
Note: Adapted from PopulationPyramid.net. (2025).  
Population Pyramid Japan [Info-Graph].  
PopulationPyramid.net.  
<https://www.populationpyramid.net/japan/2025/>  
Copyright

development: the normalization of exceptions at the policy level and the acceptance of differences at the societal level. Through a 'patchwork' approach, Japan has gradually widened channels for immigration and settlement. However, as Takaya (2025) argues, this shift requires overcoming significant ideological barriers, 'no-immigration' and the identity-binary of Japanese versus foreigner.

As mentioned by Liu-Farrer (2025), with the ever-increasing vacant job positions and new job opportunities, foreign workers are needed more than ever. This exact phenomenon is observed with the most recent data collected in October of 2025. This data shows that there are now approximately 2.6 million foreign workers in Japan, a new record high for the country, an increase of 11.7% when compared to last year's data, making up roughly 4.1% of all employment in Japan. Compared to the data from ten years ago in 2015, when there were only 900 thousand workers, indicating that the number almost tripled in just a couple of years. By industry, about a quarter of them work in the manufacturing sector, while 13.3% work in the retail and wholesale sector, followed by 12.4% in the hotel and restaurant industry.

Figure 8 - Foreign Workers Japan

### Foreign Workers in Japan by Visa Type



Created by Nippon.com based on data from the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare, as of October for each year.

nippon.com

Note: Adapted from Nippon.com Staff. (2026). Foreign Workers in Japan by Visa Type [Info-Graph]. Nippon.com. <https://www.nippon.com/en/japan-data/h02693/>  
Copyright

By only factoring in these numbers of foreign workers, Japan has a promising path laid out to fix its aging population problem since more young foreigners are entering the country. However, if we consider the total number of immigrants, it's clear that this figure is but a smidgen on the grand scale of things. According to data from the Immigration Services Agency, foreign entries totaled about 42.43 million in 2025, an increase of roughly 5.65 million, or 15.4%, from a year earlier, thus painting a positive picture of how Japan might find a way to solve its aging population crisis, created by the low birth rate in the country.

The topic of the birth rate in Japan is another major issue that immigration is supposed to help with, but in reality, is it really helping? According to Japan's health ministry, the number of births in 2025 was 705,809, including foreign nationals, down 15,179 or 2.1% compared to 2024, thus marking the tenth consecutive year of decline and the lowest ever since record taking began in 1899. Contrasting these numbers with the total of deaths in Japan presents a very concerning picture since the figures show a total of 1,605,654 deaths in 2025 resulting in a population decline of 899,845.

A clearer picture of the effects of immigration is starting to form, and we can observe that not all of it is positive. The declining birth rate exists despite the significant increase in immigrants, but is this the only negative immigration brings?

The answer is a resounding no because the biggest negative accompanying this wave of immigration is the increase in the crime rate in Japan by foreign nationals. According to the Japanese National Police Agency and the Japanese Ministry of Justice, the number of arrests for criminal offenses committed by foreigners with mid to long term visas has been increasing since 2023 going from 10,040 to 13,405 in 2024 to 17,614 in 2025 an increase of 31.4%. The number of foreign residents in Japan arrested, is 7,333, an increase of 15.2% compared to 2024 (6368 arrested). I would like to point out that even if this number of arrests is significantly lower than those observed in 2004 and 2005, it is still a massive issue for a country renowned worldwide for its amazing safety and low crime rates (EN-ICHI Editorial Team, 2026).

