



Japan Local Government Centre
Council of Local Authorities for International Relations (CLAIR), London

Social Isolation and Local Government: The Japanese Experience

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Japan Local Government Centre

- Council of Local Authorities for International Relations
- Membership organisation of local authorities supported by Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications
- Seven international offices: London, Paris, Sydney, New York, Singapore, Seoul, Beijing
- London covers UK, Germany, Netherlands, Austria, Sweden, Norway, Finland and Denmark
- Roles:
 - 1) Research into local government systems and policies
 - 2) Assisting overseas activities of Japanese local governments
 - 3) Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme (JET)



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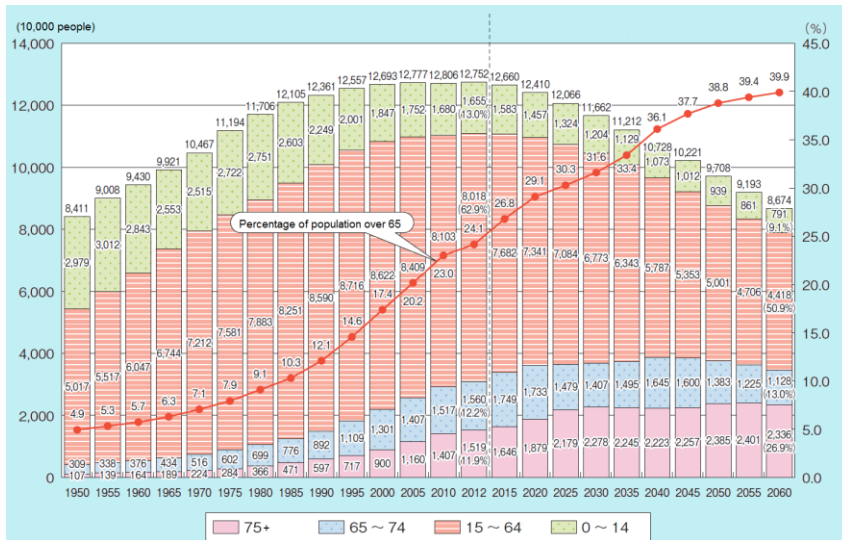
Social Isolation in Japan

Definition:

Those whose social needs are not met
 Those who have no-one to turn to in times of need
 Those who do not have meaningful social interactions on a regular basis

- Elderly
- Hikikomori (230,000 Cabinet Office survey, 2010)
- People with disabilities or mental health issues
- Single mothers
- Out of work/low income

Japan's Aging Population

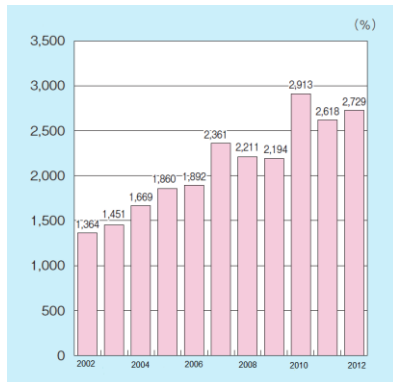


White Paper on Elderly Care, Cabinet Office of Japan (2013)

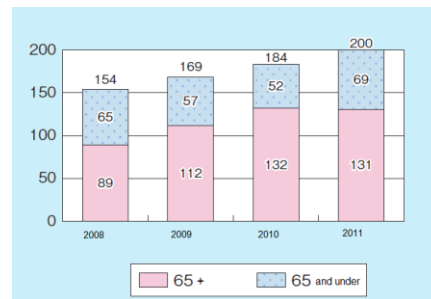
Kodokushi: Lonely Deaths

Nationwide: 15,000 annual cases of undiscovered deaths (MHLW)

Deaths at home (Over 65)



Deaths undiscovered for over 1 week



Recorded deaths in 23 wards of Tokyo, Tokyo Metropolitan Government, Bureau of Social Welfare and Public Health (2013)

