

Japan suffers biggest natural population decline ever in 2018



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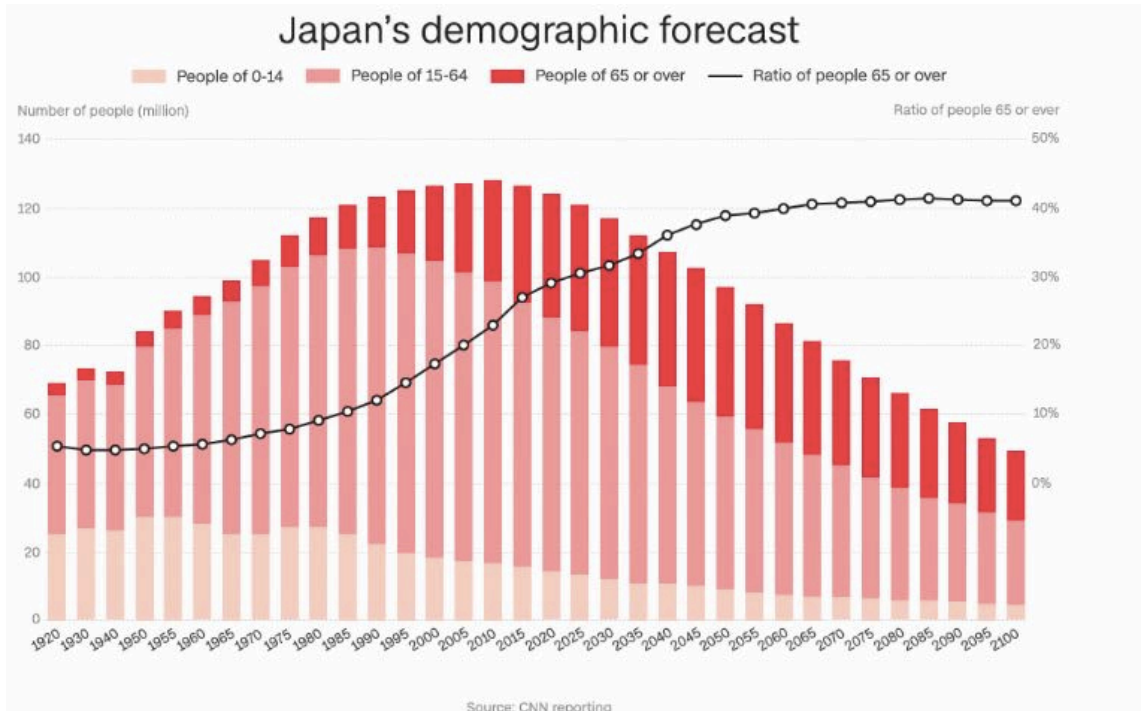


A father holds up his baby under carp streamers fluttering in a riverside park in Sagamihara, suburban Tokyo, on April 29, 2016, ahead of May 5 Children's Day in Japan.

(CNN)Japan suffered its biggest natural population decline ever this year, government statistics show.

The fast-graying nation also posted a record-low birthrate, as the estimated number of babies born in 2018 dipped to 921,000 -- the lowest since records began in 1899 -- according to [a report](#) published Friday by the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare. The number of newborns is estimated to have shrunk by 25,000 from 2017, and the figure remains under the 1 million mark for the third year running.

Deaths in 2018 also hit a postwar record high of 1.369 million, with a natural population decline of 448,000 -- the highest ever.



Japan is a "super-aged" nation, meaning more than 20% of its population is older than 65. The country's total population stands at [124 million](#) this year -- but [by 2065](#) it is expected to have dropped to about [88 million](#).

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe wants to prevent the population from dropping below [100 million by 2060](#). In 2017, the government [announced](#) a 2 trillion yen (\$18 billion) spending package to expand free preschool for children aged 3 to 5 -- and for children aged 2 and under from low-income families -- and cut waiting times at day care centers.