Table 1 - Number of Criminal Offences committed by Foreigners and Number of Arrested

| 検挙件数           | 検挙件数           | 検挙件数 | 検挙件数   | 検挙人員           | 検挙人員           | 検挙人員 | 検挙人員   |
|----------------|----------------|------|--------|----------------|----------------|------|--------|
| 刑法犯            | 刑法犯            | 刑法犯  | 刑法犯    | 刑法犯            | 刑法犯            | 刑法犯  | 刑法犯    |
| 2025年<br>1～12月 | 2024年<br>1～12月 | 増減   | 増減率(%) | 2025年<br>1～12月 | 2024年<br>1～12月 | 増減   | 増減率(%) |
| 17614          | 13405          | 4209 | 31.4   | 7333           | 6368           | 965  | 15.2   |

Note: Adapted from 警察庁 (National Police Agency). (2026). 犯罪統計資料(令和 7 年 1 ～12 月分【確定値】) [Info-Graph]. e-Stat. <https://www.e-stat.go.jp/stat-search/files?page=1&layout=datalist&toukei=00130001&tstat=000001240456&cycle=0&year=20250&month=0> Copyright

Furthermore, if we tally up the number of criminal offences in conjunction with the special law offences, we get 25,480 and increase 16.9% in comparison to 2024 (21,794). Regarding the figure of individuals arrested in 2025 is 12,777, an increase of 5% compared to 2024 (12,170).

Table 2 - Number of Criminal and Special Offences committed by Foreigners and Number of Arrested

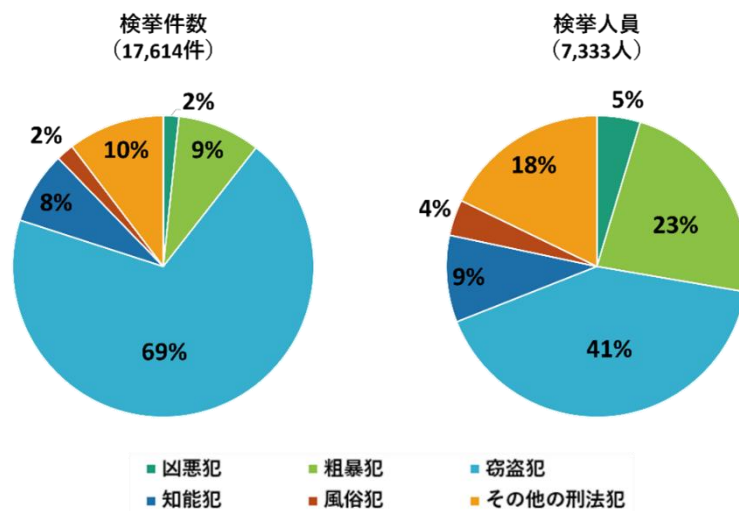
| 検挙件数           | 検挙件数           | 検挙件数        | 検挙件数        | 検挙人員           | 検挙人員           | 検挙人員        | 検挙人員        |
|----------------|----------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|----------------|-------------|-------------|
| 刑法犯<br>特別法犯    | 刑法犯<br>特別法犯    | 刑法犯<br>特別法犯 | 刑法犯<br>特別法犯 | 刑法犯<br>特別法犯    | 刑法犯<br>特別法犯    | 刑法犯<br>特別法犯 | 刑法犯<br>特別法犯 |
| 2025年<br>1～12月 | 2024年<br>1～12月 | 増減          | 増減率(%)      | 2025年<br>1～12月 | 2024年<br>1～12月 | 増減          | 増減率(%)      |
| 25480          | 21794          | 3686        | 16.9        | 12777          | 12170          | 607         | 5.0         |

Note: Adapted from 警察庁 (National Police Agency). (2026). 犯罪統計資料(令和 7 年 1 ～12 月分【確定値】) [Info-Graph]. e-Stat. <https://www.e-stat.go.jp/stat-search/files?page=1&layout=datalist&toukei=00130001&tstat=000001240456&cycle=0&year=20250&month=0> Copyright

Lastly, in the grand scale of crime in Japan, foreigners commit 3.7% of the crimes, a low number, but still an unprecedented figure in Japan, as it is the highest it has ever reached.

Now regarding the category of crimes committed by foreign nationals in Japan, the data indicates that the most common one is theft, accounting for a staggering 69% (12,226 cases) of total arrests and 41% (3,030 people) of those arrested. Next it is followed by violent crimes at 9% (1,566 cases) and 23% (1,690 people) of arrestees, White-collar crimes at 8% (1,368 cases) and 9% (683 people) of arrestees, heinous crimes at 2% (295 cases) and 5% (341 people) of arrestees and to finish it off, moral offenses 2% (355 cases) and 4% (283 people) of arrestees. The orange portion accounts for other Penal Code crimes, those that do not fall under the above (EN-ICHI Editorial Team, 2026).