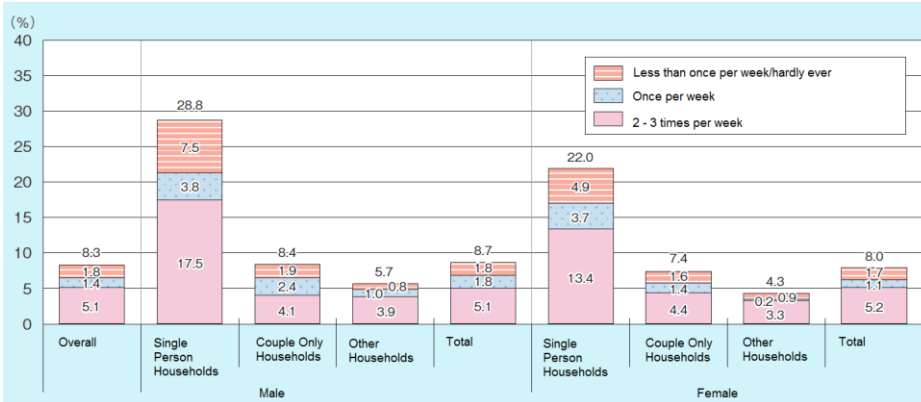
Kodokushi: An increasing problem

- Post-war changes in changes in family structure
- Change in housing
- Economic conditions
- De-population in rural areas
- Changing attitudes to marriage

Not just a problem of 'lonely death' but one of isolation in daily life

Social Isolation in the Elderly

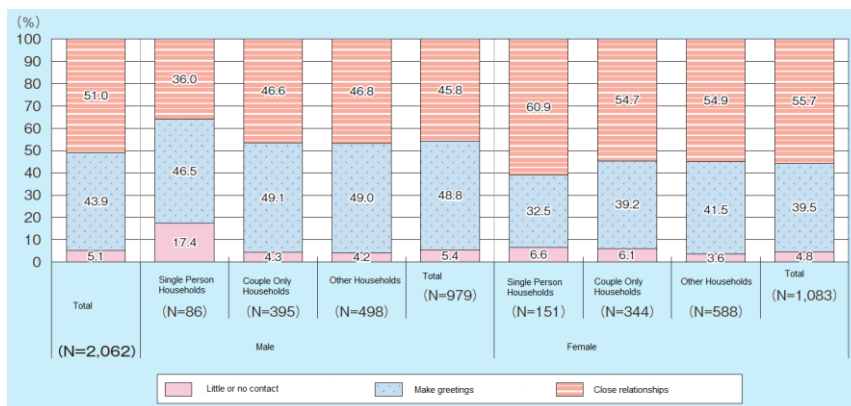
How frequently do you have a conversation with someone (including telephone and email)?



Data from White Paper on Elderly Care, Cabinet Office of Japan (2013)

Social Isolation in the Elderly

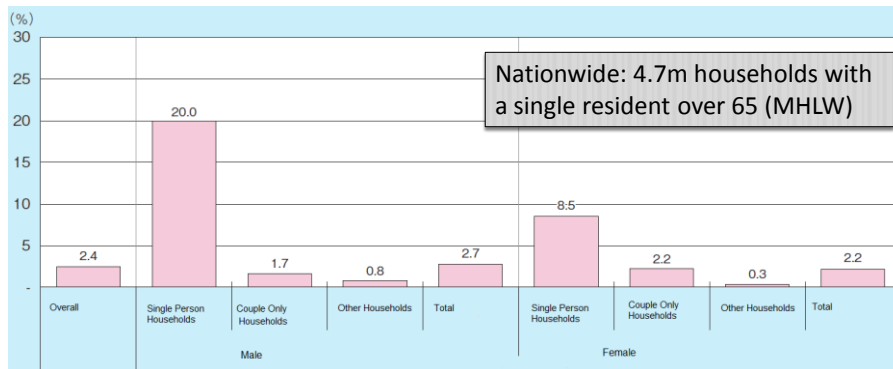
Community Links:



Data from White Paper on Elderly Care, Cabinet Office of Japan (2013)

Social Isolation in the Elderly

I have no-one I can ask for help if I am in trouble:



Data from White Paper on Elderly Care, Cabinet Office of Japan (2013)

Policy Responses

National

- Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare and Ministry of Finance provide support for implementation of successful schemes at local level
- Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications coordinates and evaluates local initiatives
- Collation of Information – Change in personal data regulations

Local

- Promotion of worry free living environments for older residents
- 24 hour/on demand support services
- Local inclusive care centres
- IT support and infrastructure
- Partnership with local business, voluntary sector (home visits etc.)
- Community based activities

Adachi: No More Lonely Deaths

- Missing Centenarians?
- Power of Communities Division – Zero Isolation Project
- Identification of single person households, over 70, not currently subscribed to public health insurance
- Visits by neighbourhood associations – Do they have enough social interaction? Do they have someone to turn to in times of need?
- Information shared with relevant services (police, welfare organisations etc.)
- Support and encouragement to engage with community activities

