



# PRAY FOR EAST ASIA

## Pray for Japan

I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.

— Ephesians 1:16

## Country Profile

Japan, the world's third-largest economy, is made up of nearly 7,000 islands. Japan's role in the international community is considerable. It is a member of the [OECD](#), the [G7](#) and the [G20](#); a major aid donor; and a source of global capital and credit. In recent years, it has also increased its contribution in global security and peacekeeping efforts.

An aging population, stagnant economy, long working hours, increasing rates of singleness, and mental health issues are some of the reasons that Japan ranks among the least happy of the richer developed nations. The suicide rate, although falling, remains the sixth highest in the world, and a recent government survey found that 25% of the population had contemplated suicide.

### Religion

Most Japanese identify themselves as both Buddhist and Shinto, but surveys have shown that only one-third of people profess a religious faith. This apparent anomaly is due a difference in how 'religion' is understood. Most Japanese are not interested in religious beliefs, but rather practice religion for the functions it fulfils in their lives. So a person may have a Shinto dedication at birth, a Christian-styled wedding, and a Buddhist funeral. Most people have little problem practicing multiple religions, since each religion provides different benefits at different times.

Fewer than 1% of Japanese people know Jesus. Hundreds of towns and villages and even some cities are without a church. The Japanese church is facing issues such as aging congregations and a lack of pastors and seminary students. Many Japanese people are too busy to have time to consider the gospel. When people do believe, they may face pressures, for example by non-Christian spouses not to attend church, or by families to participate in rituals at the Buddhist family altar or Shinto god shelf, or by communities to take part in communal activities on a Sunday morning.

### OMF Church Ministries

OMF has been working in Japan since 1951, initially in Hokkaido, and then in Aomori Prefecture, Sendai, and the Greater Tokyo Area. Work has also begun in Iwate Prefecture which was badly affected by the tsunami in 2011.

OMF seeks to glorify God by serving with others to make disciples of Jesus Christ. To this end OMF workers are involved in planting churches, student and youth work, theological education, and partnering with like-minded organizations. The most significant partner is the Japan Evangelical Churches Association (JECA). Several



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missionaries are training at JECA churches, some are involved in cooperative church plants and others are helping JECA churches plant daughter churches.

## **OMF Mission Sending Ministries**

In 1966, the OMF Japan Home Council was established. For a long time, it was difficult to find candidates willing to go overseas as missionaries. Finally, in 1973, Rev and Mrs Kunimitsu Ogawa were the first Japanese OMF missionaries sent to Indonesia. Since then, one by one, God has raised more Japanese to become missionaries.

## **Population**

- **Total:** 126.5 million people
  - **Japanese:** 98.3%
  - **Korean:** 0.6%
  - **Chinese:** 0.4%
  - **Others:** 0.7%

## **Religions**

- **Shinto**
- **Buddhism**
- *(Note: many practise both Shintoism and Buddhism)*
- **Christianity:** 0.8%

*Lord, thank you for your work in Japan. We ask you to send more workers to share your gospel with the Japanese people. Please encourage and strengthen the Japanese church. May it capture the vision of missions and grow in missions sending. Please open up more areas of partnership between the church and other like-minded organizations. Please raise up many missionaries from Japan to bless peoples in other parts of the world.*