Figure 9 - Category of Crimes Committed



Note: Adapted from 警察庁 (National Police Agency). (2026). Arrest Status for Penal Code Offenses by Major Offense Categories (2025) [Info-Graph]. EN-ICHI. [https://ippjapan.org/en\\_ichi/en/archives/1983](https://ippjapan.org/en_ichi/en/archives/1983) Copyright

Lastly, comparing these statistics to those of 2024, it suggests that all crimes, with the exception of those related to the sex industry, are on the rise. White collar crimes increased by a whopping 77.9% and the number of arrests for theft increased by 34,4%. Regarding serious crimes, the number of arrests for non-consensual sexual intercourse and similar offenses increased from 107 to 134, and the number for abduction and human trafficking doubled from 11 to 21 (EN-ICHI Editorial Team, 2026).

After analyzing all of these statistics it becomes apparent that even if immigration can be positive, it can also have staggering consequences regarding a country's safety, as the total number of arrests increased 1.7 times, nearly doubling over 3 years from 2023 to 2025 and contributing to the negative perception of immigrants (Green et al., 2025; Yamamoto, 2008)

## 2.2. How the population views Immigration

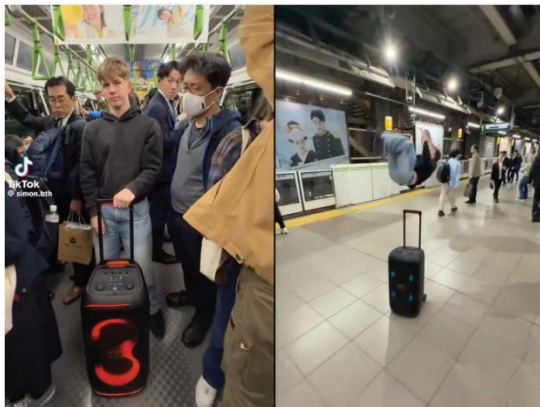
Since immigration has become such a focal topic during these last years around the world, it is fair to say that in Japan, it is also discussed, especially on social media like YouTube with interviews featuring Japanese citizens or content creators sharing their own opinions, and on X formerly Twitter, where a lot of Japanese express their frustration or satisfaction with foreigners.

When watching interviews, it is possible to observe that the Japanese populace is evenly split between accepting more immigrants or denying them entry, with some even stating that they don't really care whether more come to Japan or not.

A curious observation is that even if they don't agree on what Japan should do with immigrants, they agree on everything else. This can be seen in the fact that both parties recognize that immigrants might be needed to fill labor positions or help solve the birth rate and aging population. They believe that Japan should try to solve it themselves without foreign help and only rely on it if it is impossible to resolve this on their own.

Curiously, the point where most interviewees agree 100% of the time is that should a foreigner come to Japan, they should respect and learn about Japanese culture since it is so different from others and learn the language. This focal point on culture and language is what causes the rest of the world to sometimes label this country as racist, but according to the interviews and the sentiment shared on social media apps suggest, that

*Figure 10 - Influencer Playing Loud Music in Subway*



*Note: Adapted from Matthew, H. (2025). TikTokker Streichbruder's Tokyo Train Antics Spark Outrage [Picture]. Tokyo Weekender. <https://www.tokyoweekender.com/japan-life/news-and-opinion/tiktokker-streichbruders-tokyo-train-antics-spark-outrage/> Copyright*

in the view of the Japanese all they are doing is protect their very unique culture and live their lives peacefully without having to worry about being victims of a crime, the scenery or streets being littered with trash, feeling like they don't belong in their own country, or even feeling afraid in it.