Public Libraries in Japan: Tackling Social Isolation and Building Communities



Libraries in Japan: Facts

- First public library in Japan opens 1872
- Library Law (1950): Public Libraries must be tax supported, free to use and adequate to meet the information needs of the local community
- 3,234 public libraries (2012)
- Local government responsibility
- 100% prefectures, 98.5% cities, 54% municipalities
- 303.5m visits (2012)
- Focus on books - number of holdings, borrowing rates
- Citizens' Public Halls

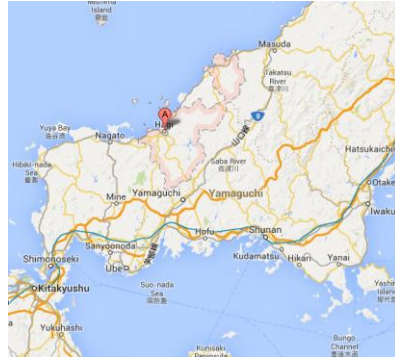
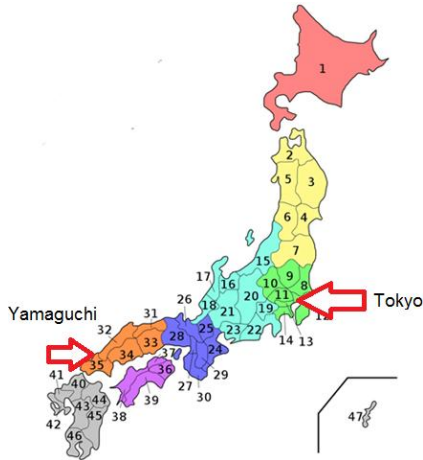
Changing Role of Libraries in Japan

- Post-Tsunami – Importance of libraries as providers of local information, safe spaces for gathering, community activities, relaxation
- Libraries to foster communities – community consultation and involvement
- Funahashi (Toyama) – pop 3000, 72% registered library users
- Imari (Saga) – Run with cooperation of 27 community groups



Hagi City 萩

700km²
Population 53,600



Hagi City Ai-brary

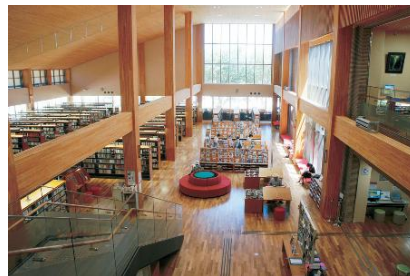


Ai-brary Principles:

- A library that all citizens can easily access
- A library that fosters children's creativity
- A library that builds communities and citizens
- A library that improves citizen's lives

愛 Love
会 Meet
合 Connect

Aim: 'To facilitate the use of historic materials and increase convenience, but furthermore to create a **meeting place**, somewhere where **community development** can take place.'



Hagi City Ai-brary



Achievements

- Visitor numbers increased 10x
- Books borrowed increased 1.5x
- Registered Hagi City residents 40%
- 81 days extra opening, 3 hours longer

- 365 days opening 9.00-21.00
- Digital services – access to national catalogue
- ICT – automated check out etc.
- 23 staff (13 qualified librarians)
- 22, 156 members
- 369, 645 books borrowed (2012)
- New services – Café, magazine sponsorship scheme, wi-fi, outside space

NGO and Community Partnership

- Partnership with the NGO 'Everyone's Library Hagi', established by citizens of Hagi City
- Citizens involved in library management, new initiatives, growth and problem solving
- Making Communities is Making Citizens: Making Citizens begins with the Library



Hagi Children's Centre



Children's library
Event hall
Music studio
Exercise studio
Crèche and children's clubs
Play park

54,712 visits (2012)
NGO: Hagi Children's Centre

Aims:

- Provide a place for children to be
- To fulfil Hagi City's overall childcare policies
- Foster links between parents and carers



Conclusions

- Social isolation is an increasing problem in Japan, and one which local authorities are taking seriously
- Social Isolation strategies currently focus on the elderly, but can be expanded to other vulnerable groups
- Libraries are an important resource, not only for provision of information, but for creation of community links
- Many public libraries are recognising the advantages of engaging in community activities
- Libraries can be at the centre of town revitalisation strategies