However, with information we have today, it indicates, that this is not what is happening in Japan. With foreign nationals' crime rates going up (National Police

Agency, 2026), the circulating videos or photos of foreigners depicting cultural disrespect, the forcing of their culture upon Japan, and the public disturbances it becomes apparent why the public perception of foreigners is becoming deteriorating rapidly. Several incidents of this disturbance of peace can be found on social media, be it with Tiktokers playing loud music on the train when complete silence is

Figure 11 -Influencer Doing Pull Ups on Sacred Torii Gate



Note: Adapted from Nikhil, P. (2024). *Influencer Sparks Outrage In Japan By Using Sacred Shinto Gate For Workout Video* [Picture]. NDTV. <https://www.ndtv.com/offbeat/influencer-sparks-outrage-in-japan-by-using-sacred-shinto-gate-for-workout-video-6815405> Copyright

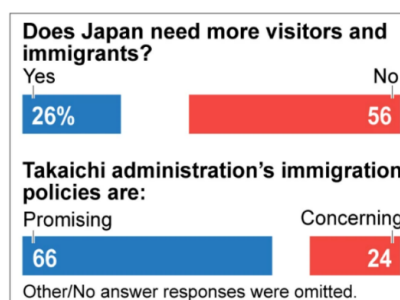
expected in Japan, engraving their names or even climbing on sacred gates, temples or trees. Public frustrations are most explicitly directed at immigrants from the Middle East, Africa, South Asia, Muslim communities and social media influencers.

In more recent months, Japanese social media has been flooded with videos of foreigners a public nuisance or danger, with fights breaking out on the streets, arguing with cops, and trying to get violent with them, to even trying to convert random women on the street to their religion by asking them to recite a certain prayer (known as Shahada) that when recited in front of a Muslim is a way to reinforce and officialize your conversion, with the punishment for leaving, according to some schools of thought, being extremely severe even leading to death. These cases are becoming increasingly common and have contributed to raising anti-Muslim sentiment in Japanese society.

Other issues cropping up that have even led to some protests include the increased cases of alleged non-consensual sexual acts or intercourse with Japanese women and boys, some of whom are minors, the blocking of streets and parks with Muslim prayer, and the biggest issue regarding the construction of a new mosque. Lastly, another shocking event that sparked outrage was the attack of a city councilor named Yusuke Kawai at the Japan Kurdish festival by an immigrant.

There has also been a telephone survey conducted by Japanese news outlet Asahi Shimbun showing that 66% of voters view the new Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's tougher immigration policies as "promising", while the remaining 24% expressed concern. The other question on the survey shows that 56% said that Japan needs fewer visitors and immigrants, with 26% saying otherwise.

Figure 12 - Asahi Shimbun Survey



Note: Adapted from Hiroshi, K. (2025). Survey: 66% back Takaichi's tougher policies on immigration [Survey]. The Asahi Shimbun. <https://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/16162590> Copyright

## 2.3. New Government Stances on Immigration

Figure 13 - Japanese Prime Minister; Sanae Takaichi



Note: Adapted from 外務省 (MOFA). (2025) Sanae Takaichi, Prime Minister of Japan [Picture]. Wikipedia. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sanae\\_Takaichi#/media/File:Official\\_portrait\\_of\\_Sanae\\_Takaichi,\\_Prime\\_Minister\\_of\\_Japan\\_\(HD\).jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sanae_Takaichi#/media/File:Official_portrait_of_Sanae_Takaichi,_Prime_Minister_of_Japan_(HD).jpg) Copyright

The new Japanese government, led by recently elected Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi, has established a very firm position regarding immigration, acknowledging that even if it is needed, it should be more controlled and deliberate in a way that would prevent overstaying visas and ensure safety and respect for the Japanese nationals.

With this objective in mind, several revisions have already been made and will be made to the existing immigration policies. A significant one that has already taken effect is the reform of the requirements for foreign nationals seeking citizenship, bringing it to the same level of requirements as permanent residency. Previously, only 5 consecutive years of living in the country were needed, now doubling to 10 years, and expanding the screening periods for tax and social insurance records, which now requires 2 years of tax and social insurance payment records as well as 5 years of tax payment certificates. Previously only 1 year was needed while permanent residency required 2. All of the above revisions have gone into effect as of the 1st of April.

A new post has also been created in the Prime Minister Cabinet with a focus on handling interactions with foreign residents, occupied by Kimi Onoda, called Minister

in Charge of a Society of Well-Ordered and Harmonious Coexistence with Foreign Nationals.

Figure 14 - Kimi Onoda



Another new policy to be put into effect in the future refers to a bill passed in Japan's House of Representatives on the 28th of April, with the purpose of raising the ceiling on fees for immigration procedures like renewing a visa. This amendment to the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Law was approved by a majority vote in the plenary meeting of the lower chamber of the Diet, with this new bill being backed by the Liberal Democratic Party, Japan Innovation Party, Komeito and Democratic Party for the People, while the party

*Note: Adapted from Cabinet Public Relations Office of the Cabinet Secretariat. (2022). Kimi Onoda [Picture]. Wikipedia. [https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kimi\\_Onoda#/media/Ficheiro:Kimi\\_Onoda.jpg](https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kimi_Onoda#/media/Ficheiro:Kimi_Onoda.jpg) Copyright*

in opposition was The Constitutional Democratic Party. These new ceilings would be raised from the current cap of 10,000 yen to a staggering 100,000 yen for permission to change residence status and the extension of the period of stay, and up to 300,000 yen for permanent residence permission (Himari, 2026)

One more policy implemented earlier in 2026, is the new requirement of Japanese language proficiency of at least N2, the second highest level, for certain jobs in Japan, such as interpretation and translation work, customer-facing roles, sales positions involving client communication, and other roles where language skills are central to interpersonal interaction.

Lastly, in the future, a new system is to be implemented called JESTA or Japan Electronic System for Travel Authorization, which will require travelers from 75 visa exempt countries to apply online and provide personal details, travel purpose, and planned location before departure to receive authorization to board their flight. The objective of this system is to pre-screen for illegal employment risks and security threats before travelers reach Japanese soil.

## Conclusion

After collecting and analyzing all this data from several different sources, whether from official government numbers or public opinion, we still can't make a definitive conclusion on the matter regarding whether immigration is benefiting Japan positively or negatively. This would involve a much deeper dive into looking at government data more in depth, the data of the private companies that employ these immigrants, interviewing and getting more public opinion on the matter entailing the need to travel to Japan to do so or employ someone from there to do it and summarizing all of the above, a bigger project.

The most we can conclude is an educated guess based on the information detailed throughout this research paper. With this information in mind, I believe that the answer is not a simple yes or no, since economically speaking, Japanese companies are benefiting from more and cheaper labor, which is a very significant positive for the economy, especially as the yen falls and the economy continues to decline (Maeda & Strausz, 2025; Liu-Farrer, 2025).

However, if we look at the other metrics like birth rate, or crime rate the impact this kind of immigration is having on Japan is, according to the data and research, negative or negligible. With the crime rates increasing, the once-safe-Japan where people could fall asleep in the street without anything happening to them or their belongings, and where walking around without any fear was commonplace, is now losing that safe place image. The birth rate continues to fall, even with all the immigrants in Japan showing that this might not be the way to change this ever-important statistic and make it go in the positive.

Lastly, and most importantly, the social effect this mass immigration is having is the most concerning aspect of all of this. With public perception souring after all the scandals and disrespect of Japanese life and culture, the populace is very unhappy and wants change, as evidenced by the new political climate showing that change is needed when the integration of immigrants into the Japanese way of life is lacking. This could lead to serious repercussions later down the line regarding economics if the number of foreign workers falls. Exemplifying perfectly the tension between economic necessity and cultural preservation (Takaya, 2025). Nevertheless, these actions show that the

Japanese prioritize their daily comfort and their culture above all, indicating that immigration is not being handled correctly in Japan.

This poses an interesting challenge and question to all other governments and nations around the world with the question being, how can immigration be conducted with respect for the country's culture and way of life?

This sentiment of anti-immigration is not only seen in Japan but in most countries worldwide that are affected by mass immigration, demonstrating that integration into the country's culture and way of life is of utmost importance. If it is not done correctly, the country will suffer socially.

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